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Shivraj Singh Chouhan sworn in as Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister
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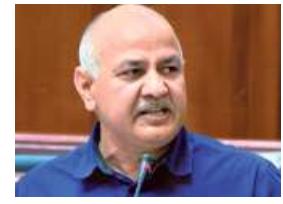
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NEARBY



AAP govt. presents ₹65,000-crore budget

NEW DELHI
Delhi Finance Minister Manish Sisodia presented a ₹65,000-crore budget in the Assembly here on Monday with continuing focus on education, transport and health sectors. The Opposition BJP, however, termed it "disappointing and a juggling of statistics". Mr. Sisodia said the budget contained an allocation of ₹50 crore to confront the COVID-19 crisis in the city.

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Riot victims asked to vacate Idgah relief camp

NEW DELHI
Amid the COVID-19 outbreak, riot victims at the Idgah relief camp in north-east Delhi alleged that they were being asked to vacate the premises at the earliest. Without their own place to go to, they stare at an uncertain future. The victims claimed that three tents were removed in the last two days and volunteers "rudely" told them to vacate the camp, which was set up by the Delhi Waqf Board.

CITY ▶ PAGE 4

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Markets bleed, Sensex dives 4,000 points

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI
With the country in a virtual lockdown mode and companies announcing temporary shutdowns as the number of COVID-19 cases breached the 450 mark, the stock market went into a free fall mode on Monday and benchmarks registered their biggest single-day fall in both absolute and percentage terms.

Trading halt

The Sensex hit the 10% lower circuit in the very first hour of the trading session, resulting in a 45-minute trading halt for the second time this month. The Nifty had hit the 10% circuit breaker on March 13.

The reopening of the session provided no respite either as the Sensex plunged over 4,000 points – 4,035.13 to be precise – to touch a low of 25,880.83, before ending the day at 25,981.24, down 3,934.72 points, or 13.15%.

All the Sensex constituents ended the day with heavy losses, with most of them currently trading at multi-year lows.

As many as 21 stocks in the Sensex pack lost over 10%, with financial sector heavyweights, including Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finance, and State Bank of India, along with Maruti Suzuki India, Bajaj Auto and Reliance Industries contributing significantly to the day's fall.

More than 2,000 stocks lost ground on BSE, as against only 214 gainers. The sectoral index representing banking was the worst performer of the day, losing nearly 17%. Meanwhile, the broader Nifty ended the day at 7,610.25, shedding 1,135.20 points or 12.98%.

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As virus toll rises to nine, States put in place tougher measures

Domestic flights grounded; first fatalities in West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

As the death toll from COVID-19 touched nine on Monday, the government announced a slew of measures, including the suspension of all domestic flight operations until the end of March, to slow down the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Thirty States and Union Territories moved to a complete lockdown mode, and governments warned of strict punitive action against those who violate preventive measures.

The number of cases confirmed by the Union Health Ministry rose to 471. Data from the States put the total number of cases at 476, with 443 active cases.

West Bengal and Himachal Pradesh reported their first fatalities.

In view of the continuing spread of the virus, Parliament curtailed its session and adjourned *sine die* after passing the Finance Bill.

650 aircraft grounded
The Ministry of Civil Aviation ordered the shutting down of all domestic flight operations hours after an announcement was made by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal suspending all incoming flights to the capital.

The new restriction will be effective from Tuesday

In limbo



Caught unawares: Workers from other States wait to return home at the Puratchi Thalaivar Dr. M.G. Ramachandran Central Railway Station, Chennai on Monday. ■ B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

- 30 States & U.T.s (with 548 districts) are under complete lockdown (with provisions for essential services & supplies). Sikkim & Mizoram are yet to issue orders
- M.P. (37 districts), Odisha (5) and U.P. (16) have imposed partial lockdowns

COVID-19

midnight, a day after the ban on international flights came into effect.

A total of 650 aircraft operated by various Indian airlines will now be grounded across airports. The Centre's move comes after several States, including West Bengal and Bihar, requested a ban on flights.

Kerala and Maharashtra, which are facing the brunt of the crisis, with 95 and 97 cas-

es respectively, announced more sweeping measures.

Following 28 new cases on Monday, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said shops, offices and establishments barring essential services will be closed. Camps will be prepared for migrant labourers, who will be provided food and given medical examinations, as economic activities come to a complete halt in the State.

Announcing a State-wide curfew, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray

said: "People are not listening and they were stepping out as if the virus threat had diminished. However, that is not the case. I am forced to say this because there are still those who have not understood the seriousness of what we face."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi once again urged people to take the lockdown seriously.

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MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGES 8, 9, 13,
LOCKDOWN AND BEYOND ▶ EDIT

Virus alarm



Chock-a-block: People who arrived from different parts of the country amid the COVID-19 outbreak taking a bus from the Mithapur bus stand in Patna on Monday. ■ RANJEET KUMAR

T.N. announces dedicated hospital for COVID-19 patients

Govt. multispeciality hospital in Chennai to house facility

RAMYA KANNAN
CHENNAI

The Omandur Government Multispeciality Hospital on Mount Road is being converted into a special facility with 350 beds to treat COVID-19 patients, Tamil Nadu Health Minister C. Vijaya-baskar said.

Other operations of the hospital in Chennai would be wound down and it will be dedicated to the treatment of the SARS-CoV-2 infected patients.

"Since it is a new hospital and has a lot of space, we decided to commandeer it. With other hospitals, there is a restriction in shifting out

in-patients already receiving treatment... which is why we looked at the Omandur hospital," Dr. Vijayabaskar explained. New beds and ventilators will be procured for the facility, he added.

The Minister said a task force of 10 senior doctors has been formed to study treatment protocols across the world.

They will suggest changes to the treatment protocols in the State as necessary, he added. In addition to the new facility at the Omandur Hospital, after discussions with the management of Apollo Hospitals, and Christian Medical College (CMC),

Vellore, the Health Department managed to secure a commitment of 100 beds (Apollo) and 250 beds (CMC) to treat COVID-19 patients.

Payment for testing
The Minister also said provision would be made under the Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance scheme to compensate the private hospitals for the expenses incurred on poor patients who may not be able to afford the fees of ₹1500 (if negative) or ₹4,500 (if positive) for testing for the infection.

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HINDU

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Curbs in the Capital get off to a stuttering start

With some venturing out, police to issue 'curfew passes'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Fewer vehicles plied on Delhi roads, but several people ventured out on the first day of extensive curbs implemented by the Delhi government to control the spread of COVID-19.

The Delhi police registered 100 FIRs against violation of lockdowns. The police conducted checks on the borders and requested people to return home if they hadn't stepped out in order to perform essential services.

The government said that if people were not going to comply with the restrictions through persuasion, it would have to enforce them by booking people under relevant sections of the law. Delhi Police said people associated with essential services will be issued "curfew passes" and that all border pickets will be sealed with "immediate effect" as the execution of the prohibitory orders in the national capital was "not up to the mark today".

Workers' woes
At the Kapashera border, several workers could be seen crossing into Delhi by foot trying to make their way to railway stations and bus stops to find some means of transport home. Many private vehicles were seen trying to persuade the police to let them cross the border but



Passengers waiting for transport amid curbs imposed by the government at Chaudhary Charan Singh Marg in New Delhi on Monday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

were sent back if they did not have a valid reason.

Arvind Pal, who works at an MNC in Noida, said that after the announcement of the "lockdown", he had not received any message from his office regarding a work-from-home option, so he decided to venture out but was sent back. "Monday was a little chaotic as most offices did not give instructions and many people tried to cross the border, causing traffic jams.

Munish Jain, president of the Aditya Mega City Residents' Welfare Association in Indirapuram, said that social distancing is necessary and they were implementing it in the most efficient way possible, and that people largely followed them.

Various residents' welfare associations in the Capital

tried to strictly implement the shutdown, granting no entry to house helps, drivers and newspaper vendors on the society premises. While common areas like swimming pool, clubs and gym were already shut since the past few weeks to avoid COVID-19 spread, society associations have now locked the children parks along with restrictions on assembly of more than four people.

Munish Jain, president of the Aditya Mega City Residents' Welfare Association in Indirapuram, said that social distancing is necessary and they were implementing it in the most efficient way possible, and that people largely followed them.

MORE REPORTS ON PAGES 3 & 4

Punjab imposes Statewide curfew after COVID-19 cases touch 23

Relaxation only in urgent cases with permission from DCs

VIKAS VASUDEV
CHANDIGARH

As the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Punjab touched 23, with two new cases being reported, the government imposed a Statewide curfew on Monday.

Chief Minister Amarinder Singh announced "full curfew with no relaxation" after reviewing the situation with senior government officials here. "The DCs have been asked to issue orders accordingly. Any person required to be given relaxation will be so allowed specifically for given period & purpose," he said in a tweet.

Capt. Amarinder warned of strict action against any violation of the curfew, which, he said, was imposed "in the larger interest of the State".

In a video message, he said the State government

was forced to take this extreme step after receiving reports that people were moving around normally in towns, mohallas and cities despite the curbs that came into force on Monday morning.

Violation 'unacceptable'
The Chief Minister said the violation of the restrictions by the people was "unacceptable" and it was the responsibility of his government, and his duty as its head, to "save Punjab".

Making it clear that the curfew would continue 24 hours a day, he said only those with urgent needs would be allowed to go out after taking due permission from their respective DCs, whose mobile numbers would be shared with the public.

The State government also

announced a slew of relief measures to support the affected masses as a result of the unprecedented restrictions.

According to an official statement, free food, shelter and medicines will be provided to those in need, for which ₹20 crore have been sanctioned from the CM's relief fund. Officials concerned have been asked to extend all assistance to people in need.

According to the State's health department, two new cases of COVID-19 were reported in Punjab on Monday. One patient is from Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar district and is a family member of a positive case reported last week. The other patient is an 80-year-old woman of Mohali in Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar district. She is also closely linked to a virus-positive patient, it added.

Reckless residents spook Central Delhi colony

Govt. officials paste notices outside four flats for flouting self-isolation directive

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Residents of a colony in Central Delhi were spooked on Monday when government officials turned up with notices, directing the occupants of four flats to remain indoors, given the recent travel history of their family members.

As it turned out, one of the quarantined persons had returned from Nepal and on his return was screened at the airport and advised to approach the authorities concerned if he developed any symptoms of the COVID-19 infection.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

habour endangers the lives of others.

The anxious neighbours approached the person, who confirmed that he had visited Nepal and on his return was screened at the airport and advised to approach the authorities concerned if he developed any symptoms of the COVID-19 infection.

A member of the residents' welfare association said another person had recently visited Australia, while two others worked as air hostesses. "We will request the families to observe self-quarantine, as per the government's directions. If necessary, we will provide them all the help to ensure that they don't go out during the quarantine period," he said.

The development came on a day when the association members stopped the entry of "outsiders" and made arrangements for sanitizers for those entering the gated residential complex. "The residents have been requested to pick up all the deliveries at the entrance gate itself," said the member.

FIR against family
The Delhi police on Monday registered an FIR against a family in Dwarka under sections of Epidemic Diseases Act for violating quarantine rules during COVID-19 outbreak, said a police officer. The police said they received a complaint from residents' welfare association of Dwarka Sector 4. On inspection, no member of the family

was found at the address that was marked as 'home quarantine'. After an extensive search, the family was found staying at a house in Dwarka Sector 10.

One of the members of the family said, "My daughter-in-law works as an air hostess. She landed on March 17 from the U.S. She was asked to be in 'home quarantine'. We are staying in one part of Dwarka while her parents stay in another sector. We had gone to collect her belongings from her parents' house during which some staff arrived and found us absent. They immediately contacted us. We returned and sorted out the matter." An apology was also issued by the family members and they promised not to repeat the mistake.

Air Quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi 124	Gurugram 91		
Ghaziabad 159	Faridabad 130		
Noida 123	Greater Noida 114		
Good 0-50	Satisfactory 51-100	Moderate 101-200	
Poor 201-300	Very Poor 301-400	Severe >400	
Air Quality Index at 4 p.m. yesterday (Average of past 24 hours) [Source: CPCB]			

AAP govt. presents ₹65,000-cr. budget amid virus outbreak

2020-21 budget contains allocation to handle COVID-19 pandemic and recent riots; Opposition calls it 'directionless and a juggling of statistics'

Capital to get 2,485 buses by next fiscal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Capital's transport sector has been allocated ₹5,941 crore in the 2020-21 budget, the second-highest allocation for the coming fiscal, with an aim to fulfil Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's guarantee of providing "the largest and cheapest public transport system" in India, Finance Minister Manish Sisodia said, adding that the government had set a target of bringing the total fleet of State-run buses to 11,000, and laying 500 km of Delhi Metro lines.

After a decade

"After a gap of about 10 years, new buses have been added in Delhi's public transport system...buses with modern CCTV and 'disabled-friendly lift' have been included in the fleet for the first time in the country. New low-floor buses have been inducted for the first time since the Commonwealth Games. Altogether 2,485 new buses - 1,300 DTC and 1,185 cluster buses, including 685 electric buses - will be added to the fleet during 2020-21," Mr. Sisodia added.

As many as 1,880 buses - 444 DTC and 1,436 cluster buses - will be purchased beginning 2021-22. He added that the government will continue providing free travel aboard buses. "I propose an outlay of ₹250 crore for the purchase of buses by DTC and ₹1,100 crore for gap funding of cluster buses...four depots, in Okhla, Harinagar, Vasant Vihar and Hauz Khas. These will probably be the first multilevel depots of their kind in the country," he said.

The government, he said, had approved all six corridors of the metro phase - IV project.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Manish Sisodia presented a ₹65,000-crore budget at the Delhi Assembly here on Monday with continuing focus on education, transport and health sectors. The Opposition BJP, however, termed it "directionless, disappointing and a juggling of statistics".

Mr. Sisodia said the 2020-21 budget contained an allocation of ₹50 crore to confront the ongoing COVID-19 epidemic in the city in addition to the necessary financial arrangements needed for the setting up of a 'Campaign for Communal Harmony' in the wake of the recent communal riots which rippled across north-east Delhi last month.

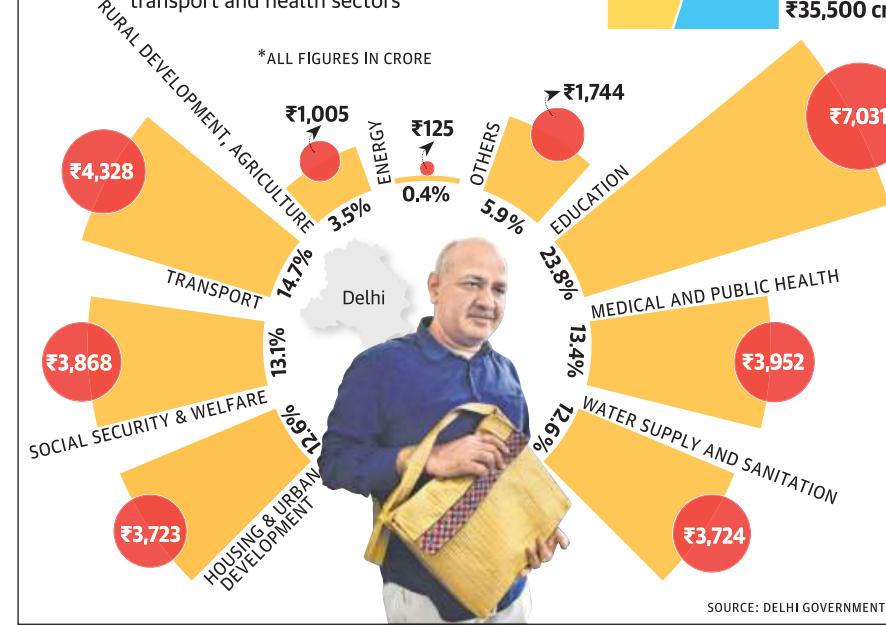
"This is the first budget of the government formed in Delhi for the third time under the leadership of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and I feel privileged that I have the opportunity to present the budget proposal in this House for the sixth consecutive time as the Finance Minister...The citizens of Delhi, under the leadership of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, have expressed their unwavering faith in the 'Kejriwal model of governance' over the last five years," he said.

Mr. Sisodia proposed to spend ₹15,815 crore for the education sector, which is 24.33% of the total budget including, ₹443 crore for education-related schemes and

an amount of ₹7031 crore for the implementation of various programmes, schemes and projects related to the sector.

Big spender

AAP government presents budget with continuing focus on education, transport and health sectors



I feel privileged that I have the opportunity to present the budget proposal in this House for the sixth consecutive time as the Finance Minister...The citizens of Delhi have expressed their unwavering faith in the 'Kejriwal model of governance' over the last five years

MANISH SISODIA
Finance Minister

funding of cluster buses.

While an outlay of ₹1,700 crore was made for development work in unauthorised colonies, ₹400 crore was pledged for the development of rural areas, ₹193 crore was proposed for the improvement of road infrastructure and ₹40 crore was dedicated to promote startups.

Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari alleged the budget was "directionless, disappointing and a juggling of statistics". The people of Delhi, he said, had "high expectations" from the budget, but once again, the Kejriwal government had shown "stepmotherly behaviour" towards them.

"Like last year, this time too, the Delhi government has shown only dreams to the people of Delhi and no new plan has been introduced through this budget...the development of Delhi was never a priority for the Delhi government. New schools, colleges, hospitals, buses have been talked about for the last five years but till date nothing has been done at the ground level," he alleged.

Delhi's per capita income 3 times higher than national average

Capital's contribution to national GDP also increases

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The per capita income of Delhi is estimated to be ₹3,89,143 in 2019-20, which is about three times the national average, which is estimated to be ₹1,34,432 in 2019-20, according to the Economic Survey of Delhi 2019-20 tabled in the Delhi Assembly on Monday.

Also, the contribution of Delhi to the national GDP has increased from 3.97% in 2014-15 to 4.20% in 2019-20 though population of Delhi is only 1.49% of the India's population.

The advance estimate of Gross State Domestic Product [GSDP] of Delhi at current prices during 2019-20 is

likely to attain level of 8,56,112 crore, at a growth of 10.48% over 2018-19," it said.

Revenue surplus

According to the survey, Delhi has maintained its consistent revenue surplus which was ₹6,261 crore during 2018-19 as compared to ₹4,913 crore during 2017-18.

Also, per capita expenditure on health in Delhi has increased from ₹1,996 in the year 2014-15 to ₹3,044 in 2018-19. "South Delhi district has the highest forest cover area of 84.63 sq. km, and the lowest forest cover is in East Delhi of 3.75 sq. km," the survey said.

Also, about 4.65 lakh senior citizens have been pro-

vided monthly financial assistance in 2019-20 (till December 2019) compared to about 4.42 lakh senior citizens in 2018-19.

Financial assistance

Similarly, 93,475 persons have been provided financial assistance under the scheme Financial Assistance to Persons with Special Needs in 2019-20 (till December 2019) compared to 87,196 in 2018-19.

The total number of hospital beds increased from 48,096 in 2014 to 57,709 in 2018, thereby, bed population ratio (beds per 1,000 persons) increased from 2.65 to 2.94 in the same period.

sodia said he proposed a budget provision of ₹7,704 crore which included an amount of ₹3,952 crore for the implementation of various schemes, programmes and projects under the sector which was 55% higher

than the revised estimate of ₹2,551 crore for 2019-20. This also included an immediate provision of ₹3 crore in the current fiscal's revised estimates and ₹50 crore for the coming financial year to confront the COVID-19

Faces flak

AAP had faced flak from the BJP over this point on several occasions, with senior party leaders stressing on this point during the campaign to the assembly elections. With various leaders such as BJP MP Manoj Tiwari attacking the Delhi government for denying benefits of the scheme to the residents of

Delhi. The scheme targets poor households to help meet their health expenses.

Commenting on this, BJP media in-charge Pratyush Kanth said that the Kejriwal government shouldn't have waited for this calamity to strike for implementing the scheme. Mr. Kanth had earlier submitted a petition before the High Court, calling for the implementation of the scheme here, he said.

Apart from this, in the health sector, Finance Minister Manish Sisodia announced that a provision of ₹50 crore was being made to fight spread of COVID-19 pandemic. He also announced an

outlay of ₹365 crore to increase the number of mohalla clinics from 451 currently to up to 1,000. Through upgrading, expansion and construction of new hospitals, the government also plans to help increase the bed capacity at hospitals from 10,000 beds currently to up to 26,000 beds. An outlay of ₹724 crore has been proposed for the same.

In the outcome budget put out by the government, of a total of 743 critical indicators were applied to measure the progress of about 56 schemes under the health department. While only a few 'major indicators' have been specified in the report, it claims that out of these, 77% of the indicators were on track, while 20% were off track and three percent were not applicable.

AAP govt. to deploy environment marshals, build smog tower in CP

Sisodia allocates ₹20 crore to create mass awareness

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

With an aim to reduce air pollution in the city to one-third of the current levels, Finance Minister Manish Sisodia in the budget on Monday announced the deployment of "environment marshals" to aid district administration in enforcing environment laws.

The reduction in air pollution level to one-third was promised by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in the run up to the Delhi Assembly election as part of his 10-point guarantee card.

Mr. Sisodia on Monday also allocated ₹20 crore to create mass awareness on environment and also "Green citizen award" for

people contributing towards environmental protection and preservation.

This comes after Environment Minister Gopal Rai stressed that the fight against air pollution has to be turned into a mass movement to make it a success.

Najafgarh drain The Finance Minister also set aside ₹210 crore toward desilting, deepening of drains, constructing of series of check dams, barrages in 45 km length of Najafgarh drain with an aim to clean the Yamuna.

"We are yet to take a final call on which level official will be selected for environment marshals. They could be of the level from civil de-

lence volunteers," an official told *The Hindu*.

Also, following a Supreme Court order on January 13, the Delhi government is in the process of building a "smog tower" in Connaught Place to clean the air and ₹30 crore was allocated in the budget for it.

"There is a need to carry out intensive campaigns all over Delhi to create awareness and public participation in the environment. I propose ₹20 crore in the budget," Mr. Sisodia said.

Also, in order to achieve the target of planting 2 crore saplings in the next five years, a target has been set to plant 40 lakh saplings by 22 green agencies in the year 2020-21.

He said that the government will be setting up its own education board with an objective to focus on understanding and learning rather scoring marks by rote learning so that they prepare themselves for the possible challenges of the upcoming world.

The government, among other measures, has planned

to convert all the classrooms from Classes IX to XII to hi-tech digital classrooms and build 17 new school buildings at a cost of ₹75 crore in 2020-21. It has also proposed to add five more schools of excellence in each zone, with an emphasis on excellence in any one particular subject, such as Science and Technol-

ogy or Commerce or Arts or in the field of sports or vocational courses.

Number of initiatives He also proposed a number of initiatives on skill and entrepreneurship development programme, spoken English competencies, patriotic course, with an aim

for overall development of personality of students to become a good citizen.

Mr. Sisodia announced that a school health scheme will be launched from next year and students will be given a multi-purpose identity card containing detailed health records for which ₹22 crore is proposed. Mr. Sisodia said that the government is mulling joining the PISA Test in 2024. Elaborating on the test, Mr. Sisodia said "This process assesses how well the level of education received by children up to the age of 15 in a country or State meets international standards and needs. About 80 developed and highly developed countries of the world participate in this competition."

The government also proposed a new law which will

ensure "quality early childhood education", overall development of children in age group of three to six.

Speaking about higher education, Mr. Sisodia said, "There is a provision of ₹20 crore in this budget to start a sports university and ₹15 crore to start Delhi Skill and Entrepreneurship University. Along with this, there is a proposal of starting Delhi Teachers Education University."

He added that the construction of the building at the eastern campus of Guru Govind Singh Indraprastha University has been completed to a great extent and 1,500 additional students can be admitted to this campus. The construction of Ambedkar University campuses in Dhirpur and Rohini is also likely to start, he added.

Coming fiscal, Capital to get improved roads, wider bridges and new flyovers

Over 1.32 lakh CCTV cameras have already been installed as promised by the government, says Finance Minister Manish Sisodia

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

New flyovers, wider bridges and improved roads are on the anvil for the coming fiscal, Finance Minister Manish Sisodia said here on Monday. He also said that the Delhi government had delivered on its promise of installing CCTV cameras across the city.

A three-lane flyover from the Munirka petrol pump to the Central base Post Office which was part of corridor improvement work on the Outer Ring Road from IIT to

NH 8 had been completed, he said. The second part of the project, a two-lane underpass at the junction of Inner Ring Road, Benito Juarez Marg and San Martin Marg would be completed by June-end, he added.

Increase in traffic To address what he termed was "a steady increase" in traffic on the roads, for which there was a need to improve road infrastructure, he said the "improvement of road infrastructure" scheme with an outlay of ₹193 crore

had been proposed. "As I announced in the last budget, the work of widening of bridges on NH-10 at Rampura, Tri Nagar-Inderlok and Karampura has been started. About 20% work has been completed and entire project will be completed in 2020-21," he said.

"I had announced in my last budget speech to install 1.4 lakh CCTV cameras - 2,000 cameras per Assembly Constituency - I am happy to inform that about 1.32 lakh CCTV cameras have already been installed and

now our government has increased the total number of cameras from 1.4 lakh to 2.8 lakh CCTV cameras for RWAs and market associations," he said.

Work related to phase-II, in relation to an additional 1.40 lakh CCTV cameras, he said, had also been started and would be completed in 2020-21 for which he proposed an outlay of ₹250 crore in addition to ₹150 crore provided in the revised estimates of 2019-20.

The Delhi government, he said, will also replace all the street lights on Public Works Department roads with energy efficient LED lights which would reduce the running cost of electricity bills for street lights from ₹6 crore per month to ₹3 crore per month.

Wi-Fi facility "This project's cost shall be ₹100 crore and the work will be taken up in the year 2020-21...Our government is committed to provide the facility of free use of Wi-Fi to the general public by installing about 11,000 Wi-Fi hotspots.

The work has been started and about 2,000 Wi-Fi hotspots have been installed," he said. "Construction of three new projects: a slip road bridge on Kondli Bridge and additional bridge over Ghazipur drain to widen the road from Hindon Canal to Dharmanashila and work to the new Ashok Nagar Metro Station will be started during the year 2020-21. All three projects will save people's valuable time and will also save their energy and money," he said.

A total of ₹193 crore has been proposed under the head of 'Improvement of road infrastructure'. ■FILE PHOTO



AN-NDNE

Gurdwara body offers help to govt.

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) on Monday wrote to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal offering the "saraai" (inn) at Gurdwara Majnu Ka Tilla Sahib for setting up of isolation wards and to be used as quarantine facilities for the treatment of those affected by COVID-19.

The DSGMC also said that "langar" will be provided by the gurdwaras in the Capital to the needy and those affected by the epidemic.

In the letter to the CM, DSGMC president Manjinder Singh Sirsa said, "We offer to provide DSGMC saraai of Gurdwara Majnu Ka Tilla Sahib as quarantine facility and provision of langar for the poor and needy people when and where it is required in Delhi." "We have made the offer to the Delhi government and whoever needs to be quarantined can be kept there. In order to ensure that the poor families are not left without food due to lack of work, we are ready to distribute langar," Mr. Sirsa added.

Follow directions of AAP govt. or face strict action, warns Kejriwal

'Govt. does not wish to make lives of people difficult but crisis must be tackled'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Strict action will be taken against those violating the Delhi government's directions to adhere to a lockdown, which is aimed at containing the spread of COVID-19 epidemic, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said here on Monday.

Citing Italy's example in this regard, the Chief Minister stressed on the need for strict implementation of the lockdown even as he urged landlords to relax payment deadlines for tenants and appealed to people to help each other and try to ensure no one around them was forced to sleep hungry.

"The Delhi government has ordered a lockdown in Delhi from 6 a.m. today [Monday] till March 31 midnight, keeping in mind the outbreak of COVID-19. Today, a majority of people were following the rules and some violated them. It is important to understand the situation. The Delhi government does not wish to make the lives of people difficult but we are doing this to tack-



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal appealed to people to help each other. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

le the crisis," he said.

"We have decided to impose the lockdown for the welfare of the residents of Delhi... The situation of first world countries, like Italy and America is also alarming. We are fortunate that we got enough time to prepare in advance... The situation in Delhi is under control, but this is not the time to congratulate ourselves but follow the restrictions because if we do not take action today and the disease spreads to a large number of people then it is going to be tough," he said.

From Tuesday, he said, if anybody was found violating the lockdown orders, the government would be forced to take strict action.

The restrictions put in place, however, were causing a financial burden on the poor and daily-wage labourers and steps had been taken to alleviate the same, he said. These, Mr. Kejriwal said, included the provision of 7.5 kg free ration to 72 lakh beneficiaries for one month and doubling pension under the widow pension scheme for 2.5 lakh beneficiaries, the old-age pension scheme for

COVID-19

5 lakh beneficiaries and the disability pension scheme for 1 lakh beneficiaries.

"The beneficiaries will get the pension amount for March and April, by April 7. We hope that all these measures will bring a little relief to these people and their families. In addition to this, we are also arranging for free lunch and dinner in 220 night shelters," he said.

"Many people have asked me how they can help and contribute to combating this pandemic... I want people who are working from home to get full salary... I also want to tell the landlords that if the tenants say they are unable to pay the rent, then please do not force them," he said.

Citing complaints from people who work in essential services, he said, the government had decided to allow 50% of the total State-run buses to ply on Tuesday instead of just 25% as had been decided for Monday.

People associated with essential services to get curfew passes

'Execution of prohibitory orders not up to the mark on Monday'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police on Monday said people associated with essential services will be issued curfew passes and that all border pickets will be sealed with "immediate effect" as the execution of the prohibitory orders in the national capital was "not up to the mark today".

Those private organisations which are located outside the national capital, in the neighbouring districts, may similarly seek curfew passes for the employees who commute from Delhi to those districts from the office of DCP of South-West, South-East, Shahdara, East, Outer-North or Outer districts of the Delhi Police.

Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code bans assembly of four or more people in one place.

An order issued by the Delhi Police Commissioner S.N. Srivastava stated that all border pickets be sealed with "immediate effect". The essential goods be permitted without any hindrance, it said.

According to the order, for people employed in private organisations, who are engaged in essential ser-

vices in the city, the respective organisations shall seek curfew passes from the office of Deputy Commissioner of Police of the area where the office is located.

Additional DCP of the district concerned will issue the passes after assessing if the requirements are genuine.

The police said that strict legal action would be taken against those violating the prohibitory orders.

"Strict checking shall be done at the border pickets and internal pickets within the city in every police station area to ensure that no gathering or movement takes place in contravention of the prohibitory orders," the order said.

To ensure compliance of the prohibitory order, the police said, mobile patrolling by four-wheelers and motorcycles will be done. Announcements will be made in the areas seeking cooperation of people and informing them about legal actions that will be taken against those found to be violating the law.

The traffic police, police control rooms, Station House Officers and their supervisory officers shall move around to inspect the arrangement and ensure compliance of the order, the police said, adding that local officers will maintain close liaison with the neighbouring districts of adjoining States.

Delhi police see steep spike in PCR calls

Most callers had questions regarding restriction of services in the Capital

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police, on the first day of shutdown of non-essential services in the city on Monday, received more PCR calls than usual, said a senior police officer.

The officer said that on a normal day, they receive around 5,000 actionable PCR calls, but on Monday they received around 6,000 such calls. Most of the calls they received on Monday were from people asking questions regarding the shutdown or reporting unavailability of public transport.

"We received most of the calls from IGI Airport area where domestic passengers witnessed mobility issues after coming out of the airport premises. Cabs and buses

were unavailable. The passengers had to call their relatives or friends to pick them up from the airport," said the officer.

A senior police officer said he received calls from people who asked questions regarding the availability of public transport at the airport here and that he spoke to officials at the airport to arrange shuttle services to the nearest common point, but it did not work out.

Gopal Prakash, who was travelling from Kolkata to Delhi said he had to reach Noida. He said he tried to speak to a private cab operator, but that the latter turned him down.

Another passenger, Kanika Singh, said, "At least the airport authorities should have arranged some transport to

the nearest point from where I could get a cab or something else to reach my house in Kirti Nagar. They should have kept the Airport Express metro services open," said Ms. Kanika.

The government has announced restriction of non-essential services from 6 a.m. on Monday till March 31 midnight to contain the spread of COVID-19. The Delhi police spread awareness about COVID-19 and urged people across the Capital to stay at home, through public announcement systems and social media platforms. They requested people not to step out of their houses unless it is necessary.

The policemen have been asking shopkeepers to ensure that only one customer at a

time makes purchase while others maintain social distance and wait in a queue. The shopkeepers have also been asked to keep washing their hands frequently.

The Delhi police have initiated a strong vigil to keep people safe by ensuring the compliance of the directions of the government and Commissioner of Police, said Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Narendra Bundela. "Scores of people stayed at home, adhering to guidelines issued to curb the spread of COVID-19," he said.

Since the bordering areas have been sealed as part of the lockdown, entry of vehicles to the national capital have been restricted unless its an emergency or if they fall under essential services.

No new case of COVID-19 in Delhi on Monday

Total number of cases reported so far stands at 30 with 23 active cases

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

There was no new case of COVID-19 in Delhi on Monday and the total number of cases so far stood at 30 in the Capital, with 23 active cases.

Meanwhile, a person, who was tested positive for COVID-19 on Sunday, was identified as a 49-year-old doctor from Dilshad Garden, who had attended an infected person who came to him for treatment. He has been admitted at GTB Hospital and his family members have been home-quarantined.

Also, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) on Monday said that it will shut its OPD services from Tuesday till further orders.



Women seen wearing masks in the Capital. ■ FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

the city.

Screening

Till date, 20,956 passengers from COVID-19-affected countries have been screened at the Delhi airport and placed under surveillance. On Monday, 1,302 passengers from affected countries were screened.

"It has now been decided that all OPD services [includ-

ing speciality services] interalia alia new as well as all follow-up patient's registration in AIIMS Hospital and all centres as all remain closed w.e.f 24.03.2020 [Tuesday] till further orders," an order issued by AIIMS stated.

An order issued by the H&FW Department read, "It has come to notice that officers/officials working in Delhi govt. hospitals/institutions are unable to reach their place of duty due to lockdown of public transport due to COVID-19. All MSS/MDS/HoDs/Dean are hereby directed to hire private vehicles for officials to reach their place of duty in hospitals or offices as many were unable to do so due to the lockdown."

A total of 1,067 passengers are under quarantine at government-run facilities in

the city.

70% more funds for water supply

Budget proposes ₹3,723 cr. for unauthorised colonies

'Works to be done by end of next fiscal'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI



The government has notified the 'Mukhyamantri Awas Yojna' under which the DUSIB will take up in situ rehabilitation of slum dwellers "by providing pucca houses as promised by the government

MANISH SISODIA
Finance Minister

of the safety and security of people in every nook and corner" of the city.

The government will also provide "neat and clean environment" in slums and JJ clusters by providing street lights to remove dark spots and augment the existing street lights.

In the outcome budget presented, the Delhi government said that ₹902 crore had been allocated "exclusively for roads, repairing, widening of drains and construction of new drains" in unauthorised colonies.

The DSIIDC has completed improvement work in 59 colonies at a cost of ₹279 crore and has already awarded work for 116 colonies at a total cost of ₹462 crore," it said.

The Deputy Chief Minister also announced allocation of ₹100 crore to the "CM Mohalla Suraksha Yojana" scheme in a bid to "take care

Private labs in city could start COVID-19 testing this week

Several diagnostic laboratories waiting for licences, registration numbers from govt. to carry out tests

SIDHARTH RAVI
NEW DELHI

Private diagnostics laboratories here may be ready to conduct tests for COVID-19 in under a week, heads of some laboratories said on Monday.

Diagnostic laboratories, accredited with the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) and with real-time polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) capabilities would be allowed to carry out such tests said, Ravi Gaur, CEO of Oncquest laboratories in Safdarjung, one such laboratory in Delhi.

To this end, Dr. Gaur said, his laboratory, just as several others was waiting to receive a licence or registration



A medical staff checking a patient with a thermal screening device in New Delhi. ■ FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

number for testing, from the government. The license number is crucial said, Dr. Arjun Dang, of Dang labs, another facility which is said to have the capacity to test for COVID-19. The number will be a proof of authenticity of any test report put out by the laboratory.

However, after the labs re-

ceive the licences, they are required to follow some steps till the testing can be started. Among these, include ICMR-NIV, validating which, test kits can be used to carry out the test. While only two such test kits were initially being allowed, which had been approved by the US FDA or by the EU CE, use of more test kits is also being validated, doctors said.

Once these kits are approved by the ICMR, they will be procured by laboratories depending on their requirement and then have to go through another set of "validation tests", they said. This would involve procuring a positive control sample of the virus, to use on the test kits to make sure that

they work, said Dr. Dang. Procuring of such a sample would have to be done either through government hospitals or via vendors, he added. These relate to use of protective gear, disposal, sample collection and related activities. At least these two laboratories, doctors said, samples would only be collected at home or be given from hospitals.

While many believe there was a need to start the conduction of tests soon, Dr. Dang said that they would begin operations only when they were absolutely sure of safety precautions and quality of the tests. Any sort of lack in these terms could mean reports turning out as false negatives or false positives, which could put more people at risk, he said.

In the meantime, labora-

tories are undertaking training and re-training of their staff to ensure all safety precautions are undertaken. These relate to use of protective gear, disposal, sample collection and related activities. At least these two laboratories, doctors said, samples would only be collected at home or be given from hospitals.

While many believe there was a need to start the conduction of tests soon, Dr. Dang said that they would begin operations only when they were absolutely sure of safety precautions and quality of the tests. Any sort of lack in these terms could mean reports turning out as false negatives or false positives, which could put more people at risk, he said.

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Municipal corporations ask CM to release arrears of staff

They seek provisions to help them fight COVID-19 pandemic; 'cleaning staff mulling going on strike'

SIDHARTH RAVI
JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

The issue of arrears due to civic body employees - especially safai karamcharis - who are yet to receive some component of their salary or the other - came to the fore here on Monday with leaders of the three municipal corporations writing to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal urging him to release funds due to the civic bodies under various heads as well as to make special provisions to help fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Not only arrears of salaries, safai karamcharis are also, understandably, demanding that the respective civic bodies where they are employed provide them with protective gear so they don't risk falling prey to Coronavi-

rus infection," said a party source. The BJP is in power at each of the three civic bodies in Delhi.

"Given their budgetary constraints, the civic bodies are not in a position to do so. It is imperative that the Delhi government release the funds due to the three civic bodies so provisions can be made in this regard failing which, the representatives of safai karamcharis have said they may strike work," the source also said. Welcoming an increase in budget allocation to the three civic bodies "from ₹6,380 crore in 2019-

20 to ₹6,828 crore for the financial year 2020-21", leader of the three civic bodies in Delhi.

"We are in urgent requirement of funds in sanitation, public health and medical care sectors where all the funds available have been exhausted and are diverting funds wherever available," wrote EDMC Standing Committee chairperson, Sandeep Kapoor. Standing committee chairperson of the North Delhi Municipal Corporation, Jai Prakash, called for the release of an additional ₹1,000 crore over and above to meet the current crisis.

lease of an additional ₹905 crore to help bring the city back to normalcy, she wrote.

"We are in urgent requirement of funds in sanitation, public health and medical care sectors where all the funds available have been exhausted and are diverting funds wherever available," wrote EDMC Standing Committee chairperson, Sandeep Kapoor. Standing committee chairperson of the North Delhi Municipal Corporation, Jai Prakash, called for the release of an additional ₹1,000 crore over and above to meet the current crisis.

IN BRIEF

Daughter of retired judge ends life

NEW DELHI
A 33-year-old woman, daughter of a retired judge, was found dead at her residence in east Delhi's IP Extension on Saturday, police said. A senior police officer said that an information was received around 1.30 p.m. regarding a woman lying dead at her residence. When the police reached the spot, they were informed that she has taken her life. "She was under depression and was unemployed for the last one year, it was informed," the officer said. Police have initiated inquest proceedings and further probe is on.

NGT adjourns pending cases over COVID-19 outbreak

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Monday adjourned all pending cases in view of the COVID-19 epidemic.

A circular issued by the green panel said, "As per the competent authority, in the wake of recent outbreak of Coronavirus disease and flu, all concerned are intimated that all pending matters till March 31 stand adjourned."

According to the circular issued, pending cases which were listed for hearing between March 23 and 25, have been deferred to July 13 and those listed for March 26 and 27, postponed to July 14.

Man calls DU student 'coronavirus', spits on face

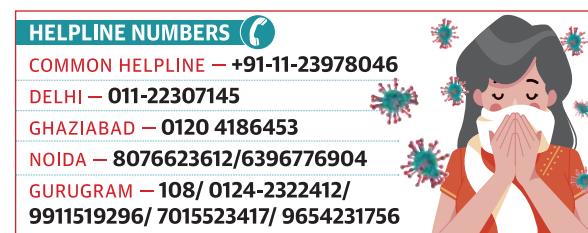
People from Northeast in the city are coping racial abuses in the wake of the pandemic

HEMAMI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

With the COVID-19 cases escalating, people from Northeastern States in the city are getting racially taunted. At least two women from Manipur have registered complaints in the last couple of days.

On Sunday night, a 26-year-old MPhil Scholar from the University of Delhi, was allegedly spat on by a man on his scooter, who called her "Coronavirus" before fleeing in a "dark alley" near Baccha Park in Mukherjee Nagar area. The woman, from Manipur, said that she and her friend were returning to their paying guest accommodation after buying vegetables when the incident happened.

"One man, aged around 50 years, slowed down his scooter and spat paan on my face and called us 'Coronavirus' and drove away," she said.



As soon they reached their accommodation, they called the police and lodged a complaint. "This is not the only incident we have faced. We have been called names and now they are spitting on us. We are not the ones who brought the virus to Delhi. We came here to study and with a hope of a better future. We are also Indians. Why should we be discriminated in our own land?" she asked.

The police have registered a First Information Report. Deputy Commissioner of Police (North West) Vijayanta Arya said that a case under section 509 (word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman) of the IPC has been registered and CCTV footage is being scanned to identify the man on scooter.

Online abuse
In another incident, a 28-year-old political activist, Angellica Aribam from Manipur, was racially attacked online. She has lodged a complaint with Delhi Police Cyber Cell and the Northeast Cell Nodal Officer via email. Ms. Aribam told *The Hindu*

that she had urged a Minister to take steps regarding COVID-19 on Twitter, after which she was hurled with racial slurs, besides coping threats on Facebook.

"The trolling turned racist and a graphic image was posted by a user. That's when I decided that I'll not take this. I also called the Northeast helpline and they offered to send a police official but I thought it wasn't required," she said.

Subsequently, she wrote to Delhi Police, and on Monday afternoon received a call from Cyber Crime Unit, who promised legal action.

Ms. Aribam said that people from the Northeast have been facing racism regularly. "The reason is that we don't have an anti-racism or discrimination law. People think they can comment and get away with it. No leader talks about it. There is a lack

of political will," she said.

General Secretary of Manipur Students Association Thokchom Veewon said that because of COVID-19 outbreak, a lot of students have left for their hometown.

"Because of the features of the people from Northeast, they are being ridiculed as 'Coronavirus'. They are being teased by calling 'corona' at sight, treated differently at shops, convenience stores, etc. for which videos have been shared on social media. This is a total act of blatant ignorance and racial discrimination," he said.

He also said that a lot of students have shared similar experiences.

Dr. Alana Golmei, General Secretary of Northeast Support Centre, said she was racially attacked and called 'Coronavirus' when she was roaming with a friend recently.

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Dr. Alana Golmei, General Secretary of Northeast Support Centre, said she was racially attacked and called 'Coronavirus' when she was roaming with a friend recently.

'Unhappy with facilities, want to shift to hotel'

Foreign returnees express resentment

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

More than 200 people sent to SGT Hospital here on Sunday for mandatory two-week quarantine after they returned from affected foreign countries have expressed resentment over the facilities at the centre. The district administration said they could be shifted to a hotel for paid quarantine soon.

Deputy Medical Superintendent, SGT Hospital, Umesh Kumar Lamba told *The Hindu* that 213 people, including 85 women, were sent to hospital on Sunday after screening at the international airport for mandatory two-week quarantine, but they have demanded to be shifted to a hotel.

Samples taken
The Deputy Medical Superintendent said none of them had fever, but still the samples of three persons were taken for examination as a precautionary measure. He said that four more samples might be taken tomorrow (Tuesday).

He said the hospital had around 300 beds and the wards were hygienic, but still they wanted to be shifted outside for more comfort.

Mr. Lamba said the hospital authorities were in talks with the district adminis-

BJP urges CM to 'work jointly' in virus fight

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The BJP has written to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal urging him to "work jointly" with its grassroots cadre in relation to efforts to contain the ongoing Coronavirus epidemic in the Capital.

The BJP was, according to Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Legislative Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri and Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari, in support of the efforts being made by the Delhi government in line with confronting the health crisis and was in favour of putting its workers at its disposal.

"As the entire country is passing through a very tough phase, all institutions, governments, and political parties need to work jointly to fight against this deadly disease... As the head of Delhi BJP and Delhi Assembly LOP, we want to assure you that in this hour of health crisis, our party is with Delhi Government," the letter stated.

For urgent matters in district courts, the HC directive said that the respective district and sessions judges shall prepare a roster of judicial officers who will hear them. The judicial

All court work in Capital suspended till April 4: HC

Urgent matters via videoconferencing

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court issued a circular on Monday declaring that all courts in the Capital, including the High Court and district courts, will suspend their operations till April 4 in view of the COVID-19 threat.

The decision, the High Court said, was taken considering the prevalent situation, particularly the extensive curbs declared by Delhi government till March 31, and the request of the Bar associations for complete closure of the courts.

In case of "extremely urgent" matters which come up before the High Court, the hearing will take place through videoconferencing.

For urgent matters in district courts, the HC directive said that the respective district and sessions judges shall prepare a roster of judicial officers who will hear them. The judicial



officers can be contacted on telephone by the advocate or the party.

The cases which were already listed for hearing till April 4 have been adjourned to subsequent dates and the information will be updated on the official websites.

The Delhi Judicial Academy will also suspend all its training programmes till April 4. "All courtrooms and other parts of the complex [including lawyers' chambers] of the High Court and courts subordinate thereto would remain closed," the High Court directive reads.

HC orders AAP govt. to set up health facility at Idgah camp

Directions came after petitions seek deployment of doctors

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday ordered the AAP government to set up health facility at the Idgah in Old Mustafabad, which houses over 600 riot victims, particularly in light of the Corona-virus pandemic.

A Bench of Justice Hima Kohli and Justice Subramonium Prasad said that health facility equipped with doctors, public health officials, equipment etc. for emergency medication must be set up at the camp site within 48 hours.



The relief camp set up for riot-hit families at Idgah in Mustafabad. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

for screening and testing and treating the residents of the camp in light of the pandemic.

The petitioners submitted that they and their families have been housed in the camp since March 2 after riots broke out in north-east Delhi. They submitted that the camp currently has 600 victims.

Poor conditions
They contended that they have been compelled to move the High Court in view of the poor health and sanitation conditions prevailing in the camp. This, the petitioners said, is likely to result in the spread of Coronavirus disease, besides other communicable diseases, fungal infections and adversely impact the health of the residents.

Earlier, the East Delhi Municipal Corporation, under whose jurisdiction the area falls, had assured the High Court that it would take steps for maintenance and upkeep of cleanliness and sanitation in the camp. The corporation had also said that provisions of a fire engine, ambulance and mobile toilets at the camp will be provided.

Decided to decongest jails to contain virus, govt. tells HC

Convicts to be given emergency parole, special furlough options

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The AAP government told the Delhi High Court on Monday that it has decided to decongest Capital's prisons by providing convicts with the options of emergency parole and special furlough to contain the spread of COVID-19 among inmates.

3,000 prisoners likely to be released: officer

NEW DELHI
Tihar jail authorities are likely to release on parole or furlough around 3,000 prisoners in an attempt to avoid overcrowding in jails during the COVID-19 outbreak, a senior officer said on Monday. The jail authorities will try to release around 1,500 convicts and 1,500 undertrial prisoners over the next four days, the officer said.

said.

The government's submission came while responding to a plea moved by two lawyers seeking to bring down the occupancy

COVID-19

rate in the prisons in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The petitioners submitted that prisoners who can be released on furlough, parole and emergency parole may be released at the earliest.

"However, the mechanism in respect of the same is yet to be formalised by the authorities concerned."

The government's submission came while responding to a plea moved by two lawyers seeking to bring down the occupancy

separate petition

A separate petition on the issue has also been moved before the High Court seek-

ing direction to the Delhi government and prison authorities to immediately provide masks and hand sanitisers to all the inmates in Tihar jail and other jails of Delhi.

The petition filed by advocate Vikas Padura has also sought directions to spray disinfectants or quarantine the jail premises. Mr. Padura also sought to set up isolation wards in the jail premises where the infected inmate or inmate having symptoms can be lodged safely.

It has urged the court to give directions so that the spread of Coronavirus disease can be contained as much as possible in the jails across India.

"As per the data available, Tihar jail has a capacity of 5,200 inmates, but more than 12,100 inmates are currently lodged in the jail; which clearly shows that the Tihar jail is excessively overcrowded and functioning beyond its capacity," the petition said.

"The same is the situation with most of the jails in India," Mr. Padura added.

The petition is likely to be heard this week.

Restaurant association asks for financial relief

It told members to shut shop till March 31

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The National Restaurant Association of India, which sent out an advisory to all restaurants to shutdown operations till March 31 due to the Coronavirus pandemic, appealed to the Finance Ministry on Monday for financial relief so that the industry may ease its pressure.

Some of the demands made are deferment of all statutory dues at the Central and State level, moratorium on bank loans, restoration of input tax credit on GST for the sector and a general invocation of force majeure clause in view of the global pandemic.

"We are staring at unmeasurable losses, prospect of several businesses closing down and most importantly, a scary spectre of job loss to millions in the sector employing more than seven million people," the NRAI president said.

During investigation, the accused, Bablu confessed that he was nursing a grudge against Manoj over some personal issue. On Friday, he, along with Rajan, had alcohol at Manoj's shanty. Later, a heated argument broke out between them during which Bablu and Rajan thrashed Manoj and strangled him, a senior police official said.

Three people have been arrested for killing a man and dumping his body in a sewer in Shahdara's Anand Vihar, police said on Monday.

The accused – Bablu Kumar (26), Rajan (22) and Baiju (41) – are all residents of JJ camp in Anand Vihar, police said.

The body of Manoj (35), a labourer, was recovered from a sewer near JJ camp in Anand Vihar on Friday, police said.

Later, with the help of Baiju, they dumped his body in a sewer, he said.

Timings

DELHI
TUESDAY, MAR. 24
RISE 06:20 SET 18:35
RISE 06:32 SET 18:36
WEDNESDAY, MAR. 25
RISE 06:19 SET 18:36
RISE 07:02 SET 19:28
THURSDAY, MAR. 26
RISE 06:18 SET 18:36
RISE 07:32 SET 20:19

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

Delhi Palam Today
28°C A cloudy and comfortable day lies ahead. There are chances of rain and thunder-shower activities.

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

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THE HINDU
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A long dreary march through Ghaziabad on Day One of curbs

Without transport, hundreds of workers from Delhi walk to their destinations

ANUJ KUMAR

GHAZIABAD
On the first day of lockdown, hundreds of workers from Delhi could be seen crossing Ghaziabad on foot to the neighbouring towns of western Uttar Pradesh.

Jagdish, a resident of Dauala near Meerut, who works at a 'Shikanji' stall near Sarai Kale Khan was walking down the Mohan Nagar flyover on foot, along with his two colleagues. "We started at 4 a.m. from Sarai Kale Khan after the owner told us that he would not be able to provide us any money or food during the lockdown," he said. Many of them were seen pleading for a lift from the few private vehicles that were on road.

"This is sad. Unfortunately, we could not provide any dedicated vehicle to such people as there was no prior information from the Delhi ad-



Workers returning home along the Delhi-Meerut Expressway in Ghaziabad on Monday. • AFP

ministration," said Neeraj Kumar Jadaun, Superintendent of Police (Rural), who saw similar movement in the Masuri area of Ghaziabad. "Once they cross into Hapur, they would get some conveyance. I hope such movement will not be seen tomorrow," he said.

Meanwhile, 70 people were booked and 20 vehicles were challaned in Ghaziabad

for violating prohibitory orders on Monday. "They have been booked under Section 188 of the IPC. We have been lenient and only those who were adamant about moving in or out of the district without any valid reason have been booked," said Mr. Jadaun.

Perhaps, he said, people were not prepared for a lockdown after the 'janata cur-

'few'. "Many of them were trying to leave the city to spend some time outside. Some people made all sorts of excuses without any proof to show," he said. The officer said a factory was also found operating in the Loni area. "Action is being taken against the owner," he said.

Business sense'

There were flashes of hope and ingenuity as well. Firoz, a salesperson of a Unani medicine shop in Meerut, was seen selling three-layered masks at government rate outside the Sahibabad Mandi, which opened on Monday. "It is good for humanity as well as makes business sense," said Firoz, surrounded by hawkers who sell vegetables in residential colonies. "We better buy one, else we would not be allowed inside," said one of them in a hushed tone.

COVID-19 cases climb to 33 in U.P.

Positive cases in 10 of 75 districts

OMAR RASHID

LUCKNOW

The number of COVID-19 positive cases in Uttar Pradesh climbed to 33 on Monday with four fresh cases from Ghaziabad, Pilibhit, Jaunpur and Kanpur.



A deserted market in Lucknow on Monday. • PTI

Eleven patients, with seven in Agra, two in Ghaziabad and one each in Noida and Lucknow, have been declared recovered and discharged, the health department said.

The State has also started testing for COVID-19 at three more hospitals — SGPGI, Lucknow, LLRM Medical College, Meerut and Command Hospital, Lucknow. Confirmatory testing has been started at BHU, Varanasi, and AMU, Aligarh, the government said.

Anti-CAA protests suspended

OMAR RASHID

LUCKNOW

The women holding a dharna against CAA-NPR-NRC at the foot of the Hussainabad Clock Tower in Lucknow since January 17 on Monday suspended their protest due to the lockdown in the city over COVID-19.

"We will get back to our protest at the same spot when the government restrictions over COVID-19 are over," said the women in a memorandum to the Commissioner of Police, Lucknow.

Similarly, the protest against CAA in Deoband's Idgah ground has also been suspended after an appeal by Maulana Arshad Madani, president of Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind, and the district administration of Saharanpur. The women submitted a memorandum to the SDM and SP. They left their bangles and burqas inside the tent as symbols of protest.

All of Haryana brought under restrictions

Chief Minister Manohar Lal announces several relief measures for the poor

ASHOK KUMAR

GURUGRAM

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal on Monday announced extension of the lockdown to the remaining 15 districts of the State. The decision came less than 24 hours after seven districts, including Gurugram, were locked down till March 31 allowing only the essential services including grocery, pharmacy, telephone and postal services.

Mr. Lal also announced a slew of relief measures for financial assistance to the Below Poverty Line families, daily-wagers and the construction workers.

Holding a digital press conference, Mr. Lal said the government had decided to extend the lockdown to the remaining 15 districts of the State from Tuesday morning as a "precautionary measure" in view of the situation emerging out of the spread of COVID-19. He said all public



Police detaining a man for violating prohibitory orders in Faridabad on Monday. • PTI

transport facilities would remain suspended during this period and shops, factories and commercial establishments shut down. However, the essential services will be allowed to operate.

The government has already invoked Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code across the State to prevent mass gatherings.

To mitigate the financial impact of the lockdown on the poor, Mr. Lal announced

He said the construction

workers registered with the Haryana Board of Construction Workers would be provided a sum of ₹4,500 per month with weekly payments beginning from March 30.

No retrenchments'

He said all health workers and frontline workers involved in combating the pandemic would be provided accident insurance (ex-gratia) of ₹10 lakh. All industries and commercial establishments are advised not to retrench any employee for their absence during the period of lockdown. All positive COVID-19 patients, if requiring hospitalisation, would be given the benefit of free hospitalisation, irrespective of whether the treatment is in a private or government hospital.

Mr. Lal also announced setting up of "Haryana COVID Relief Fund" making an appeal to everyone to contribute generously.

that free ration would be distributed to the Below Poverty Line families for the month of April as per the entitlement and food grains supplied to the government schools students under mid-day meal scheme. Cash transfers of ₹34.40 and ₹200.30 per head will be made to the accounts of the students for the primary and the senior levels respectively under the scheme.

He said the construction

that free ration would be distributed to the Below Poverty Line families for the month of April as per the entitlement and food grains supplied to the government schools students under mid-day meal scheme. Cash transfers of ₹34.40 and ₹200.30 per head will be made to the accounts of the students for the primary and the senior levels respectively under the scheme.

When the administration came across the suspect, a student who had returned from London, the person was asked to go into quarantine, he added. "The sample was taken then, and the result turned out to be positive today. The person has been admitted to a hospital in Jabalpur, marking the disease's foray into the State.

found had been sanitised, and the parents had been asked to go into quarantine too.

On March 20, three of a family who returned from Dubai and another person who returned from Germany tested positive in Jabalpur, marking the disease's foray into the State.

A government statement said that all inter-State and intra-State movement of public and private transports have been prohibited. "There would also be a total ban on movement trains and aircraft," it added.

Earlier, there was a ban on the assembly of 20 or more people. Those found violating the order will be booked under Section 188 (disobedience of order) of Indian Penal Code.

Bhopal placed under lockdown

City records its first COVID-19 case, M.P. count goes up to 5



People suffering from cough and cold getting themselves checked for COVID-19 in Bhopal on Monday. • PTI

A person tested positive for the novel coronavirus in Bhopal on Sunday, and was asked to go into quarantine, said the District Collector. With this the number of positive cases in Madhya Pradesh have ticked at five.

Meanwhile, after Chhindwara, both Bhopal and Mandsaur districts have declared complete lockdowns, barring individuals from stepping out, but allowing essential services like hospitals, pharmacies and grocery shops to remain open.

'No need to panic'

"No one needs to panic. We have followed the protocols prescribed," said Tarun Kumar Pithode, Bhopal District Collector.

When the administration came across the suspect, a student who had returned from London, the person was asked to go into quarantine, he added. "The sample was taken then, and the result turned out to be positive today. The person has been admitted to a hospital in Jabalpur, marking the disease's foray into the State.

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Each district was asked to prepare quarantine beds, while the highest number of 10,000 beds will be ar-

AMU to buy 1 more COVID-19 test machine

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GHAZIABAD

Aligarh Muslim University Vice-Chancellor Professor Tariq Mansoor has announced to purchase another COVID-19 test machine worth ₹35 lakhs. The decision was taken to ensure the speedy diagnosis of the virus.

Meanwhile, in line with the Government of India directives, the Vice-Chancellor has appealed to all the university employees and students to follow the lockdown strictly, and only employees involved in the essential services are being called for duty. "Only 4,500 students out of 13,000 are still in the residential halls," an official spokesperson said.

Rajasthan sets mega quarantine plan

1 lakh beds to be prepared in hospitals, houses and hostels

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

JAIPUR

In a major step to deal with the outbreak of COVID-19, the Rajasthan government on Monday decided to prepare 1 lakh quarantine beds where the COVID-19 positive patients could be shifted in an emergency situation. The beds will be situated in the hotels, hospitals, houses, hostels of recently closed educational institutions and other appropriately located buildings.

Each district was asked to prepare quarantine beds, while the highest number of 10,000 beds will be ar-

ranged in Jaipur. While asking the district administration to take the help of the Army, paramilitary forces, Home Guards and civil defence in tackling the crisis, the State government also created a fund of ₹25 crore for doctors and paramedical staff engaged in the fight against the dreaded virus.

Don't venture out' After holding a meeting with the officials of core group on COVID-19, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot appealed to the people to treat the lockdown as a "self-imposed curfew" and not venture out of

their homes. "If the people do not treat the lockdown seriously, the government will be forced to impose curfew throughout the State," Mr. Gehlot said.

Medical & Health Minister Raghu Sharma said here that the prohibitory orders in force in the State during the lockdown would restrict the assembly of people to five or less.

Earlier, there was a ban on the assembly of 20 or more people. Those found violating the order will be booked under Section 188 (disobedience of order) of Indian Penal Code.

Each district was asked to prepare quarantine beds, while the highest number of 10,000 beds will be ar-

Lockdown in Himachal till further orders

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

The Himachal Pradesh government on Monday announced a State-wide lockdown with immediate effect till further orders.

A government statement said that all inter-State and intra-State movement of public and private transports have been prohibited.

"There would also be a total ban on movement trains and aircraft," it added.

Himachal Pradesh has so far recorded two confirmed cases of COVID-19.

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- Advanced Grammar

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- How to express opinions and speak effectively

During this webinar, you will:

EASTERN RAILWAY
E-Tender Notice No.: O/AC/T/290/
19-20 (Open), Dated 20.03.2020.
Open e-tender is invited by
Divisional Railway Manager,
Asansol, Eastern Railway, Kolkata
for the following work : Open tender for provision of
ramp at FOB in Howrah end of
Durgapur station under the
jurisdiction of Sr. DEN/3/Asansol.
Tender Value : ₹ 1,50,97,089.84;
Earnest money : ₹ 2,25,500; Date and
time of closing : 27.04.2020
at 12.00 hrs. Complete details can
be seen in the railways website
www.ireps.gov.in
(ASN-302/2019-20)

Tender Notices are also available at Eastern Railway's
website : www.er.indiarailways.gov.in/www.ireps.gov.in

E-Tender Notice No.: MEMU-MECH-CLNG-20, Dated 20.03.2020. e-tender is invited by
Sr. DEE/TRS/ASN for the following
work from reputed tenderers having
proven experience and capable to
complete the following work
financially : Tender Notice No. :
MEMU-MECH-CLNG-20. Name of
the work with its location : Mechanized washing and cleaning
of MEMU coaches of Asansol at
MEMU Car Shed and inside
cleaning of MEMU rakes at ASN
area. JSME yard area. UDL
station yard with disposal of
garbage of each station in Municipal
area for three (03) years. Tender
Value : ₹ 63,76,828; Earnest
money : ₹ 1,27,800; Date and time
of closing and opening : 30.04.2020 closed at 12.00 hrs. and
opened at 12.30 hrs. Complete
details can be seen in the railways
website www.ireps.gov.in
(ASN-303/2019-20)

Tender Notices are also available at Eastern Railway's
website : www.er.indiarailways.gov.in/www.ireps.gov.in

EASTERN RAILWAY
Tender Notice No.: 01SERVICE of
CPOH/PAfO/19-20 for e-tendering,
dated: 18.03.2020. E-Tender is invited
through Dy. Chief Engineer/TCM/HQ,
Second Floor, GM Office, Eastern
Railway, 17 N.S. Road, Fairlie Place,
Kolkata-700001 from reputed and
eligible contractors with sufficient
experience, financial capability and
having proper and requisite resources
and experience for the following work:
Name of work: Deployment of security
guard from retired Army personnel/
Home guard/Maharashtra Industrial
Security Force/any other Govt. Security
agency for security/guarding CPOH
depot of track machine at Kanchrapara
of Eastern Railway. **Tender Value:**
₹ 78,75,480. **Earnest Money:**
₹ 1,57,500. **Date of opening :**
09.04.2020 at 12.30 hrs. Details of
tender notice, documents and
corrigendum issued from time to time
alongwith required eligibility criteria are
available at website www.ireps.gov.in
The bidding for the tender is to be
submitted through the e-tendering on
above website. Manual offers are not
allowed against this tender.

(MISC-368/2019-20)
Tender Notices are also available at website :
www.er.indiarailways.gov.in/www.ireps.gov.in

Open Tender Notice No.: H_San_MC_GHPR_SWP_20, dated: 12.03.2020.
e-Tender is invited by the Chief Medical
Superintendent, B.R. Singh Hospital,
Sealdah from the experienced &
reputed agencies for the following work:
Tender No.: H_San_MC_GHPR_SWP_20.
Name of work with location:
Daily manual cleaning at Ghoslapur colony
for 1096 days except Sundays i.e 940 working days and daily
mechanized cleaning of swimming pool
for the period of 1096 days. **Tender
Value :** ₹ 1,41,51,565.50. **Earnest
Money:** ₹ 2,20,800. **Date & time for
submission of e-tender :** Up to 14.00
hrs. of 20.03.2020. **Website particulars & Notice Board :** www.ireps.gov.in,
MD Office/B.R. Singh Hospital/Eastern
Railway, Sealdah. **Tenders are to bid
online only through the above
mentioned website.** No tender
document in hard copy will be sold
against this tender no. (MED-41/2019-20)

Tender Notices are also available at website :
www.er.indiarailways.gov.in/www.ireps.gov.in

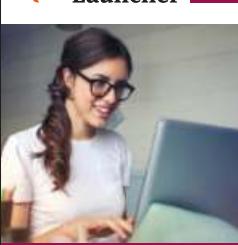
Tender Notice No.: 222-S/1/W/I-2020, dated: 18.03.2020. e-tenders are
invited online by the Divisional Railway
Manager, Eastern Railway, Sealdah for
the following work : **SI.No.-1.** **Tender
No.: TN-201-19-20.** **Name of work:** At
Halishahar: Raising of existing platform
height at P.F. No. 1 & 2 by vacuum
dewatering concrete including
extension of P.F. shed with all other
ancillary works under Senior Section
Engineer [Works]/Line/Kanchrapara in
the jurisdiction of Sr. Assistant
Engineer/2/Kanchrapara. **Tender
value:** ₹ 76,55,850.44. **Earnest Money
Deposited:** ₹ 1,53,200. **SI.No.-2.**
Tender No.: TN-202-19-20. **Name of work:** At
CTR(P) and TRR(P) along with
other ancillary works [CTR(P) 40.00 to
44.13, 44.500 to 47.40, 47,650 to 48,01,
48,825 to 56,50, 67,500 to 67,80 Down
Line and TRR(P) 47.40 to 47.65 Down
Line] in the section of Senior Section
Engineer [PWY/Kanchrapara under
the jurisdiction of Sr. Assistant
Engineer/2/Kanchrapara. **Tender
value:** ₹ 1,75,31,106.34. **Earnest
Money Deposited:** ₹ 2,37,700. **SI.No.-3.**
Tender No.: TN-203-19-20. **Name of work:** Assisting BCM for deep
screening and manual deep screening
in running track and other ancillary
works in the jurisdiction of Senior
Section Engineer [PWY/Kanchrapara
under Sr. Assistant Engineer/2/
Kanchrapara. **Tender
value:** ₹ 68,05,343.68. **Earnest Money
Deposited:** ₹ 1,36,200. **SI.No.-4.**
Tender No.: TN-204-19-20. **Name of work:** Provision of Automation of
Private Number exchange system
working at selected Non-interlocking
Level crossing gates of Sealdah
Division. **Tender value:** ₹ 37,46,652.
Earnest Money Deposited: ₹ 75,000.
Date and time of closing of tender :
17.04.2020 at 15.00 hrs.(for SI. No. 1
to 4 each). **Tender documents and other
details are at www.ireps.gov.in.**
The bidding is to be submitted through
the e-tendering on above website. Manual
offers will be summarily rejected. Date
and time of opening of tender is
17.04.2020 at 15.30 hrs.

(SDA-320/2019-20)
Tender Notices are also available at website :
www.er.indiarailways.gov.in/www.ireps.gov.in

Tender Notice No.: 222-S/1/W/I-2020, dated: 18.03.2020. e-tenders are
invited online by the Divisional Railway
Manager, Eastern Railway, Sealdah for
the following work : **SI.No.-1.** **Tender
No.: TN-201-19-20.** **Name of work:** At
Halishahar: Raising of existing platform
height at P.F. No. 1 & 2 by vacuum
dewatering concrete including
extension of P.F. shed with all other
ancillary works under Senior Section
Engineer [Works]/Line/Kanchrapara in
the jurisdiction of Sr. Assistant
Engineer/2/Kanchrapara. **Tender
value:** ₹ 76,55,850.44. **Earnest Money
Deposited:** ₹ 1,53,200. **SI.No.-2.**
Tender No.: TN-202-19-20. **Name of work:** At
CTR(P) and TRR(P) along with
other ancillary works [CTR(P) 40.00 to
44.13, 44.500 to 47.40, 47,650 to 48,01,
48,825 to 56,50, 67,500 to 67,80 Down
Line and TRR(P) 47.40 to 47.65 Down
Line] in the section of Senior Section
Engineer [PWY/Kanchrapara under
the jurisdiction of Sr. Assistant
Engineer/2/Kanchrapara. **Tender
value:** ₹ 1,75,31,106.34. **Earnest
Money Deposited:** ₹ 2,37,700. **SI.No.-3.**
Tender No.: TN-203-19-20. **Name of work:** Assisting BCM for deep
screening and manual deep screening
in running track and other ancillary
works in the jurisdiction of Senior
Section Engineer [PWY/Kanchrapara
under Sr. Assistant Engineer/2/
Kanchrapara. **Tender
value:** ₹ 68,05,343.68. **Earnest Money
Deposited:** ₹ 1,36,200. **SI.No.-4.**
Tender No.: TN-204-19-20. **Name of work:** Provision of Automation of
Private Number exchange system
working at selected Non-interlocking
Level crossing gates of Sealdah
Division. **Tender value:** ₹ 37,46,652.
Earnest Money Deposited: ₹ 75,000.
Date and time of closing of tender :
17.04.2020 at 15.00 hrs.(for SI. No. 1
to 4 each). **Tender documents and other
details are at www.ireps.gov.in.**
The bidding is to be submitted through
the e-tendering on above website. Manual
offers will be summarily rejected. Date
and time of opening of tender is
17.04.2020 at 15.30 hrs.

(SDA-320/2019-20)
Tender Notices are also available at website :
www.er.indiarailways.gov.in/www.ireps.gov.in

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY
TENDER NOTICE NO. 14
DATE 23.03.2020
Invitation of tenders through
e-Procurement system
Principal Chief Material Manager, North
Eastern Railway, Gorakhpur, and on
behalf of the President of India, invites
tenders through e-procurement system
for the supply of the following items.
Complete description of the item and
other condition are available on website
www.ireps.gov.in. Item No. 1. Tender
Number : 22191086, Due on : 16.04.20.
Brief Description of Stores : Silent
Block for Roll Link etc. Reserved to be
procured from : ICF, RCF, Qty.
Required : 1545 Nos., Earnest Money
(Rs.) : 103620/-, Item No. 2. Tender
Number : 22191192, Due on : 22.04.20.
Brief Description of Stores : Ball Joint
Traction etc. Reserved to be procured
from : ICF, RCF, Qty. Required : 1409
Nos., Earnest Money (Rs.) : 70740/-,
Item No. 3. Tender Number : 22190708, Due on : 24.04.20.
Brief Description of Stores : Kit for Injection
etc. Reserved to be procured from :
RDSO, Qty. Required : 4852 Set,
Earnest Money (Rs.) : 27490/-
Principal Chief Material Manager
CPRoS/ S = 72
Gorakhpur
About any passenger amenity
complaint SMS on Mob. No. 09794845955
"Never smoke Bid/Cigarette in train"

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PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT
IT IS notified for the information that my Original Passing Certificate of Secondary School Examination of Year 1995 and Roll No. 4110976 issued by CBSE has been accidentally lost. Name of the candidate: Swetha Shankar. Full Address: Tel: 13 Rue de Lucerne, 91140 Villebon sur Yvette, Essonne, France+3368942669

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY
Opened E-tender based on two
Packet system (Technical & Financial bid) (**Tender notice No. M/C/W&W/40/2019-20 dt. 20-03-2020**) are invited by
Divisional Rail Manager/Mech./
C&W/Varanasi/N E Railway for and
on behalf of President of India for
following work:
Description of works:- Out
sourcing of comprehensive
Housekeeping and mechanized
cleaning at SIWAN Station
including platforms, yard, washable
aprons, tracks, office buildings,
reservation office, concourse area,
circulating area, waiting halls and
rag picking etc. & watering
padlocking, sweeping, Toilet Cleaning,
Toilet disinfection of 60 coaches of
passenger turn round trains daily at
SV station for the period of four years.
Approx. Value: ₹ 5,25,91,036.97.
EMD Money: ₹ 4,13,00,00. **Cost
of tenderforms->** ₹ 10,000/-, Completion
period from the date of
commencement of work :- **04 Years**,
Validity of offer- 180 days.
Date and time of closing of E-Tender :
22.04.2020 at 14.30 Hrs. Date and
time of opening of E-Tender :
22.04.2020 at 15.00 Hrs.
Tenders may submit their offers
online up to 22.04.2020 at 14.30 Hrs.
Pl. go to the website www.ireps.gov.in
to see the complete details and
upload the tender.

**Sr. DME/C&W/
CPRo/Mech-206 BSB**

About any passenger amenity
complaint SMS on Mobile No. 09794845955

"Never travel on roof and foot boards"

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY
E-TENDERING NOTICE - 01
Sr. Divisional Materials Manager, N.E.
Railway, Varanasi and on behalf of
President of India, invites Tender
through E-Procurement system "Open
Tender" for the supply of the following
item. Complete description of the item
and other terms and conditions are
available on website www.ireps.gov.in.
Sr. No. 01. E-Tender No. : 50205110,
Due Date : 23.04.2020, **Description :**
Supply, Installation and commissioning
of Passenger elevators (Lift), **Quantity :**
09 Nos., **Earnest Money :** Rs.
382500.00, **Sr. Divisional
Materials Manager** Varanasi
About any passenger amenity
complaint SMS on Mob. No. 09794845955
Do Not smoke Bid/Cigarette in train

ANDHRA PRADESH STATE CIVIL SUPPLIES CORPORATION LIMITED
Regd. Office: 10-1521, 4TH Floor, Sri Sai Towers,Besides SIRS company,Bander road,Vijayawada-520007.
Tender No. PDS/P2/Trolleys/2020. Dated: 22.03.2020

TENDER NOTIFICATION

Empanelment and appointment of suppliers for supply and Installation of Heavy Duty Platform Trolley for handling rice bags at godowns as per the specifications at specified locations of APCSCSL across the state of Andhra Pradesh.
Applications are invited from interested Authorized Distributors, Manufacturers and authorized Dealers for Heavy Duty Platform Trolley for handling rice bags at specified locations of APCSCSL to participate in the tender process for Supply of such trolleys. For details, please visit www.apcprocurement.gov.in or www.apscscsl.gov.in (or) contact on 7702003525/988578974, 08645-246370/71/72/73/74. Last date for receiving applications along with EMD will be 6 April 2020, 2.00 PM. The EMD shall be transferred through Direct Debit Facility utilizing Debit or Credit Card/ Net Banking/Deposit through System generated challan in e-procurement website.
Online reverse e-auction will be conducted for successful bidders on konigolu.ap.gov.in platform as per the time schedule mentioned in the tender document.

Sd/- VC & MANAGING DIRECTOR

West Bengal Police Housing & Infrastructure Development Corp Ltd having its office at 3rd floor, Araksha Bhawan, Block - DJ, Sector - II, Salt Lake, Kolkata - 91 is inviting open e-Tender and Quotation from experienced agency for work of A) WBPHIDCL/ Addl.CE /NIQ-52(e)/2019-2020 (1st call) A) Construction of new officers' mess in Swami Vivekananda State Police Academy at Barrackpore - Supplying, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of ten (10) passengers & three (3) stop fully automatic MRL lift. **Tender Id: 2020_WBSPH_280701_1,** Last date & time of submission of bids online is 04.04.2020 at 16:00 Hrs. For further details please visit www.wbtenders.gov.in

**SD/-
Additional Chief Engineer
WBPH&IDCL**

QUOTATION NOTICE
Abridged eNQ No. WBUD & MAD /SLP /NIQ-33(e)/2019-20 of EE, SLC Division
Online bids are hereby invited by the undersigned for the work : Overall upkeep and guarding of Bidhannagar Mela Ground at Central Park, Salt Lake for 1 (one) year. Last date of online submission of Bid is on: 06.04.2020 at 18.00 hrs. For other details pl. contact office of the undersigned and you may visit the site wbtenders.gov.in

**Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Salt Lake Construction Division**

KMDA KOLKATA METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
NIT No : O&M-JA/37-T/500/W/S/17/18/56
Sealed Tender is invited by The Executive Engineer, Division-O&M)JA, KMDA, Makardaha Road, Dasnagar, Howrah-711 105, from reliable, experienced, bona fide, resourceful Contractors for the works; Sl. No.; Tender Qtn. No.; Name of Work; Estimated Cost (Rs); Earnest Money (Rs); 1; EE(O&M)JA/T-64 & 2019-2020; Repair & maintenance of distribution gridline of Allard FAWS Scheme for the period of 1 (one) year; 2,16,721/-, 4,350/-; 2; EE(O&M)JA/T-65 & 2019-2020; -do- of Mohiary-I & II FAWS Scheme; 4,07,069/-, 8,150/-; 3; EE(O&M)JA/T-66 & 2019-2020; -do- of Sankrail, Zone-I (Dulyla) FAWS Scheme; 2,16,326/-, 4,340/-; 5; EE(O&M)JA/T-67 & 2019-2020; Extension of 100mm dia. DL pipe line near the HO Swades Mondal at South Kamrang Jalpara area under Sankrail Zone-II FAWS Scheme; 4,20,379/-, 8,420/-; Time of Completion : 365 days for Sl. No. 1 to 4 & 30 days for Sl. No. 5; Cost of Tender Documents (Rs.) : 850/- for Each; Last Date & Time of Submission of Tender Paper is 09.04.2020 upto 12 pm; For details please contact the above office or visit our website. [KMDA/T-1024/SPAN\(3\)/19-20](http://www.kmdaonline.org)

Visit Website : www.kmdaonline.org

KMDA KOLKATA METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
e-NIT No : KMDA/HOUSING/SE/Circle-II/JNT-83/2019-2020
The Superintending Engineer, Circle-II, Housing Sector, KMDA (Erstwhile KIT), Unnayan Bhawan, DJ-II, Sector-II, 1st Floor, Block-A, Salt Lake, Kolkata-700091 invites online e-tender from reliable, resourceful bona fide and

Now, 14-day isolation for those who test negative

No community transmission of COVID-19, stresses Tope

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

State Health Minister Rajesh Tope on Monday said patients suspected to have COVID-19 who have tested negative for the infection will now be kept in isolation wards for 14 days as against the earlier seven days, as per the Centre's new precautionary advisory.

Mr. Tope told reporters, "The revised advisory is meant for more safety from the State's side," he said.

At present, six coronavirus testing laboratories are functional in the State and the government is trying to use them to their optimal ca-

COVID-19

pacity, the minister said. "I have been told that all government-run medical colleges will also have testing laboratories from March 27," he said.

The number of COVID-19 patients jumped by 15 in one day on Monday, but those without any travel history who are infected are close relatives of positive patients, he said. "It is not community transmission," he said.



Safe quarters: An isolation ward set up at NMMC hospital in Navi Mumbai. • FILE PHOTO

Asked about citizens crowding roads despite the enforcement of Section 144, Mr. Tope said, We will have to use force and initiate legal action against violators. We do not want to take such tough decisions, as we want to trust the people. We expect people to cooperate with us."

He also urged people to conduct blood donation camps on a small scale so that social distancing is maintained and supply of blood is ensured.

"The Maharashtra blood bank has supply for only the next 15 days. If a small-scale

blood camp is organised, it will help the State machinery and the required social distancing to avoid spread of the coronavirus will also be followed," he said.

There is no need to organise a large-scale blood donation camp as social distancing is advised by the Centre, he stressed.

Meanwhile, NCP chief Sharad Pawar appealed to people to stay indoors. In a video message, he said, "People should leave their home only in an emergency situation. They should not come out on streets and increase the burden on police."

No vehicles on Pune roads till March 31

Essential services exempt; heavy traffic day after Janata Curfew forces police hand

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

To discourage heavy vehicular traffic on Pune's roads in the wake of the COVID-19 contagion, the Pune Police on Monday announced the complete stoppage of all vehicular movement, barring those engaged in dispensing essential services, on city roads till the end of the month.

Issuing an order under Section 144 (I) (3) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, Joint Commissioner of Police Ravindra Shisive said all vehicles – including private ones, all types of rickshaws and app-based cab aggregators like Ola and Uber – would be prohibited from plying on the city's roads from 6 p.m. on Monday till March 31.

Only those vehicles engaged in dispensing essential services, including those belonging to media personnel or government vehicles, would be excluded from the ambit of the ban.

The police action came after roads witnessed heavy traffic despite appeals to citizens by the authorities to confine themselves indoors.

Earlier in the day, Dr. K. Venkatesham, Commissioner of Police, Pune, had hinted at the vehicular ban on Twitter. "Vehicle movement will be stopped completely



No entry: A police official sets up a barricade at Paud Phata in Pune after the police chief ordered a ban on traffic on roads. • JIGNESH MISTRY

in the evening today pl note...rqt [request] to reduce vehicle movement till formal order. Grocery, medicine, milk, vegetables, chicken, mutton may be taken from neighbourhood (walking distance) pl do not plan for inter district vehicle movement. Stay home is mantra," Dr. Venkatesham had said in a series of tweets.

While the Janata Curfew on Sunday had swept off virtually every two- and four-wheeler off the city's densely crowded streets, scores of

private vehicles were seen back on the road on Monday with many citizens behaving as if it were business as usual.

In stark defiance of government exhortations to self-quarantine to combat the spread of the novel coronavirus, teenagers were seen playing cricket on open stretches, while private vehicles were seen moving on thoroughfares.

Earlier, Dr. Venkatesham had said that 136 police teams had been formed to

check on people who had been asked to quarantine themselves at home.

He had said there were some cases of missing home quarantine people, who had returned from foreign countries in the past fortnight. Dr. Venkatesham warned that these people would face punitive action if they failed to report to the police.

Till now, 28 people have tested positive for COVID-19 in Pune district, one of whom is in the intensive care unit and is said to be critical.

Gujarat HC to hear urgent cases via video conference

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat High Court on Monday said it has decided to hear "extremely urgent matters" only through video conferencing to ensure social distancing amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The decision comes after the Supreme Court decided to restrict its functioning to hear matters only in one court through video conference.

The matters already assigned for Monday were taken up by the High Court's newly assigned Division Bench and a single-judge Bench in their respective courts.

However, no fresh filing will be accepted from Monday, as per a circular issued by the HC registrar general on Sunday night. From Monday, only e-filing will be accepted, said the circular.

"Considering the gravity of the situation prevailing not only in Gujarat but the entire nation ... it has been decided to take up all extremely urgent matters, both on the civil and criminal side, in continuation of the previous orders issued, by video conferencing," the circular said.

Taking no chances



Fighting germs: The Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority Fire Brigade sprays disinfectants on streets and housing societies at Bavdhan in Pune as a precautionary measure amid the coronavirus outbreak. • JIGNESH MISTRY

Bhima-Koregaon commission asks for six-month extension

Panel has postponed hearing due to coronavirus outbreak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

The two-member judicial commission inquiring into the 2018 Bhima-Koregaon violence case on Monday sought a six-month extension from the State government as it has postponed its hearing in view of the novel coronavirus outbreak and resultant lockdown.

The commission on Monday wrote to the Chief Secretary seeking the extension. "In view of the coronavirus epidemic and complete lockdown, the commission has postponed its proceedings until further notice. As such, the commission is unable to submit any report," the letter signed by commission secretary V.V. Palnitkar said.

If an extension is given by the State government, the commission intends to examine 40-50 more witnesses, including police, State and prominent politicians. For that purpose, the commission will require not less than six months," it said.

Violence erupted in Bhima-Koregaon and nearby areas in Pune on January 1, 2018, during the 200th anniversary celebrations of the Bhima-Koregaon battle. One person was killed in the riots



Lakhs gather at the victory pillar in Bhima-Koregaon every January 1 to celebrate the battle's anniversary. • FILE PHOTO

and several others injured.

The Pune Police had said provocative speeches made at the Elgar Parishad held in the day before had triggered the violence.

The State government had set up a two-member commission in February 2018 to conduct an inquiry into the violence. The commission is headed by former High Court judge J.N. Patel, with former chief secretary Sumit Mullick as its member.

The commission had also summoned a few senior Puna Rural Police officials.

It has since then received

four extensions. Last month, the commission was given a final extension till April 8 to submit its report.

On March 18, the commission had issued summons to NCP chief Sharad Pawar to appear as a witness before it on April 4. Mr. Pawar was summoned as a witness in view of certain statements made by him about the violence.

The commission had heightened patrolling to ensure miscreants do not take

Goa govt. extends curfew; industry delegation meets CM

Curbs to be in force till March 25 night; industry players urge Sawant to allow operations with 20% staff

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

PANAJI

Goa witnessed a total shutdown for the second consecutive day on Monday as the State government extended Sunday's 'Janata Curfew' to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Meanwhile, a delegation of various industrial bodies met Chief Minister Pramod Sawant at his residence on Monday, urging him to allow the industry work with 20% workforce.

Mr. Sawant on Sunday announced that the curfew will remain in force till the intervening night of March 25-26. All markets, shops, offices and religious places remained closed on Monday.

In order to effectively implement the curfew, the government has declared a three-day holiday for government and private sector, including banks.

State-run and private bus services have also been suspended. Only hospitals and health services, pharmacies, and essential government services like the police, electricity and water supply will be operational.

The State government on Monday announced that milk booths and fuel stations would also remain open.

The Goa Police have



Travel restrictions: The bus terminus in Panaji is deserted after the government suspended public and private bus services. • ATISH POMBURFELKAR

advantage of the situation.

The coastal State's borders have also been sealed to stop vehicular movement, except for essential commodities. Goa shares borders with Maharashtra and Karnataka. On Sunday night, Mr. Sawant paid a surprise visit to the border at Keri village in North Goa to assess the implementation of the restrictions.

While supporting the government in its endeavour, the industry also requested certain relaxations, including permission to function with minimum 20% work-

force," Mr. Caculo said.

The delegation also urged the Chief Minister to exempt the pharmaceutical sector from the shutdown, he said.

In a statement issued after the meeting, the industry players said they requested the CM to allow a few concessions to facilitate skeletal services and also finish some works in progress.

The Chief Minister assured us to study the industry representation and come out with revised guidelines later in the day," the statement said.

Testing must for recent arrivals, says Sawant

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

PANAJI

Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Monday said all those who had arrived in the State recently must get themselves checked for the novel coronavirus, failing which the government would intervene.

He chaired a Cabinet meeting to discuss the measures in place to tackle the virus outbreak. "There are some Goans who have returned to the State from outside but are yet to get themselves checked.

We appeal to them to approach primary health centres for testing. If they escape doing it, we will be getting them for checking," he warned.

As the State does not have any COVID-19 cases yet, Mr. Sawant said the "next eight days are important".

As cases rise, Kerala put under lockdown

Borders sealed, inter-district travel banned, KSRTC bus services halted, 28 fresh cases confirmed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Monday put Kerala under lockdown till March 31 following a spike in the COVID-19 caseload.

On Monday, 28 new positive cases of COVID-19 surfaced in Kerala, taking the total

COVID-19

number of cases reported by the State since January to 95.

The State will seal its borders and prevent inter-district travel. It has halted KSRTC and private bus services. Autorickshaws and taxis could ferry one person at a time. There is no restriction on the use of private vehicles.

However, the government urged people to work from home and remain indoors as far as possible. They should travel only if necessary and

that too minimally.

The government has empowered district Collectors to prevent more than five persons from assembling in public if required.

In Kasaragod, the epicentre of the outbreak in Kerala, Mr. Vijayan said the police would arrest any person who ventured out of their homes without a pressing reason. The district is on a total shutdown since Saturday following an uptick in COVID-19 infections.

He suspended most non-essential services and said only vital business should remain open from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. In Kasaragod the timings are between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m.

The services deemed essential by the government included medical shops, provision and grocery stores, milk, vegetable and fruit stores, fuel pumps, cooking gas suppliers, restaurants



Viral effect: Labourers, unaware of the cancellation of trains, reaching the Olavakode railway junction. ■ K.K. MUSTAFAH

with takeout or delivery services, delivery of newspapers and liquor outlets.

The Chief Minister said the government could not ignore social realities and the dangers posed by a total clampdown on liquor.

The government would not allow people to socialise inside bars but would permit such businesses to operate takeaway counters to mitigate the rush at Bevco outlets.

Mr. Vijayan said he had ordered Bevco to impose social distancing norms at its outlets and premium counters strictly.

There would be no interruption in power or water supply and other essential services, Mr. Pinarayi said.

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There would be no interruption in power or water supply and other essential services, Mr. Pinarayi said.

Telangana imposes 100% curfew

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

Telangana government has decided to tighten the rules governing the lockdown imposed in the State till March 31 to check the spread of COVID-19. There will be 100% curfew from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m.

Exemptions would be given only to medical emergencies, and those violating the rules would be dealt with strictly. Checkposts would be set up at all police stations to see people come out only for buying essentials or in case of emergencies.

Vehicles violating the rules would be seized and released after completion of the lockdown period. Two-wheelers with single driver, and four-wheelers with two persons would be allowed,



Safety concerns: The historic Charminar in Hyderabad wearing a deserted look on Monday. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

and steps are being taken to ensure there are no gatherings of more than five people.

"The lockdown has been imposed in the interest of public safety and public health, and the government is committed to enforcing it strictly," Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar and Director-General of Police M. Mahendran Reddy said.

Incidentally, the tightening of rules comes in the light of a tweet by Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressing dissatisfaction over people taking the lockdown "lightly".

It was also decided to intensify watch on foreign returnees.

Curfew-like restrictions enforced in Karnataka

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

Scaling up the precautionary measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Karnataka government on Monday enforced "curfew-like" restrictions across the State from Tuesday.

All public and private transport including Uber, Ola and autos will be off the road, while only essential services will be available across the State.

The government, which had initially announced restrictions only in nine districts that had reported COVID-19 cases, later revised the order to cover the entire State.

The government has en-

Priest in Kerala arrested for holding mass

THRISSUR

As coronavirus cases in the country surged past 450, a priest in Kerala, who conducted a mass at a church defying a government order against public gatherings, was arrested on Monday. Priest Pauly Padayatti, Vicar of the Lady of Perpetual Help Church at Koodapuzha in Chalakudy, conducted the mass on Monday in which at least 100 people had participated, the police said. The priest was arrested and later let off on bail. A case has been registered against the priest and the 100-odd faithful on Monday.

Given the urgent need, construction giant Larsen and Toubro is among the agencies that hopes to provide expertise to build exclusive hospitals to treat COVID-19 patients in record time.

'Can build hospitals in quick time to treat virus patients'

Construction giant L&T ready to plug infrastructure gap

RAMYA KANNAN

CHENNAI

Even as the COVID-19 outbreak spreads across the country, questions have been raised on whether the nation's health infrastructure will be sufficient to treat the rising numbers of positive cases. Sources said a mention of the gap was also made during the Prime Minister's video conference with business leaders on Monday.



L&T says it can build hospitals to treat COVID-19 patients in record time.

Factories vertical will be capable of building a 50-100 bedded hospital from scratch with state-of-the-art facilities within three to four months.

"We have the necessary design and capability. It is technically feasible," he said, exuding confidence at completing the task.

Following the novel coro-

navirus outbreak and rapid spread, China had built a large health facility with space for 1,000 beds, within 10 days in Wuhan. "With this kind of emergency building happening in the rest of the world, we have been thinking of our capabilities here. In fact, in India, we have done other projects, building structures rapidly, in record time. And so, we started thinking about building a hospital too," Mr. Subrahmanyam said.

He added that the company also had the plans, whether withdrawal, capability and methodology to quickly convert, if needed, marriage halls or other existing structures, into a hospital with necessary infrastructure.

PM INTERACTS WITH INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES ▶ PAGE 13

Miles to go



Risky ride: Passengers travelling on top of a bus near Tumakuru on Monday. Karnataka has announced total lockdown as a preventive measure against the spread of COVID-19 outbreak. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Professionals join hands to digitise over 900 Yakshagana scripts

The content is made available online for free, thanks to the voluntary community effort by some Yakshagana lovers

RAVIPRASAD KAMILA

MANGALURU

More than 900 Yakshagana scripts, including the ones printed in 1905 and 1907, have now been digitised and made available online for free, thanks to the voluntary community effort by some Yakshagana lovers who did it under the banner Yakshavahini, a registered trust.

The teamwork by about 100 professionals, including software engineers, has resulted in conservation of 934 scripts in the digital form in less than a year of launching the project. The number of digitised scripts is expected to touch 1,000 by March-end.

The Prahlada Charitre'



On a song: A Yakshagana performance in progress at Jeppu in Mangaluru on Monday. ■ H.S. MANJUNATH

printed in 1905 and 'Ramashwamedha' printed in 1907, 'Putramasthi' published in 1913, 'Kanakangi Kalyana' in 1929, Kumudhwati Kalyana of 1931

and Sampoorna Ramayana printed in 1938 are among the ones digitised.

The concept of digitisation, conceived in August last, took birth soon

after a month and the first set of scripts scanned went online in October 2019 through a blog, Nataraja Upadhyaya, a software engineer and a co-ordinator of the project, told *The Hindu*.

The scripts sourced from different sources have been scanned, preserved in digital form (in PDF format) in Google drive and made available on www.prasanga

prathisangraha.com and through the 'Prasanga Prathi Sangraha' app, Mr. Upadhyaya said.

The collection and digitisation of scripts, both in printed and manuscript forms, is one among the four projects being taken up

by the Bengaluru-based Yakshavahini, he said.

Among those digitised now are 65 scripts scanned and digitised by the Srikrishna Foundation of award-winning film-maker and director Abhay Simha and others, he said. "We have given links to those scripts," he said.

Half disappeared

Mr. Upadhyaya said that it was estimated that Karnataka had about 8,000 Yakshagana scripts. Of them, half might have disappeared due to various reasons. The Yakshavahini is making efforts to collect the remaining scripts and digitise at least 3,000 of them.

www.prasanga

prathisangraha.com and through the 'Prasanga Prathi Sangraha' app, Mr. Upadhyaya said.

Ashwini Hodala, another co-ordinator and a pillar of the project, said the scripts digitised included the ones written by Parthi Subba, considered as the pioneer of Yakshagana, Devidasa, Keerikkadu Vishnu Master, Dwajapurada Nagappaiah and contemporary writer D.S. Sridhara.

Lakshminarayana Bhat, a software engineer who developed the app for the project, said 1,045 users had installed it since it was released on December 15, 2019.

M. Krishna, administrator of a Yakshagana WhatsApp group, said the documentation was a good source for researchers and present generation artistes.

Vendors of lottery ticket in dire straits

Series cancelled, draws postponed

K.S. SUDHI

KOCHI

Luck has run out for K.G. Unni, a lottery ticket vendor at Alinchuvadu Junction, near Vyttila, in Ernakulam

He had to abandon the kiosk set up six years ago the other day after the State Lotteries Department cancelled the sale of 14 series of tickets and postponed the draw of 10 others in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over two lakh wayside lottery ticket vendors are in dire straits now. Till the other day, they were everywhere. Suddenly, they are out of sight. "Before the corona outbreak, I used to earn around ₹600 a day. After the

outbreak, I lost ₹12,000 by way of cancellation of tickets. No agent will take back the cancelled tickets," said Unni.

The Lotteries Department suffered a loss of around ₹3 crore on account of the printed tickets, said Amit Meena, Director of the department. "The tickets were cancelled and draws postponed as part of the social distancing campaign. The cancelled ones can be resold later. Agents and sellers survive on the commission offered on tickets. Wayside vendors, the last point of sales, may get an amount equivalent to 5 to 10% of the ticket price," he said.



Matter of urgency: A view of an empty Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus in Mumbai, on Monday; a woman being stamped after arriving in a special train at the Guwahati railway station; passengers seen walking at the New Delhi railway station; and a municipal worker spraying disinfectant as a preventive measure at L.D. Maternity Hospital in Srinagar. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI, RITU RAJ KONWAR, SHIV KUMAR PUSHAKAR & NISSAR AHMAD



SC to go digital to maintain social distancing

Only urgent cases to be taken up via video app



be taken up by a Bench(es) through a video app.

The Supreme Court Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde used its extraordinary powers under Article 142 to lift the limitation period for all cases across tribunals and courts

in the country until further notice.

"To obviate difficulties and to ensure that lawyers/litigants do not have to come physically to file proceedings in respective courts/tribunals across the country, it is hereby ordered that a period of limitation in all proceedings, irrespective of the limitation prescribed under the general law or special laws, whether condonable or not, shall stand extended with effect from March 15 till further orders," the apex court said after taking *suo motu* cognisance.

A Bench led by Chief Justice Bobde heard a few cases via videoconferencing on

Monday. A giant screen, instead of the usual crowd of lawyers and litigants, greeted Chief Justice Bobde and his fellow judges as they entered the courtroom. The screen, placed in front of the judges' dais, was connected to the Old Court Masters' Room at another end of the Supreme Court premises. This room was fitted with microphones and screens for lawyers to present their cases to the CJI Bench via videoconferencing.

The meeting on Monday was held by Justices L. Nageswara Rao, Surya Kant and Aniruddha Bose and attended by Supreme Court Bar Association president Dushyant Dave and secretary

Ashok Arora, Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association secretary Joseph Aristotle S. and Solicitor General Tushar Mehta.

A circular issued by the Supreme Court late on Monday explained that the cases would be heard through an app called 'Vidyo'.

It said a one-page synopsis of these cases can be sent to the apex court registry via an email id - mention.sc@sci.nic.in. The registry would then forward the mail to the judges on the slotted Bench. Once the case is approved for urgent hearing, it would be listed for the next day. The lawyer concerned would be mailed a video link and he or she can use it to

present his case via videoconferencing at an allotted time. The link would lapse automatically by default shortly after the hearing.

If the case is not listed for hearing via videoconferencing, the advocate-on-record concerned would be provided with a telephone number by the registry. The lawyer is free to call the judge between 10.30 and 11 a.m. the following day and directly press his case for urgent hearing.

"Based on the progress made in the next few days, cases pertaining to bail also will be considered to be listed subsequently on priority of urgency basis," Mr. Aristotle said.

Preventive drug for healthcare workers cleared

Two domestic virus testing kits also validated for use, says ICMR



A file photo of hydroxychloroquine tablets. ■ AFP

He added that placing of healthcare workers under chemoprophylaxis should not instil a sense of false security.

"They should follow all prescribed public health measures such as frequent washing of hands, respiratory etiquettes, keeping a minimum distance and use of personal protective equipment [wherever applicable]," Prof. Bhargava said.

"For private labs, we have issued detailed guidelines and 12 lab chains have been registered and they have begun work. They have 15,000 collection centres across India and these labs will increase as and when they register," Prof. Bhargava said.

Also a day after the Council allowed private labs to test for COVID-19, Prof. Bhargava said the ICMR has now expedited approvals for manufacturing of domestic

commercial testing kits.

"We are fast tracking approval for kit manufacturers. We want to clarify that those kits need not have USFDA or European CE approval but will need an ICMR-National Institute of Virology approval. Two such manufacturers have already been approved," he said.

"For private labs, we have issued detailed guidelines and 12 lab chains have been registered and they have begun work. They have 15,000 collection centres across India and these labs will increase as and when they register," Prof. Bhargava said.

No economic task force to deal with COVID-19 yet

Not in charge of body: Finance Ministry

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
NEW DELHI

Four days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that a task force would be set up to deal with the economic impact of COVID-19, it is yet to be constituted.

Although Mr. Modi said the task force was to be headed by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, the Ministry says it is not responsible for constituting the body. In fact, some officials said Ms. Sitharaman was unaware of the task force until the Prime Minister mentioned it in his address to the nation on Thursday.

The task force will be constituted by order of the Prime Minister's Office or the Cabinet Secretariat, not the Finance Ministry, a senior spokesperson told *The Hindu*. There is no indica-

tion on timelines as yet. "Keeping in mind the economic challenges posed by the pandemic, it has been decided to create a COVID-19 Economic Response Task Force headed by the Finance Minister," Mr. Modi had said during his address to the nation on Thursday.

"This Task Force will be in constant contact with all the stakeholders, take their feedback and after analysing the situation, take necessary decisions in the near future."

On Friday, Ms. Sitharaman told journalists that although the task force had not yet been set up, the Finance Ministry was already holding meetings with the sectors most severely affected, and these inputs would be given to the task force as well. "It is an evolving situation," she said.

Reliance sets up COVID-19 hospital

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) has announced a slew of measures to fight the COVID-19 outbreak including setting up India's first dedicated COVID-19 hospital, special quarantine facilities, importing additional test kits and enhancing its production capacities to produce 1,00,000 face-masks per day.

Within two weeks, Sir H.N. Reliance Foundation Hospital has set up a 100-bedded centre at the Seven Hills Hospital, Mumbai, to treat patients.

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

CITIES

SO₂

NO_x

CO

PM2.5

PM10

CODE

■ Poor

■ Moderate

■ Good

(Readings indicate average AQI score)

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

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

■ 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.

■ 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.

In observation made at 6.00 p.m., Muzaffarpur, Bihar recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 250 indicating a moderate level of pollution. In contrast, Ludhiana, Punjab recorded a healthy AQI score of 36.

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Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

CITIES



Lockdown and beyond

Governments must aid people during this difficult phase and prepare for wider testing

India has responded to the spectre of large-scale transmission of the novel coronavirus and the unprecedented public health catastrophe it may bring by ordering a full national lockdown. The goal is to flatten the transmission curve and help a frayed health system cope with a large number of cases. Physical distancing of people, ensured through a suspension of rail and inter-State bus services, closure of public places, cessation of all non-essential activity and street-level monitoring, is the first order priority during a pandemic and the lockdown can ensure that. The options being used by States to enforce this are Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 and the Indian Penal Code. What must follow is the galvanising of governmental machinery to address essential requirements. This was certainly not in evidence on Sunday during the janata curfew, which saw near-total compliance, but culminated in noisy public celebrations. It was also marked by a last-minute scramble among migrant labour stuffing themselves into trains to return home ahead of the shutdown. Many hundreds more remained stranded in several cities, crowding termini, as train services were withdrawn. These hapless people, who must largely fend for themselves, have been potentially exposed to the pathogen; some may have unwittingly infected others. The week-long lockdown ahead cannot become a similar exercise in chaos, confusion and misery. As a war-like moment in the country's history, it calls for massive preparation with all hands on deck to mitigate the impact on people, and to formulate a public health response for the period beyond the shutdown.

Governments have a duty to ensure that the most vulnerable classes, economically and socially, including the elderly, have access to essential articles including medicines, close to where they live. It should not be difficult to provide them a package of staples to last a week using civil supplies departments, civic workers, and non-governmental organisations. Considering that about 37% of households depend on casual labour as their major source of income for rural and urban India, and nearly 55% have tenuous regular employment, as per Periodic Labour Force Survey data for 2017-18, it is essential for governments to ensure that they get subsistence wages for as long as restrictions last. Some States have already moved in that direction. Funds transfers during the containment phase of the pandemic, followed by a stimulus to sustain employment are necessary. But a bigger challenge stares India in the face: can it get a universally accessible testing system in place to prevent transmission when the lockdown is lifted? China, South Korea and Singapore, as WHO points out, adopted a strict shutdown, but used the breather to get a grip on infections by testing at the population level. This is the hard work that lies ahead, and it will test the mettle of India's national and State governments.

The Maoist trap

In difficult terrain, security personnel end up second best despite the training

The attack by Maoist extremists in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district on Saturday, that killed 17 security personnel and injured 15, including two critically, presents a grim picture on how poorly India continues to fare on this front. There was intelligence that Maoists were going to assemble at Elmugunda village, which is dominated by the Peoples' Liberation Guerrilla Army Battalion 1. Accordingly, security forces, comprising District Reserve Guards, Special Task Force, numbering 500, were dispatched into the forests to deal with the emergent situation. In retrospect, despite the intelligence, they did not encounter even one Maoist and began their journey back, in two groups, to their camps at Chintagufa and Burkpal, not more than six kilometres apart as the crow flies. The smaller contingent, numbering 100, headed to Burkpal, encountered fire six kilometres from the base camp and they duly returned it. The Maoists retreated and fired again and the security forces fired and followed till they had been lured into an open area in hilly terrain where the Maoists, some 350 of them, had the advantage of numbers, line of fire as well as height, a classic ambush. The Maoists then picked off their targets. The other much larger group, not more than three kilometres away, also came under diversionary fire that kept them pinned down.

The real story is still to emerge, but it is odd that in the battle that began about noon and lasted five-and-a-half daylight hours, reinforcements could not be sent to hapless personnel. It can be surmised that at the very least those who got ambushed did not know the terrain or the tactics enough, although that should not be the case considering the composition of the DRG. It is yet to be convincingly explained how as many as 400 personnel so near did not rush to aid their uniformed brethren. Was it a leadership or assessment issue? Was there a communication breakdown? Was the initial intelligence properly vetted or was it bait? Was this entire operation properly supervised? It is remarkable, too, that helicopters were able to evacuate the wounded afterwards. So complete was the rout that even though the security forces said they took down some Maoists, there is not much physical evidence to support this claim. It is also significant that as many as 13 of the dead security forces were locals from Sukma district, many of them surrendered Maoists. And unfortunate that many of them bled to death waiting for assistance. There is a lot to answer for but it seems that despite dedicated training the security forces get for just these eventualities, the Maoists are able to improvise and come out on top, smarter, nimbler, and many steps ahead.

A pandemic, an economic blow and the big fix

A package for ₹5-lakh crore-₹6-lakh crore targeted across different sections of society and the economy, is feasible



PRAVEEN CHAKRAVARTY

India has just finished a day of curfew and clapping to practise 'social distancing' and to express gratitude to the millions of health and essential services workers amid the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a laudable initiative by the Prime Minister to rally the nation together. The nation is truly at war, as he alluded to, and it can be won only by everyone coming together in this 'tragedy of the commons'.

India lags

But just two days before our clapping, the Indian-origin Finance Minister of the United Kingdom unveiled the U.K.'s biggest economic recovery package in its history, as an antidote to the crisis; there is no fixed cost to it. The United States is finalising a trillion-dollar economic recovery package, while Germany is going ahead with 'unlimited' government financing for the disruptions due to the outbreak. France, Spain, Italy and the Netherlands have all launched a half-a-trillion dollars combined in recovery measures. If this reads like panic, consider this one data point – the number of people who lost their jobs, in just the last two weeks in America is the highest ever weekly job losses recorded in its history. These large, developed economies are expected to not merely slow down, but to contract and experience negative growth. The economic devastation will be much more painful and longer than the health impact.

While the rest of the world has sprung into action, India has merely announced the setting up of a task force under the Finance Minister to explore economic recovery options. This lackadaisical approach is unconscionable. Contrary to rhetoric, neither will India be immune to this imminent economic crisis nor will some 'preternatural force' insulate us from this

epidemic. It is prudent to swing into action right away to soften the inevitable economic blow.

There are already reports that a third of all restaurants could shut down in the formal sector alone and shed more than 20 lakh jobs, in the coming months. The entire automotive sector is shutting down its factories, putting at risk the incomes of a million people employed in this sector. When people lose their jobs, entire families suffer, consumption drops and overall demand collapses. When businesses close down, then they default on their commercial obligations down the chain and to their financiers. This freezes up credit flow in the economy and halts production. Since this is a global crisis, it is not even possible for India to import and export its way to recovery. Under such painful conditions, India needs a comprehensive recovery package that will first cushion the shock and then help the economy recover.

A three-step plan

In my discussions with former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram and economists, there was near unanimity that the package should rest on four pillars: providing a safety net for the affected; addressing disruptions in the real economy; unclogging the impending liquidity squeeze in the financial system, and incentivising the external sector of trade and commerce. So here is a broad plan for a 'COVID-19 Economic Recovery Package for India'.

The destruction of jobs, incomes and consumption can be addressed through a direct cash transfer of ₹3,000 a month, for six months, to the 12 crore, bottom half of all Indian households. This will cost nearly ₹2.2-lakh crore and reach 60 crore beneficiaries, covering agricultural labourers, farmers, daily wage earners, informal sector workers and others. It is important that this is not just a one-month income boost but, instead, a sustained income stream for at least six months for the millions who have lost their incomes, to provide them a safety net and a sense of confidence. The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM



KISAN) programme with a budget of ₹75,000 crore can be subsumed into this programme.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) must be expanded and retooled into a public works programme, to build much-needed hospitals, clinics, rural roads and other infrastructure. This can be achieved by integrating MGNREGA with the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana and the roads and bridges programme. These three programmes together have a budget of nearly ₹1.5 lakh crore. This must be doubled to ₹3 lakh crore and serve as a true 'Right to Work' scheme for every Indian who needs it.

In addition, the Food Corporation of India is overflowing with excess rice, wheat and unmilled paddy stocks – enough excess stock to provide 10kg rice and wheat to every Indian family, free of cost, through the Public Distribution System.

This combination, of a basic income of ₹3,000 a month, a right to work and food grains, will provide a secure safety net.

COVID-19 testing, treatment, medical equipment and supplies capacity can be expanded through the private sector and be reimbursed directly for patient care. This will need a budget of ₹1.5-lakh crore for testing and treating at least 20 crore Indians through the private sector. This will help create a large number of jobs in the private health-care sector, with trickle-down benefits.

Steps for the central bank

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced a ₹1.5-lakh crore liquidity and credit backstop facility on Monday, which is a very welcome move. Further, the RBI

should show regulatory forbearance and also set up a credit guarantee fund for distressed borrowers for credit rollover and deferred loan obligation.

The central bank must also immediately reduce interest rates drastically to spur business activity. A two-year tax holiday and an appropriate incentive scheme must be designed for exports and service sectors that have been devastated (airlines, tourism, hospitality, entertainment, logistics, textiles, leather). This could cost the exchequer between ₹1-lakh crore and ₹2-lakh crore.

Finding the money

In sum, the total incremental expenditure for the recovery package will be between ₹5-lakh crore to ₹6-lakh crore for FY2021. The next obvious question is: Where is the money for this?

The ₹5-lakh crore to ₹6-lakh crore recovery package can be funded largely through three sources – reallocation of some of the budgeted capital expenditure, expenditure rationalisation, and the oil bonanza.

Given the extraordinary situation the world is facing, it is important to reprioritise our expenditure plan in the near term. The government had budgeted more than ₹4-lakh crore in capital expenditure for FY2021. This will, unfortunately, have to be re-worked and some part of it allocated to the COVID-19 recovery package. For example, there is a budget of ₹40,000 crore for the revival of the telecom public sector units which can be delayed and the amount reallocated.

Similarly, the budget of nearly ₹1-lakh crore for national highways, roads and bridges can be rationalised to reallocate this to the recovery package. It is possible to extract a total of ₹1-lakh crore for the package out of the ₹4-lakh crore budgeted capital expenditure for FY2021.

Fifty-four ministries in the Union government of India made a demand for grants and a total of ₹30-lakh crore has been budgeted as total expenditure for FY2021. Of these, 13 large ministries account for as much of the Budget expendi-

ture as the remaining 41 ministries combined. There is ample scope to rationalise expenditure in these 41 ministries to extract ₹2-lakh crore for the recovery package.

The blessing in disguise for India is the dramatic fall in global crude oil prices – from \$40 a barrel to an estimated \$20 a barrel – which can help save nearly ₹2-lakh crore; this can be used to fund the recovery package or make up for shortfall of tax revenues.

To be sure, there will be a fiscal implication of this stimulus package and the fiscal deficit will rise driven both by increased expenditure and shortfall of revenues from the slowing economy. But now is not the time for fiscal conservatism.

Helping States

It is often asked why the States cannot embark on an economic stimulus plan. The States combined incur an expenditure of ₹40 lakh crore. There can be some sharing of expenditure of the recovery package of ₹1.2-lakh crore by the States. But after Goods and Services Tax (GST), States do not have the fiscal freedom to raise tax revenues on their own. They are largely dependent on the Centre for their tax revenues through direct taxes and GST.

In summary, India needs an immediate relief package of ₹5-lakh crore to ₹6-lakh crore targeted across all sections of society and sectors of the economy. Though daunting, the money for this can be found through detailed analysis and some bold thinking. The global economy is headed for a dark phase and it is our duty to rise to the challenge to secure the future of all Indians.

It is time to think big, bold and radical to pull our economy out of this crisis. This is India's moment for the equivalent of the "New Deal" that U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt launched in America after the Great Depression of 1929.

Praveen Chakravarty is a political economist and a senior office-bearer of the Congress party. The article has been written with inputs from former Finance Minister P Chidambaram and other economists and policy experts

The age of the neoliberal virus

In their response to the pandemic, countries have hardly evinced concern about the health and well-being of workers



TABISH KHAIR

The coronavirus that causes the COVID-19 disease is the first neoliberal virus in the world. To say so is not to reduce its dangers – particularly to the already-vulnerable, such as the old, the ill or the poor (who cannot isolate without starving) – but to criticise how it has been confronted by most governments across the world. This even applies to the better social welfare capitalist States of Europe – such as Denmark, where I live.

Hits and misses

On March 12, Denmark largely shut down for at least two weeks, as did many other European nations, with the exception of the United Kingdom and some others. There were about 500 known cases in Denmark then, out of a population of six million. This shutdown was necessary, and could have been implemented a few days earlier.

However, other necessary things were not and, at the moment I write this essay (17th

March), are still not being implemented.

One of the most crucial is testing. Denmark, like many other European nations, is testing only acute cases. If you have mild symptoms – and at least a hundred other diseases give you the same symptoms – you are simply expected to self-isolate (in doubt). At the same time, Denmark has sealed its borders – a political gesture in the absence of widespread internal testing. It is also surprising that while it takes two to four days for test results to become available in rich western nations, it takes only four hours in the afflicted regions of China.

So, what do we make of this? Evidently, it is a neoliberal response, despite the structure of social welfare and a very good health system in countries such as Denmark. A major burden of stopping the virus has been passed on to ordinary citizens, who now have to isolate themselves even if they just have the common cold, while the government issues directives but spends as little as possible. This is not surprising. For the past two decades, whenever corporations or significant banks have stumbled, national governments have pumped public money into them, while cutting public services (including health and research) to raise the money. This has hap-



pened everywhere. It is happening again.

Any days ago, Denmark provided ₹50-billion to its businesses to cope with the economic downturn caused by the virus crisis. Even before accepting that was a threat, Trump's U.S. provided \$1.5-trillion to its businesses and financial sectors. After finally declaring a national emergency, Mr. Trump added another \$700-billion for American corporations. The U.K., which is still partly in denial, is sanctioning \$900-billion for its businesses. As have other nations.

Such buffering of the national economy is necessary. But there are two major problems. Most of this money is not being strictly earmarked to preserve jobs, and the lowest wage earners are particularly ignored. Scandinavian Airlines has already suspended 10,000 jobs. Many other workers have been fired by corporations in different countries. But Bernie Sanders seems to be the only western politician who is insisting that handouts should be tied to pre-

serving jobs for the bottom 95%, not to buffering share values for the top 5%. The other problem is that almost no country has put in comparable amounts into the health, social and educational aspects of combating the pandemic.

Advantage China

There are rumours that the virus scare in China, added to the subterranean racism of the West when anything bad is reported in non-white nations, sent American and European investors on a panicked selling spree. They got rid of their controlling shares in significant Chinese sectors at a pittance, and these were bought up by the Chinese government or Chinese investors. Now, with China seemingly in control of the virus, it might be that it has also regained more control over its own economy and sectors. On the other side,

American Congress and Senate representatives sold off their shares, based on confidential briefings, just before the U.S. market fell. Once again, a neoliberal virus: a process that will continue in areas like digitalisation and robotisation, with effects on working rights.

The U.K. was the first country to openly concede that many people will need to die before the virus is controlled. Critics pointed out that, given the lack of sufficient ac-

tion to control the spread of the virus, what politicians were saying was this: "The virus mostly kills the old, the ill and the undernourished poor, and we do not really care whether such economically unproductive people live or die."

Politicians immediately backed down and said they were just doing their duty by not lying to the people.

But were they? Or were they being influenced by neoliberal logic: financial value is the only value that matters? The fact that 8,000 children die per day from the virus of hunger, whose vaccine (food) is available, is part of this neoliberal equation. Inevitably, the fight against other deadly diseases will suffer, as we scramble to protect ourselves from the coronavirus.

A lot still needs to be done to combat this pandemic. Xenophobia and nationalism will not help. A lot also needs to be done to prepare for similar pandemics that will undoubtedly occur in the future: just a century back, in 1918, the 'Spanish flu' (which started among British or allied soldiers) killed 50 million. But nothing much will be done unless we see this as the first neoliberal virus pandemic in the world, and act accordingly.

Tabish Khair is an Indian novelist and academic who teaches in Denmark

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Social security
There is no doubt that the poor people will find it difficult to stay afloat during the pandemic (Editorial page, "The perils of an all-out lockdown", March 23), but one should not forget that to survive in this double crisis, the government has chosen the lesser evil. If an all-out lockdown was not imposed then the situation would have been too serious to control. One can imagine the gravity of situation just by looking at what is happening in Italy and Iran. Of course, it is the responsibility of government to ensure that

the poor do not struggle, but others can help too – the rich, the industrialist class and religious institutions should come forward to help at this crucial juncture.

**SATYENDRA SRIVASTAVA,
New Delhi**

- There is no denying the fact that as the country is veering towards total lockdowns as a strategy, the not-so-privileged sections who need a daily income are going to face an uphill task to eke out a living. It was expected that when the Prime Minister sought the cooperation of the people for a janata curfew, he would

also spell out the ways and means of taking care of the downtrodden who constitute the majority. Now that the people had risen to the occasion and made the curfew a resounding success, it is also time for the government to reciprocate and utilise existing social security schemes to extend the required economic assistance. Along with the scare of a virus, the poor people should not be left to stare at the prospect of living on an empty stomach. The corporate industry may cry out for bailout packages, but the priority should be to look after the interests of daily-wage earners who have no

one else but the government to look to for relief.

**V. SUBRAMANIAN,
Chennai**

Change and how
The ugliness of the Congress government being toppled in Madhya Pradesh and a BJP government being installed in its place is nothing but stealing the mandate of the people. That the party is expanding its power base State by State, but by adopting all crooked manœuvres possible and with utter disregard for democratic norms is distressing.

Do not the tall leaders in the party have any shame or

conscience by openly indulging in very questionable methods to meet political ends? When will the Election Commission of India put an end to this? And when the higher judiciary call out this misuse of power? If such political absurdities continue unchecked, why hold elections at all? It may not be

CORRE

For a new generation of heroes in court

It is because of their righteous conduct and commitment to the Constitution that some judges stand out



GOPAL SANKARANARAYANAN

Shortly after Justice S. Muralidhar rose on his last day as a judge of the Delhi High Court, there was a snaking queue of lawyers waiting to not just bid farewell to him but to also say thank you. Justice Muralidhar is one of the rare few who is erudite, incisive, disciplined and yet self-effacing. His tenure on the bench was marked by a no-nonsense approach to finish cases, thereby making severe dents in the pendency figures at the court. His penultimate day in Delhi saw him doing what he does best – speak truth to power and soundly rebuff every attempt by the government to avoid affixing responsibility for the recent riots, all the while knowing that he would pay a price for his expedition. Sure enough, his transfer orders were issued overnight, depriving him of any further role.

Any person in those circumstances would have felt vexed and despondent. However, we found him welcoming us all with affection, unfazed by the drama. "I have my task cut out for me," he said, alluding to the large pendency of cases at Chandigarh. The moment was deeply emotional. As we were leaving, one of our companions (who had given consent to be appointed as a judge) said with a wry smile, "At least I found my role model, what about you?"

Need for a beau idéal

We are now at a time where we need heroes so that our institutions survive. It is not that the present epoch is exceptionally challenging for the higher judiciary. The last 50 years have seen the political playbook take a clear form – appoint a sympathiser, allow them to feel obliged, and then try to redeem the debt at an opportune time. It is merely that the manna has a new master, but the tricks remain the same. It is precisely to guide one through this morass that a beau idéal is necessary.

If one were to merely glance at the great judges over the ages – Vivian Bose, Hidayatullah, H.R. Khanna, M.N. Venkatachaliah, Ruma Pal, R.M.



The Chief Justice of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, Justice Ravi Shankar Jha, administers the oath of office to Justice S. Muralidhar (right) as Punjab and Haryana High Court Judge in Chandigarh. ■ PTI

Lodha, and many more – it was not merely their learning and innate brilliance that set them apart. Nor was it the fact that they were flawless – they would be the first to admit to their failings. What made them unique was their ability to inspire their peers by simple, righteous conduct. They were wedded to the judicial institution and through it, aligned with the constitutional fabric. In every decision they made, they were solemnly aware of the hopes of millions, and that any weakness of purpose would weaken the edifice.

As of this month, 395 out of 1,079 High Court posts are lying unoccupied. The venerable Lord Hailsham had referred to judicial office as "a privilege, a pleasure and a duty", but it appears that this aphorism is lost on the many able young women and men who have declined offers.

A primer

The travails of judicial life have been well catalogued, particularly withdrawal from society and the financial handicaps that accrue, but there are several who have sacrificed thriving litigation practices in order to offer their services to the public. These and others form the majority of the judges in our courts, and the few who are found to be otherwise need not discourage new candidates. What the new candidates do need, however, is a gentle primer on what pitfalls to avoid while they tread the path with gavel in hand.

The first is to eschew ambition. Lord Denning said, "Once a man be-

comes a judge, he has nothing to gain from further promotion". Such is the regard attached to the station, and for it to remain so, the attractions of Chief Justiceship or post-retirement sinecures ought to be cast aside. It is true that from the early years of Independence, judges have been nominated or elected to Parliament, appointed to gubernatorial office, and accepted diplomatic postings, none of which reflects the values that the court was to uphold. But then, it would be unfair to overlook the hundreds of others who have slogged for the judiciary with no other motive than to do justice, and who have overcome personal and professional challenges in doing so.

The second is to banish sycophancy. Flattery is often found to be a useful tool, either to toady up to judges in the collegium or to be at the receiving end of obsequious attention. As Burke said, it corrupts both the receiver and the giver. The reward is the office itself, and any puffery is utterly inconsequential.

All judges should exercise independence. Even a puise judge is a high constitutional officer in his own right. There ought to be no hesitation in disagreeing with a colleague's unjust opinion no matter the gap in experience or reputation. Where the position becomes untenable, there is always the softer option of recusing oneself from the Bench. Recusals are indeed utilised for less palatable purposes by less agreeable individuals, but those are aberrations not to be emulated.

It is important to be innovative. Digital screens and online databases have become integral tools to dispensing justice. Timetables are being set, costs imposed for tardiness, and adjournments are no longer *de rigueur*. Even set patterns of conduct are being questioned, reviewed and rebooted if they are broken or inefficient. For example, many younger presiding judges in the Supreme Court have broken with the tradition of finishing work on admission days before lunch, and have decided to stay on and dispose of cases finally.

They must show character. The Uncle Judge syndrome continues unabated. Even if many colleagues have relatives practising profitably in the same court without demur or receiving empanelments from corporations and governments, it does not create a new normal. As Charles Marshall said, "Integrity is doing the right thing when you don't have to – when no one else is looking or will ever know – when there will be no congratulations or recognition for having done so." Justice A.K. Patnaik and his son did precisely that, by ensuring that the latter did not commence practice at his home High Court and then shifted abruptly from the Supreme Court upon his father's arrival, thereby happily paying a price that must have been substantial.

Power and responsibility

Judges need fear nothing. With security of tenure and constitutional protections, a judge can remain unimpaired by external influence, least of all by the executive. They can soar to unimaginable heights with the wide power that is theirs. And this power, as the New Testament tells us, must be used wisely, "to admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all." [1 Thessalonians 5:14]

The true stars of India's justice system are the thousands of judges who toil over dusty briefs. It is they who will never make headlines and never seek it, but take a clear conscience and a straight spine to their well-earned rests. For their sake, and for the sake of this nation, the time has come to induct a new generation of heroes.

Gopal Sankaranarayanan is Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India

Long live the nation-state

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that the nation-state is not only alive but absolutely essential

MOHAMMED AYOOB

Paradoxical as it may sound, COVID-19, a global menace, has demonstrated the resilience of the nation-state often portrayed as antediluvian by the advocates of globalisation. It has ended up strengthening the relevance of national boundaries as the major instrument for the control of the spread of the virus. One of the first things that governments have done is to close borders and stop international travel. Even some members of the European Union have imposed entry restrictions on citizens of fellow members with a high number of infections. The precept "the nation state is dead" has been turned on its head and replaced with "long live the nation state".

The principal barriers

The COVID-19 outbreak has demonstrated that national boundaries are seen as the principal barriers to the spread of the disease. Air traffic across most state boundaries has either been halted or drastically curtailed and foreign citizens have been denied entry into national space. Even the search for a COVID-19 vaccine has become a matter of international competition. For the U.S., Europe and China, national pride is at stake in this race. Accusations have been made that the U.S. is attempting to poach European, especially German, advances towards finding a vaccine in an effort to outdo its competitors.

Self-perceived great powers such as the U.S. and China are especially worried that their inability to control the virus and find antidotes to it could not only lead to loss of face but also in the long run irretrievably erode their image as great powers with the capacity to set the international security and economic agendas. American commentators and policymakers are especially concerned that their failure to act quickly and lead the world in finding a solution to the crisis could even result in a reversal in the global pecking order with the U.S. losing its pre-eminent position to China. National pride and national security issues have thus become irretrievably intertwined with the search to combat

COVID-19.

All this is happening while simultaneously political leaders and pundits are making statements daily about the urgent need for international cooperation to prevent the spread of the disease. It is obvious that practice in the time of the pandemic is exactly the opposite of the orations about the need for global cooperation to combat it. Moves such as closures of borders and bans on commercial international flights make sense for the simple reason that the effective structure of governance is largely circumscribed by national boundaries. Laws are made and enforced by state authorities. Despite all the talk of global governance, supra-national bodies, whether regional or global, have very limited capacities to control the day-to-day lives of human beings. And a pandemic such as this needs effective methods of ordering the lives of citizens. Only the state and its representatives can perform this role.

Identifying with governments

Moreover, human beings obey orders not simply because they are issued but because they consider the issuing authority legitimate and, even more, identify with it at an emotional level. No matter how ineffective or bumbling national governments may be, their legitimacy as authoritative institutions is far greater than that of any competing institutions. People's emotional identification with them because of the sense of national identity drilled into their consciousness from an early age also make them comparatively far more effective institutions for the enforcement of orders especially in times of crisis.

It is no wonder therefore that the pandemic has also become a major source of resuscitation for the nation-state that for the last few decades has been facing challenges from advocates of globalisation. It has demonstrated that the nation-state is not only alive and well but absolutely essential particularly in times of crisis and that the rhetoric about its imminent demise is vastly exaggerated.

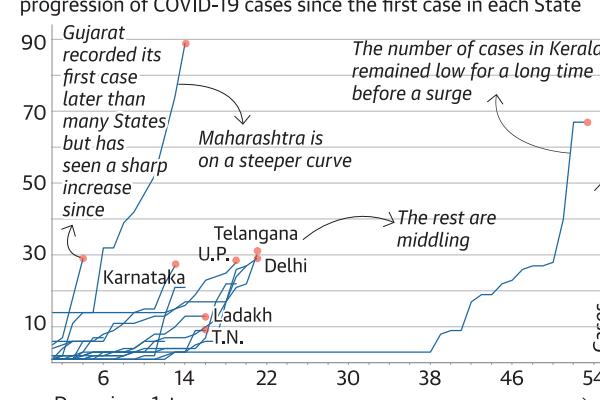
Mohammed Ayoob is University Distinguished Professor Emeritus of International Relations, Michigan State University



DATA POINT

COVID-19 across States

Case progression in States | Of 36 States/U.T.s, 23 have registered at least one case. The chart shows the day-wise progression of COVID-19 cases since the first case in each State



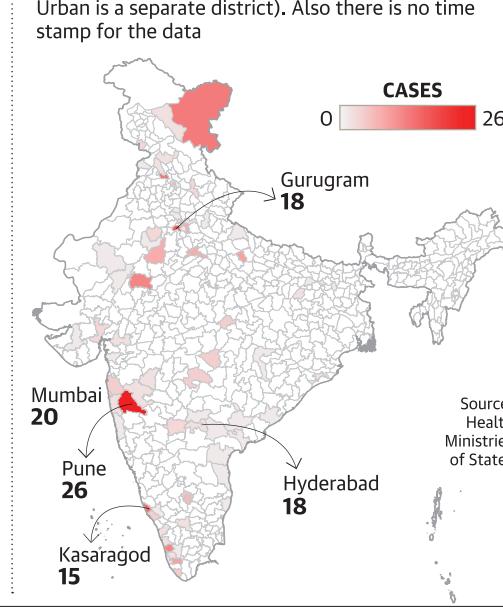
Testing rates | The data for samples tested were available for only some States. Among them, Kerala leads by a huge margin, while West Bengal has tested the least number of samples

States	Tests	Test date as of:	Tests per lakh population
Kerala	4,035	March 22	11.38
Karnataka	1,387	March 22	2.08
Maharashtra	1,666	March 22	1.37
Tamil Nadu	552	March 23	0.72
Gujarat	422	March 23	0.65
Andhra Pradesh	178	March 23	0.33
West Bengal	128	March 22	0.13

Nearly 36% of all COVID-19 cases in India have emerged from just Kerala and Maharashtra. These two States, which have lately seen an exponential rise in cases, also have relatively higher testing rates, with Kerala leading by a huge margin. Pune has recorded the most no. of cases among districts. By Sumant Sen and Vignesh R

District-wise cases | According to the latest but undated data available with the Union Health Ministry, 87 districts recorded at least one case. The map shows the cases recorded in these districts. The darker the shade, the higher the no. of cases.

The district data are unclear, however. For instance, under the U.T. of J&K, a district named "Kashmir" has been listed. However, Kashmir region has 10 different districts. In Karnataka, a district named "Bangalore" is listed. It is unclear whether the numbers pertain to Bengaluru city or to the rural parts (Bengaluru Urban is a separate district). Also there is no time stamp for the data



COVID-19: Many tasks at hand

India has a formidable challenge ahead as it needs to control the disease, combat misinformation and protect civil liberties



PADMASHREE GEHL SAMPATH

As COVID-19 continues its global rampage, India has taken drastic steps to stem its spread.

It has banned incoming international commercial flights till March 31, established rules of quarantine for those returning from abroad, and put its healthcare system on high alert. All this is justifiable given that its high population density makes 'social distancing' difficult. Also, a vast number of people depend on public healthcare, so tracking the spread of the disease is a formidable challenge. But to truly contain this pandemic, we need to make a distinction between scientific information that can support a balanced epidemiological response and misinformation that will adversely affect our efforts.

Access to healthcare

From an epidemiological perspective, the weakest links during a pandemic are testing, control, and engaged community participation. So, the first step is to shore up the healthcare system and, as the World Health Organization has recommended, create capacity in hospitals (public and private) for everyone who shows symptoms to access testing facilities. Providing full and free testing to all who need it is critical for effectively controlling the spread. The variable (or differing) experiences of Italy, France, Switzerland and the U.S. highlight that COVID-19 tests and treatment should particularly be available and accessible to people in high-risk groups (those suffering from HIV/AIDS, drug-resistant tuberculosis, or have underlying medical conditions) and from low-income backgrounds.

In this regard, although access to healthcare has improved to a large extent in India, the polarisation of healthcare facilities between the private and public sector does not provide the right framework to channel timely medical services during a pandemic. In the short-run, public healthcare services will be hard-pressed to provide the requisite support to low-income groups. In the absence of clear and targeted actions to replenish their capacity, they will not be able to cope with the pressures in the longer run. This needs to be urgently addressed, in the absence of which the poor – whom privatisation and the market economy have systematically excluded – will now be the weakest link in any effort to contain the virus.

Padmashree Gehl Sampath, PhD, is an expert on development economics

The inexorable rise of fake news is a big threat to engaged community participation and public morale. COVID-19 is already deeply affecting economic activity, and fake videos linking its spread to the meat and poultry sector have led to a low demand for these products and, consequently, large-scale losses. Advocating particular cures or linking the virus to factors such as stress without underlying scientific evidence can cause a lot of damage as such misinformation creates confusion and prevents communities from following instructions from authorities and being united against the threat. Fake news also diverts attention from grim realities. The truth is that the economy will suffer drastically, and we need a clear plan of how we will tackle this over months. The poor will be the worst affected, including informal workers, workers in the gig economy, or those running small businesses, and social safety nets are not adequately in place. Sharing information on how we can address these issues and promoting democratic deliberations should become a policy and social priority. A crucial role of the government at this time is to offset panic, and to promote a sense of solidarity, stability and confidence. There can be no room for empty political statements and no space for errors.

Civil liberties

There is also the risk that in the guise of disease tracking and control, we will fall into the trap of eroding more civil liberties. Lockdowns, curfews and travel bans are already a suppression of civil rights. We need to be clear of what measures we are embarking on, and how that affects all of us. For example, is it logical to suspend rights of our own people to return in case of absolute necessity, and does the epidemiological reason justify separating people from their families for any amount of time?

As we move ahead, we need to employ mechanisms that tackle the pandemic no doubt, but do so while protecting civil and personal rights of citizens. The Chinese have massively re-purposed their surveillance system for epidemiological control to reduce infection rates, and the U.S. government has announced that it is in talks with tech companies to access phone location data to map the spread of the virus. The U.S., a democracy, has many checks and balances in place to ensure that this kind of data is not misused, but India does not. Indians therefore need guarantees that the use of surveillance in the name of disease control does not end up serving other purposes, now or in the future.

Padmashree Gehl Sampath, PhD, is an expert on development economics

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 24, 1970

Lenin's followers got him wrong

An ideological scandal has emerged in Moscow over the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Lenin's birth next month. The original version of the 6,000-word theses by the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party last December attributes to Lenin a statement made by Otto Bauer, the Austrian Socialist leader and long-time antagonist of Lenin. The quotation was published by Pravda and other leading Soviet newspapers last December 23, a few days after the theses including the quotation had been read, discussed and approved by the Central Committee. According to reports reaching the United States the error was not discovered in Moscow. It went undetected until Walter Ulbricht, the East German leader, read the theses in his party newspaper, Neues Deutschland. He is said to have telephoned Moscow immediately in a state of outrage. There has been no public mention of the scandal in Moscow although it was said to be the talk of the town. When the theses were published in pamphlet form by the State political publishing house, Neues Deutschland, a few days after their appearance in Pravda the mistaken quotation was simply dropped from the document.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 24, 1920.

A homily to the teachers.

(From second Editorial)

The address delivered by the Hon'ble Sir P. Rajagopalachari before the Conference of teachers held under the auspices of the Madras Teachers' Guild in the Hindu High School on Friday last is of the nature of a homily to the teachers in the presidency coupled with a glowing eulogy to the educational

FROM PAGE ONE

Virus toll nine, tougher measures put in place

"Please save yourself by doing this, save your family, follow the instructions seriously. I request the State governments to get the rules and laws followed," Mr. Modi tweeted the morning after his call for a public appreciation of frontline responders to the crisis turned into mob revelry in many places.

As economic anxieties continue to mount alongside the health scare, Mr. Modi held a conference call with industry leaders. The Prime Minister tweeted that the government was "working to ensure economic stability," in consultation with all the concerned stakeholders. "Unless very very important, please do #StayHome..." the PM said, adding that he called upon industry leaders to continue following work from home as far as possible.

The government and industry were "conscious about informal sector's well-being," Mr. Modi tweeted. "We had extensive interactions on sectors like bank-

ing, finance, hospitality, tourism and infra. Industry leaders highlighted steps towards maintaining supply lines of essential items and medical equipment."

"There will be massive economic pain. But it is possible to handle the economic consequences than the loss of numerous lives," Congress leader and former finance minister P. Chidambaram said. He requested Chief Ministers to go on TV and explain the rationale behind the lockdown.

As West Bengal reported its first COVID-19 death, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee requested State BJP leaders to take up the need for more testing kits in the State with the Centre. She urged political parties to keep aside their differences and join hands in combating the outbreak.

Ms. Banerjee also urged people to follow the guidelines set by the government during the lockdown and not to come out of their homes.

(With PTI inputs)

Markets bleed, Sensex plunges 4,000 points

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) continued to be net sellers at nearly ₹3,000 crore, adding to their record sales of nearly ₹53,000 crore in the current month. Market players believe that the fall is not done yet as the number of coronavirus cases is only increasing with each passing day and as more States initiate lockdowns, companies will take a massive hit in the fourth quarter earnings.

"We believe that this is not yet done with and recovery will take a long time with lingering pain on the economy and investors," said Prasanna Pathak, Head - Equity & Fund Manager, Taurus Mutual Fund. "India was already on a sticky wicket with a rapidly slowing economy prior to the outbreak. Hence

investors are pinning their hope entirely on the monetary and fiscal measures which the government might take in the next few weeks," added Mr. Pathak.

Bigger than 2008? Incidentally, a media report on Monday quoted the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) secretary general Angel Gurria as saying that the economic shock of the coronavirus pandemic was bigger than the 2008 financial crisis and the world would take years to recover.

Back in India, foreign portfolio investors were net sellers at nearly ₹3,000 crore on Monday, adding to their record sales of nearly ₹53,000 crore in the current month.

T.N. to set up dedicated hospital for COVID-19

Meetings have also been scheduled with other heads of private hospitals and medical college hospitals in the State to explore the involvement of the private sector in treatment, testing and containment efforts of SARS-CoV-2 outbreak.

With this, the Minister said, the State has 10,000 beds in the government sector, and in the coming days, bed capacity would

be scaled up to 750-1500 in the private sector too. "It is likely to be among the highest in the country."

Dr. Vijayabaskar also added that a task force comprising of 10 senior doctors has been formed to study treatment protocols across the world, and monitor the changes being made.

They will suggest changes to the treatment protocols in the State as well, and when necessary.

Tamil Nadu lockdown from 6 p.m. today

District borders to be sealed, prohibitory orders issued

**B. KOLAPPAN
DENNIS S. JESUDASAN
CHENNAI**
In an all-out effort to battle COVID-19, Tamil Nadu will face a lockdown from 6 p.m. on Tuesday to 6 a.m. on April 1, with prohibitory orders under Section 144 of CrPC in place and all district borders closed.

The State invoked provisions of Section 2 of the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 to impose the restrictions.

The Puducherry Cabinet too recommended a lockdown from 9 p.m. on Monday to March 31.

The lockdown announced by Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami in the Assembly was followed by a detailed notification from Chief Secretary K. Shanmugam in the evening. "People are required to stay

at home and come out only for accessing basic and essential services, strictly follow social distancing norms and maintain a distance of 1m or 3 feet. Any congregation of more than five persons in public places is prohibited," he said.

The Chief Minister said all shops and commercial establishments would remain closed except those selling provisions, milk, vegetables, meat and fish. Pharmacies too were exempt.

He said that the Centre had sent out an advisory to combat COVID-19 in many districts of the country.

Except essential transport services, public and private transport, omnibuses, autos and taxis would not be allowed to ply.

All transportation, except for essential commute (and transportation of goods), between States and districts has been banned," he said.

There is no ban on the use of personal vehicles.

Chouhan sworn in as M.P. CM

Warns workers against celebrations, says priority is to contain COVID-19

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

BJP vice-president and Budhni MLA Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Monday took oath as the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh for a fourth term. The oath was administered by Governor Lalji Tandon at 9 p.m.

Earlier in the day, Shivraj Singh Chouhan was elected unopposed as the leader of the BJP Legislature Party paving the way for his appointment as Chief Minister.

Mr. Chouhan told legislators that his priority was to contain the COVID-19 outbreak.

"I will go to the Vallabh Bhavan [Secretariat] tonight itself to contain corona. Like a family, we need to fight this disease," Mr. Chouhan said.

Work in constituencies

Cautioning party workers against holding celebrations, Mr. Chouhan said, "This is not the time to celebrate or come outside houses. We need to start working immediately. We need to carry forward the sentiments expressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi."

Mr. Chouhan called upon the 107 BJP MLAs to tour their regions to spread



Change of guard: Governor Lalji Tandon swearing in Shivraj Singh Chouhan as Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, in Bhopal on Monday. ■ A.M. FARUQUI

awareness of the disease. "We have to fight this epidemic; there is no other priority. With all the strength, we will fight it. I want all your cooperation," he said.

At the meeting, Gopal Bhargava, former Leader of the Opposition, had proposed Mr. Chouhan's name, even as party general secretary Arun Singh and party State in-charge Vinay Sahasrabuddhe conducted the proceedings through video-conferencing from New Delhi.

Meanwhile, Kamal Nath, who resigned as Chief Minister on March 20, met Congress president Sonia Gandhi in New Delhi and briefed her on the political turmoil in the State.

"Let's make a new beginning," Mr. Chouhan said.

"For 15 years, I ran an efficient administration, but will make it better this time. We will not repeat any mistakes that may have happened in the past, and make Madhya Pradesh the number one State in the country."

'Reverse Cong. harm'
Mr. Chouhan further said he would work towards undoing the destruction wreaked upon the State by the previous Congress regime.

Meanwhile, Kamal Nath,

Cong. faults Centre on export of masks

Party also flays move of excise duty

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government over a provision in the Finance Bill and a reported delay in banning exports of medical equipment including masks and ventilators.

Party communications chief Randeep Surjewala accused the government of being "inhumane and heartless" to make profits by raising excise duties on petrol and diesel.

"People are losing livelihood and jobs and BJP government is profiteering from the crash in crude oil prices by raising excise duties. Don't push people to the brink," he tweeted.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman moved an amendment to the Finance Bill, 2020 that empowers the government with enabling provisions to raise the excise duty on petrol and diesel by ₹8 per litre each in future.

The amendment along with the Finance Bill was passed without a debate in the Lok Sabha.

In a separate tweet, the



Randeep Surjewala

Congress also accused the government of "criminal conspiracy" for not banning export of critical equipment like ventilators and surgical masks until March 19.

The Congress MP also tagged a news report which claimed that India did not stockpile the virus protective equipment for health workers despite WHO guidelines.

"Should you not sack Union Commerce Minister and Commerce Secretary for permitting exports of ventilators, surgical masks, face masks, raw material for masks/coveralls till March 19. This is criminal as our own doctors, nurses and patients are facing acute scarcity," said Mr. Surjewala.

Lok Sabha passes Finance Bill without debate

Budget session ends early because of the situation arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha was adjourned *sine die* on Monday after the passage of the Finance Bill, 2020 without any debate due to the situation arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic. The House was scheduled to adjourn on April 3.

Extraordinary situation

The decision was taken before the House convened at 2 p.m. (later than the usual time of 11 a.m. as flight disruptions delayed the arrival of MPs to Delhi) after a meeting was held by Speaker Om Birla with floor leaders of various parties.

Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Arjun Ram



Sense of the House: Lok Sabha members, led by Narendra Modi, applaud the work of health workers. ■ PTI

Meghwali said it was an extraordinary situation and that the Finance Bill needed to be passed.

As Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented amendments to the Bill for

passing, Congress Legislator Party leader Adhir Ranjan Choudhary said the Opposition was ready to pass it, but wanted an announcement from Ms. Sitharaman of a financial package that

would help mitigate the economic hardships resulting from the pandemic. Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam member T.R. Baalu also made the demand.

Ms. Sitharaman, however, did not speak on the issue.

Two more Bills

After the passage of the Bill, two more Bills for a National Security University was introduced by Minister of State for Home G. Kishen Reddy.

"We are ready to pass the Finance Bill but we need to hear some announcement of an economic package from the Finance Minister," Mr. Choudhary said.

Towards the end of the sitting, Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in the Lok

Sabha and members gave a standing ovation to the first responders, medical professionals, essential services workers and media for being at the forefront in the fight against COVID-19. The Speaker also mentioned the success of the "Janata Curfew".

He said that as MPs go back to their constituencies, they would be joining the fight against the virus.

He added that the Budget session, the first part of which began on January 31, saw 109 hours and 23 minutes of work done in 23 sittings. "As we go back to our constituencies, we need to take on the challenge of this pandemic and turn a negative atmosphere into a positive one," he said.

Rajya Sabha passes six Bills on last day of session



Solemn moment: MPs observing silence during an obituary reference in the Rajya Sabha on Monday. ■ PTI

House adjourned ahead of schedule due to COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha was adjourned *sine die* on Monday, ahead of the schedule, owing to the lockdown to contain the spread of COVID-19. In the Budget session that began on January 31, the Upper House passed only 12 Bills, six of which were passed on Monday, the last day of the curtailed session.

The six Bills include Finance Bill, 2020 which was passed without any discussion in both Houses of Parliament.

The last day of the session saw many vacant seats. Members of the Trinamool Congress, NCP, SP, BSP, Shiv Sena among others were absent. Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu read out the leave application of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who was absent due to ill-health.

The global outbreak of coronavirus with its origins in China is set to play havoc with the global economic outlook with our country be-

ing no exception. The challenge before the world is to minimise the damage caused by the corona outbreak," Mr. Naidu said at the close of the session.

Earlier in the day, he applauded the 14-hour lockdown of Sunday, calling it unprecedented and heartwarming. "The people of our country rose to the call of national duty in this hour of crisis," Mr. Naidu said.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Naidu also sought to chastise members for disrupting the House.

The Rajya Sabha clocked 76% productivity. He said that while members had the right to discuss and debate but did not have the right to disrupt.

Azad says J&K in 'political quarantine' for seven months

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha on Monday approved the Bill approving the Budget of ₹1 lakh crore for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir for 2020-21 and a separate Bill for the Budget for Ladakh. The Jammu and Kashmir Appropriation Bills were passed by the Lok Sabha on March 19. Opening the debate, Leader of the Opposition and Congress MP Ghulam Nabi Azad claimed that J&K economy had suffered huge losses since August last year when it was stripped off special status and statehood.

Kashmir Assembly and not in Parliament. "While the rest of the country is experiencing lockdown currently, Jammu and Kashmir has been in a political quarantine for over seven months now. This political quarantine, unlike the coronavirus, is not a natural one but a manmade one," Mr. Azad said. Ghulam Nabi Azad claimed that J&K economy had suffered huge losses since August last year when it was stripped off special status and statehood.

India winding up evacuation flights for transit passengers

Aircraft with 113 from Malaysia lands in Chennai; special flights may be arranged for 400 in Iran

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

After being stuck at the Kuala Lumpur airport for six days, a group of 113 Indians finally made their way back to Chennai on Monday night. The government, however,

was trying to bring them all back," said Dammu Ravi, Additional Secretary in the External Affairs Ministry who is coordinating the evacuation effort.

"We brought back those who were stuck in Amsterdam on Sunday night, and we hope to bring home the rest," he added. A total of 17 Indians are stuck at London's Heathrow airport, and about 400 Indians are in Iran, for whom special flights may be arranged, after which no special flights are being planned, officials said.

Among those coming from Kuala Lumpur were nearly 80 employees from

Tata Consultancy Services, who travelled to Malaysia on an assignment on March 1.

Last week, they were issued tickets on a Sri Lankan airline flight to Colombo, but were turned away just before they boarded the plane, after the Indian Health Ministry and the DGCA reportedly refused clearance. Some 20 of them who did fly to Colombo were forced to return by the same flight, and spent the next few days and nights on the carpeted floor in one section of the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA).

"Despite all the hardships, they refused to return to Kuala Lumpur city in case they missed a chance to leave. Above all, they feared

being abandoned by India, and having nowhere to go in Malaysia, where the coronavirus situation has worsened," R. Venkataraman, a relative of one of the TCS employees on board, told *The Hindu*, expressing relief that they were coming home.

Housed in hostels
However, the Air Asia flight on Monday was unable to bring back hundreds of others who the Indian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur said it had taken to "different hostels, hotels...in close coordination with local NGOs and

Chidambaram supports lockdown

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram on Monday thanked the Chief Ministers of the States that had announced a lockdown, and asked them to go on the television to explain why such a step was necessary.

In a series of tweets, Mr. Chidambaram said there would be "massive economic pain" but it could be handled. Otherwise "numerous deaths" would result from the COVID-19 outbreak.

He also offered suggestions to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on how the government could go about enforcing the lockdown.

"Lockdown is not a holiday. It is to enforce social distancing and self-isolation. CMs must go on TV and explain why strict observance of lockdown is an imperative," Mr. Chidambaram said.

Mr. Chidambaram offered some key suggestions such as doubling the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Samman Nidhi, deferring tax payment dates.

He suggested cutting indirect taxes, especially some GST rates, monthly cash transfers to the poor families, giving 10 kg of rice/wheat absolutely free and "guarantees and fiscal incentives to employers".

Announce special package, says Yechury

Moratorium on bank loans demanded

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury has urged the government to institute a special package to tackle health and economic challenges that have arisen due to the Coronavirus outbreak.

In the letter, made public by the party, Mr. Yechury argued that it is not the time to be "preoccupied by concerns to maintain fiscal discipline but to use our resources for saving lives".

He wrote, "Many countries in the world have announced that the government will guarantee the payment of at least 80% of

Don't lay off workers or cut salaries: Ministry

EPFO issues instructions on timely pension payments

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Labour and Employment Ministry has been reaching out to employers in the public and private sectors, asking them not to lay off workers or cut salaries due to the ongoing lockdown caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

In letters to the Secretaries of Central Ministries, State Chief Secretaries and employers' associations sent over a few days up to Monday, the Ministry said employers were asked to "ex-

COVID-19

tend their cooperation by not terminating employees" in this "challenging situation".

The Ministry said if any worker took leave, it should be "deemed to be on duty without any consequential deduction of wages". The same should apply to those working in an establishment that is ordered to shut down, the letter said.

"The termination of employee from the job or reduction of wages in this scenario would further deepen the crises and will not only weaken the financial condition of the employee but also hamper their morale to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Minister tweeted that the National Real Estate Development Council's advice to

hamper their morale to fight the epidemic," the letter stated.

The Ministry tweeted on Monday: "Seeing the Coronavirus pandemic, advisory has been issued by the Labour Ministry to all the employers of public/private establishments to coordinate by not terminating their employees, particularly casual or contractual workers from job or reduce their wages."

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation said in a statement that it had instructed its field offices to generate and reconcile the pension amounts and details for March by Wednesday.

The Finance Ministry announced that contractual labour and outsourced staff working for the Central government would be treated as "on duty" and paid as usual with no penalty.

members should be followed. NAREDCO had told real estate firms to ensure hygiene at construction sites, provide groceries for 15-30 days to workers and not delay payments. Mr. Puri said that it was important for builders to follow the apex body's advice and not delay "the salaries and payments of the staff, workers and other dependents."

On behalf of State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu Limited, sealed tenders are invited under "Two Cover System" for the following work from Class-I State level Contractors registered in State/ Central or Quasi Government Organisations having experience in similar nature of works. Tenders will be received upto 3.00 PM on 09.04.2020 and the same will be opened on the same day at 3.30 PM.

Name of Work : Rejuvenation of Dump Site into Model Park at Ajith Singh Nagar (Estimate Amount Rs.5.00 Crores). Contact : S.E (P), VMC, Vijayawada - 99639 95283

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

Download of bid documents starts from : 24-03-2020 from 03.30 P.M.

Last date / time for receipt of tenders : 07-04-2020 up to 4.00 P.M.

Sd/-
CHIEF ENGINEER

STATE INDUSTRIES PROMOTION CORPORATION OF TAMILNADU LIMITED

19-A, RUKMINI LAKSHMIPATHY ROAD, EGMORE, CHENNAI - 600 008.

CIN U7499TN1971SGC005967

Short-Term Tender Notice NIT.No.46/CW/DO/T.No.66/2019-20 Dt.23.03.2020

For and on behalf of State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu Limited, sealed tenders are invited under "Two Cover System" for the following work from Class-I State level Contractors registered in State/ Central or Quasi Government Organisations having experience in similar nature of works. Tenders will be received upto 3.00 PM on 09.04.2020 and the same will be opened on the same day at 3.30 PM.

Name of Work	Approx. value of work	EMD
Exterior Renovation of SIPCOT & TIDCO Premises at Egmore, Chennai - 600 008	Rs.399.00 lakhs	Rs.2,09,500/-

The tender Schedule can be Downloaded at free of cost from the website: www.tenders.tn.gov.in and www.sipcot.in

DIPR/1528/TENDER/2020

SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,
SIPCOT, CHENNAI-8

SD/-

CHIEF ENGINEER

Sd/-

CHIEF ENGINEER (EAST) CUM ADDL. SECRETARY, C.A.D., JAIPUR

Phone 0141-2709487, Email- cocadjaipur@rajasthan.gov.in

No.: F-147/CE(E)CAD/T/NIT/2019-20/4158

Date:- 19/3/20

E-Tender Notice No.05/2019-20

On behalf of Governor of Rajasthan E-Tenders are invited from "AA" Class category or equivalent contractors/firms registered in CAD/Water Resources Department and State Government/Other State Government/Authorized organizations of Central Government/ CPWD/Post and Telegraph department/Railway etc. for the Balance Works of 2 Nos. of Packages of Revamping & Rehabilitation Work of Distribution System of Chambar CAD Kota amounting to Rs 1516.22 Lac. The tender documents & other details may be downloaded and uploaded from the following website:-

1. <http://www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>

2. www.diproline.org

3. <http://www.sppr raj.nic.in>

UBN:-

1. CAD 1920 WLOB 00222

2. CAD 1920 WLOB 00223

(Ashim Markandey)

Chief Engineer (East) Cum Additional Secretary C.A.D., Jaipur

CIN: U85110KA1970SGC001919

No. KPCL/2019-20/PS/WORK_INDENT9241/Call-2 Date:20.03.2020

ABSTRACT BID NOTIFICATION

(Through e-Procurement Portal Only) (Two Cover System)

KPCL invites bids from the eligible bidders having adequate experience for "Design, Engineering, Manufacturing, Quality surveillance, Testing at manufacture's works, Packing, Supply, Delivery F.O.R Bidadi Site, Erection, Testing, Commissioning and conducting performance guarantee tests with all civil, structural, mechanical, electrical, control & instrumentation works including Two years of operation and maintenance of 11.5 MW Waste to Energy Plant at Bidadi, Ramanagar Dist. Bengaluru-562109" through GoK e-procurement portal <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>. The brief bid notification containing the pre-qualifying criteria for the bidders, EMD, Calendar of bid activities and other details can be accessed from e-Procurement portal. Those who have not registered in e-Procurement portal www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in may do so in order to participate. Further details can be had from the Chief Engineer (O&M) YCCP, KPCL, YCCP Premises, SN Halli Post, Doddaballapura Road, Yelahanka, Bengaluru - 560064. Tel No: 080-2846094, Fax No: 080-28460302 Mob: 9480682800/ 9480682801 / 9480682821 e-mail: cegswkpc@gmail.com / cegswkpc@karnataka.gov.in website: www.karnatakpower.com

Routine/ breakdown maintenance works for turbine auxiliaries-BFPs, HP heaters, PRDS, deaerator, centrifuge units, sump pumps, compressors, ACW/ ACWPB/ CEP/ dosing pumps/ LP heaters/ HP by pass system & servicing of actuator of valves of u # 5,6,7 & 8 for the period of one year

Amount Put to tender: Rs.55,78,210/- EMD: Rs.1,40,000/-

Interested bidders may submit the bids through e-procurement portal www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in only. Last date for submission of Tender: 28.03.2020 @ 16:00 Hrs. Opening of Technical bid: 30.03.2020 @ 16:30 Hrs. Opening of Price bids of pre-qualified tenderers: 31.03.2020 after 16:30 Hrs. The detailed Notification regarding subject enquiry in the e-procurement process can be obtained by logging on to GoK e-procurement website <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>. Further details can be obtained from the office of the Executive Engineer (TM-2) / Superintending Engineer (MM-2), KPCL, RTPS, Shakthi Nagar - 584170, Raichur Dist., Karnataka, Mobile No. 9449597967 / 9449596550.

Thermal Insulation works for Unit-8 (OH-4)

Amount Put to tender: Rs.4,85,681/- EMD: Rs.12,500/-

Routine/ breakdown maintenance works for turbine auxiliaries-BFPs, HP heaters, PRDS, deaerator, centrifuge units, sump pumps, compressors, ACW/ ACWPB/ CEP/ dosing pumps/ LP heaters/ HP by pass system & servicing of actuator of valves of u # 5,6,7 & 8 for the period of one year

Amount Put to tender: Rs.55,78,210/- EMD: Rs.1,40,000/-

Interested bidders may submit the bids through e-procurement portal www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in only. Last date for submission of Tender: 28.03.2020 @ 16:00 Hrs. Opening of Technical bid: 30.03.2020 @ 16:30 Hrs. Opening of Price bids of pre-qualified tenderers: 31.03.2020 after 16:30 Hrs. The detailed Notification regarding subject enquiry in the e-procurement process can be obtained by logging on to GoK e-procurement website <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>. Further details can be obtained from the office of the Executive Engineer (TM-2) / Superintending Engineer (MM-2), KPCL, RTPS, Shakthi Nagar - 584170, Raichur Dist., Karnataka, Mobile No. 9449597967 / 9449596550.

Thermal Insulation works for Unit-8 (OH-4)

Amount Put to tender: Rs.4,85,681/- EMD: Rs.12,500/-

Routine/ breakdown maintenance works for turbine auxiliaries-BFPs, HP heaters, PRDS, deaerator, centrifuge units, sump pumps, compressors, ACW/ ACWPB/ CEP/ dosing pumps/ LP heaters/ HP by pass system & servicing of actuator of valves of u # 5,6,7 & 8 for the period of one year

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Thermal Insulation works for Unit-8 (OH-4)

Amount Put to tender: Rs.55,78,210/- EMD: Rs.1,40,000/-

Routine/ breakdown maintenance works for turbine auxiliaries-BFPs, HP heaters, PRDS, deaerator, centrifuge units, sump pumps, compressors, ACW/

Pandemic is accelerating, says WHO

To win, we need to attack the virus with aggressive and targeted tactics, says agency chief Tedros

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

The new COVID-19 pandemic is clearly "accelerating", the World Health Organization (WHO) warned on Monday, but said it was still possible to change its trajectory by going on the attack. The remarks came as the number of deaths soared past 15,000, with more than 3,41,000 people infected worldwide, according to a tally compiled by AFP from official sources.

"The pandemic is accelerating," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a virtual news conference. He said it took 67 days from the beginning of the outbreak in China in December for the virus to infect the first 1,00,000 people worldwide. In comparison, it took 11 days for the second 1,00,000 cases and just four days for the third 1,00,000 cases, he said. The number of officially recorded cases is believed to represent only a fraction of the true number of infections, with many countries only testing the most severe cases in need of hospitalisation. "We are not helpless bystanders. We can change the trajectory of this pandemic," Mr. Tedros said.

Physical distancing could buy time by slowing down the spread, "but they are defensive measures that will not help us to win," he warned. "To win, we need to attack the virus with aggressive and targeted tactics," he said, reiterating a call for "testing every suspected case, isolating and caring for every confirmed case and tracing and quarantining every close contact."

On lockdown mode

Some 1.7 billion people have been asked to stay home in over 50 countries and territories around the world, ac-



Rescue efforts: Medical staff with a COVID-19 victim at the Mulhouse civil hospital, France. ■AP

cording to an AFP tally on Monday. Some countries have imposed mandatory lockdown measures, while others have issued stay-at-home recommendations to stem the spread of the virus.

Lockdowns in parts of India alone have kept some 700 million people hemmed in. At least 34 more countries and territories have also established mandatory lockdown measures ordering people to stay in their homes, accounting for some 659 million people. France, Italy, Argentina, the U.S. State of California, Iraq and Rwanda have also rolled out enforced lockdowns. Greece is the most recent country to impose mandatory confinement measures, which came into effect on Monday morning. Colombia will enforce an obligatory lockdown on Tuesday and New Zealand will follow suit on Wednesday. In most cases, it is still possible for people to go to work, buy essentials or seek medical care.

Gotabaya sets up relief fund

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Monday set up a special fund to combat COVID-19, inviting contributions locally and internationally. President Rajapaksa has instructed to donate LKR 100 million from the President's Fund for this purpose, his office said in a statement.

Authorities, including a national task force leading the response to COVID-19, are yet to share details of the government's spending so far in its efforts to contain the pandemic.

As on Monday, Sri Lanka had at least 91 confirmed cases of COVID-19, while nearly 600 persons with suspected symptoms were under observation. The first local, who was detected positive earlier this month, has fully recovered and was

discharged from hospital on Monday, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa said in the tweet.

The Prime Minister has also convened an all-party leaders' meeting on Tuesday to discuss next steps.

An island-wide curfew is in place this week – with small windows on select days in between – and police have arrested over 1,600 people on charges of violating the curfew that came into effect on Friday evening.

"We have been insisting that people remain confined to their homes and avoid visiting even their neighbours. It is very crucial that we follow this diligently to arrest the spread. And enforcing a curfew has certainly helped," police spokesman Ajith Rohana told *The Hindu*.

S. Korea reports fewest cases since Feb. 29

REUTERS
SEOUL

South Korea reported on Monday its lowest number of new virus cases and the extended downward trend in daily infections since the peak on February 29 has boosted hopes that Asia's largest outbreak outside China may be abating.

The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) said there were 64 new cases on Monday, taking the national tally to 8,961. The death toll rose to 118, from 110.

The new numbers marked the 12th day in a row the country has posted new infections of around 100 or less.

Germany's infection curve flattening

REUTERS
BERLIN

Signs are emerging that the exponential upwards curve in new COVID-19 infections in Germany is flattening off for the first time thanks to social distancing measures, the head of Germany's public health institute said on Monday. Early testing had helped the health authorities and restrictions on public gatherings in places over the last week appeared to be working, said Lothar Wieler, head of the Robert Koch Institute.

As of Sunday, there were 22,672 cases in Germany, with 86 deaths, the Robert Koch Institute for infectious diseases said.

Italy bans domestic travel

Numbers will continue to grow, warns Prime Minister Conte

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

ROME

Italy banned domestic travel and shut down a range of industries on Monday in a last-ditch push against the spread of a virus that has killed nearly 5,500 people in a month.

The wave of restrictions is designed to ensure Italy gets through a 10-day stretch in which the rate of deaths and infections is supposed to finally drop.

"Everyone's effort is needed," Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte told reporters. "The country's social and economic strength is at stake."

Italian health officials reported that the rate of in-

crease in both deaths and declared infections slowed on Sunday – albeit from a high base. There were 651 fatalities on Sunday compared with Saturday's record 793 deaths while the number of new reported infections fell to 5,560 from 6,557. But Mr. Conte told Italians it was too early to let down their guard.

"We have not reached the most acute phase of the infection and the numbers will continue to grow," he said. "Much depends on the responsible behaviour of each one of us."

Mr. Conte's latest order comes after he caused confusion on Saturday by order-

ing all "non-essential" factories and trades to shut until April 3. The government released a long list of industries and professions that would still be allowed – including translation services and computer repair shops.

The initial restrictions placed on Lombardy – the northern region at the centre of the Italian epidemic that includes the financial capital Milan – expired on Sunday and the national measures are set to end on Wednesday. "If everyone – and I stress everyone – respects our bans, we will emerge from this very difficult test first," said Mr. Conte said on Monday.

China sees drop in imported cases

Many of them are students returning from other nations

REUTERS
BEIJING/SHANGHAI

Mainland China on Monday reported a drop in its daily tally of new COVID-19 cases, reversing four straight days of increases, as the capital, Beijing, ramped up measures to contain the number of infections arriving from abroad.

China had 39 new confirmed cases on Sunday, the National Health Commission said, down from 46 a day earlier. All the new ones involved travellers arriving from abroad, many of them Chinese students returning home.

Beijing reported 10 new imported cases, the National Health Commission said, down from 13 a day earlier.

City authorities said cases came from Spain, Britain, France, the U.S. and Pakistan.

Infections from abroad in Beijing hit an all-time daily high of 21 on March 18.

Shanghai and Guangzhou have also said all arriving international passengers will be tested to screen for the virus, expanding a pro-



Food for thought: A worker taking orders outside a bakery in Beijing on Monday. ■AP

gramme that previously only applied to those coming from heavily affected countries.

In Wuhan, the epicentre of the outbreak, authorities have eased tough lockdown measures as the city saw no new infections for the fifth day.

Downtown Wuhan remains the only high-risk area in Hubei province, with other cities and counties classified as low-risk.

Pompeo in Kabul to break deadlock

Both Ghani and Abdullah claim Afghan presidency

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KABUL

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo arrived in the Afghan capital on Monday to help break a poisonous political deadlock that has further riven the country just as the Taliban is increasing attacks and a rise in COVID-19 cases threatens an already-floundering peace process.

Afghanistan has been enmeshed in a political crisis since elections last year left the country in disarray due to numerous fraud claims that ultimately saw two men claiming the presidency and holding separate inaugurations.



U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, with former Afghan Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah in Kabul on Monday. ■AP

Department official said, according to a pool report.

Mr. Pompeo has come "to help push, to encourage and to point out what our expectations are and what that assessment is if they don't do the right thing".

Welcomed by Khalilzad

The top U.S. diplomat was welcomed by special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad – the lead U.S. negotiator in recent talks with the Taliban – after arriving at Kabul airport.

"We have tried... for the last several weeks to try to find the formula and encourage them to come to an agreement," a senior State

after the Afghan government and Taliban held their first discussion on prisoner exchanges – a key step in a broader push for peace following a withdrawal deal signed between Washington and the militants. The agreement established a framework for bringing to an end America's longest war. The spat between Mr. Abdullah and Mr. Ghani, along with the world's preoccupation with COVID-19, has sparked fears the window for a peace deal is closing fast.

The visit comes just a day

Fear and foreboding in New York City

With more than 12,000 cases, it has emerged as the COVID-19 epicentre in the U.S.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NEW YORK

Anxiety ratcheted up across New York, the epicentre of America's COVID-19 pandemic, on Monday with streets eerily quiet at the start of the working week as officials warned the crisis will worsen.

As the number of deaths in the United States from COVID-19 soars towards 500, the Big Apple finds itself at Ground Zero in the fight to stem the fast-breaking outbreak.

With millions of residents ordered to stay at home, all non-essential businesses shut and schools closed, the city that never sleeps is bedding down for a long and uncertain slumber.

Uncertainty in the air

For Christian Hofer – and his wife and two young children – the most difficult thing is not knowing how long the unprecedented measures are going to last. "It goes from a range of emotions, from feeling very nervous



Combat mode: A member of Joint Task Force arrives to sanitise an area in New Rochelle, New York, on Monday. ■REUTERS

about the situation to feeling like how absurd it is," said the 42-year-old Wall Street trader.

New York City is now the focal point of America's outbreak, with more than 12,000 confirmed cases and almost 100 deaths, after the outbreak first spread in Washington State.

As only non-essential workers, such as pharmacists, grocery store workers

and nurses and doctors, headed to work on Monday, rush hour in the city was more like a mid-afternoon trickle of traffic.

New York's famous yellow cabs were out but passengers appeared few and far between with sidewalks virtually deserted. Underground, normally packed subway cars trundled along close to empty.

Gray skies and soaking wet weather added to the fear and foreboding that hung over America's financial capital, which has been through its fair share of disasters, notably 9/11.

Mental health issues
"I'm scared for me and patients that this could go on" for months, said Lucy, a psychologist who declined to give her surname. Anxiety and depression "all gets heightened at a time like this," she added, one of the few hardy souls out and about on Manhattan's Upper East Side.

In Florida, which has 1,000 confirmed cases and 13 deaths, the Governor opened a centre where the elderly can drive their golf carts to get tested.

U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams warned that the numbers across America were going to get worse before they get better. "We really need everyone to understand this is serious, to lean into what they can do to flatten the curve."

Scientists identify drug candidates against virus

They investigated 26 of the SARS-CoV-2's 29 genes, which direct production of the viral proteins

CARL ZIMMER

Nearly 70 drugs and experimental compounds may be effective in treating the COVID-19 disease, a team of researchers reported on Sunday night. Some of the medications are already used to treat other diseases, and repurposing them to treat COVID-19 may be faster than trying to invent a new anti-viral from scratch, the scientists said.

The list of drug candidates appeared in a study published on the website bioRxiv. The researchers have submitted the paper to a journal for publication.

To come up with the list, hundreds of researchers embarked on an unusual study of the coronavir-



A researcher working on a vaccine against COVID-19 in Copenhagen, Denmark. ■AP

ed diseases as cancer, Parkinson's disease and hypertension. Intriguingly, some of the possible treatments are drugs used to attack parasites. And the list includes antibiotics that kill bacteria by gumming up the cellular machinery they use to build proteins. But some of those drugs also attach to human proteins.

The new study raises the possibility that this side effect might turn out to be an anti-viral treatment.

One drug on the list, chloroquine, kills the single-celled parasite that causes malaria. Scientists have long known that it can also attach to a human cellular protein called the sigma-1 receptor. And that receptor is also the target of the virus.

24 drugs identified

Researchers sought drugs that also latch onto the human proteins that the virus seems to need to enter and replicate in human cells. The team eventually identified 24 drugs approved by the Food and Drug Administration to treat various diseases.

rus, also called SARS-CoV-2. To infect a lung cell, the virus must insert its genes, co-opting the cell's own genetic machinery. The cell begins to produce viral proteins, which are used to produce millions of new viruses. Each of those viral proteins must be able to latch onto the ne-

cessary human proteins for the process to work.

In the new study, the scientists investigated 26 of the virus's 29 genes, which direct production of the viral proteins

and diseases as cancer, Parkinson's disease and hypertension. Intriguingly, some of the possible treatments are drugs used to attack parasites. And the list includes antibiotics that kill bacteria by gumming up the cellular machinery they use to build proteins. But some of those drugs also attach to human proteins.

U.S. hiker survives 200-feet fall

Ashley Furness was saved by rocks on Mount Washington

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BRETTON WOODS

A hiker descending Mount Washington who fell about 200 feet (60.9 m) and got hurt was rescued with the help of the Cog Railway train that takes visitors up and down the summit during tourism season.

New Hampshire Fish and Game conservation officers said the hiker, Ashley Furness, 35, of Bartlett, was with a companion on Sunday afternoon when she slipped and fell, striking several rocks.

She was descending along the railway tracks and was about 2 miles up from the railway station.

"It was these rocks that ultimately saved her from plunging into the ravine, a fall that would have proved fatal," Lt. Mark Ober, Jr. said. "Her companion was able to descend to her position, place a call for help and keep her warm with a space blanket until rescuers arrived."

Rescuers could only get so far using an ATV and snowmobiles. There was no snow. Crews hiked the rest of the way and reached Ms. Furness after several hours, but injuries were severe and she

couldn't walk, said Lt. Ober. Due to the steep, icy, terrain and remote location, the Cog Railway prepared a train to retrieve Ms. Furness. In the meantime, a rescue belay was set up with ropes and other gear to hoist Ms. Furness up to the tracks. The train reached her and returned to a waiting ambulance at the base around 11 p.m. on Sunday.



MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	25981	-13.15
US Dollar	76.20	-1.33
Brent oil	26.00	-4.76

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	207.80	-48.60
Asian Paints	1498.45	-244.50
Axist Bank	308.65	-11.50
Bajaj Auto	1935.55	-306.75
Bajaj Finserv	4621.05	-1612.00
Bajaj Finance	2266.15	-685.75
Bharti Airtel	407.35	-55.30
BPCL	269.35	-48.50
Britannia Ind	2137.85	-329.95
Cipla	375.25	-17.55
Coal India	127.85	-4.95
Dr Reddys Lab	2768.40	-128.85
Eicher Motors	13705.90	-1972.55
GAIL (India)	78.00	-2.80
Grasim Ind	433.25	-96.15
HCL Tech	417.15	-27.75
HDPC	1520.70	-233.25
HDPC Bank	771.55	-111.30
Hero MotoCorp	1616.00	-199.70
Hindalco	87.90	-17.60
Hind Unilever	1869.50	-182.00
ICICI Bank	284.00	-61.70
IndusInd Bank	336.45	-103.90
Bharti Infralet	143.40	-4.75
Infosys	526.45	-58.75
Indian Oil Corp	80.75	-9.85
ITC	154.30	-21.20
JSW Steel	144.40	-31.35
Kotak Bank	1098.25	-164.10
L&T	724.05	-140.65
M&M	293.40	-29.20
Maruti Suzuki	4220.35	-858.85
Nestle India Ltd.	12944.65	-1200.85
NTPC	76.40	-4.85
ONGC	60.40	-11.95
PowerGrid Corp	153.00	-4.25
Reliance Ind	884.05	-133.90
State Bank	181.60	-28.25
Shree Cement	16959.40	-1944.25
Sun Pharma	324.50	-40.75
Tata Motors	66.20	-11.10
Tata Steel	271.15	-26.60
TCS	1669.70	-127.75
Tech Mahindra	487.20	-89.15
Titan	800.95	-103.95
UltraTech Cement	3054.85	-519.00
UPL	254.60	-45.55
Vedanta	62.65	-12.80
Wipro	170.15	-9.05
Zee Entertainment	122.00	-22.90

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	76.00	76.32
Euro	81.11	81.45
British Pound	87.45	87.82
Japanese Yen (100)	68.59	68.88
Chinese Yuan	10.68	10.72
Swiss Franc	76.88	77.22
Singapore Dollar	51.90	52.13
Canadian Dollar	52.47	52.70
Malaysian Ringgit	17.08	17.16

Source: Indian Bank

SEBI defers new norms for brokers, MFs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has eased certain compliance requirements for brokers and mutual funds as the markets are witnessing extreme volatility due to COVID-19.

In a release issued on Monday, the capital markets regulator stated that the penal provision for non-collection or short collection of margins by brokers, which was to be implemented from April 1, will be deferred till April 30.

Further, brokers who are currently working from alternative locations have been exempted from the penal provisions for not maintaining call records of orders till March 31.

Brokers, many of whom are working from home, would be placed in risk-reduction mode only after 90%, instead of the current 85%, of their capital is utilised for margin requirements.

For mutual funds, SEBI has deferred implementation of the new risk management framework for liquid schemes, the revised limits exposure norms for debt funds and the mark-to-market valuation practice for money market and debt schemes till May 1.

Ashok Leyland to buy lower stake in finance arm

To acquire 6.99%, versus 19% earlier

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Commercial vehicle manufacturer Ashok Leyland Ltd. (ALL) said it had scaled down the quantum of buy-back of shares of its subsidiary, Hinduja Leyland Finance Ltd. (HLFL), to 6.99% from the earlier 19%, following feedback from minority shareholders.

In absolute terms, it works out to ₹390.49 crore, compared with the earlier proposal of ₹1,200 crore. It represents the stake of investors Everfin Holdings and Hindujia Group (which had purchased the initial tranch-

Centre amends law to enable excise duty increase on fuel

Changes made to Finance Bill to raise the levy on petrol, diesel by ₹8 per litre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The government on Monday amended the law to get enabling powers to raise excise duty on petrol and diesel by ₹8 per litre each in future.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman moved an amendment to the Finance Bill, 2020, to raise the limit up to which the government can raise special excise duty on petrol and diesel to ₹8 per litre each in future.

The amendment, along with the Finance Bill, was passed without a debate in the Lok Sabha.

The government had on March 14 raised excise duty on petrol and diesel by ₹3 per litre.



On upswing: The government had on March 14 raised excise duty on petrol and diesel by ₹3 per litre. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

hike included ₹2 a litre increase in special additional excise duty and ₹1 in road and infrastructure cess.

This hike took the special additional excise duty to maximum permissible in law – ₹10 in case of petrol and ₹4 in case of diesel.

Now, through an amendment of the Eighth Schedule

of the Finance Act, this limit has been increased to ₹8 per litre in case of petrol and ₹12 in case of diesel.

No hike planned for now

This is an enabling provision and no change in excise duty is being done as of now, an official said.

The amendment gives

powers to the government to raise the duty by up to ₹8 per litre in petrol and diesel at any time it wishes.

Earlier in the day, the Lok Sabha passed the Finance Bill, 2020, without any discussion as the House curtailed its sittings in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak.

More than 40 amendments were introduced by the government to the Finance Bill, which was moved for consideration and passing, by the Finance Minister.

The decision to pass the Bill without any discussion was taken at an all-party meeting convened by Speaker Om Birla. Some amendments moved by the Opposition were negated. The Bill gives effect to the financial proposals of the Central Government for fiscal 2020-21.

Don't cut down workforce: PM

CII moots cash transfer via DBT to all citizens

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI / MUMBAI

Calling COVID-19 an 'unforeseen hurdle' for the Indian economy whose impact will be felt for some time to come, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday urged India Inc. to not cut down jobs despite the negative impact on business.

Mr. Modi on Monday interacted with industry representatives from 18 cities across the country via video conference.

Those in attendance included Toyota Kirloskar vice chairman and president of industry body CII Vikram Kirloskar, Kotak Mahindra Bank MD & CEO Uday Kotak, Tata Sons chairman N. Chandrasekaran, TVS Motor CMD Venu Srinivasan, founder

and co-chairman Jubilant Bhartia Group Hari S. Bhartia, Apollo Hospitals Joint MD and FICCI president Sangita Reddy, and HUL CMD Sanjiv Mehta.

Mr. Modi added that the challenge posed by the pandemic is graver than even that posed by the World Wars and "we need to be on constant vigil" to prevent its spread. Mr. Kirloskar said CII members would dedicate their plant facilities to help scale up manufacture and availability of essential goods and equipment needed to deal with the medical emergency.

Mr. Kotak said the COVID Rehabilitation Fund would look at the micro and small industry, which would need special handholding and help to rehabilitate their business.

All Indian citizens should be given cash in their accounts through the direct benefit transfer, CII said; while those below 25 years could be given a one-time payment of ₹5,000, senior citizens above 65 can be given ₹10,000, it said.

CII also said there was an immediate need to enable advances for ways and means for industry across sectors and the government could perhaps explore a moratorium on interest and principal for the next three months. "It may also be important to suspend IBC proceedings while redefining norms for NPAs, as several companies will be unable to meet payment obligations."

In a teleconference with the media, the chief of the largest private sector lender also allayed concerns over asset quality, particularly of the unsecured portfolio, raised by some analysts, saying most of the lending was to highly-rated entities.

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Working from home? Tech hygiene should be at the top of your mind, so here are some handy solutions and hacks from experts

Keyboard Surfaces... by Jana Koscova et al. "Cultivation of swabs performed five minutes after disinfection and subsequent calculation of the reduction of contamination have shown that simple wiping with an antibacterial wet wipe led to a significant reduction of microbial contamination of surfaces, with effect ranging from 36.8 to 100%," says the study.

We recommend you give your keyboard a clean wipe every day before you use it and every five hours while using, especially if you have children who may also be using it. Nair says "Absorb some isopropyl alcohol on a lint-free, soft cloth, then squeeze out excess liquid from the cloth. Wipe the keyboard surface with the cloth, making sure no liquid drips on or between the keys. Allow to dry."

However, it is vital that liquid cleaner is never sprayed or poured directly on the LCD display or the keyboard. One can use compressed air from a can to remove any crumbs and dust from beneath the keys. Also, do not use an air compressor, he adds.

Most notebooks these days have a touchscreen component. Using a dry, lint-free, soft cloth, wipe or dust the stain gently, he starts. "If a stain, smudge, or other blemish remains, moisten a lint-free, soft cloth with water or a 50-50 mixture of isopropyl alcohol and water (distilled or deionised). Wring out as much of the liquid as you can from the cloth. Wipe the display again; do not let any liquid drip into the computer. Allow the display to dry, then close the lid if the computer has one."

And the space...

It is not just the chemical grime, but also the physical clutter. Gurugram-based Gayatri Gandhi is India's first KonMari-certified consultant and points out, "Most of the gadgets that get accumulated are old and outdated devices that continue being stored with a thought that 'I may come handy' later. Also, old wires, cords and chargers form a major part of these gadgets. The best approach has been to get rid of them because they will never be used as much as



A battle cry for gadgets

Children and safety

Working from home for most families means the children will be making the most of the surrounding gadgets. **Dr. Anuradha Vinod**, consultant paediatrician at Manipal Hospitals, Bengaluru, explains, "We usually don't encourage screen time at all. At times like these, it could be unavoidable. But we can limit screen time to one or two hours. And, it is not necessary to engage them with a tablet or a phone all the time. It is a good time to bond with family and also enhance their creativity. It is risky for parents to give their phones to children, especially for those who have to head out every day. All kinds of viruses can spread through the phone since children hold it against their faces. We are also asking parents to make sure children are washing their hands before every meal and snack. They should take a shower first thing in the morning."

(Input from Praveen Sudevan)

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

With many people working from home for the first time, your home starts to feel like a bubble of safety, the walls and shut windows a barrier against who-knows-what. But there is a Trojan horse, so to speak, bringing in some worrisome unknown bodies about which we should be vigilant.

Ashok Nair, Lenovo's director for India Service Operations, gives a step-by-step breakdown of how to keep each gadget in the home as clean as possible.

Before proceeding with a deep clean, it is recommended that you remove any media from the drives and turn off all connected devices and the computer. Then, disconnect all power sources such as batteries or power cords from electrical outlets and disconnect all cables that are connected to the computer, to avoid unpleasant shocks.

Before diving into the dirt, it is important that you do not engage in panic-buying, seeing these ingredients. Most of these are used in minute amounts. He states that it is safe to use a disinfecting wipe designed for office/home use and that "some disinfecting wipes designed for medical use may cause discolouration, harm surfaces, or even affect functionality of your device."

Nair elaborates: "Medical wipes and their chemical composition vary greatly. Depending on the chemicals, fre-

Be sure to keep hand sanitiser at the ready and do avoid touching your face and eating while you're using gadgets

quency, and duration of use, medical wipes may impact cosmetic appearance and system functionality. To minimise this risk, we recommend hydrogen peroxide wipes (such as Virox Accel wipes with a maximum of 0.5% hydrogen peroxide), and alcohol-based wipes (such as PDI Germicidal or Braun Meliseptol Wipes sensitive). Do not use wipes containing sodium hypochlorite (bleach).

We also recommend wiping away residual solvent as soon as possible after the prescribed contact time and wiping the surface again with a dry, lint-free, soft cloth."

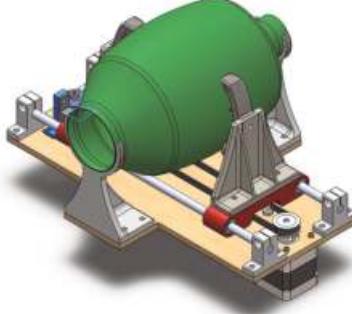
He repeats that one should always squeeze out excess liquid from wipe or disinfecting cloth before using.

Screens galore

Keyboards are a major carrier of bacteria as mentioned by numerous studies over the past 15 years, including 2018's 'Degree of Bacterial Contamination of Mobile Phone and Computer

gadgets

TECH-A-BYTE



Open Source help

Engineers, designers, and tech founders from across the globe have come together online to build ventilators and other COVID-19-related medical supplies using available materials, 3D printing and open-source hardware resources. This project, Open Source Ventilator (OSV) Ireland, is the result of a discussion within a Facebook group called Open Source COVID-19 Medical Supplies (OSCMS). They have a core team of 20-plus engineers, designers and medical practitioners. The project "is consolidating findings from experts globally to accelerate the development of working prototypes. Working closely with OpenLung Canada, and their designers, a number of concepts are being finalised for prototyping and testing. The project fully embraces the Open Source ideal, with all files made available online as the project progresses."



Against COVID-19 rumours

Twitter is bolstering its verification process in order to make it easier for health experts to get verified. "We are working with global public health authorities to identify experts and have already verified hundreds of accounts," the company stated via Twitter. Twitter had earlier shared that it will remove posts that deny "expert guidance," promote "fake or ineffective treatments," or share "misleading content purporting to be from experts or authorities." WhatsApp, too, has implemented measures to curb the spread of misinformation through its platform. Last week, it unveiled its Coronavirus Information Hub worldwide to connect its users with local, national and global organisations for reliable information. This is in partnership with WHO, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme and Poynter.

Please send your feedback to the Wireless stories and tech-related questions to techknow@thehindu.co.in

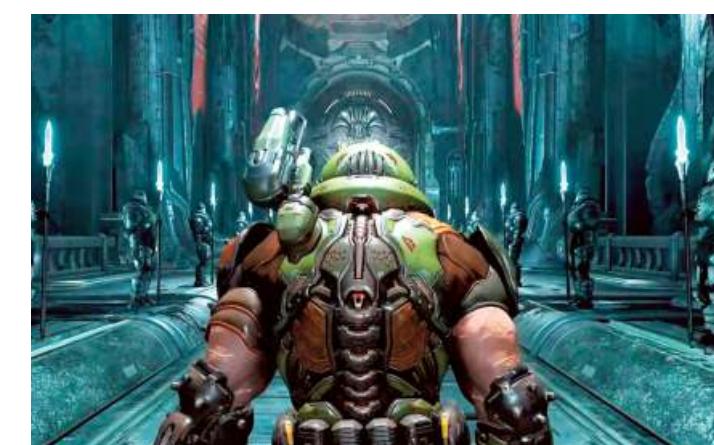


JULIAN ALMEIDA

GAMESPOT

Doom with a view

The much-awaited follow-up to the successful Doom reboot, Doom Eternal, gets your adrenaline pumping just as much as we expected



ruins of Earth, after underworld has invaded. Just as you are grasping the story, you are shoved through something about Hell Priests, a blur of exposition and then into a burning city. Pausing only for the occasional tutorial,

Doom Eternal hurls into battle after battle.

'An elaborate and bloody puzzle'

That is part of Doom Eternal's aggressive design. Battles play out in



Rip roaring
Screenshots from the game • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



sandbox-style levels, where you have to apply pressure while constantly starved of ammo or health. In a way, the action plays out like an elaborate and bloody puzzle, complete with violent kills. You need to use certain attacks against the powerful demons to give you an edge. Thankfully, the weapons are fantastic, with some fun alternate firing modes that you can swap out at any time.

When you are not massacring

DOOM ETERNAL

Developer: id Software

Publisher: Bethesda Softworks

Price: ₹3999 for PS4, Xbox One, Switch, PC

considering it confronts you with enemies, Doomguy moves fast. The AI always tries to corner you and the only way to beat it is to play aggressive and forward at all times. In one particular level, firing at a glowing button had these wicked blades just slice through demons leaving nothing but gristle.

The verdict...

Doom Eternal is not for the faint-hearted or weak-stomached. There are a lot of demonic entrails, some as big as buildings, as parts of levels are just set in demonic innards. This is a gory game with stunning vast set pieces. Using clever world-building and environmental storytelling, the developers communicate more about this biblical-end-of-the-world mythology than the actual story. The id Tech 7 graphics engine pumps out amazing graphics, even on consoles and lower-spec machines.

If you loved Doom and want more, do not miss out on Doom Eternal. Just make sure you stay off the caffeine.

The writer is a tech and gaming enthusiast who hopes to one day finish his sci-fi novel

FOR THE YOUNGLINGS



STEPapp by Edufun Technologies is an educational gaming app launched recently. The company had approached the Tamil Nadu State government to launch this app in government schools to help children learn maths and sciences concepts faster.

Family favourite Animal Crossing is widely popular among families who want to steer away from the usual tropes of video games. On March 20, Nintendo-exclusive **Animal Crossing: New Horizons** was released and Delhi-based Leena Gupta says her two children, aged 8 and 11, were long awaiting for the release. "While working from home, I have to understand that video games are not their babysitter but a supplementary recreation to their existing at-home school syllabus while also helping them improve reflexes."

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

Movie theatres and sports grounds might be experiencing restrictions but a small number of groups have benefited from the ongoing social distancing, and one of them is gamers. Yes, being stuck at home does have its perks.

Social media allows interaction to a certain point. You can rarely go beyond double-tapping for a like, popping in a comment or dropping a DM, but social gaming offers new types of communication. One is not just playing a game and streaming the progress live; there are active live chats for commentary and multiplayer options.

Another bright side: no longer do you have to go out to buy a game disc (a reality which ended almost a decade ago), you can just install the game from the comfort of your couch.

Into the void...

Cosplayer Sameer Bundela is in lockdown in the U.S., having represented India at Chicago Comic & Entertainment Expo 2020. Unable to explore the tourist sites, he has been indulging in a fair bit of gaming until the travel bans and social distancing restrictions lift, so that he may return home to Mumbai.

I have been able to discover games, especially on mobile, which I would not have been able to otherwise! Gaming is also a great heart-lightener as I can play with my friends back home. I've played multiplayer games like Call Of Duty: Warzone and Team-fight Tactics but I always find my way back to Dota."

Developed by Electronic Arts, FIFA has seen more gaming sessions across India – given going outside in groups is discouraged. The game franchise is one of the biggest in the



During the social distancing, Nintendo's **Ring Fit Adventure** sold out internationally, too. The exercising action-RPG, popular across all ages, has a fitness-focussed experience in which there are two physical components: the Ring-Con, a flexible, hard-plastic ring held by the player and which one Joy-Con slots into, and a Leg Strap, a piece of fabric affixed to the user's leg that holds the other Joy-Con.

industry with annual releases since 1993, selling more than 350 million copies worldwide. FIFA falls into the sports simulation category of gaming, with trademark technologies such as Human Intelligence and True Player Motion. Sri Krishna Charan, a self-proclaimed FIFA addict living in Chennai, has been working from home, too. He says, "Since I live alone, it's all I've been doing to beat the stress. Plus it's a great way to connect with friends overseas. We've all been bingeing on FIFA 20 as well as Call of Duty

C I'm seeing a lot of MOBA games – like League Of Legends and Dota 2 – as well as PUBG trending now

GAGAN GUPTA

mobile battle royales."

While he is not sure how long this shutdown will last, he still loves a good in-person live game-a-thon. "However, if social distancing is the way to go for a few months, then remotely playing together is the only option."

Former gaming journalist Gagan Gupta, in Mumbai, has been gaming his whole life and has been working from home for the last year, so he sheds some light on what is trending in this industry. "MMORPGs (massively multiplayer online role playing games) like World Of Warcraft and Final Fantasy are actually on the lower-end in terms of popularity in India, as of the past few years. I'm seeing a lot of MOBA (multiplayer online battle arena) games – like League Of Legends and DOTA 2."

Developed by Electronic Arts, FIFA has seen more gaming sessions across India – given going outside in groups is discouraged. The game franchise is one of the biggest in the

ta – as well as PUBG trending now," he points out, "There are other popular games like Overwatch. I obviously play with my friends so I've been playing Destiny 2 (a free-to-play online-only multiplayer first-person shooter) and Doom Eternal (a first-person shooter)." Gagan adds that he does not stream his gaming sessions at all.

Love for live

According to Amazon-owned gaming streaming platform Twitch, there are just over 100 active Twitch streamers in the country. In the light of social distancing, the platform has seen a surge in views over the past couple of weeks globally. The idea with Twitch is that people follow their favourite let's-players live-broadcast their progress in video games. Though the service is free, there are additional features such as subscriptions to each let's-player costs around ₹35.

Data from Twitch Tracker shows that just between March 1 and March 15, there was a boost of 2,18,500 live viewers across channels and 14,500 active live channels, around the world. And, of course, on weekends, there are 16% more viewers than on weekdays; for them there are 17% more streams to choose from on Twitch.

Plus, in the first 20 days of March this year, Twitch had already observed 671 million hours of livestream gaming while the average hours per month is around 750 million.

Twitch is quite aware of the boost; in a March 17 blog post titled 'How to use Twitch to support charities responding to COVID-19', the company has listed out ways for gamers to link up with charities – such as Italian Red Cross, Save The Children, Direct Relief – which are active on the platform. They have also detailed a list of Best Practices for charity streams.

Whatever the (stereotypical) image of a gamer, one cannot refute that they have mastered social distancing long before many of us could.

HOMING IN

Staying indoors for a while? We have you covered. For your weekly list of **podcasts**, we begin with the ones that cover Philosophy. You just might get answers, or end up with more dilemmas

PHILOSOPHY TALK
the program that questions everything...

PRAVEEN SUDEVAN

Philosophy Talk

With three Stanford University professors (John Perry, Ken Taylor, and Joshua Landy) co-hosting the show, **Philosophy Talk** is probably the most academic podcast in this list. It's a bit formal but never boring. The show is produced by KALW, a San Francisco-based public radio station, on behalf of Stanford University, as part of its Humanities Outreach Initiative. The usually hour-long show is available in chunks on major podcast-streaming apps. It focusses on a philosophical concept or a philosopher and usually features an expert on the episode's topic. As its motto suggests – "the program that questions everything, except your intelligence" – the topics vary from Descartes to genetic engineering.

Episode length: 10+ minutes (on average). Available on: philosophytalk.org, Google Podcasts, Spotify, and others.

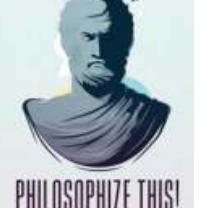
The Big Idea

 Well, this isn't strictly philosophy. You probably won't find discussions and debates on Friedrich Nietzsche on BBC's **The Big Idea**. The show, instead, talks about the events and concepts that have shaped and are shaping the world. It picks the best ideas from economics to

psychology, neuroscience to philosophy, political science to anthropology, and makes them into nine-minute, easy-to-follow episodes. It introduces an idea and provokes your thoughts on it. For instance, in the last episode on the podcast (published in September 2018) on afterlife, American philosopher Samuel Scheffler asks, "Suppose you knew that after your natural death the human race would die out – perhaps, for some reason, humans had become infertile. How would that alter how you live your life?"

Episode length: 9 minutes. Available on: bbc.com, Apple Podcast, listennotes.com and others.

Philosophize This!

 One of the major criticisms of this podcast is that it doesn't delve deep enough on philosophical concepts. Fair enough. This podcast won't suffice if you are looking to get a PhD on the works of Plato. But podcaster Stephen West doesn't promise that. He aims to introduce listeners to philosophy, usually with examples that are relatable. You won't feel like you are in a lecture hall. It is ideal, albeit not necessary,

to start listening from the first episode as West covers philosophers through the ages – from the shabbily clothed Socrates, who roamed the streets of ancient Greece to the more fashionable 20th-century American philosopher Robert Nozick and others.

Episode length: 30+ minutes (on average). Available on: philosophizethis.org, Spotify, Apple Podcast and others.

We would love to know how you are keeping busy at home. Tell us who you're lending your ears to, at delhimetro@thehindu.co.in

The real CALL OF DUTY

Ready, set, go It's business time for gamers as we work to flatten the curve • GETTY IMAGES, SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



POOCH CAFE



PEANUTS



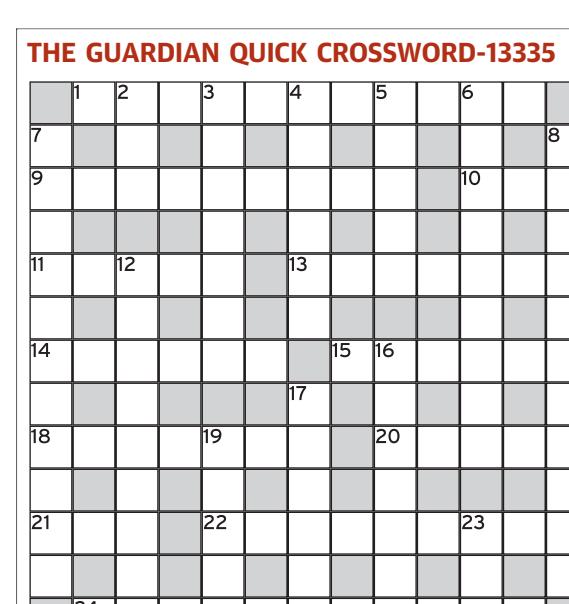
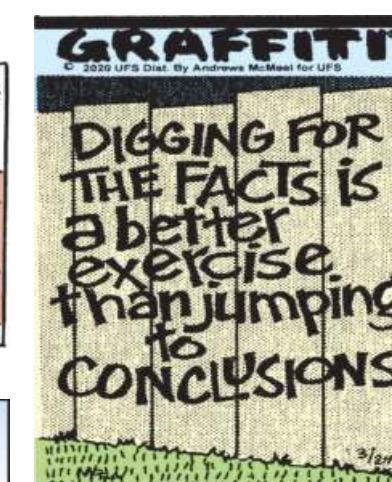
HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



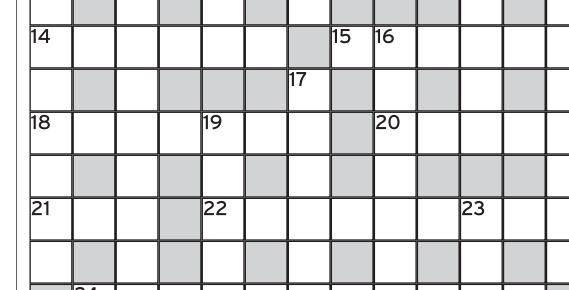
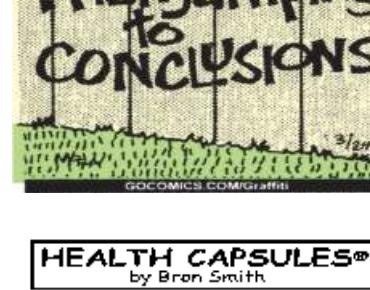
CALVIN AND HOBBES



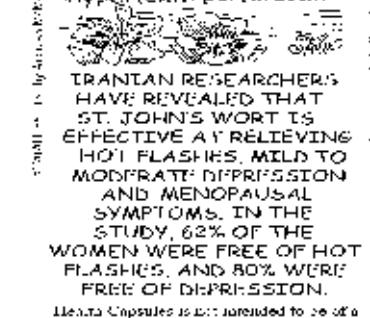
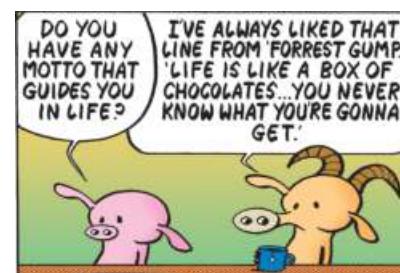
TIGER



WUMO



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



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

- 5 Pointy-nosed, mouse-like animal (5)
- 6 Not drinking (9)
- 7 Annual Munich event, centred on beer (11)
- 8 Spread unconfirmed scandal (4,3,4)
- 12 Domination (9)
- 16 Light used in murky conditions (3,4)
- 17 Male goose (6)
- 19 Inhale recreational drug through the nose (5)
- 23 Drink from China? (3)

The solution will appear on March 25, 2020.

Solution No. 13334

M	O	N	S	E	T	F	W
A	Z	W	A	V	E	R	G
P	I	O	N	E	R	N	C
L	N	E	M	A	P	P	I
E	J	E	C	T	A	I	L
U	N	O	C	N	O	T	E
N	O	B	B	W	W		
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ND-NDE

Delay looms as Canada, Australia quit

IOC and Japan promise decision on Olympics within a month; athletes worry about health risks

TOKYO 2020

REUTERS
TOKYO

Major sporting nations Australia and Canada withdrew from the Tokyo 2020 Olympics on Monday, and Britain threatened to follow suit, as organisers faced global pressure to postpone the Games due to the coronavirus crisis for the first time in its 124-year modern history.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) and Japanese government had on Sunday and Monday slightly shifted their position that the Games would start as planned on July 24, announcing a month-long consultation over other "scenarios".

That was not sufficient for the Canadians or Australians, who said they would not be participating if the Games was not pushed back to 2021.

Putting back the July 24-Aug. 9 event, as is looking inevitable, would be a massive blow for host Japan which has pumped in more than \$12 billion of investment.

Huge sums are also at stake for sponsors and broadcasters.

Tipping the balance

But a groundswell of concern from athletes – already struggling to train as gyms, stadiums and swimming



Time running out: With the coronavirus crisis escalating and just four months to go for the start, organisers and IOC are bracing themselves to take a call on deferring the event. ■ AP

pools close around the world – appears to be tipping the balance, along with the cancellation of other major sports events.

Canada and Australia both bluntly said they would not participate if the Games were not put back to 2021.

"We are in the midst of a global health crisis that is far more significant than sport," said Canada's Olympic Committee (COC) and Paralympic Committee (CPC) in a statement.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau welcomed the move saying "I know this is heartbreaking for so many

people – athletes, coaches, staff, and fans – but this was absolutely the right call. And everyone should follow their lead."

"Our athletes have been magnificent in their positive attitude to training and preparing, but the stress and uncertainty have been extremely challenging for them," said Australia's Olympics Chef de Mission Ian Chesterman.

Russia urged global sporting authorities to avoid "panic" over the Olympics and U.S. President Donald Trump expressed confidence in Japan's government

to make the "proper" call. But a raft of other nations pressed for a quick decision from the IOC.

Monday's announcements followed growing pressure from big stakeholders including U.S. Track and Field and other national Olympic committees.

"An Olympic Games in July this year is neither feasible nor desirable," World Athletics chief Sebastian Coe said. "We owe it to our athletes to give them respite where we can."

Later, World Athletics said it was prepared to shift the World Championships in

2021 in order to accommodate a potential move of the Olympic Games.

Change in stance

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told parliament on Monday postponing the Olympics may become an option if holding the Games in its "complete form" became impossible. "If that becomes difficult, we may have no option but to consider postponing the Games, given the Olympic principle of putting the health of athletes first," he said.

Abe also said calling off the Games entirely was not an option, echoing the IOC position.

Scaling back torch relay

The organising committee was already scaling back the torch relay to avoid crowds, NHK broadcaster said.

Tokyo 2020 Olympics chief Yoshiro Mori said organisers would consider postponement as one of the many scenarios they aim to have ready in the next four weeks. But finding a new date could be complicated as the summer 2021 calendar is already crowded, while 2022 will see the FIFA World Cup and the Beijing Winter Olympics.

Postponement could be a major blow to the IOC's prestige after weeks of saying the Games would go ahead as planned.

IOA, ministry to assess situation

UTHRA GANESAN
NEW DELHI

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) and the Sports Ministry are likely to assess India's preparations for the 2020 Olympics and also the possibility of participating in the Games some time this week after a series of meetings and interactions with the IOC.

"I am personally in touch with the Sports Ministry, SAI, IOC, National Sports Federations and all stakeholders regarding the preparations for the Tokyo Olympics. NOCs have to get back to the IOC this week on their preparations and health of athletes," IOA president Narinder Batra said on Monday.

All international federations had a video conference with IOC president Thomas Bach on March 17 and all 206 NOCs two days later to discuss COVID-19 and the Olympics. We are clear that there will be no compromise on the health and safety of athletes," Batra, who is also an IOC member and president of the International Hockey Federation (FIH), added.

As of now the Indian hockey teams (men and women), track & field athletes and weightlifters are in National camps at SAI centres training under strict control.

The Games can wait, says Usha

'Human lives are more precious than anything in sport'

STAN RYAN
KOCHI

She was training in London for the 1986 Commonwealth Games when news broke that India would boycott the event in Edinburgh. Naturally, P.T. Usha was shattered.

"The Games were just a few days away and I was very disappointed, I was in very good form then and expected two golds – in the 400m and 400m hurdles. And, I had trained very hard for months in London," said Usha in a telephonic chat with *The Hindu* on Monday.

India had pulled out in protest against Britain's stand on South Africa's apartheid policy. A month later, at the Seoul Asian Games in September, Usha went on to win four golds and a silver.

"Of course, the current situation is different... one can understand the uncertainty over this year's Tokyo Olympics because of the coronavirus pandemic. Human lives are much more precious than anything in sport," said Usha, the Golden Girl of Asian athletics in the '80s.

"The Olympics can wait. When you see the happenings around you, especially the situation in Italy, where thousands of lives have been lost, you feel so emotional.



P.T. Usha. ■ FILE PHOTO

"We are staying positive, hoping that this will go away soon. We are happy that efforts are being made here to ensure the deadly virus does not reach the third stage," she said.

Usha feels having the Olympics in mid-2021 would be ideal.

"The Olympics is not something we should be in a hurry to have, even if there are a couple of positive coronavirus cases in the Games, if they are held this year-end, they will have a huge negative impact."

Swimming (in Fukuoka, Japan, July 16-Aug. 1) and athletics (Eugene, US, Aug. 6-15) will have their respective World championships next year and Usha feels that this 2021 July-August period could be used to have the Olympics instead.

Staging of IPL-13 remains in the realm of uncertainty

A review meeting scheduled for Tuesday indefinitely deferred

CRICKET

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

With the COVID-19 pandemic spreading all over the country, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has indefinitely deferred a review meeting to explore the possibility of staging the 13th edition of the IPL.

A day after suspending IPL-2020 till April 15, the BCCI office-bearers had a meeting with franchise owners in Mumbai on March 14, which was followed by the IPL governing council meeting.

BCCI chief Sourav Ganguly, while indicating that "a curtailed IPL" was the only option, had mentioned that the next review meeting would be on March 24.

Brijesh Patel, chairman, IPL governing council, told *The Hindu* on Monday that "no meeting is scheduled" for Tuesday since there's "not much to discuss about IPL" at the moment.

A franchise executive ad-

mitted that the "IPL is the last thing on everyone's mind" with the coronavirus crisis worsening.

Good as gone?

Despite the BCCI hoping against hope to stage the IPL in some form before the window, which can be stretched to May 31, ends, Board and franchise sources indicated that the possibility of the tournament taking off this year was remote.

The decision on calling off the season is unlikely to be taken any time before the second week of April.

At the moment, the States where the franchises are based – Delhi, Punjab, Kolkata, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana and Tamil Nadu – are under partial or complete lockdown. With the number of cases increasing, the situation appears grim.

Just like China, the authorities are understood to be exploring the possibility of converting sports stadia into quarantine wards if the number of patients keeps escalating.

COVID-19 IMPACT



Chhetri in FIFA's 'Pass the message to kick out coronavirus' campaign

NEW DELHI

Sunil Chhetri, Indian football's sunil Chhetri, Indian football's picked among 28 past and present stars for FIFA's campaign to combat COVID-19. The 'Pass the message to kick out coronavirus' campaign

NBA's Gobert details effects of the virus

LOS ANGELES

Utah Jazz center Rudy Gobert, whose positive coronavirus test prompted the NBA to shut



includes Argentine superstar Lionel Messi and World Cup winners like Philip Lahm, Iker Casillas and Carles Puyol. FIFA president Gianni Infantino said: "We need teamwork to combat the coronavirus. I call upon the football community worldwide to join us in supporting this campaign to pass the message even further."

down its season, says the virus has caused him to lose his sense of smell. "Just to give you guys an update, loss of smell and taste is definitely one of the symptoms, haven't been able to smell anything for the last 4 days," Gobert wrote on Twitter. "Anyone experiencing the same thing?" Days before his positive test, Gobert had shrugged off safety measures aimed at limiting the spread of the virus, pointedly touching every microphone and voice recorder on a table in front of him at a media interaction. AFP

UEFA postpones major tournament finals

NYON

UEFA announced on Monday that it had postponed the Champions League, Europa League and women's Champions League finals, originally scheduled for May, due to the pandemic.

Gambhir pledges 50 lakh for treatment equipment

NEW DELHI

Cricketer-turned politician Gautam Gambhir on Monday pledged ₹50 lakh towards COVID-19 treatment. In a letter to Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal, he wrote: "I would like to pledge 50 lakh from my MPLAD fund for equipment that may be needed for COVID-19 treatment in State government hospitals." He also advocated jail terms for the offenders who break quarantine. PTI

Safety first for Sangakkara

COLOMBO

Sri Lankan batting great Kumar Sangakkara has said he is currently in self-quarantine, following his government's



body had already postponed the competitions until further notice earlier this month. UEFA said "no decision has yet been made on rearranged dates".

Meanwhile, professional football in Spain will remain suspended until further notice to limit the spread of the virus, said La Liga and the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF). AFP

Azerbaijan GP off; no F1 race until mid-June

BAKU

The Azerbaijan Grand Prix was postponed on Monday, delaying the start of the Formula One season until the middle of June at the earliest. The first eight races of the 2020 season have now been either postponed or cancelled because of the virus. "This comes as a direct result of the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic and has been based entirely on the expert guidance provided to us by the relevant authorities," the organisers said. They said a new race date would be announced later. AP



Coronavirus 'no joke', warns van der Burgh

LOS ANGELES

Olympic champion swimmer Cameron van der Burgh, who contracted COVID-19, offered an insight into how it left him weak and devastated. "Any physical activity like walking leaves me exhausted for hours. Please, look after yourself everyone! COVID-19 is no joke!" AFP

Whatever u guys can do please go ahead and help each other as far as sanitization is concerned.

"But don't gather crowd! @iamyusufpathan #corona it's a small start, hopefully, we will keep helping more. Everyone of us." PTI

Faith

Always valid

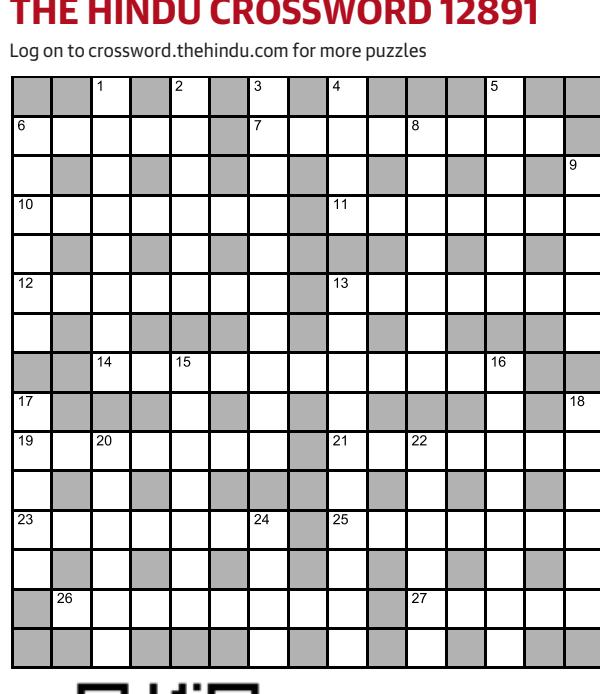
A person who offers advice must have three qualities. He must not help us with the expectation of something in return. That is why *ayavaaja bandha* – a connection with us, which does not arise for any particular reason – is necessary. The person who advises must do so without discriminating. For example, he must give his valuable advice, whether the seeker of help is an enemy or a friend. This is the quality of *avisesha*. He must have yet another quality – *asesha*. If he sees any wrongdoing, he must not be indifferent to it, but must at once point out that it is wrong. He must not restrict himself to helping only those who are dear to him.

It is hard to define dharma. What is dharma in one yuga is adharma in another. What is dharma in one place may be adharma in another. But *Vidura's upadesa* to *Dhritarashtra* is valid at all times and in all geographies, said Kidambi Narayanan in a discourse. *Vidura Nitи* is spread over eight chapters, with a total of 545 verses. Each chapter deals with a different subject and, by the end, we find that *Vidura* has covered the problems which we face in life, and has solutions for them too.

Vidura tells how to identify the educated and uneducated and describes the qualities of a good ruler. In the fourth chapter, he talks about the quality of tolerance. In the fifth chapter he talks about things we must do and what we must not do. Naturally, after having spoken so elaborately about dharma's ways of thinking and behaving, *Vidura* is anxious to know if *Dhritarashtra* has benefited. But all the advice has been wasted on *Dhritarashtra*, who says whatever is destined to happen will happen. Even after listening to *Vidura*, he is unwilling to treat the Pandavas in a dharmic manner.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12891

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ACROSS

- 6 In theory, it could be to avoid the sarcasm (5)
- 7 Mike's taken off the shoe, takes only a moment (8)
- 10 Payment overstated – the stock gains weight here (7)

(set by Arden)

- 5 Give up fine state, briefly (6)
- 6 It's fashionable and loud, girl gains notoriety (6)
- 8 Amateurish move by the warrior (7)
- 9 Procedure to keep check, both sides are crazy (5)
- 13 Stand and watch with alertness (7,3)
- 14 Accompanying picture on the way back (11)
- 19 Well, agree Scot essentially was a painter (2,5)
- 21 Swimmer close to finish, miscalculating (7)
- 23 Spell able to make you fall (7)
- 25 Come back over and over I-beam (7)
- 26 A strange flower indeed (4,4)
- 27 Agents called Herb (5)
- 18 Man eater therefore will climb on board (6)
- 20 Spy exposed, go after those at the top (6)
- 22 Father among others gets food (6)
- 24 Ache for French bread (4)

SUDOKU

1

A child's moves checkmate Queen's gambit

Humpy on the difficulties of training in times of lockdown

CHESS

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM
HYDERABAD

Given that chess is an indoor sport, the Candidates tournament is on in Russia even though sporting events around the world have been cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. But, contrary to general belief, not all chess players, confined indoors, can continue working on their game on the computer.

Ask World rapid champion Koneru Humpy, for instance. "You cannot afford any sort of distractions when training. And, this is different. A lockdown where everyone is forced to stay at home. Since I have to take care of my 30-month-old



Catch-22: It is a 24x7 job for Humpy and husband Anvesh Dasari when it comes to taking care of their young daughter Ahana. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Ahana, it is not easy to spare time for chess," she told *The Hindu* from Vijayawada. "Our normal daily schedule

meant dropping her at my parents' home and carry on the training. Now, since she cannot go out due to precau-

tionsary measures, it is a 24x7 job for Anvesh Dasari [her husband] and me," she said.

Uncertainty

"Though this is not the first time I have had to take such a long break (the last one being when she was pregnant), this is different. There is uncertainty with what's happening around the world and in our country," the 32-year-old Humpy said.

The Candidates tournament notwithstanding, chess too is badly affected as Europe has been the hub of the activity with many Indians featuring in the leagues there, especially in Spain.

With Italy being the worst-hit, Humpy is not sure if the FIDE Women's Grand Prix

Series scheduled there in May will be held.

"Though there is no official communication, given the grim scenario, it seems unlikely that it will be on," the World No. 2 said.

The other major events lined up for her are the Olympiad in August in Moscow and the World knockout championship for women in Belarus in September.

"About these two events we can be optimistic as things might improve by then given the measures being taken by the Governments here and elsewhere," Humpy appealed to every citizen to be responsible and follow the guidelines of maintaining social distancing.

CANDIDATES

SPORTS BUREAU
YEKATERINBURG

Ian Nepomniachtchi of host Russia became the first player to take the sole lead when he made China's Wang Hao pay the price for a terrible blunder in the fifth round of the Candidates chess tournament here on Sunday.

Nepomniachtchi, who had shared the lead overnight with Hao and France's Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, took his tally to 3.5 points.

Second spot

Vachier-Lagrave was in the sole second position with three points. Nine rounds remain.

Hao, who adopted his trusted Petrov's Defence, was comfortably placed until he erred on the 32nd

Nepomniachtchi takes sole lead



You should have...! Ian Nepomniachtchi seems to be pointing out where Wang Hao erred in their match. •FIDE

move. He went on to lose a piece, and the game another 11 moves later.

The results (fifth round): Anish Giri (Ned) 2 drew with Fabiano Caruana (US) 2.5; Alexander Grischuk (Rus) 2.5 drew with Ding Liren (Chn) 2; Kirill Alekseenko (Rus) 2 drew with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra) 3; Ian Nepomniachtchi (Rus) 3.5 bt Wang Hao (Chn) 2.5.

AFI defers Federation Cup, no new dates announced

ATHLETICS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

After the three India Grands Prix this month and its AGM and elections to be held next month, the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) on Monday officially postponed the upcoming Federation Cup, scheduled to be held in Patiala from April 10 to 13.

In a meeting here, the competition committee of the federation decided to indefinitely defer the competition in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Looking at the present situation in the country and around the world, hosting any competition is difficult

Looking at the present situation in the country and around the world, hosting any competition is difficult

ADILLE SUMARIWALLA

Health and safety of everyone comes first and we can resume competitions once things start getting better.

As of now, we have not discussed the new dates for Indian GPs and Federation Cup," AFI president Adille Sumariwalla said.

The Indian GPs were to be held at Patiala (March 20), Sangrur (March 25) and Delhi (March 29). The AGM was to be held in Jaipur from April 3 to 5.

CRICKET

WRIDDHAAYAN BHATTACHARYYA
CHENNAI

Albie Morkel's international career may not throw jaw-dropping numbers but he picked up the right wickets at the right time and finished games when required. Parallel to the international stint, ran the Chennai Super Kings journey under the leadership of M.S. Dhoni.

The brand
Having played five IPL finals under the superstar 'keeper-batsman, the South African feels 'Dhoni the brand' matters and that he is still supremely fit to run the show.

"He plays a big role. We all know how big Dhoni is in India. He is one of the best T20 and white-ball players ever to play the game and if you



Consistency pays: Albie Morkel feels that CSK benefited greatly from sticking with M.S. Dhoni as captain. •AP

get him as a leader, it is going to bring success as he knows how to get the best out of his players," Morkel told *Sportstar* on the sidelines of the Unacademy Road Safety World Series.

Dhoni has been off the field since the World Cup 2019 semifinal loss to New Zealand. The 2020 edition of the IPL, which is currently in

limbo due to the coronavirus outbreak, would have marked his comeback and perhaps set the stage for the expected farewell tournament in October, the ICC World T20.

Morkel threw light on the achievements of CSK to decode the Dhoni factor behind any team's success. "It all comes from keeping your

core group of players together for a long time and have the same captain, Dhoni, for all seasons except for the two years when they weren't part of the competition.

"Consistency is their secret. Over the last few seasons, they have made the finals eight times out of 10," he said.

Morkel retired from all forms of the game last year but he misses "the moments of the IPL." He was part of the South Africa Legends side for the Road Safety Series which was called off mid-way due to the pandemic.

"I have accepted that my time is over. You need to move on. I have spent fantastic years with CSK who are still very successful."

As for Dhoni, only time will tell if he will return in the blue jersey.

COVID-19 insurance cover for CAB cricketers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

The Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) has obtained COVID-19 insurance cover for cricketers and match officials in the state.

CAB Medical Committee chairman Pradip Dey and member Santanu Mitra had met representatives of SBI General Insurance (SBIGI) to ensure the cover.

"There is no reason for them to panic. However, it is always advisable to take adequate preventive measures to stop spreading of the virus. Wishing our players and match officials

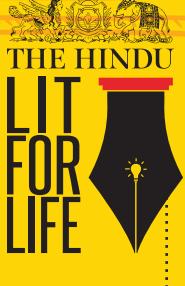
cover hospital expenses arising out of COVID-19 for over 3,200 individuals, including cricketers who are playing first and second division tournaments. It would also cover women players playing for Bengal and ex-cricketers who represented Bengal senior men's team.

"There is no reason for them to panic. However, it is always advisable to take adequate preventive measures to stop spreading of the virus. Wishing our players and match officials

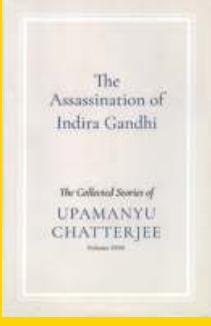
cover hospital expenses arising out of COVID-19 for over 3,200 individuals, including cricketers who are playing first and second division tournaments. It would also cover women players playing for Bengal and ex-cricketers who represented Bengal senior men's team.

"This is to assure you that all the group policies on behalf of your esteemed organization covering cricketers, umpires, scorers, etc., are being covered for COVID-19 (coronavirus)."

Dalmiya said the well-being of cricketers and match officials would remain top priority for the CAB.



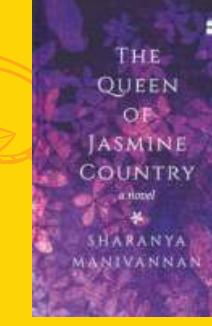
FICTION



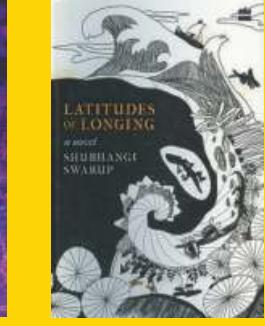
The Assassination of Indira Gandhi
Upamanyu Chatterjee



Tell Her Everything
Mirza Waheed



The Queen of Jasmine Country
Sharanya Manivannan

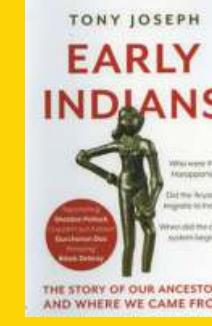


Latitudes of Longing
Shubhangi Swarup

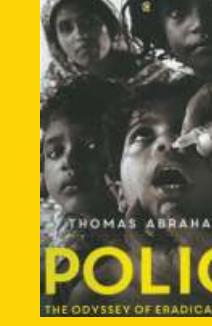


Heat
Poomani
Translated by N. Kalyan Raman

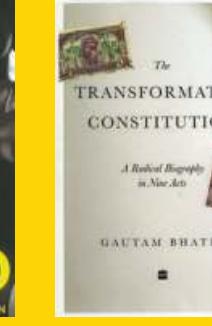
NON FICTION



Early Indians: The Story of Our Ancestors and Where We Came From
Tony Joseph



Polio: The Odyssey of Eradication
Thomas Abraham



The Transformative Constitution: A Radical Biography in Nine Acts
Gautam Bhatia

Reading gives us some place to go when we have to stay where we are

These words by Mason Cooley resonate so beautifully especially in the times we live in, battling with the COVID-19 outbreak! But fortunately, the power and beauty of literature is also its unique ability to enable refuge, offer comfort, soothe and heal. With this spirit of hope and in an effort to continue our legacy, we are very excited to recap the Shortlists for The Hindu Prize 2019 for the Fiction & Non Fiction categories. An independent jury comprising eminent authors, literary critics and academics pored over these books to pick the winner for this prestigious prize. Our jury members include Navtej Sarna - Chairperson, J Devika, Nilanjana Roy, Pradeep Sebastian and Rajeshwari Sunderarajan for Fiction; and Kamini Mahadevan - Chairperson, Chandan Gowda, Harsh Sethi, Rustom Bharucha and Shiv Visvanathan for Non Fiction. Watch this space as we announce the winners, soon!



THE HINDU PRIZE
2019

Fiction
Non Fiction

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