



Three civilians killed in Pakistan shelling in north Kashmir
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Boris Johnson leaves hospital, thanks NHS for saving his life
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Banish 'self-centredness', Pope tells the world as it fights pandemic
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NEARBY



In one day, Delhi records 5 deaths, 85 new cases

NEW DELHI
The Capital on Sunday recorded 5 deaths and 85 new COVID-19 cases, taking the total number of deaths to 24 and the number of cases to 1,154, the government said. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the rise was worrying.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Moderate earthquake felt in many Delhi areas

NEW DELHI
An earthquake of moderate intensity rocked many parts of Delhi on Sunday evening. "Earthquake of magnitude 3.5 occurred at a depth of 8 km in the National Capital Territory, Delhi," a release from the National Centre for Seismology said.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 8

Gehlot suggests 'modified lockdown'

JAIPUR
Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Sunday suggested that a "modified lockdown" could be enforced beyond April 14, when the present spell of nationwide lockdown comes to an end, to enable the States to utilise their internal resources for bringing the economy back on track.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

Bracing for a rapid surge in cases: govt.

Death toll touches 273 nationwide, with 127 in Maharashtra; Kerala bucks trend with only two new cases

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN

NEW DELHI

With the nationwide death toll from COVID-19 touching 273 and the number of positive cases reaching 8,447 on Sunday, the Union Health Ministry said India is preparing for a possible exponential surge in cases.

"We would rather be over-cautious and over-prepared," a Ministry official said while admitting that the recent resurgence in COVID-19 cases in some countries was a matter of concern.

According to data released by the Ministry, the country registered as many as 909 new cases and 34 deaths since Saturday evening. The fatalities included 17 from Maharashtra, five from

Consistent rise

With 686 new COVID-19 cases recorded on Sunday, India crossed the 9,000 mark. The day also saw 19 new deaths

NEW CASES



NEW DEATHS



Source: Health Ministry data and reports from States as of 8:30 p.m., Sunday

COVID-19

Delhi and three each from Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. As many as 716 persons have been cured/discharged after treatment.

Amid demands for ramping up health surveillance, the Centre said it is expanding the COVID-19 testing capacity in State-run as well as private medical colleges.

The Centre's proposals came even as a Punjab police officer's hand was chopped off in a brutal attack on a team enforcing lockdown restrictions amid reports

that plans were under way to ease some curbs during the likely extension of the lockdown.

According to reports from the State Health Departments, the total number of cases stood at 9,205, with 7,880 active ones. The death toll was 332.

Maharashtra recorded 149 deaths, with 1,625 active cases, while Tamil Nadu recorded 1,014 active cases, with 11 deaths. Delhi had 1,104 active cases as the toll in the national capital climbed to 24.

Kerala, however, saw 36 more patients cured of the disease, adding only two positive cases. A total of 179 persons have been discharged in the State, with only two deaths reported so far.

More testing facilities
Addressing the daily press briefing, Joint Secretary in the Health Ministry Lav Agarwal said that with the average rate of over 4% growth in cases recently, the government is expanding testing capacity in State-run

as well as private medical institutions.

"The government is extra prepared if the number of cases rises exponentially," the official said.

"Fourteen mentor institutes, including the AIIMS and NIMHANS, have been identified to mentor the medical colleges and expand testing capacity," he added.

An Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) official said more than 1,86,906 samples had been tested across the country. "In the



Status check: Members of the Mahim Dharav Medical Practitioners' Association checking the temperature of a child in a housing society in Mumbai on Sunday. ■ PTI

past five days, on an average, 15,747 samples were tested per day," the official added.

He said that while 40-plus COVID-19 vaccines were under consideration across the world, none had moved to the testing phase.

On the resurgence of cases in countries such as China, Mr. Agarwal said, "This is a new virus and there is much that we are still learning about it. We have taken this new development into account and are taking serious note of it."

Boost to primary care

"We are now focussing on increasing the capacity of primary medical infrastructure which includes dedicated hospitals, isolation beds, ICU beds, and quarantine facilities," he said.

"Currently the requirement of beds for 8,356 cases is estimated to be 1,671 (20% of confirmed cases with moderate and severe/critical clinical symptoms), the present availability of beds is 1,05,980 in 601 dedicated COVID-19 hospitals across the country. The number of isolation beds in dedicated hospitals across the country is being further augmented," he added.

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MORE REPORTS ON PAGES 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10 & 11
EUROPE TOLL CROSSES 75,000 ON GRIM EASTER DAY ▶ PAGE 12



Duty first: ASI Harjit Singh being shifted to a government hospital in Patiala on Sunday. ■ PTI

11 held for chopping off policeman's hand

Attackers flushed out of gurdwara

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Eleven persons were arrested on Sunday for an attack on a police party by a group of Nihangs, a Sikh warrior sect, at a vegetable market in Punjab's Patiala.

The hand of assistant sub-inspector Harjit Singh was severed with a sword in the attack that followed when the Nihangs were asked for curfew passes, the police said.

Defined lockdown

The accused, including a woman, were later arrested in an operation led by Inspector General of Police (Patiala Range) Jatinder Alakh and Patiala's Senior Superintendent of Police Mandeep Sidhu after they escaped into the Nihang Deora complex in Balbera, which also houses Khichdi Sahib Gurdwara.

The accused included the five persons involved in the attack on the police team posted at the vegetable market in Sanaur early on Sunday morning. They had crashed through a series of barricades and attacked the police personnel who inquired about their curfew passes," Director General of Police Dinkar Gupta said.

Baba Balwinder Singh, the Nihang head, who had come to the market in a vehicle with four other persons, was the main perpetrator of the attack, Mr. Gupta said.

"The operation followed a stand-off for several hours and many rounds of appeals and negotiations led by the Patiala SSP with Balwinder Singh to surrender with their weapons and swords. But the Nihangs refused to surrender," he added.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

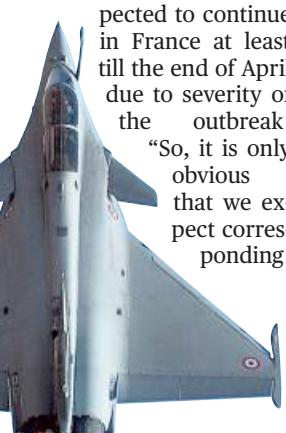
+ Pandemic impact: first batch of Rafales likely to fly in late

France severely hit by rising infections and death toll

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

The arrival of the first batch of Rafale fighter jets for the Indian Air Force is likely to be delayed by around three months due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as France battles rising infections and deaths, and continuing lockdown restrictions, which have also impacted the training schedule, defence sources said.

In mid-March there were 8-9 weeks of training left before the first major group could move to India for starting operations here. Some logistic support equipment and test equipment were also to be flown to Ambala beginning April, which is postponed as



of now due to the lockdown and restrictions on flights imposed by India," a defence source told *The Hindu* on condition of anonymity.

No clear timeframe'
In addition, the lockdown restrictions are expected to continue in France at least till the end of April due to severity of the outbreak.

"So, it is only obvious that we expect corresponding

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Troubled waters



Supply chain: Vendors unloading vegetables and other items, transported via a boat from Saran district amid the nationwide lockdown, in Patna, Bihar, on Sunday. The State has reported 64 cases of COVID-19 till date. ■ PTI

In lockdown, the big top collapses

Members of an old Bengal circus are stranded



Show stopped: The performers have been managing with food donations from a local panchayat. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

lockdown. "Our tent was dismantled. We are under the sky and the day before, when the storm hit us, we were scared," he explained. It has rained frequently in parts of the State, making life more difficult for 42 performers of Empire Circus.

The circus was supposed to perform twice a day between February 25 and March 25 and move to the

next block, but it all stopped midway. The owner left after paying "some money."

"I cannot send any money home now and the family is in deep trouble," said Mr. Ghosh, who has three sons doing odd jobs.

Helpless women

Things are even more difficult for Raj Kumari of Uttar

Pradesh. As the manager of a five-member women's squad who came from Kushinagar, she must care for the entire group.

"The girls are desperate to go back as it is painfully difficult to stay in this open area, with no income," she said.

The performers, from Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal earn between ₹10,000 and ₹20,000, based on their roles.

The performers and their manager praised local panchayat chief Farid Jamad and Block Development Officer of Haroa Dipankar Das for arranging food twice daily.

Mr. Ghosh has a son working with the troupe. A decision to lift the lockdown for three days could help all return safely. "I appeal to the government," he said.

Helpless women

Things are even more difficult for Raj Kumari of Uttar

Wine shops in Meghalaya to open for five days from today

Customers should follow social distancing rules: govt. order

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Almost a fortnight after withdrawing its order allowing home delivery of alcoholic beverages on health grounds, the Meghalaya government has allowed wine shops and bonded warehouses in the State to sell liquor for seven hours a day from April 13 to 17.

An official memorandum from the Commissioner of Excise to all heads of districts on April 11 put a few riders on relaxing the lockdown restrictions on liquor wholesalers and retail outlets. Apart from urging liquor sellers to ensure that customers followed social distancing rules and cough etiquette, the memorandum made it clear that the local authorities

should allow only one member of a family to buy. They were also instructed to prohibit the movement of such a member from one locality or village to another in search of liquor. Wine shops were asked to provide hand sanitisers to customers besides guiding them to other wine shops within the same locality/village" in order to strictly avoid overcrowding.

The Meghalaya government had on March 30 issued an order allowing restricted sale of liquor on medical grounds and advising temperance drinking for consumers. The order was withdrawn the next day after an objection from the Indian Medical Association.

On April 3, the Wine Dealers and Welfare Association

in Shillong had appealed to Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma for granting permission to open the bonded warehouses and retail outlets for "dealing with the stress" caused by the "abnormal situation".

Onus on headmen
In an earlier order, the Health and Family Welfare Department had entrusted traditional village chiefs or headmen to keep tabs on people who have recently arrived in their villages and enforce 14-day home quarantine for them. "The Headman/Rangbah Shnong/Nokma should also follow up with the person under home quarantine," the order by the Department's Commission Secretary said.

The government is "engaged" in talks with the U.S. administration to reconsider President Donald Trump's orders to impose visa sanctions on countries that don't take back illegal "aliens" in the U.S. within a week. In particular, the order clashed with New Delhi's decision to restrict all passengers, including Indian citizens from any other country, owing to the coronavirus pandemic.

If Washington refuses to relent on its seven-day deadline, or New Delhi refuses to lift the ban on incoming travel within the week, Indians could face a major cut in U.S. visas granted this year.

"We have been engaged with the U.S. government on resuming these deportation-related travels at the earliest opportunity," government sources told *The Hindu*, when asked about the logjam over the U.S. President's memorandum.

"Like all incoming international travel, the deportation of illegal immigrants to India has also been affected by the lockdown and COVID-19-related travel restrictions," the sources explained, adding that India had been cooperating with the U.S. to repatriate illegal Indian nationals from the U.S. as it is the government's policy "not to encourage illegal immigration to any country".

According to the Department of Homeland Security's 2018 survey, Indians constitute one of the largest groups of illegal aliens in the U.S., numbering an estimated 4,70,000 who had entered by 2015.

However, the Trump administration has pushed for India to tighten its controls on emigration, and accept more deportations in the past few years.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

A ND-NDE

Even essential services on a lifeline...

Several pharmaceutical companies and protective-gear manufacturing units are faced with staff crunch, shortage of raw materials and stubborn policemen

Four staff, 12-hour shift and one day off

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

A factory, the only one in Mayapuri Industrial Area-I which has been running, is of hospital essentials ensuring that the ones fighting at the forefront against the pandemic are well equipped. The factory – SLK Solutions – manufactures garbage bags, needle destroyers, sharp containers and mortuary sheets among other essentials for several hospitals including Apollo, AIIMS, Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, Safdarjung Hospital, and other private hospitals.

Outside the factory, a number of documents have also been put up – including what the factory manufactures, permissions from the District Magistrate's office and the government's order mentioning that this factory falls under the category which is allowed to run.

The factory's manager, Vinod, stepped out wearing a mask and head cap while giving instructions to a worker. He said that they had about 15-20 workers before the lockdown reduced the strength to four. In the initial days, reaching the office was hard, he said, sharing an incident in the early days of the lockdown.

Two workers, Ravi and Niranjan, were coming to work but were stopped and beaten up by the police. "They told them that they were working in a factory manufacturing essentials but they were roughed up," he recollects.

Vinod said that after the



A view of SLK Solutions in Mayapuri Industrial Area-I that manufactures essentials for hospitals. ■ HEMANI BHANDARI

incident, most of the workers left for their villages in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar leaving only four workers here. While the company is learning to work with a skeletal staff, they are staring at another hurdle – procuring raw materials.

Another hurdle

"The factories manufacturing raw materials for our production is not opening which is becoming a major

• The factories manufacturing raw materials for our production is not opening which is becoming a major problem for us

problem for us. They are not considered essentials because they are manufacturing raw materials and we are manufacturing finished product, therefore, we got permission from the DM [District Magistrate] for the factory to run," said factory owner Sanjay.

But the scarcity of raw materials has made their future production uncertain. "Because we are unable to procure as much raw materials as required, we are not sure how long we'll be able to run the factory," he said.

Talking about distribution to hospitals, he said that they have one vehicle to move around for distribution and have taken an e-pass for it. "The factory has been running every day

without a miss because all the passes and permissions were sought immediately with manageable problems like minor delays," he said.

Even the employees had to procure passes. "They live in the jhuggis close by but still e-passes were applied and given," he said. The workers weren't allowed by the owner to speak to *The Hindu* as he claimed that the workload on them, in absence of others, is enough and "they can't be disturbed".

The workers are on a 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. shift, due to the lack of employees, a reason the night shift was dropped. They get Sundays off. "The only day to quarantine for us," as Vinod joked.

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Getwell Pharmaceuticals in Udyog Vihar Phase-V, which manufactures anti-cancer medicine, has been running with one-fourth of its staff since the lockdown and revenues have diminished to one-fifth. Commuting of staff and transportation of goods has been the major challenges.

Though categorised under the "essential goods" category, the company has failed to procure curfew passes for its staff commuting from neighbouring Delhi and Gurugram.

"We applied for 14 passes in Delhi as per the procedure, but all were turned down," said the company's production head, Vaneeta Chaudhary. She claimed that one of her staff, Jitender, was hit by a policeman at a checkpoint a week ago, though he had carried the company's identity card.

Lack of clarity
The company's Chief Executive Officer and Director Manas Tandon rued the lack of clarity among the police, especially the constabulary, on the directions for the movement of staff for essential services even more than two weeks after the lockdown.

Though the government says that the company's identity card would suffice, the policemen insist that they should be duly attested by the authorities, he alleged. To avoid the hassle, the company has directed its senior staff to pick up and drop the workers.

"It is quite a task, but that is the best way out. It is anyway easy for the seniors to deal with the policemen

Scaled-down production, shut unit and skeletal staff



Staff at Getwell Pharmaceuticals manufacturing unit in Gurugram engaged in the packing of medicines. ■ ASHOK KUMAR

manning the barricades," said Mr. Tandon.

Jitender Kumar, who stays at Delhi's Samalkha, near the Delhi-Gurugram border, said the police stopped him from returning to Delhi two days ago, though he was with senior staff. They did not have curfew passes. "We then returned and took another route a little later to some route which reaches home," he said.

Though they have 110 people across all departments – manufacturing, testing, logistics, commercial operations and purchase – the company manages its operations with just 25. The movement of the manufactured good has also been hit since cargo flights have grounded.

Though they have 110 people across all departments – manufacturing, testing, logistics, commercial operations and purchase – the company manages its operations with just 25. The movement of the manufactured good has also been hit since cargo flights have grounded.

Mr. Tandon said only

two airlines were operating and charging three to four times higher than the usual freight. Also, the airlines

do not fly without complete load, delaying the cargo for days.

Travel woes

Though the demand for the medicine, used during chemotherapy, remains high as ever, the production has been scaled down due to challenges in the movement of staff and goods. The company shut its Rewari unit due to similar issues.

The availability of raw material is another challenge. The running of pharmaceutical manufacturing units is allowed, but the ancillaries are all shut. "We cannot run in isolation," argued Mr. Tandon.

The matter was conveyed to the Home Ministry, but the industry was yet to hear from the government, he claimed. Even if allowed to operate, these ancillary units may

face labour crunch with most of the migrant workers having already left for their villages in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. "Around 85% workers at our ancillary unit in Sonipat have left," said Mr. Tandon.

With the raw materials stock dwindling, they might be forced to shut down entirely. Mr. Tandon said the biggest of the pharma companies usually had buffer stock for one-two months. If the situation persists, it could result in medicine shortage, feared Mr. Tandon.

The company has paid the wages to the staff for March, but it may not be feasible if the lockdown continues.

"The larger perception is that the pharma are minting money in these times of crisis, but the reality is grim," said Mr. Tandon, smirking.

Junior doctors at ESIC wear black bands

It is being worn as they are not being provided masks and personal protective equipment

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
FARIDABAD

Around 40 junior resident doctors at ESIC Hospital and Medical College at NIT-3 here are working with black bands around their arms for the past couple of days as a mark of protest for not being provided the N-95 masks and personal protective equipment (PPE).

The hospital is a designated centre for collection and testing of samples of COVID-19 suspects. Seven patients are under treatment at the hospital.

The chief medical officer, ESIC Hospital and Medical College, Komal Kumar, told *The Hindu* that the doctors did not have N-95 masks and PPE kits and were forced to work putting their lives at risk. Most of these doctors were hired on one-year contract and had two-four months of contract period left. Dr. Kumar said their jobs were not secure and they were not covered under



People walking through the newly inaugurated disinfection passage installed at Hindu Rao Hospital in Delhi on Sunday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

any health scheme. "We will not even get free treatment, if infected," said Dr. Kumar.

He alleged that the senior doctors had either gone on leave or not coming to work adding to their burden. Against the mandated 60 hours a week, they had to work for longer hours, he

said. Mr. Kumar said the matter was brought to the notice of the Dean; the Director General, ESIC and the Health Ministry through a letter and several reminders since March 24, but there was no response.

Dean, ESIC Hospital and Medical College, Aseem Das, claimed he had a stock

of 12,000 N-95 masks, 90,000 three-layer masks and 4,000 PPE. However, as per the Indian Council of Medical Research and AIIMS protocol, he added, the N-95 masks and PPE were only for the doctors working in the COVID-19 ward. "Anyone keeping a distance of six meters from a CO

VID-19 patient did not need these masks or PPE. So, doctors not working in COVID-19 wards, which is away from the rest of the hospital do not need these," said Mr. Das. He said the protesting doctors are not put in COVID-19 wards, had ulterior motives and were scared. "They do not even know the protocol," said Dr. Das.

India will figure out how many masks we have to be made," she said. "These masks will be delivered free of cost and distribution will be entirely left to the Delhi police," said Sunil Sethi, FDCI president.

Suket Dhir is using hand-spun, hand-woven cotton from West Bengal to make masks that are breathable and can be easily washed and reused. "These masks made of two-or three-layered cotton are of strong quality," he said.

Mr. Dhir started production from April 10. "Since my artisans have gone away, I am making use of women volunteers from Noida Sarai near Sainik Farm who were trained in a programme of the Skill India campaign," he said. His masks will be distributed free of cost through an NGO.

"Making masks is the need of the hour. The FDCI [Fashion Design Council of



Rahul Mishra wearing a mask designed by him.

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

around the area that has been sealed by the Noida authorities. I don't want them to be robbed of their livelihood even if they observe social distancing," he said.

Mr. Mishra now plans to make 1,00,000 masks for the public once the lock-

Masks for the masses

Designers from Delhi-NCR are offering alternatives to the public at large

MADHUR TANKHA
NEW DELHI

Wearing masks can be claustrophobic, but there's no doing without them now given the growing COVID-19 threat in our country. Several designers have studied surgical masks such as N95 and come up with their own "more breathable" prototypes using cotton. These masks give partial protection provided they are regularly washed. The designers

plan to distribute them among the masses either for free or at a nominal price through various networks.

Designer Rahul Mishra has come up with a version using a double layer of cotton that adheres to recommendations of the U.S. health protection agency Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"So far, I have made a thousand for my workers and their families. These are washable masks and need to be dried in the sun. Each artisan has been assigned three masks which they have to change after three hours," said Mr. Mishra, resident of Noida apartment identified as a COVID-19 hotspot. "My workers live

down restrictions are eased. His rationale: "Even after the lockdown, everyone will have to wear a mask just like they wear a vest." The average cost of the mask would be less than ₹10.

Two variants
Similarly, Aneeth Arora, a textile revivalist who like Mr. Mishra studied at National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, has designed a three-layered cotton mask. The designer, whose factory is currently closed because the area has been identified as another "containment zone", has come up with two variants – one pleated and the other open. The cost of each mask, made from off-white fabric, would be ₹100.

"Making masks is the need of the hour. The FDCI [Fashion Design Council of

'Provide special allowance to those treating COVID-19 patients'

Delhi Cong. demands accommodation for nurses in hotels

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Sunday wrote to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal highlighting the problems being faced by doctors, nurses, paramedical staff, sanitation staff and COVID-19 patients and demanded that a special allowance be provided to them.

Delhi Congress chief Chaudhary Anil Kumar, in his letter, said that the Delhi Congress has received complaints that medical and non-medical staff engaged in the treatment of COVID-19 patients are

facing problems when it comes to accommodation, personal protective equipment and other things.

COVID-19

"At Lok Nayak Hospital, nurses who were asked to quarantine themselves after treating COVID-19 patients have been provided accommodation in the building which houses infected patients as well as those displaying symptoms. Instead of offering single rooms with attached bathrooms to the

nurses, who have all been in close contact with COVID-19 patients, the hospital has asked two nurses to share one room," he said, demanding proper accommodation for them. "Nurses should be provided good-quality accommodation in hotels close to their places of work with food and adequate security as has been provided to doctors," Mr. Kumar said.

The Delhi Congress also demanded counseling services for COVID-19 patients and those who have been asked to quarantine themselves.

'Lower-middle class has tough time sustaining themselves'

Civil society group distributing food, ration to 20,000 daily

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Gurgaon Nagrik Ekta Manch, a civil society group, which has been distributing cooked food and ration kits to around 20,000 people daily, said there is a spike in distress calls for food over the past 24 hours. It said that a new disturbing trend was emerging wherein the lower-middle class families, with a monthly income of ₹15,000-20,000, too have been facing difficulty in sustaining themselves.

Independent filmmaker and member of the manch, Rahul Roy, said the group had been catering mostly to daily-wagers and migrant workers, but their information team had been receiving distress calls from lower-middle class families as well over the past 24 hours.

Mr. Roy said the situation was grim and Universal Public Distribution System could be the only solution. "It

is not sustainable to provide cooked food to such a large population every day. It needs huge logistics. The weather is also getting hotter and the food may go bad within hours," said Mr. Roy. He said the group distributed around 20,000 packets of cooked food every day at fixed places. Of these, 5,000 packets were contributed by Pack and Swiggy.

Mr. Roy said a kitchen had been set up at The Shri Ram School, Mouslari campus in DLF Phase-III for this purpose. He suggested that cooked food could be the right way of catering to people in camps, but since the people were inside their homes they should be provided ration to cook on their own.

Mr. Roy said the manch collected funds through crowd-funding and the MMT Foundation had also offered to run the kitchen for ten days.

Besides, the manch has adopted a village behind the Marble Market and distributed 600 ration packets. Each ration kit, comprising wheat, flour, rice, pulses and mustard oil, among others, was enough for a family of four people to sustain themselves for 10 days. "We have distributed around 6,500 ration kits so far. Around 300-400 kits are being distributed every day. We gave away 300 such kits at Bhatti Mines on Saturday," said Mr. Roy.

The filmmaker said a team was set up before the lockdown to gather information about SOS demands through WhatsApp groups, trade unions and other sources. The information is verified, a chart is prepared every evening and ration supplied the next day. The ration packets are stored at Udyog Vihar and around 200 people work as volunteers.

Timings
DELHI

MONDAY, APR. 13
RISE 05:58 SET 18:46
RISE 00:00 SET 10:10
TUESDAY, APR. 14
RISE 05:57 SET 18:47
RISE 00:34 SET 11:05
WEDNESDAY, APR. 15
RISE 05:56 SET 18:47
RISE 01:27 SET 12:01

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	38	20
Safdarjung	38	20
Palam	38	20

Delhi Palam Today
39°C A pleasant morning turns very warm day with partly cloudy sky. Chances of thunderstorm in parts.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
40°C A pleasant morning turns very warm day with partly cloudy sky. Night will be cheerful.

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THE HINDU
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Air quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi	94	Gurugram	98
Ghaziabad	93	Faridabad	119
Noida	87	Greater Noida	98
Good	Satisfactory	Moderate	
0-50	51-100	101-200	
Poor	Very poor	Severe	
201-300	301-400	>401	

AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY
(AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) | SOURCE: CPCB

At a crossroad



A woman waits for transport near Welcome metro station during the lockdown in the city on Sunday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Five ex-staff of hospital move HC against sacking

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A plea has been moved in the Delhi High Court by five former support staff of St. Stephens Hospital Health-care Facility, challenging the institute's decision to sack them from its Gurugram branch.

The petition contended that the decision was taken without giving any notice or opportunity to hear them.

The decision was taken on March 30 by the management of the hospital, which is located at Tis Hazari here, as it was closing its Gurugram branch, the plea said, adding no one else was terminated.

The petitioners have contended that the decision was in violation of the advisories issued by the Labour Ministry on March 20 and March 23 which had "specifically directed that persons engaged contractually or casually with either public or private establishments not be terminated during the COVID-19 outbreak".

In a single day, Delhi records 5 deaths, 85 new COVID-19 cases

Govt. to launch massive sanitation drive from today across red, orange zones

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Capital on Sunday recorded five deaths and 85 new COVID-19 cases, taking the total number of deaths to 24 and the cumulative cases to 1,154, the government said.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the rise in the number of cases here over the past few days was a worrying trend and the government would be launching a "massive" sanitation drive from April 13 across the city's red and orange zones. The government has declared containment zones as red zones and the high-risk zones as orange zones.

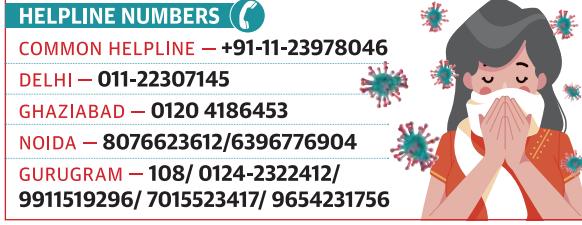
10 high-tech machines

Mr. Kejriwal said the sanitation drive will be carried out by 10 high-tech Japanese machines. He added that each machine can sanitise 20,000 sqm in one hour. Along with this, 50 small machines will be procured from the Delhi Jal Board.

"We are taking all measures possible to control the crisis and I am sure that our strategy 'operation shield' will be successful. We implemented this strategy in Dilshad Garden and no new COVID-19 positive cases



Security personnel keeping vigil at one of the hotspot areas in the city on Sunday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA



have been found in that area," he said, adding that the number of containment zones has grown to 35 – where operation shield will be in place.

"I understand that this is causing a hindrance to the people but I want to assure them that we will do whatever we can to ease out their difficulties. We have to

take these measures to ensure all our people are safe and secure and protected from the virus. In the U.S., there have been 2,000 deaths in 24 hours, we do not want to face the same situation," said Mr. Kejriwal.

Monetary relief

Announcing the details of how the government plans

to distribute monetary relief to autorickshaw drivers, gramin and phat-phat sewa and taxi as promised earlier, Mr. Kejriwal said all those who have a valid driver's license and valid driver's badge, will start getting relief assistance.

"We are providing them relief assistance of ₹5,000 each to help their families in these distressing times. Drivers will have to submit their applications on the Transport Department's website transport.gov.in and provide the government with their Aadhaar-linked bank account number and other details," the Chief Minister said.

Eight persons apprehended for religious gathering

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Eight persons have been apprehended for allegedly gathering at a gurdwara in violation of the lockdown orders in north Delhi's Kotwali on Sunday, the police said.

A police team on patrol duty found that a group of people was performing religious activities at Gurdwara Sisganj at 2.15 am, they said.

Tried to flee spot

After seeing policemen, the people there tried to flee the spot but they were apprehended, a senior officer said.

Following the incident, a case under Sections 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease) and 270 (malignant act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) of the Indian Penal Code were registered against them at Kotwali police station, the officer added.

Not wearing masks

The eight apprehended were also not wearing masks, the police said.

Labourers from Bengal demand to be sent home

They make the appeal to authorities in a video

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Migrant labourers from West Bengal, staying in Vishwas Nagar here since the start of the lockdown, on Sunday in a video appealed to authorities to help them return home.

No provision made

"We Bengalis came to Delhi to earn a livelihood but because of this epidemic, we are stuck in this lockdown..." said Fazlur Rehman, a labourer.

After the easing of the norms, the HPC was apprised by D.G. (Prisons) that the Jail Population has come down from 17,552 as on March 25 to 16,179 as on April 7. On complete implementation of the new criteria, the number would further come down.

Odd-even scheme for shops to fixed timings, Azadpur mandi under watch

Measures in place at all major markets for social distancing

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

In order to maintain social distancing at Delhi's largest wholesale fruit and vegetable market – Azadpur mandi, the police have deployed drones for surveillance, implemented odd-even rules and also fixed timings for sale of items, said officials on Sunday.

DCP (North-West) Vijayanta Arya said, to channelise the movement inside the market, entry is allowed only for traders or bulk buyers.

"Shops with odd and even numbers will operate on alternate days. There will also be fixed timings – 6:11 a.m. for the sale of vegetables and 2:6 p.m. for the sale of fruits. We have deployed police personnel on round-the-clock duty and drones will keep a watch on violations, if any," said Mr. Arya.

The police said civil defence volunteers have also been roped in for the task and officials are mulling over staggered timings for traders and buyers to avoid overcrowding.

With help from the Delhi government and the civil administration, several measures have been taken to make sure that people practice social distancing in Keshopur, Azadpur, Ghaziabad and Mehrauli mandis, said Delhi Police PRO Mandeep Singh Randhawa on Sunday.

"We have spoken to officer-bearers of mandis and proper arrangements have been made to ensure social distancing," he said, adding officials are deployed at all major mandis from early morning till the markets close.

In west Delhi's Keshopur Mandi, suppliers and buyers have been strictly directed to adhere to social distancing.



Buyers and sellers at Keshopur market in west Delhi. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

COVID-19

ing guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the police said.

Restrictions imposed

Two inspectors with a team of local police and a company of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) are deployed in the market daily, they said. Strong pickets have been erected on the road in front of the mandi to restrict entry of unauthorised persons, said Deputy Commissioner of Police (West) Deepak Purohit.

No vehicle is allowed to enter without a valid entry pass and action will be taken against violators, he said, adding ID cards of vendors and buyers are checked at the entrance. "Vendors have set up their fruit and vegetable stalls at proper distance from each other. Authorities have been requested to remove stray animals from mandi," Mr. Purohit said.

Spots have been marked in front of stalls to indicate where buyers should stand, the police said. Banners and posters have been erected at strategic locations across the

market to create awareness about social distancing, they added.

Officials also said announcements are being made repeatedly to remind visitors of the directions, they added. As many as 20 civil defence volunteers, among others, have been deployed to ensure that people follow the directions, the police said.

They said they have asked the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) to consider introducing staggered timings for traders and buyers to decongest the market.

While traders can function from 5 a.m. to 12 noon, buyers can visit from 12 p.m. to 7 p.m., they said.

The closing of Keshopur mandi for two days to sanitise the premises is also being considered, they added.

South Delhi's Mehrauli Mandi has been relocated to a bus terminal to ensure vendors maintain social distancing, said DCP (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said. "Markings have been made and a meeting was held with the mandi's pradhan to ensure social distancing," he said.

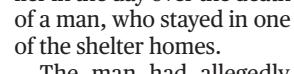
City churches livestream Easter mass

SIDHARTH RAVI

NEW DELHI
The Sacred Heart Cathedral Church here let people celebrate Easter Vigil on Saturday night under the COVID-19 lockdown by live-telecasting the mass and the rituals as clergymen sent out a message of hope.

"Everything was the same, except no one came to the church," said Father Lawrence, from the church. Over 4,000 people tuned in to watch the telecast. The church has been carrying out masses online every day, he said.

Clergymen and Archbishop Anil Cuto sent out a message of resilience and hope, the central idea of Easter, said Father Lawrence. On Sunday too, the mass was held. At Cathedral Church of Redemption, Easter Mass was carried out in Tamil and Hindi.



The night shelter which was set ablaze on Saturday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

ple who created ruckus earlier in the day over the death of a man, who stayed in one of the shelter homes.

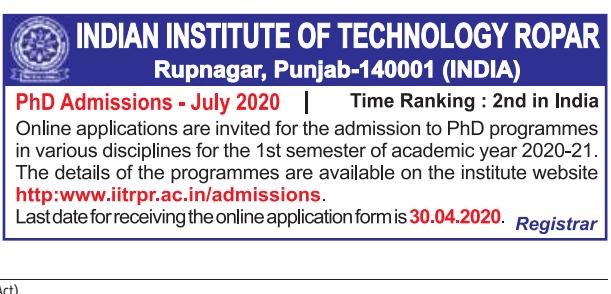
The man had allegedly jumped into the Yamuna on Friday after he was asked to maintain social distance while standing in a queue for getting food. A body was recovered from the river on Saturday morning.

A day before the fire incident, the residents at the shelter and civil defence volunteers clashed over "food distribution".

IN BRIEF

Police stop woman for not wearing mask

NEW DELHI
A foreign national was stopped by the police for allegedly not wearing a mask while cycling in Vasant Vihar here, said officials on Sunday. The incident took place at 6.30 p.m. on Saturday at Paschimi Marg, they said. The government has made it compulsory for people to wear masks when they step outside their houses, in a bid to check the spread of COVID-19.



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'Modified lockdown' should be enforced after April 14: Gehlot

'It will enable States to utilise internal resources to bring economy back on track'

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Sunday suggested that a "modified lockdown" could be enforced beyond April 14, when the present spell of nationwide lockdown comes to an end, to enable the States to utilise their internal resources for bringing the economy back on track.

"My thinking is that a modified lockdown should come into force. To what extent it can happen, depends on the Central government," Mr. Gehlot said at an interaction with journalists through video conferencing at his residence here.

Mr. Gehlot said the States could open up some sectors and allow movement of vehicles to restart limited services and agricultural value



A horse cart carrying essential items on a deserted street in Jaipur on Sunday. • ROHIT JAIN PARAS

chain operations, but added that the inter-State transport would be possible only with the Centre's cooperation.

He affirmed that the States had weakened under the impact of lockdown.

"It is easy to announce a lockdown, which stops eve-

rything, but it is a bigger challenge to end the lockdown and bring the life back on rails," Mr. Gehlot remarked while pointing out that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had hinted at extending the lockdown during his meeting with Chief Ministers on Saturday.

The Rajasthan government had announced the lockdown on March 21, three days before the nationwide lockdown was brought into force to contain the spread of COVID-19. Two task forces appointed by Mr. Gehlot on April 4 are examining the strategies for a phased withdrawal of the lockdown and for bringing the economy back to normal.

State toll reaches 9

Meanwhile, A 13-year-old girl died of COVID-19 infection in Jaipur on Sunday, taking Rajasthan's toll to nine. Health Department says she had complaints of intestine perforation and septicaemia.

The number of positive cases in the State increased to 804 with the detection of 104 new cases.

U.P. will follow Centre's move on curbs: CM

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government will follow the guidelines of the Centre on further action on the lockdown beyond April 14, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the number of positive cases in U.P. touched 483 as per the State directorate of health services.

Five persons have died in U.P. of COVID-19 so far, one each in Basti, Meerut, Varanasi, Agra and Bulandshahr.

The State has so far sent 11,855 samples for testing and put 8,836 persons under institutional quarantine.

After a meeting with his Ministers, Mr. Adityanath said U.P. will follow the guidelines of the Centre on the lockdown.

"Lockdown ke bare mein agay ki karyawahi kya hoti hai, bharat sarkar kijo guideline ho ayeji uska anupalan hum log Uttar Pradesh mein karenge (On the further action on the lockdown, in U.P. we will follow the guideline issued by the Centre)," Mr. Adityanath said.

12 new cases in Punjab, State tally climbs to 170

Stay at home on Baisakhi, says CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Punjab on Sunday reported 12 fresh cases of COVID-19, taking the total tally to 170 in the State, according to a government statement.

The State health department said out of the twelve cases reported on April 12, seven cases are from Jalandhar district, while three are from Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar. One case each has been reported from Kapurthala and Faridkot districts.

Till now, Punjab has seen 12 COVID-19 related deaths, while 23 patients have been cured of the virus.

Meanwhile, Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder said U.P. will follow the guidelines of the Centre on the lockdown.

"Lockdown ke bare mein agay ki karyawahi kya hoti hai, bharat sarkar kijo guideline ho ayeji uska anupalan hum log Uttar Pradesh mein karenge (On the further action on the lockdown, in U.P. we will follow the guideline issued by the Centre)," Mr. Adityanath said.

Strict enforcement

Pointing to the global crisis, the Chief Minister said the situation was relatively better in Punjab, and in fact across India, due to the early lockdown and its strict enforcement.

C Task force set up to work out curfew exit strategy will submit its report within 10 days

AMARINDER SINGH
Punjab CM

Captain Amarinder said all arrangements were in place for wheat harvesting, set to commence on April 15, and promised another season of smooth procurement, in line with his government's track record, not just now but even in the previous stint.

Economic revival

Underlining the need to give serious thought to the way ahead, the Chief Minister said the task force, set up to work out the curfew exit strategy, will submit its report within 10 days, and a high-powered committee, to be headed by a leading finance expert, would work on ways for economic and industrial revival of the State.

In the Union Territory of Chandigarh, two fresh cases were reported, taking the total number of confirmed cases to 21, an official statement said.

1,450 arrested in Assam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
GUWAHATI

Over 1,450 persons have been arrested across the State in the last 19 days for violating the ongoing lockdown to contain COVID-19, the Assam police said on Sunday.

A sum of nearly ₹40 lakh was collected from the arrested persons as fine for violating the norms of the lockdown, the police said.

Harvest time



Farmers harvest wheat amid lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic, in Agra on Sunday. • PTI

'Remove fear from mind, don't lose confidence'

Indore male nurse Rajesh Aswara who overcame COVID-19, says he wants to help others combat it

SIDDHARTH YADAV
BHOJPAL

After trumping COVID-19, Rajesh Aswara is eager to return to the isolation ward of the M.Y. Hospital. The fear evoked by the disease, he has defeated it with grit. And going back to duty as a male nurse now, he can tell others how he became the first in Indore to do it.

"Now that I have overcome corona, I am more confident and want to help others combat it," said Mr. Aswara, 48. Not that he was spooked tending to swine flu patients earlier, who flooded the chest ward where he has been working for six years.

"But I am much more stronger now," he chuckles. To all nurses across the

world, he says: "First of all, remove fear from your minds. Second, treat a patient only with a personal protective equipment (PPE) kit on. Don't work without it."

Not wearing a kit, while treating a COVID-19 patient, proved him dear. "I wore just a mask and gloves," he said. The patient was among the first cases to be reported from Indore on March 22. Until 25 March each day, when the patient died, he helped her put on a face mask, checked vitals and fed her.

"I am not sure how I got the illness from her. Just by touching an infected person, you could get it. As so many people are dying across the



Rajesh Aswara

world and there is no treatment discovered yet, just the mention of it spooked me back then," he said. And on March 26, his worst fear came true.

After being told he had tested positive for the illness, his limbs trembled for a good 15 minutes. Passing the first

day at the ward was the toughest, as his cough turned a sombre blackish. For several days, he slept for only two hours, walked in an empty ward next door feverishly hours at night. And with two-three patients dying of the disease at the hospital every day, he feared: *Kahi agla number mera toh nahi?* (Am I going to be the next?)

His family back in Rajasthan's Dungarpur district, insisted they come the moment they heard the news, despite the lockdown, and gave up meals. "They cried, cried a lot," he recalled. He kept it hidden from them for two days, pretending he was home all the while. "But my relatives staying in the same

street here told them," he said. Even his landlord's sons and neighbours called, to his surprise, to ask after him.

Motivated by doctors

When he began losing hope, doctors motivated him to not give up, nurses prayed for him, he prayed for himself, ate heartily and on time and "just followed properly every instruction of doctors."

Besides, he inhaled steam 10 times a day and drank warm water, and took paracetamol, vitamin tablets to boost immunity and hydroxychloroquine tablets.

"All this, and the courage to let go of fear, not give up and be confident in fighting the infection kept me going," he said.

Heritage crafts village in Odisha wears a deserted look

Uncertain about their future, Pattachitra artists want virtual platform to sell paintings



Dinabandhu Mohapatra at work. • SATYASUNDAR BARIK

of most villagers here. On an average, an artist sells paintings worth ₹15,000 to ₹20,000 per month - enough to lead a simple life in the village.

The paintings' trade had recently picked up after it was badly impacted by last year's cyclone Fani that had spoiled many artworks. Following the cyclone, visitors had also stopped visiting the village till normalcy returned.

Many argue that the health crisis has provided the much-needed break for producing more Pattachitras. But, 64-year-old award-winning artist Dinabandhu Mohapatra does not agree. "The silence is killing our creativity as well as the skill. What if the Pattachitra

arts remain unsold, will the government come to our rescue? These questions make us perturbed," the veteran artist said.

Artists claim many villagers are landless. Though the government has provided rice, old age and widow pensions and ₹1,000 each, the artists are uncertain about their future.

"We can ill-afford to earn less. Villagers want an online platform through which their paintings could be sold and tourists may not come physically to buy products. In this way we can compensate the loss of productive days," said Seema Behera, who is pursuing her bachelor's degree and also helping her family in painting.

Ban on Meru Jatra festival

People told to remain in their homes

STAFF REPORTER
BERHAMPUR

Odisha's Ganjam district administration has banned the Meru Jatra festival and congregations related to it at temples on the occasion of Mahavishnu Sankranti on Monday.

Meru Jatra marks the end of 21-day-long festival of penance named 'Danda Nata'. Mahavishnu Sankranti is also the start of the Odia New Year. On this day, thousands of devotees used to gather at the Tara Tarini hill shrine and other temples.

Ganjam District Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange on Sunday directed that no temple will be opened up for Meru Jatra. Only one priest will be allowed to enter each temple to perform

the rituals. Earlier, the administrations had banned the famous Chaitra festival at Tara Tarini hill shrine that attracts lakhs of devotees.

Action against violators'

The Collector advised citizens to remain in their homes and use social distancing to break the chain of COVID-19 spread. According to him, strict legal action will be initiated against persons, who break the lockdown rules and restrictions imposed on Meru Jatra on Monday.

The administration in March had banned 'Danda Nata' as its troupes moving around could have become carriers of COVID-19 infection.

Architects against Delhi master plan revamp

It will allow intensive development along MRTS corridors in LBZ, Civil Lines

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

Several architects have objected to the Delhi Development Authority's proposed amendment to the Master Plan of Delhi-2021 that would enable intensive development along mass rapid transit system (MRTS) corridors in Lutyens' Delhi, Chanakyapuri, Civil Lines and regulated zones near monuments - all areas that are currently excluded from the "influence zones" of MRTS corridors.

The DDA had on February 28 issued a public notice inviting comments on its draft amendment of master plan. • FILE PHOTO

mum number of people can live, work or find means of recreation within walking or cycling distance of the MRTS corridors or stations". The current version of the master plan excludes the Lutyens' Bungalow Zone (LBZ), Chanakyapuri, Civil Lines Bungalow Zone and Monument Regulated Zone (as per Archaeological Survey of India guidelines) from the influence zones, however, the amendment proposes deleting the relevant clauses.

"The modifications to the TOD policy will have far-reaching implications on the

urban character of the LBZ.

The Indian Institute of Architects, Northern Chapter, has followed a consultative process, among its members, before submitting any comments to the government on such issues.

Due to the nationwide lockdown, this has not been possible. We would request the DDA to extend the deadline for submitting suggestions or objections," IIA Northern Chapter chairman Shamit Manchanda told *The Hindu*.

Anuj Srivastava, an architect who is a part of the Lok-PATH India collective that

started an online campaign to send objections to the DDA, said the draft amendments also removed the reservation for economically weaker section (EWS) residents. He said the TOD policy was meant to create inclusive spaces where people can live and work in the same areas, but this was being negated by the amendments. Instead of EWS housing, expensive studio apartments could come up, he said.

As of Sunday evening, over 480 people had used the online platform, LetIndiaBreathe, to send their comments to the DDA.

Narayan Moorthy, another architect associated with Lok-PATH, said the amendment diluted the TOD policy by removing the clause reserving 20% of the land to be redeveloped for public spaces. He added that since the TOD policy of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs was a national policy, the DDA's amendments could set a precedent for other cities.

COVID-19 fear: Man jumps to death in U.P.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

A 32-year-old man ended his life by jumping off the seventh floor of Galgotia Engineering College quarantine centre in Gautam Buddha Nagar on Sunday evening, an official release said.

A statement issued by the District Magistrate Suhas LY said the person was a resident of Phase 2 Noida and his report of COVID-19 was awaited. "He jumped off the seventh floor of the quarantine centre. A magistrate inquiry has been ordered to investigate the case," he said.

A video of the incident that was circulated on social media showed the health department workers trying to resuscitate the man. According to official sources 346 persons have been quarantined at the centre.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH



Prof. P Bhattacharya
Former VC of Tezpur Central University and Retired Professor of Mathematics at IIT Madras
DOB: 01.05.1941 - DOD: 12.04.2020
Deeply mourned by Lakshmi, Sandhya, Shreyas, Tara & Dhruv.
Contact: +91 94495 43624



MEENAKSHI SUBRAMANYAM
Mysore
12 July 1924 – 09 April 2020
In loving memory.
Children and extended family
+91259648752

In memory of your loved ones

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KERALA **Washing away:** Fire personnel disinfecting a school that has been converted into a camp for migrant labourers in Kozhikode on Sunday; APIIC chairperson R.K. Roja disinfecting a road in Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh; personnel from the Mysuru City Corporation disinfecting a road in the city; and fire services personnel spraying disinfectant in Sangareddy, Telangana. ■ K. RAGESH, SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT, M.A. SRIRAM & MOHD ARIF



Virus deaths rise to 11 in T.N.

17 new cases in Karnataka, 2 in Kerala, 15 in A.P.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI/VIJAYAWADA/
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/
BENGALURU

One more person lost her life to COVID-19 infection in Tamil Nadu on Sunday, taking the total number of deaths in the State to 11.

The 45-year-old woman, who was admitted to the Government Omandur Multi-Super Speciality Hospital

Kerala sees drop

A drop in new cases in Kerala, a single-day high of 17 positives in Karnataka and 15 new cases in Andhra Pradesh since Saturday night marked the course of the pandemic in the southern States



Long wait: People stand in queue to collect food from a distributor near K.R. Market in Bengaluru on Sunday.

■ SUDHAKARA JAIN

State	Total number of cases	Active cases	Number of those cured	Deaths
Andhra Pradesh	420	401	12	7
Karnataka	243	183	54	6
Kerala	375	194	179	2
Tamil Nadu	1,075	1,014	50	11
Telangana	531	412	103	16

around 11 a.m. on April 5, developed breathlessness and died at 7 p.m. on Saturday, according to a bulletin.

Health Secretary Beela Rajesh told mediapersons that as many as 106 new positive cases were reported on Sunday, taking the total to 1,075. While 16 of them had travel history, 90 had contracted the infection after coming in contact with them.

Of the 49 persons who had shown symptoms of severe acute respiratory illness (SARI), two tested positive for COVID-19. Both had been infected after coming into contact with people who tested positive, she said.

Tamil Nadu's new infections were in two large clus-

ters – Chennai and Coimbatore. A cluster of 22 persons, all from Coimbatore, had tested positive.

Mixed picture
Two deaths and 28 new cases in Telangana, a drop in new cases in Kerala, a single-day high of 17 positives in Karnataka, and 15 new cases in Andhra Pradesh since Saturday night marked the course of the pandemic in the southern States.

Telangana's total of active

cases stood at 412, while 103 had recovered. Andhra Pradesh reported 15 fresh cases of coronavirus infection on Sunday, taking the total to 420.

On the bright side, a 65-year-old patient was discharged from the Government General Hospital in Vijayawada. The man with a history of travel to Mecca on March 10, tested positive and got admitted to hospital on March 27. He tested negative for the virus thrice and was

discharged.

There were 401 active cases in hospitals. Seven persons died and 12 recovered.

36 recover in Kerala

Kerala reported just two positive cases of COVID-19 on Sunday, and both individuals had returned from abroad.

The State also reported that 36 COVID-19 patients under treatment in various districts had tested negative for the virus.

The two new positive cases were in Kannur and Pathanamthitta.

Of 375 persons who tested positive for COVID-19 in the State, only 194 were under treatment. A total of 179 recovered, while two succumbed to the disease.

The State had sent samples from 14,989 persons for testing, of which 13,802 samples were negative.

17 cases in Karnataka

The new case tally for Karnataka was 17 on Sunday, the highest reported in the State in a single day.

These were from five districts, for the 24-hour period till 5 p.m. on April 12. The total number of cases in the State rose to 243.

Of the total 243 patients, 54 had been discharged and six died. Among 172 patients at designated hospitals, four were in the intensive care unit.

Central govt. delayed funds, says Kerala

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Finance Minister T.M. Thomas Isaac has hit out at the Centre for its failure to provide timely financial assistance for States to take up the fight against COVID-19.

Talking to the media after a visit to a newly opened Janakeeya fair price hotel launched to provide affordable meals on Sunday, he said the State government was facing a revenue loss of ₹15,000 crore this month due to the lockdown.

The State governments, he said, were forced to borrow at high rates of interest to finance the drive against the pandemic. "Though the repo rate has been brought down to 4.4%, we have to pay interest at the rate of 9%."

The Central government should borrow from the RBI to refinance States," he said.

Mr. Isaac hinted that the government was preparing for a conditional relaxation of the lockdown norms in the State. "Though we have brought the situation under control, there is no room for complacency at this juncture. The restrictions will have to continue till we are sure the disease is eliminated," he said.

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Six microsites to promote Kerala

State plans to push tourism

S. ANIL RADHAKRISHNAN
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala Tourism has geared up for the post-COVID-19 era by coming up with six theme-based microsites in the official website to promote destination and tourism products and get an upper hand in the virtual marketing among brands.

Talking to the media after a visit to a newly opened Janakeeya fair price hotel launched to provide affordable meals on Sunday, he said the State government was facing a revenue loss of ₹15,000 crore this month due to the lockdown.

The State governments, he said, were forced to borrow at high rates of interest to finance the drive against the pandemic. "Though the repo rate has been brought down to 4.4%, we have to pay interest at the rate of 9%."

The Central government should borrow from the RBI to refinance States," he said.

Mr. Isaac hinted that the government was preparing for a conditional relaxation of the lockdown norms in the State. "Though we have brought the situation under control, there is no room for complacency at this juncture. The restrictions will have to continue till we are sure the disease is eliminated," he said.

These were from five districts, for the 24-hour period till 5 p.m. on April 12. The total number of cases in the State rose to 243.

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Trade in tatters

The WTO expects global goods trade volume to slump by as much as 32% in 2020

The only certainty right now in a pandemic-gripped world is the all-enveloping uncertainty. And the WTO acknowledged as much when it released its outlook for global trade last week. Projecting merchandise trade to plummet by anywhere between 13% and 32% in 2020, it added a categoric caveat: at the moment, it is only able to posit a wide range of possible trajectories for the predicted decline in trade given the unprecedented nature of the health crisis caused by the COVID-19 outbreak and the uncertainty around its precise economic impact. Economists at the WTO, however, appear more certain that the disruption and resultant blow to trade will in all likelihood be far worse than the slump brought on by the global financial crisis of 2008. As IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva observed on April 9, the global economy is set to contract sharply in 2020, with "the lockdown needed to fight" the pandemic affecting billions worldwide. The tight restrictions on movement and social distancing norms across geographies have led to severe curbs on labour supply, transport and travel and the shuttering of whole sectors from hotels and non-essential retail to tourism and significant parts of manufacturing. The WTO expects all regions, save Africa, West Asia and the Commonwealth of Independent States, to suffer double-digit declines in exports and imports this year even under its "optimistic scenario", which postulates a recovery starting in the second half.

The WTO and the IMF chief have pointed to the fact that unlike the recession that accompanied the global financial crisis just over a decade ago, the current downturn is unique. Global supply chains have increased in complexity, especially in industries such as electronics and automotive products, making them particularly vulnerable to the current disruptions, with countries that are a part of these value linkages set to find trade more severely impacted. Also, services trade – in which India has a higher global share as an exporter (\$214 billion, or 3.5%, in 2019) than in merchandise exports – may be significantly affected by the transport and travel curbs. A small sliver of silver in this bleak outlook for services trade is the role that the WTO sees for information technology services as companies try to enable employees to work from home and people order essentials and drugs online and socialise remotely. India's IT exporters have been busy supporting their overseas clients' business continuity plans in the face of the pandemic and may find this hand-holding at a time of dire need earning them loyalty-linked business when economic activity revives. Still, as the WTO chief, Roberto Azevêdo, crucially observes, a rebound in global economic activity will require trade to flow freely across borders as vitally as any fiscal or monetary stimulus. The world will be best served if nations do not turn in-sular and erect new barriers to the movement of goods, services and people in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Cease fire

Ceasefire violations on the border speak poorly of the preventive mechanisms in place

The latest exchange of long-range artillery fire between the Indian and Pakistani armies in Poonch and Kupwara's Rawthpora, Panzgam, Malikpora, Hafrada and Ferkiyan areas is yet another unhappy reminder that both countries have not been able to uphold a ceasefire along the border areas and the Line of Control. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh claimed just two months ago that "all violations of ceasefire are taken up with Pakistan authorities at the appropriate level through the established mechanism of hotlines, flag meetings as well as weekly talks between the Directorate Generals of Military Operations of the two countries". But here are the figures revealed by him this February: 3,479 violations for 2019, which works out to almost 10 every day. Shridip Naik, Minister of State for Defence, provided the figures from January 1 to February 23; for 54 days, it was 646, which means an average of almost 12. If anything, there has been an upward tick since Article 370 was hollowed out on August 5 last year, and statehood taken away from Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan also has similar and competing figures for Indian ceasefire violations while prefacing explanations for its own firing with the stock phrases: "retaliatory, effective, befitting". What utility do these mechanisms have if the violations continue unchecked?

Those who bear the brunt – the loss of lives, livelihood, infrastructure, and the displacement – unfortunately live along the LoC on both sides, some 740 km, and the 221 km of the IB in J&K. In the latest instance, scores scrambled out of the range of the heavy artillery guns to seek refuge, not in government quarantine shelters, but with relatives in the district headquarters and elsewhere. Thrown to the wind in the process were protocols to protect against COVID-19. In this instance, the Army blames Pakistan for initiating the shelling in Kupwara's Keran sector to facilitate infiltration which seems to have picked up pace as have operations against terrorists. Indeed, last week saw a chase through heavy snow drifts, leading to a macabre hand-to-hand combat with terrorists who had infiltrated through the remote, nearly unpopulated, snowed-in mountainous region. That as many as five highly trained para commandos should have lost their lives in exchange for the lives of five infiltrators is unfortunate and unacceptable. Infiltrations at this time and in such remote areas are regular enough to be predictable. Wherever possible, exercising the option of precise, surgical, preventive action against such infiltration, to minimise collateral damage, through better use of technology, such as drones, might be preferable.

Wanted, a collective national endeavour

COVID-19 calls for a largeness of political vision that will bring all of India together to get the better of the virus



C. RAMMANOHAR REDDY

The world's biggest ever lockdown has now been extended. We do not know though if it has been helping us contain the spread of COVID-19. The Central government claims that if we had not locked down, we would have 800,000 infections by April 15, not the 8,000-plus at present. We are not told how these projections have been made; they seem to have been conjured out of thin air to justify the lockdown.

We will in the end get the better of the virus. But how and at what cost? There is no toolbox on how to deal with COVID-19. Mistakes will be made but we should be able to admit failure, and change course when we have to.

Who must give the cue?

One, if there is a time for a national government, it is now. We are all in it together and representatives of all political parties should work together to deal with what we are told is the severest crisis since Independence. This is not the time to seek political gain, but a time when everyone will be more than willing to put aside their differences to tackle the crisis. The initiative has to come from the ruling party.

If a national government is not acceptable to the Bharatiya Janata Party, then we should make a collective national effort. We must open our doors as wide as possible to advice from the best minds and most skilled persons, whoever they may be and wherever they might be, in the government and outside, political friends and

enemies.

Two, the Centre must have the State Governments as equal partners while taking decisions. The past week has seen a bit of a change, but it has taken weeks for the Centre to begin consulting the States.

The most productive effort will be an equal partnership between the Centre and the States. Some States began preparation well before the Centre woke up to the seriousness of COVID-19. There is little so far that the States have been able to learn from the Centre, but there is much that the Centre can learn from the States, and the States from each other.

The Prime Minister unilaterally decided to impose the three-week lockdown and it is now said that it is the States that wanted an extension. Are the States then to take the blame if the strategy does not succeed?

Shun the centralisation

Three, centralisation of decision-making in the Prime Minister's Office is the worst thing in a country-wide crisis. So far everything has been centred around the Prime Minister. The Union Cabinet is only busy tweeting in support of the Prime Minister. The Health Minister is nowhere to be seen. A small group of hand-picked bureaucrats is taking all the major decisions and directing the response. This should not be so.

Four, some forethought is advisable even in "big bang" decisions. We should have thought about *Jaan bhi, Jahaan bhi* ("Life and economy are both important") before imposing the lockdown, not now three weeks later. We should not have messaged the lockdown as an act done in fear or as a "curfew" but as a difficult decision in which the government would be with the citizen right through. If it was



cruel not to first assure the migrants that they would be supported during the lockdown, it has been worse not to have later quickly made amends.

Open the fund tap

Five, we can surely be more generous with how we can support the millions who have been brutally affected by the stop to most economic activity. Yet, it is amazing how stingy – yes, that is the word – the Centre has been so far with its relief measures. It should also be giving the States more resources for their health services and expanded welfare programmes. But it is unbelievable that even today the Centre is refusing to release the States' share in Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenues.

There have been many suggestions on how to ameliorate the immediate despair, repair the supply lines and fund what needs to be done now and in the future. If only the Centre had an open mind.

Six, uncertainty and fear among the people calls for assurance from the highest levels on a regular basis, indeed every day, about what is being done. This would also signal that the Centre is sensitive to the difficulties that citizens are experiencing. The Centre can do this only if it sheds its dislike of the press, and not offer obfuscations by mid-level officials as

is now happening. Yet, it went even further and asked the Supreme Court to place restrictions on how the media disseminates information on COVID-19.

Compare this attitude with that of the Chief Minister of Kerala. Detailed daily press briefings have built confidence in the State Government's efforts, so much so that the residents of Kerala have now shed their fear. In the process, a Chief Minister who was earlier seen as a polarising figure has united the State in this crisis, and he has come to be universally admired.

Quell social tensions

Seven, India must be unique in the world for increasing social tensions in such times. After many members of the Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Delhi were found infected, an intense wave of Islamophobia has swept the TV channels and social media. The Muslim community is blamed for waging a "corona jihad". The result is social ostracism in parts of the country, economic boycotts and an open expression of hate. If the BJP leadership had used its enormous political capital to speak forcefully against this trend, the rabble-rousers would have fallen in line. Its silence should make us afraid of what is to come.

Eight, the path we have chosen of lockdowns and containment to slow the transmission of COVID-19 may call for more (even if shorter) lockdowns in the future. An extended lockdown may make sense in an advanced economy where organised activity is the norm, but in India where there is so much of day-to-day survival and so little social security? Can our society cope with such an assault on the fabric of livelihoods? Is it not time to ask if the cure we are administering is going to be worse than the dis-

ease? Should we not begin to discuss alternatives?

Unite for the reconstruction

The economy cannot be operated with an off-on switch. It is going to be a long and hard process to rebuild the economy and rescue the livelihoods of millions of people in rural and urban India that have been weakened, if not destroyed altogether. That is why we need a collective national effort at reconstruction. Or were millions deprived of their daily earnings only so that COVID-19 would not spread to the clangers of pots and pans and lighters of candles, the more privileged among us?

There are doctors, paramedics and accredited social health activists, or ASHAs, across the country who are working tirelessly. There are young medical graduates who have asked to work in COVID-19 wards. There are officials in the States who are working day in and day out on prevention and detection. We already have heroines like the nurse in Kerala who cared for an elderly COVID-19 couple, fell ill herself, recovered and now wants to rejoin duty. But there has been a larger failure of humanity in how the rest of us have responded. We can yet recover that humanity if the political leadership shows the way.

The propaganda machine tells us that we have been doing well. Let us not be fooled. We are in the middle of a humanitarian disaster that would have been worse but for the efforts of the State governments. If we want to, we can still rise to meet the crisis. For that, we need a largeness of political vision that would enable a true collective effort at all levels of government and by all sections of society.

C. Rammanohar Reddy is the Editor of the digital publication, *The India Forum*

Disingenuous and no antidote

No government should be permitted to hide behind the assertion of 'fake news' to abdicate responsibility for its actions



AMIT SIBAL

The Central government made a claim, on the eve of April 1, April Fool's Day, that "fake news" alone is responsible for the untold misery and loss of life of migrant workers after the lockdown. It is important to examine this in the light of what "fake news" actually means, that is, a report, presented as authoritative, of an event which never actually occurred.

Fake news is a menace not only because it is usually motivated by an intent to deceive and misinform but also because it may induce people to act on the information. This can have grave consequences, especially where the penetration of mobile telephony and social media exceeds that of education and awareness.

For many who engage in political discourse, however, "fake news" is used as an epithet to describe any critical comment or opposing viewpoint. By branding criticism as "fake news", governments draw on the consensus that fake news is pernicious, obviating the need to respond to the content of the criticism. If it is fake news, after all, it merits no response. Used in this way, the phrase "fake news" is used as an antidote to any

opposition or critique. Such usage is disingenuous. News reports facts. "Fake news" is a report of facts that are knowingly false, presented as "news". By definition, news is not opinion, which can be wrong, but it cannot be "fake". Therefore, an opinion that you disagree with, cannot be branded as "fake news", because it is just that, opinion. You cannot, by mischaracterising criticism as "fake news", escape from having to respond to it.

Response needed
Contemporary political discourse has taken this dangerous approach a step further. Where governments are criticised for causing suffering among their people, the suffering is instead attributed to the menace of "fake news". For example, after the precipitous announcement of lockdown, the government has been criticised for failing to anticipate the exodus of migrant workers; failing to make advance provision for food, shelter or salaries; failing to communicate with the public regarding what migrant workers should do in view of the lockdown.

The government's response to the mass exodus was, by any yardstick, uncoordinated, where initially there was abject confusion, then the States reportedly provided vehicles to ferry the workers, and, finally, the States were directed to seal their borders. The hu-

man loss was incalculable, with hundreds of thousands undertaking Partition-esque journeys across hundreds of kilometres in a desperate bid to return home, leading to the tragic loss of lives and enormous suffering that are yet to be fully documented. The newspapers continue to report that food and shelter are still not reaching many of the migrant workers. These criticisms certainly deserve a response.

Instead of responding, the government, on affidavit to the Supreme Court of India in response to petitions that migrant workers need to be provided for during lockdown, says that the only culprit for the loss of life and hardship of migrant workers is, simply, "fake news". Apparently, the sole reason that migrant workers undertook the punishing journey back home across hundreds of kilometres back home was "fake news" that the lockdown would extend to three months rather than three weeks. The prospect of three weeks without food, shelter or basic amenities was, according to the government, not devastating enough to motivate workers to return home. Fake news is appar-

ently to blame for upsetting the government's careful calculation that millions of migrant workers would have serenely stayed put and there would have been no hardship whatsoever.

This begs a raft of questions: "Fake news" is a statement that is knowingly false – what was the false statement that constituted "fake news" in this case? Was it the announcement of relief measures for three months by the Finance Minister triggering speculation that the 21-day lockdown could be extended to June 30? Isn't the government extending the lockdown and isn't its eventual duration still uncertain? Was extending the lockdown a decision that the government could even have taken on March 24, or would it depend on an assessment of the situation closer to April 14? Could any of us, including the government, categorically have said on March 24 that the lockdown would not be extended, depending on the situation prevailing on April 14? Was the government itself the source of what it is now calling "fake news"?

The government cannot be permitted, by the artifice of "fake news", to bypass the criticism that it should have planned better, coordinated between Centre and State governments, and been clear in strategy and communication. These are not hindsight criticisms either. Lessons could and should have been learned from deficiencies in similar announcements made earlier by foreign governments regarding COVID-19 mea-

sures. Chanting the mantra of "fake news" cannot wish away these questions.

Court's line

The Supreme Court passed an order on March 31 directing the media to carry the official version of events of the pandemic, which the government is to publish on a daily basis. With little to go on other than the government's fervid assertions that it had taken more than adequate measures in response to COVID-19, the Court perhaps did not want to enter the thicket of whether better government planning and communication could have avoided or reduced the suffering of migrant workers, or whether the source of the so-called "fake news" was the government itself. The Court, fortunately, made clear that it did not intend to stifle discussion of the pandemic, else even this piece could not have been published. If false information circulated on social media is dangerous because it can trigger action, misleading statements or lack of clarity in government messaging is even more dangerous, given the credibility of the source. What "fake news" is not, is a dissenting opinion or a viewpoint the establishment does not like. No government should be permitted to hide behind a vague assertion of "fake news" to abdicate responsibility for its actions. Not even on April Fool's Day.

Amit Sibal is a Senior Advocate practising in the Supreme Court of India

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.

Way out on MPLADS
I acknowledge that our fight against COVID-19 requires mobilisation of resources. However, there are several mechanisms at the disposal of the government to do so and suspension of the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) fund is a problematic and unmerited decision. The Congress president has put forward five measures to augment resources and I urge the government to consider her recommendations. There seems to be a misconception that the MPLADS fund is just another allowance given to a Member of Parliament and, therefore, must be done away with. To clarify – the fund is not meant for personal use and there are

several rules and procedures that govern the dispersal of the annual amount of ₹5 crore. It is only within these rules that a Member of Parliament has the discretion to direct expenditure towards the creation of durable community assets based on locally felt needs. For instance, individual benefits, moveable and non-durable assets are not allowed under the scheme and 15% of the total funds is to be utilised for work in areas inhabited by the Scheduled Caste population. To do away with the MPLADS fund is unacceptable. A more reasonable formula would have been to mandate that we must spend a certain percentage

of the MPLADS fund compulsorily for COVID-19 related infrastructure within the constituency on a need-based basis.

KARTI CHIDAMBARAM,
Eluru, Andhra Pradesh

An extension?

Rising fatalities leave India with no option but to extend the lockdown (Page 1, "14-day extension of lockdown likely", April 12). Now the question is: what are the stringent actions that are to be taken by a State government to make a difference? And how are the State and Central governments to handle below middle class and the poor whose livelihoods and lives have been stalled? The governments need to focus on this section and provide them with all essentials.

The governments can also think of by demarcating zones as colour codes such as red, green and orange.

AMULYA SPENCER G.,
Eluru, Andhra Pradesh

■ The government has no other option than to listen to States and save precious lives. Arrangements to provide medical facilities to those affected by COVID-19 and supply of essential commodities to other citizens are a must. Stopping the spread of fake messages and frequent communication is needed using print and social media and other reliable forms of information.

VARUN DAMBAL,
Bengaluru

■ When measures such as a lockdown, self-quarantine

and social distancing are enforced, public trust is essential for success. Political leaders need to focus on public trust. Trust must be developed at the international level too. Sharing of accurate information is also important. Good and positive lessons must be learned from the outbreak.

NAGARAJAMANI M.V.,
Hyderabad

Spare a thought

The national lockdown and the constant flow of news on the COVID-19 pandemic have brought about many changes in our daily lives. While scanning the newspapers and also focusing on finding peace and quiet during the lockdown, very few talk about boosting the spirit of those who have caught the

disease and battling the infection. What is the state of mind of those infected or suspect, spending unsettling times alone in quarantine and isolation wards? Listening to chirping birds and sitting in a balcony drinking a cup of hot coffee might not be a luxury everyone has. Not every one is lucky to be at home with family or bombard social networking sites with recipes and workout tips. Somewhere a mother misses her son who is alone and away, or a wife worries about her husband working overseas. They miss their families and are living through a nightmare. Let us spare a thought for them too.

PRIYANKA VIKRAM,
Chennai

To read more letters online, scan the QR code



COVID-19 and the crumbling world order

Globally, societies could become more self-seeking and inward-looking



HAPPYMON JACOB

COVID-19 will fundamentally transform the world as we know it: the world order, its balance of power, traditional conceptions of national security, and the future of globalisation. The lethal combination of an interconnected world and a deadly virus without a cure is taking humanity into uncharted waters. When we emerge from the lockdown, we must be ready to confront new political and social realities.

Crumbling world order

The rampant spread of COVID-19 is also a failure of the contemporary world order and its institutions. The contemporary global order, whatever remains of the institutions created by the victors of World War II, was a hegemonic exercise meant to deal with isolated political and military crises and not serve humanity at large. COVID-19 has exposed this as well as the worst nativist tendencies of the global leadership in the face of a major crisis. That the United Nations Security Council took so long to meet (that too inconclusively) to discuss the pandemic is a ringing testimony to the UN's insignificance.

Regional institutions haven't fared any better. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's SAARC initiative, curiously resurrecting a practically dead institution, was short-lived. The EU, the most progressive post-national regional arrangement, stood clueless when the virus spread like wildfire in Europe. Its member states turned inward for solutions: self-help, not regional coordination, was their first instinct. Brussels is the loser.

All this is indicative of a deeper malaise: the global institutional framework is unrepresentative, a pawn in the hands of the great powers, cash-strapped, and its agenda is focused on high-table security issues. The global institutional architecture of the 1940s cannot help humanity face the challenges of the 2020s. Nothing less than a new social contract between states and the international system can save our future.

One country that is likely to come



out stronger from this crisis is China. Reports indicate that China has now managed the outbreak of COVID-19, and its industrial production is recovering even as that of every other country is taking a hit. The oil price slump will make its recovery even faster. When the greatest military power found itself in denial mode and the members of the EU were looking after their own interests, China appeared to use its manufacturing power to its geopolitical advantage. Beijing has offered medical aid and expertise to those in need; it has increased cooperation with its arch-rival Japan; and President Xi Jinping spoke to the UN Secretary General on how the international community can fight the virus. Its richest man, Jack Ma, has spearheaded the private sector's fight against COVID-19. The Chinese propaganda machinery will magnify this. Chinese actions are a smart economic investment for geopolitical gains. This will aid Beijing's claims to global leadership, push Huawei 5G trials as a side bargain, and showcase how the Belt and Road Initiative is the future of global connectivity. COVID-19 will further push the international system into a world with Chinese characteristics.

Neoliberal economic globalisation will have taken a major beating in the wake of the pandemic. Economists are warning of a global recession. Even as the virus is pushing back the 'successes' of neoliberal globalisation, globalisation's political counterpart is found wanting in dealing with the situation. The first instinct of every major economy was to close borders, look inwards and localise. The pre-existing structural weakness of the global order and the COVID-19 shock will further feed states' protectionist tendencies fueled by hypernationalism. A more inclusive global political and economic order is unlikely any time soon, if ever. Instead, as former National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon warns, "we are headed for a poorer, meaner, and smaller world."

The ability of big corporations to dictate the production, stocks, supply chains and backup plans will be limited by increased state intervention to avoid unpredictable supply sources, avoid geopolitically sensitive zones, and national demands for emergency reserves. The profits of big corporations will reduce, and the demand for stability will increase.

Some would gladly argue all this could potentially mean a retreat from hyperglobalisation and its attendant flaws. However, the assumption that COVID-19 will bring about a more balanced and inclusive form of economic and political globalisation is perhaps misplaced. State intervention in economic matters and protectionism are the easy way out, and that's precisely what states will do once the crisis is over. It would be return of the 'Licence Raj' through a backdoor, not a push for inclusive and responsible globalisation with its associated political benefits.

The state has failed in its inability to save us from the pandemic notwithstanding its tall claims about national security preparedness. And yet, the state has returned, with more power, legitimacy and surveillance technologies. In fact, the nervous citizenry will want the state to be omnipresent and omniscient, no matter the consequences. The state, which was losing its influence to global economic forces, will return as the last refuge of the people in the

coming age of mass disruption. With the severe beating that globalisation has taken, state-led models of globalisation and economic development would be preferred over (big) corporates-led globalisation. Will this enable some positive controls over the inherent deficiencies of globalisation? We will have to wait and see. But the more important question is whether the state has any incentive to take on big capital. Given the symbiotic relationship between the state and big capital, states have become used to protecting the interests of their corporations, often at the cost of the general public. Consider, for instance, that the first response of many Western states was to protect their capital markets than be concerned about public health.

New-age racism

Yet another undesirable outcome of the pandemic would be a spike in various forms of discrimination. Globally, societies could become more self-seeking and inward-looking leading to further pushback against liberal policies regarding migration and refugees. New questions are likely to be asked about the source of goods. More stringent imposition of phytosanitary measures by advanced states on products emanating from the less developed countries might become the new normal. Lockdowns and travel restrictions could potentially legitimise the rhetoric around border walls in more conservative countries. Tragically, therefore, while one answer to global pandemics is political globalisation, COVID-19 might further limit it.

Within India too, there could be a trend towards discrimination, with 'social distancing' producing undesirable social practices. That a Manipuri woman was spat on in Delhi by a man who called her "coronavirus", and gated communities have discriminated against those in COVID-19 quarantine, indicate a new age of discrimination. Puritan claims based on birth and class and the associated declarations about hygiene could become sharper. The more the virus persists, the deeper such practices would get. We already know what these practices feel like; it can only get worse from here.

Happymon Jacob teaches national security at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Women's safety during lockdown

Steps to protect victims of domestic violence must be made a part of the anti-COVID-19 agenda

JAYANTHI NATARAJAN

It is well-documented that during a war, a natural disaster or a pandemic, women's bodies bear the worse brunt of the crisis. Domestic violence against women is already widespread and under-reported in India. Now, at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations recognises domestic violence against women as a "shadow pandemic". The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a huge spike in domestic violence against women in China, Australia, France, the U.K., Spain, and Bangladesh, among others. In India, too, the National Commission for Women has reported a large increase in distress calls from victims of domestic violence since the pandemic broke out.

Home, not safe for many

The national strategy against COVID-19 emphasises that home is the safest place to be. Ironically, for domestic violence victims, home is the most unsafe place to be quarantined as they are forced to live with their abusers. Although asking people to stay at home is an effective and welcome anti-COVID-19 strategy, home is not the safe haven it should be for many women because abusers have increased access to their victims and survivors have decreased or no access to resources.

Domestic violence can be verbal, financial, psychological and sexual. It includes the abuser withholding financial or medical assistance. Women are most often the caregivers for those quarantined at home and already infected with the virus, which makes them more vulnerable to contracting the disease.

Domestic violence is rooted in the inequities of power and control. The abusers feel an enormous loss of power and control over their own lives due to the pandemic. They vent their frustration on the women in the house. Mental health issues arise out of isolation as well as reactive depression, but instead of recognising these issues and seeking help, people become violent.

The victims are not only unable to speak out because they are quarantined at home with the perpetrators, but also because the lockdown pre-

vents them from seeking help outside. In Spain and France, women can go to a pharmacy and request a "Mask 19" – a code word that will alert the pharmacist to contact the authorities.

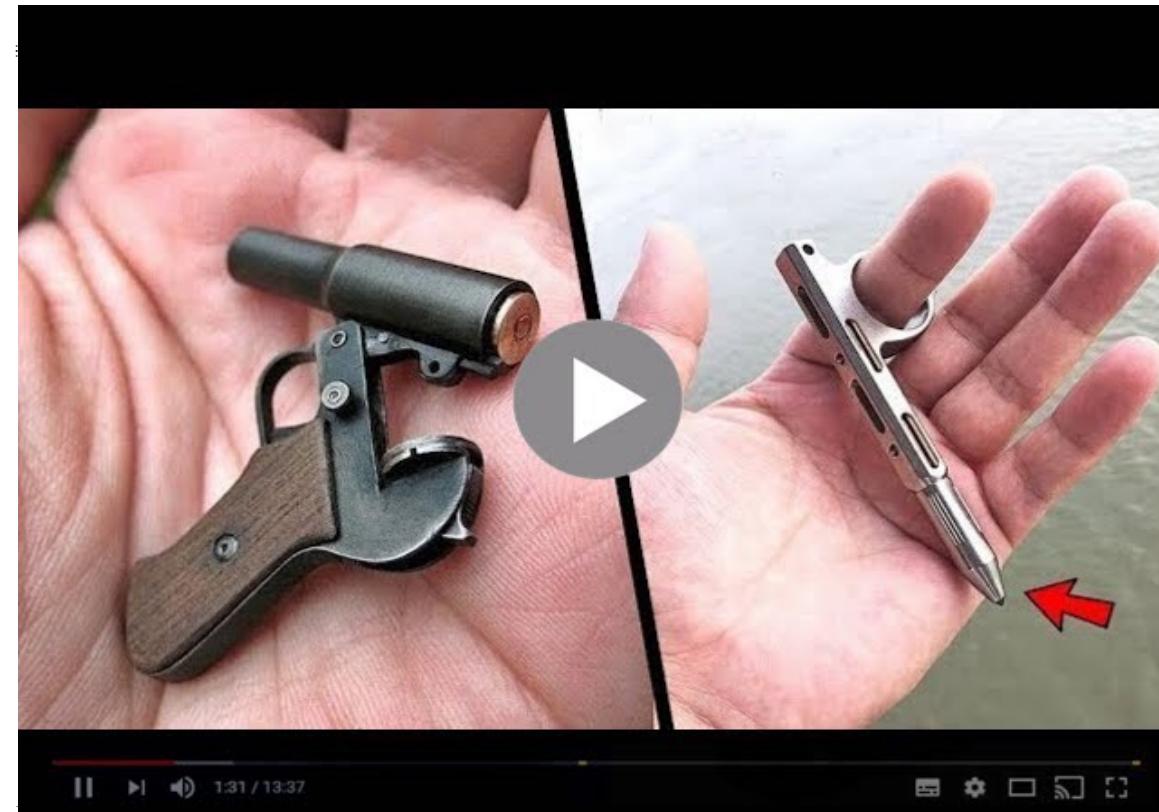
Tragically, traditional forms of support are now not available to domestic violence victims. They don't go to their parental homes for fear of infecting elderly parents. Shelter homes are crowded and so they are vulnerable to greater infection there. The police force is already overburdened with ensuring that people comply with the lockdown. Hospitals do not have the space or time to look at domestic violence cases.

Protecting victims

Nevertheless, it is vital for policymakers to address the needs of these women who are playing an indispensable role on the front line in the war against COVID-19 – as health workers, sanitation staff, caregivers, scientists, and as long-suffering housewives. Priority measures to help domestic violence victims, without detracting from the overall anti-COVID-19 strategy of lockdown, should be initiated by the government, and steps to protect victims of domestic violence be made a part of overall anti-COVID-19 action plans.

UN Women has said that "helplines, psychosocial support and online counselling should be boosted, using technology-based solutions such as SMS, online tools and networks to expand social support, and to reach women with no access to phones or Internet." Other priorities include a more responsive police force, and other government agencies who are not dismissive of domestic violence complaints. Social media posts mocking and patronising angry or "suffering" men in isolation who are helping in housework should be reported and acted upon. The electronic media can raise awareness in regional language infographics, since domestic violence is a crime under the Indian Penal Code. SOS messaging to police already exists in several cities, but this should be enhanced with geolocation facilities.

Jayanthi Natarajan is a political activist and a former Union Minister



India's place on the COVID-19 curve

CASES

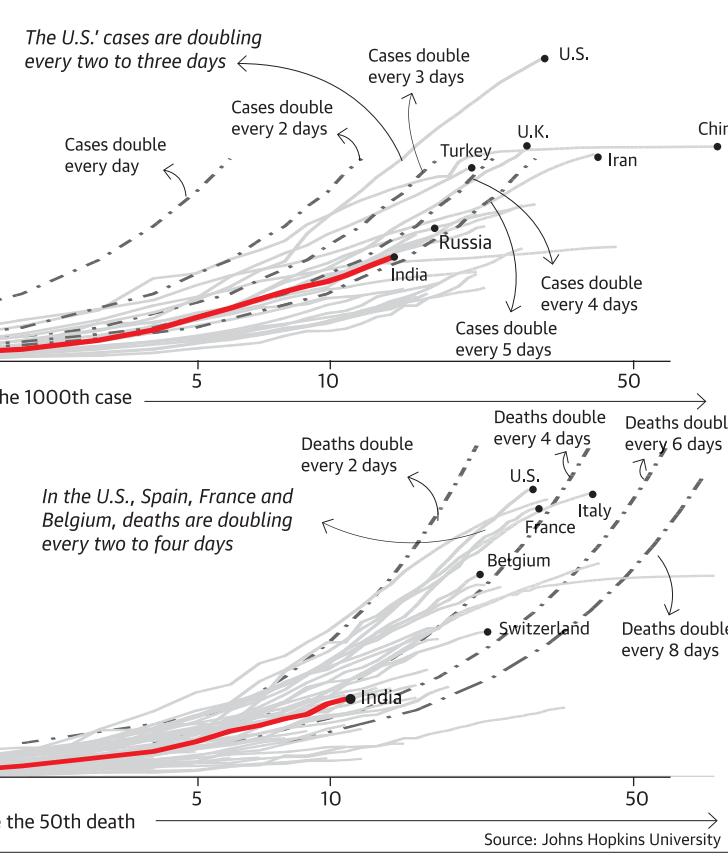
The chart shows the day-wise progression of cases since the 1000th case in each country. Fourteen days* have passed since India recorded its 1,000th case. As of the 14th day, cases in India are doubling every four to five days, similar to the U.K. and Russia. Cases in Turkey are doubling every three to four days.

DEATHS

The chart shows the day-wise progression of deaths since the 50th death in each country. Twelve days* have passed since India recorded its 50th death. And as of the 12th day, deaths in India are doubling every four to six days, similar to Italy, Germany and Switzerland.

* As of April 11

As of April 11, COVID-19 cases in India were doubling every four to five days. COVID-19-related deaths were doubling every four to six days. In the graphs, each line traces the trajectory of cases/deaths in a country. The darker, dotted lines are plotted to depict the rate at which cases/deaths are doubling in countries. By The Hindu Data Team



FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

The infodemic that accompanies the pandemic

Reporting credible information is all the more important now



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

available to prevent or treat COVID-19."

On April 7, the online edition of the newspaper carried an important article by the Science Editor, R. Prasad, "Hydroxychloroquine: publisher expresses 'concerns' about study". The article explained that 10 days after the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) approved the use of hydroxychloroquine for prophylaxis by healthcare workers attending to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases and asymptomatic household contacts of confirmed cases, the publisher of an international journal that published a study on the drug's purported efficacy expressed "concerns" about the paper. The paper was published on March 17 in the *International Journal of Antimicrobial Agents*. On April 3, the journal's publisher, the International Society of Antimicrobial Chemotherapy, said: "The ISAC Board believes the article does not meet the Society's expected standard, especially relating to the lack of better explanations of the inclusion criteria and the triage of patients to ensure patient safety." The unusual haste with which the paper was published is disturbing. As *The Hindu* report pointed out, "the paper was published a day after it was submitted to the journal, and one of the authors was Editor-in-Chief of the journal."

Looking at journals cautiously

The hydroxychloroquine controversy has forced journalists to even look at journals cautiously. On April 7, the day *The Hindu* expressed doubts on the efficacy of hydroxychloroquine, *The Guardian* carried a report, "Hydroxychloroquine: how an unproven drug became Trump's coronavirus 'miracle cure'". It explained how the hydroxychloroquine story is a distinctly modern tale of misinformation within a global information ecosystem beset by widespread uncertainty, fear, media fragmentation and hyper-partisanship.

In its situation report 13, the World Health Organization said that the "2019-nCoV outbreak and response has been accompanied by a 'infodemic' – some accurate and some not. And this does not include the underplaying of threats by various governments from China to the U.S. Along with these global issues, Indian journalists have to confront an additional burden: communalisation. Responsible journalism is to report the facts and not deepen social fissures. It was – and is – a demanding task.

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The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 13, 1970

Why an Asian Bank?

In a restricted sense the Asian Development Bank, which held its third annual meeting at Seoul on Friday (April 10), is a counterpart in the East of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank). Like the World Bank, the A.D.B. raises resources for lending to developing countries from the capital markets of rich countries. In 1968, for instance, it raised 60 million deutsche marks through bonds floated in West Germany. The A.D.B.'s Special Fund is its soft loan window comparable to the International Development Association of the World Bank. The A.D.B.'s assistance to the growing regions is, like the World Bank's, to be doubled at short intervals of time. The question that naturally arises is why there should be a duplication of such lending institutions. A clear answer to this is provided in the A.D.B.'s latest annual report. It says: "The needs, the problems, the objectives – and above all the hopes – of the Asian region may not differ materially in the long run from those elsewhere; but the techniques and processes needed may be quite different from those fashioned for use in other areas. While a knowledge of the skills and techniques developed elsewhere is important and essential, the 'knowhow' of regional development must have an indigenous basis".

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 13, 1920.

The Irish Situation

Interviewed by a representative of the Chicago "Tribune", Lord French declared that the Irish question would never breed Anglo-American enmity. He denied that the recent murders were the work of American assassins. It was unquestionable that only Irishmen were engaged in them. He emphasised that there was no chance of the situation going out of the hands of Government. A successful rebellion was impossible. It might be tried but defeat was certain. He said that Irish volunteers numbered between one and two hundred thousand organised territorially, with undoubted great organising power and with a large number of rifles and considerable quantities of explosives but no artillery. Lord French declared that he did not believe in the possibility of a Dominion settlement because that logically meant control of army and navy. The correspondent declares that Lord French is likely to resign at the end of the year and his successor may be the Marquis of Londonderry.

FROM PAGE ONE

Bracing for rapid surge in cases, says govt.

He added that dedicated hospitals for management of COVID-19 patients have increasingly been set up across the country with various private hospitals, Public Sector Units, Military hospitals, Indian Railways also contributing. "The Ordnance Factory Board has manufactured specialized tents to augment medical infrastructure in remote areas," he added.

Government spokesperson K.S. Dhatwal said the Group of Ministers on COVID-19 has approved the release of hydroxychloroquine to 13 countries after assessing the stocks.

MHA joint secretary P.S. Srivastava said that the government is trying to provide door-to-door essential

11 held for chopping off policeman's hand

Mr. Gupta said despite repeated announcements from the public address system, the accused refused to surrender. The police party heard loud shouts and noises from inside the gurdwara premises, suggesting that some innocent people and hostages within might have got caught in the trouble. The police team then moved into the premises. "A few shots were fired by the accused at the police personnel before they were nabbed," said the DGP, adding that entire operation was handled delicately so that the *maryada* (honour) and sanctity of the gurdwara was not disturbed.

A huge cache of weapons including *barche* (lances) and *kirpans*, and some used cartridges were seized from the accused, in addition to two petrol bombs and LPG cylinders.

First batch of Rafales likely to fly in late

In addition, the Defence Ministry had stated that during the dialogue the "French side has agreed to consider the Indian request for 8-10 Meteor missiles to be given to India by 2020 with the first four aircraft".

May 2020 deadline
In November, Minister of State for Defence Shripad Naik said in a written reply to Parliament that three Rafale aircraft have been handed over to the IAF. By May 2020, 24 IAF pilots along with engineers and technicians were scheduled to be trained on the Indian jets in France. Three IAF pilots and two technical officers were trained earlier on French Air Force (FAF) Rafales as per the terms of the contract.

France has been badly hit

India talking to U.S. over visa sanctions threat

In October and November 2019, India brought back 150 citizens who had entered the U.S. illegally, and accepted 311 others deported by Mexico who were trying to enter the U.S. illegally.

Officials said the pandemic had created a unique situation, making it difficult for India to accept any passengers currently abroad, for fear that they might carry the virus into the country. At present, the Ministry of External Affairs estimates that there are about 25,000 Indians stranded in different parts of the world who roughly fall into three categories: business travellers, tourists and students whose colleges and schools have been shut down owing to the pandemic. Despite several pleas from the stranded Indians as well as requests

from the countries they are in, the government has refused to reconsider the travel ban.

However, the U.S. President has also used the COVID-19 situation to justify cracking down on countries that "deny or delay" the acceptance of aliens who are citizens, "if such denial or delay is impeding operations of the Department of Homeland Security necessary to respond to the ongoing pandemic caused by SARS-CoV-2."

The Presidential Memorandum, issued on April 10, does include a clause permitting the Secretary of State to make exceptions consistent with the foreign policy interests of the United States", a clause New Delhi hopes will be used to tide over the situation.

Mr. Nadda urged party workers to garland Ambedkar's photograph at their homes and share it on social media.

He said the party members should take a pledge to uphold the ideals and tenets of the Constitution, and obey the advisories and instructions of the government to fight COVID-19.

"Distribute ration kits to every home in at least two poor settlements under the 'Feed the Needy' programme and face covers under the 'Wear Face Cover Stay Safe' programme in each mandal of a State. Ensure public hygiene and social distancing norms," the BJP president said in the message.

Mr. Nadda also asked party leaders and workers to

run awareness campaigns in every poor settlement on the good health practices to be followed to keep it free of COVID-19 and to build a healthy society.

He said they should write essays on Ambedkar and his ideas on the Constitution, social equality and harmony.

They should share and spread on social media the measures and decisions taken by the Union government, party and its leadership for the emancipation of downtrodden communities and for their all-round development, the BJP leader said.

Mr. Nadda also asked party leaders and workers to

help them tide over the psychological impact of the pandemic, indeed, a "welcome measure". But a more immediate need would be for the government to pay them minimum wages to ensure their survival.

'Lockdown delayed to topple M.P. govt.'

Parliament was allowed to function to ensure that Assembly could be convened, says Kamal Nath

SIDHARTH YADAV
Bhopal

Former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath on Sunday said Parliament was allowed to function during the COVID-19 outbreak to ensure that the State Assembly could function too.

The BJP's ultimate aim was to topple my government and the nationwide lockdown was announced only a day after Shivraj Singh Chouhan took oath as Chief Minister, he alleged. "Shivraj Singh Chouhan took oath on March 23 and the lockdown was imposed the next day."

Asked if Parliament was allowed to run to ensure the State government could be toppled, Mr. Nath told repor-

ters via a video conference Parliament functioned even when all countries were expressing concern over the outbreak and the Odisha and the Chhattisgarh Assemblies were adjourned.

"Our Assembly Speaker in his wisdom had adjourned the session to March 26 in view of the lockdown but he was mocked at," he said.

The former Congress government had initiated a lockdown by shutting malls and colleges from March 12 itself. "The Centre didn't take any action as they were waiting to topple the government."

Madhya Pradesh, he said, was perhaps the only State in



the world at present which didn't have a Health or a Home Minister.

former Chief Minister said. Mr. Nath, who had also been a Union Commerce Minister, said the country had been hit by an economic crisis and with the Centre's revenues and collections from the GST falling, India may well have to approach the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

"I see a situation where India may have to go back to the IMF as we did it in 1980. When we took an IMF loan at that time there were such conflicting views."

Talking about an economic package, Mr. Nath said the government should have a calibrated plan to restart targeted sectors of the economy with a focused package.

3 killed in Pak. shelling in Kashmir

Several houses caught fire, civilians shifted to safety; two injured in Poonch

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Five bags of poppy husk (used for opium extraction) mixed with 'sulpha', large quantities of other drugs and ₹39 lakhs in cash were also found inside the premises, police said.

Hand re-attached
A statement issued by the Post-graduate Institute in Chandigarh late in the evening said surgery to re-attach Assistant Sub-Inspector Harjit Singh's severed hand was successfully completed.

The statement said the technically challenging reimplantation surgery took around 7.5 hours. "Both radial and ulnar artery, the veins, tendons and extensor tendons were anastomosed. All the flexors and extensor tendons were repaired. All the nerves at the wrist repaired. Bony fixation done using three K-wires."

Local people said several shells landed near their homes and some exploded



Line of fire: Fire breaks out near the LoC in Kupwara as the Pakistani Army lobbed shells. ■ ANI

said in Srinagar. The deceased were identified as Zeeshan Bashir, 8, Javaid Ahmad Khan, 17, and Shameema Begum, 36.

Local people said several shells landed near their homes and some exploded

in the compounds in Chowkibal and Timuna Vilgam villages. Several houses caught fire.

"Damage assessment and evacuation were initiated immediately. People were shifted to safer locations," Kupwara Senior Superinten-

dent of Police Shriram Ambarkar said.

An Army spokesman said that Pakistan had intensified ceasefire violations in the Balakote and Mendhar sectors in Poonch, where two civilians were injured.

Australia begins airlift of citizens

Apart from 430 Australians, the aircraft carried 14 New Zealand citizens

KALLO BHATTACHARJEE
NEW DELHI

Australia, over the weekend, began to airlift its citizens who were stranded in India because of the ongoing lockdown to fight the pandemic.

The first flight took off from here in the early hours of Sunday as part of Canberra's efforts to bring back nationals stuck in various affected parts of the world.

"Supported the repatriation of 444 people who just took off on charter flight JT2846 from Delhi for Melbourne. The flight was org-

ganised by a group of Australians led by Simon Quinn," a social media message from the High Commission of Australia informed.

A diplomatic source said that apart from 430 Australians, the aircraft carried 14 citizens of New Zealand. New Delhi resident Mr. Quinn had carried out a social media campaign to help the Australian nationals after the lockdown began on March 24.

Sunday's move marks the beginning of a series of charter flights that the govern-

ment of Australia is expected to operate in the coming days to evacuate a large number of nationals from India. It is known that at least 6,000 Australians have registered with the consular teams of the country seeking food, medicines and transportation during the lockdown.

Australia began the phase of airlift five days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a telephonic conversation with Scott Morrison, his counterpart from Canberra when the Indian leader as-

sured Mr. Morrison of "necessary facilitation and support to any Australian citizens stranded in India due to travel restrictions".

Apart from the operation from India, Australia also evacuated 63 citizens from Nepal who were stranded there as the Himalayan country went into a lockdown simultaneously with India to counter the threat of COVID-19. Foreign Minister Marise Payne thanked the governments of Nepal and Canada for assisting with the evacuation attempt.

Distribute rations, masks on Ambedkar Jayanti'

BJP chief calls party members for aid

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

BJP president J.P. Nadda on Sunday urged all party members to distribute ration kits and masks to the poor to mark the birth anniversary of Dalit icon B.R. Ambedkar on April 14. He also asked all Chief Ministers and party State heads to release video messages to the public.

Mr. Nadda urged party workers to garland Ambedkar's photograph at their homes and share it on social media.

He said the party members should take a pledge to uphold the ideals and tenets of the Constitution.

J.P. NADDA
BJP president

Party members should take a pledge to uphold the ideals and tenets of the Constitution

run awareness campaigns in every poor settlement on the good health practices to be followed to keep it free of COVID-19 and to build a healthy society.

They should share and spread on social media the measures and decisions taken by the Union government, party and its leadership for the emancipation of downtrodden communities and for their all-round development, the BJP leader said.

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'Government slow to absorb lockdown impact on the poor'

Activists point to inadequacy in the relief work for migrants

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A response filed by activist Harsh Mander to a Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) status report in the Supreme Court accused the Centre of being slow to absorb the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on the poor.

While the MHA report says the Central and State governments were "doing their best strategising human resources and other resources to come out of this unprecedented global crisis", Mr. Mander and fellow activist Anjali Bhadrwaj countered that the statistics from the same report gave a different picture. At the most, the report showed wide regional variations and overall inadequacy in the relief work.

For example, Kerala and Maharashtra have 72% of the total number of relief camps in the country. Kerala alone has nearly 60% of the camps, though the tiny State accounts for 2.6% of India's population. States such as Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand, which have seen the lion's share of the migrant

exodus, have only 12% of relief camps and shelters.

Mr. Mander and Ms. Bhadrwaj argued in their petition that the declaration of the 21-day lockdown without prior information "precipitated an unprecedented humanitarian crisis" for migrant workers, resulting in their mass exodus to their home towns.

Mr. Mander, represented by advocate Prashant Bhushan, said the MHA's assurance that it would arrange counselling for migrant workers to help them tide over the psychological impact of the pandemic was, indeed, a "welcome measure". But a more immediate need would be for the government to pay them minimum wages to ensure their survival.

For one, they lived in poor settlements where there was no formal rent agreements. Secondly, most of the migrant population were self-employed like rickshaw-pullers. Thirdly, the government had no record of people working in the informal sector.

Moderate earthquake felt in Delhi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

An earthquake of moderate intensity rocked many parts of Delhi on Sunday evening. "Earthquake of magnitude 3.5 occurred at a depth of 8 km in the National Capital Territory, Delhi," the National Centre for Seismology said. A senior official of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) said the location of the quake, in a populous part, was the reason for it being widely registered.

"I see a situation where India may have to go back to the IMF as we did it in 1980. When we took an IMF loan at that time there were such conflicting views."

Talking about an economic package, Mr. Nath said the government should have a calibrated plan to restart targeted sectors of the economy with a focused package.

30 'foreigners' dead in detention centres

26 of them were Bengali speakers

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

All but four of the 30 "declared foreigners" who had died in Assam's detention centres till date were Bengali speakers. Of the rest, two each belonged to the Adivasi and Koch-Rajbongshi communities, according to State government records. The official list shows 16 of the dead were Hindus and 14 Muslims.

Six detention centres were established in as many central jails in 2009, four years after the contentious Illegal Migrants (Determinative by Tribunal) Act, 1983 was scrapped for suspected foreigners to be tried under the Foreigners' Act, 1946.

"There is no surprise in the fact that they are Bengalis. Most inmates are supposed to be from neighbouring Bangladesh [who migrated after the creation of the country in 1971] and some from Nepal, who find some protection under the India-Nepal Treaty (1950)," Hiren Gohain, scholar and social scientist, told *The Hindu*.

However, the records tabled in the Assam Assembly in November 2019 say only three of the 30 dead had addresses in Bangladesh.

Bhulu Sadakar of Taikangi village in southern Assam's Hailakandi district was the first declared foreigner to die in a detention Centre on March 17, 2016.

The second, Dulal Miya, was recorded as a resident of Marak village in "Samarang" district of Bangladesh.

Editors Guild criticises U.P. govt. over FIR

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

The Editors Guild of India has criticised the Uttar Pradesh government for registering an FIR against *The Wire's* Founding Editor Siddharth Varadarajan.

Meanwhile, the police have served a notice to Mr. Varadarajan asking him to appear in Ayodhya on April 14 in connection with the FIR, said Nandini Sundar, noted sociologist and wife of Mr. Varadarajan.

Ms. Sundar, who said policemen from Ayodhya drove to Delhi to hand over the notice, pointed out that he was summoned despite the lockdown.

"When it comes to the gross abuse of police power by the Adityanath administration in UP and its intolerance of press freedom, it is clear that COVID-19, the lockdown and social distancing make no difference whatsoever," she tweeted.

The police had lodged two FIRs against Mr. Varadarajan earlier this month on charges of allegedly wrongly attributing a quote to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on the Ram Navami festival controversy.

Nurse in Pune hospital tests positive

Over 25 colleagues under quarantine

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE

PUNE
The scourge of COVID-19 hit Pune's medical fraternity after a 45-year-old nurse associated with the city's Ruby Hall Clinic tested positive for novel coronavirus, prompting authorities to quarantine more than 25 of her colleagues on Sunday.

"The nurse who works in the general ward was on leave till a few days ago. After resuming work, she displayed virus-like symptoms following which we sent her throat swab samples for testing. The tests returned positive and we have shifted her to the hospital's isolation ward," said Dr. Sanjay Pathare, Director of Medical Services, Ruby Hall Clinic.

Stating that the nurse had contracted a mild form of infection and that her condition was stable, Dr. Pathare stressed that the nurse had had no contact with other patients currently in the hospital's isolation ward.

and undergoing treatment for COVID-19. As a precautionary measure, around 25-30 nurses, too, have been placed in quarantine facilities, he said.

Panic at Pimpri

A week ago, more than 40 doctors and nurses of a medical college and hospital in Pimpri had been quarantined after an autorickshaw driver, who had been under treatment at that hospital for accident injuries, tested positive for COVID-19. Fortunately, all 42 medical personnel had tested negative.

Meanwhile, Pune's death toll as well as the number of fresh cases continued to mount on Sunday, with two more deaths and at least five positive cases being reported in the district.

Two women, aged 58 and 56 respectively, with a history of medical ailments and comorbidities like obesity and diabetes, died at Sasoon Hospital.

Maharashtra COVID-19 tally shoots up to 1,982



Fanning out: A doctor checking residents in the COVID-19 containment zones of Dharavi in Mumbai on Sunday. ■ PRASHANT NAKWE

metropolis's tally escalating to 1,298. Of the total of 149 deaths from Maharashtra, 92 have been reported from Mumbai alone, with the city accounting for nearly a third of the total coronavirus deaths in India, and the State accounting for nearly 50% of

the country's death toll.

The Mumbai Metropolitan Region (excluding Mumbai city) witnessed an alarming surge as well, with Thane reporting 15 new cases, Navi Mumbai reporting nine, Kalyan Dombivli reporting 11, and Mira-Bhayander six. In

Pune, the number of positive cases continued to mount steadily with 15 new cases being reported from the district, taking the total tally to 282, and Pune city reporting 240 of these cases.

Malegaon in Nashik is emerging as a hotspot in

15 new cases in Dharavi

STAFF REPORTER

MUMBAI

Dharavi in Mumbai reported 15 new cases on Sunday, bringing the total to 43. However, nine of these were already under quarantine for being the high risk contacts of an earlier case.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has screened over 7,000 Dharavi residents so far.

After the first cases were reported in Dharavi, as per protocol, the BMC had put their high-risk contacts under quarantine in the Rajiv Gandhi sports complex and were screened for symptoms regularly.

Of these, it found nine people showing symptoms and upon testing, they were found to be positive. They are residents of Madina Nagar, Muslim Nagar and Social Nagar. Besides, six new cases were reported on Sunday. These include four from Shastri Nagar slum and two from Janata Society. So far, Dharavi's Mukund Nagar has reported the highest cases at nine.

This brings the total cases in Dharavi so far to 43, including four deaths.

The BMC has now started fever screening of Dharavi residents involving 24 private doctors, 35 municipal staffers and 10 police staffers.

of citizens who had attended the religious gathering at Delhi's Nizamuddin in early March was underway in all districts and municipal corporations. Till date, 217 patients in the State have been discharged; 5,064 are in institutional quarantine.

IN BRIEF

Eagle eyes



No escape: (Clockwise from top left) Security personnel keeping vigil at one of the hotspots in north west Delhi on Sunday; a police officer caning a rider for flouting lockdown norms in Patna; a constable dispersing women who gathered to collect free rations at Dharavi in Mumbai; and people assembling for food at one of the hotspots at Jahangirpuri in New Delhi. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA, RANJEET KUMAR & PRASHANT NAKWE

Goa govt. staff to work from April 15

State saw only two positive cases

ADITYA ANAND

MUMBAI

Though the COVID-19 lockdown has been extended till the month end, Goa government employees will resume work on April 15.

State government-run Kadamba Transport Corporation (KTC) buses will be used to ferry those staff requiring public transport. The government has also decided to open out-patient departments (OPDs) of government and private hospitals along with allowing intra-State businesses to operate while maintaining social distancing.

With just two positive cases, down from seven and just four suspect cases on Sunday, the government is upbeat in its fight against COVID-19.

The Goa government had recommended to the Centre that the lockdown due to the coronavirus outbreak should continue till April 30. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said the State govern-

ment would resume certain activities and establishments, including government offices, from Monday.

"Fishing has restarted from Saturday. Government offices in Goa will reopen on Monday and they will be fully functional from Wednesday after sanitisation," he said.

Dr. Sawant, who took part in videoconference of Chief Ministers with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday, said the Goa government had requested the Centre not to resume rail and air traffic.

The government on Saturday constituted the Economic Revival Committee and the Expenditure Committee to plan the way forward in the wake of the pandemic. Dr. Sawant urged people to cooperate with the government and in the three-day door-to-door survey to be undertaken from April 13. "There is no community transmission in Goa till now," he said.

More people to receive rations in Odisha

SATYASUNDAR BARIK

BHUBANESWAR
The Odisha government has added 51,766 new beneficiaries under the State Food Security Scheme amid the lockdown to prevent spread of coronavirus.

"Ration card management, an automated system, is verifying the authenticity of over five lakh beneficiaries who were left out. These beneficiaries belong to weaker sections of society, but for different reasons they were out of the purview of the scheme. Soon after their inclusion in the scheme, we have started providing them advance rations," Minister for Food Supplies Ranendra Pratap Swain said.

As many as 51,766 new beneficiaries, who were members of 19,059 families, had been included in the scheme between March 21 and April 11, Mr. Swain said, adding that further inclusion of eligible beneficiaries was in progress.

The Minister said that out of an allotment of 5.65 lakh tonnes of food grains, including rice and wheat, released by the Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare department, 5.02 lakh tonnes had been so far lifted and delivered at fair price shops for distribution of ration for April, May and June to beneficiaries.

Bihar launches app for govt. school students

However, research flags digital divide

AMARNATH TEWARY

PATNA

Following COVID-19 lockdown, the Bihar Education Project Council (BEPC) has launched a mobile application and plans to book a slot with the All India Radio for the audio broadcast of study materials for government school students.

However, an independent research by an alumna of the London School of Economics has flagged some fundamental challenges in the process as the State has a huge digital divide and socio-economic inequalities.

In Bihar, like other States, schools and colleges are shut due to COVID-19 lockdown. Recently, the BEPC, a wing of the State Education department, launched a mobile application "Unnayan: Mera Mobile, Mera Vidyalaya" for Class VI to XII of over 70,000 government-run schools. The app, said department officials, was jointly developed by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Bihar government and Eckovation, a social learning platform.

In collaboration with UNICEF, class-wise and subject-wise study materials are being prepared which will be broadcast by AIR as radio has a deep penetration into villages and is much simpler



to operate ... a basic phone or smartphone will serve the purpose," said BEPC director Sanjay Singh.

"During this long lockdown period, why should government school students suffer?" a BEPC official said.

Irrational move

But, an independent research by an alumna of the London School of Economics (LSE), Anusha Jha, has flagged some "fundamental challenges to viewing technology-enabled education" in a State like Bihar.

"There is huge digital divide that exists in Bihar and expecting that the migrant population, whose major cause of concern today is their daily sustenance, would find ways to make their children digitally connect with schools and teachers or participate in online classes would simply be arrogant and irrational," Ms. Jha told *The Hindu* over phone.

The aggressive testing strategy has been very effective in J&K. Besides, 78% asymptomatic cases have al-

Tablighi link to rising M.P. tally inconclusive

Bhopal and Indore are hotspots in State

SIDHARTH YADAV

BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh government officials and experts have said it is yet to be conclusively established that returnees from the Tablighi Jamaat event at the Nizamuddin centre were major contributors to the novel coronavirus spread in Bhopal and Indore, the two hotspots in the State.

This runs contrary to Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's statement at the Chief Ministers' videoconference with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday.

"During this long lockdown period, why should government school students suffer?" a BEPC official said.

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"In Indore and Bhopal, especially those who have returned from Markaz (centre), because of them our problems have increased like the rest of the entire country," he said.

However, the largest chunk of cases in Bhopal, 74 from the State Health Department, did not find a mention. The Bhopal administration has earmarked four verticals from where cases have emerged — the Health Department, the police, the Tablighi Jamaat, and miscellaneous. Efforts at locating the source of outbreak within the department have come to nought. So far, 20 members of the Jamaat had tested positive in Bhopal.

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Stopping the spread: A modified tanker being used to sanitise a locality in Bhopal on Sunday. ■ PTI

On April 7, three members tested positive in Indore, which has recorded 311 cases.

As cases spiral in the State's most populous city, experts are scrambling to locate the source of the outbreak here too, as most pa-

tients have no travel or contact history.

Asked if members of the Jamaat had been prominent carriers of the disease in Indore, Rahul Rokade of the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Medical College, Indore,

said, "We are working on that. We are working with the intelligence wing to see if there is a link. As of now, there is no substantial verification with our data."

Responding to the same query, Sapna M. Lovanshi, Additional Director, Directorate of Health Services, said Bhopal was an exception to such a conclusion: "We can't say it conclusively yet as the analysis is still going on. In some other districts, the link may hold true." The government was yet to get results of samples taken from the primary contacts of the Jamaat members who had tested positive in Bhopal, said Upendra Jain, Additional Director General of Police, Bhopal.

2 more die in West Bengal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

The number of patients who contracted COVID-19 and died rose from five to seven in the last 24 hours in West Bengal. The number of active cases remained at 95, the Health department's bulletin said.

The number of suspected cases under hospital isolation went up from 1,964 on Saturday to 2,085 on Sunday. A total lockdown is being observed after mid-day, but in the early hours people thronged the local markets.

78% positive cases in J&K asymptomatic'

All areas under eight police stations in Srinagar's old city declared 'red zones'

PEERZADA ASHIQ

SRINAGAR

Of the 245 coronavirus positive cases in J&K, 78% are asymptomatic, with 21 more positive cases reported on Sunday.

A J&K government spokesperson said it has been able to trace 98% of locals with a history of foreign travel, or having attended religious gatherings, and their contacts.

The aggressive testing strategy has been very effective in J&K. Besides, 78% asymptomatic cases have al-

so been tracked," said the spokesperson.

Worried by the growing numbers in the asymptomatic coronavirus positive population, Lieutenant Governor G. C. Murmu's adviser Basir Ahmed Khan declared all the areas falling under the jurisdiction of eight Police Stations in Srinagar's old city as 'red zones'. "The step has been taken to ensure there is no further spread of COVID-19 in Srinagar's old city," said Mr. Khan.

Chief Secretary B.V.R. Subrahmanyam also direct-

ed Deputy Commissioners to strictly implement restrictions in all 77 'red zones' declared in J&K. "Proper regulation of 'red zones' and complete lockdown in the identified areas should be ensured," he said.

21 new cases

Spokesperson for the J&K government Rohit Kansal said 21 new positive cases of coronavirus were reported in J&K on Sunday.

Around 51,320 travellers and persons who came into contact with them are under

Enough grains for 9 months: Paswan

Food Minister says supply of foodgrains during the lockdown has gone on well without a hitch

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI
The Central government has enough stock of grains to feed over 81 crore beneficiaries of the public distribution system (PDS) for nine months, Union Minister Ram Vilas Paswan said on Sunday, expressing confidence that its granaries, expecting a boost from a "bumper" wheat crop, will have adequate stock for a much longer period.

With the government likely to extend the nation-wide lockdown till the month end, the Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Minister said that the transportation and distribution of foodgrains at an "unpre-

C There is no shortage of grains. We now have a bumper rabi harvest and our estimate is that we will have adequate stock for up to two years

RAM VILAS PASWAN,
FOOD MINISTER



dented" scale has emerged as a "lifeline" during the crisis, with the poor being assured of their ration supply in time.

As of April 10, the government-run godowns have 299.45 lakh tonne rice and 235.33 lakh tonne wheat, totalling 534.78 lakh tonne of the two major grains supplied to the poor, Mr. Paswan said.

The per month supply through the PDS amounts to 60 lakh tonne, he said. Coarse grains and pulses are also supplied through the PDS in a limited quantity.

"There is no shortage of grains. We now have a bumper rabi harvest and our estimate is that we will have adequate stock for up to two years," he said.

Though the extended

lockdown may have sparked a variety of concerns, including about economy, but any shortage of essential grains like wheat and rice is not among them.

Mr. Paswan said in a lighter vein that the condition is akin to "the lawyer (Centre) being more keen about the case than the client (States)", with the Union government constantly asking States to lift their quota of rations in time after it was announced that all PDS beneficiaries will get three months of supply free.

What has been seen is unprecedented and historic", he said about the mechanism put in for the distribution of grains, with trains

playing a key role. Recently, over 20.19 lakh tonnes of grains was moved through trains in one day, a record, he noted.

Subsidised grains

The government has also made it easier for agencies, public or private, to purchase grains from it at a subsidised rate if they are involved in helping the poor.

"If in this lockdown there had been any issue regarding the supply of food grains, then it could have created a havoc. So the biggest satisfaction and relief is that it has all gone well," Mr. Paswan, a member of the Group of Ministers overseeing the lockdown exercise, said.

Pharma units in limbo amid confusion over HCQ exports

Despite Ministry's nod, DGFT ban on drug sales continues

SUHASINI HAIDAR

NEW DELHI

A week after the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) announced that it would "license" the malaria drug hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) and supply it to various countries on a "government to government basis", the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) maintains that the drug is still prohibited for export, causing some confusion in industry circles.

"There is huge capacity in our industry for both HCQ and paracetamol production. But our manufacturers, especially the MSMEs and SMEs are confused about the process, given the DGFT's notification banning exports." Dinesh Dua, Chairman of the Pharmaceutical Export Promotion Council of India told *The Hindu*.



Drug traffic: The first shipment of HCQ landed at the Newark airport in the U.S. on Sunday. ■ AP

of Ministers had approved the release," the Press Information Bureau spokesperson said at the daily press briefing on COVID-19 in Delhi.

The first shipment of HCQ landed in the U.S.'s Newark airport on Sunday, a week after Mr. Trump had called PM Modi to ask for the release of the drug orders placed by the US.

ports, at a time when global demand is at its highest.

Others said that none of the major markets in Africa, Latin America, and CIS countries had yet been cleared for the export of HCQ, at a time when demand from them is at its peak.

More confusion arose after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu thanked Mr. Modi for HCQ supplies, although Israel is not on the list of companies cleared.

Global market

"The Indian pharmaceutical industry has been painstakingly built over 25 years with a market of \$22 billion to 206 countries. It would be a tragedy if we are not allowed to use our strength at this time when the world needs these products, by placing orders and even paying in advance and still unable to get these spareable medicines with huge capacity in India," Mr. Dua said.

He added that several industry groups plan to petition the Commerce Ministry and the Ministry of External Affairs to clarify the rules for export.

Protect firms from takeover: Rahul

'Slowdown weakened corporates'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Sunday asked the government to ensure that Indian companies did not face any hostile takeover bid by foreign companies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The massive economic slowdown has weakened many Indian corporates making them attractive targets for takeovers," he wrote on Twitter.

"The Govt must not allow foreign interests to take control of any Indian corporate at this time of national crisis," he said.

His comments came days after reports suggested that Chinese investors were scouting for shares in distressed European companies.



Rahul Gandhi

Last week, Italy announced changes to its foreign investment policy and protected its banking, insurance and healthcare sectors from hostile takeover by foreign companies. Spain, too, has made it mandatory for its companies to seek government approval if any foreign company wants to pick up over 10% stake in them.

Chinese bank picks up 1% stake in HDFC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The People's Bank of China, the Chinese central bank, has picked up over 1% stake in HDFC Ltd., India's largest mortgage lender.

According to the March-end shareholding pattern disclosed by the mortgage lender to the stock exchanges, People's Bank of China has 1.75 crore shares, or a 1.01% stake, in HDFC.

The Chinese bank had some stake in HDFC prior to the January-March quarter, but the disclosure was made since the shareholding crossed 1% during the fourth quarter of 2019-20.

Domestic equities came under pressure in March, including that of HDFC, after the COVID-19 pandemic spread.

The shares of HDFC are now trading at ₹1,701.95.

Resume industrial activity in 15 sectors'

Key to improve economy, says DPIIT

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Commerce and Industries Ministry has called for far-reaching measures to be taken to mitigate the effects of the lockdown, urging the Home Ministry to allow relaxations of the restrictions on a number of industry sectors.

In a letter to Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla on Saturday, Industries Secretary Guruprasad Mohapatra said "more activities with reasonable safeguards must be allowed" once a final decision was taken on the extension of the lockdown.

"These new activities are essential to improve the economic activity and provide liquidity in the hands of the people," said Dr. Mohapatra who heads the Department for Promotion of Industry

and Internal Trade (DPIIT). He said all recommendations were based on Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal's interactions with industry representatives.

Dr. Mohapatra recommended that industrial activity be restarted in at least 15 sectors, including heavy electricals, electronics and telecom equipment, automobiles, steel mills, power looms, defence units, cement, rubber, seeds, agrochemicals and fertilizers.

To begin with, manufacturing should be restarted in single shifts of 20-25% capacity, following proper social distancing and sanitation norms. Companies which are allowed to operate should be allowed to insist on workers returning for duty to avail wages, he added.

"Some small exporters have tonnes of finished goods lying in their FG warehouses and some at ports which is not being exported because of lack of clarity on the procedure," he added.

"We are receiving many queries from various manufacturers due to this discrepancy; there is no transparency in the process at present as nothing is on paper officially," said an official from another industry group, who asked not to be identified.

On Sunday, the government said it had cleared the release of HCQ for 13 countries.

"After making an assessment of the domestic requirement and keeping a buffer, which is assessed on a weekly basis by the Empowered Committee, a Group

India is the lead producer for HCQ, an anti-malarial drug, while Indian-made paracetamol is used as a fever medication worldwide.

The sources pointed to a number of hurdles in ex-

INTERVIEW | PRAVEEN CHARAVARTY

India-specific strategy must'

Poor are worst hit by pandemic, says Congress functionary

SANDEEP PHUKAN



Pradeen Chakravarty, political economist and head of the Data and Technology Cell of the Congress, says India should evolve a strategy with the idea that the novel coronavirus infections will last for a long time.

It's certain now that the lockdown will be extended by another two weeks but the Centre may allow some economic activity. Reports suggest that the government may partially open up the least affected areas. How do you see this move?

■ We have to wait and see what the government is going to do exactly. As of now, there are reports indicating that the current form of extreme lockdown will be extended until April 30. If the government is also simultaneously thinking about a gradual "unlock" process, it is welcome. As the Chief Scientist of the WHO, Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, has said in an interview to *The Hindu*, the disease is going to be with us for a long time and we need to start planning for life with the virus and cannot be in a lockdown and wait for the virus to be eliminated completely, which will take a long time.

You've talked about a 'targeted lockdown' instead of a complete nationwide lockdown. But Congress-ruled Punjab was the second State to extend the lockdown on Friday. Is there a divide within the Congress?

■ A lockdown in itself cannot be a strategy. It has to be accompanied by measures such as what Rajasthan undertook in Bhilwara.

The Bhilwara model is the model for the nation to emulate. Even after 21 days, the Prime Minister and the Union government have not laid out a strategy for the na-

predict a counterfactual. Based on trends from global and Indian data on COVID-19, it now seems clear that the virus is very contagious but not as fatal as some of the initial wild estimates of epidemiologists predicted.

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi too talked of a 'nuanced approach' that takes an India-specific approach. What exactly is it?

■ It is clear that Mr. Gandhi has been studying and researching on COVID-19 a lot. He was among the first to warn the nation about it. He wrote a letter to the PM arguing for a nuanced approach to a lockdown, keeping India's unique realities in mind.

Given India's vast informal, daily wage labour force, a high density of people living in one room houses, large urban-rural divide and a much younger population than the developed countries, he is arguing for a more balanced and humane approach than the current extreme and absolute lockdown.

Both former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram and you have argued for a economic package of ₹5-6 lakh crore. With the economy under a total shutdown now, is it even possible for the Centre to generate this kind of additional resources?

■ Of course it is entirely possible. In my piece in *The Hindu*, I had even detailed where to find the money – from a combination of rationalised expenditure, higher borrowing and printing of more money. It is absolutely imperative that the package consists of a "rescue" for the affected workforce. But it is important to remember this is not a demand crisis but a supply crisis.

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Attacks on minorities up in Haryana

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

Amid surging of COVID-19 cases in Haryana, the State has so far seen 19 incidents of attacks on religious minorities in connection with spreading of coronavirus.

Across the State, till April 11, the police have registered 19 cases against 89 people in different incidents of attacks on minorities relating to the epidemic. Police data show that so far 28 accused have been arrested for the attacks.

In majority of the incidents, Section 295-A of the Indian Penal Code (deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs) has been evoked. Panipat district has seen the maximum incidents of attacks on the minority community. Seven incidents have been reported in the district.

INTERVIEW | G.V.S. MURTHY

'People with disabilities have special issues during virus outbreak'

Govt. and organisations working with differently-abled people need to make efforts to convert prevention and care messages into an accessible format, says expert

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN

NEW DELHI

People with disabilities need much more support than others in the face of a pandemic. They may not be eating properly and may experience higher stress because they are unable to understand what is happening all around them, says G.V.S. Murthy, Vice-President and Director, Indian Institute of Public Health, Hyderabad.

What are the unique challenges that people with disability face?

■ People with disability have special issues in a situation like the spread of the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). People with disability are a diverse group, experiencing different hardships in accessing information on prevention and risk of infection.

People with visual impairment and blindness depend upon touch for most of their daily activities. They need to hold the hand of an escort to move around; they cannot read the messages that the rest of the population can

see; they cannot practise social distancing unless there are innovative approaches like keeping a safe distance using a white cane.

For the hearing impaired, especially those who are not literate, they cannot hear the message or read it. Since many depend on lip-reading, they are compromised when the person giving a message is wearing a mask.

None of the messages in the media is using sign language interpreters. The physically disabled cannot reach a wash basin or may not be able to wash their hands vigorously.

Children and adolescents

with conditions like cerebral palsy or Down's Syndrome need to be assisted in feeding. People with mental health issues cannot comprehend the messages. At the same time, people with disabilities have a higher risk of conditions such as diabetes and hypertension, which are high-risk factors for COVID-19 mortality. Therefore, people with disabilities need much more support than the rest of the population in the face of a pandemic.

They may not be eating properly and may experience higher stress because they are unable to understand what is happening all around them, over which they have no control.

Women with disability have additional issues. They are vulnerable to exploitation and even more so during a pandemic. Many of them have children without dis-



Health facilities should prioritise the needs of people with disabilities over the rest of the population

ability and are highly stressed as to how they can care for them and family members because they are not supported to care for them.

People with communication disabilities don't know how to express their pro-

blems. Routine health needs that they have are also not provided as health centres or transportation facilities are not accessible.

What is the scale of the problem?

■ India is home to nearly 150 million people with some degree of disability. Nearly 25-30 million have severe disability. Most of them live as part of their families and depend on a carer. This adds to another 25-30 million carers. Therefore, we are looking at nearly 50 million people who need special support, which is not routinely forthcoming.

How can the public and government help?

■ India has signed up to achieve sustainable development goals, the cornerstone of which is universal access

to health and education and equity. The government and the organisations working with people with disabilities have to make efforts to convert prevention and care messages on COVID-19 into an accessible format.

Health facilities should prioritise the needs of people with disabilities over the rest of the population

and make information available in an accessible format for people with disabilities.

Students with disabilities also need to be provided support so that they can keep up academically. Therefore, online teaching programmes should be made available to them in an accessible format.

Civil society should volunteer their time to provide this sort of support. Since many of them will not be able to access professional carers during a lockdown, civil society volunteers should help. Even for supporting cooking and other self-care activities, volunteers should step in.

Inclusive society is the need of the hour. We don't want to face a situation where medical equipment is prioritised based on younger populations being cared for at the cost of the elderly and

the people with disability, as happened in countries like Spain where there was a limited number of ventilators and beds, which could not cope with the avalanche of cases that needed critical care.

A country's development is measured by its social support and inclusive policies. We need to set high standards and not succumb to the 'might is right' philosophy and abandon people with disability in this crisis.

What is the current situation?

■ Nobody is addressing the special needs of people with disabilities and making efforts at reaching out to them.

We would fail as a human race if we don't show a humane response in an equitable manner with affirmative action for people with disabilities.

'Stimulus must precede lifting of lockdown'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) has said that before the lockdown is lifted, adequate notice should be given and an economic package announced.

Priests of the Sacred Heart Cathedral Church at the Bishop's House in district headquarters Dibrugarh said photos sent by believers associated with the church were placed on the pews to mark their symbolic presence during a special Mass.

Easter prayers with photos in pews

Church in Assam's Dibrugarh uses images to mark believers' symbolic presence

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

Members of a church in eastern Assam's Dibrugarh district could not attend the Easter prayer service on Sunday. They sent in their photographs instead.

"Last week, the believers in the town were sad that they would not be able to come to church on Easter, but understood the necessity



Quiet attendance: A view of the Sacred Heart Cathedral Church in Dibrugarh on Sunday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

of remaining at home because of the COVID-19 lockdown. One of them came up with the idea of using representative photos," Bishop Joseph Aind told *The Hindu*

over phone from Dibrugarh. An e-mail was accordingly sent to some 400 Christian families in the town on April 10. Within three-four hours, they sent us family photo-

graphs that we downloaded and printed and pasted on the pews ahead of the Sunday Mass. Only three believers attended in person while abiding by the government's guidelines," the Bishop said.

"I am happy that the believers have performed their duties as citizens by staying and praying at home while being in the church virtually," he added.

Churches in the Christian-majority States of Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland conducted Sunday services through live-streaming via social media platforms. The Nagaland Baptist Church Council carried out the Easter Sunrise Service online.

CMERI develops low-cost disinfectant walkways

Mist-type spray ensures maximum coverage, easy installation

SHIV SAHAY SINGH

KOLKATA

In an attempt at providing new technologies to contain the spread of COVID-19, the Central Mechanical Engineering Research Institute (CMERI), Durgapur, a laboratory of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), has developed low-cost disinfection walkways.

The walkway, which costs about ₹1.5 lakh on an average, can be easily installed in critical locations such as isolation/quarantine facilities, mass transit system entry points and medical centres, CMERI Director-General Harish Hirani said. The walkway uses mist type spray ensuring maximum target coverage with minimum shadow area of an individual.



Passage to safety: The walkway, which costs about ₹1.5 lakh, can be easily installed in critical locations. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

walkways can sanitise a person in 20 to 30 seconds. Both the walkways have been installed on the CMERI campus in Durgapur.

Researchers say that in these disinfectant walkways, the base liquid is sodium hypochlorite along with which soap and ethanol are added. In certain cases, if people are allergic to chlorine, the liquid can be changed to iodine-based solutions.

Emphasising that these walkways will become a part of people's lives post the coronavirus outbreak, Mr. Hirani said the variants made by the CMERI could be easily customised.

Recently, during a video-conference with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Nobel Laureate Abhijit Banerjee had suggested sanitising the markets. The CMERI-built road sanitisers can be used for this purpose.

Auto sector revival by next year: PwC

There is a need to re-start 'controlled operation', suggests NRI Consulting

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Experts expect the Indian automobile sector to start seeing recovery in the fourth quarter of 2020-21 in a "realistic" scenario, while facing challenges such as delayed launches, higher costs, shortage of labour and material, and productivity losses.

According to a report 'Automotive sector: Impact of COVID-19 and navigating the turbulence' by PwC, in an "optimistic" scenario, we could see a recovery by third quarter (October-December) of the current fiscal. In a "realistic" scenario, it expects the economy to recover by Q4-FY21, pushing the recovery of the sector



Path to recovery: In a realistic scenario, PwC expects recovery by the fourth quarter of 2020-21. ■ PTI

with pay cuts and temporary job losses in the informal sector, with recovery by the fourth quarter of 2020-21. Under a "pessimistic" scenario, it expects the economy to recover by Q4-FY21, pushing the recovery of the sector

to April-June 2021 quarter.

The analysis, based on the situation as on April 08, 2020, suggested that under a realistic scenario, two-wheeler sales are likely to decline by 18% to 14.2 million from 17.2 million, passenger

vehicles sales may fall 12% to 2.43 million (from 2.75 million) and commercial vehicles sales are forecast to decline 21% to 1.06 million from 1.34 million.

Another report by Nomura Research Institute (NRI) Consulting & Solutions India pointed that Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Delhi-NCR, which are major automotive demand and supply clusters, are the worst-hit.

Ashim Sharma, Partner & Group Head at NRI Consulting & Solutions, said that there is a need to re-start "controlled operation" in factories to mitigate some of the impact.

According to the CMERI-D-G, the walkways use mist type spray, whose particle size could be as small as 100 to 200 microns. "We have already got orders from the local municipal corporation like Asansol and Durgapur and some schools in the region," Mr. Hirani said.

Depending on how much chemicals are used, the

walkways can sanitise a person in 20 to 30 seconds. Both the walkways have been installed on the CMERI campus in Durgapur.

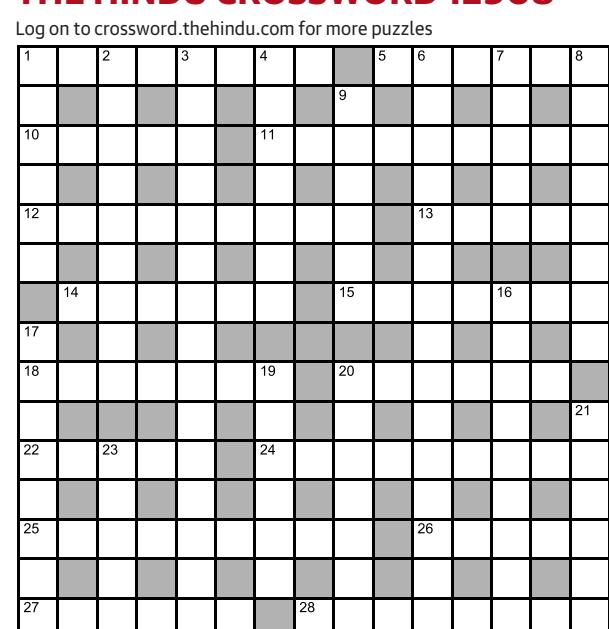
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THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12908

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**ACROSS**

- 1 Army cracks fancy code (8)
- 5 American, unfairly prejudiced, leaves immigrants primarily mortified (6)
- 10 Husband abandons woman after fight turns more serious (5)
- 14 Husk say in company ensnares sincere associate (4,5)

- (set by Dr. X)
- 2 Enthralling set! Band is lively (9)
 - 3 Fine revolutionary rushed to get sacred book (5)
 - 4 Problem is fool in depression lacks love (6)
 - 5 Trick to go across incline – it's used by ice climbers (7)
 - 18 Concocted by director pursuing hot model, consumed by desire (7)
 - 20 Adventurous one bitten by nasty shark (6)
 - 22 Dismisses one immature trainee in centre (5)
 - 24 Seduced by oriental wife with eagerness in sack (9)
 - 25 Where chamber pot might be put out (9)
 - 26 Result is terrible unease after abrogation of article (5)
 - 27 First off, decrease in traffic is welcome (6)
 - 28 Most costly nuisance to maintain habitual drinker (8)
 - 29 Scrambles to drink punch in lively parties (8)
 - 30 One owing money in bar about to accept reckless bet (6)
 - 31 A woman and daughter stifled by truly unfair treatment (3,4)
 - 32 Stop to tackle a little defective plug (6)
 - 33 Fine westernized houses, most contemporary (6)

SUDOKU

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		7	1	4				

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 12907

S	C	U	A	S	H	R	E	F	L	E	C	T	S
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Europe toll crosses 75,000 on grim Easter day

Experts feel that the case count in Italy, Spain and France could have peaked; U.S. now tops the list of infections and deaths

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

ROME
Billions around the world celebrated Easter Sunday from lockdown at home as the Pope urged solidarity to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and the European death toll from the virus topped 75,000.

Unprecedented scenes of empty churches emerged from Italy to Panama and the Philippines, as religious leaders found creative ways to address parishioners marking the holiday weekend from the confines of their homes. More than half the world are in lockdown worldwide as governments scramble to halt the pandemic's deadly march. The toll from the virus soared past 1,09,000 this weekend, with more than 1.7 million reported infections globally.

COVID-19

Europe is by far the hardest-hit continent and on Sunday marked a grave milestone with more than 75,000 dead, according to an AFP tally.

The U.S. was quickly emerging as a hotspot as well, and on Saturday marked its own grim landmark: more than 20,000 dead, out of around half a million infected. The U.S. now has the highest death toll and the most cases out of any country in the world.

Celebrations indoors

In Panama, an Archbishop blessed his nation from a helicopter, while worshippers in Spain blasted music from their balconies and U.S. President Donald Trump said he would be among those following Easter services online. In a church north of the Philippines capital Manila,



To the skies, and the heavens: A Priest leading an Easter Sunday Mass on the roof of the Santa Maria della Salute church, in Naples, Italy, on Sunday. ■ REUTERS

hundreds of pictures of parishioners were taped to pews as a priest held a Sunday service to a near-empty room.

Ray of hope in U.S.
In the United States, New Orleans and hardest-hit New York saw a slowdown in the number of new infections, deaths and hospitalisations, offer a shred of hope.

U.S. President Donald Trump said this past week that the disease was near its peak in the U.S. and he was considering ways to re-open the world's biggest economy as soon as possible. "We look like we'll be coming in on the very, very low side, below the lowest side of the curve of death," said Mr. Trump in an interview with Fox News.

China, where the virus first emerged at the end of last year in the central city of Wuhan, has seen an increase in imported infections as it starts to ease strict lockdown measures this month.

"A very high plateau for the epidemic appears to have been reached, but the epidemic remains very active," said French health offi-

cial Jerome Salomon, urging people to remain vigilant.

official death toll in Britain

passed 10,000.

Johnson leaves hospital, thanks NHS

REUTERS

LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson left hospital on Sunday and thanked the National Health Service (NHS) for saving his life, saying "things could have gone either way" for him as he battled COVID-19. Mr. Johnson, 55, was taken to St Thomas' Hospital in central London on April 5, suffering from persistent symptoms of the disease. On April 6, he was moved into intensive care, where he remained until April 9.

"I have today left hospital after a week in which the NHS has saved my life, no question," he said in a five-minute video message posted on Twitter from 10 Downing Street as the



Boris Johnson. ■ REUTERS

every second of the night they were watching and they were thinking and they were caring and making the intervention I needed," he said. Mr. Johnson will continue his recovery at Chequers, the official prime ministerial country residence northwest of London, his office said.

"There were times last week that were very dark indeed. My heart goes out to all those in similar situations, worried sick about their loved ones," his fiancée Carrie Symonds said on Twitter. "Today I'm feeling incredibly lucky."

Mr. Johnson thanked the public for following strict social distancing guidelines in place since March 23 and assured them their efforts were paying off.

Banish self-centredness, Pope tells the world

Pontiff marks 'Easter of solitude'

REUTERS

VATICAN CITY

Pope Francis called on Sunday for global solidarity in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout, urging the relaxation of international sanctions, debt relief for poor nations and ceasefires in all conflicts. He also warned the European Union (EU) that it risked collapse if it did not agree on how to help the region recover.

The Pope's Easter "Urbi et Orbi" (to the city and the world) message, delivered from an empty St. Peter's Basilica, was by far his most pressing and political since his election in 2013.

Saying the message of this year's "Easter of solitude" should be a "contagion of hope," he heaped praise on doctors, nurses and others risking their lives to save others and hailed those working to keep essential services running.

"This is not a time for indifference, because the whole world is suffering and needs to be united in facing the pandemic," he said in the message, almost entirely dedicated to the pandemic's effects on personal and international relations. "Indif-

ference, self-centredness, division and forgetfulness are not words we want to hear at this time. We want to ban these words forever!"

Collective action needed
Pope Francis expressed sympathy for those not able to bid farewell to their loved ones because of restrictions, for Catholics who have not been able to receive the sacraments and for all those worried about an uncertain future. "In these weeks, the lives of millions of people have suddenly changed," he said.

The Pope said now was the time for politicians and governments to avoid "self-centredness" and take decisive, concerted action to help each others' populations live through the crisis and eventually resume normal life. He also called for debt reductions or forgiveness for the poorest nations, without naming any countries.

Pope Francis expressed particular concern for the future of Europe, saying it was vital that rivalries that existed before the Second World War "do not regain force" as a result of the pandemic.



Call and prayers: Pope Francis holding the Holy Book of Prayers during the Easter Vigil on Saturday. ■ AFP

'All dying due to virus will be cremated'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KABUL

Sri Lanka made cremations compulsory for COVID-19 victims on Sunday, ignoring protests from the country's minority Muslims who say it goes against Islamic tradition.

Of the seven deaths from the infectious disease so far in the island nation, three were Muslims. The bodies were cremated by authorities despite protests from relatives.

"The corpse of a person who has died or is suspected to have died, of... COVID-19 shall be cremated," Health Minister Pavithra Wanniarachchi said on Sunday.

The World Health Organisation has said victims "can be buried or cremated".

Taliban set to release 20 prisoners

They will be handed over to Red Cross representatives'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KABUL

The Taliban said it would on Sunday release the first prisoners in a delayed exchange deal with the Afghan government – a potential breakthrough after the insurgents walked out of talks with Kabul last week.

The announcement comes as fears rose that an avenue for fragile peace talks between the two sides was being undercut by mounting disagreements over the prisoner swap. "To-day, 20 prisoners of the Kabul administration will be released," Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen said on Twitter, adding that the group would be handed over to representatives of the Red Cross in Kandahar.

The Afghan government has pressed ahead with freeing hundreds of Taliban pri-



Starting the swap: Some newly freed Taliban prisoners at Bagram prison on Saturday. ■ REUTERS

soners over the past week. The peace deal requires the Afghan government – which was not a signatory to the accord – to free up to 5,000 Taliban prisoners, and for the militants to release 1,000 pro-government captives in return. The exchange was supposed to have happened by March 10, allowing peace talks to begin, but has been beset with problems.

Kabul has claimed the Taliban want 15 of their "top commanders" to be released, while the insurgents have accused Afghan authorities of needlessly wasting time.

The Taliban cautioned that their decision to release a group of prisoners did not mean that the talks with Kabul were being restarted. "No process is not back on, but this is a good will step by the [the Taliban] to accelerate the prisoners exchange process," said insurgent spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid.

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Jennifer Robinson, one of Mr. Assange's lawyers in Britain who introduced the pair to each other in 2011, according to Ms. Morris, also confirmed that they were a family. She said a statement by Ms. Morris outlining the situation had been cited as evidence in a failed court bid last month to get Mr. As-

Congo records second Ebola death in days

REUTERS

BENI

Democratic Republic of Congo recorded a second Ebola death in days following more than seven weeks without a new case, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Sunday.

Congo had been due on Sunday to mark an end to the second-deadliest outbreak of the virus on record, until a case was confirmed on Friday in the eastern city of Beni.

The outbreak has killed more than 2,200 people since August 2018. The latest victim was an 11-month-old girl, who was treated at the same health centre as the previous case, a 26-year-old electrician, said Boubacar Diallo, deputy incident manager for the WHO's Ebola response.

Inspector General of Prisoners Brigadier General A.K.M. Mostafa Kamal Pasha at a media briefing in front of the jail said that the body would now be handed over to the family members for burial.

Majed was arrested in Dhaka on Tuesday after hiding in India for nearly two-and-a-half decades. On Friday, Majed's wife and four

Mujib assassination convict hanged

Majed was held last week after hiding in India for 23 years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

DHAKA

Bangladesh on Sunday executed a former military captain for his involvement in the 1975 coup in which the country's founder Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was assassinated, nearly four-and-a-half decades after the high profile massacre. Abdul Majed was hanged at 12.01 a.m. (local time), said Law Minister Anisul Huq.

Inspector General of Prisoners Brigadier General A.K.M. Mostafa Kamal Pasha at a media briefing in front of the jail said that the body would now be handed over to the family members for burial.

Majed was arrested in Dhaka on Tuesday after hiding in India for nearly two-and-a-half decades. On Friday, Majed's wife and four

other relatives met him for nearly two hours in the prison. President Abdul Hamid on Thursday rejected his mercy plea, removing the last hurdle for his hanging.

A prosecution lawyer said Majed told the court that he returned to Bangladesh on March 15 or 16. The convict, he said, claimed he managed to live secretly in Kolkata for the past 23 years.

Abdul Majed

Sri Lanka Catholic church forgives Easter bombers

We offer love to the enemies: Cardinal

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

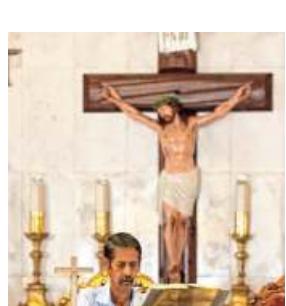
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's Roman Catholic Church said on Sunday it had forgiven the suicide bombers behind the attacks that killed at least 279 people last Easter.

Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith told an Easter mass that "we offered love to the enemies who tried to destroy us". "We forgave them," he said, adding that instead of retaliating, the nation's Catholic minority had contemplated Jesus's message of hope, and reduced tensions.

The April 21 Easter Sunday bombers targeted three churches and three luxury hotels, killing at least 279 people and wounding 593.

Last year, Cardinal Ranjith called for the government at the time to step down over its alleged failure to investigate an "international conspiracy" behind



The St. Anthony's church in Colombo was one of the sites attacked. ■ AP

Assange's lawyer speaks up on relationship, children

Forming a family was a deliberate decision to break down walls around him, says Stella Morris

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange fathered two children with one of his lawyers while holed up in Ecuador's Embassy in London for much of the past decade, according to a report on Sunday confirmed by the mother.

The 48-year-old Australian is the dad of two boys, aged two and one, with lawyer Stella Morris, to whom he is engaged, she confirmed following a *Mail on Sunday* report.

Mr. Assange is currently being held in London's high security Belmarsh Magistrate prison as he fights an extradition request by the United States to stand trial there on espionage charges.

Ms. Morris detailed the revelations shortly after the report emerged, in a video posted on social media by WikiLeaks chronicling her

five-year relationship with Mr. Assange and the arrival of their two children. "We fell in love," she said in the nearly 12-minute film, outlining how the romance began in 2015 – three years into his seven-year stay at the Ecuadorian Embassy in central London. "This is the person... I know the most in this world – he's extraordinary," the South African-born lawyer said.

Ms. Morris said she wanted to speak out now fearing Mr. Assange's life "might be coming to an end" due to his continued detention and the spread of coronavirus.

Jennifer Robinson, one of Mr. Assange's lawyers in Britain who introduced the pair to each other in 2011, according to Ms. Morris, also confirmed that they were a family. She said a statement by Ms. Morris outlining the situation had been cited as evidence in a failed court bid last month to get Mr. As-

sange bailed to avoid catching COVID-19. "Despite her statement about their family and the medical evidence about the severe risk to Assange's health, the judge refused bail and refused to grant her and the children anonymity," said Ms. Robinson.

The British government

plans to allow some pris-

oners temporary release, amid fears COVID-19 could sweep through jails, but a judge re- jected the request on March 25, saying there were "no grounds" for his release. Mr. Assange faces charges under the U.S. Espionage Act. A ruling could see him jailed for 175 years. He ensconced himself in the Ecuadorian embassy in 2012 after skipping bail to avoid separate legal proceedings in Sweden, but was finally dragged out last year. He reportedly conceived the first child with Ms. Morris in

February 2013.

He avoided a trial in the U.S. by appearing via video link from the Ecuadorian embassy in London, where he had been living since 2012. The U.S. government filed a criminal complaint against him in 2012, charging him with leaking classified information to WikiLeaks. He was indicted in 2016 and faces 175 years in prison if convicted. He has been held in Belmarsh since 2012.

ELSEWHERE



Kim's sister rises in North Korea hierarchy

SEOUL
North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's sister has been reinstated to a key decision-making body, state media reported on Sunday. Kim Yo-jong was reappointed an alternate member of the Central Committee in a reshuffle on Saturday, according to KCNA. AFP

ASK US



N. SREEKANTH

Q. I am a super-senior citizen and also a railway pensioner who is bedridden. I have engaged an attendant for ₹20,000 a month. Is this amount admissible for exemption under 88B of the Income Tax Act?

S. VISVANATHAN

A. Medical expenses incurred for yourself up to ₹50,000 a year in case there is no medical insurance policy in force can be claimed under Section 80D. Further, a deduction under Section 80DDB can be claimed up to ₹1.50 lakh for a senior citizen towards expenses for medical treatment, if he is suffering from certain prescribed diseases such as dementia, Parkinson's etc. provided he has a certificate from a prescribed medical practitioner.

A deduction under 80U can be claimed up to ₹1.25 lakh for severe disability due to autism, cerebral palsy, multiple disabilities etc. and if a certificate from the prescribed medical authority is obtained. Section 88B is no longer in the statute.

Q. I am 65 years old, retired and my wife is 62. I have a health insurance policy for ₹5 lakh covering my wife and me. I pay an annual premium of ₹55,000. How much tax exemption will I get under Section 80D?

N. BALASUBRAMANIAN

A. You will be in a position to claim up to ₹50,000 under Section 80D in a year for the premium paid by you for yourself and your wife as you are a senior citizen.

Q. My neighbour, aged 75, is a retired Central government employee getting a monthly pension of ₹75,000. He needs a clarification with regard to deduction u/s 24 and u/s 80C. His only source of income is pension. He recently extended his house with two more bedrooms.

The house is owned by him. Because of his old age, he could not avail a housing loan. He availed a personal loan to the tune of ₹20 lakh against pension from the SBI. The loan carries an interest rate of 12% and repayable in 48 EMIs. The entire loan proceeds are used for the construction only.

His queries are:
1) Can he claim deduction u/s 24 for payment of interest to SBI for the personal loan and EMI principal u/s 80 C?
2) If permitted, does he need to show any evidence to prove the funds were utilised for construction purposes?

H. RAMAKRISHNAN

A. Deduction under Section 24 can be claimed only when a certificate is obtained from the lender stating the purpose of the loan, interest paid and the principal repaid for that year. In the given case, we are not sure whether the SBI would be able to provide a certificate to this effect.

Under housing loan, the lenders, especially the institutions, issue the loan only after ensuring it is used for construction or purchase or renovation of an house and in case of a personal loan, the bank is not obliged to monitor loan usage.

Under section 80C, deduction can be availed only for construction or purchase of house property and not for renovation.

Q. Recently, I had purchased a house for residential purpose in my wife's name. She is a homemaker with nil income. I had taken a loan from Bank of Baroda. Can I claim benefits u/s 24 and 80C?

MANISH KUMAR SINGH

A. Under sections 24 and 80C, only the owner of the property can claim benefits as provided. In your case, the property is in the name of your wife though the loan is availed by you; hence, you cannot claim benefit.

(The author is partner, GSS Associates, Chartered Accountants, Chennai)

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

MIND YOUR MONEY

Do you know your INSURANCE POLICY?

Insurance is about spreading risk, sharing of losses. However, those covered must be aware of policy details, claim procedures

GAURAV MASHRUWALA

While training for insurance, I heard the following story to explain the concept of insurance.

Many years ago, there was a human settlement on a hilly region of China. During summer, menfolk would descend the hills, cross the dry river bed and set up tents on the plains.

Next, they would start ploughing the land, sow the seeds and wait for rains. Later, they would harvest the crop and start their journey back to their settlement.

The dry river bed would now have water flowing forcefully and hence, each man would make a wooden barge, keep his agricultural produce on it and cross the river.

This ensured that no member of the settlement would lose the entire produce and live in poverty for the rest of the year.

Insurance is all about spreading risk and sharing losses.

My IPO

All of us have heard the term IPO. The performance of that IPO, during the offer period and once it is listed, is unknown. However, there is one IPO over which we all have control. That is 'My Insurance and Protection Options.'

My IPO for my family

'My IPO' is for my family. Once I was asked by a renowned MNC to conduct a workshop on financial planning for employees. Before the workshop, I was casually talking to their senior HR manager. I was inquiring about the kind of medical cover the company gave its employees. She explained in detail. I enquired if

the employees were aware of it. Her response was in the affirmative.

During the workshop, I asked the participants what kind of health cover the employer provided, how much the cover was, whether the whole family was covered, whether any cashless options were available and so on. Similar to my past experiences with other organisations, only a third of the participants were fully aware of the details.

Last year, one of my clients working at a very senior level in a telecom company, suffered a massive heart attack while he was touring on work. He was in the ICU for a few days and later, succumbed. The family had to pay a large amount. Of course, he was covered well by the employer and the full amount was reimbursed. Interestingly, the company had a tie-up with that hospital and if only the details had been given to the hospital, cashless treatment would have been possible.

The family would have been saved from the trouble of making online fund transfer. Unfortunately, the family had no clue.

'My IPO' is for the benefit of our family. Keep them com-

pletely abreast. Introduce them to your insurance agent. Have annual meetings with him.

One important activity I suggest to my clients is to request their health and life insurance agent to visit their homes and explain the procedure for filing claims. "I had prepared a complete file of the required papers for claiming health insurance," said Ms. Rustogi, adding "my claim was processed within a fortnight."

Personally, I recall, a few years ago, when my family had to make a claim for health insurance, I had prepared the file in detail, including indexing it. A few weeks later, when a query came from the insurance company, I gave only a copy of the invoice along with the page numbers, all the originals were with them. Since they had acknowledged the receipt of the file, they processed my claim without any further communication. Our insurance is for ourselves and our family. It is 'My IPO.'

(The writer is a financial planner and author of the *Yogic Wealth*)



COVER NOTE: UBERRIMAE FIDEI

A contract of utmost good faith

In insurance, withholding of information by one party works against the other

K. NITYA KALYANI

The tough thing about insurance is that it is intangible. You can't see it or size up what it can do for you very easily as a credit card or a home loan. You don't just pay up and get a product, but have certain responsibilities.

Insurance is a contract that operates under certain principles. As an insured, or potential insured, understanding these principles will help you appreciate the product and get the best out of it.

Here are some main principles as applied to personal insurances.

'Utmost good faith' is one of the first principles of an insurance contract. This means that both the parties have to be transparent with each other and material facts have to be disclosed both before the policy is issued and after.

Withholding information by one party works against the interests of the other.

When you are buying, say, a health insurance, you should disclose all relevant information about your health, which will impact terms and rates.

An adverse health history can mean a higher premium rate matching your risk profile, or even a rejection of your proposal.

But non-disclosure will lead



Looking closely, you see you don't insure your health, you insure the cost of regaining lost health. ■ GETTYIMAGES/ISTOCK

to rejection of claims as the contract will be void. Similarly, the insurer has to spell out the terms and conditions of the cover, especially exclusions, as a matter of full disclosure to you.

An important basis of insurance is the principle of indemnity, which means compensation, or reimbursement. An insurance claim makes good your financial loss, but is not meant to let you make a profit.

When you look closely, you don't insure your health, you insure the financial cost of regaining lost health. You insure the cost of a property or article lost to fire or theft. What about life insurance? You can't place a value on human life. What is insured is not life, but the potential

future earnings of the insured person.

The tie that binds

Insurable interest is the basis on which any insurance can be given. You can insure something only if you would face financial loss when the subject of insurance is damaged, destroyed or lost.

You have an insurable interest over all your properties and belongings.

When your health suffers, you incur expenses. Nobody else can insure your car or your health. You can insure the health of your family members, within definitions, as you will be meeting their expenses should they be hospitalised.

When a person dies, their natural or legal financial obligations are at risk.

All these indicate insurable interest. If this were not followed, either an insurance policy can be gambling, or worse still, a basis for crime! There are also limits on the extent to which insurable interest can apply. Lenders can insure their customers up to the extent of the loan or people can insure themselves for a factor of their reasonably proven future potential earnings and life expectancy.

The principle of loss minimisation means after you take an insurance policy, you should still act as if you are a prudent uninsured. That is, regardless of the fact you bought a policy, you should still park your car in a safe place and lock it. If there is an accident, you should behave in such a manner that the financial cost of the accident is minimised - like ensuring proper medical attention to any injured person and getting your vehicle repaired for a fair rate. In the context of health insurance, you should follow medical advice.

These and other principles work in interesting ways to protect you and to keep the relationship of the two parties to the contract on an even keel.

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

BLACKBOARD: INDEX FUNDS

Mirrors of stock weightage

Many such funds replicate popular benchmarks

ASHISH RUKHAIYAR

What are index funds?

■ Index funds, as the name suggests, are funds that replicate a certain index. So, if there is a Sensex fund, it will have the same 30 stocks that are there in the Sensex. Further, the weightage of each stock in the fund would also mirror their respective weightage in the actual index. Globally, there are many index funds that replicate popular benchmarks like S&P 500 and Dow Jones. In the Indian arena, most of the leading mutual fund houses offer index funds based on Sensex or Nifty. Index funds are a form of passive funds since the fund manager does not have to actively do any kind of stock picking. The fund sees a churn in its portfolio only if the actual index sees any inclusion or exclusion.

What are the benefits of investing in index funds?

■ Typically, the benchmark index of any exchange would comprise the largest and most liquid companies publicly listed on that bourse. The benchmarks are quite diversified in terms of sector representation as well. So, investing in an index fund allows the investor to have a well-diversified portfolio of the largest companies. An investor can own a basket of stocks at a much lower cost compared to owning each stock individually in a benchmark.

Are index funds better than other types of equity funds?



■ Warren Buffet, who is widely considered as one of the most successful investors in the world, recommends index funds. Having said that, it depends on an individual's investment approach – whether one wants to bet on the benchmark's movement or wants to play on a certain sector, or wants to invest in stocks based on market capitalisation – midcap or small-cap. Index funds, however, allow an investor to bet on the overall market, which is always measured in terms of the benchmark's movement.

Do index funds offer cost benefits as well?

■ As mentioned earlier, index funds are a form of passive investment instruments as fund managers do not have any active role in managing such funds on a day to day basis. So, typically, index funds have a lower expense ratio compared to an actively-managed fund where the fund manager does active stock picking. Hence, there is a cost benefit in favour of index funds.

LOOSE CHANGE

RAVIKANTH



"Can you guess how much bitter gold cos...er...bitter gourd costs?"

Bank Fixed Deposit Rates

Bank Name	Highest Slab	Interest Rates (%)	1-year tenure	3-year tenure	5-year tenure
SMALL FINANCE BANKS					
Suryoday Small Finance Bank	9.00	8.00	8.25	9.00	
Utkarsh Small Finance Bank	9.00	8.20	8.00	8.35	
Fincare Small Finance Bank	9.00	7.50	8.50	8.00	
Jana Small Finance Bank	8.25	8.00	7.75	8.00	
Ujjivan Small Finance Bank	8.10	8.00	7.50	7.00	
ESAF Small Finance Bank	8.00	8.00	7.30	7.30	
Equitas Small Finance Bank	8.00	7.75	7.55	6.75	
North East Small Finance Bank	8.00	7.50	7.25	6.50	
AU Small Finance Bank	7.77	7.00	7.77	7.50	
Capital Small Finance Bank	7.30	6.90	6.90	6.80	
PRIVATE SECTOR BANKS					
DCB Bank	7.60	6.75	7.60	7.50	
IDFC First Bank	7.50	7.25	7.25	7.25	
Lakshmi Vilas Bank	7.25	6.75	6.50	6.50	
RBL Bank	7.25	7.20	7.00	7.15	
IndusInd Bank	7.00	7.00	6.75	6.75	
Nainital Bank	7.00	6.00	6.10	6.10	
Bandhan Bank	6.75	6.75	6.60	6.50	
Tamilnad Mercantile Bank	6.75	6.60	6.60	6.60	
South Indian Bank	6.55	6.40	6.40	6.40	
Axis Bank	6.50	6.40	6.50	6.50	
Federal Bank	6.50	6.30	6.40	6.40	
Karur Vysya Bank	6.50	6.25	6.30	6.30	
Dhanlaxmi Bank	6.40	6.25	6.25	6.15	
HDFC Bank	6.25	6.1			



Frodeno's 'Tri at home' raises over €200,000

GIRONA (SPAIN) Jan Frodeno, Laureus ambassador, former Olympic champion and three-time winner of Ironman triathlon World championship, on Saturday, completed a grueling charity triathlon – 'Tri at home'. Frodeno, who finished the course in 8 hrs 33min 39sec, raised over €200,000. AFP

Dalglish out of hospital

LONDON Former Liverpool player Kenny Dalglish, who tested positive for coronavirus, has been released from hospital, British media reported on Sunday. The 69-year-old, admitted for an infection, required intravenous antibiotics but was asymptomatic. The former Scotland international is now self-isolating at home. REUTERS

How Kumble helped Saqlain see things clearly!

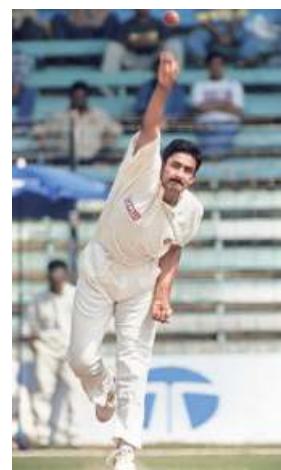
SHAYAN ACHARYA
MUMBAI

Saqlain Mushtaq and Anil Kumble were locked in a fierce rivalry on the pitch, but were friends off it.

In an Instagram live chat with *Sportstar* on Sunday, the Pakistan legend revealed how the Indian spin king helped him immensely in his career.

"We were in England and I told Anil *bhai* that there were not many good ophthalmologists back home. I asked him if he could suggest someone and he referred me to Dr. Bharat Rughani. Anil said he and [Sourav] Ganguly consulted him often and shared the doctor's number."

"I visited the doctor in



Anil Kumble.
■ FILE PHOTO: N. SRIDHARAN



Saqlain Mushtaq.
■ FILE PHOTO: V.V. KRISHNAN

London. He told me I had cataract and gave me new lenses. Thanks to Anil *bhai*'s help, I recovered. He

had been a problem earlier. "While fielding on the boundary, my anticipation used to be zero and I was slow to react. All that vanished and I became more confident after the visit to the doctor."

Elder brother
"Our culture has taught us to respect elders and he is like my elder brother. Whenever we meet, we have long chats."

"Even during my playing days, I used to walk up to him and seek suggestions. He would help me with the necessary tips and never misguided me. I have a lot of respect for him," said the 43-year-old, hoping to play with Kumble in the same team some day.

is a gem of a person," said Saqlain.

The former Pakistan spin ace said tracking the ball

staged this year. We have to wait and watch, but at the moment we will have to defer it indefinitely."

The decision is set to be taken on Monday during a

conference call between the BCCI office-bearers – president Sourav Ganguly, vice-president Mahim Verma, secretary Jay Shah, treasurer Arun Dhruv and joint-secretary Jayesh George – and the IPL governing council chairman Brrijesh Patel. After the meeting, the BCCI is likely to communicate the deferment to the eight franchises.

Expected development

The franchises, along with the host broadcaster, have been expecting this development for a while. Despite the huge financial ramifications involved in case the IPL cannot be held this year, neither the broadcaster nor the franchises are in a position to discuss it with the BCCI until the pandemic is under control.

The possibility of staging the IPL can be determined only after some normalcy returns and a new cricket calendar is chalked out.

Stirling Moss. ■ FILE PHOTO

glia, where he set a new course record in the 1,000 mile event.

In F1, Moss won 16 GPs, with his first victory coming in the 1955 British GP at Liverpool that saw him become the first British winner of the race.

His renowned sportsmanship cost Moss the 1958 title when he defended the conduct of British rival Mike Hawthorn following a spin at the Portuguese GP. Moss' action helped spare Hawthorn a six-point penalty, with Hawthorn winning the title by a single point.

Motorsport legend Moss passes away

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Motorsport great Stirling Moss has died aged 90 following a long illness, the British driver's wife announced on Sunday.

"It was one lap too many," said Susie Moss. "He just closed his eyes." Although Moss never won the F1 title, he finished runner-up four times and third thrice.

No corona link

British media reported Moss' passing was the result of a chest infection he caught in Singapore in December 2016 that saw him retire from public life two years later. There is no suggestion his death was linked to the coronavirus.

In an era where it was common for drivers to race in different disciplines, a 14-year career that started in 1948 saw Moss win 212 of the 529 races he entered, including the 1955 Mille Mi-

lia, where he set a new course record in the 1,000 mile event.

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All stakeholders need to come together'

Karun says it is imperative as Formula One faces a major economic crisis



S. DIPAK RAGAV
CHENNAI
With the Formula One season in limbo with as many as nine races cancelled/suspended so far, the sport is staring at a major crisis.

From the huge financial hit due to not racing to sponsorship revenues amid a much wider economic crisis that the world is undergoing, an expensive sport like F1 is facing some tough times.

Recently, McLaren boss Zak Brown indicated that as many as four teams were in danger of folding up if there was no sensible budget caps on what teams could spend.

India's former F1 driver Karun Chandhok, in a chat with *The Hindu*, felt that the sport has a big task on its

hands, and all stakeholders need to come together to find a solution.

Compressed calendar

While the F1 group is trying to hold as many as 15 to 18 races, Karun said 12 to 13 races might be possible if the season starts in August.

"It will be a big commitment from everyone involved in the sport as it could mean triple headers or intense two day weekends but it's all doable."

"I would like to see F1 use the time to experiment with fewer practice sessions and two-day weekends and maybe even trying to do two races on the same weekend."

On the issue of a cost cap and the warnings from

Brown, Karun said, "In light of the current scenario, it seems like most teams are now in favour of a lower budget cap from the currently agreed \$175 million."

Stalemate

"However, the big players at Ferrari and Red Bull Racing seem to be opposing that, which has created a bit of a stalemate."

"Where there's a will there's a way, but unfortunately, the people associated with F1 are wired in such a way that they often think of themselves before the sport."

"But, at this point, F1 needs strong leaders... it needs Chase Carey, Ross Brawn and Jean Todt to come up with a solution."

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Jeevan has a vision for Indian tennis

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

Every crisis can be turned into an opportunity and Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan believes in it.

Now staying at his family resort in Puducherry, the 31-year-old, who was ranked a career-best 64 in doubles last year around this time, has been thinking about helping Indian tennis realise its potential.

Jeevan firmly believes that the best way forward, once life gets back to normal, would be for leading players to collaborate with the national federation and make concrete contributions for



Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan with golfer wife Neha.
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the revival of the game.

"I personally don't see a global tour like the ATP giving a green light for the next

many months. I think the players and the All India Tennis Association (AITA) need to work together in times like these," observes Jeevan, quite clear that rather than finding fault with the system, the players need to be proactive and mobilise support.

Jeevan feels it is necessary to get the tennis fraternity into confidence while trying to make a fresh start for the game.

"If I am the leader, I would speak to top players across categories and also to the juniors (along with their parents) to figure out what is missing and what is required in Indian tennis, going

forward".

Once clarity is achieved about the ideas that need to be implemented, Jeevan suggests that a 'player council' can work with the AITA to infuse life into the action-plan.

Jeevan is confident that players like Sania Mirza and Rohan Bopanna have the ability to collaborate with the national federation and various stakeholders to take the game forward.

"We have to figure out a National tour."

"We need to provide clarity for a 15-year-old to progress and become the next Yuki Bhambhani or Sumit Nagal," says Jeevan.

CM
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