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NEARBY



Delhi police ban gatherings, protests

NEW DELHI
The Delhi police on Sunday imposed Section 144 of the CrPC banning protest and assembly of four or more people in one place in the national capital till March 31 in view of the novel coronavirus outbreak.

NEWS ► PAGE 11

Court meeting to decide on closure of apex court

NEW DELHI
A full court meeting of all the 33 judges of the Supreme Court is scheduled at 12.30 p.m. on Monday to consider the repeated requests made by lawyers' associations to close the court till further notice on account of the COVID-19 infection spread.

NEWS ► PAGE 10

Anti-CAA stirs continue despite 'janata curfew'

GAZIABAD
The ongoing protest against the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act in Deoband's Idgah ground continued during the 'janata curfew' on Sunday. An organiser said they are ensuring that no more than 10 protesters are at the site at any given time.

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80 districts in lockdown to contain virus spread

With first deaths reported in Bihar and Gujarat, toll rises to seven; inter-State transport, suburban trains, bus services suspended

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
All train, metro and inter-State transport services across the country were suspended on Sunday till March 31 as the death toll from COVID-19 rose to seven nationwide, and the number of confirmed cases stood at 396. Unprecedented restrictions were imposed in 80 districts across 17 States and five Union Territories affected by the pandemic.

The Union Health Ministry said Bihar and Gujarat had reported their first casualties from COVID-19. A 38-year-old man with a kidney ailment and recent travel history to Qatar died at AIIMS-Patna and a 67-year-old man died at a hospital in Surat. Another death of a 63-year-old man was reported from Mumbai.

Only essential services
"State governments will issue orders allowing only essential services to operate in districts with confirmed COVID-19 cases. The focus should be on closure of all activities except essential services such as hospitals, telecom, medicine shops and provision stores," an official release said.

Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba described the new measures as further "pre-emptive" actions, given the "sharp increase" in the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the country after curbs on international travel,

COVID-19 curbs

A look at the essential services and commodities notified by the government



Locked down:
An aerial view of the deserted Koyambedu flyover in Chennai during the Janata Curfew on Sunday.
■ K. PICHUMANI



FOOD AND PRODUCTS

■ Groceries, fruits and vegetables, milk and dairy related products, loading and unloading of wheat and rice at FCI and State food depots, cattle feed and fodder



MEDICAL

■ Medicines and other pharmaceuticals, health services, manufacturing of health and medical equipment



OTHER SERVICES

■ Newspapers, banks and ATMs, post offices, telecom, petrol and diesel pumps



HOUSEHOLD SERVICES

■ Electricity and water supply, sanitary services, LPG supply

contact tracing and efforts at social distancing.

COVID-19

Indicating that the 'Janata Curfew' on Sunday was a precursor of more stringent measures, Mr. Gauba, in a letter to the Chief Secretaries, said the States need to "build on the momentum" of the 14-hour lockdown.

Calling on the States to operate transport within their boundaries at a "skeletal level", the Centre said all these

measures were temporary in nature but "vital to break" the chain of transmission of the pandemic.

Earlier in the day, the Railways announced suspension of all passenger services until March 31, including suburban services. Only goods trains will run during the period, the Railways said, adding that trains that had commenced their journey prior to 4 a.m. on March 22 would complete their journeys.

Joint Secretary in the Health Ministry Lav Agarwal

said the nature of "essential services" would be decided by the individual States. "We want to control the movement of people," he said at a press briefing.

In response to questions, Mr. Agarwal was clear that more districts could be brought under curbs if they were affected. According to him, the lockdown was temporary in nature.

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OVER 3 LAKH CASES ► PAGE 12
MERKEL QUARANTINED ► PAGE 12

Isolation best weapon: ICMR

Isolation, and not indiscriminate testing is the only way to limit the spread of COVID-19, ICMR Director-General Balram Bhargava said. A lockdown is the most important step in breaking transmission of the disease. ▶ PAGE 11

Banks reduce services

The Indian Banks' Association said banks would only provide essential services from Monday. They will provide services such as cash deposit and withdrawal, clearing of cheques, remittances and government transactions. ▶ PAGE 7

Networks under stress

With social distancing measures like work from home putting pressure on telecom networks, the operators have reached out to 12 video streaming platforms to implement measures such as reducing video quality to standard definition. ▶ PAGE 7

Kejriwal announces curbs in the Capital till March 31

'We must take extraordinary measures'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Sunday announced a lockdown of the Capital from 6 a.m. on Monday till midnight on March 31 to implement social distancing and isolation measures to contain the spread of COVID-19.



best practices taken up by other countries. People will face difficulties due to the lockdown but it is necessary to contain the spread of the virus," said Mr. Kejriwal.

Public transport

During the lockdown, there will be no public transport service or private buses, taxis, auto-rickshaws, rickshaws, and e-rickshaws.

The DTC buses will operate at 25% capacity to cater to personnel engaged in essential services. The DMRC has already announced that it has shut its services till March 31. The Delhi government said that "people are required to stay at home and come out only for basic services within the vicinity of their residences while strictly following social distancing".

PM thanks people for staying indoors, says battle not over

He urged citizens to adhere to restrictions

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

An eerie silence descended on the country as millions of Indians stayed indoors on Sunday following a call given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a "people's curfew" to break the transmission chain of the novel coronavirus. Traffic was negligible as people struggled in some places to find transport from airports. Trains and public buses also did not ply.

Just before 5 p.m., sirens sounded in several cities and people came out onto the roads and balconies clapping their hands and banging steel plates to express gratitude to those providing essential services during this crisis.

In many places, conch shells sounded as people milled around.

In a series of tweets, Mr.



Showing gratitude: Children clapping during the 'people's curfew' in Patna on Sunday. ■ RANJEET KUMAR

Modi thanked the people for adhering to his call, but warned against any celebration when it came to an end at 9 p.m. on Sunday night. "Don't treat this as a success. This is the beginning of a long battle," Mr. Modi said.

Appealing to the people to adhere to the new restrictions being imposed by the Centre and the State governments, Mr. Modi said people should not move out of their houses in the 80 districts where a "lockdown" had been declared. "Even in oth-

er parts of the country [where there was no lockdown] people should stir out of their houses only when necessary," he added.

Health Minister Harsh Vardhan warned that anti-social elements were "spreading misinformation that after #JanataCurfew, the virus will be wished away". "They're exhorting people to come outdoors after 9 p.m. This is false & an attempt to mislead the public. #Social Distancing must be adopted as a habit," he stressed on Twitter.

Fifteen policemen were injured, with two in a critical condition.

Maoists kill 17 policemen in Chhattisgarh

VIJAYA SINGH
NEW DELHI

Seventeen members of a police patrol were killed in an ambush by Maoists in Chhattisgarh's Sukma on Saturday.

Police sources said around 350 Maoists, including women cadres, opened fire on a police patrol, consisting of 100 personnel, in an attack that lasted around five hours.

The bodies of the policemen could be retrieved only on Sunday.

Director General of Police, Chhattisgarh, D.M. Awasthi told *The Hindu* that most policemen who were presumed to be missing after the encounter, were either killed at the spot or died due to "loss of blood" following gunshot injuries.

Fifteen policemen were injured, with two in a critical condition.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 10

Silent Sunday



The New Delhi railway station wears a deserted look during the one-day 'janata curfew', which was imposed to curb the spread of COVID-19, in the city on Sunday. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN (SEE ALSO PAGES 2, 3 & 4)

IIT-D team develops cheaper COVID-19 test

'Probe-free detection assay' sent to NIV, Pune



■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

regions in COVID-19. These unique regions are not present in other human coronaviruses, providing an opportunity to specifically detect COVID-19," said Prof. Vivekanandan Perumal, lead member of the team.

Accurate results' According to Professor Manoj Menon, the current testing methods available are "probe-based", while the one developed by his team is "probe-free", which reduces the testing cost without compromising on accuracy. "Primer sets targeting unique regions in the spike protein of COVID-19 were designed and tested using real time

polymerase chain reaction. The primers designed by the group specifically bind to regions conserved in over 200 fully sequenced COVID-19 genomes. The sensitivity of this in-house assay is comparable to that of commercially available kits," said Parul Gupta and Prashant Pradhan, members of the team.

"This assay can be used as a qualitative (yes or no) assay without the need for extensive instrumentation. In addition, it can also quantitatively assess virus loads," they added.

The research team also includes Ashutosh Pandey, Praveen Tripathi, Akhilesh Mishra, James Gomes and Bishwajit Kundu.

Srinagar tracking locals who hid travel history

Four flyers arrived on Sunday but declined to declare history: administration

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

The Srinagar administration is tracking down local travellers hiding their overseas travel history, especially to COVID-19-hit countries such as Italy and the U.S., to escape screening.

"Four passengers arrived from Mauritius, Dubai and Kazakhstan on Sunday but declined to declare their travel history. A girl coming from the U.S. posed as a student returning from Bangladesh," said Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar, Shahid Choudhary, who is spearheading the government's efforts to contain any spread of COVID-19 in the Valley.

He said a man coming from the most COVID-19-hit



Security force personnel check vehicles in Srinagar. ■
FIR lodged
The J&K police on Sunday lodged a First Information

Report against a person in south Kashmir's Pulwama for hiding his travel history to Pakistan.

Dr. Choudhary warned that those hiding travel history may face jail as per the National Disaster Act.

The Srinagar administration has launched a crackdown in the past 24 hours against travellers who are hiding symptoms and avoiding the necessary quarantine. "It needs a collective focus to handle it. Things are not that simple as they appear from homes and office rooms. It's like World War III," Dr. Choudhary said.

The crackdown comes amid reports of students forging their identity cards before arriving at the Srinagar

airport to escape screening, which is a must for overseas travellers.

The J&K administration has approached the Immigration Bureaus of all international airports to secure details of travel history of the locals who are travelling back to J&K from different countries.

According to the official figures, 1,166 travellers, mostly students, have been quarantined on arrival in the past four days in Srinagar.

The administration is in the process of procuring the premises of 65 hotels and government accommodations to be used as quarantine facilities for citizens arriving in Srinagar from other countries.

Capital at a standstill

Delhi sees its quietest Sunday after decades, displaying its fight against the pandemic



(Clockwise from top right) Metro trains parked at a DMRC yard; autorickshaws parked at Aram Bagh in Paharganj; people clapping hands and beating utensils in their balcony; an empty Signature Bridge; people outside Kashmere Gate metro station; aircraft parked at Indira Gandhi International Airport and a deserted view of the Anand Vihar railway terminal in the Capital on Sunday. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN, R.V. MOORTHY, SANDEEP SAXENA, SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Capital responds to Modi's call for 'people's curfew'

People clapped, beat vessels to thank those involved in essential services at 5 p.m.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Capital was in a near-total shutdown on Sunday for 14 hours with Delhites largely adhering to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to observe 'janata curfew'. The silence during the day was punctuated briefly at 5 p.m. with people coming out of their homes clapping and beating vessels as a gesture to thank those who were providing essential services at a time when social distancing was the need of the hour.

The main city roads were empty and inner colony roads had only a few people walking between their home more out of curiosity than necessity. With the metro services shut, no private taxi is available and only 50% of the DTCs bus fleet plying on the roads, several passengers were seen stranded at the Delhi airport, New Delhi railway station and ISBT, Kashmere Gate. A family

C We noticed that since 7 a.m., people had not come out of their houses unless it was really necessary. We have selected 15 points in central Delhi where policemen are offering flowers to people and asking them to stay at home

SANJAY BHATIA
Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central)

that arrived at New Delhi railway station and wanted to travel to Rishikesh was left looking for ways to find accommodation in Delhi and head to Rishikesh on a later date.

At busy junctions like ITO, Connaught Place and Mandi House, Delhi police personnel were seen handing over roses to motorists, who had ventured out, asking them to go back home.

In some parts of Delhi, policemen also handed out masks and sanitisers to spread awareness about COVID-19.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central) Sanjay Bhatia said largely, people were adhering to the 'janata curfew'. "We noticed that since 7 a.m., people had not come out of their houses unless it was really necessary. We have selected 15 points in central Delhi, which are usually crowded and frequented by people. In these areas, policemen wearing masks were offering flowers to people and urging them to stay at home," he said.

Several grocery stores and pharmacies remained open during the curfew, with people in the city coming out in small numbers for supplies. Others were also seen taking joyrides on two-wheelers.

Commenting on the curfew, Twisha, a resident of Kalkaji said: "I think the cur-

few was a good idea, given that it is followed with national shutdowns."

A lot of Delhites were surprised that the city was able to discipline itself. "This is a measure we are taking because of an extremely dangerous situation but it has given us time to pause and reflect on the smaller things in life. It is good that Delhites are able to discipline themselves when needed," said Uttara Seth a resident of Jangpura.

Architect Sandal Kapoor, who resides at Sidharth Extension in Delhi, said he came out to his balcony after staying indoors all day, at 5 p.m., to blow a conch shell to thank the health workers who have been working to contain the COVID-19. "Me and my wife did not step out of the house the whole day. We hope that with collective efforts of the government and the public, we can avoid further spreading of COVID-19," Mr. Kapoor said.

Commenting on the curfew, Twisha, a resident of Kalkaji said: "I think the curfew is a good idea, given that it is followed with national shutdowns."

DMRC to suspend services till Mar. 31

Move is aimed at controlling spread of COVID-19 epidemic

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) on Sunday announced that metro services will be suspended till March 31 to contain the spread of COVID-19.

In a statement, the DMRC said: "... it has been decided that metro services will remain completely closed till March 31."

The move is aimed at controlling the spread of COVID-19 by ensuring social distancing and encouraging people to stay at home for the time being," the statement read.

The Noida Metro Rail Corporation (NMRC) also announced that bus and metro services on the Aqua Line, connecting Noida and Greater Noida, will remain suspended till March 31.

services on the Aqua Line, connecting Noida and Greater Noida, will remain suspended till March 31.

Earlier, on Saturday, both DMRC and NMRC had announced that metro services on Monday will be truncated

COVID-19

in an attempt to promote social distancing.

Apart from issuing advisories, the DMRC had said that a staggered operation of metro services would be followed where only commuters belonging to the "essential services" category would be allowed to enter the metro premises between 6 a.m. and 8 a.m.,

while the general public could travel between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m.

It was said that services would remain suspended between 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and the last trains would depart from originating stations at 8 p.m.

Following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to observe a 'janata curfew', metro services were closed on Sunday.

"The Delhi Metro system will, however, continue to be powered for essential internal operational maintenance activities during this duration and security of the system will continue to be taken care of by the CISF," the statement read.

Traders' body welcomes curfew

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Traders' union, Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), welcomed the Delhi government's decision on Sunday to impose a shutdown in the wake of the outbreak of COVID-19.

In accordance, the union said it issued an advisory to all trade associations of Delhi to inform every trader in the city to keep their shop closed till the end of the month. On Sunday alone, following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for a 'janata curfew', CAIT said, up to 7 crore traders in 60,000 markets, with nearly 40 crore employees have observed the curfew.

Joining hands with CAIT, about 1 crore transporters, 4 crore hawkers and about 2 crore small-scale industries also refrained from any kind of business activities, it said. The one-day shutdown caused a loss of business to the tune of nearly ₹15,000 crore to the domestic trade, the union estimated.

Along with CAIT, other national organisations of retail sector, including All India Motor Transport Welfare Association, National Hawkers Federation, Laghu Udyog Bharti, MSME Development Forum, All India Ladies Entrepreneurs Association, All India Motor Transport Congress, Bharatiya Kisan Manch, participated in the 'Janata Curfew'.

Highlighting the impact of the pandemic on trade, particularly near the end of the financial year, CAIT also urged the Prime Minister to make various interventions, such as postponing filing of income tax and GST returns, extension on bank loans and EMIs without interest or penalty, institution of a cash loan at concessionary rates of interest to ensure a smooth supply chain and provision of subsidy to traders to award wages to employees during the shutdown.

Roads in Millennium City abandoned

Most people stay indoors; shops barring pharmacies, grocery stores remain shut

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

A near-complete shutdown was observed in the Millennium City on Sunday in response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for 'janata curfew' to tackle the spread of COVID-19. The roads wore a deserted look with most of the people staying indoors and shops remaining closed, except pharmacies and a few grocery stores.

In contrast to the routine heavy traffic on the Delhi-Gurugram highway, fewer vehicles could be seen plying on the road all through the day. Similarly, usual weekend hustle-bustle of shoppers and vehicles on Mehrauli-Gurugram Road, with over half-a-dozen shopping malls dotting it on both sides and metro stations, was completely mis-

sing.

"Only a few vehicles are seen plying. In most of them, families are travelling," said a Gurugram police constable manning a barricade under the M.G. Road metro station, along with two fellow police officers.

Deepak, who was manning the front desk at Yes Bank near Cyber Hub, said he had to walk around 5 km from near Jawala Mill to reach the office since autorickshaws were not plying. Shubham, standing at IFFCO Chowk with a huge luggage, said that he had come from Anand Vihar in a bus and was now waiting for an autorickshaw for the past 30 minutes.

The shops, except the pharmacy stores, had the shutters pulled down in all major localities. However, the

grocery shops were open in the regularised colonies and urbanised villages away from the eyes of the police. Harish Bakery, a prominent confectionery shop on Old Railway Road was also open. Though it was a call for a 'voluntary curfew', the police had put barricades at several points across the city and were inquiring those who had stepped outside. Also, the police, in a few cases, lacked clarity on whether the confectioneries and grocery stores could remain open during the 'janata curfew'.

Though the petrol pumps were open, they registered little sale. "Only a dozen cars and around 40 motorcycles have come since morning. The traffic is usually huge on Sundays, but we are playing games on mobile phones to

kill time today [on Sunday]," said an attendant at Indian Oil petrol pump opposite the office of Gurugram Police Commissioner.

The railway station was also empty with all trains having been cancelled. Brijender, a railway platform employee, said around 40 trains halted on the station everyday with hundreds of passengers thronging it on Sundays, but only goods trains were allowed on Sunday in view of the 'janata curfew'.

Responding to the Prime Minister's appeal, people also came to the balconies or stepped out of their homes in large numbers at 5 p.m. to beat 'thalis', blow conch shells and applaud to appreciate the efforts of those offering services to the masses in the fight against COVID-19.

Govt. marking homes of people advised quarantine

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

With the Delhi government marking homes of people who have been advised home quarantine, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal took to Twitter to ask people not to stigmatise such people.

"Delhi government is marking all homes with persons advised to home quarantine. I appeal to all not to stigmatise such families. Please be empathetic and supportive towards them. The marking is aimed only at cautioning others for their own safety. #DelhiFightsCorona [sic.]," Mr. Kejriwal tweeted.

The CM announced that the government was providing 72 lakh people free ration and was doubling pensions. He urged all employers to provide employees, includ-

ing domestic helps, paid leave. "Not only is this a compassionate gesture, it is essential for our economy to survive," the CM said.

He also added that it was the people of Delhi who could fight COVID-19 on their own.

"I said this yesterday in my address, and it cannot be stressed enough - Only we can protect ourselves. Each of us must realise the gravity of the threat, stay indoors & wash our hands regularly. By protecting yourself, you also protect those around you

Only we can protect ourselves. Each of us must realise the gravity of the threat, stay indoors & wash our hands regularly. By protecting yourself, you also protect those around you

ARVIND KEJRIWAL
Chief Minister

wash our hands regularly. By protecting yourself, you also protect those around you, [sic]," he said.

Mr. Kejriwal also welcomed people to visit night shelters across the city to avail the free meal service of the Delhi government. "We do not want anybody to suffer due to hunger," he added.

Restrictions in Gurugram, 6 other districts in Haryana till March 31

People have to stay at home and come out only for basic services: government order

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Haryana government on Sunday announced restrictions in seven districts of the State, including Gurugram, till March 31 in the wake of the situation emerging out of the COVID-19 threat. No public transport services will be permitted during this period. However grocery and pharmacy shops remain open.

"Under Section 2 of the Epidemic Disease Act, 1897 and regulation made thereof, the Government of Haryana hereby notifies restrictions in the territorial jurisdiction of revenue districts of Gurugram, Faridabad, Sonipat, Panipat, Jhajjar, Rohtak and Panchkula from 9 p.m. on March 22 till March 31, 2020," read the three-page order.

Exceptions

The order further said no public transport services, including operation of taxis and autorickshaws would

Curbs on non-essential services

- No public transport services, including operation of taxis and autorickshaws, will be permitted. The exception will include transport of all kinds to and from hospitals, airports, railway stations, bus terminals/ bus stands and for the purpose of essential services
- All shops, commercial establishments, offices and factories, workshops, godowns etc, shall close their operations except for essential services
- All foreign returnees are directed to remain under strict home quarantine for a period as decided by local health authorities
- People are required to stay at home and come out only for basic services while strictly following social distancing guidelines issued earlier

SOURCE: GOVERNMENT ORDER

be permitted during this period. The exception will include transport of all kinds to and from hospitals, airports, railway station, bus terminals/ bus stands and for the purpose of essential services. All shops, commercial establishments, offices, factories, workshops and godowns etc. shall close their operations except for

come out only for basic services during this period while strictly following social distancing guidelines issued earlier.

6,600 under surveillance

The order said that Haryana had two International Airports i.e. IGI Airport, New Delhi and Chandigarh International Airport in the vicinity and there were more than 6,600 people under the surveillance in Haryana. It further read that a majority of these returnees were from the revenue districts of Haryana namely Gurugram, Faridabad, Sonipat, Panipat, Jhajjar, Rohtak and Panchkula.

Haryana Chief Minister in his address to the State residents around 6 p.m. congratulated them on the success of "Janta Curfew" and made an appeal to them to continue it till 7 a.m. on Monday. He also informed the residents about the decision of the State government on the restrictions in seven districts.

fifteen categories of essential services, including groceries, pharmacy, railways, media, electricity, postal services and petrol pumps.

The order directed all foreign returnees to remain under strict home quarantine for a period as decided by local health authorities. It said the people were required to stay at home and

Plea seeks directions to provide masks, sanitisers to jail inmates

Petitioner sought setting up of isolation wards on prison premises

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

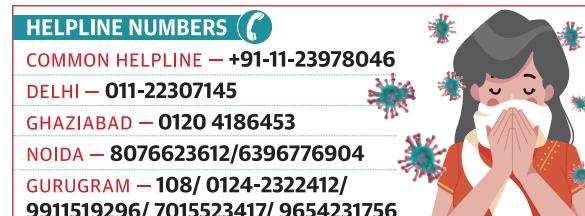
A public interest petition moved before the Delhi High Court has sought directions to the Delhi government and the prison authorities to immediately provide masks and hand sanitiser to all the inmates in Tihar Jail and other jails of Delhi.

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

The petition, which is likely to be heard this week, urged the court to give directions so that the spread of COVID-19 can be contained as much as possible in the jails across India.

'Beyond capacity'

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



C Even if one case of COVID-19 goes undetected in any jail, there will not be any stoppage to the same

VIKAS PADURA
Petitioner

functioning beyond its capacity," the petition said.

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

Mr. Padura stated that on March 17, he received a copy of letter sent by one inmate Raminder Singh through one of his visitor friend. "In the same letter, apart from requesting his own interim bail, the inmate informed the petitioner about the conditions inside the jail during this period of spread of COVID-19," the plea said.

"It is most respectfully

submitted that the said letter clearly depicts that the inmates inside jail are living in a constant fear of disease and which is making the life of inmates worse than it already was being inside jail," the petition stated.

The advocate argued that all the jails in India are required to install isolation wards in their premises and take immediate measures to control the possible outbreak of COVID-19.

He sought "suitable directions" to the Centre to issue appropriate orders to all the jails across India. "Even if one case of COVID-19 goes undetected in any jail, there will not be any stoppage to the same and thereafter the same will not be controlled easily, and which may lead to unprecedented outbreak of virus and unprecedented deaths in the jails," he said.

Four FIRs have been registered against the owners for operating gyms in Punjab Bagh, Moti Nagar and Kirti Nagar despite government orders, police said. The FIRs have been registered with a view to deter the violation of orders promulgated by the government for the purpose of prevention and control of Coronavirus disease in Delhi, said DCP (West) Deepak Purohit.

According to the government order, operation of gyms and spas have to be suspended till March 31.

Formulate SOPs for DNA test of bodies recovered during riots: HC

People are not constrained to rush to courts each time'

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has asked the AAP government to formulate a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for DNA matching of the unidentified bodies recovered during the recent riots in north-east Delhi so that "individuals are not constrained to rush to courts each time DNA sampling or matching is to be done".

"This court is of the view that there should be SOPs so that essential matters are dealt with in a timely and even-handed manner without leaving the affected parties to the discretion, whims and fancies of the authorities," Justice Anup J. Bhambhani remarked on Thursday.

The High Court's remarks came while ordering the government to complete the DNA matching of an unidentified body of a riot victim before March 30 and to communicate the result to Matlub Alam within 24 hours of being prepared.

Mr. Alam, in his plea, stated that his brother went missing on February 25 during

the riots in north-east Delhi. He feared that his brother may have suffered an unfortunate end.

He stated that upon receiving information that certain bodies were lying unclaimed in the mortuary of GTB Hospital, he went there, where he learnt that one of the bodies was found on the night of February 27 from the side of Pushta, near Kali Ghata Cut, in Karwan Nagar. Mr. Alam said this was the area where his brother was last present.

No information yet' On his request, the blood sample of his father was collected at GTB Hospital on February 29 with the purpose of conducting DNA matching to confirm if the body recovered was that of Mr. Alam's brother. Mr. Alam contended that despite lapse of more than two weeks, there has been no information on the result.

During the hearing, the Delhi government's standing counsel Naushad Ahmad Khan said the process of DNA matching is already under

way, "but according to his instruction, the scientific process of testing itself takes about 15 days".

Mr. Khan assured that considering the urgent and sensitive nature of the matter, the DNA matching will be expedited and a report will be given as soon as possible.

The court additionally noted that "the same problem with regard to identification of bodies recovered in the recent riots is being faced in several cases".

Responding to this, Mr. Khan stated that the resources of the Forensic Science Laboratories (FSLs) in Delhi are severely stretched since they receive hundreds of samples. "Samples are received in matters which are pending criminal investigation or trial; and in case of mass casualties such as riots, fires etc., the FSLs get overwhelmed by the samples received. In such cases they are required to prioritise the testing of the DNA samples and cope with their limited resources," Mr. Khan explained.

Greater Noida man tests positive

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A 31-year-old man in Greater Noida has tested positive for COVID-19, taking the total number of cases to six in Gautam Buddha Nagar, officials said on Sunday.

The man stays in Sector Alpha 1, which has been locked down for 48 hours to sanitise, and all residents have been asked to stay indoors, the officials said.

TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT

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MONDAY, MAR. 23
RISE 06:22 SET 18:34
MOON 06:01 SET 17:45
TUESDAY, MAR. 24
RISE 06:20 SET 18:35
MOON 06:32 SET 18:36
WEDNESDAY, MAR. 25
RISE 06:19 SET 18:36
MOON 07:02 SET 19:28

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

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

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

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Doctor among two tests positive for COVID-19 in Gurugram

Number of infected persons goes up to eight in the Haryana district

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

A 35-year-old woman doctor at Civil Hospital here and a 22-year-old man with a travel history to the United Kingdom tested positive for COVID-19 in Gurugram on Sunday, taking the total number of infected persons to eight.

Gurugram Chief Medical Officer J.S. Punia told *The Hindu* that the doctor was entrusted with the sample collection of the COVID-19 suspects at Civil Hospital in Sector 10. Her sample was taken along with nine other doctors, and she was found positive. The rest nine samples are negative. She is a resident of Sector 9A.

In a third case from Palam Vihar, after a brother-sister duo tested positive, another young man is found infected with the virus. He had re-



An empty shopping mall in Gurugram. ■ FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

turned from the UK earlier this month, said Mr. Punia.

As many as 148 samples have been taken in Gurugram, and reports for 18 samples are awaited.

So far, Gurugram has three cases from Palam Vihar, two each from Sector 9A and Nirvana Country and one from Sushant Lok.

A total of 4,455 persons

have been screened in the district so far.

Entry banned

As a precautionary measure, many group housing societies in Gurugram have banned the entries of visitors, domestic workers and delivery persons inside their premises and also discontinued newspaper deliveries

for the time being. "In the wake of two positive COVID-19 cases, the residents welfare association of Nirvana Country has decided to ban the entry of domestic workers, drivers and gardeners inside the premises. Also, the visitors, couriers boys, newspapers delivery boys and other similar deliveries are not allowed inside till March 31. But the residents have decided to pay the wages to the domestic workers and also helped them with buying ration and other necessary items," said senior Congress leader Ashok Bhaskar, a resident of Nirvana Country.

MCG Commissioner, Vinay Pratap Singh issued directions to all residents, who have recently returned to India after foreign travel, to follow compulsory home quarantine.

The deceased, Mohd. Saif Ali, 38, was found positive for the virus on Friday and was admitted to Patna-based All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). "He was also undergoing treatment for kidney ailment and died on Saturday," said doctors at AIIMS.

"He had travel history and was put under observation for sometime," said Director of AIIMS Dr Prabhat Kumar Singh.

Bihar records its first virus-related death

CM Nitish holds high-level meeting

AMARNATH TEWARY
PATNA

Bihar on Sunday reported its first death due to COVID-19 while another person was found positive for the virus.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar who held a high-level meeting with top officials to monitor preparedness for COVID-19 also expressed grief over the death victim and appealed to the people to stay safe.

The deceased, Mohd. Saif Ali, 38, was found positive for the virus on Friday and was admitted to Patna-based All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

"He was also undergoing treatment for kidney ailment and died on Saturday," said doctors at AIIMS.

"He had travel history and was put under observation for sometime," said Director of AIIMS Dr Prabhat Kumar Singh.

The State Chief Secretary Deepak Kumar, Principal Health Secretary Sanjay Kumar and AIIMS Medical Superintendent C.M. Singh too confirmed the death of Mohd. Saif Ali because of COVID-19.

Dr. Pradeep Das, the Director of Rajendra Memorial Research Institute (RMRI), the only institute where COVID-19 tests are being done in Patna, said that 88 samples were examined till Saturday night in which two samples were found positive in Patna.

'Suspend all flights'

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar expressed grief over death of Mohd. Saif Ali and appealed people to stay safe and maintain restraint to fight the virus.

"He had travel history and was put under observation for sometime," said Director of AIIMS Dr Prabhat Kumar Singh.

Lockdown in Punjab as cases rise

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

As the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported in Punjab climbed to 21, the State government on Sunday ordered a Statewide lockdown, effective from March 23 to March 31, as an emergency measure to tackle the worsening situation.

CM's tweet

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh tweeted that a State-wide lock down till March 31 has been ordered to check spread of COVID-19.

"All essential government services will continue and shops selling essential items such as milk, food items, medicines, etc will be open. All Deputy Commissioners and Senior Superintendents of Police have been directed to implement the restrictions immediately," he said.

Anti-CAA stirs continue despite curfew

We are taking all precautions, say protesters in Deoband and Aligarh

ANUJ KUMAR
GAZIABAD

The ongoing protest against the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act in Deoband's Idgah ground continued during the 'janata curfew' on Sunday. "Following the directions of the government, we have cut down on the number of protesters at the ground. At any given time there are not more than 10 protesters," said Aamma Roshi, president of the Mutahid Khawatim Committee. "We make sure that there is only one woman on one bench. Two members of the committee and eight others are sitting on protest. They will be replaced by other protesters after the eight-hour shift. No public speeches are being made. We will continue like this till the threat of COVID-19 comes down."

On the issue of hygiene, Ms. Roshi said only burqa-



Anti-CAA protesters at the Idgah ground of Deoband on Sunday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

clad women were present on the site. "A burqa has four layers, which is better than the three-layered mask recommended by the administration. We are providing sanitizers at the site as well," she added.

Ms. Roshi said the protest would continue as the government didn't pass any notification on CAA-NRC-NPR. "It has been 56 days.

We are doing what the Prime Minister expects of us but the people in power are not responding to our demands. Merely making statements won't help, they should give us in writing," she urged.

The local administration, she alleged, was putting pressure on male members of the families of protesters to put an end to the protest.

Meanwhile, anti-CAA prot-

ester continued in Shahjalal area of Aligarh as well. According to local sources around 500 people turned up for the protest on Sunday.

'Act more dangerous'

"We believe that the 'black act' is more dangerous for them than the virus. We are following the 'janata curfew' by keeping our business establishments shut but protesting against CAA-NRC-NPR is a separate matter," said a participant, requesting anonymity.

"We are taking precautions like we are not bringing children to the protest site and are washing hands at regular intervals. Some of us are wearing masks as well," a protester told reporters. "As Aligarh is yet to see any positive case of COVID-19, the protesters are not taking its threat seriously," said a local source.

All quiet on the riverfront



Boats docked at a ghat during 'people's curfew' to stop the spread on COVID-19 in Varanasi on Sunday. ■ PTI

'Centre looting people with raised fuel prices amid COVID-19 scare'

International crude rates at its lowest: Punjab Cong chief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

The Punjab Congress has accused the BJP-led government at the Centre of looting the people with raised fuel prices amid the COVID-19 outbreak.

The party's State unit chief, Sunil Jakhar, said that even though the international crude prices have witnessed a record low, the Central government was still selling fuel at a high price.

"Our economy is going through a crucial phase when the GDP is at its lowest, employment opportunities are shrinking, gross income is on a nose-dive and even banks have reached the state



Sunil Jakhar

of closure. The emerging situation due to the COVID-19 outbreak has deepened the economic crisis. In such a scenario usually the government is expected to come forward and take charge of the situation to bring people out of the crisis but it is unfortunate to say that the Central

government is adamant to devastate the economy of the country through petroleum price hike and inflation," Mr. Jakhar said in a statement here.

"The Modi government is selling petrol and diesel, the two essential commodities, at very high prices especially when crude prices have come down drastically. The government is blocking the benefit of a decrease in the price of crude oil especially amid the COVID-19 outbreak which is an imminent threat to our economy," he said.

Mr. Jakhar demanded that the Central government must cut fuel prices and give relief to the people.

Maruti suspends operations in Haryana

Move comes in the wake of Gurugram DC's direction for closure of all units

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

Maruti Suzuki India Limited on Sunday announced shut down of its production and office operations across Haryana till further notice. The orders came in the wake of the directions of Deputy Commissioner, Gurugram, a day earlier to shut down all private and corporate establishments in the district till March 31.

Maruti Suzuki has been taking all recommended precautions in its operations against the spread of COVID-19, which includes sanitisation and hygiene, temperature checks, maximising video-conferencing and minimising contact, closing employee travel, health and distancing advisories to



Maruti Suzuki plant in Manesar, Haryana. ■ FILE PHOTO

employees and following all government directions on the subject.

"As a next step, the government policy now requires closure of production and accordingly the company has taken a decision on production closure. The company

will shut production and office operations at its facilities in Gurugram and Manesar, Haryana with immediate effect till further notice. The R&D Centre at Rohtak will also remain closed," said a press statement issued by the company on Sunday evening.

The statement further said the duration of this shutdown will depend upon government policy.

Workers demand

The workers employed in the automotive and garments sector of the district, with the majority of the units situated in the Industrial Model Township, Manesar, had been long demanding the shutting down of the factories arguing that they were at a great risk of being infected with the deadly virus because of the crowded premises and use of public transport by them.

Maruti Udyog Kamgar Union general-secretary Kuldeep Janghu said the workers were eligible for wages during the suspension of the production as per the law.

Woman falls from roof, dies in U.P.'s Banda

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BANDA

A 22-year-old woman died after falling from the roof of a three-storey house in Uttar Pradesh's Banda district, police said on Sunday.

While her sister claims the woman was pushed from the roof, her husband alleged it was suicide, police said.

The incident took place on Saturday and the deceased has been identified as Manisha, a resident of Kanshiram Colony, said ASPL Lal Bharat Kumar Pal.

Manisha sustained injuries and was rushed to a hospital, where she succumbed to injuries, the officer said.

Stranded train passengers and long march in 'janata curfew'-bound Ghaziabad

Administration might be thinking of breaking the virus chain but it could end up breaking the food chain, said an annoyed canteen owner Ankit Rathore

ANUJ KUMAR
GAZIABAD

From donkeys forming the traffic to people walking for several kilometres to reach their destination, Ghaziabad presented some strange scenes during the 'janata curfew' on Sunday.

At the deserted Sahibabad railway station, a family of three were the only passengers present on a platform that remains crowded throughout the week. For their service was Seva Ram, the pointsman, who was doubling as the catering boy for the family. After all, they had a day to spend on the deserted platform.

Ajay Pandey was travelling

with his wife and son from Buxar to Mandi Gobind Garh in Fatehpur Sahib district in Punjab. Their train arrived at 10.30 a.m. and their connecting train was scheduled for 9 p.m. "We were told that it (COVID-19) didn't affect vegetarians," remarked Mr. Pandey, perhaps, irked by repeated phone calls of relatives and questions of officials. "The trains were running on time yesterday. So we boarded the Garib Rath. But by the time it reached Sahibabad, it was more than 2.30 hours late. We missed the connecting train. Now we are waiting for Chhattisgarh Express to arrive."

D.S. Rawat, Chief Booking

Supervisor of Sahibabad Railways Station, said he hadn't seen such a scenario in his more than a three-decade-long career. "A virus has stopped the Indian Railways. Only those trains that left their points of origin yesterday would complete their journey," he said.

At the Mohan Nagar Chowk, Maharoof, with his six colleagues, was on a long march from Dilshad Garden border to Ghaziabad Railway Station, a distance of around 12 kms. They got down at Nizamuddin Railway Station and took a bus first to Anand Vihar and then to Ghaziabad border. "After that, we didn't find any conveyance. We work near Goa in a cotton factory. The factory has been shut down temporarily. We are going to our village in Amroha. We don't know how

long it will last but we do know that we don't have enough money to stay home for more than 4-5 days." On the other side of the road, Ovais and his two friends were lucky to find Maqbool, a rickshaw-puller at the Vaishali Metro Station. "We are coming from Sholapur. We walked down from Anand Vihar to Vaishali Metro Station. There, we found him," said Ovais. Maqbool was tired but happy. He had charged them ₹200 for a distance of almost 5 kms, a route he had never

Man held for running job racket

STAFF REPORTER
BERHAMPUR

A person running a fake job racket was arrested in Odisha's Gopalpur police station area in Ganjam district on Saturday.

The accused, Prakas Chandra Das, is a resident of

Mandiapalli village.

Military Intelligence personnel also played a key role in his arrest.

According to police sources, initial investigation has revealed that he had cheated five youths. He had taken ₹60,000 from a youth of

Chhatrapur police station for providing a clerical job in the Indian Army. He had allegedly taken ₹20,000 to ₹20,000 from four other youths.

The accused is being interrogated and investigation is on to find out other victims.

PUBLIC NOTICE

TO WHOMSOEVER IT MAY CONCERN

Apology Letter

I, Priyank Jain, Director of M/s

Binarysoft Technologies Pvt. Ltd.

having the registered office at 47,

Babar Road, Bengali Market, New

Delhi-110001, by way of the present

publication seek unconditional

apology from M/s Vinda Papers Pvt.

Ltd. and its directors for having spread

false rumours against them.

In the month of June, 2019,

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mentioning therein false information about M/s

Vinda Papers Pvt. Ltd. and its

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their clients/customers.

I hereby revoke all my false and

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which I have intentionally /

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I also seek apology from the public at

large for having circulated false

information.

Seeking Pardon,

Sd/-

Priyank Jain

Director

Binarysoft Technologies Pvt. Ltd.

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It is hereby informed that my clients Smt.

Rama Arora W/o Sh. Ramesh Arora

(both) R/o E-4/62, Sec-7 Rohini, Delhi

that they have discovered their son Yatin

Arora and his wife Smt. Sarika Arora from

their moveable/immovable properties

hence forth and have severed all their

relations with him. It is hereby informed

that my clients shall remain responsible

for their acts and omissions, any kind

whatsoever, if any body is dealing with

them at their own risk. M. L. Pahwa

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Shri Sandeep Shokeen

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the said site, kindly contact us within 7 days

from the publication of this notice, with the

relevant & appropriate proof to substantiate

the objection/ claim, failing which, it shall be

deemed that there is no objection/ claim for

the setting of CNG Station at the said site.

Contact us: IGL Bhawan, Plot No. 4,

Community Center, R.K. Puram, Sector-9,

New Delhi-22. Email: cngproject@igl.co.in

Pavneet Singh Batra

GM (BD & Projects)

e-TENDER NOTICE

Odisha to book people who violate quarantine order

Over 100 may be roaming outside homes: govt. official

SATYASUNDAR BARIK

BIHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government has started filing criminal cases against people on charges of violating home quarantine protocols. Of the over 3,400 people who returned from foreign, more than 100 are suspected to be roaming outside.

"We have received registration from 3,474 people who have come from abroad. They had opted for home quarantine. But, during regular follow-up, we have come to know that more than 100 people have violated quarantine protocol," said Kishan Kumar, State Works Secretary who is now heading 104 Helpline.

Mr. Kumar said these people would be taken to task for risking lives of others.

"It was suspected that a person registered for home quarantine after his return from the U.S. was not following the advice and was indulging in risky behaviour. On getting intimation from the Health Department, the police did necessary verification and found that the person moved in market place in Cuttack," said an official. He was later shifted to institutional quarantine.



A police personnel asking train passengers not to assemble at one place at the beginning of the 'janata curfew' on Sunday. • BISWARANJAN ROUT

The State police are all set to book another foreign-turned person for risky behaviour in Bhubaneswar.

In a unique initiative, the State government had offered an incentive of ₹15,000 to each person registering with the State on coming from abroad. At the same time, it had threatened with legal actions if a person would not give disclosure about travel history.

The persons who have returned from foreign can register both with portal <https://covid19.odisha.gov.in> and toll free helpline number 104. The government has also come up with outbound call centre through which doctors are in regular touch with people in home quarantine.

During regular follow-ups, some of these people had failed to give satisfactory answers. Seven doctors have been engaged to talk to people in home quarantine. The helpline number received over 12,000 calls on Sunday. As of now, 76 samples were tested, two of them were found to be positive.

Meanwhile, 'janata curfew' call given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi evoked total response. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik expressed his gratitude to the people for giving wholehearted support to the 'janata curfew'. He appealed for similar cooperation for the restrictions being enforced in five districts and nine urban centres in the State till March 29.

One more tests positive in Bengal, tally now 4

21 news patients in isolation in 24 hours

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

One more person, a 57-year-old man, tested positive, according to a bulletin released by the Health Department of the West Bengal government. The bulletin did not mention travel history of the person, unlike in earlier cases, indicating that the person did not travel abroad.

The latest addition has increased the total number of COVID-19 patients in the State to four. While 21 new patients were taken in for hospital isolation in the last 24 hours, the "health condition of all persons under surveillance is stable", the bulletin noted. Presently, 52 persons are in hospital isolation.

"Till date samples were collected from 128 suspects

for test of COVID-19 and the results of 107 persons were negative," the bulletin noted.

While four came positive, result of 17 tests are awaited. Significantly, the number of positive cases jumped from zero to four between March 2 and March 22, while the number of people taken in for hospital isolation increased from three to 21 during the same period. The argument for growth, however, is that the level of awareness and testing facility has also increased over the last three weeks.

Meanwhile, isolation facilities with 428 beds have been arranged in different medical colleges, district, sub-divisional and multi-speciality hospitals in the State.

Nagaland puts curbs on movement of people

Simple punishment if order is violated

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

Nagaland has followed Mizoram in ordering partial lockdown and sealing of borders as the northeastern States on Sunday largely responded to the 'janata curfew' call by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in order to ensure social distancing.

COVID-19

Nagaland's Chief Secretary Temjen Toy on Sunday issued an order restricting the movement of people and all vehicles, except for those engaged in essential services, indefinitely from March 23 midnight. All government offices, shops and business establishments, barring those

specified as essential, have also been asked to shut down as a precautionary measure.

The State government has prescribed punishment under Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code for violators. Under this section, a person is liable to be imprisoned for up to a month with or without a fine. "This is in the greater interest of the people. The heads of administration and departments will form a core group to attend to urgent and essential matters," Mr. Toy said.

On Saturday, his Mizoram counterpart Lalnunmawia Chuango had signed a notification from the State's General Administration Department ordering partial lockdown till March 29.

Man held for running job racket

STAFF REPORTER
BERHAMPUR

A person running a fake job racket was arrested in Odisha's Gopalpur police station area in Ganjam district on Saturday.

The accused, Prakas Chandra Das, is a resident of

Mandiapalli village.

Military Intelligence personnel also played a key role in his arrest.

According to police sources, initial investigation has revealed that he had cheated five youths. He had taken ₹60,000 from a youth of

Chhatrapur police station for providing a clerical job in the Indian Army. He had allegedly taken ₹20,000 to ₹20,000 from four other youths.

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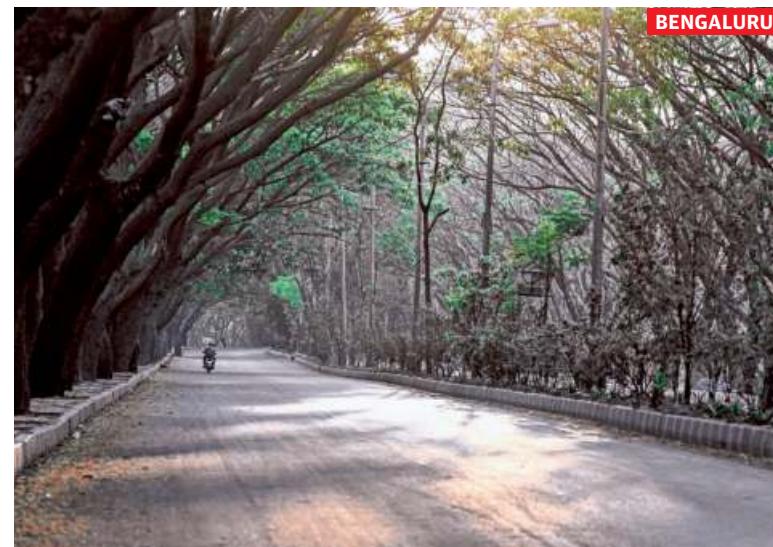
Priyank Jain

Director

Binarysoft Technologies Pvt. Ltd.



High vigilance: Mass being held without people in the wake of the Janata Curfew at the St. Mary's Basilica in Kochi, Kerala, on Sunday; a street dog relaxing on an empty road while a traffic personnel keeps vigil in Khammam, Telangana; and an empty HAL Old Airport Road in Karnataka's Bengaluru. • H. VIBHU, G.N. RAO & SAMPATH KUMAR G.P.



Normal life comes to a grinding halt in southern States

People in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Kerala observe 'Janata curfew' in response to Modi's call to help curb the spread of COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

VIJAYAWADA/HYDERABAD/
BENGALURU/
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Southern States observed a shutdown in response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to observe 'Janata curfew' on Sunday to help curb the spread of COVID-19.

Normal life came to a grinding halt in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Kerala.

Focus on sanitisation

In Andhra Pradesh, people remained indoors. Workers were seen sanitising bus and railway stations, waiting halls, platforms, ticket counters, and other public places.

COVID-19

The Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation, which ferries 65 lakh passengers through 12,000 buses, cancelled many services. The railways too cancelled and regulated many trains. The busy Pandit Nehru Bus Station, and the Vijayawada railway station were deserted. Platforms, foot over-bridges and parking places

were seen empty. Police officials came on to the roads and called upon people to maintain self-isolation. Autorickshaws, private travel buses and taxis were off the road. A similar situation prevailed in bus and railway stations in Gudivada, Kaikalur, Bhimavaram, Nidadavole, Eluru, and other places.

Total in Telangana

Telangana observed a total curfew-like situation, the likes of which were never witnessed in the past, during Janata Curfew. People confined themselves to homes right from daybreak to night as public and private transport, shops and establishments, hotels, bus and railway stations remained closed. There was not a soul for long stretches of roads throughout the State. The only scenes visible on roads were parked vehicles outside houses. Even morning walkers did not come out.

Police also set up barricades at important locations to prevent movement of vehicles. On the other hand, petrol bunks were open but sales boys were glued to their



Long wait: Passengers stranded at the Vijayawada railway station due to the curfew in Andhra Pradesh on Sunday. • K.V.S. GIRI

smartphones as there was hardly any vehicle visiting the outlets for refuel.

As announced by the government, RTC buses and metro trains did not commute. The worst sufferers were travellers and the poor in Hyderabad who depended on the Annapurna canteens of GHMC and Akshayapatra foundation for ready-to-eat food at subsidised rates.

The closure of inter-State

borders resulted in vehicles stranded on roads for long hours. The day-long curfew was topped by clapping sessions by residents at the stroke of 5 p.m. to express solidarity with doctors and sanitation workers who were crucial to check the virus.

Good response

The 'Janata Curfew' received good response across Karnataka, including Bengaluru.

Shops and other commercial establishments downed the shutters in the capital. With citizens preferring to stay back at home, most thoroughfares across the city, including the Ring Road and national highways passing through Bengaluru, wore a deserted look.

With the Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation announcing minimum services and no services of

New COVID-19 cases emerge from 4 States

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New cases of persons infected with COVID-19 were reported from the southern States of Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana on Sunday.

A 24-year-old man from Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, tested positive for COVID-19 and has been admitted to a hospital in Telangana. He is the 22nd COVID-19 patient in the State.

Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Ltd., several rail commuters who reached the Krantiveera Sangolli Rayanna Railway Station were stranded.

Since few autorickshaws were plying, many rail commuters were seen walking near the station with their luggage. BMTC officials stated that the corporation operated only 30 buses, of which 25 were from the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA).

The Karnatak State Road Transport Corporation has cancelled all its services from Bengaluru. The entire Central Business District, which is the nerve centre of commercial activities, was completely shut. Several hotels and restaurants were also closed. Except for a few pharmacies and petrol stations, most commercial estab-

blishments were shut.

Across Kerala, people remained mostly indoors on Sunday. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had urged citizens to use the interim to disinfect their homes.

'We have to fight'

Mr. Vijayan tweeted: "There is no miracle cure yet. Wait for science to do its job. The virus does not discriminate based on religion, nationality, or dietary habits. We have to fight this battle. Not enough evidence to claim it will go away in summer."

Urban centres appeared eerily quiet, with the roads devoid of traffic and pedestrians. Public squares and parks seemed bared off life. So did malls, sporting venues, and cinema halls.

The metro cities of Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi, and Kozhikode appeared desolate. The signature tea stalls on sidewalks in the capital were missing. The situation was no different in other parts of the State. The shutdown was perhaps most evident in Kasargode that reported a slew of COVID-19 cases.

No need for lockdown in Kerala: Pinarayi

Kasaragod to remain fully isolated; prohibitory orders in place in Kozhikode

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government on Sunday indicated that the current COVID-19 epidemic scenario did not warrant a State-wide lockdown.

Kasaragod district, which reported five new cases, is on lockdown since Saturday. The administration has suspended all non-essential services and clamped down on gatherings and free movement of people. The government also brought Kozhikode under prohibitory orders to restrict the assemblage of people. However, the administration has not suspended commerce or travel but merely narrowed working hours between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m.

The Union government has advised State governments to issue appropriate orders to allow only essential services to operate in 75 districts across the country, 10 of which are in Kerala –



Left to nature: A view of Kozhikode beach on Sunday. Prohibitory orders have been imposed in the district. • K. RAGESH

Ernakulam, Alappuzha, Idukki, Kannur, Kasaragod, Kottayam, Malappuram, Pathanamthitta, Thrissur, Thiruvananthapuram.

The advisory has triggered a measure of uncertainty in Kerala with several news channels interpreting it as an inviolable lockdown order from the Centre. The office of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan attempted to

clear the air by refuting the news reports that State was on the cusp of a crippling lockdown.

It said the government had not planned to impose any new restrictions than those already in force. Chief Secretary Tom Jose, later, clarified that the Centre had given Kerala considerable latitude to decide its course of action in the matter. As of

now, the government did not perceive a situation that warranted suspension of ordinary life to ward off the pandemic in the districts listed as COVID-19 affected by the Centre.

The government had already banned assemblies, imposed social distancing norms stringently and restricted inter-State travel. The measures are enough for now.

However, the situation remained fluid. The State government had on Saturday invoked the prohibitive Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, in Kasaragod.

Late Saturday, Mr. Jose empowered Collectors of other districts to invoke the provisions of the Act and issue prohibitory orders if the pandemic situation worsened.

However, the Collectors would require the prior concurrence of the Additional Chief Secretary, Home.

As pilgrims stay away, Tirupati turns into a deserted city

Shutdown of Tamil Nadu borders also impacts inflow

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

TIRUPATI

The temple city of Tirupati appeared unusually desolate with no sign of the tens of thousands of devotees usually visiting the abode of Lord Venkateswara. Though the inflow started dwindling a couple of days after the TTD cancelled darshan, locals also stayed indoors, taking a cue from the call given by the Central government to observe self-imposed exile in the name of 'Janata Curfew'.

The APSRTC central bus station, the railway station and Sri Govindaraja Swamy temple located in the core city area, looked deserted from dawn. People voluntarily stayed home to keep COVID-19 at bay.

Srinivasam and Vishnu Nivasam, the two massive pil-



A deserted Sri Krishna Devaraya Circle in Tirupati on Sunday.

grims' accommodation complexes located in the heart of the city having around 1,000 rooms, wore a deserted look.

The Tamil Nadu government's announcement to shut its borders with neighbouring States also impacted the inflow of passengers by road.

Leela Mahal Centre, known for the clutter of poultry, mutton and fish markets, was a different sight this Sunday thanks to the curfew. The scare of the spread of the virus through non-vegetarian food, though rubbished by the industry as unfounded, has already taken a toll on the poultry and meat business, and the curfew only exacerbated it.

Milk supply hit

Denizens had the first bitter experience of the day when many missed their first sip of coffee due to the non-supply of milk, which was reportedly hoarded by retail vendors out of panic.

However, it was business as usual for policemen, sanitary workers and journalists, who were seen roaming the streets on duty.

We sit apart, but stand united, say farmers

Amaravati protests enter 96th day

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

VIJAYAWADA

Giving up does not seem to be an option for the farmers of the Amaravati region who have been protesting in support of their demand that Amaravati be retained as the capital of the State.

Their protest entered the 96th day on Sunday.

In the wake of the pandemic and the guidelines asking people to extend cooperation and help in containing its spread, the farmers and their representatives found new ways to continue their protest even while adhering to the advisory.

"Earlier, we had 12 places in the 29 villages that comprise the Capital region,

from where the protests were carried out in a big way. Since 'distance' is the need of the hour, we have multiplied the number of protest venues with smaller number of people participating," said Puvvada Sudhakar Rao, convener of the Amaravathi Rajadhani JAC.

On Sunday, a small group of farmers gathered from 6 a.m. to 6.45 a.m. at the protest sites and again at 9 a.m. for 45 minutes.

Sitting in chairs positioned at a 3-metre distance, they held placards and raised slogans such as "Jai Amaravati" and "Save Andhra Pradesh".

"We may sit apart, but united we stand for our cause," said Mr. Sudhakar.

Foreign returnees in bus stopped at Telangana border

They were coming from Qatar via Mumbai

R. AVADHANI

SANGAREDDY

Responding to the call given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao, people voluntarily participated in 'Janata Curfew' on Sunday.

The Sangareddy district police stopped a private hired vehicle carrying some 50 passengers from Mumbai. According to Superintendent of Police S. Chandrasekhar Reddy, all of them were working at Qatar and landed at the Mumbai airport and hired a bus to reach Hyderabad. They were stopped at the Chiragpally checkpost.

After consulting higher authorities in Hyderabad, they were shifted to a quarantine centre at Gachibowli. All of them were reportedly from different districts in Andhra Pradesh.

The police stopped another private bus carrying more than 30 software professionals from Mumbai to Hyderabad at the same checkpost. They were asked to stay two kilometres away. Police said that they would be allowed into the State on Monday after the conclusion of the curfew.

Lottery windfall for Bengal labourer

He returned from COVID19-hit Kerala

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BERHAMPUR

A poor labourer from the Murshidabad district was staring at an uncertain future after returning from Kerala, one of the States hard-hit by COVID-19, when he won ₹1 crore in a lottery.

Izarul Seikh, 30, of Mirzapur village under the Beldanga police station area, was working in Kerala and returned home a week back after the number of the pandemic-affected people started soaring, a police officer said on Sunday.

Seikh has a little daughter, wife, rickshaw-puller father and mother at home.

As he went to Beldanga town, about 5 km from his village on Wednesday, he

bought a lottery ticket of a State that has prize money of ₹1 crore. He discovered the next day that he won it.

Hopes to start business

Seikh met the officer-in-charge of Beldanga police station and requested him for help, including security, as the news got around and hundreds of people crowded his modest dwelling.

"I want to start a business with a part of that amount and also build a house and ensure my family is not hard-pressed any more," he said.

The prize money has been deposited at a bank account at the advice of the police officer and his well-wishers, he said.

KALPETTA

The Wayanad district administration has imposed restrictions on all vehicle movements, except trucks carrying essential commodities and emergency vehicles, from Kerala through various checkposts, on the Kerala-Tamil Nadu and Kerala-Karnataka borders. The restrictions were imposed on Sunday.

Convicts in Kerala make hand sanitisers

The District Jail in Kerala's Alappuzha district has started making hand sanitiser. Last week, the State Prisons and Correctional Services Department directed the district jail authorities to begin the production of sanitisers to meet its growing demand in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. A 100 ml bottle of 'Freedom sanitiser' will cost ₹50.

IN BRIEF



T.N. not hiding COVID-19 figures: Health Minister

CHENNAI
Health Minister C. Vijayabaskar rejected allegations that the government was suppressing figures related to COVID-19. A complete lockdown was the best option to control its spread, and that the State was prepared for the worst, he said, adding that there were 1,690 ventilators ready for use and a 1,000 more units were expected next week.

Outpatient wards in Puducherry to be closed

PUDUCHERRY
District Collector T. Arun on Sunday said the outpatient ward attached to the Government General Hospitals in Puducherry will remain closed to contain the spread of COVID-19. He told presspersons that the outpatient wards would remain closed till further notice. He urged people in the 15-60 age group to avoid coming out of their homes.

Minor girl in Assam tests negative

GUWAHATI
The laboratory report of a minor girl suspected to be suffering from COVID-19 has come out negative, officials said on Sunday. The Jorhat Medical College and Hospital (JMCH) on Saturday evening said a four-and-a-half-year-old girl tested positive in a preliminary test. The Jorhat district authorities, however, said more tests would be required according to the protocol before confirmation.

Activists call for halt on disclosure of identities

JAIPUR
The Jan Swasthya Abhiyan on Sunday expressed concern over the Rajasthan government's move to disclose the identity of persons who could be COVID-19 positive, apparently for ensuring effective containment of infection transmission. Health activists attached to the Abhiyan termed it a "blatant violation" of the patients' right to privacy and confidentiality.

INTERVIEW | DR. V.K. PAUL

COVID-19 is a new animal in the zoo'

States have been told to marshal all resources to contain the virus, says NITI Aayog member

**YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN**

Co-chair of the Empowered Committee for COVID-19 Response, India, and Member of the National Institution for Transforming India, NITI Aayog, Dr. V.K. Paul said the changed circumstances of the spread of the disease called for a revised testing strategy and marshalling of all resources to contain the pandemic.

Why has India revised its testing strategy making it more inclusive and now also allowing private laboratories to test? Is this an indication of the trends that you may be seeing in terms of a wider spread of COVID-19?

■ It's best to align our thoughts with what the Prime Minister has articulated. We know we have a pro-

blem. We have been containing it to a large extent but the way these things pan out, emerging scenarios are unpredictable and can be very serious, so let us put our act together.

Why have we changed criteria? Because we think it is time to get the first indications to know if it is spreading in India. If it spreads, serious patients will come in and we cannot miss this indication. COVID-19 is a new animal in the zoo, we are still understanding the virus. We know that it is a pandemic, it is somewhat explosive and somewhat delayed. We may be better-off currently but be prepared for the worst. We should be sensible for the next two months.

NITI Aayog had advised the government to rectify the lack of health infrastructure,



skewed patient-bed and medical staff ratio...keeping this in mind how prepared is India if we do slip into community transmission? The trends currently indicate massive spikes.

■ It is no secret that India's health infrastructure needs to be augmented. Currently, States across India have been instructed to marshal all their resources to ensure that we are able to contain the virus. They have been asked to use all legal and emergency powers and

funds to cater to any medical situation that may arise. You know, it is a situation for which you have to pull out all the stops and get makeshift arrangements if need be.

How does the 14-hour 'Janata Curfew' help?

■ This one-day bandh is the only way we can cut down or dent transmission. Though we are still at stage 2, what if we moved further? Since we cannot create a perfect situation, social distancing is key and this drill is essential. Perfect social distancing cannot happen under normal situation. What the Prime Minister has done is say "OK guys, we have been making an effort to break this chain."

Where are we in terms of making available testing kits and vaccine?

■ We are looking at two

types of technologies/products – one is diagnostic kits and the other, of course, vaccine which is a long term solution.

Currently, everything related to COVID-19 is new but I am very happy to be able to tell you that we are very close to making available a simpler and indigenous diagnostic test. There are four to six promising projects being carried out and we are very close to an early validation and early scale up. I am hoping this could be in a matter of weeks.

Also, remember if a vaccine comes out somewhere else, they may find it very sensible to manufacture here in India. So that's the silver lining, we have a huge vaccine production capability.

(Read the full interview at: <https://bit.ly/VKPaulInterview>)

Senior citizen denied hospital admission over virus fears

Spokesperson cites realigning of ICUs and beds as reason

**JIYOTI SHELAR
MUMBAI**

The family of a 70-year-old person from the Kalyan locality of Mumbai, suffering from breathlessness, fever and throat pain, has alleged that he was refused entry by the Rukminibai Hospital. The doctors at Rukminibai gave

COVID-19

him an injection and referred us to Kasturba Hospital for a COVID-19 test," he said.

The senior citizen had no history of international travel, but he had been to Bengaluru, Mangaluru and Tirupati over the past one month for religious rituals.

"At the Hinduja Hospital,

they refused to take us in. I showed them the medical paper from Kasturba Hospital but they insisted that he could be a COVID-19 patient," he said. The patient was eventually taken to the KEM Hospital, where the doctors diagnosed pneumonia and started treatment.

A Hinduja Hospital spokesperson said that after the detection of a COVID-19 case at the hospital on March 12, they had been realigning ICUs and beds for the safety of patients and their treatment as per guidelines. "The patient arrived with severe respiratory issues and needed ICU care, which was not possible at that time in view of the realignment. Therefore, the patient was attended to, stabilised and then referred to other hospitals," the spokesperson said.

Telcos ask OTT platforms to reduce video quality

Surge in digital use straining networks

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

With social distancing measures like work from home putting pressure on the country's telecom networks, the operators have reached out to 12 video streaming platforms, including Hotstar and Netflix, to implement measures such as reducing video quality to standard definition (SD) to ease the stress on the networks.

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) has also separately written to the Department of Telecom, requesting that a communique be sent to video streaming players as it "will be more effective if a similar communication is sent from the DoT to these companies."

In its letter to video streaming platforms, the COAI noted that in the past



few days, advisories had been issued by various government agencies for social distancing, restrictions in terms of workplace, encouraging work from home and online education whenever possible. "This sudden surge in digital use is already putting pressure on the network infrastructure of the telecom service providers. The TSPs are taking steps to manage this load and facilitate the smooth functioning of the networks," it said.

Air Force plans to work with 50% manpower

Proposes weekly rotation of staff

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Taking note of the high probability of SARS-CoV-2 affecting the community, the Indian Air Force (IAF) has drawn up a contingency plan to work with 50% manpower at the workplace and bring in weekly rotation in the event of its spread.

"In the eventuality of infection assuming an alarming proportion, there will be a need to restrict the manpower to workplaces to 50%

for better management of the emergency," an IAF circular dated March 19 said.

"All the branches and offices, therefore, need to work out a contingency plan to work with 50% manpower," it added.

"The remaining 50% manpower should be instructed to work from home. Accordingly, a weekly roster to attend office on alternate week needs to be formulated," the circular stated.

Paramilitary forces halt movement of troops

Direction will be in force till April 5

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The country's paramilitary forces, comprising about 10 lakh personnel, have ordered immediate suspension of movement of troops for any kind of travel, including leave or routine work, and directed them to "be where they are" till April 5 to check COVID-19 outbreak in their ranks, officials said on Sunday.

The forces have also asked personnel to fill up a declaration form stating that none of their family members have travelled to a foreign destination in the recent past.

Officials said the direction was issued by the headquarters of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the Border Security Force (BSF), the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) and the National Security Guards (NSG).

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
National Health Mission

Karnataka State Health & Family Welfare Society®
1st Floor, DH&FW Services, Anand Rao Circle, Bengaluru - 560 009

FNo. NHM/FMG/CFO/76/2019-20 Date: 20.03.2020

HIRING SERVICES OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT FIRM FOR STATUTORY AUDIT OF STATE HEALTH SOCIETY (SHS) & DISTRICT HEALTH SOCIETY (DHS) (FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2019-20) under National Health Mission (NHM)

Govt of India (GoI) in partnership with the State of Karnataka is implementing the National Health Mission in Karnataka which comprises of various programs, with the objective of improving medical facilities in the areas and seeks to provide accessible, affordable and quality health care to the population, especially the vulnerable sections. To facilitate implementation of NHM, State and District level entities (Health Societies) have been registered which work under the administrative control of the Department of Health & Family Welfare. The Karnataka State Health and Family Welfare Society®, invites "Proposal for audit" from firms of Chartered Accountants empanelled with C& AG and eligible for major PSUs audit for the year 2019-20.

Minimum payable fees for Audit (Consolidated Audit fees) will be Rs. 3,55,539

Detailed RFP: Detailed Request for Proposal (RFP) comprising Background, Terms of Reference (ToR) and Guidelines for submitting the proposal can be either downloaded from the state's website <https://karunadu.karnataka.gov.in/hfw/Pages/home.aspx> or this can be collected from the O/o Mission Director, National Health Mission, Karnataka State Health & Family Welfare Society®, Directorate of Health and Family Welfare Services, Anand Rao Circle, Bengaluru-560009, between 10.30 AM and 5.30 PM.

Important Dates:

- Last date for collection of RFP: From 23.03.2020 to 04.04.2020
- Date for pre-bid conference: 01.04.2020
- Last date for submission of Proposal to SHS: 07.04.2020
- Date of opening of financial bid: 10.04.2020

Venue for Pre-bid Conference: Pre-bid Conference would be held at Office of the Project Director (RCH), National Health Mission, Karnataka Directorate of Health & Family Welfare Services, Anand Rao Circle, Bengaluru-560009.

(Sd/-) Mission Director
National Health Mission
Karnataka State Health and Family Welfare Society®

DIPR/DDU/2884/2019-20

Banks to provide only essential services

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

With several States announcing complete lockdown to fight the spread of COVID-19, the financial sector is also responding with reduced timings in branches and providing only essential services.

The Indian Banks' Association (IBA) has said banks will only provide essential services from Monday.

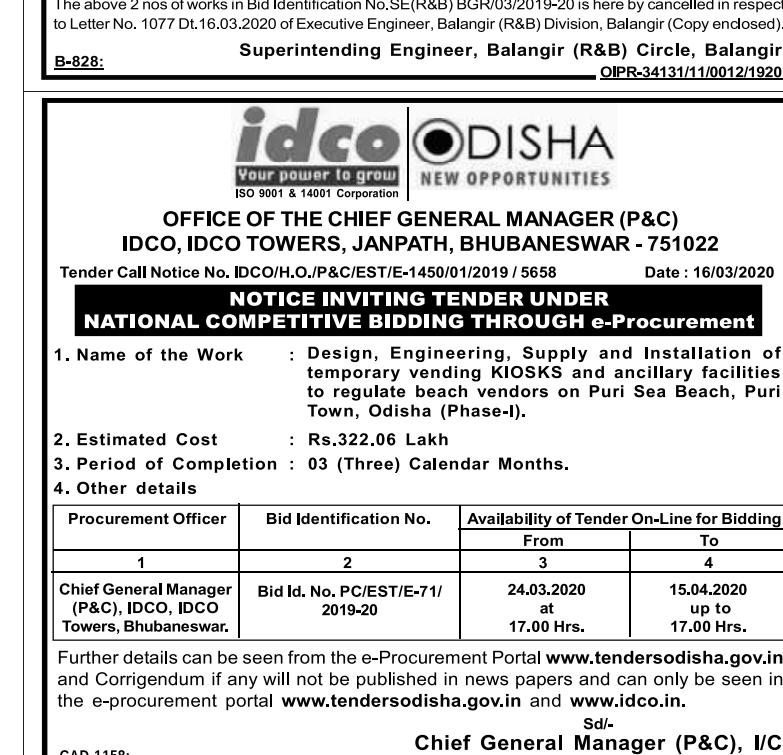
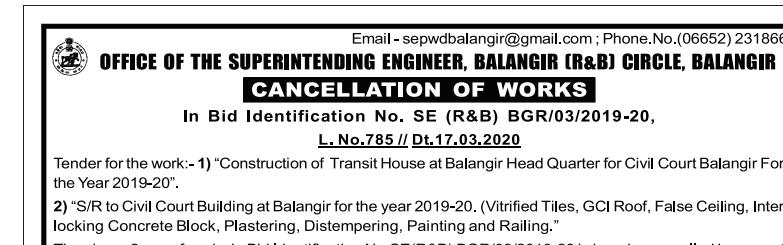
They will provide only services such as cash deposit and withdrawal, clearing of cheques, remittances and government transactions.

IBA said that since most of the services were available online, customers could avail them through mobile and Internet banking channels.

Some of the large private banks like ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank have decided to reduce branch timings. The branches will open only from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Sunil Mehta, chief executive, IBA, in a letter to the MD and CEOs of its member-banks, said banks might selectively keep their branches open after consultation with local governments.

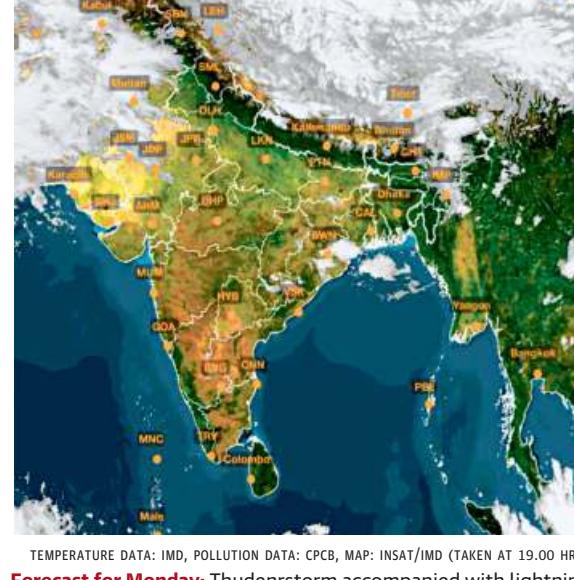
The Life Insurance Corporation of India has said that in view of the prevailing situation due to COVID-19, it will give relaxation to policyholders to pay premium due up to April 15 wherever they are unable to deposit online or otherwise.

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WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



Forecast for Monday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning and gust likely at isolated places over Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Delhi, Odisha, Assam and Telangana.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	0.6	31.4	19.6	Kozhikode	-	37.4	26.4
Ahmedabad	-	36.4	23.0	Kurnool	-	39.1	24.1
Aizawl	-	25.4	13.9	Lucknow	-	32.2	17.2
Allahabad	1.5	33.6	15.8	Madurai	-	38.6	25.8
Bengaluru	-	35.4	22.8	Mangaluru	-	35.6	24.0
Bhopal	-	34.8	16.2	Mumbai	-	31.1	20.7
Bhubaneswar	34.4	34.0	20.6	Mysuru	-	34.9	22.3
Chandigarh	-	28.8	14.1	New Delhi	-	31.1	15.7
Chennai	-	33.2	27.3	Patna	-	30.8	17.8
Coimbatore	4...	35.4	21.0	Port Blair	-	31.6	23.8
Dehradoon	-	28.2	12.7	Puducherry	-	33.0	25.4
Gangtok	16.1	14.3	8.5	Pune	-	36.2	17.6
Goa	-	32.0	22.3	Raipur	-	33.7	22.1
Guwahati	0.2	24.5	18.0	Ranchi	-	29.8	15.0
Hubballi	-	37.0	19.0	Shillong	-	25.5	12.4
Hyderabad	-	35.5	22.7	Shimla	7.8	16.4	5.9
Imphal							



Stealing a mandate

BJP played by the book, but a new govt. will lack moral legitimacy without winning bypolls

The impending change of guard in Madhya Pradesh is on the back of a disgraceful betrayal of the popular mandate of 2018 when the Congress defeated the BJP that was in power for three consecutive terms. Jyotiraditya Scindia's vault from the Congress to its antithesis, the BJP, set the ball rolling for the unravelling of Chief Minister Kamal Nath's government earlier in March. With the resignation of 22 of its MLAs from the Assembly, the Congress was reduced to a minority, with 92 members. The resignations brought down the halfway mark to 104 and now, the BJP, with 106, can claim a majority as it is doing right now. The BJP legislature party is expected to elect former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan as its leader who is likely to form the new government this week. Mr. Nath tried to salvage his government by buying time to woo back the defectors but the Supreme Court ordered that a floor test be held on Friday. His decision to submit the resignation before forcing a vote in the Assembly was appropriate. Luring back the defectors by dubious means would have been no less dishonourable than the defections. The total strength of the MP Assembly is 230 in which 24 seats are now vacant. Although the BJP is within its rights to stake claim, in the interest of moral and political legitimacy, it could have waited until after by-elections are held to these seats and either of the parties establishes a clear majority.

But a disturbing new mechanism of usurping power that is not won through an election, perfected by the BJP in recent years, has no such restraint. The party engineered the resignations of Congress and JD(S) MLAs and returned to power in Karnataka last year. The BJP took power on the claim of majority in a truncated legislature, and had the advantage of being the ruling party when the by-elections were held. It had used the same strategy earlier and there are indications that it might be tried in some other States too in the coming weeks. This route by-passes the Anti-Defection law but the financial and moral corruption involved in this is only far too evident. While the top court did the right thing by asking for an early floor test in M.P., the larger question the power tussle in the State has thrown up, which is the claim of majority in a legislature that has a considerably large number of seats vacant, remains unresolved. The recurrence of this model across States makes this an unhealthy pattern and a fresh challenge to clean politics. The legal and moral implications of mass resignations of MLAs to upend an electoral verdict need to be examined at the political and judicial levels.

China's zero

The rest of the world might have to follow

China's lead in containing the virus

In a remarkable turnaround, China had zero cases of novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) on March 18-20, including in Wuhan, the epicentre of the epidemic. This comes three months after the first case emerged in Wuhan. But on March 21, Guangdong province had one instance of local transmission from an imported case. As on March 22, China reported 314 imported cases. As the instance on Saturday shows, more number of fresh cases from local transmission can show up, turning the zero cases reported on three consecutive days into nothing but a blip. At the peak of the epidemic, mainland China reported thousands of fresh cases and hundreds of deaths each day before the total number reached 81,054 which is nearly 26% of the global case load of 31,665 as on March 22. The total mortality from coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in mainland China stands at 3,237, which is less than the deaths reported from Italy (4,825). The initial signs of the epidemic beginning to wane were visible when the first makeshift hospital in Wuhan was closed in early March after all patients had recovered and there were no new admissions. The turnaround in China comes at a time when the virus is galloping in Europe and is spreading in the U.S. Shutting down Wuhan and a few other cities on January 23 and many more in the following days placed nearly 60 million in China in lockdown. In retrospect, the drastic measure sharply reduced the chances of a rapid spread of the virus within China and onward to the rest of the world. It gave Europe and the U.S. the much-needed time to take measures in preventing the virus from gaining a foothold. Unfortunately, both Europe and the U.S. seem to have squandered that opportunity. What was once considered undoable outside China is now being played out in Italy – the entire country is locked down. Putting the rights of the community ahead of the individual, many countries have been adopting tough measures akin to China's – restricting travel, banning mass gatherings, cancelling important events and shutting down educational institutions and entertainment in a bid to cut the transmission chain.

Even as China's success in containing the epidemic is in the spotlight, its cover-up of the outbreak until mid-January, nearly a month after the first few cases showed up, will remain a stain hard to erase. Worse, its refusal to inform its people even after notifying a cluster of cases to the World Health Organization on December 31, 2019 and gagging doctors for raising an alarm show that not much has changed since the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2002. The only solace is that China did not unduly delay informing WHO about the novel virus unlike in the case of the 2002 SARS outbreak. Also, it quickly sequenced the whole genome of the virus and made the data public just days after informing WHO; it has since shared 126 sequence data. Scientific papers published by Chinese researchers have given their peers across the world a head start in understanding the virus and the disease.

The perils of an all-out lockdown

If the poor must stay at home, they need income support and essential services



JEAN DRÈZE

As the novel coronavirus spreads, a double crisis looms over India: a health crisis and an economic crisis. In terms of casualties, the health crisis is still very confined (seven deaths in a country where eight million people die every year), but the numbers are growing fast. Meanwhile, the economic crisis is hitting with full force, throwing millions out of work by the day. Unlike the health crisis, it is not class-neutral, but hurts poor people the most.

India slows down

Migrant workers, street vendors, contract workers, almost everyone in the informal sector – the bulk of the workforce – is being hit by this economic tsunami. In Maharashtra, mass lay-offs have forced migrant workers to rush home, some without being paid. Many of them are now stranded between Maharashtra and their homes as trains have been cancelled. The economic standstill in Maharashtra is spreading fast to other States as factories, shops, offices and worksites close with little hope of an early return to normalcy. With transport routes dislocated, even the coming wheat harvest, a critical source of survival for millions

of labouring families in north India, may not bring much relief. And all this is just a trailer.

This economic crisis calls for urgent, massive relief measures. Lockdowns may be needed to slow down the epidemic, but poor people cannot afford to stay idle at home. If they are asked to stay home, they will need help. There is a critical difference, in this respect, between India and affluent countries with a good social security system. The average household in, say, Canada or Italy can take a lockdown in its stride (for some time at least), but the staying power of the Indian poor is virtually nil.

Tap social schemes

Since time is of the essence, the first step is to make good use of existing social-security schemes to support poor people – pensions, the Public Distribution System (PDS), midday meals, and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), among others. Initial measures could include advance payment of pensions, enhanced PDS rations, immediate payment of MGNREGA wage arrears, and expanded distribution of take-home rations at schools and anganwadis. Some States have already taken useful steps of this sort, but the scale of relief measures needs radical expansion. That, in turn, requires big money from the Central government. It also requires the government to avoid squandering its resources on corporate bailouts: most crisis-affected



sectors of the economy will soon be lobbying for rescue packages.

Meanwhile, there is a danger of people's hardships being aggravated by a tendency to shut down essential services. Public transport, administrative offices, court hearings, MGNREGA projects and even immunisation drives have already been suspended to varying degrees in many States. Some of these interruptions are certainly justified, but others are likely to be counter-productive. Remember, we are dealing not only with a health crisis but also with an economic crisis. Even if discontinuing public services helps to contain the health crisis, the economic consequences need to be considered.

To assess the case for various precautionary measures, we must bear in mind the dual motive for taking precautions. When you decide to stay at home, there are two possible motives for it: a self-protection motive and a public-purpose motive. In the first case, you act out of fear of being infected. In the second, you participate in col-

lective efforts to stop the spread of the virus.

Some people think about precautions as a matter of self-protection. What they may not realise is that the individual risk of getting infected is still tiny – so small that it is hardly worth any self-protection efforts (except for special groups such as health workers and the elderly). Four hundred thousand people die of tuberculosis in India every year, yet we take no special precautions against it. So why do we take precautions when seven people have died of COVID-19? The enlightened reason is not to protect ourselves, but to contribute to collective efforts to halt the epidemic.

Display creativity

A similar reasoning applies to the case for shutting down public services as a precautionary measure. Self-protection of public employees is not a major issue (for the time being), the main consideration is public purpose. Further, public purpose must include the possible economic consequences of a shutdown. If a service creates a major health hazard, public purpose may certainly call for it to be discontinued (this is the reason for closing schools and colleges). On the other hand, services that help poor people in their hour of need without creating a major health hazard should continue to function as far as possible. That would apply not only to health services or the Public Distribution System, but also to many other public services including administrative of-

fices at the district and local levels. Poor people depend on these services in multiple ways, closing them across the board at this time would worsen the economic crisis without doing much to stem the health crisis.

Keeping public services going in this situation is likely to require some initiative and creativity. An explicit list of essential services (already available in some States) and official guidelines on coronavirus readiness at the workplace would be a good start. Many public premises are crying for better distancing arrangements. Some services can even be reinvented for now. For instance, anganwadis could play a vital role of public-health outreach at this time, even if children have to be kept away. Many public spaces could also be used, with due safeguards, to disseminate information or to impart good habits such as distancing and washing hands.

The urgent need for effective social security measures makes it all the more important to avoid a loss of nerve. The way things are going today, it will soon be very difficult for some State governments to run the Public Distribution System or take good care of drinking water. That would push even more people to the wall, worsening not only the economic crisis but possibly the health crisis as well. This is not the time to let India's frail safety net unravel.

Jean Drèze is Visiting Professor at the Department of Economics, Ranchi University

Picking up the quantum technology baton

With the Budget announcement providing direction, the stakeholders need to roll-out the national mission quickly

R. VIJAYARAGHAVAN,
SHIVAJI SONDHI, SANDIP TRIVEDI &
UMESH VAZIRANI

In the Budget 2020 speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman made a welcome announcement for Indian science – over the next five years she proposed spending ₹8,000 crore (~\$1.2 billion) on a National Mission on Quantum Technologies and Applications. This promises to catapult India into the midst of the second quantum revolution, a major scientific effort that is being pursued by the United States, Europe, China and others. In this article we describe the scientific seeds of this mission, the promise of quantum technology and some critical constraints on its success that can be lifted with some imagination on the part of Indian scientific institutions and, crucially, some strategic support from Indian industry and philanthropy.

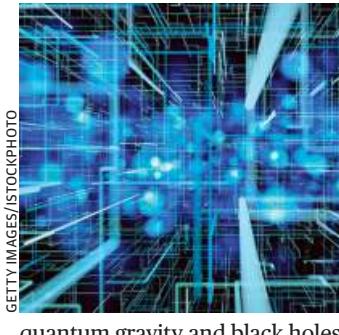
A timeline

Quantum mechanics was developed in the early 20th century to describe nature in the small – at the scale of atoms and elementary particles. For over a century it has provided the foundations of our understanding of the physical world, including the interaction of light and matter, and led to ubiquitous inventions such as lasers and semiconductor transistors. Despite a century of research, the quantum world still remains mysterious and far removed from our experiences based on everyday

life. A second revolution is currently under way with the goal of putting our growing understanding of these mysteries to use by actually controlling nature and harnessing the benefits of the weird and wondrous properties of quantum mechanics. One of the most striking of these is the tremendous computing power of quantum computers, whose actual experimental realisation is one of the great challenges of our times. The announcement by Google, in October 2019, where they claimed to have demonstrated the so-called "quantum supremacy", is one of the first steps towards this goal.

Promising future

Besides computing, exploring the quantum world promises other dramatic applications including the creation of novel materials, enhanced metrology, secure communication, to name just a few. Some of these are already around the corner. For example, China recently demonstrated secure quantum communication links between terrestrial stations and satellites. And computer scientists are working towards deploying schemes for post-quantum cryptography – clever schemes by which existing computers can keep communication secure even against quantum computers of the future. Beyond these applications, some of the deepest foundational questions in physics and computer science are being driven by quantum information science. This includes subjects such as



quantum gravity and black holes.

Pursuing these challenges will require an unprecedented collaboration between physicists (both experimentalists and theorists), computer scientists, material scientists and engineers. On the experimental front, the challenge lies in harnessing the weird and wonderful properties of quantum superposition and entanglement in highly controlled manner by building a system composed of carefully designed building blocks called quantum bits or qubits. These qubits tend to be very fragile and lose their "quantumness" if not controlled properly, and a careful choice of materials, design and engineering is required to get them to work. On the theoretical front lies the challenge of creating the algorithms and applications for quantum computers. These projects will also place new demands on classical control hardware as well as software platforms.

Where India stands

Globally, research in this area is about two decades old, but in India, serious experimental work

has been under way for only about five years, and in a handful of locations. What are the constraints on Indian progress in this field? So far we have been plagued by a lack of sufficient resources, high quality manpower, timeliness and flexibility. The new announcement in the Budget would greatly help fix the resource problem but high quality manpower is in global demand. In a fast moving field like this, timeliness is everything – delayed funding by even one year is an enormous hit.

A previous programme called Quantum Enabled Science and Technology has just been fully rolled out, more than two years after the call for proposals. Nevertheless, one has to laud the government's announcement of this new mission on a massive scale and on a par with similar programmes announced recently by the United States and Europe. This is indeed unprecedented, and for the most part it is now up to the government, its partner institutions and the scientific community to work out details of the mission and roll it out quickly.

But there are some limits that come from how the government must do business with public funds. Here, private funding, both via industry and philanthropy, can play an outsized role even with much smaller amounts. For example, unrestricted funds that can be used to attract and retain high quality manpower and to build international networks – all at short notice – can and will make an

enormous difference to the success of this enterprise. This is the most effective way (as China and Singapore discovered) to catch up scientifically with the international community, while quickly creating a vibrant intellectual environment to help attract top researchers.

Further, connections with Indian industry from the start would also help quantum technologies become commercialised successfully, allowing Indian industry to benefit from the quantum revolution. We must encourage industrial houses and strategic philanthropists to take an interest and reach out to Indian institutions with an existing presence in this emerging field. As two of us can personally attest, the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), home to India's first superconducting quantum computing lab, would be delighted to engage.

R. Vijayaraghavan is Associate Professor of Physics at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research and leads its experimental quantum computing effort; Shivaji Sondhi is Professor of Physics at Princeton University and has briefed the PM-STAC on the challenges of quantum science and technology development; Sandip Trivedi, a Theoretical Physicist, is Distinguished Professor and Director of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research; Umesh Vazirani is Professor of Computer Science and Director, Berkeley Quantum Information and Computation Center and has briefed the PM-STAC on the challenges of quantum science and technology development

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.

Fighting the pandemic

Despite assurances, I have never experienced so much fear and anxiety in my life as I feel now about the COVID-19 pandemic (Page 1, "No community transmission of coronavirus, says Centre", March 22). I am 84, and have seen disasters like the tsunami, floods after tanks have breached, and epidemics such as cholera. But COVID-19 has made them all insignificant. It is unsettling that cases are galloping. With no vaccine in sight in the foreseeable future, people have to be very conscious not to create problems as far as the infection transmission cycle is concerned. There was curfew during the world wars to safeguard ourselves from enemy's attack. Now, a 14-hour lockdown has to be thought of to try and help safeguard ourselves from a pandemic.

D. SETHURAMAN,
Chennai

At 5 p.m. yesterday, the sound of vessels being

sounded and bells ringing rent the air in almost every locality, society, apartment block, house and building. The Prime Minister must be complimented for his efforts in bringing people together in the war against a virus. We also owe much gratitude to those in service of the country.

KIRTI WADHAWAN,
Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh

■ The curfew has without doubt been successful. People kept indoors as an inherent part of social distancing, which is sure to have helped in the fight against COVID-19. The shutdown shows the support for a genuine and valid emergent cause.

B. VEERAKUMAR THAMPI,
Thiruvananthapuram

■ Now that India has proved that it can stay indoors, it is imperative to keep the momentum going rather than bask in the glory of a day's success of the government having made the country listen to it. There should be more intense

measures in the crucial third week if India is to avoid an Italy-like situation. The difference in the ground situation between two major European countries, Italy and Germany, in tackling the virus is a lesson not to be overlooked. India has very few testing centres in proportion to its population size. And the most important point is to take care of the needs of daily wage earners.

G.B. SIVANANDAM,
Coimbatore

■ The Janata curfew has been successful, but the real success comes when people are out of danger. The pressing concern is that the number of cases being tested and found positive could be a tip of the iceberg. It is quite possible that in a country like ours with a huge population and inadequate health-care services, the number of confirmed cases being put out by the agencies could be off count. The situation could turn bad if there are community transmissions. While social distancing can reduce the possibility of the

spread of infection, hygiene measures must be pursued without a break.

N. SADHASIVA REDDY,
Bengaluru

■ It is not for nothing that money is called filthy lucre. In spite of the fact that currency notes change hands frequently, most people do not consider it necessary to wash their hands after touching them. In the process of changing hands, notes may turn out to be a health hazard, all the more so when the coronavirus is in the air. Shouldn't the health advisories also include advice asking people to wash their hands thoroughly every time they touch a bank note?

M. JAMEEL AHMED,
Mysuru

■ It is a fact that the pandemic has wreaked havoc all over the world. In addition to this, many of us have had to contend with a rise in the prices of essential items. Using the excuse of a shortage of essential commodities, there are

instances of prices being raised even though there is no shortage of goods in reality. It has been made worse by all sorts of forwards on social media. One is unable to understand why people are hoarding items. The government must make it clear that there are no shortages and that shopkeepers who are selling goods at a higher price will be prosecuted.

ABDUL MALIK QASMI,
Mumbai

Crime and punishment

It is deplorable that the electronic media went overboard on the day of the hangings of the Nirbhaya convicts. While the collective conscience of the nation has been disturbed by the dastardly act – they did deserve severe punishment – the point to note is this. People have already despatched these criminals a million times as it were, but are also hanging their heads, in shame for not being able to protect the life of a young girl. We also had a criminal justice system that took over

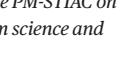
the case and the executions were the last part of the procedure. Certain sections of the media played up minutiae such as the nooses and the hangman's compensation. That we still need capital punishment as a deterrent reflects poorly on our societal development. The criminals could have been awarded the death penalty by lethal injection instead of the barbaric system of hanging.

KRISHNAN SESHDARI,
Point Cook, Melbourne, Australia

Kenny Rogers

The passing of Kenny Rogers at the ripe old age of 81, leaves a void as he was one of the greatest icons of country music the world has ever seen. Who can ever forget his hits such as "Lady", "The Gambler", "Lucille" and "Islands in the Stream". His role in the "The Gambler", which was based on his signature hit number, was memorable too.

N.J. RAVI CHANDER,
Bengaluru



How to handle a pandemic

The Kerala government has been successful in putting the public health sector back on the rails



K. K. SHAILAJA

Every year after the Union Budget, newspapers carry articles critiquing the abysmal allocation for the health sector. As the COVID-19 threat looms, doctors, healthcare professionals and state institutions have been regularly issuing guidelines on the precautions to be taken. However, the ubiquitous fault lines of India's public healthcare infrastructure are being laid bare as we combat our latest adversary. In his book, *Everybody Loves a Good Drought*, veteran journalist P. Sainath poignantly details what it looks like to be a poor family that relies on government hospitals. He remarks how the 1994 plague in India got unprecedented media attention because unlike several other diseases, it couldn't be restricted to rural areas and urban slums. The disease-causing bacteria had the audacity to enter elite spaces; in Sainath's words, "Worse still, they (the bacteria) can board aircraft and fly club class to New York. Too many of the beautiful people felt threatened." COVID-19, although a lot less dangerous than the plague, was brought to India by infected passengers flying from affected nations. This argument is not to suggest that either of these diseases are to be taken lightly, but rather to shed light on how India responds differently to health requirements based on the social and class locations of those affected.

The advent of COVID-19 has led to a peculiar scenario wherein those who can otherwise afford private healthcare are now relying on government facilities to be quarantined and tested. It took a pandemic like COVID-19 for some to realise what most of India has been dealing with for decades. A case in point is the Agra woman who was falsely reported to have fled quarantine. In reality, she reportedly resisted the option of being isolated at a public health facility because "the sight of the unhygienic toilets made her retch". This is an apt representation of the consequences of meagre health spending and lack of motivation from state institutions to strengthen public



A health official applies hand sanitiser on a policewoman's hand at the Ernakulam Junction Railway station. ■ THULASIKAKKAT

healthcare infrastructure. With a system that cannot even ensure fully functional toilets in public health centres, the COVID-19 challenge towers over our health administration.

Preparing for an outbreak

Given India's record on public health, Kerala has been receiving praise for the way it is tackling the emergency. Be it the presence of health infrastructure prerequisites or its experience in handling the Nipah virus, the Kerala government's preparedness for COVID-19 was relatively stronger than other States. Discussions on how to address it started as early as mid-January. When various countries started confirming cases, Kerala was the first State to draft measures for its containment. The measures became more stringent when the State reported its first case on January 30. Since then, the government has become more vigilant and taken proactive measures to trace people who have had primary and secondary contact with those who tested positive.

The situation became grave after a family that flew down from Italy tested positive for the virus. After vigorous tracing, we found that 719 people had come in contact with the first case. The government then tightened the norms for people returning from other countries. It started taking strict action against all those who were not revealing their travel history. All those who were in primary and secondary contact were tested and kept in isolation or home quarantined. The next step was to cancel big religious ceremonies. The government then gave a list of people

under observation. More recently, the government started checking people at different entry points to the State. Healthcare workers are stationed at all check posts on roads to check travellers for the virus before they enter the city. A similar exercise is conducted for those taking trains.

If we are to learn from China and South Korea, the most efficient way to tackle the situation is to aggressively trace and test potential cases of COVID-19. Experts have said that the only reason South Korea was able to handle the crisis without imposing any lockdown was because of rampant testing. However, in order to follow these best practices, even Kerala, with superior mechanisms for healthcare, faces the challenge of limited resources and labs for testing. In such a situation, it is important to judiciously use available facilities and localise efforts. All of this can be achieved only through clear political will, strong public healthcare services and commitment on the part of people. It is important for citizens to closely follow measures prescribed by the government. An important step towards this is to ensure that people don't go for testing without solid grounds. If they do, the public health facilities will be overwhelmed.

To ensure that people have access to the dos and don'ts for self-isolation, monitoring symptoms and reporting to health facilities at the right time, the Kerala government has launched a mobile application called GoK Direct. The Disha helpline has also been used for awareness generation. The 'Break the Chain' campaign advocates ideas of basic cleanliness and hygiene. This attempt to bring

about a behavioural change is gaining traction across the State and is also being picked up by the national media. Such precautionary measures and social distancing by citizens will buy some time and lighten the burden on government functionaries. This buffer period should be leveraged by the State government to strengthen testing facilities so that we reach a point where a maximum number of symptomatic individuals can be tested. In this context, based on the State government's request, the Indian Council of Medical Research has sanctioned 10 testing centres in Kerala. The government is also planning to facilitate the setting up of more testing centres with the help of the private sector for meeting the required capacity.

Lessons from and for Kerala

That Kerala came up with a set of guidelines before the COVID-19 outbreak was possible because of its history of unwavering governmental support for public health. The administration has been serving as a catalyst for the development of health services. This is reflected in the expansion of health infrastructure – for example, setting up the National Institute of Virology's unit in Alappuzha soon after the Nipah incident.

The epidemiological status of the State is currently characterised by the burden of both non-communicable diseases and increased incidence of communicable diseases in recent times. The monitoring system created by the government in public health infrastructure has been highly successful. It has helped healthcare officials to detect and combat diseases quickly. The healthcare system in Kerala is decentralised to achieve the potential gains of improvement in service delivery and access. Consequently, in the context of COVID-19, the State has been successful in tracking individual cases and implementing measures like the 'Break the Chain' campaign successfully.

Efforts are being made to provide infrastructure and quality services through the 'Aardram Mission', which focuses on developing primary health centres into family health centres. The government has been successful in putting the public health sector back on the rails.

K.K. Shailaja is Minister for Health and Social Justice, Government of Kerala

FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

The language of grief

The sports pages are a metaphor for these times



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

COVID-19 has affected every sphere. At the Readers' Editor Office, we had to stop readers from attending our editorial meetings and also cancel the Open House that we had planned to celebrate 50 years of this newspaper in Bengaluru. Apart from a perceptible decline in letters and calls, there is also pronounced anxiety everywhere. People are fervently hoping that this pandemic will end soon. This hour of crisis may also be used as an hour of reflection.

Physicist Freeman Dyson, who died early this year, was fond of reminding everyone about two different kinds of scientists: birds and frogs. Some scientists are birds who fly high to survey the broad vistas and establish unexpected links between different bits of the landscape. Others are frogs who prefer to be close to the ground, focussing on minute details. These two are not opposing trajectories; they are complementary paths.

If applied to journalism, Dyson's classification may put most Editors in the bird category, but the Readers' Editor in the frog category. An internal news ombudsman views and evaluates the world mainly through the pages of the newspaper. COVID-19 is hurting us on all fronts. From crippling our economy to immobilising us, the ramifications of the pandemic are beyond our comprehension. It may take a month or two to quantify the loss. In this hour of unknown hardship, the sports pages seem to be a metaphor for our times.

No sports events

There is a moratorium on sporting events. Some observers say that the 2020 Olympics to be held in Tokyo in July may be postponed. Sports writers usually compete with each other to grab the precious space for their reportage. When politics polarises people, it is sports that helps to break the silos, despite attempts by hyper-nationalists to inject jingoism in sports too.

I asked the Sports Editor, K.C. Vijaya Kumar, about how his team is managing when there is no sporting event to report. "Sports pages ideally thrive on kinetic energy through live reportage of matches supplemented with action-photographs. The other

added elements are a sprinkling of analysis, a few features, and the odd pinch of nostalgia as and when a significant event's anniversary comes to the fore. But largely the sports pages are of the here and now, of who won a match, of who scored the winning goal or the championship-winning forehand or the game-changing blistering hundred. But when sport ceases as it has in these grave times of the coronavirus pandemic, the sports pages are plunged into a vacuum," he said.

With sports having hit the pause button globally, there is a dearth of live-action content. Understandably the sports pages had to be scaled down from three to two and the Sudoku grid was moved from the world page to the sports pages. "Even the feature-driven Weekend Sport page that appears on Saturdays, with its look-ahead perspective, well-curated by Senior Deputy Editor S. Ram Mahesh and embellished by Deputy National Design Editor S. Kannan, had to be suspended for now. Besides the periscope-gaze, reporters are also looking back with awe as anniversaries are culled out and written about, while the sports

desk, headed by R. Narayanan, provides support through archival images and graphics," said Mr. Vijaya Kumar.

Creating hope where there is despair

From George Orwell's pithy article, "The sporting spirit" to Jorge Luis Borges biting one-liner – "Soccer is popular because stupidity is popular" – we have had criticisms of sport over the last century. What these thinkers did not bargain for was the possibility of suspension of sporting activity itself. In this bleak time, it is important to recall Nelson Mandela's observation about sports. He said: "Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire, it has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. Sport can create hope, where once there was only despair."

Sports journalism informs us that bleak realities do not mean despair alone. They suggest possibilities and potentials, alternatives and optimism. The absence of sporting events has forced the sports team to remember and reflect on multiple aspects of sport – from aesthetics to skills – that make the world of games an integral part of our life. In a sense, it is a language of grief that generates space for empathy, social action and shared values, which in turn create space for hope and transformation.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

Not an unfettered right

Sovereignty is subject to constraints

MANURAJ SHUNMUGASUNDARAM & MUTHUPANDI GANESAN

mitted, would serve as a precedent for a number of future applications. It would also provide an opportunity for the Supreme Court to lay down the law on whether such applications interfere with national sovereignty.

Sovereignty as responsibility

International Court of Justice judge James Crawford defines sovereignty as, among other things, the "capacity to exercise, to the exclusion of other states, state functions on or related to that territory, and includes the capacity to make binding commitments under international law" and states that "such sovereignty is exercisable by the governmental institutions established within the state". The Preamble to the Constitution lays out the position, wherein the people of India have resolved to constitute Indian Republic into a sovereign and not just any one authority. As such, the courts (judiciary), the government (executive) and elected legislatures (legislature) are equally sovereign authorities. No one can claim exclusivity over sovereignty. Furthermore, Article 51 (c) of the Constitution directs the state to "foster respect for international law".

According to the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, "national political authorities are responsible to the citizens internally and to the international community through the UN". Therefore, it is true to say that an authority's right to sovereignty is not unfettered. It is subject to constraints including the responsibility to protect its citizenry and the larger international community. Furthermore, Article 14 extends the right to equality to all persons, which is wider than the definition of citizens. Even illegal immigrants shall, consequently, be treated by the government in a manner that ensures equal protection of Indian laws. It is hoped that the Supreme Court will conclude that the intervention is necessary as the Court would benefit from the High Commissioner's expertise in public international law principles.

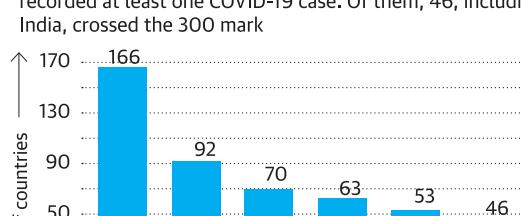
In response, the External Affairs Ministry argued that "no foreign party has any locus standi on issues pertaining to India's sovereignty". The High Commissioner has filed similar *amicus curiae* briefs on issues of public importance before a range of international and national judicial fora. However, this intervention, if per-



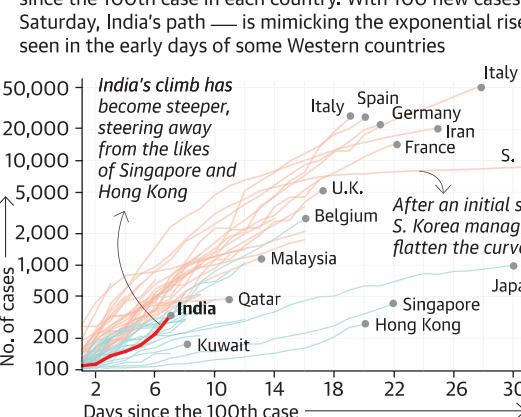
DATA POINT

Steep climb

1. RAPID PROGRESS | As of March 21, 166 nations recorded at least one COVID-19 case. Of them, 46, including India, crossed the 300 mark



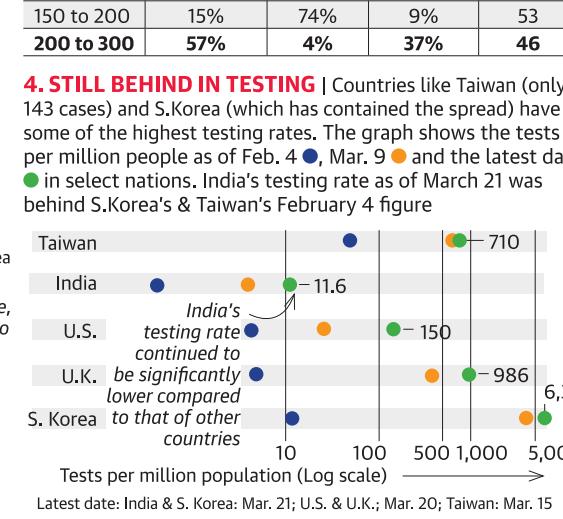
3. WORRYING RISE | The graph depicts the no. of cases since the 100th case in each country. With 100 new cases on Saturday, India's path — is mimicking the exponential rise seen in the early days of some Western countries



2. PROGRESS COMPARISON | The table lists the % of countries which took more days or fewer days than India to cross a certain number of cases. For instance, 57% of countries took more days than India to jump from 200 to >300 cases, while only 4% took fewer days. The more days a country takes to reach a mark, the better

Case progress	% took more days	% took less days	% took same days	Total nations
From 0 to 50 cases	11%	88%	0%	92
50 to 100	13%	73%	13%	70
100 to 150	10%	78%	11%	63
150 to 200	15%	74%	9%	53
200 to 300	57%	4%	37%	46

4. STILL BEHIND IN TESTING | Countries like Taiwan (only 143 cases) and S.Korea (which has contained the spread) have some of the highest testing rates. The graph shows the tests per million people as of Feb. 4, Mar. 9 and the latest date



FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 23, 1970

Time on nobody's side

Time works against everyone in West Asia and if no settlement is found this year a fourth round of warfare will almost inevitably explode. Both Egypt, the main Arab contestant, and Israel are being pushed to this conclusion for strikingly different reasons. Nasser sees escalation as his last chance to retain control, apparently reckoning that although the military balance is adverse, he might force Russia to step in. Otherwise, there is a chance his own officer corps may drop him. The Army does not seem to fancy escalation but Nasser has warned it may be necessary. Meanwhile Israel, although possessing a fighting advantage based on quality, suffers slowly grinding attrition in weapons that can only be replaced by the United States and there is awareness that world sympathy has declined and the official American mood may possibly be less forthcoming. Therefore Israel might also wish to escalate while its armed might remains ahead. It could seize an advantage by winning another round and then offering generous terms for peace, an opportunity muffed after the 1967 military triumph.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 23, 1920.

Budget session: Savarkar brothers.

At the Imperial Council's Budget Session, Mr. Khaparde asked: a) Is it a fact that Mr. Savarkar and his brother have not been given the benefit of the Royal amnesty? b) Is it not a fact that Mr. Savarkar and his brother had once in 1915 and another time in 1918 submitted petitions to the Government? c) If answers to a) and b) be in the affirmative will the Government be pleased to state the circumstances by reason of which they have not been released according to the terms of the amnesty?

The answer to a) is in the affirmative b) two petitions were received from Vinayak Damodar Savarkar through the Superintendent, Port Blair. In the former, he offered his service to the Government during the war in any capacity and prayed that a general amnesty be granted to all political prisoners. The second petition was confined to the latter proposal. No petitions on either of those subjects have been received from Ganesh Damodar Savarkar c) Because their release was not considered to be compatible with public safety. Their cases are however being re-examined.

FROM PAGE ONE

80 districts in lockdown to contain virus spread

Apart from essential services like hospitals, fire services, prisons, banks and newspapers, States were told to ensure that the production and provisioning of medical supplies continued uninterrupted, he said.

The Health Ministry also said States would earmark hospitals to exclusively treat coronavirus patients and the government was expanding the network of labs for testing samples from suspected cases.

According to the Union Health Ministry, Maharashtra continues with the highest number of confirmed coronavirus cases at 67, followed by Kerala with 52 and Delhi, 29.

Uttar Pradesh had 27 cases, Karnataka has 26, Rajasthan 24, Telangana 22 and

Haryana 21.

The Delhi Government closed its borders to Uttar Pradesh and Haryana and announced it would run a skeletal bus service.

However its announcement that all domestic flights had been suspended from Monday morning was contested by the Director-General of Civil Aviation.

"Domestic flights to and from IGIA Delhi shall continue to operate and the airport shall remain functional," DGCA said.

In his letter, Mr. Gauba also suggested that State governments could request industries / establishments to allow their staff to work from home and "provide remuneration to them during this period".

(With PTI inputs)

17 policemen killed in Chhattisgarh encounter

At least 14 sophisticated weapons of the police were taken away by the Maoists.

Mr. Awasthi said the area where the attack took place is dominated by the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army Battalion number 1, among the most armed and trained units of the Maoists in southern Chhattisgarh. The group, led by Hidma, was responsible for the April 2017 attack that killed 25 CRPF personnel.

Mr. Awasthi said a team of around 500 policemen comprising the District Reserve Guard and the Special Task Force had gone to Elmangunda in the deep forests of Sukma on Friday on receipt of information that a large group of Maoists had assembled there. Police received information that the top Maoist leaders had congregated to plan attacks at two police camps.

Mr. Awasthi said when the police teams could not find anything at the particular location, they decided to return.

"One police party was sent from Chintagufa camp and the other half from Burkapal. While returning, the two teams dispersed towards their respective locations. While one of the teams was around six kms

away from their camp, the Maoists opened fire. DRG and STF fought fierce battle with Maoists for five hours," Mr. Awasthi said.

He said while chasing them, the police were forced into an open area while the Maoists had taken position on surrounding heights and an exchange of fire ensued.

"Many Maoists had been killed, too, but no bodies could be recovered as they drag the bodies along. Many jawans were injured and they tried to crawl to safety but they died due to loss of blood," Mr. Awasthi said.

The DGP said before the main encounter started, there were two more instances of exchange of fire with the Maoists with the other team. "It could have been diversionary act to stop the other police personnel from reaching main encounter site," he said. The two police teams were three to four kms apart.

He said the operation ended at 5.30 p.m. and while the teams were retreating they carried out a headcount. "We found that 17 people were missing... one team remained in the jungle to trace them. On Sunday morning, we managed to retrieve the bodies," Mr. Awasthi said.

ATF price cut, petrol, diesel unchanged

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi

Jet fuel prices were slashed by 12% after oil firms reverted to fortnightly revisions to pass on the benefit of falling crude oil prices, but rates of petrol and diesel remained unchanged for the seventh straight day to adjust the increase in excise duty.

State-owned oil firms cut aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price by ₹6,687.5 a kilolitre (kl) or 11.76% to ₹50,171.26 per kl, the lowest since September 2017, according to a price notification put out by oil marketing companies.

This is the third straight reduction in jet fuel rates since February which make up for as much as 40% of an airline's running cost.

In all, rates have fallen by ₹14,152.5 per kl or 22%.

Aviation Turbine Fuel prices, which already were lower than petrol and diesel, are now even lower than the rates of non-subsidised kerosene which comes at ₹58,818.07 a kl, according to price notification of oil firms.

Petrol price remained unchanged at ₹69.59 a litre in Delhi and diesel at ₹62.29 for the seventh day in a row, as oil firms adjusted the ₹3 per litre hike in excise duty on the two fuels effected by the government on March 13.

CMYK

STAFF REPORTER

New Delhi

Cong. seeks incentives for health staff

Government should offer protection kits on priority, says Randeep Surjewala

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday thanked the citizens for showing gratitude to the country's health workers and demanded that the Centre should offer financial incentives to all doctors, nurses and supporting staff for dealing with the pandemic on war footing.

In a series of tweets, Congress communication chief Randeep Surjewala said the government should offer protection kits on priority basis, and increase testing facilities.

"For the protection of all

health workers, give them Personal Protection Equipment - N95 Masks, Gloves, Face Shields, Goggles, Hand Covers, Rubber Boots, Dis-

posable Gowns so that they can avoid infection themselves," Mr. Surjewala said.

"We are proud of our doctors, nurses and supporting staff and they should be given special financial benefits in this difficult time who are risking their lives while fighting Corona Virus. The government should announce it immediately," he tweeted.

Similarly, the Congress leader argued that, till now, only one isolation bed was available for every 84,000 Indians, which is insufficient.

"Increase testing Corona

virus by several times be-

cause in a country of 130 crore citizens, samples of 16,109 people till date have been investigated," he tweeted.

The Congress, while advocating financial help for businesses in terms of tax breaks, has asked for strict action against the black-marketing of hand sanitisers, face masks and liquid soaps across the country.

Action should be taken against those who increase the daily rate of vegetables, pulses, potatoes, onions among others during the time of disaster," Mr. Surjewala said.

Demand for cash transfers increases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

With multiple cities and States announcing lockdown on Sunday in the wake of COVID-19, demand for an economic relief package for the vulnerable sectors is growing from different quarters.

The head of the All India Unorganised Workers' Congress, Arbind Singh, has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking to create a corpus of ₹1 lakh crore for the informal sector and offer direct cash transfers to the poor.

Rations sought

In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Arbind Singh, who also heads the National Association of Street Vendors of India, urged the government to provide three months' rations to 44 crore workers who work as domestic help, street vendors, brick making workers, Ola and Uber drivers, food delivery boys and those working with the hospitality industry.

The Congress's wing for the informal sector workers also suggested ₹10,000 cash transfer for a month.

A study conducted by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has also mooted direct cash transfer of ₹10,000 to the rural and urban poor to help increase consumer demand.

Pursue no-trust motion, Governor tells Speaker

BJP demands pro-temp Speaker

SIDHARTH YADAV

BHOPAL

The day the BJP leaders had met him, Madhya Pradesh Governor Lalji Tandon directed Speaker N.P. Prajapati to convene the session so that legislators could act on the no-confidence motion pending against him.

In another instance of a stern exchange of letters between Mr. Tandon on one hand and Mr. Prajapati and caretaker Chief Minister Kamal Nath on the other, the Governor wrote:

"As the action on no-confidence motion against you is the job of the legislature, therefore after convening the session necessary action should be taken on this proposal on priority. Until then the Principal Secretary, Vidhan Sabha, will perform daily work on your direction."

Mr. Tandon told the Speaker he was expected to

work only after studying the legality of every subject "based on the Constitution, the Vidhan Sabha rules and morality," until his fate was decided by the Assembly.

On Saturday, a BJP delegation led by former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan met the Governor and later told reporters that MLA Sharad Kol was forced to resign by the Congress.

In a letter submitted to the Governor on Saturday, the BJP leaders had contended that the Speaker had been acting in a politically motivated manner. A day before, when Mr. Nath resigned as the Chief Minister, they had implored the Governor to use the powers vested in him under the Constitution to appoint a pro-temp Speaker instead to "abide by the constitutional values and democratic traditions".



11 years old Mast Balaji needs your support in bringing a lasting change and a new life. He suffers from Hodgkin's Lymphoma and has undergone Autologous Bone Marrow Transplantation at V.S. Hospital, Chennai. He urgently needs Rs. 6,00,00/- for his treatment. Donations sent by ChD.D. favouring V.S. Medical Trust will be acknowledged. The donations sent through ChD.D.NEFT Transfer (Symbiont Bank, Nungambakkam Branch, A/c No. 60182010063310, IFSC No. SYNB0006018) favouring WOMEN'S WELFARE SYNDICATE is exempted under 80G IT (please do not mention patient name on the cheque).

All correspondence is done through WWS, Regd. Public Charitable Trust, Flat No.GF 1, Cordel Apartments, O.No.13, N.No.29, Pycrofts Lane, Chennai - 600006, Ph: 044-42137401 / 28235324, E Mail ID: womenwelfaresyndicate@gmail.com Website: www.womenwelfaresyndicate.org

WWS

Seizure of Afghan meth on high seas triggers concern

It indicates a trend of contraband being smuggled out through a well-established heroin trafficking route, says official

DEVESH K. PANDEY

NEW DELHI

Tipped off by its national drug-enforcement counterparts, the Sri Lankan Navy set out for the high seas in the last week of February and intercepted two trawlers on international waters, more than 1,000 km off the country's coast. While the operation resulted in the country's biggest drug haul at sea, with the seizure of 400 kg of heroin, what was far more worrying for the region's drug fighters was that the seized contraband included 100 kg of crystal methamphetamine.

The drug haul was valued at \$33.5 million, and 16 crewmen, including eight Pakistani nationals, were detained. Initial investigations suggested that the boats came from the Makran coast in Pakistan, with the drugs presumed to have originated in Afghanistan.

Several seizures of Af-

ghan-origin heroin in the high seas of the region have been made in the recent past.

"Heroin seizures are common," said a senior Indian Customs official, speaking on condition of anonymity. "However, it is the seizure of 100 kg of methamphetamine that has alarmed the drug enforcement agencies in India and other countries. It is the indication of an emerging trend of meth produced in Afghanistan being smuggled out through an already well-established route for heroin trafficking to different parts of the world," the official added.

Also known as meth, crystal, glass, ice, speed and shards, methamphetamine is a psychostimulant "party" drug. It is much cheaper and highly addictive compared with cocaine. Its effect may last for over 12 hours. In contrast, heroin is a depressant.



Huge haul: Sri Lankan police personnel examining drugs seized by the Navy on March 5. • AFP

mand province on January 31 that year.

Noting that the history of the Golden Triangle (the opium-producing area where the borders of Myanmar, Thailand and Laos meet) demonstrated that meth production could have significant impacts on the opium economy, rapidly transforming a plant-based narcotics challenge into a

challenge of tracking large synthetic laboratories, the UNODC said many countries had reacted too late to the development of meth markets.

Things changed dramatically after air raids by the United States Forces Afghanistan (USFOR-A) and the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces on May 6, 2019, when they claimed to have targeted 68 drug laboratories in south-western Afghanistan. Subsequent ground studies unearthed meth labs.

"The huge seizure in Sri Lanka has perhaps cleared the air," the Customs official observed. "This shift is suspected to have been triggered by the 2018 drought in Afghanistan, in which large tracts of opium [used in heroin production] crops were destroyed. The UNODC report (January 29, 2019) stated that opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan peaked in 2017, after which it declined," the official added,

explaining the move to meth labs.

ephedrine for making meth was very recent, in 2018. Proof of the shrub being harvested and transported in huge quantities started emerging. In the third quarter of 2019, more than 900 kg of meth was seized in Afghanistan. However, still there was no clarity on where all the meth being produced in the country was going.

"The huge seizure in Sri Lanka has perhaps cleared the air," the Customs official observed. "This shift is suspected to have been triggered by the 2018 drought in Afghanistan, in which large tracts of opium [used in heroin production] crops were destroyed. The UNODC report (January 29, 2019) stated that opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan peaked in 2017, after which it declined," the official added,

Trinamool, NCP, Sena to skip Parliament

Keeping Houses open 'was not the example to set'

NISTULA HEBBAR

SANDEEP PHUKAN

NEW DELHI

The Trinamool Congress, the Nationalist Congress Party and the Shiv Sena on Sunday said their MPs will not attend Parliament when it reconvenes on Monday.

Sources said the House will convene on Monday, and the priority would be to clear the Finance Bill. "With Delhi going into lockdown, there is every chance that Parliament would be adjourned after that," said a source.

Letter to Speaker

While Trinamool wrote a strongly worded letter to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu, informing them of the party's decision, NCP chief Sharad Pawar tweeted that he had asked MPs to help their constituents.

Trinamool's letter has been signed by the party's



COVID-19

leaders in both Houses – Sudeep Bandopadhyaya and Derek O'Brien. "The Prime Minister himself has spoken about the urgent need for social distancing and the need not to assemble in large groups and those above the age of 65 should take abundant care," said the letter, adding that in the face of all this, keeping Parliament open "was not the example to set".

Instead, the letter said, MPs should be sent back to their constituencies to co-operate

dinate efforts for relief work. "The All India Trinamool Congress has advised all of its parliamentarians to go back to their respective constituencies," the letter said.

Rajya Sabha MPs Sukhendu Shekhar Roy and Mr. O'Brien are in self-isolation at the moment.

The letter also suggested that both Houses be adjourned after the passage of the Finance Bill, 2020, preferably on Monday.

Finance Bill delayed

Unlike Trinamool and NCP, Congress members of the Lok Sabha will be attending the House on Monday.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Opposition leader in the House Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury blamed the government for delaying the Finance Bill, allowing the imposition of taxes. "The government was non-serious all this while and was taking things lightly," Mr. Chowdhury said.

Demand for cash transfers increases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

With multiple cities and States announcing lockdown on Sunday in the wake of COVID-19, demand for an economic relief package for the vulnerable sectors is growing from different quarters.

The head of the All India Unorganised Workers' Congress, Arbind Singh, has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking to create a corpus of ₹1 lakh crore for

Isolation is India's best weapon: ICMR

Lockdown is the most important step in breaking virus transmission, says its Director-General

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN

NEW DELHI

Isolation, and not indiscriminate testing, is the only way India can limit the spread of COVID-19, Balram Bhargava, Director-General, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said on Sunday.

A lockdown is the most important step in breaking transmission of the infection, he said, adding that the State governments have now been directed to earmark hospitals specifically to accommodate COVID-19 patients.

COVID-19

India on Sunday reported a total of 376 cases and seven deaths, show Union Health Ministry data, with 14,90,303 persons screened at airports so far. The ICMR noted that it had tested over 16,109 individuals, and over 7,000 were currently under surveillance.

Professor Bhargava told presspersons that testing had been scaled up with 111 labs offering COVID-19 tests. Also, four of 60 online applications received from the



Lockdown advantage: With people staying home during the 'Janata Curfew' on Sunday, Fire and Emergency Service personnel sprayed disinfectants in Ahmedabad. ■ VIJAY SONEJI

private sector to test for the virus had been approved.

"There has been no delay in allowing private labs to test. The idea was to put in place enough safety nets to prevent any accidents to medical personnel handling this highly infectious virus," he said.

Highlighting testing facilities available and the spread of the virus, Professor Bhar-

gava said that very few drug trials across the world were working currently.

"India in the past one week has tested 5,000 samples and has the capacity to scale up to 50,000-70,000 tests a week. Compared to this, France tested 10,000 a week, the U.K. 16,000 a week and the U.S. 26,000 a week. The virus test can be positive between two and 14

days and 80% people experience only mild symptoms and 55% need hospitalisation. But we are dealing with a highly infectious and unknown virus, so isolation is our biggest weapon," he said.

R. Gangakhedkar, scientist at ICMR, said India was in no way working against World Health Organization (WHO) norms, and the focus

now was on breaking transmission. "We are right now not in a position to say that community transmission is happening; maybe, by Tuesday, we will have a clearer picture," he said.

Ventilators ordered

Responding to the issue of national hospital infrastructure, Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary, Union Health Ministry, did not give specific numbers of beds and ventilators available. He said that India had placed orders for 1,200 ventilators. "We have enough stock of personal protection equipment and have asked the States to use all their resources to ensure that the poor and disadvantaged groups don't suffer. Our approach is preventive while being prepared," he said.

Meanwhile, Thyrocare, Mumbai, Suburban Diagnostics, Mumbai, Metropolis Healthcare, Mumbai, Sir H.N. Reliance Foundation Hospital and Research Centre, Mumbai are the first four private labs to get clearance to test for the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19.

Car, bike companies apply the brakes on production

They say safety and well-being of employees is priority

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA

NEW DELHI

Amid national efforts to curtail the spread of COVID-19, nearly all automakers in the country, including market leaders Maruti Suzuki and Hero MotoCorp, have announced a temporary shutdown of their manufacturing plants.

"With the safety and well-being of employees as top priority in view of the escalating COVID-19 situation, Hero MotoCorp has decided to halt operations at all its global manufacturing facilities – including in India, Colombia and Bangladesh – and the Global Parts Centre (GPC) at Neemrana with immediate effect until March 31, 2020," the country's largest two-wheeler manufacturer said in a statement.

It added that employees at all the other functions and locations, including the Centre of Innovation and Technology (CIT) in Jaipur, will continue to work from home, except for those whose physical presence is necessary to run the day-to-

day essential services of the company.

Likewise, Maruti Suzuki said it would shut down production and office operations at its facilities in Gurugram and Manesar, Haryana, till further notice. The R&D Centre at Rohtak will also remain closed.

Mahindra and Mahindra too has decided to suspend manufacturing operations at its Nagpur plant with immediate effect, and in Chakan (Pune) and Kandivali (Mumbai), from Monday night. "Employee well-being and

safety are matters of utmost priority," the company said.

Fiat Chrysler Automobiles and Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India (HMSI) also announced a temporary shutdown of operations. HMSI, has four manufacturing plants in the country.

Honda Cars India too informed its associates and suppliers that production operations at both its manufacturing plants in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh and Tawakal, Rajasthan will be temporarily suspended from March 23 till March 31.

Mahindra offers to convert resorts into care facilities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Industrialist Anand Mahindra, chairman of Mahindra Group, has offered to convert Mahindra Holiday resorts as temporary care facilities and plans to make ventilators at Mahindra

reports, there was a trend of circulation of misinformation/false news and sharing anonymous data related to coronavirus in social media platforms creating panic among the public.

The advisory asked social media companies to initiate an "awareness campaign on their platforms for the users not to upload or circulate false news or misinformation concerning coronavirus which are likely to create panic among the public and disturb the public order and social tranquillity."

"Intermediaries are urged to... take immediate action to disable or remove such [false news] content hosted on their platforms on a priority basis," MeitY cyberlaws and e-security group coordinator Rakesh Maheshwari said in the advisory note issued to all social media companies.

It said that as per media

Remove false social media posts: Centre

Ministry issues advisory to companies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Taking cognisance of fake news reports on the Internet, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has asked all social media companies to remove false reports spreading misinformation about the novel coronavirus from their platform immediately.

The Ministry issued an advisory on March 20 asking social media companies to inform users about not posting false news that can create panic and disturb social tranquillity.

"Intermediaries are urged to... take immediate action to disable or remove such [false news] content hosted on their platforms on a priority basis," MeitY cyberlaws and e-security group coordinator Rakesh Maheshwari said in the advisory note issued to all social media companies.

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Delhi police ban gatherings, protests

National capital has reported 27 cases

STAFF REPORTER

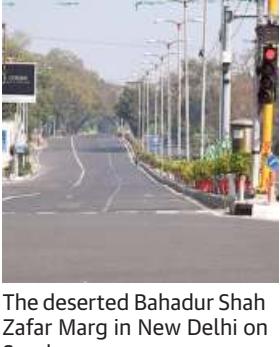
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police on Sunday imposed Section 144 of the CrPC banning protest and assembly of four or more people in one place in the national capital till March 31 in view of the novel coronavirus outbreak.

The order issued by Delhi Police Commissioner S.N. Srivastava came into effect from 9 p.m. on Sunday and would remain in force till March 31.

The order copy issued by Mr. Srivastava reads that "it has become necessary to take all required precautionary steps to mitigate the possible detrimental effects of the spread of COVID-19 for public health, public safety and public order. Therefore, in exercise of the power conferred upon me Section 144 of CrPC has been imposed all over the city."

The order copy reads that assembly of any kind for demonstration, procession,



The deserted Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg in New Delhi on Sunday. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

protest etc. is prohibited. Any gathering – social, cultural, political, religious, academic, sports, seminar and conference – is prohibited.

Weekly markets (except vegetables, fruits and essential commodities), concerts, exhibitions, etc have been banned. So are guided group tours conducted by various private tour operators.

Delhi has reported 27 cases so far, according to the Union Health Ministry.

Section 144 in Maharashtra cities

Only 5% of government employees will work from offices: Uddhav Thackeray

ALOK DESHPANDE

MUMBAI

To ensure that there is no overcrowding, Section 144 will be imposed in all cities of Maharashtra from Monday to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, said Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray in his address to the State. He said the number of government employees working in offices would be cut down to a mere 5% from the existing 25%.

With the announcement, the State states at a virtual lockdown in urban parts till March 31. Maharashtra has seen the highest number of COVID-19 patients in India with the State Health Minister putting the number at 74 on Sunday morning.

Pat for people

"We have entered the critical stage where the patients suffering from the virus not only add but may multiply as per the trends worldwide. It is of utmost importance that we pass this stage successfully and safely

ople of Maharashtra on the huge success of the 'Janata Curfew', I urge them to not go out even after 9 p.m. or tomorrow [Monday]," said Mr. Thackeray.

'Don't stock up on food'
Announcing the additional measures taken by the State, Mr. Thackeray said: "We request the citizens to not gather in a group of more than five and also avoid gatherings at market places or even at shops selling essential commodities."

He said all shops selling essential commodities, milk, food items and medicines would remain open and ap-

pealed to people not to go on stocking food. "The government has enough food for everyone and supply will not be disconnected."

The Chief Minister also announced closure of all modes of public transport – train, local train and metro services as ordered by the Central government. "No inter-State or long-distance buses, both private and State owned, will run till March 31. Decision on whether to extend this stay or not will be taken after reviewing the condition after March 31."

Mr. Thackeray said city bus services would transport only those government em-

Home quarantine

Clarifying that no new international flights will be landing in India from the night of March 22, Mr. Thackeray appealed to all those who have been stamped for home quarantine to follow the instructions given by doctors with utmost care. "Everyone from Donald Trump to a sardarpanch of a village in Maharashtra need to take precautions to avoid the spread of the disease," he said.

"I also appeal to all religious places to close down immediately. They can continue doing daily prayers but these destinations will be closed for the devotees," he said.

It said that as per media

employees who are part of providing essential services or those with utmost urgency and need.

"We had initially decided to keep only 50% employees working in rotation mode,

which was later brought down to 25%. Now, I have decided to cut it down further to 5% only."

Home quarantine

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INTERVIEW | BOBBY JOHN

'Social solidarity and extended lockdown are crucial'

Home quarantine, isolation will reduce spread of infection and pressure on limited facilities, says global healthcare expert

VARGHESE K. GEORGE

Global health advocate and expert Bobby John, who has worked with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, warns that despite its early start on containment measures, India faces an uphill task because of its poor healthcare infrastructure. He calls for social solidarity to care for patients.

Has India moved relatively early with containment measures?

■ When compared with Italy and the U.S., yes, India has moved early on a country-wide measure like Sunday's 14-hour lockdown. Such a step early on in an epidemic with high rates of transmission helps in reducing the speed at which the population gets infected, and reduces the size of the avalanche of very sick people coming to hospitals. That said, we need to understand that India is three times the size of the U.S. in population terms, and we are way below in terms of our health infrastructure in terms of beds, equipment and, most importantly, trained personnel.

What did Sunday's 'Janata Curfew' achieve?

■ In terms of managing any epidemic, we have a few tools to look for – a vaccine, that will take a year or more, a medicine which may be a matter of weeks in the more



For a majority of COVID-19 patients, large field hospitals set up by the armed forces will be the best option

town Tamil Nadu. The tourism season was still under way until early February.

How to prevent a geometrical explosion of cases?

■ Children play the statue game – on someone saying 'statue', the intended person is to stand still. Lockdowns to limit the rate of disease spread is akin to playing statue. It is tough medicine, and people need to be explained the benefits and side effects of it. Everyone should stay where they are.

For many, many Indians, it immediately means loss of

income, with no reductions in expenses. Ensuring an adequate set of mitigation measures to offset daily expenditures in times of zero income are necessary to get the most benefit of the precription of lockdowns.

How do we ensure the optimal use of our health infrastructure?

■ India has fewer hospital beds and qualified personnel for its population than the WHO norms. Most of these beds and clinical capacity are taken up by people already sick. I would think of retaining existing beds and gearing up personnel and facilities in these establishments to take care of those that need very intensive support. For the vast majority of COVID-19 patients, who need to be in a healthcare setting but not requiring advanced interventions, large field hospitals will be the way to go. The Armed Forces Medical Services know how to get them operational quickly. This would be the time to put MBBS and nursing students into clinical work. The numbers of patients needing medical care but not advanced support would be large, and they should not overwhelm existing infrastructure.

In urban India, within condominium complexes, stigmatisation of those that are self-isolating or in quarantine is becoming more visible. Prejudicial behaviour in such gated complexes must be addressed, and police and local health authorities should not become accessories to stigmatisation of sick individuals. This crisis

should bring out our best in neighbourliness. There needs to be more social solidarity, a caring for those that may be vulnerable, especially the elderly in our communities, all the while ensuring physical distance. I have personal difficulty with the terminology of social distancing in these fraught times, and would implore on greater social solidarity while maintaining physical distance.

How quickly can we hope for some breakthrough in treatment?

■ Linus Torvalds, the open source computing guru, is supposed to have said: "Given enough eyeballs, all bugs are shallow." I think a therapeutic breakthrough is on the horizon. Pharmaceutical companies are playing their part, and I think it is only a matter of months to have specific treatments.

In urban India, within condominium complexes, stigmatisation of those that are self-isolating or in quarantine is becoming more visible. Prejudicial behaviour in such gated complexes must be addressed, and police and local health authorities should not become accessories to stigmatisation of sick individuals. This crisis

Sri Lanka evacuates pilgrims

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation intensified steps to secure people from the COVID-19 pandemic. Sri Lanka evacuated a large number of Buddhist pilgrims from India early on Sunday before India stopped all flights.

"All Sri Lankan Buddhist pilgrims, who were stranded in India, have now returned to Sri Lanka," a press release from the High Commission of Sri Lanka said. As many as 1,500 pilgrims from Sri Lanka had been stuck in India but were evacuated over the last few days successfully.

Earlier India had streamlined the movement of goods and people across the border with Nepal. Kathmandu has boosted health screening on the border. "As of now, cross-border movement continues," said an official.

Bangladesh on Sunday became the latest country to support the SAARC COVID-19 Emergency Fund after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina pledged \$1.5 million to the initiative proposed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Earlier Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan and the Maldives came forward

Amid lockdowns, virus cases cross 3 lakh

More than half the cases are now in Europe, with Italy, France and Spain shut to the outside world

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

ROME
From Italy to India to the U.S., governments rolled out tougher measures to halt the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic as global cases surged past 3,00,000 on Sunday and Asia braced for a possible second wave of infections.

Nearly one billion people are already confined to their homes around the world as countries race to contain the ballooning outbreak by imposing unprecedented lockdown measures, shutting shops and businesses and sealing borders. The pandemic has sparked fears of a global recession, prompting governments to unleash gigantic emergency measures to avoid an economic meltdown.

12,000+ deaths

More than 12,000 people have died from the virus worldwide, with the situation increasingly grim in Italy, the new epicentre of the disease.

Countries in Asia now worry infections could once again mount on their shores

COVID-19

as travellers return from badly-hit parts of Europe, a continent under siege by the pandemic, with more than 1,50,000 declared cases.

Italy has now reported more deaths than mainland China and third-placed Iran combined, and it has a death rate of 8.6% among confirmed COVID-19 infections. The death toll in the Mediterranean nation spiked to more than 4,800 – over a third of the global total.

Lockdown measures have done little to stem new infections and deaths and the go-



Hope, prayers and medicines: A group of nurses wearing protective mask and gear prior to their night shift earlier in March at the Cremona hospital, Lombardy, Italy. ■ AFP

Jaffna reports first case

MEERA SRINIVASAN

COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's COVID-19 count on Sunday went up to 81, even as over 500 persons with symptoms remain under observation in government hospitals across the country.

Health authorities in the northern Jaffna district confirmed the first case there of a man who reportedly met a pastor who was visiting from

Switzerland recently.

A curfew, in place since Friday evening until Tuesday morning in many districts, is likely to be extended through next week sources said, as part of the government's efforts to continue combating the pandemic.

Police have so far arrested 790 persons on charges of violating the ongoing curfew, police said in a statement.

Trump writes to Kim

REUTERS

WASHINGTON

North Korea on Saturday welcomed what it said was a letter from U.S. President Donald Trump to North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, saying it was a sign of "the special and very firm personal relations" between the two leaders. A senior administration official confirmed Mr.

Trump sent the letter and said it was "consistent with his efforts to engage global leaders during the ongoing pandemic." The letter said that despite good personal relations between the leaders, "if impartiality and balance are not provided and unilateral and greedy intention is not taken away, the bilateral relations will continue to aggravate."

Can China's model work for the West?

Its top-down COVID-19 approach may be hard to replicate

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BEIJING
The head of the World Health Organization believes China's battle with COVID-19 offers a beacon of hope, but others question whether Beijing's strategy can be followed by other countries – particularly Western democracies.

China has reported only one new local infection over the past four days, a seemingly remarkable turnaround given the chaos that surrounded the initial outbreak in the city of Wuhan. While some experts caution against accepting Beijing's figures at face value, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus insisted China's success "provides hope for the rest of the world".

But China is a particular case – a centrally-controlled, top-down, one-party authoritarian state that allows no dissent and can mobilise vast resources on a single issue. In January, Chi-



Two medical workers in Wuhan on completion of relief work. ■ AFP

sor of medicine at the University of Melbourne. "Two weeks after the closure of Wuhan, which is exactly the incubation period, the number (of infections) started to drop." In cities, it quickly became necessary to wear a mask as apartment blocks, businesses and even parks had been closed entry without one.

During the crisis, China produced up to 1.6 million N95 respirator masks per day, according to the official Xinhua news agency. To boost detection rates, temperature checkpoints were installed outside buildings and shops, or in public places. And in the high-tech country where privacy is limited, many localities require citizens to show a QR code on their phone that rates them as "green", "yellow" or "red".

This assessment – based on tracking of whether they visited a high-risk zone – is now an entrance requirement for many businesses.

"Containment works," said Sharon Lewin, profes-

REUTERS

ZAGREB

A large earthquake struck near the Croatian capital Zagreb on Sunday, leaving a teenager critically injured after an apartment building in the city collapsed, the GFZ German Research Center for Geosciences and a hospital official said.

Another minor was badly injured and the quake caused several fires and power blackouts in parts of the capital, hospital and emergency services said.

Call for calm

Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic called on citizens to remain outside their homes amid potential aftershocks. Mr. Plenkovic and Interior Minister Davor Bozinovic also appealed for people rushing onto the streets to keep social distances from each other as the country struggles to contain the spread of COVID-19. So far, Croatia has reported 206 cases of the vi-



Double shock: A wall that collapsed due to the impact of Sunday's quake in Zagreb, Croatia. ■ AP

rus and one death. "We will do our utmost to make the best estimate of what to do at the moment. There are protocols when it comes to an earthquake. But when it comes to an earthquake combined with the global pandemic, then it is a much more complicated situation," Mr. Bozinovic told local media.

Mr. Plenkovic said the quake, with a magnitude of

5.3 according to GFZ, was the biggest to hit Zagreb in 140 years. It struck 6 km north of the city and was felt across the Western Balkans.

2 admitted to hospital

Zarko Rasic, head of the Zagreb Emergency Medicine Institute, a children's hospital, said a 15-year-old was in a critical condition after being found by an emergency services team under a collapsed

building and another minor had been admitted with head injuries from a falling roof.

The Zagreb Fire Department said fire-fighting and rescue operations were ongoing at several locations. Mr. Plenkovic said the Army had been called in to help clean up debris in Zagreb and urged citizens to "stay outside and keep your distance".

"The situation is contradictory, we invited people to stay at home to avoid spreading of the coronavirus, and now we are advising them to leave their homes," Mr. Plenkovic told a press conference. GFZ downgraded the magnitude of the quake from an initial reading of 6.0.

The U.S. Geological Survey said the quake measured 5.4, while the European Mediterranean Seismological Centre (EMSC) also reported 5.3 magnitude, followed by another 5.1 magnitude earthquake.

ELSEWHERE



U.S. relief to include \$4 trillion of liquidity

WASHINGTON
The COVID-19 economic relief bill being finalised by the U.S. Congress will include a one-time \$3,000 payment for families and allow the Federal Reserve to leverage up to \$4 trillion of liquidity to support the nation's economy, U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said on Sunday. ■ REUTERS

Afghanistan reports first virus-linked death

MAZAR-I-SHARIF
Afghanistan on Sunday reported its first fatality due to COVID-19, after a man died in the north of the impoverished and war-torn country. Officials said the 40-year-old victim died in Balkh province, which borders Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, from complications due to the COVID-19 disease. ■ AFP

Putin sends aid to Italy to fight virus

MOSCOW
The Russian Army on Sunday began flying medical help to Italy to help it battle the virus after receiving an order from President Vladimir Putin. Giant IL-76 planes began taking off from an airbase in the Moscow region after he spoke to Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte on Saturday. ■ REUTERS

French hospital doctor dies of COVID-19

PARIS
France on Sunday reported its first death of a hospital doctor from COVID-19. Health Minister Olivier Veran said that as far as he knew the man – who died on Saturday – was the "first hospital doctor to be hit". The accident and emergency practitioner worked at a hospital in Compiegne, north of Paris, AFP was able to confirm. ■ AFP

How it came apart for Bernie Sanders

He failed to expand his message beyond his traditional base and unify Democrats, say officials

ALEXANDER BURNS

JONATHAN MARTIN

In mid-January, a few weeks before the Iowa caucuses, Senator Bernie Sanders' pollster offered a stark prognosis for the campaign: Mr. Sanders was on track to finish strong in the first three nominating States, but Joe Biden's powerful support from older African Americans could make him a resilient foe in South Carolina and beyond.

The pollster, Ben Tulchin, in a meeting with campaign aides, recommended a new offensive to influence older black voters, according to three people. The data showed two clear vulnerabilities for Mr. Biden: his past support for overhauling Social Security, and his authorship of a punitive criminal justice law in the 1990s.

But the suggestion met with resistance. Some senior advisers argued that it wasn't worth diverting resources from Iowa and New Hampshire. Others pressed Mr. Tulchin on what kind of message, exactly, would move voters to rethink their support for the most loyal ally of the first black President. Crucially, both Mr. Sanders

and his wife, Jane, consistently expressed reservations about going negative on Mr. Biden, preferring to stick with the left-wing policy message they have been pressing for 40 years. The warnings about Mr. Biden proved prescient.

In the view of some Sanders advisers, the candidate's abrupt decline was a

Lessons from Italy for the COVID-19-wracked world

Action to isolate areas, limit movement need to be taken early

JASON HOROWITZ
WASHINGTON
ROMA

Republican U.S. Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky has tested positive for COVID-19, his office said in a statement on Sunday, becoming the first member of the upper chamber of Congress to announce he has COVID-19 as the number of U.S. cases continued to grow. Senator Paul has no symptoms and was tested out of "abundance of caution" given his recent travels, according to the statement, which comes as the Senate prepared to take up an economic relief bill.

Other U.S. Senators self-quarantine as a precaution in recent weeks.

Merkel goes into quarantine

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BERLIN

German Chancellor Angela Merkel will quarantine herself at home after being treated by a doctor who has since tested positive for COVID-19, a government spokesman said on Sunday. "The Chancellor has decided to quarantine herself immediately at home. She will be tested regularly in the coming days... (and) fulfil her official business from home," Steffen Seibert said in a statement.

The doctor had visited Ms. Merkel on Friday to vaccinate her against the pneumococcus bacteria. It could take some time to determine whether Ms. Merkel is infected as "a test would not yet be fully conclusive," Mr. Seibert said.

The tragedy of Italy now stands as a warning to its Eu-

ropean neighbors and the United States, where the virus is coming with equal velocity. If Italy's experience shows anything, it is that measures to isolate affected areas and limit the movement of the broader population need to be taken early, put in place with absolute clarity, then strictly enforced.

Despite now having some of the toughest measures in the world, Italian authorities fumbled many of those steps early in the contagion – when it most mattered as they sought to preserve basic civil liberties as well as the economy. Italy's piecemeal attempts to cut it off – isolating towns first, then regions, then shutting down the country in an intentionally porous lockdown – always lagged behind the virus' lethal trajectory.

"Now we are running after it," said Sandra Zampa, undersecretary at the Ministry of Health, who said Italy did the best it could given the information it had. "We closed gradually, as Europe is doing. France, Spain, Germany, the U.S. are doing the same. Every day you close a

bit, you give up on a bit of normal life. Because the virus does not allow normal life."

In the critical early days of the outbreak, Mr. Conte and other top officials sought to downplay the threat, creating confusion and a false sense of security that allowed the virus to spread.

They blamed Italy's high number of infections on aggressive testing of people without symptoms in the north, which they argued only created hysteria and tarnished the country's image abroad.

Even once the Italian government considered a universal lockdown necessary to defeat the virus, it failed to communicate the threat powerfully enough to persuade Italians to abide by the rules, which seemed ridged with loopholes.

"It is not easy in a liberal democracy," said Walter Ricciardi, a World Health Organization (WHO) board member and a top adviser to the Health Ministry, who argued that the Italian government acted on the scientific evidence made available to it. ■ NY TIMES

Guinea referendum to extend Conde's rule

Residents vote despite COVID-19 scare

REUTERS

CONAKRY

Despite the threat of COVID-19 and an Opposition boycott, a constitutional referendum was held in Guinea on Sunday that opponents of President Alpha Conde fear could allow him to govern for 12 more years.

Opposition supporters heading a call to disrupt the referendum and simultaneous legislative election attacked several polling stations in the capital Conakry, delaying the start of voting in some districts.

The Opposition boycott all but ensures the new basic law will be approved when results are announced in the coming days, despite the risk it could trigger wider unrest that would, along



A man preparing to cast his vote in Conakry, Guinea, on Sunday. ■ AFP



Left stranded again: Bernie Sanders with his wife Jane O'Meara Sanders in Essex Junction, Vermont, on March 3. ■ AFP

result of unforeseeable and highly unlikely events – most of all, the sudden withdrawal of two major candidates, Sen. Amy Klobuchar and former Mayor Pete Buttigieg, who instantly threw their support to Mr. Biden and helped spur a rapid coalescing of moderate support behind his campaign.

Reversal in fortune

But interviews with more than three dozen Sanders aides revealed a more extensive picture of his reversal of political fortune. Though Mr. Sanders climbed to a position of seeming dominance by mid-February, he and his inner circle also made a series of fateful decisions that left him ill-positioned to win over sceptical Democrats.

Mr. Sanders proved unable to expand his base well

beyond the left or to win over African Americans in meaningful numbers. He failed to heed warnings from traditional party leaders, and even from within his campaign, about the need to modulate his message and unify Democrats. He allowed internal arguments to fester within his campaign, an un-gainly operation that fragmented into factions beneath the only two real decision-makers – Mr. Sanders and his wife.

Perhaps the most significant factor, as with every presidential campaign, was the candidate himself, and the stubborn ideological and stylistic consistency that both endeared Mr. Sanders to his supporters and limited his ability to build a coalition larger than his progressive movement. ■ NY TIMES

CM YK

ASK US



ARATI KRISHNAN

Q. My spouse, a homemaker, plans to trade in the stock market with an investment of less than ₹1 lakh. Kindly advise on the tax implications of trading in equities (intraday trade and others).

Brokers informed us they collect various statutory charges apart from their brokerage. I also want to know whether one should pay tax on the profit earned per annum or on the basis of turnover. If so, what is the rate and how should she file I-T returns? Kindly advise.

V. SARATH

A. Stock market trading is a risky activity with a high possibility of capital losses.

We hope your spouse has studied companies and markets carefully and has a risk-management strategy in place before undertaking this.

The profit you make on stock trading can be subject to income tax as long and short-term capital gains or taxed as business income, which can be speculative or non-speculative.

Capital gains taxation usually applies to investors in stocks – those who take delivery of their positions and hold their stocks for one day or more. Whether your profits from trading get treated as long-term or short-term capital gains depends on how long you held the stock before selling them.

If you hold a stock for 12 months or more, the profit you make on selling (over and above your purchase price) get treated as long-term capital gains. All long-term capital gains you make during a year will be taxed at a flat 10% (without indexation benefits) after exempting ₹1 lakh of such gains each year.

If you hold a stock that you bought for between 1 day and 12 months, the profit you make on the sale will be treated as short-term capital gains and taxed at a flat 15%.

Business income

The profit you make through intraday trading in the cash markets (where you don't take delivery but close out the position within a session) is usually treated as business income.

Business income is clubbed with your other sources of income (say salary, interest, rent etc) and taxed at the income tax slab rate applicable to you. When your trading profit is classified as business income, you are allowed to deduct all the costs you incurred towards this activity (securities transaction tax, brokerage, Internet and phone bills) from your total income before calculating the tax on it.

For traders with no other source of income apart from trading, the income tax rate could work out to be quite low in this route, because they would be taxed at the lower slab rates (zero tax on up to ₹2.5 lakh a year and 5% on the excess up to ₹5 lakh). Losses on speculative business income can be carried forward but only set off against profit from similar income in future years.

Apart from income tax, all transactions through the stock exchanges in listed securities in India attract the securities transaction tax (STT) which will be automatically charged by your broker on the trade.

STT is levied at 0.1% of the transaction value on delivery-based purchases or sales of shares and at 0.025% on the sale transaction on intraday trades or non-delivery trades.

Besides the brokerage payable to the broker on your turnover, States levy stamp duty at different rates on the total turnover, exchanges levy transaction charges, SEBI levies a flat turnover fee and you need to pay GST at 18% on the brokerage and transaction costs. The depository you are with may levy charges too.

As the classification of your profit from stock market trades as capital gains or business income can be subject to interpretation, it would be best to use a qualified accountant to file your returns if you engage in stock trading.

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.

Driving tips can light up an investor's path

Starting out before peak hour is one way to beat traffic. In investing, too, being the early bird is key. Now is, probably, the time to pick winners



G.R. BALAJI

Both driving and investing / savings are integral parts of our lives. Both take an individual from point X to point Y either physically or financially.

In driving, you use the road to travel and reach your physical destination. In investing, you use various investment assets such as equity, gold, debt, real estate, fixed deposit or insurance, use the platform (an analogy to the road) to achieve your fi-

nancial goals in a timely and safe manner.

The time taken to reach the destination or financial goal, the speed (read return on investment) and safety (permanent loss of capital) and volatility (read risk involved in investing in various types of assets) and the intermediate experience are all based on four important factors: the number of vehicles on the road; other drivers' behaviour; your own behaviour while driving; and, the

ability of the vehicle.

Vehicles on the road
The number of vehicles on the road is likely to be high during peak hours. In the early hours, driving will be peaceful because of fewer vehicles on road.

Driving in the early hours is like investing in years such as 2008 (post-correction) or 2012 or when no one wanted to invest in equity markets.

There is less competition and you can pick and

choose funds or stocks at a reasonable valuation that could yield desired returns over a long period.

Driving in peak hour traffic is like investing during a crazy market run such as in 2007 or 2017, when there is heavy competition. This could lead to higher valuations and hence give lower returns – due to either prices being stagnant or due to a significant fall in prices, as was the case with the correction in mid- and small-

caps in the 2018-2019 period.

Others' behaviour

Equity investing in the short term is largely affected by the behaviour of market participants. Over the last 1-2 years, price correction in a lot of mid- and small-cap companies have been severe due to valuation de-rating (this stems from a lower expectation of future growth from market participants).

Being cautious during market highs and being aggressive when the market falls is essential to realising better returns.

During a peak market, you need to manage risk by investing in tier-1 (ie, the best companies) and by not investing in tier-2 and -3 companies though the latter's valuation may seem lower and could see higher speculative activity.

During market lows, build a portfolio for future returns by investing in firms that have the balance sheet to fund growth using internal cashflows and which have large reinvestment opportunity; avoid investing in 'cigar butt' ideas where only valuation re-rating is possible and no growth in intrinsic value may be expected.

Your own behaviour
Change your behaviour if you want to change what

happens to you or around you. By wearing a seat belt, coupled with cautious driving, you choose to drive safe and avoid major accidents, or at least protect yourself in a mishap should one take place.

The probability of an accident is low but its impact could be high. In investing, the amount to be invested in various assets such as equities and fixed deposits needs to be considered based on the risk tolerance of the investor and the time factor.

A poor decision could mean a portfolio that belies expectation. For example, investing in equities with a short time horizon could lead to loss and increase the risk level of the portfolio. Similarly, investors need to step up purchase of equity assets at lower multiples (valuations) to improve returns.

A fall in the markets can be seen either as a risk or as an opportunity. A temporary fall in the market is considered risky by investors who panic and exit the market; the same temporary fall is seen as a call to action by those who wish to deploy capital for the long term.

Any net saver should welcome a fall in markets as the net incremental money is deployed at lower levels and not at higher levels. A market fall gives investors enough time and

opportunity to research on companies or funds and invest at attractive valuations. (ie, good stocks bought post a crisis such as in 2008, 2013 and early 2016 have, in general, yielded better returns).

Being defensive is the equivalent of driving too slow in a highway where you need to be in top gear instead of in third gear.

Not taking risk by accepting short-term volatility in the portfolio could lead to long-term risk of not reaching the desired corpus target.

Ability of the vehicle

Some vehicles are designed for high speeds and some, for reasonable speeds. You choose a vehicle or an investment instrument based on your comfort and need. If your style fits an aggressive form of driving, then you need a vehicle with a high-power engine.

Similarly, in investing too, choose instruments such as stocks, mutual funds or fixed deposits depending on what suits your temperament and what your needs are, to reach your financial goals in a safe and timely manner.

Happy Investing!
(The writer is Head of Research and co-fund manager at Ithought Financial Consulting LLP)

THINK INVESTOR

Diversification is not in numbers

Adopt a mix of bonds, and assets whose returns could be higher than expected



For goal-based portfolios, bond investments should typically be in bank FDs, PPF and tax-free bonds. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

VENKATESH BANGARUSWAMY
We all like to diversify our investments. We spread our fixed deposits among three or four banks as we believe that the likelihood of all these banks failing to repay our deposits at maturity is low. Using the same logic, we also invest in several equity funds. However, investing in multiple investment products may not, necessarily, reduce investment risk.

Portfolio diversification

Suppose you invest in five different equity funds to diversify your investment risk. What if all of them have large holdings in the same stocks, say, Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank? If these stocks decline sharply, so will the net asset value (NAV) of all these funds. So, investing across multiple funds may not necessarily prevent your investments from declining in value.

Correlation is vital

Diversification is not about spreading your investment across multiple products. It is about how each of these investment products correlate with (or relate to) each other. Ideally, you want your equity investment products to increase in value when the market moves up.

On the flip side, you want some of these investment products to move up when other products in your port-

folio move down in line with the market.

But, gathering such products to form a portfolio requires application of rigorous statistical and mathematical tools. This is because you have to determine how these products relate to each other when markets move up as well as when they drop. Now, most investors cannot engage in such exercise for want of time and effort. So, what should you do? Stop buying multiple investment products.

Buying a home

Assume you want to buy a house ten years hence and decide to invest in equity and bonds. By bonds, we mean any interest-bearing instrument offering you stable cash flows, and a pre-defined value at maturity. It is easier to map cash flows from bonds to the cash flows needed to achieve your goals. For goal-based portfo-

folios, bond investments should typically be in bank deposits, public provident fund and tax-free bonds. They must preferably pay interest at maturity, not annually. So, if you are investing to accumulate money to finance your vacation three years hence, you should invest in a three-year recurring bank deposit (RD). Your equity investments will be in mutual funds, preferably a Nifty Index fund.

Now, your bond investments will provide stability to your portfolio because of the known cash flows at maturity. But bonds offer low post-tax returns because of higher tax rate and lower-than-expected return, and do not beat inflation.

Hence, you need equity investments. While equity offers higher-than-expected return, the cash flow you will receive when you sell your equity investments is uncertain. Diversification is, therefore, all about how judiciously you mix a higher-than-expected-return asset (equity) with a stable-return asset (bonds). We believe it is best you pay greater attention to your asset allocation – the proportion of equity and bonds in each of your goal-based portfolios. Often, investing in one RD and in one index fund will suffice to achieving a goal.

(The author offers investor-learning solutions)

INSURANCE: COVID-19

Cover for a pandemic

AMIT CHHABRA

Also, the infection caused due to COVID-19 does not fall under the pre-existing disease category and hence, the claims will be covered for the illness from day one. Every basic health insurance plan will compensate the policyholder for expenses incurred on pre-hospitalisation, post-hospitalisation, in-patient treatment, OPD and ambulance expenses, should one seek treatment for COVID-19.

Fixed benefit plan
While the above features are for an indemnity-based health plan, those looking for a fixed benefit health plan that compensates them for loss of income due to hospitalisation following COVID-19 can invest in the fixed benefit health plan offered by Digit Insurance.

Offered under the IRDAI's regulatory sandbox framework, Health Care Plus plan is available for a sum insured of between ₹25,000 and ₹2 lakh.

The premiums start at ₹299 at the lower end, while the maximum sum insured entails a premium of ₹2,027 plus GST.

As to the payout process, in case a policyholder tests positive for COVID-19, the insurer will pay out the entire sum insured. If a quarantine is advised in a government or a military hospital, the insurer will pay 50% of the sum insured.

Retired people may consider it for additional benefits even if they have a standalone plan since they are more vulnerable to the virus. Those suffering from symptoms of cold or respiratory diseases will not be able to purchase this plan.

(The author is business head, health insurance, Policybazaar.com)

LOOSE CHANGE



"I have finally found a way of watching the stock market happenings without any anxiety!"

Life insurance term plan premium

Male: 30 Years, Sum insured- Rs. 1 crore, Cover upto- 70 Years

Insurance company	Plan name	Maximum cover Up to (Years)	Annual premium (Rs., Male)
Aditya Birla Capital	Ultima Term	85	10,270
Aegon Life	iTerm Insurance Plan	100	9,114
Aviva Life	iTerm Smart	80	9,007
Bajaj Allianz	Smart Protect Goal	99	8010
Bharti AXA	Flexi Term Plan	85	9,440
Canara HSBC OBC Life	iSelect Term Plan	80	9,491
DHFL Pramerica Life	Flexi e-Term	75	9,403
Edelweiss Tokio Life	Zindagi+ Term Insurance Plan	80	9,309
Exide Life	Smart Term Plan	75	12411*
Future Generali	Flexi Online Term Plan	75	9,427
HDFC Life	Click2Protect 3D Plus	100	12,478
ICICI Prudential	iProtect Smart	99	12,502
IDBI Federal Life	iSurance Flexi Term	80	12,402
India First Life	e-Term Plan	80	8,260
Kotak Life	Kotak e-Term Plan	75	9,558
Max Life	Online Term Plan Plus	85	10,148
PNB Met Life	Mera Term Plan	99	10,148
Reliance Nippon Life	Digi Term	80	11,012
SBI Life	eShield	80	15,070
TATA AIA Life	Sampoorna Raksha	100	9,912

*Exide coverage upto 60 yrs for age 30 yrs

Source: www.policybazaar.com

Health insurance premium

Insurer name	Key features	Plan names	Premium(Rs.)	Insurer name	Key features	Plan names	Premium (Rs.)
Religare Health	Day Care Treatments Family Floater option Health Checkups Pre and Post Hospitalisation	NCB Super Premium Care Care with unlimited recharge	8,675 7,887 8,478	Royal Sundaram General	Day Care Treatments Hospitalization at Home Hospital Room Eligibility Alternate Medicine	Lifeline supreme	7,936

Happy classes

March 20 is celebrated as International Day of Happiness. Questions about education being a joyful experience, the happiness quotient and prepping for exams continue to remain unanswered. So, what is the way forward?

■ ALBERT P'RAYAN

The term 'happiness curriculum' has been in the news in the recent past, and almost everyone in Delhi is familiar with it. The First Lady of the United States (FLOTUS), Melania Trump, during her maiden visit to India, attended a 'happiness class' at a government school in Delhi and interacted with its teachers and students. While the FLOTUS and other guests were watching a cultural performance happening on the stage, a little boy in the audience started dancing and won their admiration. Witnessing the jolly kid's impromptu dance, Mrs. Trump too smiled at the student, applauded and expressed her joy. It was an incident of joy in action.

The Aam Aadmi Party government's 'Happiness Curriculum' scheme launched in 1,030 Delhi government schools in 2018, has been hailed as a major school education reform in the country. The scheme that targets students from kindergarten to class VIII is seen as a shift from exam-and-marks-oriented education to holistic education with the focus on cognition, literacy, numeracy, values, and learner well-being.

Is learning a joyful experience for learners in India? Do children really learn what they need to, in order to lead a happy life? What are the factors that affect effective learning and act as hurdles for joyful learning? Does our education system prepare students for life or for exams and career? These questions arise when we think of 'happiness curriculum' and 'happy schooling'.

Why 'happiness curriculum'?

The World Happiness Report 2019, published by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network, which ranks countries on citizens' well-being, ranked India 140 out of 156 coun-

tries. Finland topped the list for the second year in a row whereas India slipped from 133rd position in 2018 to 140th position in 2019. This gloomy picture makes us raise questions: Why are Indians not happy? Is there any link between our education system and our happiness quotient?

The purpose of education is to prepare students – to lead a joyful and purposeful life. To translate this vision into action, the system should have sound curriculum and educators. The moral responsibility of such educators is to produce happy individuals who find joy in what they learn and meaning in what they do. The purpose of such curriculum is to help students develop self-awareness, boost confidence, improve mental wellness, build character, and instil values in them in order to enable them to encounter problems boldly and face challenges confidently. To achieve this goal, moral/value education, self-awareness exercises, mental health activities, and social awareness programmes should be given more importance and incorporated into the curriculum. This should be done on a regular basis at the primary and secondary levels of education.

Education for happiness should be one of the aims of primary and secondary education. Learners who are hap-

py will be able to develop a positive attitude towards life. One of the reasons given for Finland's high level of happiness is the country's high-quality education system which aims at improving learners' well-being. Finns guided by the slogan "there is no bad weather, only bad clothes", learn to do the right thing at a young age.

There are various factors that kill learners' happiness and make them behave like machines. One of the factors is the hidden agenda of our education system: "education for exams and career". In the book *Creative Schools*, Ken Robinson and Lou Aronica (2015) stress the need for shifting away from 'exam-factory' education to developing creativity among students. According to the authors, the eight core competencies (8C's) that education should develop in students are: creativity, curiosity, criticism,

communication, collaboration, compassion, composure and citizenship. The UNESCO Happy School Framework (2014-2015) also highlights the need for recognising values and competencies that contribute to enhancing happiness. In this context, it is good to look at two models of happiness curriculum: Delhi and Finland.

Delhi model

The Delhi government's Happiness Curriculum was designed with an attempt to find answers to the question "What makes a good life?"

Forty teachers were chosen and trained in "co-existent thought" which is based on understanding spiritual, intellectual, behavioural and material aspects of life. Dream a Dream, an NGO, trained the teachers to become educators so that they can nurture em-

pathy and develop their creative and critical thinking skills. The teachers were encouraged to undergo a paradigm shift and apply empathy-based pedagogy and a life skills approach in the classroom. These teachers, who later became mentors, were involved in designing the happiness curriculum that focused on addressing learners' emotional and mental needs and developing their self-awareness, creativity, critical thinking and a few other life skills.

The eight core competencies (8C's) that education should develop in students are: creativity, curiosity, criticism, communication, collaboration, compassion, composure and citizenship.

Finland model
Is happiness a skill? Can it be taught? The answer to these questions can be found in the motto of the Happiness School of Finland: "Finnish happiness is a skill – and it can be taught". The Finnish education system encourages learner autonomy and creativity. It does not pressurise students by giving them meaningless homework and unproductive tests. Teachers too enjoy autonomy. According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Finnish teachers are happier than teachers in other countries. In Finland, it is not easy to be certified as teachers. Only those who have the aptitude for teaching and teaching skills are certified to become teachers. Teachers in Finland are highly respected and trusted. They enjoy a great deal of autonomy to plan lessons and run classes. Granting autonomy to teachers results in producing happier teachers who, in turn, play a vital role in producing happier students.

Sue Palmer, literacy specialist and author of *Toxic Childhood*, in an interview to CNN says, "My admiration for the Finns is for their education in general and the trust they put in teachers..." She also attributes Finland's success in education to the later starting age. In Finland, no parent expects their children to be reading and writing formally until they are seven.

Governments and educators

Education should enable the all-round development of individuals. It is possible only if joyful education is promoted and joyful environment is created in educational institutions.

Happiness curriculum is based on the belief that the emotional well-being of learners is linked to their successful life. It is a major shift from teacher-centredness to learner-centredness, teaching to learning, textbook-based learning to experiential learning, unhealthy competition to happy collaboration, teacher domination to learner participation, rote learning to activity-based learning. Happiness curriculum can enhance learner motivation and result in positive learning outcomes. It is high time our governments introduced 'happiness curriculum' in schools.

The writer is an academic, columnist and freelance writer. rayanal@yahoo.co.uk

What History? Whose story?

Children are being taught history in classrooms, but telling them untold stories other than war would be a step towards their holistic development



ETHICS AND YOU

MINI KRISHNAN

Winning is so deeply a part of our psyche that history is generally considered a chronicle of power; a list of who crushed whom and descriptions of rivalries amongst the strong. The destruction of Troy in 1193 BC. Alexander's defeat of Raja Purushothaman in 326 BC. The Norman conquest of England in 1066. The fall of Constantinople in 1453. The first battle of Panipat in 1556. The siege of... the war of... the sacking of... After all the fiery wars came the Cold War.

Why isn't the intellectual History of Mankind as important? Why does it come a poor second to the history of violence and death-struggles between countries and civilisations? The Calendar of Man's artistic and technological ascent should be given more importance than it is. Given the academic atmosphere in classrooms, it could surely be both interesting and relevant.

Rewind

The history of war and conflict is a focus on the political trends and divisive forces of the world and has traditionally been a part of the political agenda of educa-



tion. For a long time, it was also uppermost in peoples' minds because hand-to-hand skirmishes and field battles were always imminent between countries, with the lives of whole populations under threat all the time. Today, governments may talk about making war on an adversary, but they all know that the weapons both sides have are so devastating that both groups could be reduced to dust in the space of hours.

On the other hand, look at just one example in the history of ideas:

When Islam and Christianity were locked in a fight to the death for the control of the Mediterranean, a community of European monks and scholars were in peaceful contact with their more advanced colleagues: scholars who were producing works of science and technology through translations into and out of Arabic. There are so many such instances which cannot be narrated in this column.

Can we not also bring the untold his and her stories of the "daily"ness of the human experience?

The writer is Series Editor, Living in Harmony (OUP).

VALUE ADD

Prepping for the mainstream

This certificate programme equips young adults with learning needs, with formal vocational training and skills

■ ARCHANA SUBRAMANIAN

The London Learning Centre (LLC), Delhi, in collaboration with Ansal University, Gurugram, has announced the launch of India's first-ever certificate programme for young adults aged between 18 and 32 years with mild to moderate learning needs. The one-year course will support them to learn and work towards achieving their ambitions.

Though all children and young adults learn in different ways and at different rates, the term 'additional learning needs' refers to those with specific learning, physical or sensory needs that make it harder for them to learn compared to their peers. This also includes individuals with a learning disability. "Based on in-depth cognitive assessments and screening during admissions, we identify individuals with 'mild to moderate' needs, in order to ensure that they are the best fit for the programme, since this course is specifically developed to be suitable for and match the abilities of such individuals," explains Jackie Harland, Co-founder and Clinical Director of LLC.

Learning support

LLC was established by Harland along with Pooja Talwar to create a therapy centre of international standards in India. It provides expertise and consistent support for children and their families through its multidisciplinary team and its in-house early intervention screening mechanism and intervention programmes. The first cohort of the programme will admit five to six young adults with special needs, and will begin at Ansal University's campus in Gurugram. Harland elaborates, "This pro-



Be equipped: Skills that matter

gramme is aimed at preparing young adults for formal vocational training tutored by internationally trained psychologists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and special educators. The course has been carefully curated, keeping in mind a certain set of skills required for independence, managing personal finances and acquiring soft skills to gain and maintain a job. Furthermore, students will have the flexibility to work at their own pace."

Every student will go through a standardised assessment and a personal interview. This will help the centre in identifying their level of functioning and specific individual needs. Once the needs are identified, each professional in the multidisciplinary will work together to support the individual, based on the professional's area of expertise. "For example,



Jackie Harland

one of our students is a high functioning young adult with autism. We set up a series of workshops that were conducted by a psychologist from LLC, who provided him with one-on-one training to help him develop critical life skills, which include management of personal finances and independent travel," explains Harland.

The faculty comprises a multidisciplinary team featuring psychologists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and special educators. "Our team is internationally trained and our psychologists hold licenses to practise from in-

ternational regulatory bodies. This team brings together their expertise and skills to support each individual's needs to enable them to overcome challenges they may face," adds Harland.

At a glance

The course will run for a year and it includes four modules, with each module spanning over 10 weeks.

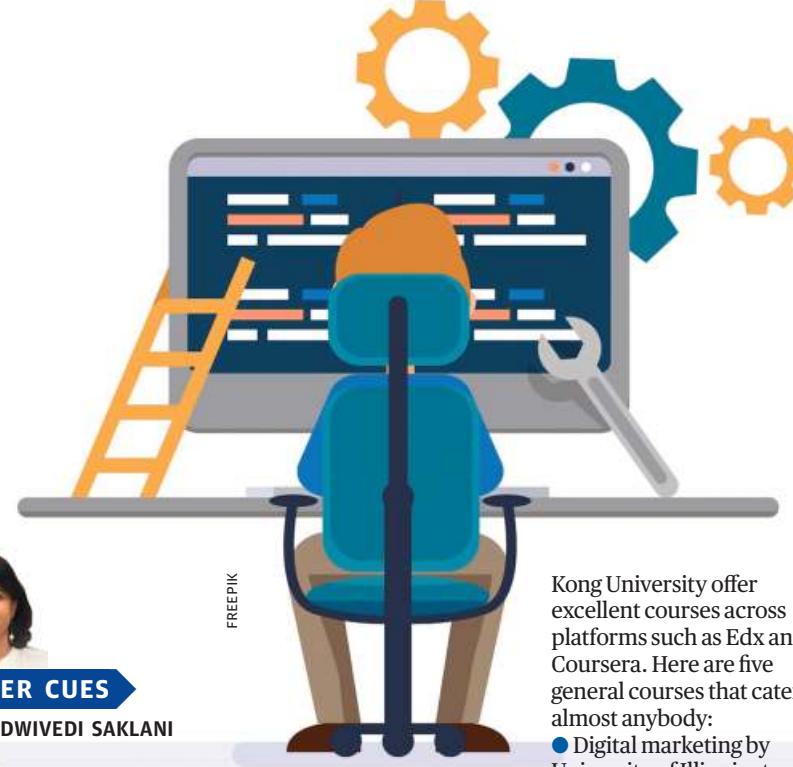
Module I: Functional Social Communication and Language Skills: It will focus on developing students' communication skills in terms of their functional language in understanding and expression, also in terms of their use of language for different communicative purposes.

Module II: Independence and self-care: This will focus on enhancing functional numeracy, self-care, presentation skills and activities of daily living, such as managing one's personal finances.

Module III: Employability: This will focus on developing vocational skills and enable individuals to apply for employment and teach them how to remain employed by learning to cope in the workplace environment and also appropriate behaviours at work.

Module IV: Student specialisation

elective: Students will be encouraged to choose an area of specialisation at the end of the first year and opt for subjects such as Catering, Art and Design, Photography, Sports and Fitness, Hair and Beauty, and Information Technology. This is aimed at helping them identify their preferred field of employment.



FREEPIK



CAREER CUES

RICA DWIVEDI SAKLANI

It is a party! When I was a student, any shutdowns due to national emergencies meant that great movies were telecast on television. Kids' parties were thrown in the happy belief that the adults would figure things out and things would soon be back to normal. Among all the partying though, this long, unexpected break is also an opportunity to work on your profile – especially for those applying to college this year,

and the next. Here are some simple strategies that would take up to an hour a day, over this break, and add considerably to your profile.

Do an online course

Most online courses are self-paced and require three-to-five hours per week. Pick beginner-level courses in an area you are likely to apply to in college, and choose well-known universities. Harvard, MIT, Wharton, Yale and Hong

Disappointed?



KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

S. UPENDRAN

"Come in! Did you go to the airport this morning to pick up your cousin from London?"

"He decided not to come because of the coronavirus scare."

"That's so sad. You were really looking forward to his visit. That explains the long face, I guess."

"Long face? Are you telling me that my face is long?"

"The expression 'long face' is frequently used in informal contexts to suggest that a person is looking rather sad – there's a look of disappointment. For example, Jai has been walking around with a long face ever since he was dropped from the team."

"By the end of the tenth over, there were some long faces in the room. We knew that our girls weren't going to win the World Cup."

"Good example. With the final exams around the corner, many students are walking around with a long face."

"That's not the case in Bengaluru. The virus has forced many schools to cancel the final exams. The children's summer break has already begun."

Happiness personified
"I heard about that. I am sure the students are like a dog with two tails."

"Two tails? A dog usually wags its tail when it's happy. So, when you say that someone is like a dog with two tails, are you suggesting he's extremely happy?"

"That's exactly what it means. The person is excited because something good has happened. Ever since Sunitha got engaged, she's been like a dog with two tails."

"How about this example? Ganesh has every reason to be like a dog with two tails. He won the lottery last week."

"Sounds good. After her promotion, Vineeta was walking around like a dog with two tails."

"Talking about promotion. Weren't you planning to ask your boss for one?"

Too much to bite
"I'm scared that if I ask for a raise or a promotion now, he will bite my head off."

"Bite your head off? Are you scared that he will say no to your request?"

"When someone bites your head off, what the person is doing is shouting angrily."

More to read

For this week's *Off the Edge* and *Knowledge Quiz* columns, log on to <https://www.thehindu.com/education/>

While an unexpected break is a chance to unwind, it is also an opportunity to work on your profile and acquire skill sets

Cash-in on lockdowns

• Python for everybody from University of Michigan on Coursera

Work on a personal project

Most students are full of ideas of what they would love to do, and this is a great time to take the first few baby steps. Some suggestions:

• Write poetry or start a blog. Explore platforms such as Medium, Wattpad, Teenink, or Tumblr

• Choose a theme or style to draw or paint in. Explore water colours, charcoal or other media you have been dying to explore. You could tell a personal story or take inspiration from the current

lockdown, or from doctors fighting the virus, to tell a new story.

• Prepare a curriculum for workshop you may want to run. This seems bigger than it actually is. Some simple and useful workshops that almost any student could run, include offering senior citizens a five-day crash course on how to use newer social media such as Instagram and Five Fun, organising engaging games, or even teaching them five songs on the guitar or ukulele.

Work on basic college essays

If you are applying to college this year, you could start

working on college essays – the common app prompts are the same as last year, and almost everyone will need a statement of purpose. You could also work on essay prompts from liberal arts universities in India such as Ashoka University, Haryana, and Flame University, Pune, to get some practice and create a bank of ideas.

And of course, tank up on academics – choose one subject to deepen and strengthen in an hour a day over and above everything else.

But seriously, do tank up on fun and laughter as well. Schools will open soon and start catching up at breakneck speed. So really, now is the time to party.

The writer is Founder and CEO, Inomi Learning, a Gurugram-based career and college guidance firm. info@inomi.in

EAR SHOT

ASHOK RAJAGOPALAN



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Hope from the KITCHEN

Recipes shared across continents and time spent cooking with little ones — corona culture is embracing social distancing through food

ANOOHTHI VISHAL

As the world grapples with a virus that threatens all its fundamentals, it is inevitable that despite the grimness, humanity should attempt to assert itself. Perhaps through snatches of music, twirls of dance... and by creating foods, the basis of sustenance, yet something more, which offers us hope, joy and bonding — even if socially distanced. The emerging "corona culture", as it is being dubbed, has been most visible on social media.

Nostalgic endeavours

The most endearing way in which I find friends reaching out is through food and drink. Someone in Singapore sends me a picture of Amarone from his collection.

He will be drinking it in contemplative solitude but not before we have exchanged thoughts on life. Vi- no has that effect, whether you drink it, or merely see it!

There are friends in Orvieto, a tiny town perched on a mountain near Rome, who post pictures of six-year-old Maria Luce, their daughter, cooking up a little treat. The last time I had seen her in December, she had sat at a restaurant eating truffled pasta, drawing me a picture. Now, she has progressed to baking, and that's how we keep track of lives.

In London, my friend Namrata, a professional in the travel trade, has seen all her business crumble. We ex-



change recipes amidst our respective fears and she sends me pictures of fantastic Tamil meals she is learning to cook, food that she enjoyed at her in laws' place in Chennai. Now, in bleak London, these are dishes she is cooking for her husband and herself, plating them on banana leaves; a bit of excitement, a bit of nostalgia.

Stories and meals

This is privilege, of course. All of us who can sit at home, cook fantastic spreads, fix ourselves "quarantine", and post about these on social media must spare a thought for that restaurant worker whose establishment just shut and who has had to go not just on leave without pay but is now also denied even his two meals a day that he ate daily in the staff kitchen. Or those who do not have the luxury



of sitting at home with enough in the bank to tide them through self-imposed isolation.

Yet, even amongst those with privilege, there is loss of occupation as the wheels of the global economy slow down as they haven't in a long time. Highly-paid influencers, whose travel and food stories generated fantastic views, and thus, endorsement deals, must now keep alive those accounts with the minutiae of their lives. What else is there to do but share recipes online?

Throwback to the simple life

In isolation, the slow rhythm of the day is reminiscent of how we would spend time when schools shut, social media wasn't a reality and there were fewer options of staying connected. In those days, old recipe collections would be brought out and experiments conducted to the delight of the family gathered at the table at night.

This is what strikes me as I see the Instagram account of restaurateur Aditi Dugar, whose path-break-

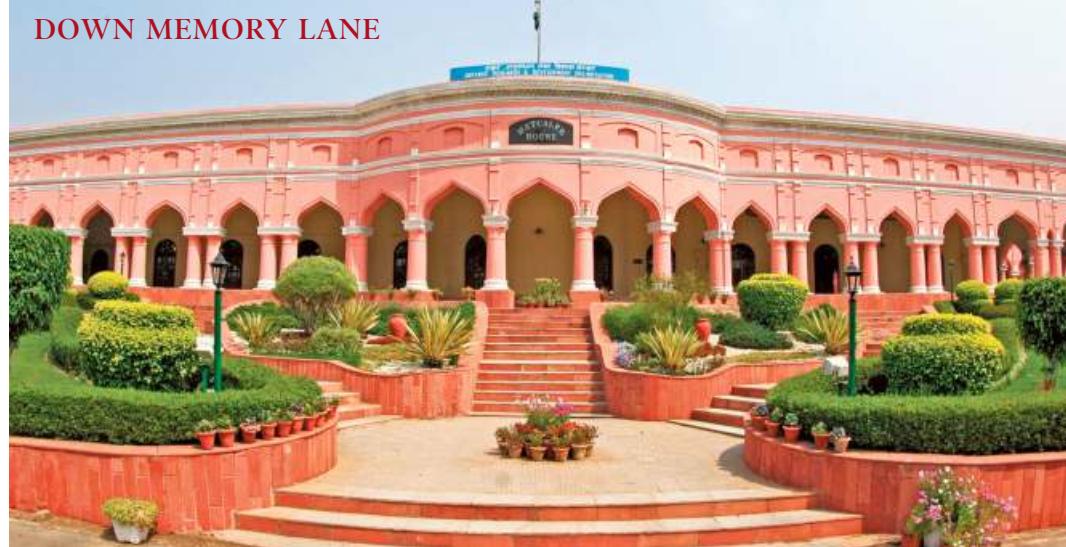


Kitchen tales (Clockwise from above) Aditi Dugar with her son; the writer's friend, Namrata; children learning to cook and Maria Luce

• @ADITIDUGAR ON INSTAGRAM, SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT AND @GROWINGCHEFSTUDIO

ing Masque celebrated its coming of age on the World's 50 Best "watch list" just about a fortnight ago, but who has since shut operations of her restaurant and highly-successful catering business. Assisted by her son, she made sweet potato dim sum in her home kitchen one afternoon, the process for all of us to see on Instagram. It reminded me of summer afternoons working with chachi, my aunt, making ice creams and cakes, cutting vegetables to be fried with noodles and learning to handle ovens, setting agents and mixers. Inside our bubbles, that is the life we must lead once more — and count ourselves lucky.

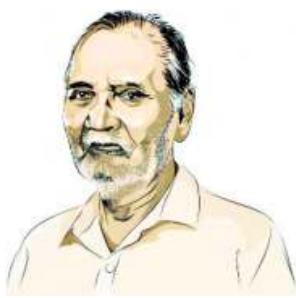
DOWN MEMORY LANE



Believed to be spooky (Above) A view of Metcalfe House; Khooni Darwaza • V. V. KRISHNAN, SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Mysteries of Metcalfe House

Mysterious tales can be stranger than fiction and give us a break of the monotony of daily life



R. V. SMITH

If reports are to be believed, a club near Birla Mandir in Connaught Place has been declared unsafe. It was once patronized by South Indians, but now lies deserted. Those living nearby say it is haunted. The notice printed on the front wall declaring it out of bounds though, could mean that the building has become unsafe because of age or structural defects. Be that as it may, such places do acquire their own attraction.

Now take Metcalfe House. It too is long supposed to be haunted though DRDO has its offices there with a large number of scientists working on its premises. It was built by Sir Thomas Metcalfe, British Resident in Delhi from 1835. Another such building, the Metcalfe Testimonial, built by his brother, Sir Charles Metcalfe, in Agra, was destroyed in a mysterious fire in 1895. In the heart of the capital, the Khooni Darwaza has its own spooky tales associated with the beheading of Dara Shikoh by his brother Aurangzeb. Earlier the murder of the sons of

Abdul Rahim Khan-e-Khanan, the poet in Akbar's court, on the orders of Jahangir, took place there.

Later two sons and a grandson of Bahadur Shah Zafar were shot there by Lt. William Hudson in 1857. Some freedom fighters were also hanged in its vicinity when the Delhi Jail was situated at the site now occupied by Maulana Azad Medical College. On Hailey Road the Agrasen ki Baoli is also believed to be haunted by those who were drowned in it.

From the dungeons in Metcalfe House, they say the sound of clanking chains is heard sometimes. In the ruins of the Metcalfe Testimonial at Agra, the sound of spoons striking empty plates was heard up to the time it made way for a housing colony. It was a reminder of a macabre Christmas Eve party: the host was murdered by unseen hands in 1898.

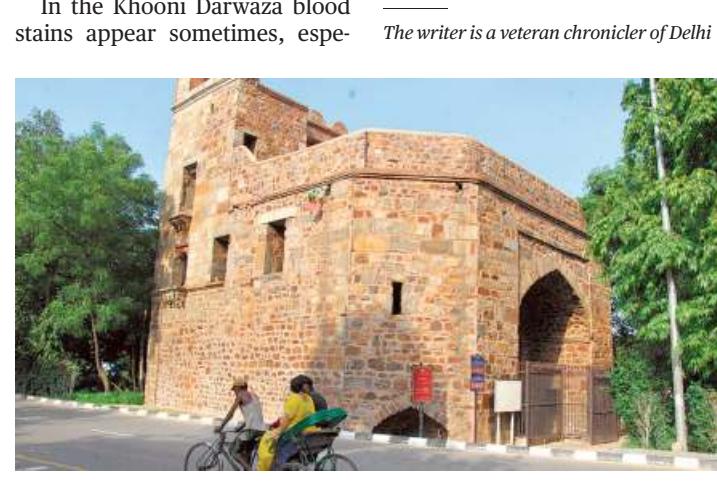
In the Khooni Darwaza blood stains appear sometimes, espe-

cially during the monsoon. They say that the sound of music emanates at night suddenly, in a flashback to the day when cabaret was held there. What does one make of all this? The best explanation is that such scary tales add some spice to a sedentary existence. So don't be startled if you hear that Ghalib's apparition is seen at his haveli on moonlight nights and at the Kala Mahal where he was born, some 3 km from the Taj.

The spectre of the poet's patron, Bahadur Shah Zafar, is believed by some to haunt the Red Fort on Thursdays, something unimaginable as the king died in distant Rangoon. Apparently ghosts can travel long distances!

The ghost of his court poet, Zauq, they say, is seen over the old Yamuna Bridge, running away with books, tightly clutched in his hands, to escape the British soldiers pursuing him in 1857. But this is definitely a fib because Sheikh Ibrahim Zauq died three years before the Uprising.

The writer is a veteran chronicler of Delhi



A JOURNEY OF YEARS



Rani Singh's book on the Dalai Lama's escape to India took many years to piece together

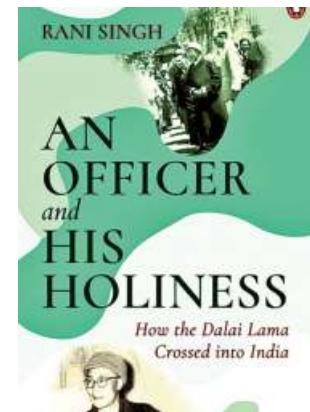
KRITHIKA R.

While most people know of the Dalai Lama's escape to India in 1959, not many know the details behind the event. This is what journalist Rani Singh focuses on. It was her uncle, Har Mander Singh, who was in charge of escorting the young leader to safety. In *An Officer and His Holiness: How the Dalai Lama Crossed into India*, Rani Singh lifts a curtain, as she puts it, in her introduction. Here, she talks about the making of the book.

You say you are neither a historian nor an expert on Sino-Indian relationships. What did it take to write this book?

I started the process years ago and it was a long, hard, lonely journey. As I did not know the full story and probably never will, I painstakingly assembled jigsaw pieces where I could, and built a picture. I started interviewing my uncle in 2005; 15 years ago! And I wrote it as a children's story even earlier. I was worried, as I am not a historian, so I got things checked over and over by experts.

You've spoken about Har



Mander's and the Dalai Lama's early years. What did it take to recreate that world?

It was very tough. In the case of Har Mander Singh, through direct interview and also by talking to his elder son Raj Mander. My late mother, so long as she was able to, would tell me anecdotes about their early lives together. As she declined in health she would draw her memories of Africa on paper. The years in India were confusing to work out as there was a lot of movement and then Partition happened. But I hope I managed to convey what happened. With His Holiness the Dalai Lama's childhood, I spoke to him and also drew from his own writings about his early years.

Were there any anecdotes you remember from writing the book?

Oh yes, but I decided to omit some for various reasons! Meet-



Across time and border (Clockwise from left) People witnessing the Dalai Lama (centre, on his horse) and party on the journey to Bomdila, April 1959; the Dalai Lama sitting on a wooden throne designed for him, April 1959; the book cover; Rani Singh • ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY HAR MANDER SINGH, SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

What is the status of the film project around An Officer and His Holiness? How different is that process from that of the book?

Actually the news clips from various shoots need to be collated to see how they will fit together. These can follow a similar narrative line to my manuscript and I know it better than any collaborator so it follows that I need to be in editorial control of that project. I am the originator and executive producer of the various separate pieces of news footage as well as the writer-presenter.

I am privileged that Virgin Media recognised the story's value and sponsored the first crew and that Grand Vision sponsored the second. Since it is my story and based on relationships I have built, I expect that, as it goes to edit phase, full respect will be shown towards my editorial judgement and that those who we filmed will know who the decision maker is. Unfortunately such projects sometimes attract people who want to take control, so I have to hope that that does not happen.

What's next as an author? I hope that an international publisher picks this work up for readers outside India and I am getting interest already. This project needed a lot of my energy and focus so I am enjoying getting back to broadcast media and my current affairs reporting for radio and TV.

At the frontline

Fighting disease and death, here's what medical professionals go through personally, and how their families feel about what they do

SUNALINI MATHEW

A tweet from a doctor in Australia, @seemathewombat says: "I'm a Dr. I'm about to separate from my family within my home for ?? months. So that I can keep treating you, whilst trying to keep my family safe. It hurts. No hugs from my girls, no cuddles from my partner. PLS socially distance NOW, to make my sacrifice worth it."

He is not worried that his interactions with the patients can put him or his family at risk. "I work with infectious patients everyday and I always make sure that I am not working when I am not in the hospital. I get calls from my juniors asking doubts or to update me on the condition of my patients."

While such precautions for doctors are still in the planning stages in India, we asked medical professionals what goes through their minds when a pandemic is declared and they are at the forefront of testing and caring. How do their partners react?

Dr. Adarsh Pratap, president of the Resident Doctors Association at AIIMS, Delhi, positioned at Emergency, says it is the reason they signed up for the profession. His mother, who is over 60 and lives in Etawah, Uttar Pradesh, is worried, but "I tell her it's like being in the Army in times of war. *Ye to karna hi hai* (This has to be done)."

Dr. R. Sajith Kumar, Professor and Head of Department of Infectious Diseases, Government Medical College, Kottayam, is a part of the Corona Clinical Management team for Kerala. He now treats four people in the isolation ward of the hospital. He



says that his time at work is unpredictable. "It depends on the condition of my patients. After the Corona pandemic, there are days I have gone home at midnight. But that does not mean that I am not working when I am not in the hospital. I get calls from my juniors asking doubts or to update me on the condition of my patients."

She has made him a small kit containing dry and wet tissues, a bottle of sanitiser, and a small bar of soap, to keep in his car. Even on regular working days, he is away from 7.30 a.m. to 11 p.m. "I keep reminding him his health is most important to all of us and get our kids (12 and seven) to speak to him at least once during the day over the phone," says Praveena, who runs the household single-handedly.

She says she stopped complaining after one particular night emergency. "I heard him take a post-midnight call and say that he'd be at the hospital immediately. I lost my cool and asked why somebody else couldn't be on call. He told me my father was admitted in the ICU. That moment I realised the importance of all patients in a doctor's life."

Another partner, Dr. Sujatha Sangumani, says it is easier for doctors to relate to the fear during an epidemic, given that they understand the spread better. As the wife of Dr. J. Sangumani, Dean of Madurai Medical College & Government Rajaji Hospital,

ry about his health," she says.

"Sleep is everything for babies! It's so important for their mood, immunity, growth and brain development. Babies release growth hormone during sleep, which is why it's so important for them to get 11-12 hours of night sleep. When babies start sleeping well, they are more cheerful in the daytime.

Doctors on their part are conscious of health and hygiene at home, and also of keeping their own immunity up with supplements at times like this. "I share the common area with my family, so I make sure that I am not passing any potential infection on by touch. Hand hygiene is the most important. My clothes are washed separately and put into the washer immediately as soon as I'm home," says Dr. Om Shrivastav, Unit Head, Kasturba Hospital for Communicable Diseases. He says at times like these he does put some physical distance between himself and family members, until such time that he is sure he is not carrying any infection. "This will require effort, but has to be done. If you say everything is fine, I am just going to be getting on with my life as if nothing will happen, then you are setting yourself up for an infection."

An article in the European Respiratory Journal talks of high-risk emergency situations, where "the doctor is subject to a number of competing duties: 1) a duty to patients; 2) a duty to protect oneself from undue risk of harm; 3) a duty to one's family; 4) a duty to colleagues whose workloads and risk of harm will increase in one's absence; and 5) a duty to society."

That's a great deal of pressure, but Dr. Pratap says doctors keep conversations professional, talking about how to contain the virus if it turns from contact to community transmission.

"We keep thinking of innovations," he says, adding that AIIMS is now producing their own masks and sanitisers. A few days ago though, the doctors did ask the AIIMS management for better personal protection equipment (PPE).

Despite the concerns, Dr. Shrivastav says, "The satisfying part of our professional duty is that we are in a position to make a difference. We must embrace that."

With inputs from Susan Joe Philip, Soma Basu and Sweta Akundi

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

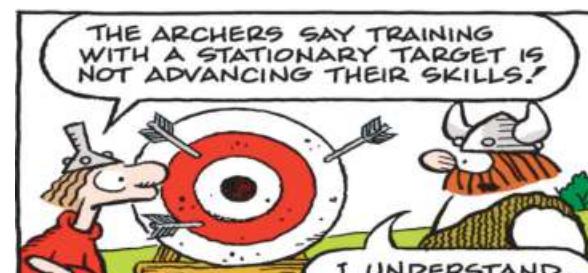
Pooh Cafe



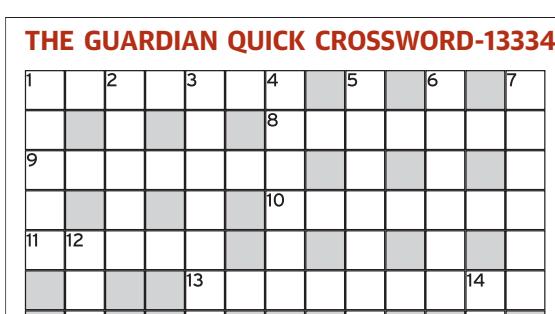
PEANUTS



Hagar the Horrible



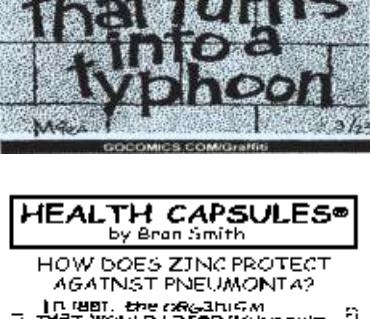
Tiger



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

- 6 Over simple (6)
- 7 Significance (6)
- 12 Roman queen of the gods, wife and sister of Jupiter (4)
- 14 Study hard before an exam (4)
- 15 Sinlessness (6)
- 16 Post-closing time pub drinking session (4-2)
- 17 Rise (6)
- 19 Respond – reply (5)
- 20 Watered with a flexible pipe (5)

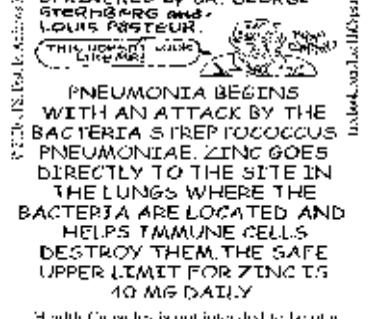
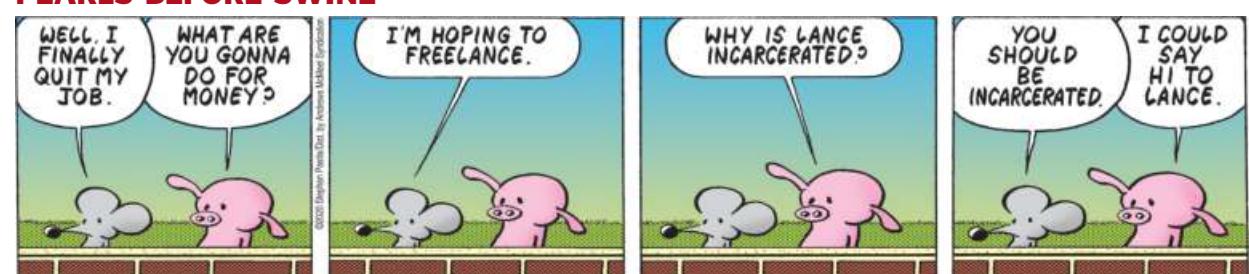
Wumo



The solution will appear on March 24, 2020.

Solution No. 13333

PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



F	R	A	N	C	H	I	S	E	B
A	O	O	N	I	H	L	E	A	B
S	C	R	U	N	C	I	E	T	A
K	R	U	N	C	N	T	E	A	K
S	T	Q	U	I	O	N	E	N	E
T	E	A	C	U	P	O	D	I	O
O	N	I	N	E	E	I	H	E	I
W	I	Z	A	R	J	O	U	N	R
A	A	K	R	O	N	E	E	E	E
W	I	N	K	L	G	S	I	E	E
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IOC to start discussions on possible postponement

Insists cancellation of the Olympics will not solve any of the problems or help anybody

TOKYO 2020

REUTERS
ATHENS

The International Olympic Committee is to step-up its "scenario planning" for the Tokyo 2020 Games – including its postponement – it said after an emergency meeting on Sunday.

The IOC will hold detailed discussions which will include possibly changing the July 24 start date due to the global coronavirus pandemic, but emphasised that a cancellation of the Games would not solve any of the problems or help anybody.

"Therefore, cancellation is not on the agenda," the IOC said in a statement, adding that the discussions would be completed within the next four weeks.

The IOC is facing mounting opposition to the current schedule for the Games as athletes, teams and federations call for a delay because of the coronavirus outbreak.

Several National Olympic Committees have urged the IOC to postpone the Games as the pandemic forces countries to lock down and has wreaked havoc with their preparations.

"These scenarios relate to modifying existing operational plans for the Games to go ahead on 24 July 2020, and also for changes to the start date of the Games," the IOC said. "The IOC will... start detailed discussions to com-

Lewis wants Games put off for two years

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Nine-time Olympic track and field champion Carl Lewis says he wants a delay of up to two years for the Tokyo Olympics but rejects any bid to cancel them outright. He called upon the IOC to consider pushing back the Games after the scheduled 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

plete its assessment of the rapid development of the worldwide health situation and its impact on the Olympic Games, including the scenario of postponement," it said. "The IOC is confident that it will have finalised these discussions within the next four weeks."

Sources told *Reuters* on Sunday, however, that Tokyo Games organisers had started drafting possible alternatives to holding the Olympics this summer. "Finally, we have been asked to make a simulation in case of a postponement," a source close to the organising committee who is involved in drafting the scenarios said.

"We are making alternative plans – plan B, C, D – looking at different postponement

time-frames," said the official, adding the scenarios included cost estimates for different delays.

Opposition

Serbia and Croatia joined the Olympic committees and sports bodies opposing the IOC's plans to proceed.

"Japan has invested a lot of resources and they are adamant that the Games should go ahead, but that defies common sense and we cannot support it because human lives come first," Serbian Olympic Committee president Vanja Udovicic said.

USA Track and Field, USA Swimming, Brazilian Olympic Committee, UK Athletics and the French Swimming Federation have also urged postponement.



Fan favourite: While there has been a clamour for the Games to be deferred, locals in Japan see the Olympic flame as a ray of hope. From taking selfies to queuing up patiently for their turn with the flame, the Japanese are showing what a big draw the Olympics is. ■ AFP, REUTERS

A day of draws



Rohit Sharma takes a dig at ICC

CRICKET

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Rohit Sharma on Sunday took a dig at the International Cricket Council (ICC) after his name did not feature in a poll



Take your pick: The candidates in ICC's Twitter poll for choosing the player with the best pull shot. Clockwise from top: Richards, Ponting, Gibbs and Kohli. ■ TWITTER.COM/ICC

initiated by the apex body on who has got the best pull shot in international cricket.

The ICC tweeted a collage of Viv Richards, Ricky Ponting, Herschelle Gibbs and Virat Kohli, asking "which batsman, past or present, has the best pull shot, in your opinion?"

Rohit, the only batsman to score three double hundreds in ODIs, responded by tweeting, "Someone's missing here?? Not easy to work from home, I guess."

He also looked at the brighter side of the virus lockdown in his tweet.

BFI mum on Mary Kom breaking quarantine

She had returned from Amman

BOXING

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

The Boxing Federation of India (BFI) has chosen not to react on the issue of top boxer M.C. Mary Kom breaking self-isolation.

Mary Kom, along with the Indian boxing squad, returned home on March 12 after taking part in the Asia-Oceania Olympic qualifying event in Amman, Jordan. Mary Kom was among the nine Indian boxers who earned Olympic quota places at the event.

The Indian team – which was training in Assisi, Italy – left that country on February 27, prior to the scheduled departure owing to the coronavirus outbreak. The boxers competed in the Olympic qualifier in Amman before returning home.

"By the time the boxers returned home, they had been 14 days out of Italy, one of the worst-affected by the coronavirus. However, in the best interests of the athletes and support staff, we decided that everyone



Mary Kom. ■ FILE PHOTO: PTI

By the time the boxers returned home, they had been 14 days out of Italy, one of the worst-affected by the coronavirus

■ BFI official

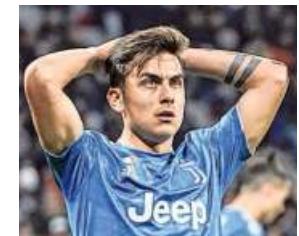
would go on self-isolation on their return from Jordan," said a BFI official.

Mary Kom, a Rajya Sabha member who was spending time with her family since her return, reportedly attended a breakfast get-together for MPs organised by President Ram Nath Kovind at the Rashtrapati Bhawan on March 18. "It's very difficult to ignore the President's invite. Let's hope that the situation remains under control," said the official.

COVID-19 IMPACT

Dybala and Maldini test positive for the virus

Argentine striker Paulo Dybala said on Saturday that he has become the third Juventus player to test positive while former AC Milan defender Paolo Maldini revealed that he and his son Daniel have also been infected. "Hi everyone. I just wanted to let you know that we have received the COVID-19 test results and that Oriana (Sabatini), his girlfriend



and I are positive," the 26-year-old Dybala tweeted. "Fortunately, we are perfectly fine. Thank you for your messages." ■ AFP

Fellaini is first coronavirus case in Chinese League

Marouane Fellaini has tested positive for coronavirus, his club Shandong Luneng said on Sunday, the former Manchester United player becoming the first known case in the Chinese Super League (CSL). The 32-year-old Belgian international midfielder has a normal temperature and is feeling fine, Shandong said,



Former Real Madrid president Sanz dies after contracting coronavirus

Former Real Madrid president Lorenzo Sanz, who was hospitalised with coronavirus, died on Saturday at the age of 76. Sanz was in charge of the Spanish giant from 1995-2000, overseeing two Champions League titles. "My father just passed away. He did not deserve this ending and in this way. He was one of the

best, bravest and hardest-working people I have ever seen. His family and Real Madrid were his passions," tweeted his son. ■ AFP

sake of its poor. "People should take this pandemic seriously and follow guidelines. They should do this voluntarily. Countries in Europe are very small and they have better medical services but they are facing a huge crisis," he reasoned.

"Our country is much bigger with a lot of poor people. If our country reaches the stage 3 (of the spread of pandemic) it may really have a devastating effect.

"We should try and contain the disease before that happens. So, each one of us should be a responsible citizen and try to maintain social distancing." ■ PTI



what you want to achieve going forward," he was quoted by *Jamaica Gleaner*. West Indies is scheduled to play a three-Test series in England from June 4.

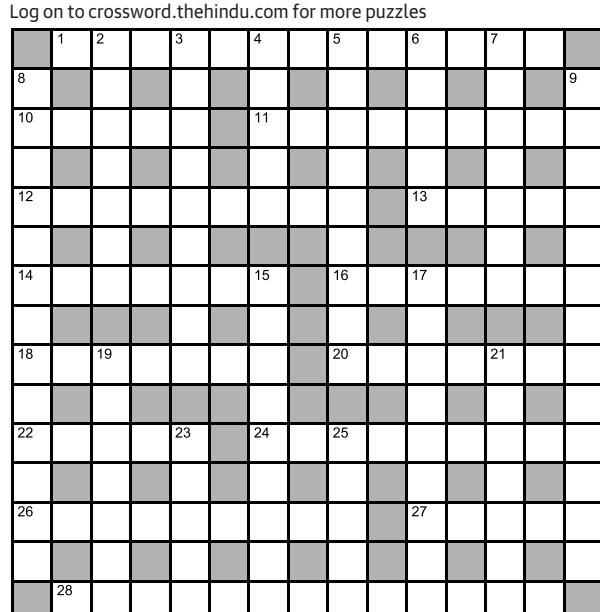
distancing for a really long time, for probably two weeks now, and every little thing makes me crazy," the 38-year-old superstar said.

"And by anxiety I mean I'm just on edge. Any time anyone sneezes around me or coughs, I get crazy. I don't hang out with anyone, and when I say anyone I mean my daughter.

"She coughed, I got angry and gave her a side-eye. I gave her that 'angry Serena' look and then I got sad. I was like, 'Is she ok? Is there anything I can do?' I just don't know what to do, so instead of being relaxed, I'm really under a ton of stress." ■ AFP

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12890

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ACROSS

- 1 Eleanor Cortez shot – no concession to lawbreakers (4,9)
- 10 Cover both sides of fish basket (5)
- 11 Tom writes novel, cheats (3-6)
- 12 Five were part of a gig beforehand (2,7)
- 13 Worked mostly in army unit on Sonar (5)
- 14 Opposed to American lumberjack featuring in the advertisements (2,11)
- 15 Nocturnal creature gets things moved by crane, perhaps (5,4)
- 16 Worked mostly in army unit on Sonar (5)
- 17 Slept contents in plain cover, being forgetful (9)
- 18 By changing vertical direction absolutely becomes erect (7)
- 19 Old composer died – it's exaggerated (7)
- 20 Free time to check building blocks (3,2)
- 21 For derivatives there is domestic demand (5)

(set by Arden)

- 4 Frequently soothes when naked (5)
- 5 Recondite matters as coterie is formed (9)
- 6 Mostly everyone follows a team along the centre (5)
- 7 Coolers used to make phenol (7)
- 8 Strange pair – connected but always getting hurt (8-5)
- 9 Design nicer features as part of software (4,9)
- 10 Hormone evens out – snugly wrapped up inside homes (7)
- 11 Right of ship to go through – it's Germany bound (7)
- 12 A wave able to take on a sea creature (7)
- 13 River and mountain range in the countryside (5)
- 14 Can feel as free and unbound (9)
- 15 Shouting about work piling up, it's music to some (9)
- 16 Worked mostly in army unit on Sonar (5)
- 17 Status quo on Spooner's sex, say (9)
- 18 By changing vertical direction absolutely becomes erect (7)
- 19 Old composer died – it's exaggerated (7)
- 20 Free time to check building blocks (3,2)
- 21 For derivatives there is domestic demand (5)

SUDOKU



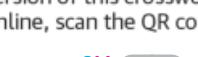
DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12889

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

O	B	L	I	V	I	O	Y	E	A	R	N	S	
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F	O	R	G	O	H	M	E	T	R	S			
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FAITH

Intuitive awareness

In spiritual parlance, the term 'Ikshana' meaning to see gains deeper significance when it implies the way one regards, considers or looks upon, etc, to evaluate and discriminate between the real and the unreal. In the Bhagavad Gita, it is used to describe the perception of the world through the vision of a realised soul. Scriptures reiterate that realisation of the eternal truth is something beyond visual perception since Brahman transcends the grasp of human sense organs. But still sages and rishis have realised Brahman through intuitive perception when the mind and the heart are trained to meditate and think deeply about Him. It is possible that by such continuous mental effort directed towards inward search, true insight arises, pointed out Swami Nirviseshananda in a discourse.

The *Katopanishad* explains the peculiar human condition wherein the creator has made the senses outward bound. There is thus a natural flow of the human mind and heart towards the glitter and attractions of the external world. The *Upanishad* warns that pursuing outward pleasures is immature and childish for it ensnares one to the cycle of birth. The wise, however, aware of immortality, do not seek permanence in things which are impermanent. So, it is important to realise that getting entangled in worldly pursuits is no different from the plight of the unsuspecting donkey that is enticed by the carrot and made to carry the load. The sincere seeker has to make the effort to understand the reality of the nature of the senses and exercise judicial restraint over them. This creates an atmosphere that is conducive for the recognition of the divine presence within oneself. In fact, to one with a pure heart and mind, God is more manifest in the Self than in the external world of experience.

Mithali keeping herself fit for the future



Awards and rewards: Mithali Raj with mementos and souvenirs at her home in Hyderabad. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Trips down memory lane liven up 'forced break'

CRICKET

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM
HYDERABAD

The coronavirus pandemic has led to a 'forced break' for athletes across the world and it is no different for one of India's best-ever woman cricketer, Mithali Raj.

"I have been following the developments on social media. These are dangerous times, but I do feel a sense of pride that India is much better off than most countries hit by it," Mithali said in a chat with *The Hindu* here on Sunday.

And, the 37-year-old Mithali, at home for more than a week for the first time in her illustrious career spanning 21 years, is digging into her treasure house of mementos, trophies and India jerseys to kindle memories of memorable feats in a brilliant career.

"Other than the trips down memory lane, I am also doing some basic exercises to keep fit as all gyms are closed.

"I am doing everything to be mentally and physically fit once this virus is eradicated and we are back on the field," said the leading ODI run-getter in women's cricket.

"But for the pandemic there would have been some serious moves towards organising a women's IPL," she said.

Mithali also has some suggestions for the women's IPL. Six foreign players should be permitted per team, she said. Unlike in men's cricket, women's teams might find it difficult to find capable domestic players to form the team if only four foreigners were allowed, she said.

"I strongly believe you need to start somewhere and it is high time we came

up with a women's IPL."

Interest

The massive response to the T20 World Cup final in Melbourne showed that there was great interest in women's cricket, she said.

"It was an unforgettable experience. The atmosphere was unbelievable and the crowd response matched men's cricket in terms of not just attendance but the passion with which they supported the finalists – India and Australia," said Mithali, who was there as ICC ambassador.

"Like all other sports bodies, the ICC has been forced to reschedule many events. We were supposed to play the World Cup (50-over) qualifiers in Sri Lanka this June, then tour England this July-August. But, given the grim battle against the virus, everything will go for a toss," she concluded.

The pandemic has cast serious doubts over the upcoming Tokyo Olympics, but Manu, a medal prospect at the quadrennial extravaganza, is not thinking about things beyond her control.

Bhaker looks at the bigger picture

Says she is, however, prepared for the Tokyo Games

GENERAL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Postponement of tournaments, and cancellation of trials and camps hardly matter at this point to Manu Bhaker, one of India's biggest young achievers in sport. The 18-year-old is hoping to see the world win the battle against COVID-19.

The pandemic has cast serious doubts over the upcoming Tokyo Olympics, but Manu, a medal prospect at the quadrennial extravaganza, is not thinking about things beyond her control.



Manu Bhaker.
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Trials and events should be postponed in the current situation as there are other very important things to deal with

not long ago by the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI). The trial was arranged to allow the shooters to register their scores after the postponement of the New Delhi ISSF World Cup and the Indian team's pull-out from the Cyprus World Cup owing to the coronavirus outbreak.

The pistol ace was one of the few shooters who participated in a trial organised

gathering and it lasted only three days."

Asked about the Olympic Games which has a cloud hanging over it, Manu said she will look to carry on with her routine that is part of her preparation.

"I am relaxed at home. The current situation doesn't affect my preparation and mindset. I am continuing with my yoga sessions, meditation and things that help me stay calm and composed.

"The Olympics, whenever it happens, is huge, so we need to be prepared. I am preparing for the Olympics as planned," she said. "Shooting is very competitive now, especially 2019 and after, and it is evident from the scores."

Manu, who secured an Olympic quota for India in women's 10m air pistol, enjoyed a successful season last year where she won five World Cup gold medals in individual and team events.

She burst onto the national scene at the start of 2018 with a victory at the ISSF World Cup in Mexico, and has not looked back since.

My fallout with Taylor a stain on NZ cricket: McCullum

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WELLINGTON

Former skipper Brendon McCullum, describing his fallout with Ross Taylor as a "bad stain for New Zealand cricket", attributed it to a race for captaincy between the two in 2011, and admitted that they still aren't the best of friends despite mutual respect.

Taylor, who is still active in international cricket, took over the captaincy after Daniel Vettori stepped down following the 2011 World Cup.

"It put some pressure on my friendship and relationship with Ross. I have played a lot of development and age cricket with Ross. I was the captain of the under-19 team

and Taylor was my vice-captain. We've always got on really well," said McCullum.

However, after a 1-1 draw in a Test series in Sri Lanka in 2012, it emerged that Taylor had issues with the then coach Mike Hesson. That followed series defeats in South Africa, the West Indies and India.

Unnecessary

"We had to go for an interview for the job. It was about presenting the map for the future of New Zealand cricket to a panel. I don't really know what we were doing. If I had my time, I would've said: 'no, I'm not going to come and go through the process, you appoint Ross as captain and then we'll see



Who will it be? The captaincy battle between Taylor and McCullum eventually swung the latter's way.

■ FILE PHOTO: K. BHAGYA PRAKASH

what unfolds from there.'

"It's a bad stain for New Zealand cricket and put pressure on Ross and me. Then it led me to eventually take over from Ross," said McCullum.

mense amount of respect for him," said McCullum.

Taylor was given the option of remaining the Test captain, with McCullum leading the limited-overs sides, but he declined.

"I was asked if I wanted to take over the role of New Zealand captain in all three formats. So initially, I told them I would get back to them. I needed to think long and hard about it. I knew it would be a major controversial decision. I knew it could have major ramifications on NZ cricket, and also on my time as a player," he said.

McCullum eventually took over in all formats in December 2012 and remained in the role until his retirement in 2016.

in Himachal Pradesh in February 2020.

According to *ESPNCricket*, the BCA's apex committee will now form a probe committee that will look into the allegations made against Bedade.

Baseless and false?
The 53-year-old, who played 13 ODIs for India in 1994 and scored one half-century, said the allegations were a "surprise" to him, and "baseless and false".



Atul Bedade.
■ FILE PHOTO: VIJAY SONEJI

'All efforts will go waste if Games are cancelled'

I just want to get an Olympic medal for myself, says Mirabai Chanu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Mirabai Chanu has only one prayer on her lips, that the Tokyo Olympics go on as per schedule despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Otherwise, all her efforts of trying to win an Olympic medal will go down the drain.

For the last four years, Mirabai has laboured for a successful Olympics outing but all she can think of right now is about the fate of the July 24-August 9 Games, which could be postponed due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

"If the Olympics don't happen all our efforts for the last four years will go to waste. I don't want it to cancel, I am praying to God every day. I just want to get an



Mirabai Chanu. ■ FILE PHOTO: PTI

Olympics and it should not be cancelled. That's all I'm thinking.

"The rest, training, etc. I am not worried about right now. Even if it's postponed there will be a lot of problem because a lot can change in a short period of time for us," she said.

Schedule gone haywire

Weightlifting's Olympic qualifying schedule has also gone haywire.

The International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) had to cancel five continental championships, including the Asia event.

The Asian Championships, which was relocated from Kazakhstan to Tashkent in Uzbekistan was the

last tournament before the Olympics for Mirabai. She had missed out on a bronze by a whisker last year.

The Manipuri, had aimed to improve her total effort of 203kg (88kg+115kg).

"I was preparing for Asian very well. There was a lot of uncertainty whether it will happen or not. I have already qualified for the Olympics but in the Asian Championship we would have got a clear picture," she said.

"I wanted to improve my effort here so that I could go to the Olympics high on confidence. That was the target. If the Asian Championship had taken place it would have been a good platform for me to better my performance."

Gasly vows to be 'stronger' for F1 start

Says he is happy to shun the hastily organised virtual world



Pierre Gasly. ■ REUTERS

me before the season resumes to prepare physically.

That strength and stamina will prove useful in August when it's possible that some of the postponed races will be shoe-horned breathlessly into successive weekends.

Challenging

Gasly said it would be challenging to race three weekends in a row.

"It's exhausting as you lose between two and three kilos per race and then you have the flights," said Gasly. "There is an intensity during a race weekend – from morning to evening, it never stops."

However, Gasly insisted that taking part in F1's virtual reality races, announced on Friday, was not an option to prepare for the real thing.

"In Dubai, we don't have a 'sim' (simulator), just a PlayStation, so I play games other than F1," explained Gasly.

SAI centres to be used for quarantine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

PARIS

The Sports Authority of India (SAI) centres, which have been shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, will be used as quarantine facilities for patients of the deadly disease, the Sports Ministry said on Sunday.

The decision to allow all SAI regional centres, stadiums and hostels to be used as quarantine facilities was taken following a request from the Health Ministry.

"Yes, we have decided to allow all our centres to be used as quarantine facilities after the Health Ministry asked for it. It is a pandemic and all the SAI centres are public properties," sports secretary Radhey Shyam Jhalaniya said. He, however, did not specify exactly when these centres will be put to use.

SAI has 10 regional centres and five stadiums in the national capital under it.

Gasly vows to be 'stronger' for F1 start

Says he is happy to shun the hastily organised virtual world



Pierre Gasly. ■ REUTERS

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IN BRIEF



Pope calls for world prayer to stop COVID-19

VATICAN CITY

Pope Francis said on Sunday he will this week deliver an extraordinary "Urbi et Orbi" (to the city and the world) blessing — normally given only at Christmas and Easter — and called for worldwide prayer to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. The Pope made the surprise announcement in his weekly Angelus message. **REUTERS**



Netflix' \$100 mn fund to help film, TV workers

LOS ANGELES

Netflix has created a \$100 million fund to assist workers on film and television productions that have been shut down due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the company has said. Hundreds of thousands of cast and crew around the world have lost work amid the crisis. That includes electricians, carpenters, drivers and other hourly workers. **REUTERS**



Russian billionaire hands out free masks

MOSCOW

When Moscow-based billionaire Igor Rybakov saw medical masks becoming scarcer and more expensive in Russia, he bought up a batch to hand out free to people. The entrepreneur is handing out up to nine medical masks to anyone who has registered online. "I would want the speculators who profit from these difficult times to go bankrupt." **REUTERS**

Air quality is picking up in quarantined countries

Striking reduction in concentration of NO₂ reported in China, Italy and Spain

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

PARIS

Air quality is improving in countries under COVID-19 quarantines, experts say, but it is far too early to speak of long-term change.

Images by the U.S. space agency NASA are clear, in February the concentration of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) fell dramatically in Wuhan, China, the epicentre of the COVID-19 pandemic, passing from an indicator that was red/orange to blue.

NO₂ is mainly produced by vehicles, industrial sites and thermal power stations.

As China moves past the peak of its crisis, however, recent images by the European Space Agency (ESA) show a resurgence in NO₂ emissions.

A striking reduction has also been observed by the ESA in northern Italy, which has been locked down to fight a spread of the novel coronavirus.

The European Environ-



Breathing easy: The road connecting Rome to Ostia is seen completely empty due to the lockdown. **GETTY IMAGES**

ment Agency (EEA) reports a similar change in Barcelona and Madrid, where Spanish authorities issued confinement orders in mid March.

Dramatic drop-off

"NO₂ is a short-lived pollutant, with a lifetime in the atmosphere of about one day," said Vincent-Henri Peuch, from the EU earth surveillance programme Copernicus.

"As a result, this pollutant

stays near the emissions sources and can be used as a proxy of the intensity of activity in different sectors," he told AFP.

COVID-19

Fei Liu, an air quality researcher at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, noted the change in China, saying: "This is the first time I have seen such a dramatic drop-off over such a wide area for

a specific event."

Even during the economic crisis more than a decade ago, the decrease in NO₂ levels "was more continuous in time," according to EEA air quality specialist Alberto Gonzalez Ortiz.

In northern Italy, "average NO₂ concentration levels have been almost halved on average," Mr. Peuch remarked.

The pollutant can provoke serious inflammation of the respiratory system.

Confinement measures thus protect in two ways, by reducing the risk of COVID-19 infection and by easing pollution from road traffic, according to a group of French doctors.

It is nonetheless hard to know how much benefit the world's population will actually experience because, according to the health experts, "what will have more impact is the long term exposure," Mr. Gonzalez Ortiz said.

Sunderbans' honey hunters find a sweet way to fend off tiger attacks

They are turning to community apiculture for safety, livelihood

SHIV SAHAY SINGH

KOLKATA

From time immemorial, people from the villages of Sunderbans have been venturing into the dense mangrove forest inhabited by the royal Bengal tiger to collect the sweetest produce of the forest, honey.

Maulis (honey collectors), as they are called in Bengali, often risk their lives in the peak season to collect honey, armed with nothing but a prayer to Bon Bibi (the Forest Goddess). Going by the official estimates, at least five to six of these honey hunters (official figures) are killed by tigers every year.

In an attempt to ensure that the honey collected from the Sunderbans does not involve such risks to life, Directorate of Forest 24 Parganas (South), along with WWF India, has come up with a novel mechanism of community apiculture for collecting the forest produce.

The villagers of the fringe areas of Sunderbans have set up three cooperatives societies, the members of which have been provided with training and equipment, such as honey collection boxes. These boxes are placed inside forest camps and adjoining nylon-netted areas of the Sunderbans. Though located deep inside the mangrove forest, the camps and the adjoining areas are relatively safe and the maulis can go about their activity without any fear of tiger attacks.

"The project was inaugurated by State's Forest Minister Rajib Banerjee earlier this week. As of now, there are 70 members in the three cooperatives, who are involved in the community apiculture initiative. We are very hopeful that the number will increase in times to come," Santosha G.R. Divi-



Fully natural: A honey collector with a bottle of Bonphool wild honey. **FOREST DIVISION 24 PARGANAS SOUTH**

sional Forest Officer (DFO), 24 Parganas (South) told *The Hindu*.

Ecological balance

The cooperative societies located at Jharkhali, Kultali and Nalgora have been provided with financial support in the form of loans. The State's Panchayat and Rural Development department has facilitated the process of securing these loans by these cooperatives. The initiative is not only aimed at protecting the lives of honey collectors but also aimed at ensuring the ecological balance of the Sunderbans.

After June, the boxes will be sent to south Bengal forest, where the cooperatives will collect honey from Eucalyptus plantations. There are plans to sell the Bonphool through the Biswa Bangla, the State government's outlets.

WWF report

Human tiger conflict is a major issue in the Sunderbans. In the State of Art Report on the Biodiversity of Sunderbans, released by WWF India in 2017, Chandan Surabhi Das points out that between 1985 to 2009, tigers attacked 789 persons, of which 666 succumbed to their injuries. Nearly 14% of the victims were honey hunters, the document added.

While the number of human-tiger conflict have come down over the last few years because of better forest management and use of nylon fencing, instances of such tiger attacks are still reported.

Rihanna donates \$5 million in aid

Earlier, Hollywood couple Ryan Reynolds and Blake Lively had donated \$1 million

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LOS ANGELES

Singer Rihanna's non-profit organisation, the Clara Lionel Foundation, has donated \$5 million to COVID-19 response efforts.

The charity will be supporting Direct Relief, Partners In Health, Feeding America, the International Rescue Committee and World Health Organization's COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund as they continue to fight the pandemic in the U.S., the Caribbean and Africa.

"Never has it been more important or urgent to protect and prepare marginalised and underserved communities — those who will be hit hardest by this pandemic," said Justine Lucas, Executive Director of the Clara Lionel Foundation, in a statement to Billboard.

The funds will help to provide communities with critical protective gear, medical supplies, equipment and access to food.

Ms. Rihanna is the latest celebrity to donate for coronavirus relief efforts. Earlier this week, Hollywood couple Ryan Reynolds and Blake

Lively had donated USD 1 million to food banks.

Last week, celebrated fashion designer Donatella Versace and her daughter Aliegra Versace Beck, had donated €2,00,000 to a hospital in Milan, Italy, to help battle the novel coronavirus.

Fashion industry giant Giorgio Armani has also donated \$1.9 million to the Luigi Sacco and San Raffaele hospitals and the Istituto dei Tumori in Milan, as well as the Istituto Lazzaro Spallanzani in Rome.

The COVID-19 has claimed over 13,000 lives.



Rihanna

Cherries bring cheer



Visitors looking at the blooming cherry blossoms at Ueno park in Tokyo on Sunday. **REUTERS**

Wild berry gets a new cousin in Assam, but the 'Great Hedge of India' faces threat

Carissa kopili is threatened by a hydroelectric project and acidic water

RAHUL KARMAKAR

GUWAHATI

A multi-utility wild berry, whose thorny plant the British had used to build a barrier through India in the 1870s, has a hitherto unknown wilder cousin in Assam, a new study has revealed.

But unlike the abundant *Carissa carandas*, better known as *karonda* in Hindi, *kalakkai* in Tamil, *koromcha* in Bengali and *karja tenga* in Assamese, the *Carissa kopili* is threatened by the very river it is named after — Koplili in central Assam. Reasons: a hydroelectric project on the river and water turned acidic because of coal mining in Meghalaya upstream.

It took Jatinrao Sarma, Northern Assam Circle's

*Carissa carandas*

"The fruits were difficult to find amid a profusion of thorns. The pricks were worth it, as we established it as a new species, a wilder variety of the more familiar *karja tenga*," Mr. Sarma, one of the authors of the study, told *The Hindu* on Saturday.

The study, co-authored by Hussain A. Barbhuia of Mumbai's Bhabha Atomic Research Centre and Santanu Dey of Nagaland University's Department of Botany was published in the latest issue of the *Journal of Asia-Pacific Biodiversity*.

Karja tenga has been used as a traditional herbal medicine for a number of ailments such as diarrhoea, anaemia, constipation, indigestion, skin infections and urinary disorders. The

leaves have been used as fodder for silkworms while a paste of its pounded roots serves as a fly repellent.

The *Carissa carandas* was also among several thorny plants the British had grown 140 years ago for a 1,100-mile barrier apparently to enforce taxes and stop the smuggling of salt. In his book *The Great Hedge of India*, Roy Moxham had likened this short-lived barrier to the Great Wall of China.

"*Carissa kopili*, yielding white flowers from August-October and fruits from November-January, should have all the medicinal and utilitarian properties of its better-known cousin, but we have to ensure it survives the river that sustains it," Mr. Sarma said.

Fish fossil show how fins evolved into human hands

Their evolution into four-legged vertebrates was one of the most significant events, says study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MELBOURNE

Researchers have revealed new insights into how the human hand evolved from fish fins based on their analysis of an ancient fossil found in Miguasha, Canada.

Palaeontologists, including those from Flinders University in Australia, said the fish specimen has yielded the missing evolutionary link in the transition from fish to four-legged animals.

They said this happened during the Late Devonian period, millions of years ago, as fish began to foray in habitats such as shallow water and land.

The study, published in the journal *Nature*, noted that the 1.57 m long fossil



New revelation: A reconstruction of the *Elpistostege watsoni*, which lived about 380 million years ago. **REUTERS**

shows the complete arm — pectoral fin — skeleton for the first time in any elpistostegalian fish.

Using high energy X-Ray CT-scans, the scientists as-

sembled the skeleton of the pectoral fin, revealing the presence of a humerus (arm), radius and ulna (forearm), rows of carpus (wrist) and phalanges organ-

ized in digits (fingers).

"This is the first time that we have unequivocally discovered fingers locked in a fin with fin-rays in any known fish," said John Long, study co-author from Flinders University professor.

"The articulating digits in the fin are like the finger bones found in the hands of most animals," Mr. Long said.

The finding, according to the researchers, pushes back the origin of fingers in vertebrates to the fish level. They said it also reveals that the patterning for the vertebrate hand was first developed deep in evolution, just before fishes left the water.

The evolution of fishes into four-legged vertebrates was one of the most signifi-

cant events in the history of life, the study noted.

With this adaptation, the scientists said, vertebrates, or back-boned animals, were then able to leave the water and conquer land.

To complete this transition, they said, one of the most significant changes was the evolution of hands and feet. "The origin of digits relates to developing the capability for the fish to support its weight in shallow water or for short trips out on land. The increased number of small bones in the fin allows more planes of flexibility to spread out its weight through the fin," said study co-author Richard Cloutier from the Universite du Quebec in Canada.

After 7 years, olive ridleys go for daytime nesting in Ganjam

Over one lakh turtles have laid eggs along Rushikulya coast

SIB KUMAR DAS

BERHAMPUR

In a rare sight after a gap of seven years, mass nesting of olive ridley turtles was witnessed during the daytime along the Rushikulya rookery coast in Odisha's Ganjam district.

According to Berhampur Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Amlan Nayak, at around 2 a.m., 2,000 mother olive ridleys started coming out of the sea to the beach early on Saturday. The nesting went on till the sunrise. By Sunday evening, around one lakh mother olive ridleys had nested.

Usually, olive ridleys pref-



Mothers' space: Olive ridley sea turtles on Rushikulya Rookery in Ganjam. **SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT**

er to nest in darkness. "Sometimes due to pressure of delivery time, they may be opting to nest at daytime," said Bivash Pandav, scientist of Wild Life Institute of India (WII), who has been study-

ing olive ridleys for over two decades now.

Each nest dug up by the turtles, on an average, contains around 100 eggs. The incubation period is around 45 days.

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