



Kerala High Court stays State govt. order on deferment of salary
page 5



Centre drawing up plans to bring back Indians from West Asia
page 10



Trump suggests he may seek damages from China over COVID-19
page 12

Brazil's court orders probe into claims Bolsonaro tried to interfere in police affairs
page 12



NEARBY



Capital reports no death for third consecutive day
NEW DELHI
No COVID-19 related death was reported in Delhi for the third consecutive day on Tuesday. The city, however, reported 206 fresh cases, taking the total number of cases to 3,314, according to the Delhi government.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Shut down Azadpur Mandi, demand traders
NEW DELHI
With 11 confirmed COVID-19 cases, and another suspected case emerging from it on Tuesday, the traders' union at Azadpur Mandi has demanded that the wholesale fruits and vegetable market be shut down and declared a containment zone.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Gurugram police increase vigil at Delhi borders
GURUGRAM/NEW DELHI
The Gurugram police on Monday heightened the scrutiny of vehicles at its border with Delhi, allowing entry to only those with movement passes or catering to essential services. The Delhi police have arranged accommodation for around a thousand of its personnel staying in NCR in view of the increased vigil at the borders.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

OPPORTUNITIES ▶ PAGE 3

51 more deaths as cases near 30,000

Patient count rises by 1,594 in 24 hours; Health Minister promises India-made RT-PCR testing kits

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India has reported 1,594 new cases and 51 new deaths related to COVID-19 in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 29,974. This includes 22,010 active cases, 7,027 discharged and migration and 937 deaths.

The country currently is registering a recovery rate of 23.3%, the Health Ministry said on Tuesday.

Rising doubling rate

"For the last 14 days, our doubling rate is 8.7, while for the last 7 days, it is 10.2 days. In the last three days, it is 10.9 days roughly," Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said at an interaction with directors/ heads of Department of Bio-Technology,

COVID-19

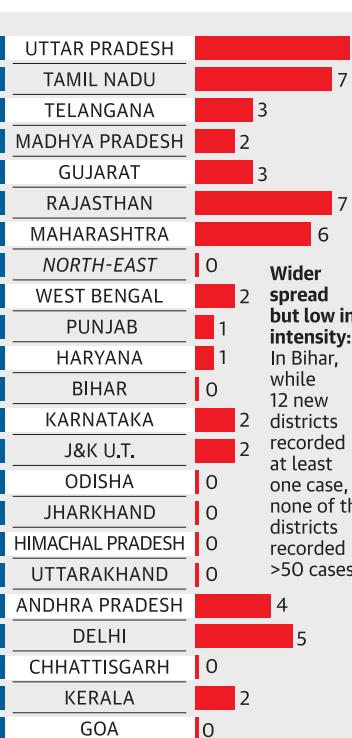
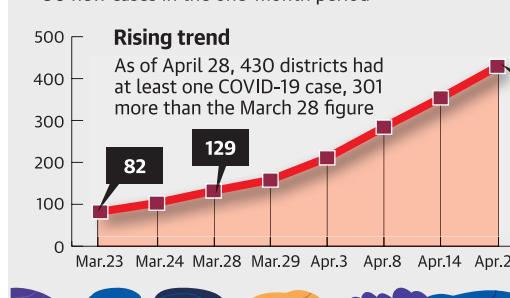
through video-conferencing. He added that no fresh case had been reported in 80 districts in last 7 days and 17 districts had no case in 28 days. "In 47 districts, no case has been reported in the last 14 days, while 39 districts have not reported a case since the last 21 days," he said.

Data from the State Health Departments put the nationwide death toll at 973 and the total number of cases at 30,415, with 22,088 active ones. Maharashtra continued to report the maximum

41

Spreading thick and fast

The graph shows the no. of new districts which recorded at least one COVID-19 case between Mar. 28 and Apr. 28 ■ and the number of districts which recorded >50 cases in the period ■. In U.P., 41 new districts recorded at least one case while 8 districts registered >50 new cases in the one-month period



number with over 8,500 active cases.

Gujarat reported 226 new positive cases, with Ahmedabad alone accounting for 164 in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of the affected people in the State to 3,774, a Health Department official said.

Ahmedabad reported its highest single-day fatalities with 19 deaths, taking the overall death toll in the State to 181.

The Health Minister has said that India will be able to

produce RT-PCR and antibody test kits by May-end.

Production soon

"All processes are in an advanced stage and production will start after getting approval from ICMR. It will help us in meeting our target of 1 lakh tests per day by May 31. We have issued directions to expedite the development of anti-body detection kits, real-time PCR-based detection kits and vaccines for COVID-19 under 'Make in India,'" Mr. Vardhan said.

Stating that India is tackling COVID-19 through a graded, pro-active and pre-emptive response strategy, he added.

It has also written to the States about reports of private hospitals hesitating to provide critical care to regular patients needing dialysis, blood transfusion, chemotherapy and institutional deliveries on account of the fear of contracting COVID; many are also keeping their premises closed.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

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

SIGNALLING SUPPORT

► EDITORIAL

Ministry does U-turn on plasma therapy

Treatment not proven: Health official

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

Plasma therapy is not an approved treatment for COVID-19 and is only one of the several therapies being explored currently, the Union Health Ministry said on Tuesday. The therapy is still at an experimental stage and the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) is currently studying its efficacy, it added.

"ICMR has not given any clearance for its use as a prescribed treatment and the misuse can have fatal outcome for the patients," the Ministry said.

The Health Ministry statement comes days after the Drug Controller General of India gave its go-ahead to a proposal by the ICMR for the clinical trial of convalescent plasma therapy in COVID-19 patients as per the protocol developed by the Council.



The ICMR has not given clearance, says the Centre.

▪ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

cy of plasma therapy in treatment of COVID-19.

"Till the ICMR concludes its study and a robust scientific proof is available, plasma therapy should be used only for research or trial purpose. If plasma therapy is not used in proper manner under proper guidelines, then it can also cause life threatening complications," he cautioned.

Last week, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan had asked the Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) to contact recovered COVID-19 patients to come forward for blood donation, from which convalescent plasma could be collected and used.

"As mentioned by ICMR, the convalescent plasma will be really helpful in treating severe and serious COVID-19 patients," Mr. Vardhan had said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

\$1.5 billion ADB loan to fund COVID response

Geared up



Taking precautions: A man wearing a mask grazing goats near Deverapalli in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday. People in remote villages too have started taking precautions in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. ▶ K.R. DEEPAK

Uncertainty clouds admission to undergraduate courses in city

Evaluate Class X, XII students on marks in internals: Sisodia

JAIDEEP DEO BHANJ
NEW DELHI

Uncertainty lingers over the future of students looking to enrol in undergraduate programmes in universities across the city as they have not yet completed their board examinations due to COVID-19 lockdown and the admission season is fast approaching.

In a meeting with Union Human Resource Development Minister Ramesh Pokhrayan and Education Ministers from other States, Delhi Education Minister Manish Sisodia said that it would not be possible to conduct pending board exams for Classes X and XII, and suggested that the students be evaluated on their performance in internal exams.

"It may not be feasible to conduct the remaining exams for Classes X and XII even in May-June. Having exams thereafter will delay the next academic cycle heavily," Mr. Sisodia said.

He appealed to Mr. Pokhrayan to direct the Central Board of Secondary Education to evaluate Class X and XII students on their internal exams scores, as was proposed for Classes IX and XI.

The University Grants Commission has recommended that the academic session 2020-21 commence from September 1 and the admission process be carried out between August 1 and 31. If the necessity arises, provisional admission may be allowed and the last date for submission of documents for qualifying examination be set as September 30.

Last year, Delhi University, which sees the bulk of applications for undergraduate courses, had started the admission process on May 30.

This year, it has not issued any notification on the admissions yet. Jawaharlal Nehru University will close the registration for admissions on April 30 and is scheduled to conduct the entrance examination in mid-May.

Mr. Sisodia also proposed reduction of syllabus by 30% in all classes for 2020-21. He requested the MHRD to provide Doordarshan and AIR slots to the Delhi government to broadcast classes. "If you grant us the slots, we will have our teachers on board to conduct the classes as per our lesson plan," he said.

Explain MHA order on full wages, SC tells govt.

Bench asks Centre to reply in 2 weeks

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has given the Centre two weeks to explain a Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) order, issued on March 29, directing employers to pay full wages to their workers during the lockdown.

A three-judge Bench, led by Justice N.V. Ramana, on Monday, allowed Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the government, to file his response to a batch of petitions filed by several companies challenging the constitutional validity of the March 29 order, which mandates that industry, shops and commercial establishments, without exception, pay their workers without any deduction in the name of COVID-19. The petitions said a blanket direction to private establish-

ments to pay full salaries against no work was arbitrary and violative of Article 14 (right to equality) of the Constitution.

No obligation

"It is implicit in the fundamental right of an employer to trade or business that there is an obligation to pay when work is actually done and there is no obligation if no work is done. An employer and employee have reciprocal promises whereby the right of an employee to demand salary is reciprocal to performance of work by such employee. The employer has a right to not pay if no work is done," the petition filed by private firms such as Nagreeka Exports Limited and Ficus Pax Private Ltd. said.

The Maha Kumbh Mela is organised once in 12 years, and the last time the event was held in 2010, about 10 million reportedly congregated in the city.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Govt. starts planning for Haridwar Kumbh Mela

Mission for Clean Ganga discusses funds needed for community toilets, urinals

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI



Mega gathering: Maha Kumbh Mela is organised once in 12 years, and 10 million had congregated in Haridwar in 2010.

For organising the event, the State sought ₹85 crore from the NMCG for creating 16,075 community toilets (made of fibre and portable) and 20,000 community urinals. However, the Executive Committee of the NMCG deferred a decision on the grounds that several other components of the proposal – making provisions for dustbins and solid waste management – were not yet included and a decision on the project would be taken at the next meeting, according to a record of the minutes of the meeting. Rajiv Ranjan Mishra, Director-General, NMCG, did not respond to a request for comment.

Routine meeting

The meeting was convened via video-conference and had officials from the NMCG, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Ut-

tarakhand and is held every month to decide on funding for projects to clean the Ganga as well as its tributaries.

A participant at the meeting told *The Hindu* that there was no discussion with Uttarakhand on whether it would be safe to organise the Kumbh Mela, given that the world is yet to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and the global case count continues to increase.

"There was no discussion on whether the organisation of the Kumbh would be impacted by COVID-19. But there's a lot of time left and the situation could change. If there's still as much of a risk as there is now, I'm sure measures will be taken," the person said.

However, preparing logistics in advance was par for the course, given the size of the event.

A similar Kumbh was organised in Prayagraj in 2019.

2 priests found dead on U.P. temple premises

Police nab a suspect within two hours

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

Two priests were found dead in a temple in a Bulandshahr village in the early hours of Tuesday, the police said. The murders sent shockwaves in the region as it reminded locals of the Palgarh incident in Maharashtra, where two priests were allegedly killed by a mob. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath asked the police for a report by the evening.

Within two hours, the police arrested a person in a neighbouring village and charged him with the murder. Santosh Kumar Singh, Senior Superintendent of Police, Bulandshahr, said the chowkidar of village Pagona found the bodies of Sher Singh, 35, and Jagdishdas, 55, on the Shiv temple premises around 5 a.m.

The villagers said Murari, a drug addict who belongs to a Scheduled Caste, had stolen the priests' chintas [tongs] on Sunday and the priests had berated him. He was nabbed in an inebriated state in his underwear. An FIR has been filed against him under Section 302 of the IPC," he said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8



The suspect allegedly involved in the murders in Bulandshahr. ▶ PTI

"The villagers said Murari, a drug addict who belongs to a Scheduled Caste, had stolen the priests' chintas [tongs] on Sunday and the priests had berated him. He was nabbed in an inebriated state in his underwear. An FIR has been filed against him under Section 302 of the IPC," he said.

AN-ND-NDE

Timings

DELHI

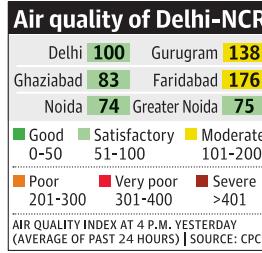
WEDNESDAY, APR. 29
RISE 05:43 SET 18:56
RISE 10:19 SET 00:00
THURSDAY, APR. 30
RISE 05:42 SET 18:56
RISE 11:18 SET 00:38
FRIDAY, MAY. 01
RISE 05:41 SET 18:57
RISE 12:21 SET 01:28

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	34	22
Safdarjung	34	22
Palam	36	22

Delhi Palam Today
36°C The weather will be warm with partly cloudy sky. Chances of duststorm over parts of the city.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
37°C A warm and cloudy sky to prevail. Night will be pleasant. Light spell of duststorm and thundershower is likely.

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IN BRIEF

JNU to organise webinar from May 2

NEW DELHI
Jawaharlal Nehru University on Tuesday announced that its School of Sanskrit and Indic Studies and School of Languages, Literature and Cultural studies will organise a webinar – Leadership lessons from the Ramayana. It will be held on May 2 and May 3 between 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. on the Zoom platform.

Delhi University teachers on hunger strike

NEW DELHI
Several DU teachers on Tuesday observed a day-long hunger strike to protest the non-payment of salaries, DUTA said. "The government has so far not cared to respond to the repeated pleas by the DUTA for the immediate release of salaries," the group said.

Azadpur Mandi a virus hotspot, city govt. should close it: traders

Authorities say 11 cases linked to market, but sellers claim figure is over 20

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

With 11 confirmed COVID-19 cases, and another suspected case emerging from it on Tuesday, the traders' union at Azadpur Mandi has demanded that the wholesale fruits and vegetable market be shutdown.

They said that the mandi has become a virus hotspot and should be declared a containment zone. Almost a dozen cases have come to light from the area between April 20 and April 26.

While a senior government official put the number of COVID-9 cases connected to the mandi at "around a dozen", Anil Malhotra, member of the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (Azadpur), said there were "at least 20" cases that needed to be probed. These cases have surfaced



On April 20, the Delhi government had announced that the mandi would remain open round-the-clock. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

over the last week and one person has died.

"There are easily over 20 cases which are also just the tip of the iceberg. Labourers at the mandi have not been tested and no camp has been set up for it despite cases increasing daily," he said, adding.

The whole area needs to be shut down and converted into a containment zone. The produce can be sold at other open spaces such as Japanese Park in Rohini, Niranjan grounds, and Chhatrasal Stadium. What is the government waiting for?"

No social distancing

Social distancing norms are also not being enforced, especially at night, he further said. Official records show 11 confirmed cases were reported from shops located in

A, B, C and D blocks. A total of 34 individuals are in quarantine; half of them are on the premises of the mandi.

The government, meanwhile, said it is undertaking screening. "As many as 300 individuals have been screened so far. It is a continuous drive and more will be examined in the days to come," said a senior Delhi government official.

Adil Khan, chairman of the committee, said: "We are following social distancing norms. I am present on the premises of the mandi at night and oversee everything... As far as the number of cases are concerned, the official figure is so far at 11."

On April 20, the Delhi government had announced that the mandi would remain open round-the-clock to ensure uninterrupted supply of essentials.

Over 4 lakh challans issued for speeding since lockdown began

Most violations captured by camera: Police Commissioner

SAURABH TRIVEDI

NEW DELHI

Delhi Police Commissioner S.N. Shrivastava on Tuesday said no one is above law and motorists should not violate traffic rule when travel time is down to a minimum during the lockdown.

■ No one is above law, motorists should not violate traffic rule when travel time is minimum during the lockdown

S.N. SHRIVASTAVA

Commissioner of Delhi Police

gistered in 2019 between April 1 and April 15; in 2020, 66 such cases were registered during the same period.

Crime dip

In the same period last year, a total of 10,579 cases were lodged; this year only 2,574 cases were registered.

Reports of cases of murder and rape have also reduced by over 75%. In 2020, four cases of murder and 21 cases of rape were registered in Delhi; last year, 19 murder cases and 93 rape were registered during the first two weeks of April.

The crime rate in Delhi dropped by 42% in the last two weeks of March as compared to the same period last year. A total of 1,990 cases were registered from March 15 to 31 this year as against 3,416 cases during the same period last year.

Police bid to intimidate Kawalpreet, claims AISA

Seizure memo cites FIR with UAPA charge

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The All India Students' Association (AISA) on Tuesday said that as part of a series of arrests and intimidation of student activists, Delhi Police went to its State president Kawalpreet Kaur's house on April 27 and seized her mobile phone saying that it was required as part of an inquiry into the northeast Delhi riots.

"The seizure memo given to her cites an FIR with a slew of charges including the Unlawful Activities [Prevention] Act [UAPA]," the AISA alleged in a statement. It added that the attempt to intimidate Ms. Kaur comes in the wake of similar acts of

intimidation and arrests – especially targeting prominent voices in the movement to save India's Constitution by opposing the CAA, NPPR and NRC.

The students' association alleged that while police have claimed that its targeting of AISA and other students' groups is based on painstaking "investigations" and "evidence", in reality it was simply acting on a script that had been prepared by the government in power.

"Ms. Kaur along with AISA activists joined thousands of students in raising their voices against CAA. AISA activists participated in peaceful protests," it said.

Two months, five accommodations and yet far from home

A couple struggles to manage their lives, first amid riots and now the COVID-19 pandemic

HEMAMI BHANDARI

NEW DELHI



Imran Khan and Muskaan have not seen their son since February, when riots broke out. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

From their rented accommodation in Shiv Vihar to Chaman Park, Chaman Park to Idgah, Idgah to another rented accommodation and now to the top floor of a madrasa building, the riots which broke out in the Capital in February have left a family living like nomads.

Muskaan and her husband Imran Khan have shifted four times since February and haven't seen their nine-year-old son ever since. They have been living with bare minimum essentials, dependent on money from the NGOs they had met at the Idgah relief camp.

Torn clothes

Wearing blue-coloured kameez with a salwar, Muskaan pointed at two pairs, "These were given to me by a woman where I had gone to bathe while staying at the Idgah camp. My clothes were torn so she gave me these. The one I am wearing was picked up by my

husband from a pile of clothes lying there. The clothes were stinking but we didn't have an option," she recalled.

Muskaan recalled that she and Imran left their rented accommodation in Shiv Vihar, which was looted by the mob, and shifted to Chaman Park without picking up a single belonging and were further sent to Idgah where they stayed for more than 20 days. Recalling the night they were asked to leave from the Id-

gah relief camp, Muskaan said, "It was raining heavily. They asked us to leave because of COVID-19 outbreak. They gave us ₹3,000 and a packet of ration which they claimed will last three months. It's over in a month. I remember we didn't even get a rickshaw and had to walk all the way in the rain," she said.

On street number 19, they rented a room for ₹2,500.

Just as they started to settle, rent for the second

month approached. The landlord asked Imran and Muskaan for rent which they didn't have. "The landlord said he is also managing his needs with the rent money. But we were barely managing ourselves and paying rent was very tough," said Imran, adding that he started looking out for other possibilities.

Finally, an acquaintance decided to help and offered the couple an unfurnished floor of a multistorey building he owns, where a madrasa is functioning. The couple picked up their minimal belongings for the fourth time and left on April 22.

Five days ago, they shifted refrigerator, TV, utensils, and a few clothes from their Shiv Vihar accommodation to this place. "We didn't shift the belongings as we didn't have a permanent place," said Muskaan.

The couple got an FIR registered as their house was looted and also submitted documents for compensation but haven't received the money yet, they

Arrests in riot cases to be done in accordance with SC guidelines'

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has directed that arrests in connection with the recent riots in the Capital, shall be done in accordance with the Supreme Court guidelines related to arrest and detention.

A Bench of Justice Siddharth Mridul and Justice Talwant Singh which also issued

notice to the Centre, Delhi government and police seeking their stand on a petition

alleging that arrests in connection with the riots were being made during the lockdown.

Jamiat Ulama-I-Hind, in its plea, has contended that while the top court has called for a need to decongest jails in wake of coronavirus pan-

demic, the police was arresting people "on the pretext of investigation of offences related to the Delhi riots".

The Centre, during the hearing conducted through video conferencing, told the bench that all the arrests made so far and those which would be made in future, shall be strictly in accordance with guidelines laid

down by the Supreme Court. "Directed accordingly," the court said on Monday after noting the Centre's submission and listed the matter for further hearing on June 24.

The court also clarified that all the individuals who according to the petition have been arrested so far, "are at liberty to institute appropriate proceedings in ac-

Rights' body seeks release of activists

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) on Tuesday demanded that activists Anand Teltumbde and Gautam Navlakha, who surrendered before the National Investigation Agency in Mum-

bai and Delhi respectively on April 14 in connection with the Bhima Koregaon case, be given interim bail in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. The human rights' organisation said other vulnerable prisoners of advanced age and ailments should also be re-

leased. "Both Prof. Teltumbde and Mr. Navlakha were interrogated by the NIA and have been sent to judicial custody. It has come to light that one of the officers of the NIA, Mumbai, has tested positive for COVID-19 in this period," the PUDR said.

Students form union to end eviction by landlords

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Students living on rent here have formed a union to "fight harassment by landlords and PG owners".

Despite a recent circular issued by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority, landlords are harassing and threatening students with eviction, said Student Tenant Union Delhi (STUD) on Tuesday.

Some residents of an all girls PG in Gurumandi, including those who have re-

turned to their hometowns, have complained that they are being threatened with eviction notices if they failed to pay rent, the group said, adding that some owners have warned the students that their belongings will be thrown away.

The group has helped students file a police complaint at the Model Town police station in this regard.

The group has demanded unconditional suspension of rent during the lock-down.

**DIBRUGARH UNIVERSITY
DIBRUGARH**

NOTIFICATION

It is hereby notified to all concerned that the last date of submission of application forms for various teaching posts advertised vide Advt. No. A-1/2020 dated 17-03-2020 has been extended until further notification and fresh date for submission shall be notified in due course of time.

Sd/- Registrar

e-Tender Notice Against N.I.T. No. 28_2ndCall / S.E.S.C.S. P.W.D. of 2019-20

Tender Reference No: WBPWD/SE/SC_SS/NIT28_2ndCall/2019-2020

Tender ID: 2020_WBPWD_282319

Name of Work: Construction of Additional two number class rooms with toilet on Academic block in the Campus of Post Graduate Institute for Physical Education, Banipur, North 24 Parganas. (2nd Call)

Estimated Amount: ₹ 52,74,434.00

Superintending Engineer, Southern Circle, Social Sector, P. W. Dte. 45, Ganesh Chandra Avenue, 5th floor, Kolkata - 700 013 (Ph no: 033-22360457) invites 1 (one) no. civil works for site in the district of North 24 Parganas through e-Tender.

**I) Bid Submission Upload End date (online): 20.05.2020 upto 14.00 Hrs. (IST)
II) Details will be available in e-Tendering Portal from the website <https://wbtenders.gov.in> directly.**

IN BRIEF

Portal launched for COVID-19 updates

NEW DELHI
The Delhi government has launched a single window for all COVID-19 related updates and information: DelhiFightsCorona.in. The website has the list and geo-locations of containment zones, testing facilities, ration shops, temporary relief centres and hunger relief centres in the city. It also features a daily tracker of the number of COVID-19 cases and testing statistics of Delhi in addition to a single window to apply for ration e-coupons and e-passes.

Policeman tests positive for COVID-19

NEW DELHI
A Delhi Police constable posted with the Crime Branch, who had allegedly visited the religious congregation in Nizamuddin to probe, was tested positive for COVID-19, the police said on Tuesday. The constable had visited the building in connection with the probe, they said. According to police, around 15 team members of Crime Branch who came in contact with the constable have been advised for home quarantine.

Delhi told to increase periphery of sealed areas

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI
The Capital needs to increase the periphery of sealed areas to fight COVID-19 better, said Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Tuesday while citing reports by experts.

He also expressed concern over the fact that 4.11% of health workers (including 13 paramedics, 26 nurses, 24 field workers, 33 doctors) in Delhi were infected. "This is a worrying trend. Currently, there are around 100 hotspots in Delhi, this number should go down," Dr. Vardhan said during a review meeting on the COVID-19 situation in the Capital held via videoconference.

Meanwhile, the medical fraternity under the Federation of Resident Doctors' Association (FORDA) has demanded designated COVID health centres for infected healthcare employees.

While appreciating the efforts of the Delhi government in providing facilities to doctors and staff on COVID-19 duty, it expressed concern over the rising number of healthcare staff getting infected.

Woman charged with killing in-laws found dead in jail

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI
A 35-year-old woman who was charged with murder of her parents in-law in Dwarika was found dead inside Tihar jail on Tuesday, the police said.

Enquiry revealed that the

Max wants to turn its Smart hospital into COVID-19 facility

Doctors question decision as Max East Block is already treating virus patients

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Doctors at Max Smart Super Speciality Hospital in Saket are concerned at the management's plan to turn it into a COVID-19 treatment facility at a time when the neighbouring Max Super Speciality Hospital, East Block, is already designated a COVID-19 hospital.

"Max Smart has so far managed to remain COVID-19 negative, but this decision of the management can expose doctors, nurses and other hospital employees here to infection," a doctor, who preferred anonymity, told *The Hindu*.

When contacted by this reporter, Dr. Gurpreet Singh, administrative head of Max hospitals in Saket, stated, "I do not want to comment on this." Separately, a spokesperson of Max Healthcare said, "There is nothing like this on the cards now."



Max Hospital staff at the entrance of the premises in the Capital. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

An estimated 105 COVID-19 patients are currently admitted in Max East Block of whom as many as 45 are Max hospital employees. "It doesn't make sense to move these persons to Max Smart and contaminate this hospital as well," the doctor said.

May 1 implementation

The idea appears to be to shift all COVID-19 positive patients from Max East Block to Max Smart and let non-CO-

VID patients be treated in the East Block. The plan is to be implemented on May 1 if the management has its way.

Doctors' concerns

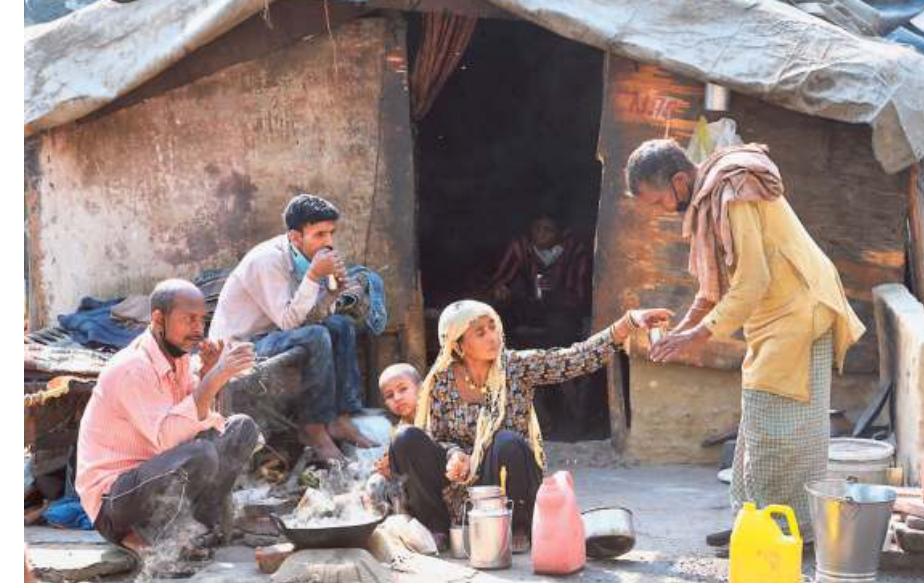
Several other doctors have taken up their concerns with the Max Hospitals' management, including seeking a town hall meeting, but the management reportedly was not keen on pursuing the idea.

A second doctor wrote in

an internal message that the decision to designate Max Smart should have been taken at the outset of the COVID-19 breakout. Yet another doctor warned in his message that several hospitals in the country had been shut down due to the spread of the pandemic.

On April 9, two persons, admitted to Max East Block Hospital with cardiac problems, and later shifted to Max Smart, after the former was turned into a dedicated COVID-19 treatment facility, tested positive for the virus.

On April 13, the Hospital had said that three people, including one doctor working at Max East Block, had tested positive for COVID-19. And, on Monday, the hospital said that 33 healthcare workers of the Max Super Speciality Hospital in Patparganj, East Delhi, including two doctors, had tested positive for COVID-19.



Taste of humanity: A slum dweller offers a cup of tea to a homeless man in Old Seemapuri during the nationwide lockdown. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Capital reports no deaths for third consecutive day

More doctors, employees of hospitals test positive for virus

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

No fresh virus-related deaths were reported in the city for the third consecutive day on Tuesday. However, 206 new cases were registered, taking the total to 3,314, according to the Delhi government.

Of the total cases, 1,078 people have recovered and there are 2,182 active cases. A total of 54 people have died due to the virus so far. Another area in the city has also been sealed off, taking the total number of containment zones to 100.

Meanwhile, four more people working at Delhi government's Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital, including a doctor, have tested positive for COVID-19, taking the total number of workers infected at the hospital to 31, said an official.

The Delhi government in an order on April 19 announced that ₹1 crore compensation would be given to families of anybody who loses their life while serving COVID-19 patients.

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

Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases	3,314
Total deaths	54
New cases in the past 24 hours	206
New deaths in the past 24 hours	0

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

terday [Monday] and they have been quarantined," a doctor at the hospital told *The Hindu*. Neither the PRO nor hospital Medical Superintendent Balvinder Singh commented on the two doctors testing positive.

Earlier in the day, around 25 nurses of GB Pant Hospital protested against violation of treatment guidelines by authorities. "Any patient who comes to the hospital has to be admitted in a separate block and tested negative for COVID-19 before moving to general ward according to rules, but this is not being done," said L.D. Ramchandani, president of the Nurses' Association of GB Pant Hospital.

WE ARE WITH YOU

During this lockdown the Delhi Government is committed to the safety of all women. In this difficult time preventing domestic abuse is a top priority. If you feel insecure at any point of time, during this lockdown Delhi government has implemented following measures to protect you.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT, 2005 :

Protection officers have been appointed to assist women courts for better and effective protection of the rights of women suffering from domestic violence.

WOMEN HELPLINE (24X7):

If you feel insecure at any point of time, during this lockdown dial Delhi Commission for Women's toll free helpline 181, or send a message on the given whatsapp helpline number 9350-181-181

INSTITUTIONAL SERVICES:

Women in distress, destitute women or women who need care and protection can seek shelter in shelter homes run by the Delhi government and NGOs. List is available at www.wcddelhi.in.

SAKHI ONE STOP CENTRE (24X7):

The scheme provides integrated services such as psychosocial counselling, legal assistance, police assistance, medical care and temporary shelter. Detailed information is available at www.wcddelhi.in, or the women's helpline 181.

WE ARE JUST A CALL AWAY



OPPORTUNITIES

GENERAL

Energy Centre, Sivasagar (Assam) of Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Petroleum Technology
(An Institute of National Importance Established Under an Act of Parliament)
Jais, Amethi
Website: [www.rgipat.ac.in](http://rgipt.ac.in)

FACULTY RECRUITMENT NOTICE

Advt. No.: RGIP/Sivasagar/FA/01/2020

Assam Centre, Sivasagar of RGIP invites ONLINE applications from eligible candidates for post of Lecturer (Pay Level-10) in following disciplines:

- Petroleum Engg.; Chemical Engg.; Mechanical Engg.; Electrical Engg.; Computer Science & Engg. ; Fire and Safety Engg.; Electronics & Instrumentation Engg.; Sciences; Humanities & Social Sciences

Interested applicants may visit <https://rgipat.ac.in/en/page/faculty-recruitment> for eligibility criteria and apply online.

Opening date: 01-05-2020

Closing date: 15-06-2020

SOUTH DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR LOCAL BODIES
(TOLL TAX DEPARTMENT)
14TH FLOOR, DR. SPM CIVIC CENTRE
MINTO ROAD, JLN MARG, NEW DELHI-02
E-mail ID: tolltaxsdmc@gmail.com (PH- 011-23226422)
No: ADC/TT/HQ/SDMC/2020/D-1453 Dated : 28/04/2020

PUBLIC NOTICE
Name of work: Engagement of a contractor by SDMC (Lead Corporation acting on behalf of all three Municipal Corporations of Delhi) for Toll and Environment Compensation Charges (ECC) collection at border points from specified commercial vehicles entering Delhi.
SUB: Cancellation of NIT No. ADC/TT/HQ/SDMC/2020/D-1416 dated 06.04.2020.

Considering the provision at para 12 of NIT and at clause I, sub-clause 2.0 of Section-2 of RFP document Vol.-I, Competent Authority has cancelled the NIT No. ADC/TT/HQ/SDMC/2020/D-1416 dated 06.04.2020. The EMD of the bidder shall be refunded.

Addl. Dy. Commissioner
(Toll Tax Department)

Ro No. 10/DPI/S/2020-21

Raise Tricolour on rooftops on May 1 against Centre: Congress

Union govt. discriminating against non-BJP-ruled States, alleges Sunil Jakhar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Accusing the BJP-led government at the Centre of discriminating against non-BJP-ruled States in the matter of extending support in the fight against COVID-19, the Congress has urged the people in Punjab to raise the Tricolour from the rooftops of their homes on May 1 as a mark of protest.

The idea was mooted by State Congress president Sunil Jakhar at a videoconference with party MLAs today. Chief Minister Amarinder Singh pointed out that the State was losing ₹3,360 crore monthly in revenue and would end up



Punjab Congress president Sunil Jakhar. ■ FILE PHOTO

with a loss of almost ₹50,000 crore in a year.

"The State has received no help so far from the Centre," he said.

Sunil Jakhar said the event, coinciding with May Day (Labour Day), will serve to underscore the right of

Punjab to central aid in this unprecedented crisis. "Punjab is an integral part of India and the central government cannot discriminate against us," he said, asserting that the party would demand ₹20,000 crore as an immediate relief.

He said the event will also be a mark of solidarity with the farmers, workers and all corona warriors who were battling the crisis from the front.

Terming it a case of 'seeking our right', Mr. Jakhar said Punjab was not begging but merely asking for its rightful share. He added what Punjab was asking was peanuts compared with what many

other States had demanded.

21-day quarantine

Meanwhile, Capt. Amarinder announced compulsory 21-day quarantine for all those returning to the State from other places to check further spread of the virus. "All pilgrims returning from Nanded, and students and labourers coming from Rajasthan will be stopped at the border and sent to government quarantine centres to ensure that they do not mix with other people for 21 days," he said.

He said there was consensus among the MLAs to continue with the strictness for another couple of weeks.

other States had demanded.

21-day quarantine

Meanwhile, Capt. Amarinder announced compulsory 21-day quarantine for all those returning to the State from other places to check further spread of the virus. "All pilgrims returning from Nanded, and students and labourers coming from Rajasthan will be stopped at the border and sent to government quarantine centres to ensure that they do not mix with other people for 21 days," he said.

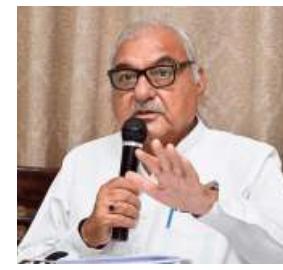
He said there was consensus among the MLAs to continue with the strictness for another couple of weeks.

Cong. slams Khattar govt. for job freeze

Move will severely hurt State's youth in these challenging times, says Hooda

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH



Bhupinder Singh Hooda. ■ FILE PHOTO

employment in both urban and rural areas as many employed persons have lost their jobs.

"Youth must be given more jobs to overcome the current situation but the government is instead working in the opposite direction," said Mr. Hooda.

"Today, the State needs more and more doctors, medical staff, sanitation workers and other employees. Instead of freezing the recruitment of personnel, the process should be expedited in view of the corona epidemic. Only creating new employment opportunities can pull our youth out of the darkness and despair of unemployment," he added.

State Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar had an-

nounced to put a moratorium on new recruitments in government jobs for a year in the backdrop of financial crises in the State following the lockdown after COVID-19 outbreak. Besides, the government had also announced not to pay leave travel concession to government employees for a year.

'Insensitive move'

Asking the BJP-JP government to immediately take back the decision, senior Congress leader Randeep Singh Surjewala said the decision was an "insensitive" one, which was a severe blow to the dreams and aspirations of the youth in Haryana. "I urge the government to take back the order," he said.

Workers leave Surat in buses for Odisha

STAFF REPORTER
BERHAMPUR

Five buses with 288 Odia migrant labourers from Surat in Gujarat are on their way to Odisha's Ganjam district.

As they are returning from Surat where COVID-19 infection is on the rise, Ganjam district administration has started taking precautionary measures. These migrant workers were given special permission by Surat district administration to travel by buses, said Pitam-

bar Pradhan, an Odia lawyer based in Surat. All of these workers were working in textile mills of Surat.

These buses started from Surat on Monday. According to sources, they may reach Ganjam on Wednesday. Each of these 288 migrant labourers paid around ₹3,500 to hire the private buses.

Mr. Pradhan was critical of the Surat administration for allowing these workers to leave for Odisha, while the country-wide lockdown

continues till May 3. There was no medical check up of these workers before they boarded the buses.

Four of these buses carried 57 passengers each, while the fifth bus had 60 workers, said Mr. Pradhan. He added social distancing was completely neglected.

According to Ganjam District Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange, the workers will be immediately put into quarantine when they reach the district.

Gurugram police increase vigil at Delhi borders

Minister says Haryana would be in 'comfortable position' if borders remain sealed for 15-20 days

'Reconsider movement ban'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

VID-19 pandemic.

In a letter to Haryana Home and Health Minister Anil Vij, Mr. Bidhuri appreciated the efforts being made by his government to curb the pandemic. However, he reminded him that frontline workers, posted in various departments in Delhi, live in Haryana.



Gurugram police personnel checking vehicles at the border. ■ ASHOK KUMAR

Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij on Tuesday told the PTI that the State's borders with Delhi were sealed with essential services allowed, but stricter restrictions imposed on those coming from the national Capital.

He was further quoted as saying that Haryana would be in a "comfortable position" as far as COVID-19 cases were concerned if the borders remained sealed for 15-20 days.

Sub-Inspector Bal Kishan,

in-charge Delhi-Gurugram border check-point on National Highway-48, said more than two dozen vehicles coming from Delhi were made to return after they could not produce valid documents.

He, however, added that those with valid movement passes and falling under the essential commodities category as allowed by the Union Home Ministry and cases involving medical emergencies were being allowed.

Though the Sub-Inspector claimed that government employees and officials were allowed, the Delhi police personnel manning the check-point on the opposite carriageway claimed that their colleagues staying in Gurugram were facing issues in commuting.

Deputy Commissioner of Police, East, Chander Mohan, did not comment on the matter.

Meanwhile, Delhi Police Commissioner S.N. Shrivastava said that arrangements were made for 1,000 police personnel to stay back in Delhi at 60 places to avoid commuting. Around 30% Delhi Police staff lives in NCR and commutes to the city.

Mr. Shrivastava said more places were being identified to accommodate the remaining staff. A helpline has also been set up for the family of these police personnel to contact them and enquire about their well-being.

Fruit vendor thrashed by locals in U.P.'s Kheri

They alleged he had spit water on watermelons

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

Talking to a local TV channel, Mr. Ali showed bruises and swelling on his neck, arm and hamstrings, alleging that he was beaten up by the public and the police.

"Public surrounded me and started hitting me. Police didn't help, they hit me," he said.

The Kheri police said a team from the Kotwali Sadar police station reached the spot on April 25 after the allegation was circulated on WhatsApp groups and that local women had caught hold of him.

"Due to the heat he was carrying a bottle of water with him. Then a few local youths came there and started creating a ruckus," said the Kheri police.

Police had to use mild force to disperse the crowd

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

A group of people in Haryana's Chandpur village in Ambala opposed and attempted to disrupt the funeral of an elderly woman as they suspected that she had died of COVID-19 and feared that her cremation would spread the virus, the police said.

The police said mild force was used to disperse the crowd after they pelted stones at the police personnel and members of the health department and the municipal committee at the cremation site in the village

on Monday evening.

"A team of the health department, the police and the municipal committee had come to the village to cremate the body of the woman, who died at a civil hospital in Ambala Cantonment, but around 100-150 people, breaking the lockdown, came there and tried to oppose the cremation," a police officer present at the site told reporters.

Stones pelted

He said when the police tried to ally their fears over spread of COVID-19 infec-

tion, many started pelting stones after which the police had to use mild force to disperse them. "The deceased was later cremated in the presence of the police," he said.

The deceased had been admitted to the civil hospital after complaining of breathing problems and her samples had been sent for tests, the report of which is still awaited.

Ambala Superintendent of Police Abhishek Jorwal said that the police had detained nearly a dozen villagers and investigation in the matter was under way.

Animal poaching registers a sharp increase during lockdown

Besides chinkaras and blackbucks, poachers have targeted peacocks, grey francolins in Rajasthan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

The instances of poaching of wild animals and birds, including the endangered chinkara or Indian gazelle, have registered a sharp increase across Rajasthan during the COVID-19 lockdown, with the hunters taking advantage of slack monitoring and sparse public movement in the remote areas.

Armed poachers have been moving inside the national parks and wildlife sanctuaries since the lockdown was enforced. Besides killing chinkaras and blackbucks, the poachers have targeted peacocks, grey francolins and other birds covered under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, as endangered species.

During the last one week, instances of chinkara poaching were reported in Pali,



Environmental activist Anil Bishnoi tending to an injured chinkara in Rajasthan. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Jodhpur, Jaisalmer and Nagaur districts.

Several of the cases were detected and reported to the forest authorities by the members of the Bishnoi community, which is known for its beliefs associated with nature worship and wildlife conservation.

During the last one week,

instances of chinkara poaching were reported in Pali, near Bhundel village in Nagaur district late on Sunday night. Range Officer Hemendra Sirodiya said the villagers had earlier reached the spot but the poachers fled. In another incident near Guddha Bhagwan village, the local residents nabbed one poacher, while two others escaped.

Forest and police teams recovered a chinkara carcass

near Olwada village adjoining the Ranthambore National Park in Sawai Madhopur district on Saturday. When the villagers tried to catch them, they fired in the air and fled with the carcass of the antelope which was tied to a bike.

Caught a poacher

Wildlife lovers assisted by a teacher, Pradeep Bishnoi, caught a poacher who killed a blackbuck near Napawas village in Pali district's Sojat block on Monday. Similarly, chinkara meat being cooked by some poachers was seized in Jaisalmer district's Ramgarh village on Sunday night, according to Divisional Forest Officer Om Prakash Bishnoi.

The chinkaras are usually poached in Rajasthan, allegedly by the Bawaria community, whose traditional occupation is hunting.

Rashtriya Loktantrik Par-

ty MP from Nagaur, Hanuman Beniwal, has expressed concern over the increasing incidents of poaching.

Environmental activist Anil Bishnoi, who lives in Hanumangarh district's Lakhsar village, rescued a chinkara which was found injured in an agricultural field on Monday. Mr. Bishnoi, a recipient of the State-level Amrita Devi Environmental Award in 2009, gave primary aid to the animal and handed it over to the forest officials in Pilibanga.

The chinkaras are usually poached in Rajasthan, allegedly by the Bawaria community, whose traditional occupation is hunting.

Rashtriya Loktantrik Par-

SOUTH DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

NOTICE FOR INVITING TENDER THROUGH ONLINE MODE
[i.e. www.tenderwizard.com/SOUTHDMCTENDER](http://www.tenderwizard.com/SOUTHDMCTENDER)

TOLL TAX DEPARTMENT

Notice Inviting Offer cum Request For Proposal (RFP)
NIT No: ADC/TT/HQ/SDMC/2020/D-1454 Dated: 28.04.2020

ENGAGEMENT OF A CONTRACTOR BY SDMC (Lead Corporation on behalf of all the three Municipal Corporations of Delhi) FOR TOLL & ENVIRONMENT COMPENSATION CHARGE (ECC) COLLECTION AT BORDER POINTS FROM SPECIFIED COMMERCIAL VEHICLES ENTERING DELHI

The South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) invites online technical and financial proposals through www.tenderwizard.com/SOUTHDMCTENDER from interested developers/toll plaza operators to collect toll tax from specified commercial vehicles, upgrade/modify, operate, and maintain 124 toll plazas/posters/borders locations bordering Delhi. In addition to toll collection, the contractor shall also separately collect ECC as per actual basis and deposit the same on weekly basis. Collection of Toll & ECC shall be through newly installed RFDI System at 13 entry points and manually or likely to be installed RFDI system at remaining entry points of Delhi.

The work shall be granted for a period of 3 years extendable for further six month, if decided by Commissioner, SDMC with provision of increase of 5% (five percent) in the existing awarded amount / committed amount after two years.

- Reserve Price*: Rs. 636.00 crores annually (Rs. Six Hundred Thirty Six Crore only)
- Earnest money deposit = Rs.13.00 crores through online payment mode available at www.tenderwizard.com/SOUTHDMCTENDER or in the form of BG. The bidder who failed to submit EMD shall not be considered for opening of its technical bid and such bid shall be summarily rejected.
- An Applicant Firm or Consortium of Firms may submit their proposal.

*This reserve price is for toll amount only.

For project background, Broad role of contractor, Eligibility Criteria and Selection Process, please visit www.mcdonline.gov.in and visit www.tenderwizard.com/SOUTHDMCTENDER for copy of NIT and RFP document.

NOTE-The Applicant / Firm / Member of a consortium of firms and their subsidiaries either wholly owned or subsidiaries with percentage of any holding or step down subsidiaries with percentage of any holding or subsidiaries by control of composition of board / associates / consortium who has not cleared past dues of SDMC shall not be eligible to participate in the tender and such participation will be rejected, summarily. The applicant / firm / Member of consortium has been black-listed by either SDMC or any Govt. organization / Ministry / PSUs shall not be eligible to participate in the tender and such participation will be rejected, summarily.

RFP document shall be available on www.tenderwizard.com/SOUTHDMCTENDER for a non-refundable fee of Indian Rupees 1,00,000/- (Rupees One Lakh Only) payable through online mode available at www.tenderwizard.com/SOUTHDMCTENDER.

Pre-bid conference – 02.05.2020 at 03:00 PM will be held at meeting hall, Office of Commissioner, SDMC, at Ambedkar Stadium, Delhi Gate, Delhi. Prospective bidder may also join pre-bid meeting through video conference (Zoom). For video conference please contact to Sh. Khazan Bhardwaj, AO (TT), SDMC (Mobile No.: 8929143252).

Submission of Technical and Financial Proposal/Bid through Online mode available at www.tenderwizard.com/SOUTHDMCTENDER

Last date of submission of Proposal 12.05.2020 on or before 03.00 P.M. (IST) Date of opening Technical Bids 12.05.2020 at 03.30 P.M. (IST)

MOST IMPORTANT

The NIT, RFP document alongwith the bidding schedule shall be uploaded on www.tenderwizard.com/SOUTHDMCTENDER. For participation, online registration is required by the prospective bidders to avail user ID and Password. For detail please visit the facility available on above website at "Register with us". In case of any assistance regarding registration, please contact Sh. Irshad Ahmed - 8800900129 and Sh. Mohit Kumar - 9560095958 & through email sdmcprochelpdesk@gmail.com. The prospective bidders are also free to contact Sh. Khanan Bhardwaj, AO (TT) on his mobile no. 8929143252 in case of any difficulty.

This NIT issued subject to outcome of WP(C) No. 12483/2019 and WP(C) 2241 of 2020 pending before Hon'ble High Court of Delhi.

R.O. No. 09/DPI/S-2020-21

Sd/-
For Commissioner (SDMC)

Kerala community sampling finds new cases

Three of four fresh cases in State found through special drive; In A.P., burden of new cases continues to rise

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/
VIJAYAWADA/HYDERABAD/
BENGALURU

Four persons tested positive for COVID-19 in Kerala on Tuesday. Three of the cases were picked up from the community in the Health department's augmented sampling drive on Sunday with 3,101 swabs.

For the third day, Andhra Pradesh reported more than 80 fresh cases taking the tally to 1,259. Eleven new positive

COVID-19

cases were reported in Karnataka on Tuesday, taking the State total to 523. Telangana continued to show a dip with only six cases, and 42 people were discharged.

Two of Kerala's positive cases on Tuesday had a travel history abroad while the other two were "contacts". Three were in Kannur and one at Kasaragod.

Though the Idukki district

Maintaining vigil

Though the Kerala government has allowed partial relaxation of the lockdown norms in some districts, it has not compromised on the restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19.



Take your pick: A shop owner displaying coloured masks at a shop in Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday.

■ S. GOPAKUMAR

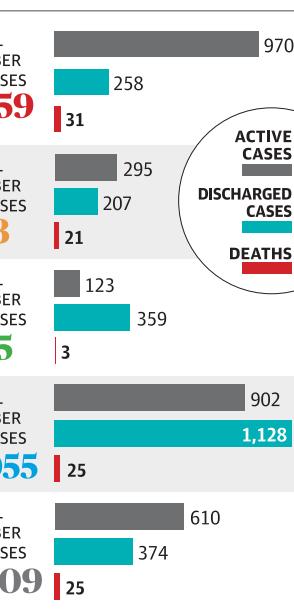
administration said it had three fresh cases, who had been shifted to the hospital, Chief Minister, Pinarayi Vijayan, said that these cases needed reconfirmation.

The patients in question had been moved to hospital and were under treatment,

he added. Of 485 COVID-19 cases reported in the State so far, 123 were under hospital care and 359 on the recovery list.

62 frontline staff

In Andhra Pradesh, 62 frontline staff were infected till



date. They included 31 health care providers, 12 doctors, 12 nursing staffers, five sanitation workers and two pharmacists who were dealing with COVID-19 patients, said Special Chief Secretary (Health, Medical and Family Welfare) K.S. Jawahar Reddy.

Many personnel of revenue and police departments were also infected.

Addressing the media on Tuesday Dr. Reddy said that the Governor Biswa Bhushan Harichandan and all other staff at Raj Bhavan tested negative. He said they were tested after four staffers of the Raj Bhavan were infected.

During the 24-hour period, 82 samples tested positive of a total 5,783 tests, the bulletin of the Health Department said. So far, 80,334 tests were conducted and the State stood first with 1504 tests per million population.

In Karnataka, six cases were from Kalaburagi. On Tuesday, 14 patients were discharged.

Primary and Secondary Education Minister S. Suresh Kumar said 39.5% of the total 523 patients had been discharged. Seven of the 295 patients isolated in different hospitals were in intensive care units. Also, three new cases were from Bagalkot district and one each from Bengaluru Urban and Gadag.

In Telangana with 1,009 cases - 610 active - the six new cases were from Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation limits.

103 cases in Chennai

With 103 new cases, Chennai witnessed another surge in COVID-19 on Tuesday, the city accounting for 85% of the 121 persons who tested positive across Tamil Nadu.

Among the new patients were two infants - a five-day-old baby in Chengalpattu and a seven-month-old child in Chennai.

With 103 fresh cases, Chennai's tally of COVID-19 cases soared to 673. In fact, the State's overall tally crossed the 2,000-mark on Tuesday. Tamil Nadu reported its first COVID-19 case on March 7. The total number of cases crossed the 1,000-mark on April 12. The count has doubled in 16 days, reaching 2,058.

Kerala HC stays State govt. order on salary deferral

'Financial difficulty not a valid reason'

K.C. GOPAKUMAR
KOCHE

The Kerala High Court on Tuesday stayed for two months the operationalisation of the State government order to defer the payment of the salary of government employees and the staff of State government-owned undertakings.

Justice Bechu Kurian Thomas passed the interim order on a slew of petitions filed by various unions challenging the order to defer payment of six days' salary every month from April to August. The order is not applicable to employees who draw a gross salary below ₹20,000.

The court observed that *prima facie* the law authorising the government to issue such an order was found wanting. There was ambiguity in the order on the manner in which the amount deducted was proposed to be set apart or was to be utilised. The order only referred to the financial difficulties faced by the government due to the COVID-19 situation.

Financial difficulty

Financial difficulty was not a ground for the government to defer payment of salary of its employees. *Prima facie*, deferment of payment of salary, for whatever purposes, amounted to denial of the right to property, the court added.

Counsel for the unions contended that Article 300A of the Constitution (right to property) would include within its ambit 'salary' as well.

The article mandates that no person shall be deprived of his/her property save by the authority of the law. They further argued that no



Deferment of payment of salary amounts to denial of right to property, the HC said.

Pinarayi silent about filing appeal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Tuesday refused to reveal whether the State would file an appeal against the High Court's stay on deducting the salary of government employees. Mr. Vijayan said the government was yet to review the order in its entirety. The State was constitutionally bound to obey the decision of the court.

law empowered the government to defer the salary payment of the employees. Besides, the payment could not be deferred without their consent.

Rejecting a contention of the government, the court pointed out that the Disaster Management Act or the Epidemic Diseases Act did not specifically confer any power on the government to defer salary payments during the times of any disaster.

Kerala to register those stranded in other States

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Department of Non-Resident Keralites Affairs (Norka) will commence online registration of those stranded in various States wanting to return home.

They can log on to the website registrernorkaroots.com from April 29 evening and provide details. As the same website is used for registration of non-resident Keralites wishing to return from foreign nations, a separate section will be available for those stranded in various States.

The government has prioritised the categories of those stranded for their return journey. A meeting

chaired by the Chief Minister on Tuesday took stock of the arrangements.

Unlike those arriving at the international airports, the government is looking into a proposal of the Transport Department to restrict the movement through six interstate checkpoints - Kumily, Arayankavu, Amaravila, Walayar, Muthanga and Manjeswaram.

2.76 lakh NoRKs register
Meanwhile, 2,76,700 NoRKs from 150 nations have registered on the website till Tuesday evening for returning to Kerala. The registration had commenced on Sunday but the Centre is yet to take a call on the flights and the dates for the same.

Left high and dry



Seeking a bailout: Lockdown-hit toddy tappers staging a protest seeking relief measures at Rajapalem in Andhra Pradesh's Prakasam district on Tuesday. ■ KOMMURI SRINIVAS

IN BRIEF



Kerala Chief Justice in home quarantine

Kerala Chief Justice S. Manikumar has gone into home quarantine in Kochi on Tuesday after a road trip from Chennai to Kochi. The Chief Justice is likely to confine himself to his official residence for 14 days as mandated by the quarantine protocol. The travel was facilitated after discussions between the Home Secretaries of the two States.

'Vidya Deevena' to benefit 14 lakh students
VIJAYAWADA
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday launched 'Jagananna Vidya Deevena', a fee reimbursement scheme that to benefit 14 lakh college students in the State. From 2020-21 academic year, the fee reimbursement would be credited directly into the accounts of the mothers of the students in four instalments. The government has released over ₹4,000 crore for the scheme and ₹1,880 crore more towards pending dues.

Return of bodies of Anantapur students

ANANTAPUR
The bodies of two students from Anantapur district, who died in an accident in the Philippines on April 5, are likely to arrive in an air ambulance from Manila on April 30. Vamsi Kondigala Peddinti hailing from the city, and Revanth Kumar Katikela from Kadri, both aged 21, were studying medicine in Cebu City. The bodies have reached the Manila airport and are expected to reach Anantapur by Wednesday midnight or early on Thursday.

Bodies of Tamil Nadu, Kerala & Goa natives brought from UAE

They died of diseases other than COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOZHIKODE

Bodies of seven Indians who died of diseases other than COVID-19 in the United Arab Emirates landed at the international airport here on Tuesday.

The bodies - of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Goa natives - were repatriated via Flydubai cargo flight FZ 8189 from Dubai at 12.40 p.m., airport director K. Srinivasa Rao said.

He said the freighter aircraft departed for Dubai with over 18,000 kg of fruits, vegetables and medicines later.

Given to relatives
A senior police officer said the bodies were of Koshy Mathai and Sijo Joy of Pathanmitta; Punakkal David



Back home: Bodies of Indians who died abroad being shifted from the cargo hold at Kozhikode airport. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Shamy of Kannur; Johann John of Kollam; Velayudhan Sathyan of Thrissur; Sreenivas Muthukarappan of Sivaganga in Tamil Nadu and Henrique D'Souza of Goa. The bodies were handed over to their relatives.

The bodies were repatriated after the Ministry of Home Affairs issued an order permitting their transport subject to guidelines issued by various Ministries and government depart-

ments related to the management of COVID-19 and the submission of No Objection Certificates from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Clearance needed
Indian Embassies and High Commissions abroad can give clearance for repatriation of mortal remains of Indian citizens who died due to reasons other than the COVID-19 infection.

How many vehicles used for Nikhil's wedding: HC

Have received several pleas, says court

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

What is the policy of the government on giving passes to vehicles during the lockdown and how many passes were given to allow people to attend the wedding of K. Nikhil, son of former Karnataka Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy, the High Court of Karnataka asked the government on Tuesday.

A Division Bench, comprising Chief Justice Abhay Shreenivas Oka and Justice B.V. Nagarathna, posed these questions orally after noticing that the government had not responded to the court's April 21 direction on whether there was breach of social distancing during the ceremony.

The Bench pointed out that the High Court had received several pleas through e-mails from various persons from within and outside Karnataka on the breach of social distancing norms and the grant of vehicle passes for the wedding.

Is it the policy of the government to grant passes for a wedding during the lockdown? If yes, then everyone will apply for passes, the Bench observed orally asking the Additional Advocate-General to submit the government's response by the next hearing.

Money kept for event to be spent on relief work

BENGALURU

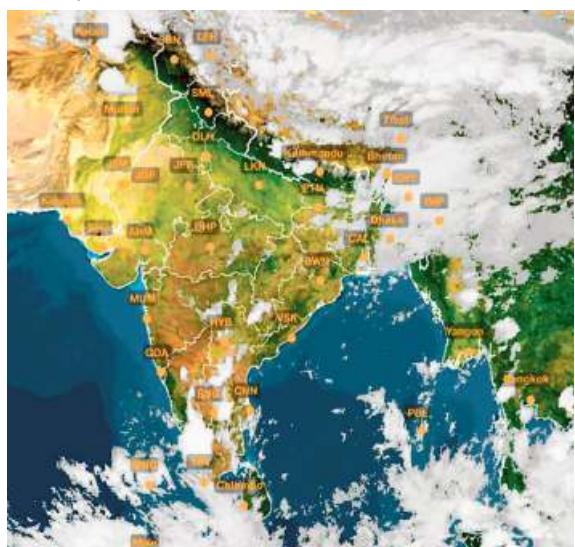
After plans of performing his son K. Nikhil's wedding with all the voters of Ramanagara in attendance getting dashed due to the COVID-19 epidemic, former Karnataka Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy has decided to distribute 1.2 lakh dry ration kits from the money earmarked for the wedding expenses.

side Karnataka on the breach of social distancing norms and the grant of vehicle passes for the wedding.

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WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB; MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Wednesday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning, hail and gusty winds very likely at isolated places over Maharashtra; with lightning and gusty winds at isolated places over Rajasthan, Meghalaya, Goa, Tamil Nadu and Kerala and with lightning at isolated places over east Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Odisha, Telangana, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	34.0	22.7	Kozhikode	—	35.6	27.2
Ahmedabad	40.7	26.0	19.0	Kurnool	—	39.0	28.4
Aizawl	—	23.9	15.2	Lucknow	—	34.0	22.3
Altahabad	—	32.0	23.0	Madurai	—	38.2	27.6
Bengaluru	—	32.4	23.0	Mangaluru	—	36.1	26.2
Bhopal	—	36.8	23.4	Mumbai	—	36.6	26.1
Bhubaneswar	—	34.4	25.5	Mysuru	—	34.9	23.0
Chandigarh	0.2	26.4	18.7	New Delhi	—	32.8	21.6
Chennai	—	34.6	24.8	Patna	0.4	33.6	21.8
Coimbatore	13.3	37.4	25.4	Port Blair	—	33.6	27.4
Dehradun	46.5	—	14.7	Puducherry	—	33.4	28.3
Gangtok	1.2	1					



Signalling support

RBI's liquidity facility for mutual funds still hinges on banks' willingness to lend

The Reserve Bank of India's decision to open a special facility to ensure the availability of adequate liquidity for the mutual fund industry is a timely move in signalling to investors that the central bank is alert to the need to preserve financial stability in these challenging times. In assigning ₹50,000 crore exclusively for commercial banks to lend to mutual funds, the RBI made clear on Monday that it wants to tamp down on any build-up of liquidity strains at mutual fund houses in the wake of heightened volatility in the capital markets and increased redemption pressures as a fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. The proximate trigger for the central bank's move was last week's announcement by Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund that it was winding up six debt funds – funds that collectively had assets under management (AUM) amounting to about ₹26,000 crore. The RBI has rightly recognised the urgent need to ward off any incipient contagion impact from the closure of these six funds. With the overall industry-wide AUM for debt funds at about ₹15-lakh crore, it was crucial for the banking regulator to reassure investors that liquidity need not be a concern while deciding on whether to retain or redeem their investments in these mutual funds. The Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) had, separately, last week, sought to assure investors that a majority of debt fund schemes had "invested in superior credit quality securities" and had appropriate liquidity to back their normal operations.

While the facility is a straightforward 90-day repo-based lending window from which banks can avail credit to provide loans to mutual funds, there are concerns about the banking industry's willingness to expose itself to the credit risk involved in making these fresh loans. That the RBI was cognisant of this is evident in the way that the norms have been tailor-made to incentivise the banks to lend. From allowing banks to breach their 25% ceiling on held-to-maturity investments as a consequence of lending to mutual funds, to exempting the support extended from banks' overall capital market exposure limits, the central bank has sought to ease the flow of credit to the fund houses. Still, if the recent experience of getting lenders to support the non-banking financial companies through a targeted long-term repo operation backed by ₹50,000 crore is any pointer, clearly the banking industry – beset by bad loans – appears to have little appetite for adding any credit that it deems risky. Moreover, with the economy still in lockdown and the credit ratings of even relatively well-established companies facing a real and not-too-distant threat of downgrades, how willing banks would be to use this facility to lend to debt mutual funds remains to be seen. The Centre may need to be ready to step in with direct intervention if the RBI's gambit fails to ease the pressure on mutual funds.

No end in sight

India must learn from other countries in devising strategies to contain the epidemic

It took 94 days to reach one million novel coronavirus cases on April 3 after China reported the first cluster of 41 cases to WHO on December 31, the number of days needed to double to two million sharply reduced to 12. It again took just 12 more days to cross three million cases globally on April 27 night. The virus has now spread to 188 countries/regions. The true number of infections will be several-fold higher as most countries have not been testing people who have mild or no symptoms. For instance, in the U.S., the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said that those with mild symptoms of COVID-19 who do not meet the criteria for priority testing will not be tested. While new cases have declined in Europe, there is an uptick in Africa and South America. The virus is still spreading quickly in the U.S. – with 0.99 million cases, it has the most number of cases globally, a little more than four times that of Spain, which has the second most number of cases. There have been over 2.1 lakh deaths worldwide, with the U.S. again accounting for the most – over 56,600, which is double that of Italy – over 27,000. New York City alone has 17,515 deaths, which is multiple times higher than that of many countries. The mortality figures too may be an underestimation.

India has reported over 30,300 cases and 973 deaths, based on data collated from States. The number of cases has multiplied several-fold from over 600 since the national lockdown from March 25. At nearly 8,600 cases, Maharashtra has the maximum in the country; Dharavi alone has 330 cases and 18 deaths. With a population close to 1,00,000 that lives cheek by jowl, physical distancing is an impossible luxury. A central team has indicated that nearly 3,000 people might need institutional quarantine in the absence of effective containment in Dharavi. In this context, India could look at the experience of Singapore. Much appreciated for its efforts in almost containing the spread of the virus early on, the city-state has seen numbers rising since late March. Fresh cases have been reported from dormitories that house over 0.2 million migrant workers from other countries. The crowding in the dormitories, which is akin to what is seen in Dharavi and other slums in India, has provided an ideal setting for easy infection spread. Despite shutting down educational institutions and workplaces on April 3, when the number of cases was 1,114, and moving many workers to alternative accommodation and quarantining others, it has not been able to contain the spread; nearly 15,000 cases have been reported as on April 28. As India nears the end of its extended lockdown, it needs to learn from the successes and failures of other countries.

Vividly imagining the life of migrant workers

A regime of social policy must be installed to meet the basic needs of all citizens at all times – not only during pandemics



RAJEEV BHARGAVA

The current pandemic has forced us to think about the plight of workers in our country. While the virus has demonstrated the enormous value of health workers, it has also enhanced public awareness of the pivotal role of migrant workers in our economy. We have been compelled to realise that between 100 million to 125 million people leave their villages, families and homes to find work far away wherever they can find it; their invisible hands harvest the crops and feed us, clean streets, run factories, build roads, and construct our houses.

The trek back home

Living away from home is never easy. A home is not made of brick and mortar, certainly not tin or planks of wood. It is where one finds comfort, nurtures relationships, and raises a family. It gives sanctuary from daily struggles. An extension of one's identity, it provides us a sense of belonging. A place of tranquillity and serenity, it is where one longs to be when not there. This can only be where one's family, friends and community reside, not an inhospitable, overcrowded room with strangers. Not surprisingly, hungry migrant workers were determined to trudge hundreds of kilometres to reach "home" in their village. I believe many would have preferred to do so even if they were fed by their employers or the State, which clearly they were not. Sure-

ly, they were entirely justified in asking why Indians stranded abroad were flown back in special planes or middle-class students brought back to their hometowns from coaching centres in Kota, Rajasthan, but no such arrangements were made for them? Why this differential treatment? Are they not citizens of the same country? Are they any less Indian?

Condition in 'normal' times

The current plight of migrant workers during the lockdown should become an occasion to reflect on their abysmal condition in "normal" times. Many "contractual labourers" rarely see a written contract. A minimum, regular wage per month is legally required but seldom paid. Many do not receive wages for months, and at the end of the season when they are finally paid it is often less than what was agreed. There is a lack of transparency in accounting – excessive, arbitrary and unexpected deductions from final payments are common.

Lack of regular wages means that workers either borrow from employers or from local money-lenders. This renders them even more financially vulnerable because of indebtedness. Quite often they work long hours, between 10 and 13 hours a day, live in tents or makeshift shanties without access to potable water, toilets, and electricity. I doubt if they are ever fully protected from the elements. Many of them do not have a kitchen and are forced to eat from local street vendors who live in similar conditions. Under such dire working and living circumstances, is it a surprise that under an unexpected lockdown they all wish to return to their original homes?

The Prime Minister recently spoke of the need for empathy and



compassion during pandemics.

These are admirable moral virtues, always necessary, not just in emergencies. But ultimately, individual virtues are insufficient to deal with social malaise. For it is not feelings of individuals but enduring collective sentiment crystallised around a stable course of action by public agencies that really matter. Effective public policies are indispensable. Gurudwaras and non-governmental organisations may complement its efforts to feed the hungry, but it remains the prime duty of the state to do so.

Work, home and dignity

In short, a regime of social policy, pivotal for a minimal welfare state must be installed to address the basic needs of all Indian citizens, not only during pandemics but for all times, to meet any contingency. Socioeconomic rights, including the right to work, have long been part of our Directive Principles of State Policy. By enacting the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act law in 2005, the Indian Parliament had set in motion a process that makes a specific and significant welfare provision constitutive of the very idea of citizenship. To be a citizen of a polity is to be entitled to an opportunity to work. Now, manual work in extremely hot conditions on parched terrain is an energy-

draining, back-breaking chore, not quite a source of self-realisation central to the emancipatory vision of Gandhi, Hegel or Marx. And yet, even such paid manual labour is a far cry from receiving charity. Under democratic norms of equality, living on charity is demeaning and lowers self-esteem. There is a sense in which any voluntary work, no matter how arduous, quietly uplifts and enhances dignity and basic self-respect – a point gracefully underscored by a group of painters (migrant labour) in Palسانا, Sikar in Rajasthan, when they chose to give a fresh coat of paint to an entire school building in return for the shelter provided to them during lockdown.

Work is one among many sources of satisfaction and self-respect. Our Directive Principles focus on others – proper housing, for instance. It is time the state took these seriously. While no state can build a home – which needs personal care and must be our own handiwork – the right to housing can certainly be guaranteed for it is implicit in the article enjoining the state to provide a decent standard of living.

Multiple deprivations

However, such social policies will not be forthcoming unless we, who make these policies, stopped viewing the poor as sub-human. This is a controversial statement and requires some explanation. I believe the best of us carry the image of the poor as labouring creatures with basic material needs who beget children. They suffer when deprived of these material needs. Our humanity lies in empathetically acknowledging this suffering. This, however, is not an image that we have of ourselves. We have more complex social, cultural, political and even spiritual

Rajeev Bhargava is Professor, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi

The outline of another pandemic combat strategy

A way out is to lift restrictions in a graded way, with reverse quarantine for the elderly and those with comorbidities



R. PRASAD

With the number of novel coronavirus cases reported so far continuing to rise in most States even during the national lockdown that came into force since March 25, India faces the great challenge of containing its spread just days before the May 3 deadline for lifting the lockdown. With the number of cases increasing from 519 on March 24 to nearly 28,000 on April 27, the lockdown has indeed prevented an explosion of cases.

As the World Health Organization (WHO) had pointed out on March 25, the unprecedented measures of the shutdown can only buy time and reduce the pressure on the health-care system. But by itself, it cannot "extinguish epidemics".

Contrary to WHO's advice of using the opportunity to carry out more precise and targeted measures to chase and contain the virus, there have been no concerted efforts to aggressively test and isolate positive cases even in hotspot and containment areas.

In light of this, will extending the lockdown become a default option as was done after the first phase of restriction ended on April 14 even as the government believes there is no community transmission yet in India? Or, as

many experts have been advocating, will India bite the bullet and opt for lifting the restrictions in a phased manner?

Weighing in

Dr. Giridhar R. Babu, an epidemiologist at the Public Health Foundation of India, Bengaluru and a member of the COVID-19 task force of Karnataka and Dr. Jayaprakash Mulyil formerly with the Christian Medical College, Vellore, say that without doubt there will be an increase in the number of cases once the lockdown is lifted; particularly so as no effort was made to hunt the virus during the lockdown period. But a careful, graded approach to lift the restrictions can still help prevent a huge spike in cases and create a concomitant strain on the health-care system.

Any strategy adopted for lifting restrictions should bear in mind that the actual number of people who have been infected is many times more than the laboratory-confirmed cases. Dr. Babu estimates the total number of infections to be around 2,50,000 while Prof. Mulyil says that for every recorded case, there are 60 people who have not been counted.

While extending the lockdown in hotspot areas appears not only prudent but also essential, there should be more focus during the remaining days of the lockdown on silent areas that have not reported any case or just a few cases.

Increased surveillance of those exhibiting severe acute respiratory infection (SARI), influenza-like illness (ILI) and any COVID-19 sus-



pect cases in the silent areas will help determine if restrictions should be eased or continued after May 3. Sikkim, which has walled itself up has not reported a single case; some northeast States have reported only a few cases. These States would not need a continued lockdown, once the true infection prevalence is ascertained. Most importantly, the decision on whether to continue the restrictions or not should be taken at the local level; a centralised approach to decision making will be hugely counterproductive.

As Dr. Babu strongly advocates, it is important to segregate essential and non-essential activities and encourage more people to work from home till such time as an effective vaccine or anti-viral becomes available. Universal mask wearing, physical distancing and observing hand hygiene will help in curtailing the spread; but these will not be practical in slums and other crowded neighbourhoods.

On herd immunity

This brings to the fore a more natural way to slow down and bring the epidemic to an end through herd immunity that happens naturally during an epidemic. Herd immunity arises when a sizeable population gets naturally infected

over a period of time so that the virus does not easily find a susceptible host to infect, thus bringing the epidemic to a halt – this is what Dr. Mulyil and virologist Dr. T. Jacob John advocate.

The herd immunity that these scientists are referring to is not very dissimilar from the one practised by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson who intended using it as a strategy to end the epidemic. But the difference is that while Mr. Johnson put even the elderly and those with comorbidities at risk of infection through his approach, both these scientists have kept the interests of the elderly and those with comorbidities as top priorities.

While these two categories of people who may experience serious symptoms and even death can protect themselves by self-isolation – also called as reverse quarantine – the young, who mostly exhibit only mild symptoms, can go out by following containment measures together with universal mask wearing, physical distancing and hand hygiene.

Strictly following containment measures, wearing a mask and maintaining physical distancing not only slow down the rate of infection but also the rate at which herd immunity is achieved naturally. But that is a small price to pay in order to avoid overwhelming the health-care system, if many require hospitalisation.

In the case of H1N1, in 2009, the swine flu pandemic died out in two years when 40% of the population where the virus was spreading had been naturally infected. But it comes back each year as the

susceptible population through new birth grows beyond the threshold. The same was true for all the previous influenza pandemics – the 1918 Spanish flu, 1957 Asian flu, and 1968 Hong Kong influenza. Even during the pre-vaccination days, measles used to strike once in three years and German measles every seven years. Dr. Jacob John expects at least one year for herd immunity to develop naturally for the novel coronavirus, provided shutdowns are eased.

Though other strains of coronavirus, which cause the common cold, infect people almost every winter, the same strain does not infect people twice. But the mutations that these viruses undergo make most people susceptible to infection. Fortunately, the novel coronavirus appears more stable (experiences fewer mutations) than other influenza viruses and so an infected person may probably be protected against future disease, Dr. Mulyil hopes.

WHO cautions that "there is currently no evidence that people who have recovered from COVID-19 and have antibodies are protected from a second infection". Infected people may have some level of protection against the virus, but the level and duration of protection is still unknown. In South Korea, at least 222 people who have recovered from the disease have again tested positive. It is still not clear if it is a case of reinfection or reactivation (where infected people have not been able to completely clear the virus).

prasad.ravindranath@thehindu.co.in

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.

Humane and inclusive

The daily "bombardment" of news about the extent and the impact of the novel coronavirus pandemic shows the extensive damage it has caused to countless lives, societies and economies, gripping every nation with fear and anxiety. It is not just the poor and the marginalised but also the affluent and the corporates who are gripped with uncertainty. Leaders of nations with a very high count of cases must rollout strategies to cope with the crisis. At the same time, even during this testing time, the leaders of some powerful nations, especially the United States, have not shown the needed tenderness and compassion to other nationals working

in their countries. Many of them now are not assured of jobs and are looking at an exit. Human resources are a great asset to any countries, and contribute immensely to the respective economies. Hence, it is time national leaders make wise decisions that are humane and inclusive.

RITA DHANABALAN,
Chennai

■ News of hapless, hungry and quarantined people in Agra being treated like animals is a reflection of the apathetic and insensitive functioning of government machinery (Editorial, "Casting out stigma"; April 28). The ghastly incident makes me think of a thought-provoking scene in the film, *Pratidwandi*, directed by

legend, Satyajit Ray, where the protagonist raises his voice vociferously against administrators on seeing the plight of job-seekers who are compelled to wait endlessly and painfully for their turn to face the interview in a cramped hall without seats, water, food and fans in summer. It is unfortunate that even 50 years since its release, there has not been much progress in this regard in establishing political and administrative accountability and attitudinal changes in the delivery of efficient governance.

N. RAVEENDRA BABU,
Hyderabad

Real development
Most of us should stop daydreaming – that in a post-COVID-19 world, many

will flock to India for economic purposes. India's standing in the new order will be determined by how Indians restructure themselves within. Sadly, when we hear the word "infrastructure", we tend to think of roads, bridges, railway lines and commercial complexes. We forget the social infrastructure – of health care and education which are more important to nation building and which also reduce inequality. Human development, democracy and the institutions enshrined in the Constitution are the prerequisites for a strong India. Pluralism and inclusiveness have to be preserved. Social security in terms of basic public health care and free education to all

must be the priority (Editorial page, "India in the post-pandemic world", April 28).

NAGARAJAMANI M.V.,
Hyderabad

Virtual courts? It's a no

The Bar Council of India is right in calling upon the Supreme Court to open its doors and function normally. And, let the top court, High Courts and all other courts restrict the entry of the litigants to reduce crowds and the pressure on courts – which should be a part of the COVID-19 parameters to observe sufficient precautions. However, as an advocate with 45 years of experience in the Bar, I state with respect that courts of law, including the Supreme Court and High Courts,

cannot function with a new type of hearing – virtual hearings or video-conferencing or 'Court-in-nets' (corrupting the word seminars).

I wish to add that the new technology could be used to speed up desk work in court offices. The functioning of our Courts leaves much to be desired. And last but not least, court proceedings cannot at all be an oral hearing face-to-face with the judges; to cross swords with them, if necessary, and arguing cases forcefully before our honourable judges in the larger interests of the Bench, the Bar and the litigant public.

B.M. BALIGA,
Bengaluru

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CM YK

Privacy concerns during a pandemic

The government's technology solutions to fight COVID-19 do not meet minimum legal requirements

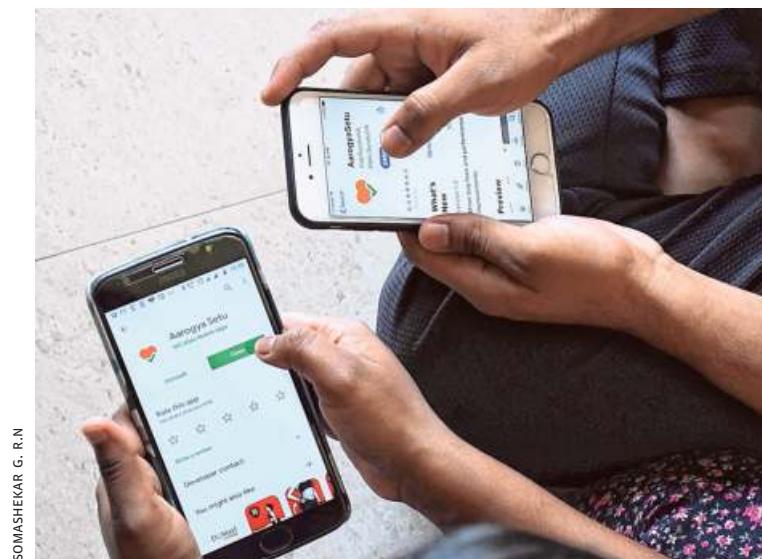
SURHITH PARTHASARATHY,
GAUTAM BHATIA & APAR GUPTA

In his now-legendary dissenting judgment, delivered at the height of Indira Gandhi's Emergency, Justice H.R. Khanna, invoking Justice Brandeis of the U.S. Supreme Court, wrote that "[t]he greatest danger to liberty lies in insidious encroachment by men of zeal, well-meaning but lacking in due deference for the rule of law." Justice Khanna was not speaking about the crushing of freedom at the point of a bayonet. He was concerned, rather, about situations where the government used the excuse of a catastrophe to ignore the rule of law. Quoting Brandeis, he said, "experience should teach us, 'to be most on our guard to protect liberty when the Government's purposes are benevolent.'"

Today we live in the midst of a grave public health crisis. There is little doubt that the government is best placed to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. Doing so requires it to take extraordinary actions. This is why the efforts of the Central and State governments to maintain a nationwide lockdown, to enforce norms of physical distancing and to restrict movement, have been met with support.

It can be tempting in these circumstances to argue that the executive's powers are limitless; that, if the government so chooses, fundamental rights can be suspended at will. The pandemic, the argument goes, is an existential threat and the paramount need to save lives takes precedence over all other interests. Appealing though it is, this argument is not only wrong but also dangerous, for precisely the reasons that Justice Khanna outlined: when faced with crises, governments – acting for all the right reasons – are invariably prone to overreach. Any temporary measures they impose have a disturbing habit of entrenching themselves into the landscape and creating a 'new normal' well after the crisis has passed. Paying close attention to civil rights, therefore, becomes critical, not to impede the government's efforts, but to ensure that rights – fragile at the best of times, and particularly vulnerable in a crisis – are not permanently effaced.

Data and public health
The state's most significant responses to the pandemic have been predi-



cated on an invasive use of technology, that seeks to utilise people's personal health data. While the measures deployed intuitively sound reasonable, the mediums used in implementing the programme overlook important concerns relating to the rights to human dignity and privacy.

Broadly, technology has been invoked at three levels. First, in creating a list of persons suspected to be infected with COVID-19; second, in deploying geo-fencing and drone imagery to monitor compliance by quarantined individuals; and third, through the use of contact-tracing smartphone applications, such as AarogyaSetu.

Each of these measures has induced a miasma of despair. In creating a list of infected persons, State governments have channelled the Epidemic Diseases Act of 1897. But this law scarcely accords the state power to publicise this information. What's more, these lists have also generated substantial second-order harms. As the director of the All India Institute of Medical Science, Dr. Randeep Guleria, pointed out, the stigma attached to the disease has led to an increase in morbidity and mortality rates, since many with COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms have refused to go to hospitals.

The use of geo-fencing and drone technologies is similarly unsanctioned. While cell-phone based surveillance might be plausible under the Telegraph Act of 1885, until now the orders authorising surveillance have not been published. Moreover, the modified surveillance drones

used are equipped with the ability to conduct thermal imaging, night-time reconnaissance, and also – as some private vendors have claimed – the ability to integrate facial recognition into existing databases such as Aadhaar. Contrary to regulations made under the Aircraft Act of 1934, the drones deployed also do not appear to possess any visible registration or licensing. Indeed, many of the models are simply not permitted for use in India.

Most concerning amongst the measures invoked is the use of contact-tracing applications that promise to provide users a deep insight into the movements of a COVID-19 carrier. The purported aim here is to ensure that a person who comes into contact with a carrier can quarantine herself. Although the efficacy of applications such as these have been questioned by early adopters, such as Singapore, the Union government has made AarogyaSetu, its contact-tracing application, its signal response to the pandemic.

Thus far, details of the application's technical architecture and its source code have not been made public. The programme also shares worrying parallels with the Aadhaar project in that its institution is not backed by legislation. Like Aadhaar it increasingly seems that the application will be used as an object of coercion. There have already been reports of employees of both private and public institutions being compelled to download the application. Also, much like Aadhaar, AarogyaSetu is framed as a necessary technolo-

logical invasion into personal privacy, in a bid to achieve a larger social purpose. But without a statutory framework, and in the absence of a data protection law, the application's reach is boundless. One shudders to think how the huge tranches of personal data that it will collect will be deployed.

The importance of civil rights
The Supreme Court's judgment in *K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India* (2017) is renowned for its incantation, that each of us is guaranteed a fundamental right to privacy. But the Court also recognised that the Constitution is not the sole repository of this right, or indeed of the right to personal liberty. For these are freedoms that inhere in all of us. The Court additionally thought it important, as Justice S.K. Kaul wrote, that the majority opinions of Justice Khanna's brethren be buried "ten fathom deep, with no chance of resurrection."

To be sure, the right to privacy is not absolute. There exist circumstances in which the right can be legitimately curtailed. However, any such restriction, as the Court held in *Puttaswamy*, must be tested against the requirements of legality, necessity and the doctrine of proportionality. This will require government to show us, first, that the restriction is sanctioned by legislation; second, that the restriction made is in pursuance of a legitimate state aim; third, that there exists a rational relationship between the purpose and the restriction made; and fourth, that the State has chosen the "least restrictive" measure available to achieve its objective.

In this case, not only are the government's technological solutions unfounded in legislation, there is also little to suggest that they represent the least restrictive measures available. A pandemic cannot be a pretext to abnegate the Constitution. *Inter arma silent leges*, said Cicero: "For among [times of] arms, the laws fall mute". But our fight against COVID-19 is no war. Even if it were, our Constitution is intended for all times – for times of peace and for times of crises.

Surhith Parthasarathy is an advocate practising at the Madras High Court; Gautam Bhatia is a Delhi-based lawyer; and Apar Gupta is a lawyer and executive director of the Internet Freedom Foundation

A task for South Asia

The virus reminds us that it is in our collective interest to look at health security and not just national security



AAMIR JAFAREY & SANJAY NAGRAL

South Asia, one of the world's most populous regions, is also affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Both Karachi and Mumbai, among the world's most densely populated cities, where we live and work, are being overwhelmed by cases. While the death rate in these places may not be as alarming as in Europe and the U.S., the collateral damage of the lockdown is taking its own toll.

While there are many differences amongst the countries of the region, there are also common features which impact the health of its people, some of them a result of our shared cultural and geopolitical history. The collective experience of dealing with COVID-19 may provide important lessons, which transcend national boundaries.

Poor healthcare system

South Asian countries have invested very little in health. This is reflected in our abysmally low health parameters. It is interesting that Britain, which formulated our health policies before independence, went on to form one of the world's strongest public health systems, the National Health Service, whereas its South Asian colonies chose to stray from that path. This resulted in a dysfunctional public healthcare system.

Governments have also relinquished what ought to have been their primary duty, of health care provision, to the private sector. Having become an industry, the focus of healthcare in the private sector is on profit rather than on people's needs. Whilst privatisation has brought in advanced technology and expertise, the high costs of treatment in the private sector have resulted in impoverishment as most of the population has no insurance or third-party coverage, and pays out of pocket. The sector has also been poorly regulated. The result is that it is responsible for several excesses in its quest for profit.

Hunger, malnutrition, poor sanitation and large-scale migration are features of this region. Existing infectious diseases like TB, HIV and malaria have been worsened by emerging ones like dengue, chikungunya, healthcare-associated infections and antimicrobial resistance. The region is also an epicentre of an epidemic of lifestyle diseases.

Constant internal and external conflicts in South Asia not only consume a large portion of national budgets, but also divert the attention of the public and policymakers from

healthcare needs. Defence budgets take the largest share of national budgets, and obviously adversely impact social sector spending. Underfunded public health is going to hinder our capacity to fight COVID-19.

Religion continues to occupy a central space in the society and politics of the region. Though it offers succour to many, religious dogma can impact health policy and health-seeking behaviour. The refusal of devotees across Pakistan to avoid religious congregations during Ramadan despite the government's orders has significantly fed the community spread of the virus. On the other hand, the Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Delhi was used to whip up sentiments against the entire Muslim population in India. This will only put a further strain on the social fabric. The medical community must emphasise that religious practices cannot be exceptions to epidemic-control practices.

A silver lining

If there is a silver lining, COVID-19 has forced us to seriously reflect on our healthcare system. This is welcome if it results in policy change. Healthcare professionals and bodies must seize this opportunity to push our respective governments to address it seriously and not just as a pre-election strategy. A long-term commitment to universal health care, with not only a national but also a regional and global focus, is needed.

The SAARC heads of state have already offered help to one another. A regional strategy has a better chance of controlling the pandemic than isolated national-level efforts. Pooling of resources and sharing data may not only help flatten the curve but perhaps even develop into longer-term efforts towards effective treatment. It is being speculated that our populations are behaving differently; that the BCG vaccine may be a protective influence. Joint research into such areas can be a unifying point for SAARC.

The region's healthcare community has many tasks. We have the responsibility of upholding science as the guiding principle of policy, of guarding against fake cures, unethical experimentation and quackery. We also have the onerous task of convincing our people that regional conflicts fuelled by geopolitical interests are not in our mutual interest. This could even mean standing up to populist narratives on nationalism and reminding our citizens that the real threat to the security of our nations is our misplaced priorities. It is in our collective interest to look at health security and not just national security. By the accident of their birth, South Asians have endured a lot. They merit better.

Aamir Jafarey is a surgeon based in Karachi and Sanjay Nagral is a surgeon based in Mumbai

Unlocking justice in the lockdown

Without legal practitioners being classified as essential, fundamental rights cannot be realised

G. S. BAJPAL & ANKIT KAUSHIK

The pandemic has compelled the government to suspend work, movement, businesses, services, liberty and more. The Constitution itself, however, cannot be suspended. Any measures enforced under statutory frameworks must conform to the Constitution. Nevertheless, practically, with the near-complete shutdown of India's justice system, such operation of the Constitution lies in limbo.

Several situations today warrant the intervention of the judiciary. For instance, the enforcement of the constitutional rights of life, health and food requires urgent resolution. Any constitutional challenge, however, requires unfettered access to lawyers and courts. The non-inclusion of both in the state's list of permitted activities effectively denies such access.

Peculiarly, the judiciary too has retreated into the background. While the higher courts are hearing 'urgent' matters, the lower courts are entertaining only 'remand' cases. In doing so, they have ceded important constitutional and legal space to the executive. Video-based online proceedings have been proposed as an alternative. But their success rests on the assumption that everyone has equal access to properly functioning equipment as well as fast Internet. The idea also assumes that all courts are Internet-enabled and all functionaries are tech-savvy.

No legal protection
Meanwhile, the state is still active in its traditional policing functions. In Guwahati, on April 7, two activists were arrested in connection with a 2018 case, a day after complaining that officials were siphoning off rice meant for public distribution. Last week, the Delhi police booked two students under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, in a case related to communal violence in Delhi over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2019. Article 22 of the Constitution guarantees every individual the right to consult and to be defended by a legal practitioner of their choice upon being arrested or detained in custody by the state. While arrests by the police are rampant, legal protection has

almost vanished on account of non-functioning lawyers and courts. Without legal practitioners being classified as essential, one wonders if fundamental rights can substantively be enforced.

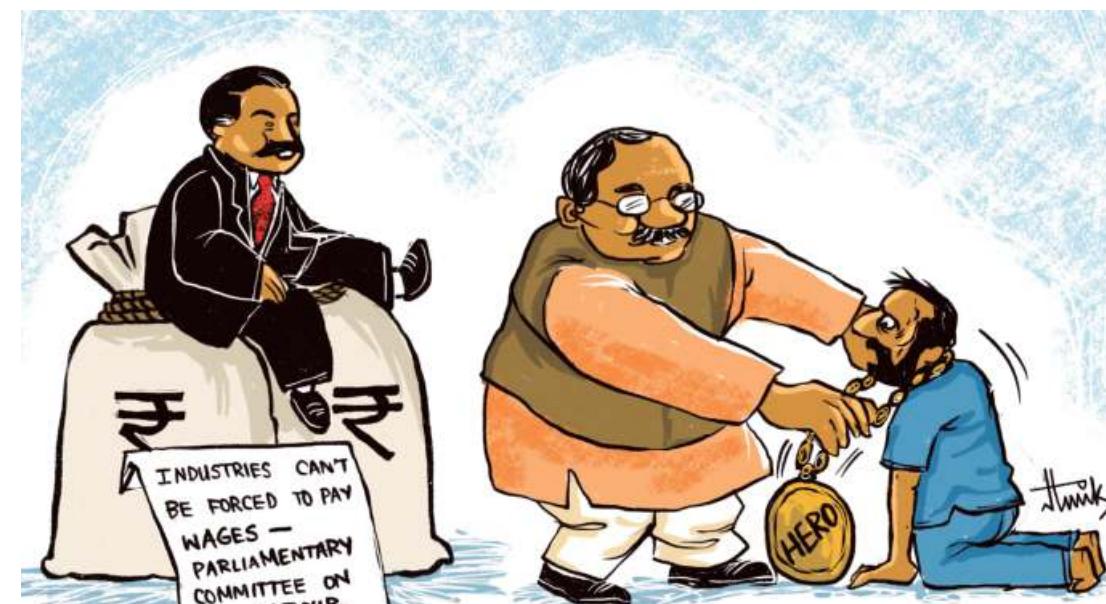
Moreover, in the enforcement of lockdown, reports of summary punishments by the police without any sanction of the law are pouring in from across the country. Videos of police forcing persons to perform push-ups and squats; vandalising vegetable carts; and harassing migrant labourers and the homeless are evidence of arbitrariness. The ease with which we have given up on the principles of rule of law is deplorable.

With justice being inaccessible, the populace has become powerless in both the public and private spheres. The National Commission for Women has reported an increase in incidents of domestic violence. Despite abusers and victims being locked down for over 40 days, the institutional response has been to take away the civil remedy of obtaining 'protection orders' against the abuser under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

The lacunae must be remedied
In contrast to India's response, the U.K. first notified legal practitioners as key workers and then notified how different categories of courts shall function. In the U.S., the Department of Homeland Security categorises 'workers supporting the operations of the judicial system' as essential.

In India, the judiciary and the executive should have instituted means to serve the cause of justice. A comprehensive response should have outlined the minimum judicial infrastructural requirements; the nature, type and manner of priority cases; enforcement of physical distancing guidelines; and list of key personnel permitted to ply to and from courts, prisons, police stations, residences, etc. These lacunae must be remedied. Justice must not become a casualty to the pandemic.

G. S. Bajpai is a Professor and Chairperson of the Centre for Criminology and Victimology at National Law University Delhi; Ankit Kaushik is a Research Associate there. Views are personal

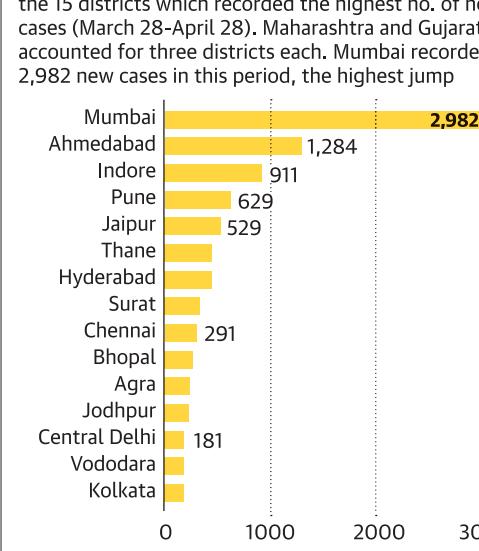


DATA POINT

Geography of the spread

As of April 28, as many as 430 districts in India have recorded at least one COVID-19 case, 301 more than the March 28 figure. Five districts recorded more than 500 new cases in the one-month period: two from Maharashtra and one each from Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Mumbai recorded the most number of new cases in the period followed by Ahmedabad. By **Sumanth Sen, Naresh Singaravelu and Vignesh Radhakrishnan**

DISTRICTS WITH MOST CASES | The chart depicts the 15 districts which recorded the highest no. of new cases (March 28–April 28). Maharashtra and Gujarat accounted for three districts each. Mumbai recorded 2,982 new cases in this period, the highest jump



NUMBERS RISING | Table divides districts into four categories: those with 0-50 new cases; 51-100 new cases; 101-500 new cases; and >500 new cases (March 28–April 28). In Maharashtra, 26 districts recorded 0-50 new cases, three recorded 51-100 cases, one recorded 101-500 cases and two recorded > 500 cases

State	0 to 50	51 to 100	101 to 500	>500
Maharashtra	26	3	1	2
Rajasthan	19	4	2	1
Gujarat	24	0	2	1
M.P.	25	0	1	1
T.N.	28	4	3	0
Delhi	6	2	3	0
U.P.	44	6	2	0
A.P.	7	2	2	0
Telangana	26	2	1	0
W.B.	15	1	1	0
Kerala	12	1	1	0
Karnataka	19	2	0	0
J&K	12	2	0	0
Haryana	18	1	0	0
Punjab	18	1	0	0
Northeast	19	0	0	0
Bihar	14	0	0	0
Odisha	10	0	0	0
Jharkhand	8	0	0	0
H.P.	6	0	0	0
Uttarakhand	6	0	0	0
Chhattisgarh	5	0	0	0
Goa	2	0	0	0

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 29, 1970

Yahya Khan faces criticism
(From an editorial)

The Pakistan President, Gen. Yahya Khan's plans for framing a new constitution have been severely criticised in East Pakistan and last Sunday, a political demonstration was organised to protest against the terms of his Legal Framework Order. The Working Committee of the East Pakistan Awami League, the biggest political party in the east and led by Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, has raised objections to Sections 25 and 27 of the Presidential Order. The first says that, if the President refuses to authenticate the Constitution Bill, the National Assembly will stand dissolved and fresh elections will be held. Section 27 provides that any doubt as to the interpretation of the Order must be resolved by the President, not by the Assembly.

FROM PAGE ONE

51 more deaths as cases near 30,000

"It is also noticed that in many places they are insisting on COVID-19 tests before providing services. The Ministry wants to insist that all health centres should remain open and cater to patients," the Health Ministry said.

The Ministry said that across India there have been some instances of hospitals having closed down as few health care workers working there turned out to be positive for COVID-19.

"Also some non-COVID health facilities have reported confirmation of COVID-19, in patients admitted for unrelated/non-respiratory illness, causing undue ap-

prehension among health-care workers, sometimes leading to impaired functionality of such hospitals," it said.

The Ministry has said guidelines have been issued that all health care facilities (HCF) have a staffing plan in place including a contingency plan for infection in staff and patients to maintain continuity of operations.

"Staff HCF can be divided into groups to work on rotation basis every 14 days and a group of back up staff which is pooled in case some high risk exposure with suspected COVID-19 infection is detected," it has suggested.

Ministry does U-turn on plasma therapy

"The IRCS may like to take up this at the earliest so that the blood collected from the recovered patients could be used for transfusion for the benefit of corona patients," the Ministry said.

Several States across India too have been using and advocating for the therapy with Uttar Pradesh Chief Mi-

nister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday directing officials to encourage use of plasma therapy for the treatment of infected people and to increase testing capacity.

Delhi, Gujarat and Maharashtra, among other States, have started clinical trials for the plasma-based treatment.

\$1.5 billion ADB loan to fund COVID response

It will also be used to provide social protection for 80 crore poor people over the next three months, according to Finance Ministry additional secretary Sameer Kumar Khare, who signed the loan agreement.

The loan, approved by the ADB under its COVID-19 Active Response and Expenditure Support (CARES) Programme, is the bank's largest ever to India. The Centre will also take the ADB's technical support to strengthen its implementation framework and capacities to deliver the Rs. 1.7 lakh crore welfare package announced last month.

The bank was also in talks to provide "further possible support for stimulating the economy, support strong growth recovery, and to

build resilience to future shocks", an official statement said.

During an April 9 telephone meeting, ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa told Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman that apart from emergency needs, the bank was also willing to support "short- to medium-term measures to restore the dynamic economic growth of the country by exploring all available financing options", it added. This would include support for the MSMEs by facilitating access to finance through credit guarantee schemes, integration into global and national value chains through enterprise development centers, and a credit enhancement facility for infrastructure projects.

Two priests found dead at U.P. temple premises

In the FIR, chowkidar Aminchand stated that he saw Murari running away with a sword and he made noise, prompting villagers to pursue him. Later, Harendra Kumar, Superintendent of Police (Rural), told *The Hindu* that the murder weapon was a *lathi* [stick]. "The nature of injuries also suggested the same. We have recovered the murder weapon. The chowkidar made the initial statement on the basis of what the villagers had told him," he said.

Mr. Kumar said locals confirmed that Murari was a drug addict and had a violent streak. "Till afternoon, he was not in his senses to record a statement as he was under the influence of 'bhang' [cannabis]. Later, he admitted to the crime

and said the priests reprimanded him and berated him." However, he added, there was no caste angle as the priests also belonged to the same caste group as the accused. Both priests hailed from Aligarh district and turned priests only a decade ago. "Sher Singh suffered from an ailment that limited his movement," said Mr. Kumar.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra tweeted that the killings should not be politicised and the crime should be investigated. Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav said the incident should not be politicised; instead, the reasons for such a violent and criminal mindset should be investigated and action should be taken.

Explain MHA order on full wages, SC tells govt.

Nagreka said it was engaged in manufacture and export of cotton yarns, fabric and textiles. It said stoppage of operations since the lockdown had led to losses to the tune of ₹1.50 crore.

Separate petitions have also been filed by entities from the micro, small and medium sector against the government's order to pay full wages to their workers. MSME industries have said they are compelled to slide

into insolvency by the government, which has ordered them to continue to pay full salaries to their workers. These petitions have asked the court to order the government to support them by taking responsibility for 70% of their staffers' pay by drawing funds from the PM Cares Fund or the Employees State Insurance Corporation. The court is yet to list these pleas.

What is PM's exit strategy: Cong.

Party seeks road map for economic revival and to deal with pandemic post May 3

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi consulted Chief Ministers on the lockdown, the Congress on Tuesday said the "nation is waiting" for him to spell out a clear exit strategy for the containment that ends on May 3.

"We once again appeal to the Prime Minister to come out with a clear exit strategy for the lockdown, to state the road map for economic revival and to deal with the health pandemic post May 3 as also restrict the lockdown only to hotspot zones," Con-

Q No one has still heard from the Prime Minister about the exit strategy or the road map and that is an area of serious concern

RANDEEP SURJEWALA,
CONGRESS LEADER



gress communication chief Randeep Surjewala told reporters through videoconference.

The Prime minister was expected to lead the nation in crises like these. "No one has still heard from the Prime Minister about the exit strategy. What is the road map for the future post 3rd

and that is an area of serious concern," he said.

Financial plan

Mr. Surjewala claimed that the Chief Ministers requested the Prime Minister to tell the nation what is the exit strategy. "What is the road map for the future post 3rd

May? How is the Prime Minister going to come out with financial action plan part-II as Shrimati Sonia Gandhi has repeatedly demanded, and so have many other experts, to mitigate starvation, kick-start the economy, return of the migrant labour or starting small, medium and micro businesses," he asked.

On Monday, Puducherry Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy, after the videoconference with the Prime Minister, told reporters that most of the Chief Ministers had urged Mr. Modi to adopt a cautious approach to lifting the lockdown.

Cong. questions govt's ₹68,607 cr.-loan 'write-off'

Defaulters include 'BJP's friends': Rahul

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Tuesday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to "explain" why his government had "written off" bank loans worth ₹68,607 crore taken by the top 50 defaulters, including Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi and Vijay Mallya, at a time when the country is fighting the coronavirus [COVID-19] pandemic.

The party cited a reply of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to an Right to Information (RTI) query and claimed that until March 2020, the government had written off loans worth ₹6.66 lakh crore since 2014.

'Truth held back'

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, in a tweet, said though the government had refused to answer him in Parliament, the RBI has now put out the list, which includes names of BJP's "friends".

Mr. Surjewala said while the entire country is fighting the coronavirus, the Centre doesn't have money to pay to States but still decided write off ₹68,307 crore of defaulters.

"This reflects the misconceived priorities and dishonest intentions of the Modi government," he said.



list of bank frauds. That is why this truth was held back from Parliament," Mr. Gandhi tweeted in Hindi.

Addressing an online press conference, Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said, "This is a classic case of promoting the 'dupe, deceive and depart' policy of the Modi government, which can no longer be accepted and the Prime Minister has to answer."

Mr. Surjewala said while the entire country is fighting the coronavirus, the Centre doesn't have money to pay to States but still decided write off ₹6.66 lakh crore since 2014.

"I asked a straight question in Parliament – state the names of the 50 top bank loan defaulters in the country. The Finance Minister refused to answer the question. Now the RBI has given the names of Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi and many of BJP's 'friends' in the

82 arrested in Bihar for communal posts

Police have lodged 153 cases in the past one month of lockdown

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

Eighty two persons have been arrested in Bihar for spreading communal disharmony on social media after the COVID-19 outbreak.

The police have lodged 153 cases in the past one month. Officials said most of the arrested were those posting inflammatory and communal messages on social media.

"Eighty two people have

been arrested and 153 cases filed since March 22 after the first COVID-19 case was detected in the State," Additional Director General of Police (Headquarters) Jitendra Kumar told mediapersons. The number of cases had gone up from 104 to 153 in the past 10 days, he added.

BDO's complaint
On April 20, the Biharasharif Block Development Officer

(BDO) in Nalanda district, Rajiv Ranjan, lodged an FIR at the Laheri police station against two Bajrang Dal members, Kundan Kumar Mahto and Dhiraj Kumar, and five unidentified persons, for fanning communal tension at the Bharavpur Chowk by putting saffron flags at shops owned by Hindus. They were also urging locals to buy only from shops owned by Hindus, said the BDO. "This could lead to a communal tension in the area," he added. However, even after a week none has been arrested in the case.

Similar cases have been lodged in Muzaffarpur, Shahabad, Katihar and Saran districts too. In Katihar, the police arrested an individual who was running a portal for propagating a fake video about a COVID-19 patient moving around unattended in a government facility.

NITI Aayog slams India's terror ranking

Report questions opaque funding

VIJAYA SINGH
NEW DELHI

A report compiled by the NITI Aayog has questioned the methodology adopted by an Australian-based institute to rank India as the seventh worst terrorism affected country ahead of conflict-ridden countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Sudan, Burkina Faso, Palestine and Lebanon.

The report also questions the opaque funding of the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP). Emailed queries by the government think tank, seeking list of its donors, remained unanswered. India has moved to the seventh position from the previous year's eighth in the annual Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2019. The countries ahead of it are Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Syria, Pakistan and Somalia.

In March, the Cabinet Secretariat asked NITI Aayog to track 32 such global indices to see how they could

Positioning in the global indices impacted investments and other opportunities

help drive reforms and growth.

An official said the positioning in the global indices impacted investments and other opportunities.

"The purpose was to see which of the indices can be used to drive reforms or which of these would require some amount of engagement with the publishing agency to make the indices more relevant," a NITI Aayog official said.

Emailed queries sent to the IEP requesting a list of its donors have also remained unanswered. The IEP's 2019 annual report shows that the organisation has only 12 full-time staff, 12 full-time equivalent staff and 6 volunteers," the report said.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Biswanath Somadder, who drove 2,000 km from Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh via Kolkata to reach Shillong, went into home quarantine after taking oath as the Chief Justice of the High Court of Meghalaya on Monday.

Court officials said Chief Justice Somadder (57) travelled by road following national protocols related to COVID-19 and honoured State protocols to quarantine himself for 14 days at his official residence soon after Governor Tathagata Roy swore him in.

Officials said he took turns with his chauffeur to drive from Prayagraj via Kolkata, where he stayed at his residence briefly. The trip took less than a week.

Meghalaya's Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong defended the "sudden appointment" amid the lockdown. The government had faced criticism for not waiting for a few days for it to end.

Officials of a deemed varsity, though not seen as pu-

blic servants in the conventional sense, perform duties in the discharge of which the State, the public and the community at large has an interest, a three-judge Bench led by Justice N.V. Ramana reasoned in a judgment pronounced on April 27.

"The object of the PC Act was not only to prevent the social evil of bribery and corruption, but also to make the same applicable to individuals who might conventionally not be considered public servants. The purpose under the PC Act was to shift focus from those who are traditionally called public officials, to those individuals who perform public duties. Keeping the same in mind, it cannot be stated that a deemed university and the officials therein, perform any less or any different a public duty," Justice Ramana, who authored the main judgment shared with Justice Mohan M. Shantanaygoudar, observed.

A deemed institution under the University Grants Commission Act of 1956 has the same common public duty like a university to confer academic degrees, which are recognised in the society.

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Activists Anand Teltumbde and Gautam Navlakha, who surrendered before the National Investigation Agency in Mumbai and Delhi respectively on April 14 in connection with the Bhima Koregaon case, should be given interim bail in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) demanded on Tuesday. In a statement, it said other vulnerable prisoners of advanced age and ailments should also be released.

Anti-graft law covers deemed universities
Officials are 'public servants', says SC

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In a significant ruling, the Supreme Court has held that bribery and corruption in a deemed university can be tried under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Individuals, authorities or officials connected to a deemed university, whatever be their role or designation, come under the definition of a 'public servant'. They can be tried and punished under the anti-corruption law, the court said.

Deemed universities come within the ambit of the term 'university' in Section 2(c)(xi) of the Prevention of Corruption (PC) Act, 1988.

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Most posts flagged by U.P. police inflammatory
LUCKNOW

Since March 16, most of the offensive and inflammatory social media posts around COVID-19 flagged by the Uttar Pradesh police were related to communal issues. Of the 578 FIRs lodged by them against objectionable posts online, the majority, 310, are those that could "impact communal harmony," the UP DGP headquarters said in a statement. While 151 posts related to spreading misinformation or rumours, 117 were linked to other reasons like indecent remarks, said the police.

CRPF officer dies of COVID-19 in Delhi
NEW DELHI

A 55-year-old Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Sub-Inspector died of COVID-19 at the Safdarjung Hospital here on Tuesday. This is the first such death reported in the Central Armed Police Force, comprising the CRPF, the Border Security Force, the Central Industrial Security Force, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, the Sashastra Seema Bal and the Assam Rifles. A resident of Barpeta in Assam, the deceased was posted at the CRPF unit at Mayur Vihar in East Delhi. A senior CRPF official said the victim was a diabetic.

USCIRF downgrades India in 2020 list
Religious freedom panel lists nation among 'countries of particular concern'

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (US

Brother of victim also dies in M.P.

STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

Around mid-April, a 63-year-old man was brought to M.Y. Hospital in Indore. After he was denied an ambulance, his son took him to the hospital in a scooter. But as soon as they reached the hospital, the man died.

That day his brother, 60, rode beside them on another scooter. And a week later, he too died. The brothers showed COVID-19 symptoms, but only the younger was tested.

"If my uncle's body had been tested, we could have probably saved my father," said Rahul Chandne, 34. The government-run COVID-19 facility refused to take in his uncle's body. As the body was not tested, no contact-tracing was done. Two days after the younger brother's death at the hospital on April 22, his report confirmed him positive.

'Private clinics, hospitals can't refuse patients'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

The West Bengal government is set to issue an advisory to private hospitals making clear that they cannot turn back patients and directing private clinics and doctors' private chambers to remain open during the ongoing lockdown.

"Private hospital will have to be more energetic," Chief Secretary Rajiva Sinha said. "We have to ensure that they do not refuse patients... We are issuing an advisory," he added.

"Clinics are shut and doctors are saying that they cannot treat patients as they have their chambers in the private clinic's building," said a patient's relative. "Many private hospitals are shut too," the relative added.

Over 28 new cases were reported in the last 24 hours in the State.

Fatality rate in Ujjain at 14.28%

Officials in the city scramble to shore up crumbling health infrastructure

SIDHARTH YADAV
Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh reported 57 new COVID-19 cases on Tuesday, taking the tally to 2,387. On the day, seven deaths were reported across the state.

However, a cause of concern is the fatality rate in Ujjain, a neighbouring district of Indore, which shot to 14.28% on Monday, arguably the worst in the country.

The rate is even higher than that of Ahmedabad, Mumbai and New Delhi, which have recorded more than 20 times the cases found in Ujjain.

Faced with spiralling mortalities, Ujjain officials are scrambling to shore up a crumbling health infrastructure in the city, where all is dependent on just one private medical college. Even patients from neighbouring Agar Malwa and Ratlam districts are treated there. The hospital's senior manage-



Helping hands: People receiving food packets from volunteers in Bhopal on Tuesday. ■ PTI

ment has gone into quarantine; several staff members refuse to attend to duties and patients complain of bad quality of food and lack of proper treatment.

Just four of the 17 deaths until April 27 occurred on the hospital's beds, while the rest could not even reach in time. "Around eight could not wait to see their test results," said Additional Collector Sujan Singh Rawat.

The case fatality rate for Indore, where it had touched 10% around mid-

April, dropped to 4.6% on Monday. On the same day, it was 1.7% in New Delhi, 3.3% in Surat, 3.8% in Mumbai, 5% in Ahmedabad and 7.6% in Pune. The rate is a measure of disease severity which records the proportion of those who die from a disease among all those diagnosed.

The administration received complaints of improper treatment at the Ujjain hospital, said H.P. Sonaniya, district COVID-19 nodal officer. The government has set up CCTV came-

Gujarat reports 226 fresh cases, 19 deaths

Ahmedabad sees 164 of the new cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD

Gujarat on Tuesday saw 226 new infections and 19 deaths due to COVID-19, with 164 of the cases and all the fatalities reported from Ahmedabad. So far, the State's cumulative figures are 3,774 cases and 181 deaths, while 434 people have recovered and been discharged, including 40 on Tuesdays.

The situation in the State's commercial capital continues to be grim with the number of infections and fatalities increasing. Ahmedabad's cumulative figures are: 2,543 cases, 129 deaths and 242 recovered. In the past five days, Ahmedabad has recorded 59 deaths and 890 cases.

Ahmedabad continues to be grim and there is no let up," a State government offi-



Keeping vigil: Policemen inspecting an area in Ahmedabad. ■ PTI

cial said, adding that the city has emerged as the second in terms of cases and deaths after Mumbai.

Meanwhile, Ahmedabad's Municipal Commissioner told mediapersons on Tuesday that the civic body had turned its focus on super spreaders (vegetable and fruit vendors, shop keepers etc.), slums and semi-nomadic citizens.

Dharavi records 42 new cases

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Dharavi reported its highest single-day tally on Tuesday, reporting 42 new cases of COVID-19. The area also reported four deaths. Its tally now stands at 330 cases, including 18 deaths.

The new cases are from areas like Matunga labour camp, Kunchikurve Nagar, 90-feet road. Besides, cases were reported from newer parts of Dharavi, including Markandeya Society, Dhobi Ghat, Mochi gully, Agas Wadi and Uday Society. Dharavi reported four deaths on Tuesday, two from cases reported earlier. These two, a 60-year-old man and a 60-year-old woman, died at Sion Hospital.

Besides, a 48 year-old man from Kasarwadi and a 55 year-old man from Social Nagar passed away at KEM Hospital.

ras in wards to keep an eye on the treatment. "The main issue was food, which we have resolved now," he said.

Skipping duty

Majority of class-4 employees, including sweepers, had stopped coming for duty fearing infection. The hospital's director and its medical superintendent, who was ill, and the attached college's dean, all went into quarantine. "We have given the hospital additional staff of 11 workers. Those who were not returning to duty have been asked to come back. Nine have returned," added Mr. Rawat.

The State suspects that the outbreak in Ujjain had occurred owing to carriers who returned from Indore.

On Tuesday, Madhya Pradesh reported seven deaths. Ujjain reported three deaths, while Bhopal, Dewas, Raisen and Ashoknagar districts reported one death each.

Only on April 10, when his son tested positive in Jabalpur, was Nasir tested in Indore. When his result came back positive, the 125 inmates in the barracks were moved into a hostel-turned-quarantine centre, said an official of the Jail Department.

Although the six arrested for the attack on the constable came from a COVID-19 hotspot, they were huddled up in the jail without being tested for the illness, said an official of Indore's COVID-19 combat team, requesting anonymity.

Four of the infected inmates were admitted to the MRTB hospital, while the others were lodged at the quarantine centre, guarded by the police, in the Asrawad Khurd area. "Three of them are asymptomatic," said Mr. Tripathi. Two guards who

had handled the father also tested positive.

A few days ago, Javed pulled off a dramatic escape from a government-run hospital in Jabalpur while undergoing treatment for the illness. He took a lift on a truck to Narsinghpur district and tried to ride back on a motorcycle to Indore.

A police team arrested him at a checkpost. Personnel who had come into contact with him, including a 2017-batch IPS officer, went into quarantine. The officer tested positive later.

"Invoking the NSA against them was perhaps right, but immediately putting them in jail, just to show an exemplary action, was negligent," said the official. He claimed the decision imported the virus into the jail, virtually an isolation centre, which has hundreds of inmates.

Mumbai hits spike of 25 deaths

Six donate plasma; critical patient in Lilavati Hospital gets transfusion

JYOTI SHELAR
MUMBAI

Mumbai recorded the highest number of 25 deaths on Tuesday pushing the death toll to 244. With 393 new cases, the tally of COVID-19 cases in the city have gone up to 5,982. The case fatality rate of the city now stands at 4%. The deceased included 13 men and 12 women.

An expert committee, set up to stem the rising fatalities in the city, has submitted its preliminary report to the State government, a health official said. The report highlighted the ordeal of victims who were forced to go from one hospital to



Long journey: Migrant workers from Hyderabad on their way to Chhattisgarh climbing onto a passing truck. ■ J. RAJAGOPAL

another after being turned away from treatment. The committee has proposed the setting up of a call centre where people who develop symptoms can call for guidance and can be helped in reaching the right hospital.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra is preparing to return 75,000 rapid testing kits received from the Indian Council of

Medical Research (ICMR). Dr. Anup Kumar Yadav, commissioner (health services), said, "Now with the debate over the wide range of variations in the results, we have been asked to send them back."

As a part of the plasma therapy trial, the BMC has received plasma from six patients who have recovered from COVID-19. One critical patient at the Lilavati Hospital has received a plasma transfusion. Doctors are closely monitoring his condition. Dr. Jalil Parkar from Lilavati Hospital said the patient has been on a ventilator since April 21.

MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OF GREATER MUMBAI

No, Dy.Ch.E / 92 / SWD / WS Dated 27.04.2020.

OFFICE OF

DEPUTY CHIEF ENGINEER (STORM WATER DRAINS) WESTERN SUBURBS

Greenwood Complex, Andheri Kurla Road, Near Gurunanak Petrol pump, Andheri (E), Mumbai-400 093.

THIS IS A e-TENDER NOTICE

Sr. No.	Name of the Work	Estimated Cost (in Rs.)	Earnest Money Deposit (in Rs.)	Class	Time Period	Cost of Blank e-Tender form
1	Et No.7100177427 WS-536 Designing Providing Constructing and modernized & fully automated package/ modular sewage treatment plant along Poisar River on Design Build Operate (DBO) along with 15 years of operation & maintenance & providing & laying of sewer network, provision of interceptors for diversion of DWF, construction of service road and road side drains on either banks of Poisar river.	7,51,69,34,651/-	7,51,69,400/-	Category C.II, C-III & V and Class-I (A) in Civil works (as per new registration rules 2015 & 2016) and/or in Class AA in M&E works as per registration of 2015 & class A in M&E as per registration rules of 2016	Thirty Six (36) Months (Excluding Monsoon)	Rs.8085/- (Rs. 7700/- +2.5% CGST +2.5% SGST)
2	Et no.7100177428 WS-537 Rejuvenation of Oshiwara / Walhat River by Designing, Providing, Constructing and commissioning modernized & fully automated package/ modular sewage treatment plant along Oshiwara / Walhat River on Design Build Operate (DBO) along with 15 years of operation & maintenance & providing & laying of sewer network, provision of interceptors for diversion of DWF, construction of service road and road side drains and construction of retaining walls on the banks of Oshiwara / Walhat River.	5,03,42,43,363/-	5,03,42,500/-	Category C.II, C-III & V and Class-I (A) in Civil works (as per new registration rules 2015 & 2016) and/or in Class AA in M&E works as per registration of 2015 & class A in M&E as per registration rules of 2016	Thirty Six (36) Months (Excluding Monsoon)	Rs.8085/- (Rs. 7700/- +2.5% CGST +2.5% SGST)

The dates and time for uploading e-Tender & opening of the e-Tenders are as under If there are any changes in the dates the same will be displayed on the MCGM portal (<http://portal.mcgm.gov.in>) or will be displayed on the notice board in the office of Dy.Ch.E (S.W.D.) WS.

The e-tender sale starts from:-	29.04.2020 from 11.00 a.m.
Prebid meeting	11.05.2020 at 15.00 Hrs. in Conference room of AMC(P)'s Conference Hall, Head Office, Fort, Mumbai-400 001.
The last date & time of e-tender sale :-	26.05.2020 up to 12.00 noon
Last date for Submission of e-tender :-	26.05.2020 upto 16:00 Hrs.
Opening of Packet - 'A'	27.05.2020 after 16:05 Hrs.
Opening of Packet - 'B'	27.05.2020 after 16:15 Hrs
The packet 'C' to be opened on:-	09.06.2020 at 15.00 Hrs
The e-Packet 'A'. e-Packet 'B' & e-Packet 'C' shall be uploaded online before last date and time for submission.	
The Municipal Commissioner reserves the right to reject any or all e-tenders without giving any reason to the tenderers.	
The details are available on MCGM's website http://portal.mcgm.gov.in	

Sd/-
Deputy Chief Engineer
(Storm Water Drains)
Western Suburbs

'Give PPEs to teams in non-pandemic areas'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A NITI Aayog employee in Delhi has tested positive for COVID-19, and the building has been sealed for 48 hours.

"An employee working at NITI Bhawan has been detected positive with COVID-19. It was informed to the authorities at 9 a.m. this morning. NITI Aayog is following all the due protocols necessary as per the Ministry of Health guidelines. The building has been sealed," the government think tank

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Taking serious note of rising infections from asymptomatic patients, the Supreme Court has ordered the government to examine and make necessary arrangements to provide protective medical gear to medical staffers working in "non-COVID treatment areas".

"We direct the Union of India to examine this issue and make necessary suggestions in the 'Rational Use of Personal Protective Equipment' guidelines so that PPEs are provided to all health officials, as stated above, who are working in non-COVID treatment areas," said a three-judge Bench led by Justice N.V. Rama.

The case was heard on Monday but the order was published on April 28.

'Should be protected'

The court found substance in a plea made by Jerry Banai, a doctor, that health workers, including doctors, nurses, ward boys and paramedical staff, in non-COVID zones should also be protected.

The petition said the issue was of utmost urgency as infections from asymptomatic patients were on the rise in the country.

C.M.K.

PRO/50/ADV/20-21

Sd/-
E.E.Mech.(Sewerage) Malad Zone

PRO/49/ADV/20-21

Jailed father, son in M.P. turn super spreaders; 21 infected

An IPS officer is among those who contracted the illness

STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

A father-son duo arrested for allegedly attacking a police constable on lockdown enforcement duty have infected at least 21 persons, including 18 other inmates of the Indore Central Jail, with COVID-19. Two jail guards and an IPS officer have also contracted the illness from them.

Nasir Khan was arrested on April 7 for the assault along with his son Javed Khan and four others. Nasir Khan was initially kept in the same barracks as the other inmates at the Central Jail, said Akash Tripathi, Indore Divisional Commissioner.

INTERVIEW | SITARAM YECHURY

'Centre is behaving like a big brother by centralising authority'

CPI(M) general secretary says the Union government is neither giving the States resources nor allowing them to assess whether to continue the lockdown or not

SOBHANA K. NAIR

Stating that economic restoration post the lockdown will require much higher government allocation, CPI(M) General Secretary Sitaram Yechury calls for greater freedom and financial aid for the State governments at the frontlines of the battle against COVID-19, and warns that democracy will be a casualty if there is a totalitarian clampdown.

Is the lockdown and its extension justified considering the extent of adverse impact on the economy?

■ A lockdown may have been inevitable sometime or the other. The point is, it should have been imposed with a proper preparation. The lockdown should be used effectively and scientifically to isolate the areas where the disease is spreading and start reopening the remaining areas, like many other countries are doing or have done. But with a four-hour notice, the Prime Minister gave no time either for the State governments to prepare or people to be prepared. This led to unnecessary chaos.

Secondly, during the lockdown, there has to be widespread testing to isolate the areas where community transmission is taking place.

And slowly start easing the other areas, with normal restrictions, of what I have always maintained, physical distance with social solidarity and not social distancing. We weren't prepared with the testing facilities or personal protection equipment. We were unprepared for both effectively tackling the pandemic and providing relief to the people.

How do you look at the recent consultations between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Chief Ministers via video-conferencing?

■ There was a direction given by the PMO for yesterday's [Monday's] meeting listing out the nine CMs who will speak. So why would the others go, if the speakers are already pre-decided? Of these nine, one was Odisha

and the other was Puducherry, the others were either BJP-led or supported governments. What is this sort of consultation?

At every meeting the PMO decides which CM will speak. Now if you are going to have a CM's video conference, then allow everyone to air their opinion. This kind of pick-and-choose and then putting out disinformation saying that four out of these nine wanted extension, that really impacts credibility of such meetings.

The Union Home Ministry shot off a letter to the Kerala government when it eased restrictions briefly; the Centre sent out teams to Opposition-ruled States such as West Bengal and Rajasthan. How do you see these events?

■ If you really want the States, which are on the battlefield, to be on board, you have to arm the State governments properly. For that, financial resources are absolutely essential. You are not returning them even GST dues. You have collected crores of rupees under this



If you want a totalitarian clampdown, then democracy will be the casualty

new fund, PM CARES; what is this money for? You transfer this money to the State governments. The Centre is behaving like a big brother, centralising the authority, wanting the States to do the job but the Centre will tell them how to do it. The Centre will not give them resources or allow them to have their own assessment on how to continue with lockdown or ease it.

Not only fiscal federalism but political federalism is also being adversely affected. Why are Central teams only to the Opposition-ruled states? BJP-led states of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh

are reporting one of the highest number of COVID-19 positive cases. From January 30, when the first case was reported in Kerala, till March 22, the Union government did nothing. This is the period when we should have armed ourselves. On the contrary, they organised Namo Trump, and now the situation in Gujarat is of major concern with the pandemic on rampage.

And then you had toppling of Kamal Nath government and the public swearing-in with huge crowds. Then you had the Tablighi Jamaat, which was a very irresponsible act by the organisers to have held congregation at that time. But who permitted it? How come the Maharashtra government refused permission for a similar congregation when they were asked but the Delhi police, that comes directly under Home Minister Amit Shah, allowed it?

How does democracy survive this pandemic?

■ Unless you bring back some degree of normalcy, which is possible only when

you have a scientific approach, of identifying isolating on the basis of widespread testing in the areas where it is spreading. Start your normal activities slowly with the necessary precautions. That is how even democracy will survive.

If you want a totalitarian clampdown, then democracy will be the casualty. Every time such an epidemic or health emergency arose, draconian laws were brought in.

In the 1890s during the plague, British herded the patients into congested camps virtually condemning them to death. In protest to that the national movement rose and the famous case of Chapekar brothers shooting down the Pune Plague Commissioner Walter Charles Rand happened. Then came the Epidemic Diseases Act of 1897 with its draconian measures.

The same thing with some cosmetic amendments in 2005 is what we have now. Then came the sedition act – [Bal] Gangadhar Tilak was arrested for writing an editorial condemning the British approach in mishandling the pandemic.

■ This has to be tackled in three stages; in my opinion, there are short-, medium- and long-term measures required. All of these have to start now.

In the short term, immediately the government must do a cash transfer of ₹7,500 for three months. Immediately, distribute the food-grains in the FCI [Food Corporation of India] godowns. Hunger and lack of nutrition makes people vulnerable to the virus.

Arrange for the migrant workers to return to their homes. Providing relief to the people is actually you are maintaining your workforce. In the medium term, go-

vernment should now announce a much larger relief package than what was announced of ₹1.7 lakh crore, which is less than 1% of our GDP.

Many countries in the world have given 20% of their GDP. Why are we being so meekly, we don't know. If you are able to write off loans that the rich took and not paid back to the tune of ₹7.78 lakh crore in the past five years, surely there is no dearth of resources in the country. You restore the wealth tax of 4% on the super rich.

This will give us enough funds to work out a package worth 10% of our GDP if not more.

In the long term, which also has to begin now, the main emphasis should be in public investments on health, education and much-needed infrastructure. This will give employment to lakhs and crores of people. The budgetary allocation under the MGNREGA should significantly increase. Instead of the promised 100-day of guaranteed work, it should be increased to 200 days.

Centre starts preparing for post-lockdown urban services

Urban Affairs Ministry to ready protocols for metro trains and missions

DAMINI NATH

NEW DELHI

Officials of the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry were on Tuesday asked to start preparing the post-lockdown protocols for the various urban missions and services, including operation of Metro trains.

Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri reviewed the progress of the various urban missions, including the Smart Cities Mission, the Swachh Bharat and the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban), being implemented by the Ministry.

Status check
Officers presented the status of the missions and were asked to prepare protocols, an official said. For instance, the officers were asked to have the protocols for restarting Metro services ready, the official said.



Empty corridors: The Rajiv Chowk Metro station in New Delhi remains closed during the lockdown. ■ PTI

After the meeting, Mr. Puri said in a tweet that he had reviewed the progress of the flagship missions with the Secretary and senior officers.

"Happy to note that the missions are also contributing extensively towards COVID-19 related work along with their normal work and implementation of projects."

Among the urban infrastructure pressed into service are the integrated command

and control centres built as part of the Smart Cities Mission that are being used to monitor the spread of the pandemic and the response to it.

"Integrated Command & Control Centre in Agra Smart City has transformed into District Control Room for fight against COVID-19. It offers doorstep delivery of items of daily need, security services, detection of loitering, medical assistance &

other services to citizens," Mr. Puri said in a tweet.

While construction activities have been allowed with certain conditions, availability of workers has been hit as the lockdown led migrant workers to return to their hometowns or are stuck in camps on the way.

However, Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry Secretary Durga Shankar Mishra said works under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) had started.

"229 projects worth more than ₹27,000 crore have started/restarted under AMRUT with available local manpower in 10 States. All prescribed precautions for fighting COVID-19 are being observed. This will provide livelihood opportunities to those who have lost their jobs temporarily," he said in a tweet after the meeting concluded.

Massive evacuation planned from Gulf

Naval ships and IAF, AI planes readied

DINAKAR PERI

NEW DELHI

The Union government is drawing up a major evacuation plan involving the Navy, the Indian Air Force (IAF) and Air India to bring back Indians stranded in West Asia following the nationwide lockdown and travel restrictions due to COVID-19, multiple defence sources said.

A major evacuation plan is under discussion with the Ministry of External Affairs being the lead ministry. When, where and how many and factors like who is to be evacuated and so on are under deliberation," a defence source told *The Hindu*. The tentative window for evacuation has not been decided yet but it is expected to be after the lockdown ends on May 3.

Defence sources confirmed that Navy and IAF had been asked to work out the modalities from their end and accordingly preparations were on. "An exercise of aircraft availability was done to have a picture about capability, turn around time, sortie generation possibility and so on," a second source said, adding there was no tasking yet.

The IAF has a fleet of US



The IAF will deploy its transport aircraft.

origin C-130 Hercules medium transporters and C-17 Globemaster heavy transport aircraft, in addition to older Russian IL-76 aircraft, which have been playing a major role in recent Humanitarian and Disaster Relief (HADR) efforts.

Naval ships need enough time to sail from their home ports with requisite preparations to handle civilians. "The nation lockdown ends on May 3. So there is reaction time and there is also lot of administrative and logistical issues to be worked out," another defence source said on this.

There are more than eight million Indians who live and work in the Gulf region and with plummeting oil prices there have been concerns of massive job losses.

Mid-day meals on during vacation

Centre to provide ₹958 crore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Centre plans to extend the mid-day meal scheme in government schools over the summer holidays due to the COVID-19 lockdown.

An additional ₹958 crore will be provided for this purpose, Human Resource Development Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank told State Education Ministers on Tuesday. An extra ₹790 crore would be provided to buy pulses, vegetable, oil, spices and fuel by hiking the annual allocation for cooking costs. The Centre will also provide 3 lakh tonnes of foodgrains, worth approximately ₹990 crore, officials said.

However, reports from States suggest that the current implementation of the mid-day meal scheme has been patchy and variable across different regions. While Kerala is providing actual cooked meals delivered to the homes of poor students, a large number of other States, including Karnataka and West Bengal, are providing dry rations to students' families in lieu of cooked meals during the lockdown. Delhi schools do not seem to be offering either option, with officials

simply pointing to the cooked meals being offered at general relief centres across the city.

Nationwide, 11.5 crore children studying in Class 1 to 8 in 11.34 lakh schools depend on the scheme for a nutritious lunch.

Board exam papers

Mr. Nishank also urged States to begin the process of evaluating answer sheets of completed State Board exams during the lockdown itself, and facilitate the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) in its correction of answer sheets as well, according to an official statement.

Noting that an alternative academic calendar has already been released by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), the Union Minister said States could adopt it according to their local situation. He also urged them to prepare safety guidelines in preparation for opening of schools post the lockdown.

The Education Ministers of 22 States and secretaries from another 14 States and Union Territories participated in the videoconference with the Union Minister.

Unfair to call test kits faulty, says China

Committed to assisting India in fight against pandemic, embassy says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

"We are deeply concerned with the evaluation results and the decision made by Indian Council of Medical Research. China attaches great importance to the quality of exported medical products. The Chinese Embassy maintained a close contact with ICMR and the two Chinese companies to find out the real situation,"

said Ji Rong, Counsellor and spokesperson of the embassy.

The official said China was committed to assisting India in the fight against the pandemic, and reminded the test kits were sent to India after the ICMR and the National Institute of Virology approved them.

"It is unfair and irrespon-

sible of certain individuals to label Chinese products "faulty" and look at issues with pre-emptive prejudice," the spokesperson said.

The Hindu reported on April 28 that despite the decision of ICMR to return the test kits, India remains on track to import more medical goods in the coming days.



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Gearing up for floods during pandemic

The National Disaster Response Force is preparing to face the twin challenges in many States

DEVESHK PANDEY
NEW DELHI

With the southwest monsoon around the corner, the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) is preparing to face the twin challenges of COVID-19 and floods in different parts of the country. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast a normal monsoon, which is expected to hit Kerala on June 1.

"In the rainy season, managing the situation in areas that have been reporting COVID-19 cases, particularly in the hotspot and containment zones, will be an uphill task. Given the forecast, it will require more preparation," said a senior NDRF official.

There is a chance of above normal rain in August and September, according to the IMD.

Over the past week, the NDRF has been working on an action plan to meet all



Staying alert: In this August 2018 photo, members of the National Disaster Response Force patrolling along the Periyar during the floods in Kerala. ■ H. VIBHU

possible exigencies. The top brass has been briefing the field formations on measures to be taken. The organisation has been in constant touch with the IMD and the local administration in the respective States.

Assam, which witnesses

heavy rains and flash floods during the monsoon, leading to several deaths and displacement of lakhs of people in the affected areas, had asked for monsoon pre-deployment of NDRF teams.

"Response teams in other States are awaiting further

instructions. It is an unprecedented situation wherein more than 90% resources will have to be mobilised. Last year, when the country recorded the best monsoon over the past 25 years, 200 of the 216 teams had to be deployed in close to 20 States

for rescue and relief operations. Before that, we also responded well to Cyclone Fani which had hit eastern India in the first week of May 2019," the official said.

The NDRF has taken note of the latest IMD warning of the likely formation of a low pressure area over the south Andaman Sea and the neighbourhood around April 30, which is likely to intensify into a depression during the subsequent 48 hours, triggering moderate and heavy to extreme rainfall in isolated areas.

Following the COVID-19 outbreak, NDRF teams in several States joined the local administration in implementing preventive measures and distributing essentials, including medical supplies. They also stepped in to alleviate the problems faced by thousands of stranded migrant labourers, particularly in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

There could be a possibil-

BRICS should help entrepreneurs: India

Jaishankar calls for global reforms

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Member countries of the BRICS group should assist private entrepreneurs to help them deal with the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Monday. He also spoke of the need for reform in the multilateral global platforms during the video-conference of Foreign Ministers of the BRICS group which was convened by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

"He [Mr. Jaishankar] em-

phasised that we need to provide support to businesses, especially MSMEs, to tide over the crisis and ensure livelihoods are not lost. The Minister emphasised that the pandemic is not only posing a great risk to the health and well-being of humanity but is also severely impacting global economy," said a government release.

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi, South African Minister of International Relations Grace Naledi Pandor and Brazilian Foreign Minister Ernesto Araujo participated.

The lockdown may have dramatically reduced air pollution across the country but it hasn't significantly reduced pollution in the Ganga, according to a report by the Central Pollution Control Board.

The dissolved oxygen (DO) concentration, a measure of the amount of free oxygen available in river systems, "rose marginally" from March 22-April 15. A high DO value is considered a good

indicator of river health. However, two other measures, BOD (Biological Oxygen Demand) and COD (Chemical Oxygen Demand) – both indicators of the amount of oxygen necessary to break down organic and inorganic

pollution – showed "insignificant reductions", the CPCB report notes. The lower these numbers are the better they indicate river health.

"Reduction in BOD concentration has been less significant owing to continual

discharge of untreated or inadequately treated sewage. Marginal reduction can be seen only in the 4th week of the lockdown. Further, there is gradual increase in BOD levels towards downstream stretches of the river, with the maximum values in West Bengal," according to the CPCB report. "Reduction in COD concentration has also been less significant. Few locations show increase in the COD values, while in remaining stations reduction in COD levels was not significant. This marginal reduction can be attributed due to stoppage of industrial activities."

Domestic wastewater from 97 towns situated near

river Ganga, and industrial effluents, are the main sources of water pollution in the river, with an estimated quantity of 3,500 MLD (million litres per day) of sewage, out of which 1,100 MLD is treated and the remaining 2,400 MLD gets discharged untreated. Industrial effluent is estimated to be about 300 MLD.

The CPCB assessed pollution a week before lockdown and weeks after at 36 locations in Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The pollution in the river is highest in Uttar Pradesh. The bulk of the sewage treatment plants commissioned under Ganga are in Uttar Pradesh towns and though projects worth

₹23,000 crore have been commissioned (across 11 Ganga basin States), a noticeable increase in the cleanliness of the river isn't yet apparent.

The CPCB, however, said that there was notable improvement in water quality in the Yamuna. "Analysis results indicate there is considerable improvement in the water quality of river Yamuna with respect to DO, BOD and COD when compared with pre-lockdown and lockdown period," the CPCB notes.

However, this was done basis an assessment at only three locations in Delhi and the gains were significantly due to reduced industrial activity.

No improvement in Ganga water quality during lockdown

But pause in industrial activity has aided Yamuna

JACOB KOSHY

NEW DELHI



Few gains: All boat jetties along the Ganga remain deserted, but pollution continues due to sewage discharge into the river. ■ RANJEET KUMAR

lockdown delayed auction of ship that has been placed under 'arrest' for non-payment of debt

Lockdown delays auction of ship that has been placed under 'arrest' for non-payment of debt

JAGRITI CHANDRA
NEW DELHI

With food, water and diesel likely to run out in two days, 19 sailors on board an oil tanker off Mumbai are an anxious lot. Their ship has been under "arrest" for the past three months after the owner failed to clear its debt owed to the erstwhile UTI Capital Private Ltd. and an auction scheduled last month could not conclude due to the lockdown.

"The Bombay High Court has asked the agency which has arrested the ship to provide us essentials through our company, Mercator Ltd. But we can't be certain until the supplies arrive on board," says Captain Iftikhar Modak, Master of MT Prem Mala. Last week, he sent an

SOS to various stakeholders including the Sheriff of Mumbai, the Directorate General of Shipping, the shipping company and Axis Trustee Services Ltd. (ATSL), requesting for supplies yet there is no clarity on who will provide them.

Unfinished business

On January 31, the Bombay High Court granted a plea by the ATSL, a beneficiary of Axis Bank, for issuing an arrest warrant against MT

Prem Mala.

The owner of the ship owed UTI through the ATSL ₹196 crore. On March 3, the Bombay High Court directed the Sheriff of Mumbai to conduct an auction. The bids were to be submitted on March 24 and an auction pur-

chaser declared by the court two days later. But these were left incomplete after the lockdown was announced.

"In April, UTI paid for the

essential supply on humanitar-

ian grounds though it is

not obliged to do so. On Mon-

day, we approached the

court to ask that it must either

direct somebody to pay

for the essentials or allow for



In troubled waters: The Prem Mala. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ment regulations which require a minimum of 17 crew members to be mandatorily on ship. But if these supplies don't reach us on time, we will be forced to abandon the ship. The morale onboard is very low as we have not been paid our salaries since January and our insurance has also expired. We have no idea when we will be able to return home or send money to our families. We have no contact with our owners, who have simply abandoned us. I was assigned duty for two months and my four-month long contract expired last week, but the shipowner says he can't even send a boat to allow us to leave the ship because there are dues owed to them too," says Chief Officer Ankit Maurya.

"We are obeying govern-

ment regulations which re-

quire a minimum of 17 crew

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there are dues owed to

them too," says Chief Of-

ficer Ankit Maurya.

"We are obeying govern-

ment regulations which re-



Hyundai Creta revamp: Bettering a blockbuster

Hyundai has played to its strengths, foregoing things like driving dynamics for greater comfort and an even longer equipment list

GAVIN D'SOUZA

It could not have been easy to make the second-generation Hyundai Creta. Simply put, the original was a blockbuster and the go-to model in the mid-size SUV segment. However, the segment has grown over the years with stronger rivals (one in particular from Hyundai's own backyard). And with more rivals just around the corner, the new Creta has its work cut out for it. So, can the successor surpass the original?

Compared to its predecessor, the new Creta is visibly larger and has superb proportions, with a chunky, square-shaped front end, thick creases and broad shoulders. However, the smaller details are likely to polarise people. The flat nose houses a big grille and lighting is via an unusual three-part, C-shaped LED DRL pattern, with the actual LED headlamps in a cluster lower down (the indicators and fog lamps are lower still). The LED tail-lamps mirror the headlamps, although a neat black strip housing the high-mount stop-lamp adds some relief. The design is quirky at best and fussy at worst.

The interiors are quite the opposite, and you are welcomed by a



clean and simple dashboard design, with a rather elegant V-shaped flowing centre console. The all-black interior with red highlights seen here is exclusive to the 1.4 Turbo model, while others get a more conventional beige-and-black interior. Sporty as this colour scheme is, though, it highlights the liberal use of hard shiny plastic in the cabin. While the plastic quality itself is pretty good for the class, the lack of soft-touch materials and very little brightwork takes away from the perceived quality.

The big attraction here, however,

is the flush-sitting 10.25-inch touchscreen, which is slick to use, crystal clear with sharp graphics, and loaded with features, including Hyundai Blue Link connectivity suite. Also nice is the row of physical buttons, so you do not always have to take your eyes off the road. Another neat touch is the part-digital instrument cluster, with the speedo and MID housed in a sharp 7.0-inch central display within the binnacle.

Head room, while quite decent, is eaten into somewhat by the frame of the sunroof, but only the tallest of passengers will find this an issue.

In true Hyundai fashion, the Creta has a lengthy equipment list, including auto headlamps, wireless phone charging, powered driver's seat, air purifier and a tyre pressure monitor, among others, though what Indian buyers will really love are the ventilated front seats, a tre-

lue abrupt manner.

Surprise the gearbox with a sudden kickdown at low revs, and it fumbles a bit. Like most DCTs, this one too works well at high speeds and high revs. The real game-changers here, however, are the paddleshifters – a first in its class – which really let you take the reins and use the powertrain to the fullest.

The engine is, overall, pretty refined, but it does get a little boomy when you rev hard. In most scenarios, however, you won't really feel the need to do so,

thanks to a peppy low end and a strong mid-range.

To enhance driving pleasure, the Creta also has drive modes that alter the engine and gearbox characteristics. In Eco mode, the



Timely update Hyundai's target is to surpass the success of the previous Creta, which it probably will

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

mendous-sounding Bose audio system, electronic parking brake and the full-length panoramic sunroof.

The safety suite on offer is pretty good too, including six airbags, rear parking sensors and a rear-view camera, traction and stability control, and disc brakes at all four corners.

There are five powertrain options, including a 115hp, 1.5-litre naturally aspirated petrol, a 115hp, 1.5-litre turbo-diesel and the 140hp, 1.4-litre direct-injection turbo-petrol we are driving here. The former two are available with both manual and automatic options, while the turbo-petrol is only available as an auto.

While it is not being positioned as an outright 'performance' model,

the 140hp/242Nm 1.4 T-GDI engine, the same unit as in the Seltos, imbues the Creta with pretty strong performance. It is a shame there is no manual on offer, but the quick-shifting dual-clutch automatic does this engine justice as well. It is not as smooth as, say a Volkswagen DSG, and there is still a fair bit of jerkiness at slow speeds, but shifts are noticeably smoother in the Creta than in the Seltos (which also uses the same gearbox) and it engages gears in a less abrupt manner.

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drive is relaxed, and the gearbox shifts early to give you maximum efficiency, which is good for city driving. In 'Comfort', the Creta feels a bit more responsive and energetic, and then in 'Sport', it pulls all the way up to the redline, giving you maximum performance.

Moving to a new platform has also improved the Creta's dynamics. It feels like an altogether larger and more solidly put together vehicle from behind the wheel, although it's still not quite up there with European cars.

The suspension errs on the softer side, and you move around a bit in your seat, but it is not overly bouncy like the old Creta, and you get superb stability at high speeds. The softer setup also allows it to tackle smaller road imperfections really well.

The overall handling is tuned to make driving as easy as possible. All the controls are light, and the steering too, requires little effort. This is great for low-speed manoeuvrability, but comes at the cost of feedback, which doesn't encourage mid-corner histrionics. There's a bit of torque steer, too, when you whack open the throttle.

The Creta's new look may not work for everyone, but frankly, that

HYUNDAI Creta 1.4 T-GDI DCT SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE: 1353cc, 4 cyls, turbo-petrol

MAX POWER: 140hp at 6000rpm

MAX TORQUE: 242Nm at 1500-3200rpm

GEARBOX: 7-speed dual clutch automatic

LENGTH (MM): 4300mm

WIDTH (MM): 1790mm

HEIGHT (MM): 1635mm

WHEELBASE (MM): 2610mm

is not going to be enough to curb its almost certain future popularity – it bagged 14,000 bookings in just two weeks. Where it won't have it as easy as its predecessor is in the fact that the competition has stepped up its game too. Apart from its most direct rival, the Seltos, the segment below is catching up, and larger SUVs like MG Hector, are offering some really tempting value for money. But Hyundai has played to its strengths, foregoing things like driving dynamics for greater comfort and an even longer equipment list. They have even given it an aggressive introductory price of ₹9.99 lakh to ₹17.20 lakh, which points to pretty good value.

What will clinch it, however, is those class-leading features (such as the cooled seats and panoramic sunroof) which Indian buyers are willing to pay a premium for. No doubt, it has taken the fight to the Seltos' doorstep, but Hyundai's target is to surpass the success of the previous Creta, which it probably will.

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Detailed by design, unique in colour

While the Gemopai Astrid Lite boasts many user-friendly features, it is still too expensive for what it offers

FIROZE IRANI

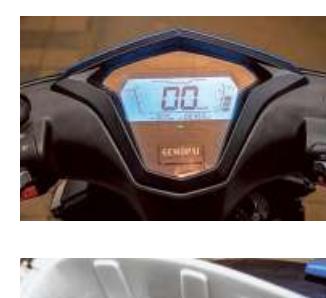
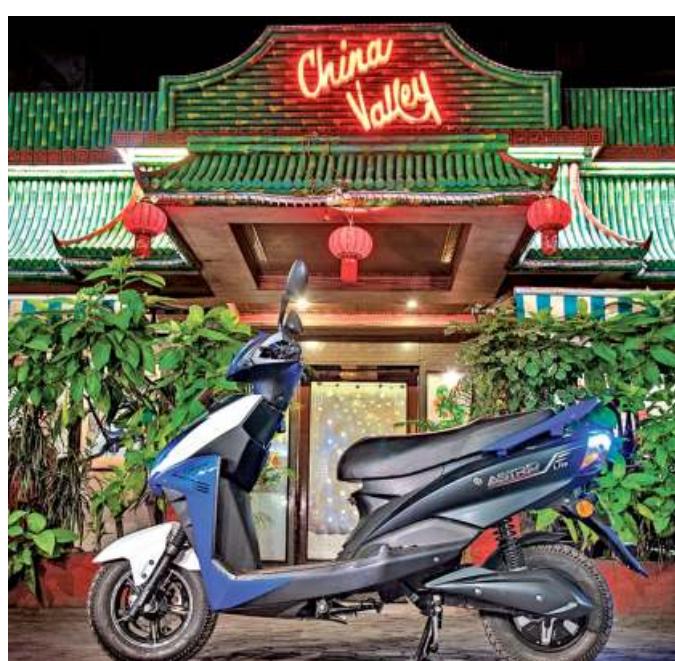
The last few years have seen a massive influx of electric scooter companies with strong Chinese connections. While a majority of them try to portray themselves as completely Indian brands, Gemopai doesn't, and has in fact adopted its Chinese connection's name in its own. Gemopai claims quite openly on its website that its Chinese partner, Opai Electric, has over 15 years of experience in the field, with a total of 25 international patents for its line-up of 70 electric two-wheelers and three electric car models.

Gemopai's honest approach is quite refreshing, but let us see if the company's Astrid Lite e-scooter has what it takes to come across as a commendable product.

At first glance, the Astrid Lite looks like any other Chinese electric scooter, with its comparably smaller and narrower design. When you get a little closer, you begin noticing the design highlights, and while the materials still feel low-quality, the paint finish and styling are very nice. The blue, black and white three-tone colour scheme on the Astrid Lite is unique and something we found attractive.

What we also liked is the legroom on the footboard and large rear-view mirrors. Another useful touch is the deep pocket on the apron that can easily store a pair of riding gloves.

As for other storage spaces, the



Good looks The three-tone colour scheme on the Astrid Lite is unique and attractive

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

battery gauge. The Okinawa and Ampera electric scooter we rode a few months ago feature real-time battery-level gauges that fluctuate wildly; but luckily, this is not the case here and the Gemopai's gauge is quite accurate as well.

On our range run, the Gemopai ran for 61km (in City mode) after which the battery was completely exhausted. That is not bad, but it is important to note that the scooter did not cross 15kph in the last 10km of range, so the effective usable range is around 50km when ridden at about 30-40kph in City mode. This is quite far off the company's claimed 75-90km range.

Moving on to performance figures, the 2,400W BLDC motor allows it to go from 0-40kph in 7.39sec. Our Vbox indicated a 45kph top speed, while the digital speedo was claiming 61kph. That translates to a massive 26.03% speedo error. This was recorded in the scooter's maximum-performance Sport mode and it only

gets slower in City and Eco modes.

On the move, the scooter gets along quite nicely and just about manages to keep up with traffic – as long as you are not on a fast and flowing main road. I even found myself overtaking other two-wheelers a few times. It is not too bad on inclines and manages flyovers without stress when it is got enough charge. The ride quality is decent as well and a little better than the two aforementioned e-scooters. What also helps the comfort level of the scooter is the soft seat that is nice over shorter distances. On the flip side, the riding position is slightly awkward due to the high-set floorboard, although this is still vastly better than the Okinawa Praise Pro's and is not a deal breaker.

As far as how it handles, it is not the most stable electric scooter and leans over a little too quickly, resulting in a nervous feel. This is not a surprise as the scooter rides on 10-inch wheels at both ends, although the Continental tyres are quite nice. Another thing that makes low-speed manoeuvres, like U-turns, very cumbersome is how touching the brakes, even a little, cuts off the accelerator.

Gemopai is asking for ₹80,000 for the Astrid Lite. It is not eligible for the FAME II subsidy and sells out of around 50 dealerships (in India and Nepal), according to the company. At that price, it is around ₹10,000 pricier than the Ampera Zeal and around ₹7,000 more expensive than the Okinawa Ridge Plus. While it may fit in with the Chinese-origin EV crowd in terms of how it feels, it is still too expensive for what it offers and there is also the concern that this is a completely new and unknown company with no history to fall back on.

Ravi, Bengaluru: Within a budget of ₹13 lakh, which is a better purchase between the Ford EcoSport petrol and the Hyundai Venue Turbo manual transmission? My daily commute is around 30 kilometres, with 70% of it being in the city. While I liked the Ford EcoSport's dynamics, its India operations are worrisome.

Q AND A WITH HORMAZD



Fun to drive and practical

Prateek Sharma, Hamirpur: I am planning to replace my 2018 BMW X1 and have shortlisted the BMW X3, Audi Q5, Mercedes-Benz GLC and Range Rover Evoque. I love thrill-seeking speeds and a good pickup, and I am looking for features like cruise control, AWD, sensors, auto parking assist, along with a good sense of luxury.

■ The new X3 stands out with its mix of practicality, a fun-to-drive character and most of the features you are looking at. In fact, if you love thrills, being a BMW X1 owner, you will appreciate the X3 even more and that is the one we would pick from your shortlist.

Focus on fuel efficiency

Sarath Jose, Kozhikode: I have shortlisted the Tata Nexon XM petrol and the new Maruti Suzuki Vitara Brezza petrol base model. Both cars are good, but I am a little more biased towards the Nexon. However, I have been told that the Tata gives very less mileage.

■ The Nexon is certainly the more exciting of the two, both in terms of performance and design. The Nexon's turbo-petrol is punchy and stronger than the Vitara Brezza's 1.5 naturally-aspirated petrol engine. The thing about the Nexon's engine is that being a turbo, the fuel efficiency is very susceptible to driving style. If you drive it hard, the fuel efficiency will plummet, but if you drive it gently, the consumption won't be too high. However, the Vitara Brezza's petrol is likely to be more fuel-efficient overall.

Ford is here to stay

Ravi, Bengaluru: Within a budget of ₹13 lakh, which is a better purchase between the Ford EcoSport petrol and the Hyundai Venue Turbo manual transmission? My daily commute is around 30 kilometres, with 70% of it being in the city. While I liked the Ford EcoSport's dynamics, its India operations are worrisome.

■ Your decision shouldn't be based on Ford's India operations because with the new joint-venture with Mahindra, Ford has started a new innings in India and is unlikely to close down. Coming to the two cars, the Venue turbo-petrol has a strong mid-range and feels punchier than the EcoSport. However, the EcoSport's 1.5 Dragon engine is pretty good too and if you like the superior dynamics of the EcoSport then don't hesitate to go for it.

Hormazd Sorabjee is the editor of Autocar India. Mail your feedback and queries to roadshow@thehindu.co.in

U.S. may seek damages from China

President says many options on the table to hold Beijing accountable, draws an angry response

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump suggested he may seek damages from China over the COVID-19 pandemic, which began in the Chinese city of Wuhan and spread around the world, prompting a furious response from Beijing on Tuesday.

Beijing and Washington have clashed repeatedly over the outbreak as tensions have soared between the world's two biggest economic powers.

COVID-19

"We are not happy with China," Mr. Trump said at a White House briefing on Monday. "We are not happy with that whole situation because we believe it could have been stopped at the source."

"It could have been stopped quickly and it wouldn't have spread all over the world," he said, saying there were many options to "hold them accountable".

Mr. Trump was asked about a recent German newspaper editorial, which called on China to pay Germany \$165 billion in reparations because of economic damage due to the virus.

Asked if the U.S. would



China connection: Police marching in front of the portrait of Nationalist Party founder Sun Yat-sen at Tiananmen Square in Beijing on Tuesday. ■ GETTY IMAGES

consider doing the same, Mr. Trump said "we can do something much easier than that."

Tensions and doubt

"Germany is looking at things, we are looking at things," he said. "We haven't determined the final amount yet," Mr. Trump said.

In Beijing, a Foreign Ministry spokesman on Tuesday accused U.S. politicians of "telling barefaced lies", without naming Trump specifically, and of ignoring their

own serious problems".

"American politicians have repeatedly ignored the truth and have been telling barefaced lies," Geng Shuang told reporters at a regular press briefing.

"They have only one objective: shirk their responsibility for their own poor epidemic prevention and control measures, and divert public attention."

Mr. Geng said U.S. politicians should "reflect on their own problems and find ways to contain the outbreak as

quickly as possible."

There have been nearly a million infections with more than 56,000 coronavirus-related deaths in the U.S. and the pandemic has shut down huge swathes of the economy.

In China, the outbreak seems to be under control with no new deaths reported for 13 straight days and the toll standing at 4,633 – although several countries have cast doubt over whether the numbers are accurate.

Trump knew of virus threat'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump was repeatedly warned about the dangers of the novel coronavirus in intelligence briefings in January and February, The Washington Post reported on Monday. The warnings – more than a dozen included in classified briefings known as the President's Daily Brief – came during a time the President was mostly downplaying the threat.

Sindh Governor tests positive

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KARACHI

Governor of Pakistan's southern Sindh province Imran Ismail, a very close aide of Prime Minister Imran Khan, has tested positive for COVID-19, his party said. A stalwart of Pakistan's ruling party Tehreek-e-Insaf, Mr. Ismail said he was ready to fight it out. He has gone into self-isolation.

South Asia faces health crisis as children miss vaccination

Lockdowns halt immunisation, may reverse hard-won gains

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

ISLAMABAD

South Asia could face a further public health crisis as children miss routine vaccinations, the UN warned on Tuesday, spurring fears that the fallout from the pandemic might reverse hard-earned gains in the region.

The United Nations children's agency UNICEF said hundreds of thousands were at risk as lockdowns across South Asia halted immunisation drives and parents refrained from taking their children to doctors to be inoculated.

"While the COVID-19 virus does not appear to make many children seriously ill, the health of hundreds of thousands of children could be impacted by this disruption of regular immunisation services," said Jean Gough, director of UNICEF's South Asia office.

"This is a very serious threat. Early action is key."

Bangladesh and Nepal have halted their measles and rubella campaigns while Pakistan and Afghanistan have suspended their polio drives since the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNICEF noted that "sporadic" outbreaks of prevent-



Losing out: A boy receiving polio vaccine in Peshawar, Pakistan, in this file photo. ■ REUTERS

table diseases that can be cured with vaccines, including the measles and diphtheria, have emerged in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal.

The agency estimated that 4.5 million of South Asia's children had already missed out on routine immunisations, even before the pandemic struck.

Afghanistan and neighbouring Pakistan were struggling to vaccinate children as local populations viewed inoculation teams with suspicion.

Opposition grew after the CIA organised a fake vaccination drive to help track down al-Qaeda's former leader Osama bin Laden in the Pakistani city of Abbottabad.

It added that as long as

ELSEWHERE



Vietnam jails man for FB posts against regime

HANOI

Vietnam sentenced a 24-year-old man to five years in prison on Tuesday for Facebook posts that were considered anti-state, as the hardline communist regime ramps up pressure against dissent on the social media platform. Phan Cong Hai posted in support of activists jailed in protests against the government's handling of a toxic dump in 2016, as well as other controversial issues. AFP

Norwegian tycoon held for wife's disappearance

OSLO

Norwegian police said on Tuesday they had arrested a wealthy businessman over the disappearance of his wife 18 months ago. Tom Hagen, 70, was arrested on suspicion of "murder or accessory to murder," Commissioner Ida Melbo Oystese told a press conference. Mr. Hagen's wife Anne-Elisabeth Hagen disappeared without a trace from their home in Lørenskog on October 31, 2018. AFP

Venezuela names official indicted by U.S. as Oil Minister

El Aissami is on the fugitives list on drug trafficking charges

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

CARACAS

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on Monday named a top official targeted by U.S. sanctions as Oil Minister as the market for the country's vital export is in tumult.

Mr. Maduro tasked Tareck El Aissami – a Vice-President for the economy who has been indicted in the U.S. on drugs trafficking charges – with "restructuring and reorganization" of the OPEC member's crippled oil industry.

Mr. Maduro also named Asdrubal Chavez, cousin of the late President Hugo Chavez, as interim President of the state oil firm PDVSA.

The U.S. in 2017 designated El Aissami as having played "a significant role in international narcotics trafficking" and placed him on a most-wanted fugitives list in August last year.

"In his previous positions, he oversaw or partially owned narcotics shipments of more than 1,000 kg from



Key appointment: A file photo of Tareck El Aissami, left, and Nicolas Maduro in Caracas, Venezuela. ■ AP

Venezuela on multiple occasions, including those with the final destinations of Mexico and the United States," the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) said on its website.

Mr. El Aissami declared his innocence and said the move was "a dirty trick."

The U.S. has been seeking for more than a year to oust Mr. Maduro. More than 60 countries recognise opposition leader Juan Guaido as interim President.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo renewed support

Imran cracks the whip on media team

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan has fired his special aide on Information and Broadcasting (I&B), replacing her with a powerful former military spokesman as he revamped his media team for the second time since coming to power.

Former Army spokesman Lt. Gen. (retired) Asim Saleem Bajwa, who is also the chairman of the newly-created China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Authority, has replaced Dr. Firdous Ashiq Awan as the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) for information and broadcasting.

Lt. Gen. Bajwa was credited for making former PM Nawaz Sharif a larger-than-life figure.

Mr. Khan also appointed Senator Shibli Faraz as the new Information Minister. The steps seek to allay the perception that the media handling of the government was not good and its works were not being properly highlighted.

During Mr. Moro's announcement of his resignation on April 24, he said Mr. Bolsonaro had told him on multiple occasions that he wanted to replace the head of the federal police with someone who could facilitate access to investigations and intelligence reports.

Brazil's top court authorises investigation into Bolsonaro

President accused of trying to 'interfere' in police affairs

ASSOCIATED PRESS

RIO DE JANEIRO

Brazil's Supreme Court on Monday night authorised an investigation into whether President Jair Bolsonaro committed crimes by allegedly attempting to interfere with the country's federal police.



Jair Bolsonaro

Brazil's Prosecutor-General, Augusto Aras, last week asked the Supreme Court to open an investigation into the allegations made by Mr. Moro, who made a name for himself as the top judge in the sprawling Car Wash corruption investigation.

He was by far Mr. Bolsonaro's most popular Minister and, throughout a series of crises in the Bolsonaro administration, his place in Cabinet helped secure the administration's base of support and appearance of respect for the rule of law.

The Prosecutor-General

in his request said Mr. Moro's speech implied Mr. Bolsonaro had committed several possible crimes, including obstruction of justice, and asked for the former Minister to be questioned and provide evidence to substantiate his claims.

Justice Minister's exit

Mr. Moro quit after Bolsonaro removed the Federal Police's director general. Mr. Bolsonaro claimed the former official had resigned of his own accord, which Mr. Moro said was untrue and also that he hadn't signed off on any resignation.

Mr. Bolsonaro, in his address the same day as Mr. Moro's exit, denied wanting to know about investigations underway, but did not address the accusation he wanted a successor who would share information.

The Supreme Court's press office didn't reply to requests for information late Monday night. And there was no immediate reaction from Mr. Bolsonaro.

Trump's bleach statements echo claims by pseudo-scientists

'Miracle cure' quacks have long promoted industrial bleach to treat autism, malaria and many other medical conditions

ANDREW JACOBS

President Donald Trump's public statements about using disinfectants to potentially treat the coronavirus have put him in the company of pseudoscientists and purveyors of phony elixirs who promote and sell industrial bleach as a "miracle cure" for autism, malaria and a long list of medical conditions.

The President's comments, at a White House briefing last week, have already prompted widespread incredulity, warnings from health experts and a spike in calls to poison control centres around the country. The makers of Clorox and Lysol urged Americans not to inject or ingest their products.

But some scientists fear Mr. Trump's remarks could breathe life into a fringe movement that embraces the medicinal powers of a powerful industrial bleach known as chlorine dioxide. Among its adherents are Alan Keyes, the conservative activist and former presidential candidate who has pro-



Dangerous proposition: President Donald Trump looks at a decontamination device at the White House. ■ NYT

son familiar with senior administration officials said they were not familiar with him or his letter.

It is unclear what inspired Mr. Trump to suggest disinfectants as a cure for COVID-19 – and he did not mention chlorine dioxide or bleach specifically in his comments during the White House briefing. But promoters of such solutions have seized on his remarks with vigour.

"Do you realise how freaky cheap and easy it would be to mass produce chlorine

dioxide for 100,000's of people?" Jordan Sather, a follower of the pro-Trump QAnon conspiracy theory, wrote on Twitter. "We could wipe out COVID quick!"

Unproven products
In a statement earlier this month, the Food and Drug Administration reiterated its warnings about ingesting chlorine dioxide, which it described as "dangerous and unapproved". Chlorine dioxide is widely used in paper processing, by water treatment plants and as a disinfectant in hospitals. "We will not stand for this, and the FDA remains fully committed to taking strong enforcement action against any sellers who place unsuspecting American consumers at risk by offering their unproven products to treat serious diseases," the administration's commissioner, Stephen M. Hahn, said in the statement.

Mr. Grenon and his son, Jonathan did not respond to interview requests.

Chlorine dioxide has also been embraced by vaccine opponents who say the toxic substance treats autism. Emma Dalmayne, a mother of five autistic children who maintains a website about the dangers of so-called bleach cures, said the treatments have left some children with skin burns, seizures, damaged digestive tracts and other injuries. "The harm done to these kids has been unconscionable," she said.

Melissa Eaton, a mother of a child with autism in North Carolina who campaigns against phony cures, said she sees overlaps between those who embrace chlorine dio-

xide as a curative, conspiracy theorists like Alex Jones, and the strident protesters who have clamoured for loosening social distancing measures across the country.

"It's like a Venn diagram," she said. "What they all have in common is the idea that the government is hiding something from you. These people not interested in what scientists, doctors or the media has to say."

Dr. Alan Levinovitz, a professor at James Madison University who studies the relationship between science and religion, said Mr. Trump's comments about disinfectants were in keeping with his previous support for conspiracy theorists, agitators against the deep state and his promotion of two antimarial drugs to fight the coronavirus, despite warnings from medical experts about their possible dangerous side effects.

For a lot of people, Trump represents an alternative to pointy-headed experts in white lab coats who speak a language we can't understand," Dr. Levinovitz said.

Protesters returned on

One killed as violent protests rock Tripoli

Banks set ablaze after a night of rioting

REUTERS

BEIRUT

Violent protests erupted in Lebanon's Tripoli again on Tuesday, with more banks set ablaze after a night of rioting that left one protester dead, according to security and medical sources, in demonstrations renewed by growing economic despair.

A collapse in the Leba-

nese pound and soaring inflation and unemployment are compounding hardship in Lebanon, which has been in deep financial crisis since October.

A shutdown to curb the

spread of the new corona-

virus has exacerbated eco-

nomic woes.

Overnight, protesters in

the northern city of Tripoli

set several banks and an Army vehicle on fire. Soldiers fired into the air and used tear gas and rubber bullets to repel protesters.

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	32114	1.17
US Dollar	76.18	0.09
Brent oil	20.28	3.57

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	272.95	-1.80
Asian Paints	1824.40	-26.95
Axisc Bank	455.45	28.15
Bajaj Auto	2463.70	-42.05
Bajaj Finserv	4861.80	244.30
Bajaj Finance	2228.10	184.05
Bharti Airtel	485.65	-8.40
BPLC	359.10	3.70
Britannia Ind	3193.95	-48.10
Cipla	598.60	-10.10
Coal India	135.40	-2.70
Dr Reddys Lab	3949.75	-30.55
Eicher Motors	14326.85	327.35
GAIL (India)	84.55	2.85
Grasim Ind	497.45	-0.80
HCL Tech	471.10	-12.00
HDFC	1715.80	124.35
HDFC Bank	931.40	1.70
Hero MotoCorp	1943.10	7.90
Hindalco	108.75	0.55
Hind Unilever	2289.95	-30.50
ICICI Bank	359.85	11.95
IndusInd Bank	468.05	60.65
Bharti Infralet	159.40	-2.00
Infosys	660.70	-3.90
Indian Oil Corp	79.65	-1.85
ITC	179.45	-0.40
JSW Steel	159.40	2.10
Kotak Bank	1326.65	23.05
L&T	857.15	1.90
M&M	335.95	5.65
Maruti Suzuki	5052.70	-3.65
Nestle India Ltd.	17569.65	-381.15
NTPC	90.35	-2.00
ONGC	69.20	0.75
PowerGrid Corp	157.20	-2.40
Reliance Ind	1428.15	-1.60
State Bank	184.30	3.40
Shree Cement	18865.90	-155.95
Sun Pharma	473.95	-15.95
Tata Motors	76.95	1.70
Tata Steel	273.55	1.90
TCS	1859.05	22.45
Tech Mahindra	520.40	8.70
Titan	932.85	5.10
UltraTech Cement	3394.00	33.35
UPL	360.50	11.15
Vedanta	76.85	-1.60
Wipro	179.70	-2.35
Zee Entertainment	152.45	2.70

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	75.99	76.31
Euro	82.57	82.94
British Pound	94.79	95.19
Japanese Yen (100)	71.25	71.55
Chinese Yuan	10.74	10.79
Swiss Franc	78.11	78.48
Singapore Dollar	53.64	53.87
Canadian Dollar	54.48	54.71
Malaysian Ringgit	17.40	17.50
Australian Dollar	49.36	49.58

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Deadline for Air India bids extended again

The government on Tuesday extended the deadline for submission of bids for Air India by two months until June 30. The deadline was being extended after "request received from (interested bidders) in view of the prevailing situation arising out of COVID-19," the Department of Investment and Public Management said.

TVS Motor to raise ₹500 crore via securities

TVS Motor Company Ltd. announced that it would raise up to ₹500 crore through issue of securities on a private placement basis. The company's board, which met on Tuesday, approved the issuance of non-convertible debentures aggregating up to ₹500 crore on a private placement basis. The company said in a regulatory filing. The firm did not disclose the reasons for raising the capital. Recently, the company had acquired U.K.-based sporting motorcycle firm Norton in a £16 million all cash deal.

Circulate Capital invests in Lucro

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
COIMBATORE

Circulate Capital, the Singapore-based investment management company has invested in homegrown, Mumbai-based manufacturing firm Lucro Plastecyle Private Limited (Lucro) through the \$106 million Circulate Capital Ocean Fund (CCOF), the world's first investment fund dedicated to the ocean plastic crisis in South and Southeast Asia.

"CCOF has made its inaugural investments in two plastic recycling companies located in India and Indonesia for a total investment of \$6 million," the company said.

CCOF is backed by several leading companies, including PepsiCo and Procter & Gamble.

Bharti, Nokia 'connect' for strong network

\$1-bn deal will lay foundation for 5G connectivity in future; to deploy Nokia's solution across 9 circles

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Telecom equipment maker Nokia has secured a nearly \$1 billion deal from Bharti Airtel to enhance the capacity of its networks, 4G in particular, for nine circles.

In a statement on Tuesday, Bharti Airtel announced a multi-year agreement to deploy Nokia's SRAN solution across nine circles in India. While the financial details of the deal were not disclosed, an industry source pegged it at close to \$1 billion.

"The roll-out, which will also lay the foundation for providing 5G connectivity in the future, will see approximately 3,00,000 radio units deployed across several spectrum bands," the statement added.



The roll-out will see approximately 3 lakh radio units deployed across several spectrum bands. ■REUTERS

2022," the statement added.

These Nokia-supplied networks will give Airtel the best possible platform when 5G networks launch across the country, with their low latency and faster speeds.

Gopal Vittal, MD & CEO

(India and South Asia) at Bharti Airtel, said: "We are committed to continuously investing in emerging network technologies to provide a best-in-class experience to our customers."

This initiative with Nokia

is a major step in this direction. We have been working with Nokia for more than a decade now and are delighted to use Nokia's SRAN products in further improving the capacity and coverage of our network as we prepare for the 5G era."

Rajeev Suri, president and chief executive officer at Nokia, said, "This is an important agreement for the future of connectivity in one of the world's largest telecom markets and solidifies our position in India."

This project will enhance their current networks and deliver best-in-class connectivity to Airtel customers but also lay the foundation for 5G services in the future."

India is the second largest telecom market in the world and is expected to reach 920 million unique mobile customers by 2025, which will

also include 88 million 5G connections, according to the GSMA.

SRAN solution

The statement added that Nokia's SRAN solution helps operators to manage their 2G, 3G and 4G networks from one platform reducing network complexity, increasing cost efficiencies, and future-proofing investment.

"The deal will also include Nokia's RAN equipment, including its AirScale Radio Access, AirScale Base Band and NetAct OSS solution, which will help Airtel to monitor and manage its network effectively."

Nokia Global Services will also play a crucial role in the installation, planning and deployment of the project, which will be executed via the cloud-based Nokia Delivery Platform," it said.

The slowdown will delay the normalisation of our corporate stress book

AMITABH CHAUDHRY
MD & CEO, Axis Bank

ating performance of the bank suggested Q4 was not materially impacted by the COVID-19 induced lockdown, though some impact was felt on the fee income. He, however, indicated some pain would be inevitable going ahead.

"Given the size and the reach of the bank, our cross border ties in sectors and geographies, it will reflect in numbers too. Among other things, we expect our fee income growth to slow down, and provisions to increase materially. The COVID-19 induced slowdown will delay the overall additional provisions held by the bank towards various contingencies, together with the standard asset provisions, translate to a standard asset coverage of 1.3% as at March 31, 2020," the bank said.

As on March 31, the bank's provision coverage, as a proportion of gross NPAs stood at 69%. Specific bad loan provisions for Q4 FY20 were ₹4,204 crore, compared to ₹1,714 crore in Q4 last year, and ₹2,962 crore in Q3 FY20.

The bank recognised slips of ₹3,920 crore during Q4 FY20, compared to ₹6,214 crore in Q3 FY20 and ₹3,012 crore in Q4 FY19.

Slippages from the loan book were at ₹3,418 crore and those from investment exposures stood at ₹502 crore. Corporate slippages were at ₹1,839 crore.

As on March 31, 2020, the bank's gross NPA and net NPA levels were 4.86% and 1.56% respectively, as against 5% and 2.09% respectively as on December 31, 2019. Amitabh Chaudhry, MD & CEO, Axis Bank, said the business and operations time to normalise.

The net interest income – interest earned less interest expended – grew 19% year-on-year to ₹6,808 crore in Q4. Net interest margin for Q4 FY20 was 3.55%. Non-interest income, comprising fee income, trading profit and miscellaneous income, grew 13% to ₹3,985 crore in Q4. Fee income grew 6% on quarter to ₹2,931 crore.

Loans grew 15% year-on-year to ₹5,71,424 crore, while retail loans rose 24% to ₹3,05,400 crore, accounting for 53% of net advances. Overall deposit growth was 17% year-on-year.

'MFs have moved to better assets in past 18 months, can tide over current crisis'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The recent events at Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund may have increased the risk of redemptions in debt funds, but a gradual reduction in exposure towards riskier issuers in the last year and a half could limit any further downside risks.

Morgan Stanley further highlighted the fact that non banking finance companies (NBFCs) and housing finance companies (HFCs) that, till last year, constituted a big part of the assets under management (AUM) of debt schemes now account for a much lesser share.

"Recent events at credit

risk funds have increased risk of redemptions at debt mutual funds. However, we think a big shift in the AUM mix over the past 18 months towards stronger borrowers should mitigate this risk," stated a note by the global financial major.

Morgan Stanley further highlighted the fact that non banking finance companies (NBFCs) and housing finance companies (HFCs) that, till last year, constituted a big part of the assets under management (AUM) of debt schemes now account for a much lesser share.

"... driven by decline in

AUM as well as risk aversion and regulation, mutual funds have been cutting debt exposure to NBFCs/HFCs (down approximately 45% from the peak in July-Aug 2018) with even sharper cuts (down around 90%) to entities in real estate financing, promoter financing etc, which are down to around 1.5% of mutual fund debt AUM," said the report released on Monday.

Last week, Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund decided to wind up six debt funds with combined AUM of nearly ₹26,000 crore on account of illiquid, low-rated instru-

ments in the portfolio.

Meanwhile, Morgan Stanley's analysis showed that about 80% of the NBFC or HFC paper held by mutual funds maturing over the next 12 months have strong percentage while those facing funding constraints constitute only 5% of the overall mutual fund exposure towards the sector.

The financial major, however, noted that while the dependence of the NBFC/HFC segment on mutual funds has decreased, such potential outflows would coincide with banks' turning risk-averse towards NBFCs.

business schools, engineering colleges and undergraduate schools across the country.

According to Goldman Sachs, the virtual internship will encapsulate all the facets of a physical internship at the firm, "facilitated by a strong work-from-home infrastructure".

Some 98% of the firm's employees in India currently work from their homes. The firm said this was possible due to continued investments over the years in technology and risk management framework.

Mr. Samtani added, "Interns joining us this year are aligned to a multitude of functions across several divisions – investment banking, global markets and engineering. They join us in their pre-final year of the academic programme."

We are proceeding with a virtual internship in India for a shortened duration of four to six weeks, compared with the usual duration of eight to ten weeks," he added.

"However, Goldman Sachs will honour the full financial compensation of the original programme duration for all the interns," he said.

This is applicable to all those who are joining the firm from about 100 busi-

Aarogya Setu for feature phones soon

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Centre is working on a Aarogya Setu application-like solution that can be used by feature phones users.

IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said on Tuesday, in a videoconference with IT ministers of all States on Tuesday, the Union Minister said that the solution would be launched soon.

He also called upon States to promote electronics manufacturing through pro-investment initiatives to tap the 'great opportunity' likely to emerge following COVID-19.

"Every state highly appreciated the #AarogyaSetu app and shared their thoughts on it. I have assured them that a similar solution for feature phones is being developed and will be launched very soon," he tweeted.

IN BRIEF



Tendulkar lends a shoulder to Shaw

NEW DELHI Sachin Tendulkar has started helping Prithvi Shaw deal with life on and off the 22 yards after he endured a rough patch following a bright start to his India career. "I have had a number of interactions over the years with Prithvi. He is a very talented player and I am happy to help him. I spoke to him about cricket and also about life beyond the cricket field," said Tendulkar during an interaction. PTI



Arunkumar to coach USA men's team

BENGALURU Former Karnataka captain and coach J. Arunkumar has been appointed the head coach of the United States of America men's cricket team, it was announced. A statement from USA Cricket explained that J. Arunkumar's role will see him be "permanently based in the United States, as and when his working visa is obtained." This will be the first international coaching assignment for Arunkumar.

UEFA sets May 25 deadline for leagues

MANCHESTER European football leagues have been given a May 25 deadline to inform governing body UEFA of their plans to restart their domestic competitions. UEFA is keen to start planning for next season's European club tournaments. In a letter to the 55 federations in UEFA, president Aleksander Ceferin wrote that any league cancelling its season would need to produce a list of teams that have qualified for European club competitions, also by May 25. REUTERS

Ding and Nakamura join Carlsen in lead

NEW DELHI Ding Liren and Hikaru Nakamura joined Magnus Carlsen in the lead with 11 points after five rounds of the \$250,000 Magnus Carlsen Invitational online chess tournament on Monday. Ding defeated Ian Nepomniachtchi 2.5-1.5 and Nakamura took one point off Fabiano Caruana, who went on to post a 3-2 victory.

The results (fifth round): Fabiano Caruana (USA) bt Hikaru Nakamura (USA) 3-2; Ding Liren (Chn) bt Ian Nepomniachtchi (Rus) 2.5-1.5. **Standings:** 1-3. Ding Liren (Chn, 11 points), Hikaru Nakamura (USA, 11), Magnus Carlsen (Nor, 11); 4. Fabiano Caruana (USA, 10), 5-6. Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra, 5), Ian Nepomniachtchi (Rus, 5); 7. Anish Giri (Ned, 4); 8. Alireza Firouzja (FIDE, 3).

Olympics cancellation likely if vaccine not found in time

Further delays impossible, says Tokyo Games organising panel chief Mori

GENERAL

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

TOKYO The postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympics will have to be cancelled if a vaccine isn't found and the coronavirus pandemic brought under control by next year, the organising committee's president warned, ruling out further delays.

The comments, in an interview with Japanese sports daily *Nikkan Sports* published on Tuesday, come as medical experts doubted whether the pandemic can be sufficiently contained by next year to hold an event drawing participants and spectators from around the world.

The pandemic has already forced a year-long delay of the Games, which are now scheduled to open on July 23, 2021.

But, Tokyo 2020 presi-



Bleak prospects: The very magnitude of the Olympics makes its conduct possible only after a complete end to the pandemic. ■ AFP

dent Yoshiro Mori was categorical when asked whether the Games could be delayed until 2022 if the pandemic remains a threat next year, replying: "No. In that case,

it's cancelled," Mori said.

Mori noted the Games had been cancelled previously only during wartime, and compared the battle against coronavirus to "fighting an

invisible enemy".

If the virus is successfully contained, "we'll hold the Olympics in peace next summer", he added.

"Mankind is betting on it."

ICC should step in: Azhar

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

HYDERABAD

Former India captain Mohammad Azharuddin says it is time the ICC confers with all cricket boards and revisits the Future Tours Programme to finalise the international calendar for the next three years in the wake of the prevailing COVID-19 crisis.

"Since there is a global problem now because of COVID-19, this is mandatory in the interest of the game," Azhar, currently the Hyderabad Cricket Association

president, said in a chat with *The Hindu* on Tuesday.

"It is pretty obvious that even the domestic season, for instance HCA's leagues, will be off to a delayed start and consequently the whole calendar of BCCI will be affected.

"There will definitely be far fewer tournaments on the domestic front," he said.

"These are tough times and hence I feel the ICC should come out with a concrete plan to offset whatever losses the boards suffer financially," he said.

Vijay would have preferred Bhupathi as partner

Prakash Amritraj says it was hard to live up to the famous surname

TENNIS

KAMESH SRINIVASAN

NEW DELHI

It was sheer entertainment as Vijay Amritraj and son Prakash had a lively chat with Purav Raja on his Instagram show, Chai with Raja.

Recalling the 1987 Davis Cup summit clash in Gothenburg, Vijay said, "The Swedish public and organisation was fantastic. Wish we could have spent a few hours more on court. We managed to win

one set in five matches in that Davis Cup final. It was very special, as it was the second time in my career to be in the Davis Cup final after 1974. We learnt a lot from that match."

The 66-year-old, a regular at Wimbledon for the last 50 years, applauded Raja for his choice of questions.

Vijay, who reached a career-best rank of 18 in 1980, tried his best to groom Prakash from the junior days, but injuries meant that the

latter could not crack the top 150.

Prakash said that if anything could be changed, he would have loved to listen to his gut, make his own decisions and have peace of mind about his tennis career. It was hard to live up to the famous surname and handle all the media attention.

"Winning the fifth match against Uzbekistan [in 2008]," said Prakash, about his most memorable Davis Cup tie.

When queried about taking up Davis Cup captaincy, a candid Vijay said it was "important for others to do it".

He picked Ramesh Krishnan, who reached a career-high rank of 23 in 1985, ahead of his father Ramanathan Krishnan, and called Ramesh 'the Therapist'.

Between Leander Paes and Mahesh Bhupathi, Vijay opted for the latter as his doubles partner, saying that it was because he himself played the deuce court.

Sharath live!

Catch Olympian and India's highest-ranked table tennis player, A. Sharath Kamal, in a live chat on Sportstar's Instagram handle (@sportstarweb) on April 29 (Wednesday) at 4 p.m. IST.

BFI loses hosting rights of 2021 Worlds

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI India lost the hosting rights of the 2021 men's boxing World Championship to Serbia after the International Boxing Association (AIBA) alleged non-payment of host fee by the National federation.

Boxing Federation of India (BFI) blamed it on "procedural complications" arising out of AIBA's failure to resolve "issues" with regards to the account to which the money was to be transferred. The payment was due on Dec. 1 last year.



Purav Raja chatting with Vijay and Prakash Amritraj. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Desperate ideas we must take seriously in desperate times

It is better to have some cricket rather than none at all, and if compromises have to be made, so be it



BETWEEN WICKETS

SURESH MENON

It might well be the Lockdown Blues. Or the Isolation Syndrome.

Maybe administrators around the world are merely taking a leaf out of US President Donald Trump's book and being "sarcastic." But desperate times have given rise to desperate ideas, some of which we might have to live with if cricket as we know it is to live on.

The hope is that it will be fiercely competitive, with those outside the main team using the opportunity to prove themselves. It will be "gripping", says former player Simon Katich.

It is an idea England's cricket board is toying with too. England's focus for the moment is the new tournament, the Hundred, which the board hopes will bring in much-needed money. Currently the Hundred is to England what

dy asked his staff to take pay cuts up to 80%.

Various options

Ideas being discussed involve playing the India series (if the Australian government allows) at a single venue, a "quarantine hub", and play matches to an empty stadium.

Should that fall through, and with television needing live action, there is a proposal to play a series of matches between the national team and the 'A' team.

The hope is that it will be fiercely competitive, with those outside the main team using the opportunity to prove themselves. It will be "gripping", says former player Simon Katich.

It is an idea England's cricket board is toying with too. England's focus for the moment is the new tournament, the Hundred, which the board hopes will bring in much-needed money. Currently the Hundred is to England what

the IPL is to India – a cash cow that is in danger of being put out to pasture. It is why neither tournament has been officially called off yet; there are few folks more optimistic than those in danger of losing millions.

England believes they could lose "in excess of £300 million" if no cricket is played this year. They are looking at playing in "bio-secure" environments – no audience, players staying at hotels attached to the stadium, and quarantine being the key – but nothing is slated to happen before July 1.

The idea is to use the "minimum number of grounds for our desired international schedule," according to the chief executive.

"After international cricket," former England captain Michael Vaughan has said, "the Hundred is the most important aspect of the game." Cricket officials around the world have the confidence of knowing that whatever decision

they make – good, bad, indifferent – there will always be some prominent player to support it.

Relatively safe

As reported in this newspaper, India are relatively safe, with the board not needing to make cuts even if no cricket is played the rest of the year. But even here, the ripple effects of lack of international cricket and home series will be felt by the average domestic cricketer.

"Even in the worst-case scenario, the BCCI will try and protect the staff and cricketing fraternity, and do its best to minimise the impact on our cricketers and administrative staff," the BCCI treasurer has said, and that must come as a relief.

Cricket boards in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, West Indies, South Africa and Bangladesh are on the brink of bankruptcy; at the moment the International Cricket Council has no plan for them, or for the non-Test playing countries.

Hence the importance of the World T20 (to be held in Australia later this year, but likely to be postponed to February next) and other ICC tournaments which bring in money.

Accept what is given

All of which is why we might have to bite our tongues and accept what comes our way by way of domestic and international cricket once the governments give permission.

Playing to an empty stadium might be anathema to the sports fan, maybe sport itself, but we might have to reconcile ourselves to that. Playing four Tests at a single venue might not be a great idea, but it is both acknowledgement that television is what sport is for, and that the sports ecosystem goes beyond the players and coaches.

Hundreds of thousand make their living off cricket – officials, employees of various associations, players at the lower end of the scale, umpires, groundsmen, journalists, caterers and other important professionals at the venues of matches, radio and online commentators, airlines operators, taxi drivers at the cities where matches are played, hotel owners, hotel employees and others all gain by the multiplier effect.

Business reason

In times like these, sport has to be seen as a business that feeds families, that puts money in the pockets of those who depend on it.

I wish we didn't have to play in empty stadiums, I wish we didn't have four successive Test matches in a series at the same venue, I wish "bio-security" weren't an issue.

But we need to look seriously at all the desperate ideas, which even a year ago we would have laughed off. It is better to have some cricket rather than none at all, and if compromises have to be made, so be it.

Vikalp@Prithvi goes online with a 48-hour link

Starting this Friday, it will screen a documentary film on its Facebook page

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

One of the positive sides of the ongoing global lockdown has been the wealth of films, in all formats, that have been coming home to us through the streaming world, some with complimentary treats attached.

So this Friday, May 1, you don't just get the opportunity to watch Mark Achbar and Peter Wintonik's *Manufacturing Consent*, but can also put forward your questions to Mr. Achbar and to the towering intellectual, linguist, philosopher and political commentator Noam Chomsky, on whose seminal book of the same name the film is based.

The film will kick off a new online initiative of Vikalp@Prithvi.

Starting this Friday noon, it will provide a 48-hour YouTube or Vimeo link, valid till Sunday noon (or longer, depending on the discretion of the filmmaker), to a docu-



For cinephiles: The lockdown has brought many films to online platforms.

■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

mentary film of acclaim on its Facebook page.

Viewers' queries

Vikalp: Films for Freedom has been bringing a monthly series of documentaries and short films, followed by a discussion, at Prithvi House, at 7 pm on the last Friday of every month.

"We can't do that anymore during the lockdown... we are going online with our interactive documentary

film screenings on a weekly basis till the lockdown ends," said filmmaker Anand Patwardhan, the driving force behind the initiative.

Viewers can send in any questions they have for the filmmaker by leaving a comment on the Facebook post about the film by Saturday 5 pm.

The filmmaker will reply to any or all of the questions and the answers will be posted on the same comments thread by Sunday night or latest by Monday.

Vikalp: Films for Freedom was born as a parallel film festival in Mumbai in 2004 in the face of the censorship imposed on documentary filmmakers during the Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF).

A collective of a large number of filmmakers was formed and the "rejected" films were screened right across the MIFF venue. Several filmmakers with

drew their films from MIFF and screened them at Vikalp, drawing packed houses everyday. Since then it has transformed itself from a parallel festival into a movement.

Relevant to the times

Curation is the all-important factor and Vikalp@Prithvi's idea is to showcase films, old or new, that are passionate and relevant to the times we live in and address the socio-political and economic issues of the day.

In that sense, Chomsky's analysis of mass media and his critique of the political forces at work behind the daily news couldn't have come at a better time.

Vikalp@Prithvi is also inviting suggestions for films and is asking filmmakers who already have their work on YouTube or Vimeo to submit their preview links to vikalpscreenings@gmail.com if they'd like it to show the film online.

'Animal disease detectives' look towards India

Equipping vets with tools for investigation crucial after recent outbreaks: experts

RAHUL KARMAKAR

GUWAHATI

India is on the radar of a consortium of veterinary scientists formed to train a new generation of 'animal disease detectives' in the Asia-Pacific region amid the coronavirus crisis.

The \$4.3 million programme currently involves 11 countries in the region – Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu and Vietnam.