



Former Prime Minister
Manmohan Singh
admitted to AIIMS
page 8



Nepal to deploy more
forces on India border,
says Foreign Minister
page 8



5 Air India pilots, who
had operated cargo
flights, test positive
page 9



Prime Minister to interact
with CMs today with focus
on economy
page 8

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NEARBY



Delhi govt. issues SOP on
reporting virus deaths

NEW DELHI
After being accused of not reporting the actual number of deaths in the city due to COVID-19, the Delhi government on Sunday issued an order along with a standard operating procedure to all hospitals to email a death report to the authorities daily by 5 p.m.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Haryana announces steps to revive MSMEs

GURUGRAM
In view of the role of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in economic and industrial development, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal has announced several measures to bring these industries back on track, including a redress centre for bank-related issues.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

Haryana police file fraud case against six

GURUGRAM
Almost two years after around a dozen people came forward claiming a ₹400 crore compensation for a plot of land in Narsinghpur off the National Highway-48 here acquired by the Haryana government, the police have now registered an FIR against six to investigate their claims.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

EDUCATIONPLUS ▶ PAGE 11

India reports 128 more deaths, 3,277 fresh cases in 24 hours

Cabinet Secretary chairs meeting with Chief Secretaries; focus on special trains

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India reported 3,277 new cases of COVID-19 in the past 24 hours and an additional 128 deaths, taking the total tally to 62,939 and 2,109 deaths on Sunday.

During this period, 1,511 patients were discharged after treatment, which takes the total recovery rate to 30.76%, according to the data released by the Union Health Ministry.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said that so far a total of 16,09,037 samples have been tested.

COVID-19

Data released by the Ministry noted that in 10 States/Union Territories no COVID-19 cases have been reported in the past 24 hours.

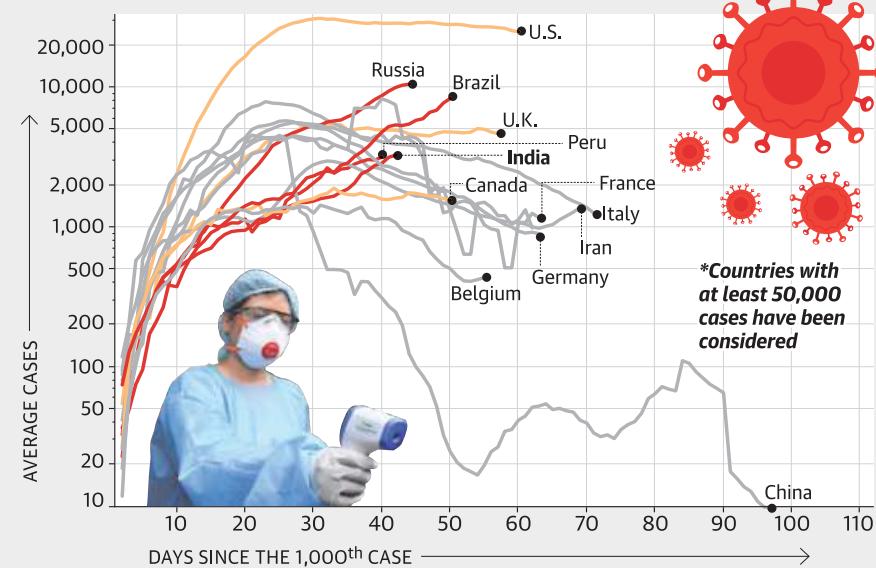
State Health Departments reported a total of 66,918 positive cases nationwide, with 43,888 active ones. The death toll stood at 2,200.

West Bengal reported 14 more deaths, taking the toll in the State to 113. Of the 14 deaths, Kolkata alone accounted for 10. The State also reported 153 new cases, the highest in a day so far.

Ahead of Prime Minister

The viral spread

The chart shows the seven-day rolling average of new COVID-19 cases recorded since the 1,000th case in each country. India's curve is on an upward trajectory, similar to Russia, Brazil and Peru. On the other hand, the rise in new cases seems to have flattened in U.S., U.K. and Canada. The rest have seen a drop in new cases



Narendra Modi's meeting with Chief Ministers on Monday, Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba chaired a video conference with the Chief Secretaries and the Health Secretaries of all States and Union Territories to review the status of COVID-19 management.

Mr. Gauba noted that more than 350 Shramik Special trains have been run by

the Railways carrying 3.5 lakh migrant workers and requested State governments to cooperate with the Railways in running of more such trains.

Safe passage for doctors

Mr. Gauba emphasised that the movement of doctors, nurses and paramedics should be totally unhindered and all steps should be taken

to facilitate and protect the corona warriors.

The Chief Secretaries said while protection is required from those infected with COVID-19, economic activities also need to be stepped up in a calibrated manner, a government release said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8
MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGES 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10 & 12

Chhaya

Homesick



Trying to go back: Policemen attempt to stop migrants from violating social distancing norms as they gather outside a registration camp to travel back to their home towns during the nationwide lockdown, in Jalandhar on Sunday. ▶ PTI

+ Norms issued for restart of industrial units

First week is test run period: NDMA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has issued a series of guidelines for restarting manufacturing industries after the lockdown period. Certain economic activities have already been allowed on gradual lifting of restrictions in some zones.

Instructions have been issued for safekeeping of hazardous and flammable materials. Guidelines also pertain to chemical disasters, management of chemical (terrorism) disasters, and strengthening of safety and security for transport of petroleum, oil and lubricants (POL) tankers.

The State governments have been told to ensure, through the district officials concerned, that the off-site disaster management plan

of the respective major accident hazard (MAH) units are up to date.

"While restarting the unit, consider the first week as the trial or test run period; ensure all safety protocols; and try not to achieve high production targets," said the order, adding that employees should be sensitised to the need for identifying abnormalities such as strange sounds or smell, exposed wires, vibrations, leaks, smoke, abnormal wobbling, irregular grinding or other potentially hazardous signs.

All lockout and tagout procedures should be in place on a daily basis (not applicable for units running 24 hours). The equipment are to be inspected as per safety protocols.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

parture. "Only asymptomatic passengers will be allowed to board the train," it said.

AC coaches

A Railway spokesperson said only AC coaches would be run and the fares would be equal to that of equivalent Rajdhani trains.

Details of the train schedule along with more details would be issued to due course.

In a separate release, the Railways said it had run a total of 366 'Shramik Special' trains till Sunday afternoon. These trains had ferried migrants to Tiruchirappalli, Tiragarh, Barauni, Khandwa, Jagannathpur, Khurda Road, Prayagraj, Chhapra, Balia, Gaya, Purnia, Varanasi, Darbhanga, Gorakhpur, Lucknow, Jaunpur, Hatia, Basti, Katihar, Danapur, Muzaffarpur and Saharsa.

said an official statement.

The reservation for these trains would start on May 11 from 4 p.m. and would be available only on the IRCTC website.

"Only passengers with valid confirmed tickets will be allowed to enter the stations," the railways said. It would be mandatory for passengers to wear face cover and undergo screening at de-

Four more deaths in Delhi, CM says toll 'very less'

A total of 73 people have died due to the virus so far; cases near 7,000 mark

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Capital recorded four deaths and 381 new COVID-19 cases on Sunday, taking the total number of cases to 6,923 and the toll to 73. According to the Delhi government's health bulletin, a total of 2,069 people have recovered and there were 4,781 active cases in the city.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the number of deaths was "very less" and of the 6,923 cases, only 1,476 were in hospitals. "Of these 1,476 cases, 91 are in ICU, 27 are on ventilator; around 75% are asymptomatic or have very mild symptoms," he added.

In accordance with the directions of the Centre, Mr. Kejriwal said asymptomatic patients or those with mild symptoms were being treated at home after a medical



Labourers working on Barapullah Extension Road near Mayur Vihar on Sunday. ▶ R.V. MOORTHY

team conducted an inspection and was satisfied that self-isolation could be practised. "There is no cure for the virus, patients have to just get better and our teams stay in contact with the infected. Patients who cannot self-isolate are shifted to COVID Care Centres or COVID Health Centres," he said.

"Instances of patients waiting for hours for a go-

"This lockdown is going to

end soon and everything will be back on track. You will get employed again as everything will start running again. Please do not leave Delhi. We are here to take care of you," Mr. Kejriwal said. He, however, added that the government was arranging for more trains for people who wanted to get back home.

He added that 150 migrants were sent back to Punjab by his government on Sunday, and that two trains to Bihar and Madhya Pradesh have already left.

Appealing to the leaders of the Opposition party who have been critical of the government's efforts to control the outbreak, the Chief Minister said this was "not the time to do politics but to work collectively for the people and the nation".

SEE ALSO ▶ PAGE 3

15 pairs of trains to run from tomorrow

They will start from New Delhi; Railways to add more services in phased manner



Home calling: Migrant labourers wave as they leave for Barauni in Bihar from Amritsar, Punjab, on Sunday. ▶ PTI

Jammu Tawi. Following this, the Railways would start more special services on new routes, "based on the available coaches after reserving 20,000 coaches for COVID-19 care centres and adequate number of coaches being reserved to enable operation of up to 300 trains every day as 'Shramik Specials' for stranded migrants," said an official statement.

The reservation for these trains would start on May 11 from 4 p.m. and would be available only on the IRCTC website.

"Only passengers with valid confirmed tickets will be allowed to enter the stations," the railways said. It would be mandatory for passengers to wear face cover and undergo screening at de-

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA

NEW DELHI

The Indian Railways on Sunday said it planned to restart passenger services in a phased manner – initially with 15 pairs of trains – from Tuesday onwards, almost 50 days after the services were stopped amid COVID-19 lockdown.

The announcement comes even as the Centre has extended the lockdown till May 17 to contain the spread of the virus.

To begin with, the 15 pairs of trains, meaning a total of 30 return journeys, would be run as special trains from the New Delhi station connecting Dibrugarh, Agartala, Howrah, Patna, Bilaspur, Ranchi, Bhubaneswar, Sambalpur, Bengaluru, Chennai, Thiruvananthapuram, Madgaon, Mumbai Central, Ahmedabad and



Miles to go:
(Clockwise from left) A migrant labourer at the Government Boys Senior Secondary School in Jangpura, a makeshift shelter, in the Capital; labourers and homeless queuing up for food in Srinivasupuri; passengers boarding special DTC buses after their arrival at the IGI Airport; workers boarding a vehicle to Palwal on Kondli-Manesar-Palwal Expressway; labourers at a government shelter; a family of migrants at a shelter in Srinivasupuri.

■ SUSHIL KUMAR
VERMA, SHIV KUMAR
PUSHPAKAR,
ASHOK KUMAR



CITY TEAM
DELHI-NCR

More than a month after they were given no other option than to count days until they could be "free" again, thousands of migrant workers stranded in the National Capital Region (NCR) await their turn to be transported back to their hometowns.

Offering them hope, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on April 29 allowed the movement of migrant workers, pilgrims, tourists, students and individuals stranded at different places, first by inter-State buses and then special trains according to strict guidelines.

The shifting of migrants was already being undertaken by different State and district administrations within the NCR on inter-State buses even before these guidelines. The MHA order gave hope to residents of faraway destinations in Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal for whom special trains can now be arranged.

However, like all initiatives, it is taking time, though those associated with the initiative argued that the process has commenced and will gather steam over the coming days.

Bonded labour'

A week after the guidelines, at the Government Boys' Senior Secondary School in south Delhi's Jangpura, a group of 30-odd labourers are still lodged with their families in makeshift houses. Employed for the construction of a new school building, the labourers, most of whom are from Madhya Pradesh's Tikamgarh district, said that the government's "lack of initiative" in transporting them home was equivalent to allowing "bonded labour".

The Delhi government estimates that the number of migrant workers lodged at 111 shelters ranges between 5,000 and 12,000. By a senior Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) official's count, the total number, irrespective of whether they were migrant workers or "locals", came to around 14,000.

Over 1,000 such workers were sent to Chhatarpur in Madhya Pradesh on a special train on Thursday and an equal number departed for Muzaffarpur in Bihar on Friday. An estimated 11,000 — a majority of whom are from Bihar — are scheduled to be sent home in the coming days. With these two trips, the numbers are down to around 8,000.

Surendra Kumar Banskar, a labourer, lamented: "It is almost

'Nothing is more dangerous than hunger'



Workers at the Radha Soami Satsang centre in Ghaziabad; migrants at a shelter in Srinivasupuri; (below) a migrant worker at one of the shelters in the Capital. ■ ANUJ KUMAR, SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Out of work and living on dole, a ticket to home is all migrant labourers yearn for. The process of ferrying them back has begun even as a post-lockdown labour shortage looms

etary relief. At this stage, the least they can do is arrange transport."

While most seemed unaware of the registration process initiated by the Delhi government, 30-year-old Haripad Kumar claimed that police personnel had collected their details more than a week ago and promised to take them back home in trains on May 3. "Nothing has happened since then. Now they do not even bother responding to our queries," he said.

Inmates of the Government Girls' Senior Secondary School in Srinivasupuri, comprising mostly migrant workers from Anand Vihar and homeless people around Nizamuddin, admitted they were unaware of the registration process.

Nandu, who is from Jabalpur, fumes he can no longer live in the city. "We have no work, no money and no family in the city. Why are we being forced to stay here like this? We were brought back from Anand Vihar and told that we would have to stay here for only 14 days. Now it has been longer than that. How long do we have to stay here?" he asked.

Swelling numbers
Around 2.50 lakh migrants had registered on the Haryana government's e-Disha portal till Thursday. With the Gurugram-Manesar-Bawali industrial belt being the hub of automobile manufacturing industry, and a large number of garments units scattered across Udyog Vihar areas of the district, Gurugram

has a large population of migrant workers, mostly from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

A large number of domestic workers and seasonal farm workers for rabi crops are also among them. Though thousands, mostly from Uttar Pradesh, left in hordes soon after the lockdown was announced in March, the number of migrants willing to return home could run into a few lakhs in Gurugram. Around 1.5 lakh people have registered for Bihar alone.

District Development and Panchayat Officer Narender Kumar said camps were held in all 203 villages in Gurugram people to register names.

Though around 35,000 farm labourers have registered, a huge number of industrial workers also thronged the camps. Mr. Kumar recalled how hundreds of workers crowded a registration centre at Kho village carrying "forms" while food was being distributed on May 3.

The officer said that the "forms" were being sold to the migrants by unscrupulous elements for ₹10-20 when the registration was online and free of cost. The district administration has also appointed nodal officers for different States to facilitate the registration.

While a majority of the migrants staying in relief centres across Haryana were repatriated to their hometowns in State buses even before the MHA guidelines, several trains and buses have run to facilitate the returning of migrants registering themselves. As many as 2,978 residents of Uttarakhand returned to their homes in 108 Uttarakhand State buses on Thursday and more such buses were run on Friday.

Haryana CM Manohar Lal said on Friday that 23,452 labourers were already sent home while 100 trains and 5,000 free-of-cost

like we have been held captive and treated like slaves just because we are poor. The leaders have completely forgotten that we are the ones who bring governments to power. We are forced to travel thousands of kilometres away from home in search of work only because we need money to feed our families. But in the last two months, we have not been able to send a single penny. There is no money to treat people for basic injuries. It is impossible for us to continue living like this."

Futile attempts

The group in Jangpura made two attempts to "walk" back to M.P., but on both occasions they were "caught" by the police

near Badarpur.

"Our children and families are more important to us than the virus. The government should have at least warned us before the lockdown and given us a chance to be with our families. The lockdown has already been extended twice. We want to warn the governments that we are not ready for yet another round of lockdown. We want to go back to our villages immediately," Mr. Banskar asserted.

Akhilesh Kumar, another labourer, shared his lockdown agony: "On a given day my wife and I would earn ₹700 together. Since the lockdown started, we have earned nothing in the last two months and the government has not provided any mo-

mentary relief. At this stage, the least they can do is arrange transport."

While most seemed unaware of the registration process initiated by the Delhi government, 30-year-old Haripad Kumar claimed that police personnel had collected their details more than a week ago and promised to take them back home in trains on May 3. "Nothing has happened since then. Now they do not even bother responding to our queries," he said.

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buses were being arranged over the next seven days.

Unhappy industrialists

Several industrialists, however, have challenged the wisdom of the decision to allow workers to return home when the government had accorded permission to the factories to resume operations. Manesar Industries Welfare Association vice-president Manmohan Gairola reckoned that the industry would face huge scarcity of labour in the days to come.

Following the feedback from the industrialists, the Haryana Chief Minister in a recent address issued an appeal to the workers not to leave.

According to the Gautam Buddha Nagar administration in Uttar Pradesh, the process of sending migrant workers home had begun on Thursday but in Ghaziabad, the third episode of the lockdown has jeopardised their hopes.

"We have been sending migrants from home after seeking requisite permissions from the respective district officials. Nearly 1,465 migrant workers from Rajasthan were sent to Bharatpur aboard 60 buses. More such trips are being arranged," a district official said.

Anger writ large

Jai Narayan, the most articulate among a group of 13 daily wagers from Saharsa, is angry and hurt. He had sought the route to Bihar, but was instead told that the shelter home was only two kilometres away.

"Sarkar se kaho ya to humein maar de, ya humein ghar pa-hunchaiye [Tell the government, either kill us or send us home]," he quipped. "We waited. Now, we want to go home. We have consumed all the savings and we are convinced that ghar par kam se kam roti to miliyi [at least we will get food at home]," he sighed.

Lallan, a construction worker, concurred: "The government should have thought of people like us before shutting down public transport. Now, wherever we go, we are first abused, at times beaten and then pushed into a corner."

Hunger lessons

At the shelter home in Radha Soami Satsang in Morta on Delhi-Meerut road, Thursday is relatively easy for sevadars, as on Wednesday the district administration had sent

around 170 workers in buses to their homes in Uttar Pradesh.

Sitting on the sprawling lawns and swatting mosquitoes are workers from Mathura who are desperate to reach Jammu, their home. "We work as labourers in a cold storage. When the lockdown was announced, our contractor left without making our payments. We had no option but to walk to Jammu. We were stopped on the Eastern Peripheral Highway and brought here," said Bharat Bhushan, 34, from Udhampur.

"We know the seriousness of the disease but last month's experience has taught me that nothing is more dangerous than hunger," said Pradeep Kumar.

He is desperate to see his two daughters. "Everybody wants to be home during a crisis. Yes, we are getting food and shelter but we want to be among our own. Is it too hard for the authorities to understand it? Didn't they bring people from abroad?"

A 17-year-old from Panipat had gone to Amroha to work in a soap manufacturing unit and got stuck, but had told his parents that he is at a friend's place. Then there's Charan Das, a 65-year-old from Ludhiana who had gone to see a friend in Bhopal but was stopped at the Nizamuddin Railway Station. "I walked to Ghaziabad and spent several days on the footpath before being brought to the Radha Soami Satsang shelter home," he said.

It was getting dark, the fogging machines had started to make a gurgling sound and the preparation for the evening meal had begun.

"We eat the same food that is served to our guests," says Vishal Rastogi, the sevadar, looking after the facilities at the centre. "The most difficult part is to give them [migrants] hope when they break down in the middle of the night," says the chartered accountant. "Perhaps, the governments underestimated their desperation to go home and their will to make it possible."

Outside the gate, in the inky darkness, inspector Naresh Singh from Masuri police station is standing with around two dozen migrants, including children, in a truck. His seniors are shouting at him over the phone that he had brought them to the wrong shelter home. He requests not to take photographs of workers. "We picked them from the Eastern Peripheral Highway. Please tell the governments of Punjab and Haryana to send them homes in buses or trains. We can't see their plight," he said.



61 new cases
in Punjab, tally
reaches 1,823

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Punjab recorded 61 new COVID-19 cases on Sunday, taking the tally of positive cases to 1,823 in the State, according to an official statement.

The State health department said the major chunk of cases were reported from Roopar and Amritsar districts respectively.

The active cases are 1,626 and 166 patients have so far recovered, it added.

In Haryana, one virus-related death was reported while 28 new cases surfaced, taking the State's tally of confirmed cases to 703.

In the Union Territory of Chandigarh, four fresh cases were reported, taking the tally to 173. The city also reported one death, taking the total number of fatalities to three.

Haryana announces measures to bring MSMEs back on track

A new enterprise promotion policy will be formulated in August, says CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

In view of the role of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in economic and industrial development, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal has announced several measures to bring these industries back on track.

These include setting up of bank complaint information centres to redress bank related issues by the Finance Department, extending the date of depositing electricity bills without penalty till May 31, providing guarantee to MSMEs for bank loans from Small Industries Development Bank of India by the State government, fixing the power rate at ₹4.75 per unit for agriculture-based industries up to 20 kW, and pre-fabricated housing for labour-



CM Manohar Lal. ■ FILE PHOTO

Commerce Department, was also present.

Mr. Lal said that during the nationwide lockdown, the economic activity of all the States was affected and now they were being reopened in a phased manner. Haryana's enterprise promotion policy, 2015, was appreciated all over the country. The State government was now committed to make the best industrial policy in the country again. A new enterprise promotion policy will be formulated from August, for which suggestions will be invited from all stakeholders, he added.

The Chief Minister said that the revenue collected in the last two months had been almost negligible. The revenue is mainly collected from GST, Excise, Stamp Duty, VAT

ers in the factories itself.

The Chief Minister announced the measures while interacting with the representatives of MSMEs along with members of the Laghu Udyog Bharati Association of all the districts of the State through videoconferencing in Chandigarh on Saturday. Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala, who holds the portfolio of Industries and

refund from Central government, and mining, he added. He said these were now being operationalised in a phased manner.

Mr. Lal assured that a separate nodal officer would be appointed for issues related to the Haryana State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation.

VAT refunds

In addition, issues related to VAT refunds of 2017 were being resolved in a timely manner. For about 1,300 applications, a refund of ₹162 crore has been made since April. He also assured to re-assess MSMEs' bank loans.

The scheme to provide 10% working capital has also been announced by the Central government, the Chief Minister added.

Man dies in Meerut because of 'negligence', DM orders action

The video of a person with difficulty in breathing went viral

ANUJ KUMAR
GAZIABAD

A possible COVID-19 infected person died, allegedly because of the negligence of doctors at Lala Lajpat Rai Memorial College and Hospital in Meerut, on Saturday night.

The video of a middle-aged person with difficulty in breathing went viral on Saturday evening. The person could be seen sitting on the floor of a ward and asking for help. After some time, another video of the person covered with a white sheet came to light where a voice in the background could be heard saying that the person died as he kept waiting for medical attention.

Rahul, a relative of the person who brought him to the hospital, told reporters, "We brought him to the hospital after his health deteriorated. We were told that his COVID-19 sample has been taken and he was admitted to the ward."

Later, he said, they saw a video of him sitting on the floor and not being attended to by medical staff. "We rushed to the hospital and were told that he had passed away and were asked to bring an e-rickshaw to take his body home," Mr. Rahul said.

LLRM Medical College and Hospital, said, "Action would be taken against those found guilty. There are two wards in the hospital. One is meant for COVID-19 positive cases and the second for the those whose reports are awaited. The deceased was in the latter."

Late on Saturday night, District Magistrate Anil Dhingra held a meeting with the Chief Medical Officer and Principal of the Medical College and directed that any case of negligence should be strictly dealt with. On Sunday, the DM issued an order to install CCTV cameras in the hospital. Mr. Dhingra said daily recording should be preserved in a pen drive. He also asked the Principal to ensure the online display of the footage in the office of the Chief Medical Officer.

Queue for ration



People wait for their turn to collect free ration distributed by volunteers during lockdown in Agartala on Sunday. ■ PTI

Petition seeks financial aid for sex workers

'No steps taken for their welfare'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A public interest petition filed before the Delhi High Court has sought direction to the Centre and the city government to take necessary steps for protection, social security and welfare measures, including food, accommodation and medicines, for sex workers and the LGBT community during the lockdown.

Set up panel
The petitioner, advocate Anurag Chauhan, also urged the High Court to constitute a committee for rehabilitation of sex workers in the Capital.

The petition was filed for the welfare of sex workers and members of the LGBT community who do not have access to financial aid during the lockdown.

The petition also sought a direction to the authori-

ties to take steps to exempt them from paying rent and also to set up a separate helpline to counsel them and address their problems during the period of the pandemic.

No details

"There is no particulars or details found regarding grant of any financial aid and scheme to sex workers and LGBT community people by the Delhi government, despite exercise of due diligence by the petitioner and other people in the society," the petition has revealed.

The survey covered 2,880 practising advocates from eight HCIs – Delhi, Allahabad, Bombay, Kerala, Gujarat, Calcutta, Madras and Patna – who answered 27 questions across various themes.

The survey covered advocates' perceptions about the judges with regard to different aspects of their functioning, their relationship with the Bar Council and

'Collegium system ensures selection of competent judges'

Advocates of 8 High Courts surveyed on various themes

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Over 68% of the advocates surveyed from eight High Courts were of the opinion that the collegium system of appointments – wherein the Supreme Court appoints judges to itself and the HCIs – ensures the selection of the most competent judges, a report by Delhi-based Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy has revealed.

The survey covered 2,880 practising advocates from eight HCIs – Delhi, Allahabad, Bombay, Kerala, Gujarat, Calcutta, Madras and Patna – who answered 27 questions across various themes.

The survey covered advocates' perceptions about the judges with regard to different aspects of their functioning, their relationship with the Bar Council and

their perceptions about their earnings and other professional conditions.

On whether the advocates think they get a fair hearing before the judge, 82% of the surveyed Delhi HC advocates said it depended on the judge or the bench.

Monthly income

It also found that 80% of the surveyed advocates from the Delhi HC said that the average monthly income in the first two years of practice is between ₹5,000 and ₹20,000. For the remaining seven HCIs, over 78% of the advocates surveyed said this was in the range of ₹2,000 and ₹10,000.

"This finding is particularly relevant in the current times where reports have emerged regarding the adverse impact of lockdown has had on a large section of

advocates," Vidhi Centre said.

"Many Bar Associations have sought financial assistance from the governments and Bar Councils. In this backdrop our data collected on the average earnings of the advocates at different stages of career progression can inform the discussion on the professional security that advocates as a class enjoy," it added.

Financial help

The survey also found that only 7.58% of the surveyed Delhi High Court lawyers have themselves or any other lawyer they know received assistance from the Advocates' Welfare Fund that was established by a law in 2001. This percentage, however, was much higher at the other seven HCIs at around 64.

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IIT-JEE top rankers offer free doubt-solving sessions

Start-up launches 30-day online initiative to help aspirants

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

A group of Indian Institute of Technology-Joint Entrance Examination (IIT-JEE) top rankers has offered free doubt-solving sessions for students aspiring to crack JEE and National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) for medical courses.

Examination dates

Union Human Resource Development Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' had on May 5 announced July 18-23 as the dates for JEE Main and July 26 for NEET exams.

The announcement made Edvizo, a Guwahati-based start-up launch a 30-day online initiative to help JEE and NEET aspirants clear their doubts.

"Studying from home has obtained top impor-

tance more than ever before due to the ongoing crisis that made educational institutions close abruptly. Post-lockdown, many platforms are providing free online courses but few are there to solve their doubts on time," said Pallav Barua, one of 42 members of the start-up formed in 2017.

They have been focussing on "real-time query resolution", which a Google-KPMG report in 2017 said topped the list of problems for India's ed-tech firms.

"We have registered more than 50,000 students from across India and tied up with more than 2,500 coaching institutes in five cities of the country for taking the idea forward. Our objective is not to make the students feel demotivated due to the lockdown," Mr Barua said.

Career guidance
The team has now planned to provide career guidance classes every weekend for seven hours from 9 am.

COVID-19 duty keeps administrators away from children on Mother's Day

'We have been separated by a floor in my official residence since pandemic preparations began 2 months ago: DC of Jorhat



Roshni Aparanji Korati with her two sons in an old photo.
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

responsibilities require meeting healthcare workers and others who deal with

people on quarantine," she said.
Her workload increased

after two women, who arrived from Mumbai in an ambulance tested COVID-19 positive on Saturday.

While she has been a reassuring figure in the district's fight against the virus, her sons are not amused.

"They see my vehicle. We see each other from the stairs. I cannot help it, better to be safe than sorry," she said.

On Sunday, Ms Ala returned to her official residence in the district headquarters Lawngtlai three days after a tour of some vil-

lages on the Myanmar border to ensure.

"The borders are very porous and long and we have to make sure no one sneaks in during the lockdown," she said.

That's the way it is

"He got used to my being away for a few days during the November 2018 elections. It hurts not to be able to give him more time, but that's the way it is," Ms. Ala said.

A local woman takes care of her son when she is away.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

SMT V.JANAKI, W/o Venkatraman R (42), attained Sivaloka Praphi on 05-05-2020,Dasasu 14-05-2020 @ 11, Perumal koll St, Old Pallavaram, Chennai 600117. Ph:9840632882 / 22474010

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SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Roshni Aparanji Korati's sons Sanchit, 4, and Suchit, 2, are furious with her for being "so near yet so far".

On the other hand Sashanka Ala's two-year-old son Prabir is used to her staying away, sometimes for a week.

Life was no different for the two district administrators about 900 km apart on Mother's Day.

Ms. Korati is the Deputy Commissioner of central Assam's Jorhat district and Ms. Ala is her counterpart in

Lawngtlai, Mizoram's southernmost district bordering Bangladesh and Myanmar.

"We have been separated by a floor in my official residence. They are upstairs with my parents who are above 65 years and I have been staying downstairs since the COVID-19 preparedness began two months ago," Ms Korati told *The Hindu* on Sunday.

The Jorhat DC has been on "perpetual home quarantine" for fear of infecting her sons and parents if she contracts COVID-19. "My



Tragedy on the tracks

State support, good communication strategy are vital to end the migrant labour crisis

The tragedy of 16 strewn bodies on a railway track in Maharashtra on Friday morning has been in the making for weeks now. The Centre and several States have been engaged in flip-flops on facilitating the return of migrant workers to their homes. In the present instance, the workers at a company in Jalna in Maharashtra were walking on the track to their families in Madhya Pradesh some 800 km away after the national lockdown since March derailed their livelihoods. The Centre's inability to clearly communicate to the public and States the purpose and protocol of the lockdown every step of the way has put people through completely avoidable hardship. This governance failure was aggravated by several States, either due to lack of capacity or incompetence. The sight of an endless stream of migrant labourers, some of them carrying toddlers and the infirm, walking towards India's poorer regions from its economic centres, will remain an indelible memory of this inept and insensitive approach that had not taken their particular circumstances into account. Under orders to stop their movement at any cost, the police in many places forced them to walk back. This particular group took to the rail track to escape the police, according to survivors.

Though it did not spare any effort to make spectacles out of an unfolding pestilence, each government announcement about the lockdown threw even the educated public into a tailspin, and required numerous clarifications and amendments. To argue that this is a once-in-a-century event that caught even developed countries napping could at best be a tenuous defence. Even after it woke from the slumber and announced special trains to ferry the stranded and starving workforce to their homes, confusion reigned. Onerous paper work and huge costs were heaped on these hapless citizens who manage to barely get by even in the best of times. States acted arbitrarily; courts intervened thoughtlessly. Hunger, humiliation and fear of the disease made thousands of these migrants so desperate that they ventured to walk thousands of kilometres to get home. All of this could have been managed better had the Centre worked with States to map out a strategy to support those who wanted to stay where they were, and organised the return of those who chose to do so in an orderly manner. A huge cost has already been paid in lives and suffering, but even now there can be measures to mitigate the situation. For that, it must have a more open and honest communication with State governments, and citizens. Tough measures may be essential but caring ones are just as vital. This unfolding tragedy must be stopped in its tracks.

Coming to terms

Centre, States must enforce virus containment measures, assuming community spread

As early as March 28, the Health Ministry acknowledged that there was "limited community transmission" of the novel coronavirus in India. On April 9, the ICMR and Health Ministry researchers – some of them are national task force members for COVID-19 – in a journal paper, provided evidence suggesting the prevalence of community transmission in 36 districts across 15 States. The sentinel surveillance for community transmission undertaken by the task force among patients hospitalised for severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) found 40 of the 102 who tested positive for the virus had no travel history or contact with a known positive case, while data on exposure was not available for another 59 SARI patients. Yet, the ICMR consistently maintained that the virus had not spread to the community. On May 5, even when the total number of nation-wide cases was close to 47,000, the Health Minister said that India's virus spread had not gone to stage three. While there has been no hesitation in declaring local transmission caused by people who have a travel history, the government has been extremely hesitant to admit community transmission. The reluctance is surprising given that the total cases reported so far has already crossed 63,500, and the nature of spread is through droplet transmission and contact with contaminated surfaces. In contrast, is the U.S. On February 26, when the total number of cases was just 60, it confirmed community spread following the detection in California of the first case with no travel history or contact with a known positive case. One reason why India refused to confirm community spread early on could be the compulsion to expand testing when the country did not have the capacity to test huge numbers each day. But there is no reason now to continue being in denial, as that erodes public trust in the government.

Against this background, the latest decision to initiate a study in 75 hotspot districts to confirm community spread and ascertain the proportion of community already exposed to the virus is encouraging. The study had apparently got delayed by about a month due to the non-availability of reliable rapid antibody tests. Due to the unreliability of rapid antibody test, the government will instead use the ELISA test to check for infection. Since the ELISA test detects antibodies to the virus, the survey will be able to pick previously infected people including those who were asymptomatic for the entire duration of the infection. Since it takes one to three weeks for the antibodies to develop, the ELISA test will miss people who have been recently infected. The survey, scheduled to begin later this month in collaboration with the States concerned, will randomly test about 30,000 people in the general population. Meanwhile, all States should continue with strict containment and mitigation measures, acting on the assumption that the virus has indeed spread in the community.

The trends shaping the post-COVID-19 world

Six geopolitical lines will define the contours of the emerging global order



RAKESH SOOD

The COVID-19 pandemic began as a global health crisis.

As it spread rapidly across nations, country after country responded with a lockdown, triggering a global economic crisis. Certain geopolitical trends were already discernible but the COVID-19 shock therapy has brought these into sharper focus, defining the contours of the emerging global (dis)order.

Asia ascending, U.S. waning

The first trend which became clear in the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis is the rise of Asia. Economic historians pointed to its inevitability, recalling that till the 18th century, Asia accounted for half the global GDP. The Industrial Revolution accompanied by European naval expansion and colonialism contributed to the rise of the West, and now the balance is being restored. The 2008 financial crisis showed the resilience of the Asian economies, and even today, economic forecasts indicate that out of the G-20 countries, only China and India are likely to register economic growth during 2020.

Asian countries have also demonstrated greater agility in tackling the pandemic compared to the United States and Europe. This is not limited to China but a number of other Asian states have shown greater responsiveness and more effective state capacity. Consequently, Asian economies will recover faster than those in the West.

The second trend is the retreat of the U.S. after a century of being in the forefront of shaping the global order. From the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations after World War I or the creation of the United Nations and Bretton

Woods institutions after World War II, to leadership of the western world during the Cold War, moulding global responses to threats posed by terrorism or proliferation or climate change, the U.S. played a decisive role.

U.S. hubris and arrogance also generated resentment, more evident in recent years. Interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq have become quagmires that have sapped domestic political will and resources. This is the fatigue that (former) U.S. President Barack Obama sensed when he talked of "leading from behind". President Donald Trump changed it to "America first" and during the current crisis, the U.S.'s efforts at cornering supplies of scarce medical equipment and medicines and acquiring biotech companies engaged in research and development in allied states, show that this may mean "America alone". Moreover, even as countries were losing trust in the U.S.'s leadership, it bungled response at home to the pandemic indicates that countries are also losing trust in the U.S.'s competence. The U.S. still remains the largest economy and the largest military power but has lost the will and ability to lead. This mood is unlikely to change, whatever the outcome of the election later this year.

Intra-European fission

A third trend is the European Union's continuing preoccupation with internal challenges generated by its expansion of membership to include East European states, impact of the financial crisis among the Eurozone members, and ongoing Brexit negotiations. Threat perceptions vary between old Europe and new Europe making it increasingly difficult to reach agreement on political matters e.g. relations with Russia and China. The trans-Atlantic divide is aggravating an intra-European rift. Rising populism has given greater voice to Euro-sceptics and permitted some EU members to espouse the virtues of "illiberal democracy".



Adding to this is the North-South divide within the Eurozone. Strains showed up when austerity measures were imposed on Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal a decade ago by the European Central Bank, persuaded by the fiscally conservative Austria, Germany and the Netherlands. Recently, ECB chief Christine Lagarde's press statement in end-March that "ECB is not here to close spreads" undermined any solidarity that the Italians felt as they battled with the pandemic and growing borrowing costs.

Further damage was done when Italy was denied medical equipment by its EU neighbours who introduced export controls, which led to China airlifting medical teams and critical supplies.

Schengen visa or free-border movement has already become a victim to the pandemic. The EU will need considerable soul searching to rediscover the limits of free movement of goods, services, capital and people, the underlying theme of the European experiment of shared sovereignty.

Rising China

A fourth trend, related to the first, is the emergence of a stronger and more assertive China. While China's growing economic role has been visible since it joined the World Trade Organization at the turn of the century, its more assertive posture has taken shape under President Xi Jinping's leadership with the call that a rejuvenated China is now ready to assume global responsibilities. Chinese assertiveness has raised concerns, first in its neighbourhood, and now in the U.S. that

feels betrayed because it assisted China's rise in the hope that an economically integrated China would become politically more open. In recent years, the U.S.-China relationship moved from cooperation to competition; and now with trade and technology wars, it is moving steadily to confrontation. The pandemic has seen increasing rhetoric on both sides and with the election season in the U.S., confrontation will only increase. A partial economic decoupling had begun and will gather greater momentum.

Mr. Xi has engaged in an unprecedented centralisation of power, and with the removal of the two-term limit, has made it clear that he will continue beyond 2022. His signature Belt and Road Initiative seeks to connect China to the Eurasia and Africa through both maritime and land routes by investing trillions of dollars in infrastructure building as a kind of pre-emptive move against any U.S. attempts at containment. Even if Mr. Xi's leadership comes under questioning, it may soften some aggressive policy edges but the confrontational rivalry with U.S. will remain.

Fading organisations

Global problems demand global responses. With COVID-19, international and multilateral bodies are nowhere on the scene. The World Health Organization (WHO) was the natural candidate to lead global efforts against the health crisis but it has become a victim of politics. Its early endorsement of the Chinese efforts has put it on the defensive as the U.S. blames the outbreak on a Chinese biotech lab and accuses Beijing of suppressing vital information that contributed to the spread. The UN Security Council (UNSC), the G-7 and the G-20 (latter was structured to co-ordinate a global response to the 2008 financial crisis) are paralysed as they wait for the world faces the worst recession since 1929.

The reality is that these institutions were always subjected to big power politics. During the Cold

War, U.S.-Soviet rivalry blocked the UNSC on many sensitive issues and now with major power rivalry returning, finds itself paralysed again. Agencies such as WHO have lost autonomy over decades as their regular budgets shrank, forcing them to increasingly rely on voluntary contributions sourced largely from western countries and foundations. U.S. leadership strengthened the Bretton Woods institutions in recent decades (The World Bank spends 250% of WHO's budget on global health) because the U.S.'s voting power gives it a blocking veto. The absence of a multilateral response today highlights the long-felt need for reform of these bodies but this cannot happen without collective global leadership.

The energy factor

The final trend relates to energy politics. Growing interest in renewables and green technologies on account of climate change concerns, and the U.S. emerging as a major energy producer were fundamentally altering the energy markets. Now, a looming economic recession and depressed oil prices will exacerbate internal tensions in West Asian countries which are solely dependent on oil revenues. Long-standing rivalries in the region have often led to local conflicts but can now create political instability in countries where regime structures are fragile.

A vaccine for the novel coronavirus, possibly by end-2020, will help deal with the global health crisis but these unfolding trends have now been aggravated by the more pernicious panic virus. Rising nationalism and protectionist responses will prolong the economic recession into a depression, sharpening inequalities and polarisations. Greater unpredictability and more turbulent times lie ahead.

Rakesh Sood is a former diplomat and currently Distinguished Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation

The epidemic and ensuring safety in courts

Suitable measures must be put in place for conducting proceedings after the lockdown is lifted



K. SUBRAMANIAN

In a letter addressed to the Chief Justice of India, the Bar Council of India has opposed the continuation of virtual hearings once the lockdown is lifted, on the grounds that 90% of the advocates and judges are "unaware of technology and its nuances". The COVID-19 crisis is far from over. Once the lockdown is lifted, unless the number of advocates/litigants is restricted in open court proceedings, the possibility of the virus spreading is high.

On April 6, invoking its powers under Article 142 of the Constitution, the Supreme Court issued certain directions for the functioning of courts through video conferencing during the lockdown. The Court directed the State officials of the National Informatics Centre (NIC) to liaison with the respective High Courts and formulate a plan for the virtual functioning of courts. A virtual court hearing is one where there is no physical court room. All the participants take part in proceedings using telephone or video conferencing facilities. It was made clear that the guidelines for this would be formulated by the NIC and sent to the respective courts and lawyers. But the NIC has not yet notified the

guidelines. In its order, the Supreme Court had also indicated that the district courts would follow the video conferencing rules as formulated by the respective High Courts.

E-filing system

In the United Kingdom, a considerable amount of work has gone into putting in place the infrastructure necessary to facilitate remote court hearings. For instance, a user must have a personal computer running Windows, OS X or Linux; a web browser such as Mozilla Firefox or Google Chrome; the Adobe Reader 11 software; and a scanner. Only documents in PDF format are accepted for e-filing. Thus, e-filings involve a certain amount of technical knowledge and capability.

In India, most advocates and litigants are unaware of and unwilling to use these services. The e-filing system was introduced in the Delhi High Court in 2009. Compared to the other High Courts in the country, the Delhi High Court is far ahead in terms of technology. About 10 courts in the Delhi High Court function as e-courts. Moreover, there are 13 e-courts functioning in the district courts attached to the Delhi High Court. Another 11 e-courts will soon be functional.

There is also sufficient technical manpower in the Delhi High Court (70) and district courts (30). In the Delhi High Court, e-filing is mandatory for company, taxation and arbitration jurisdictions. The facil-

ity for e-filing of cases pertaining to the Delhi High Court was also made available from April 7, 2020, at all the court complexes of the Delhi district courts.

Realising that the lockdown may continue for a while, the Delhi High Court formed a panel to create a graded plan for courts functioning after the lockdown. The committee, headed by Justice Hima Kohli, was formed with the expectation that there will be a deluge of new cases after the lockdown is lifted. The letter addressed by the Registrar General to the district judges attached to the Delhi High Court clearly mentions that it may not be possible to predict a definite cut-off date for the resumption of normal functioning of the court system as there is no certainty about when the COVID-19 threat will end. One of the issues refers to ensuring availability of proportionate court infrastructure till normalcy is completely restored. The Delhi High Court has sought suggestions from the district courts for the effective functioning of e-courts.

In the Bombay High Court, e-

courts started functioning from 2013. Initially they started taking up company matters, arbitration and conciliation matters, income tax appeals and suits. Now even writs, suits and testamentary matters are heard by e-courts. In the Madras High Court, the facility for e-filing of cases, which was initially only for bail applications, was launched on April 22, 2020. Filing of urgent cases through e-mail is also permitted now.

While it is true that there is less pressure on the courts now, this will change once the lockdown is lifted. It is in this context that suitable safety measures must be put in place for conducting proceedings after the lockdown is lifted. The method of hearing post lockdown will depend on the facilities available at the court concerned. While such facilities are largely available in the Supreme Court and the Delhi High Court, they are not available in the various other High Courts and subordinate courts. The judiciary must be allotted sufficient funds for self-administration and timely delivery of justice. Today, technology dictates our lifestyle, but because of lack of allocation of sufficient funds to improve and strengthen technical support for the judiciary, we in India are unable to make full use of technology.

Implementing guidelines
As much of the Supreme Court and many High Courts will remain closed for the summer, the High Courts can consider constituting

committees, as the Delhi High Court did, to create graded plans for the courts functioning after the lockdown. They can formulate plans based on the availability of infrastructure to conduct virtual hearings or actual hearings, or by running courts in shifts. In case any of the courts are inclined to conduct open court hearings, they may have to implement some guidelines.

One, only those lawyers/litigants whose cases are listed for the day's hearing should be allowed to enter court halls. Two, the lawyers must enter in batches according to the serial number in the list. Three, thermal image cameras must be installed at the entrance of every court building, to identify risk persons. Four, every person entering the court premises must install the Aarogya Setu app on their phones. Five, at the entrance of every court complex, an automatic hand wash faucet should be installed. Six, there should be regulations on the manner of functioning and running of public utility services, canteens, etc., within the court premises with all necessary precautions. Seven, masks, gloves and sanitisers should be made available. Importantly, as junior lawyers have been seriously impacted by the lockdown, they should receive financial assistance (even in the form of a loan from a nationalised bank) from the Central government.

K. Subramanian is Senior Advocate and former Advocate General of Tamil Nadu. E-mail: rks_lawyer@yahoo.com

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.

They deserve better

Every time I hear or read about the helplessness and plight of hapless migrant workers, my heart goes out to them (Page 1, 'Special', "Weary workers lug crashed hopes en route their homes", May 10). Have migrant workers come to a state of being despised by their host States and disowned by their own home States? Millions of them have given their 'blood, sweat and tears' to build structures, mansions, and 'concrete jungles all over the country'. Conscience and gratitude demand that the Centre and States draw up

schemes to address the agony and distress of migrant workers who are the invisible and least recognised builders of India.

C.G. KURIAKOSE,
Kothamangalam, Kerala

Liquor revenue, sale
It is bemusing that a State government which is expected to espouse the cause of welfare of its people is now moving the Supreme Court to permit it to sell liquor on the grounds of reopening the economy ("TN moves SC against HC order on liquor shops", Page 1, May 10). Can the State government

inform the top court that its main revenue depends on revenue from the sale of liquor? Also, can the State assert before the Court that but for the sale of liquor the State economy cannot be rebooted?

While there are many avenues to reopen the economy, having Tamil Nadu cling on to issue of the sale of liquor is obnoxious. Further, it should be noted that the Madras High Court did not opt for a total ban of liquor sale and had also perhaps noted a failure to maintain law and order and control overcrowding, enforce social distancing and other

lockdown norms on the days when government liquor shops opened.

MANOHAR MUTHUSWAMY,
Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu

■ The suggestion that there be online sales, and subsequently, I would think, the home delivery of liquor during the lockdown to facilitate physical distancing simply put means this: that what is consumed beyond the gaze of family may now invade the home where there are bound to be all age groups. Youngsters may be tempted to taste liquor out of curiosity and then develop it into a habit. There was a liquor-free

period which will now be unlocked in an abrupt and strange manner. The judiciary should advise States not to lift prohibition till there is an end to the pandemic.

V.N. GOPAL,
Chennai

Baggage identification
The article, "The thief was not to be" (Open Page, May 10), made me nostalgic about my many air journeys. I always found the most difficult part of my journey to be in identifying my baggage from the conveyor belt. I generally used a black suitcase. Once while returning from Abu Dhabi,

my smart plan of tying red and green ribbons on my suitcase almost resulted in grief. I was shocked to see three black suitcases of the same dimensions, and with red and green ribbons on the conveyor belt, moving at high speed. After a while, two ribboned suitcases disappeared.

After I noted that the remaining box was not mine, I ran after the two passengers. One of them turned red faced and after much checking, we were reunited with our boxes.

D. SETHURAMAN,
Chennai

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my smart plan of tying red and green ribbons on my suitcase almost resulted in grief. I was shocked to see three black suitcases of the same dimensions, and with red and green ribbons on the conveyor belt, moving at high speed. After a while, two ribboned suitcases disappeared.

After I noted that the remaining box

Responding to COVID-19 at the grassroots

Kerala and Karnataka have shown how democratic decentralisation has worked in their favour



T.R. RAGHUNANDAN

Mahatma Gandhi envisioned that a free India would rest on a foundation of gram panchayats, village republics that governed locally and epitomised Swaraj in practice. B.R. Ambedkar was sceptical; he described the caste-ridden, unequal village society as a cesspool. Yet, he was not unequivocally against decentralisation.



"Kerala has the most panchayat-friendly fiscal system." A primary health care centre in Vypeen in Kochi. ■ H.VIBHU

Locally relevant initiatives
The 73rd Constitutional Amendment mandates the constitution of panchayats at the district, intermediate and village levels as devolved institutions of self-government and provides for the endowment of powers and responsibilities to plan and implement programmes for social justice and economic development. This fulfilled the vision of the Mahatma, whilst addressing Dr. Ambedkar's concerns by providing for reservation in both the elected seats and leadership positions of sarpanches, mukhiyas and adhyakshas.

Yet, the progress of panchayati raj has been patchy, since its constitutionalisation 27 years ago. Some States have walked the talk by devolving untied grants to panchayats so that they can plan flexibly and implement locally relevant initiatives. However, in most, the substantive spirit of the constitutional design has been obstructed by politicians and bureaucrats, who fear the loss of their patronage powers. Panchayats are not given enough funds and are bypassed by State-controlled line departments that continue to implement programmes falling within the rightful domain of the former.

Past pandemics, apart from decimating populations, have also caused paradigm shifts in the perception of governance. The plague waves of the 15th century, which killed nearly three quarters of England and nine-tenths of people in some quarters of Europe, also undermined the political position of the Pope, whose assurances that god would come to the help of the virtuous, were not fulfilled. Will the novel coronavirus crisis trigger a reaction of greater faith in the local govern-

The face of exploitation

Governments are once again choosing to protect industry at the cost of workers' rights and dignity

N.S. TANVI

As thousands of migrant workers walk across India in a desperate attempt to reunite with their families, States are competing with one another to provide greater relaxation of labour laws to appear 'industry friendly'. U.P., for instance, has cleared an ordinance exempting businesses and industries from labour laws, except for a handful, for three years. The Centre has done the same through its many circulars and clarifications issued during the lockdown. The worst affected are the migrant workers.

Mere eyewash

The lockdown has clearly established that migrant workers are the backbone of India's economy. The sudden announcement of the nationwide lockdown on March 23 left an estimated 13 crore migrants with no way to return home and no money. However, the State and Centre remained quiet about ensuring adequate relief to them or ways for them to return home. When the lockdown was relaxed from April 20, the Standard Operating Procedure issued permitted asymptomatic workers to return to their worksites where they were to reside, but not to their home State. This denial, trade unions alleged, was because industry heads were worried that there would be a labour shortage when industries reopened; that if migrant workers returned home, they may not come back to work immediately. However, the same industrial heads did nothing to ensure that these workers were given adequate food, shelter and their dues during the lockdown. Recently, Karnataka cancelled Shramik trains after the Chief Minister met prominent builders in the State.

The April 29 order permitting inter-State movement of migrant workers was just eyewash. It permitted only "stranded workers" to leave, with the Centre clarifying that workers "otherwise residing normally at places, other than their native places for purposes of work" are not "stranded". Yet another circular said that the workers, who have no money left, will have to pay for their train tick-

ets. It was clear that all these were deliberate attempts to prevent workers from leaving the State. Railways and inter-State travel are within the Centre's control. The Central government could have ensured that travel was free. Effectively, the Centre once again sought to protect industry at the cost of the workers' rights, while appearing as though it was doing its best for the workers. The dispute about payment of fare also provided a ready excuse to the States to prevent workers from crossing borders.

Violating rights

Through their various actions, the States and the Centre are consistently and systematically violating the fundamental rights of migrant workers. Article 23 of the Constitution prohibits "forced labour". The Supreme Court, in *PUDR v. Union of India* (1982), held that "the word 'force' must... be construed to include... force arising from the compulsion of economic circumstances which leaves no choice of alternatives to a person in want and compels him to provide labour or service even though the remuneration received for it is less than the minimum wage." It would also run afoul of the International Labour Organization's 'Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017' which requires states to ensure marginalised groups "freely choose employment" while rebuilding after any disaster. Thus, the various Home Ministry directives and State ordinances would be violative not only of India's own Constitution but also its international commitments.

Industry leaders, ministers and bureaucrats have denied workers the dignity and respect they deserve as fellow humans. Workers are being treated as a resource to be exploited by industry and state. The workers have no autonomy. This autonomy over self is at the core of dignity, a fundamental right. Until we develop a plan that respects this invisible 13-crore force, there can be no real revival of India's economy or society.

N.S. Tanvi is an Advocate at the Madras High Court

locked-in senior officials cannot oversee their frontline workers, panchayats have stepped in and are taking charge. Nearly all panchayats in Karnataka passed a formal resolution that no one in their respective areas will go hungry.

Kadashettihalli Satish, an elected member to the Kadaba gram panchayat in Karnataka's Tumkur District, is president of the Karnataka State Gramma Panchayat Sadasaya Maha Okkoota, a federation of district and taluk associations of elected panchayat representatives in the State. He speaks of how panchayats are rising to the occasion. He credits the government with the creation of gram panchayat and village-level COVID-19 task forces, and the way these have begun to easily and readily function to handle the crisis.

The panchayat-level task force meets twice a week. The primary health centre doctor, auxiliary nurse midwives and accredited social health activists are part of the task force in which all elected representatives and panchayat-level staff participate. Decisions taken on COVID-19 related management such as implementing the lockdown, disinfection, providing food to those who need it and ensuring the supply of other essential services are implemented by the village-level task forces.

Yet, all is not well. In a panchayat in Kolar district, while the entire body resolved to buy masks for people, the panchayat development officer, an officer deputed from above and placed with the panchayat, obstructed the resolution. He owed no allegiance to the panchayat to which he was posted, and ignored government guidelines giving flexibility to panchayats to decide appropriate responses to the pandemic.

Another problem looms large. Very soon, the five-year terms of the panchayats will come to an end and an election is impossible in the current circumstances. A confident and caring government ought to continue with the current elected bodies functioning as administrators. If instead they appoint officials or their chosen political representatives to take charge, then we will know where the government stands on its commitment to democratic decentralisation.

T.R. Raghunandan is Former Secretary, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Karnataka, and Former Joint Secretary, Ministry of Panchayat Raj, Government of India

FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

Are we knocking on the wrong doors?

Support from readers alone can help journalism retain its core values



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

Daniel Defoe's 1722 classic, *A Journal of the Plague Year*, is a prescient reading of both the mishandling of the COVID-19 crisis by various governments and of human distress and fortitude. At a time like this, one has to remember that for the media to remain free, it must first survive. I am petrified by a term that has been gaining currency: 'new normal'.

How can we call an uncertain future 'normal'? Are there any policymakers who are sure of the contours of this 'new normal'? The pandemic is being used as a pretext to empower a centralised executive and weaken the federal balance between the Union and State governments, which, at its best, was a quasi-federal arrangement in India. The government has acknowledged the economic downturn but is indifferent and insensitive to the hardships faced by many.

A bitter irony

In this dire situation, the news industry is in an ironic situation. On the one hand, the pandemic has forced a large section of people to trust established news brands rather than the viral content on social media. A study by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (RISJ) on how institutions are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in the U.K. revealed that "more than one-third (37%) think that the news media is doing a good job of responding to COVID-19, higher than the equivalent figure for technology companies (15%)". But at the same time, the industry is in a crisis. Adam Gabbatt's report for *The Guardian* in early April captured the situation well. He wrote: "As journalists across the US scramble to cover the impact of the coronavirus, they are grappling with a bitter irony: as demand for their stories soars, the decline of the business model that funds them is speeding up catastrophically."

At a deeper level, the news industry is paying a price for its past folly of laying emphasis on reach over revenue. The cover price was kept low, and digital content was not monetised because of the faith that the reach would generate more advertising revenue. In November 2019, a study by the Tow Center for Digital Journalism revealed the uneasy relationship between the technology majors

and news organisations. It said: "The most discernible difference between past findings and those of our most recent interviews is that any hope that scale-based platform products might deliver meaningful or consistent revenue for publishers has disappeared. This does not mean, however, that publishers will no longer work with platforms – an impossible scenario, as the latter are the gatekeepers of the online information ecosystem – but rather that any optimism about the ability of ad-based products to sustain journalism seems all but gone."

BBC Media Action, the charity arm of the BBC, has come up with a feasibility study for an International Fund for Public Interest Media. It spells out the difficulties before the news media industry: "As advertising revenue to journalism organisation declines, political and other factional actors invest in their own media, and the costs of carrying out independent journalism escalate, the business models available to public interest media are disappearing. The evolution of digital advertising, in particular, has destroyed funding models for journalism – news media are on course to lose around \$23.8 billion in annual advertising revenue between 2017 and 2021." Media managers are in an elusive search for a viable revenue stream. The India-specific figures for the financial year ending March 2020, and the projections for the first quarter of 2021, are alarming.

Support from readers

For nearly a decade, the RISJ has been arguing that independent, professional journalism needs freedom, funding and a future. While there is a near consensus about what constitutes media freedom, there are divergent views about funding and the future. One section feels that the government should come up with a bailout package for the news industry, a model which may seriously cripple the autonomy of the news organisation. Another section prefers a not-for-profit model, funded through philanthropy, without realising the pitfalls of constantly negotiating with the prescriptive agenda of various foundations. While I do not discount the value of timely help from various quarters to the beleaguered news industry, the political economy of the industry shows that only enhanced support from its principal supporters – readers – will endure and not hurt the core values of journalism. We need to identify, in a dispassionate manner, the right doors to knock on.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 11, 1970

Buzz on Cabinet reshuffle

This has been a weary weekend of searing heat and seasonal rumours of impending Cabinet changes which have become a routine ritual here [New Delhi] before the end of every Parliament session. For the last few days, Delhi has been buzzing with both informed and uninformed reports of an early Cabinet reshuffle. But the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, has become even more uncommunicative on the subject in the face of this widespread speculation. What is known so far about the scope of the proposed changes is that the Prime Minister has been working for some time on two or three sets of proposals for a reshuffle, ranging from a major shake-up to make the Cabinet more reflective of her political thinking as well as the current power factors in the party to a routine instalment of new appointments to fill the existing vacancies without displacing any of her senior colleagues or altering the present Cabinet structure.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 11, 1920.

The Irish Situation

(From an editorial)

English papers of The Mail week support the view expressed by Reuter elsewhere that Ireland is practically under anarchy. Recent news about the change of personnel in the Irish administration and release of hunger-strikers from jails tended to reassure confidence in British policy, but as yet there is no sign of a definite, declared change of attitude, or confession of mistake on the part of Government. By a peculiar irony, which is by no means rare in the history of English statecraft, the Parliament failed to show high statesmanship at a time when it was sorely needed. The policy of concurrent reform and repression, which we here know too well, was inaugurated in Ireland without any apparent grasp of the real inwardness of the Irish insurgency. The reform offered in the form of the Home Rule Bill is not only disliked by all parties, but is even suspected to be on account of its centrifugal tendencies to form a repression designed to divide the country; while the measures of repression, the army of occupation, the agencies of surveillance and other concomitants of a "strong" regime have served only to reveal the astonishing ingenuity, resilience and depth of the forces of disaffection. Ireland is practically in a state of open war.

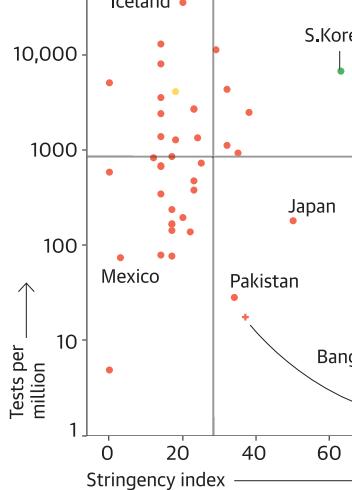


DATA POINT

Policy impact

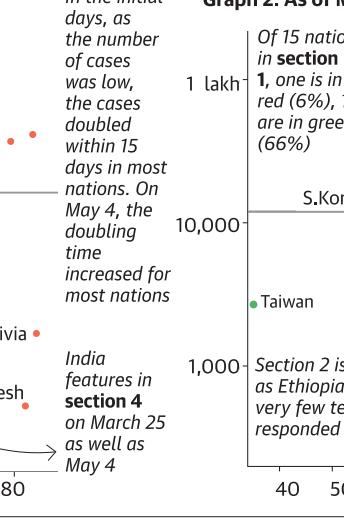
HOW TO READ THE CHARTS The graphs plot tests conducted per million population against how stringent* a country's lockdown was on March 25 and May 4. Each circle corresponds to a country. ● denotes a case doubling time* (DT) of <16 days; ○ denotes a DT of 16–35 days; ▲ denotes a DT of >35 days. Only 46 nations with data were considered

Graph 1: As of March 25



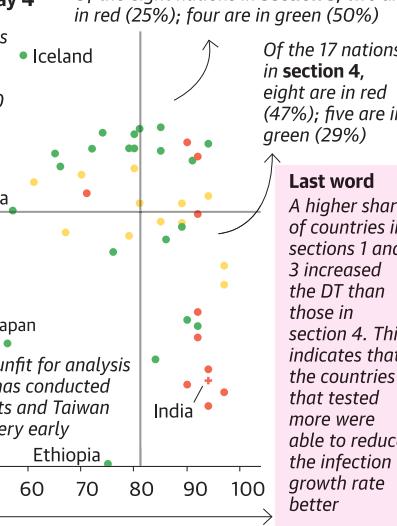
SIGNIFICANCE OF QUADRANTS

The charts are divided into 4 sections:
1. Top left: Relatively less stringent lockdown, more tests
2. Bottom left: Relatively less stringent lockdown, fewer tests
3. Top right: Relatively more stringent lockdown, more tests
4. Bottom right: Relatively more stringent lockdown, fewer tests



* Stringency is calculated based on 17 indicators such as school closures and restrictions in movement. The index was created by Oxford University (More details: bit.ly/3bhwiiv)

▲ Doubling time is the estimated number of days it takes for the number of cases to double in a nation. The higher the number of days, the fewer the new infections in a country



FROM PAGE ONE

India reports 128 more deaths, 3,277 new cases

"Based on the active COVID-19 confirmed cases being treated currently, we have noticed that only 2.48% of these COVID cases have required ICU facility, only 1.94% of them have required oxygen support while 0.40% have required ventilator support," the Health Ministry said in its release.

Giving more details, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said India's doubling rate now stands at 12.0 – over a 3-day window, 10.1 over a 7-day window and 11.0 when measured over a 14-day window.

He added that 20 countries of the world where maximum cases have been reported, have total population which is almost equal to the population of India i.e. 135 crore and they have collectively till date reported almost 84 times the number of cases in India.

"In case of mortality, these top 20 countries have reported 200 times the number of deaths reported in India," he said.

"The central government has sent 72 lakh N-95 face masks and 36 lakh PPE kits to the States so far," Mr. Vardhan said, adding that the Railways has converted 5,231 coaches into COVID Care Centres. The Minister was speaking to reporters

Norms issued for restart of industrial units

The units should approach local district administration for specific assistance.

"District Magistrates may be instructed to ensure that in such instances, the industrial unit may be facilitated to run their end-to-end operations, in the overall interests of industrial security," the order said.

Storage facilities have to be inspected for any signs of spills, wear and tear. "Check for already opened storage vessels, containers, bags or silos for possible oxidation/chemical reaction/rusting/rotting etc. HAZMAT chemicals in the storage need to be checked for chemical stability before using for any processes," said the order.

Before entering the storage areas, proper ventilation and lighting has to be ensured. They should be examined for any sign of damage.

Complete safety audit
The owners should get done a complete safety audit of the entire unit, clean pipelines, equipment and discharge lines as per set procedure, run rotatory equipment under supervision, and check boilers, furnaces or heat exchangers for lining and signs of wear and tear. All pressure and temperature gauges should be functional.

"Ensure the arrangement for round-the-clock emergency crews/professional technical teams provided with MAH and cluster of MAH should have an ex-

after inspecting a COVID-19 care centre in the Mandoli area in the national capital.

The Health Ministry also said the procurement of a high throughput machine as per the recommendations of the Empowered Group-2 has been approved for the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).

"Presently the testing capacity at NCDC is about 300-350 tests per day. With Coats 6800, which is a high throughput machine with the capacity to test around 1,200 samples in 24 hours, the testing capacity for COVID-19 at NCDC has been significantly enhanced," noted a release.

The Health Ministry has now directed all States and Union Territories to upload the details of three types of COVID- dedicated facilities on their websites for public information.

"So far 7,740 facilities in 483 districts have been identified in all the States/UTs that include hospitals and facilities of the State/UT Govts as well as the Central Government. There are 65, 6,769 isolation beds, 30,5,567 beds for confirmed cases, 35,1,204 beds for suspected cases, 99,492 oxygen supported beds, 1,696 facilities with oxygen manifold and 34,076 ICU beds," noted the Ministry.

tended coverage of 200 km to reach transport accident spots for help," it said.

24-hour sanitisation

The employers should provide hand sanitisers, masks, face protection shields and PPEs, ensure 24-hour sanitisation of the factory premises, accommodation of workers should also be sanitised regularly, and their temperature checked twice a day. Those showing symptoms should not report to work.

The staff should be educated on COVID-19 health and prevention, quarantine measures for supply and storage of goods, isolation and sanitisation of finished goods and delivery of goods in shifts.

Barriers should be created to ensure the physical distance within the work floor and dining facilities. Work should be in shifts. The factories operating round-the-clock at full production capacity should consider one-hour gap between shifts, except for units requiring continuous operations.

Managerial and administrative staff should work one shift at 33% capacity. The employees should not share tools or workstations to the extent possible.

Factories have to prepare accommodation to isolate workers, if needed. The HR has to help manage the whole process for the individual. All travelling employees have to undergo 14-day quarantine.

Ensuring safety

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Indian, Chinese troops face off in Ladakh, Sikkim

A defence source said that at Muguthang, the road on the Chinese side is motorable, and on the Indian side, it is a remote area. Due to this, they can bring in a large number of troops if need be, the source added.

Both countries have differing perceptions owing to the non-demarcated boundary, which lead to transgressions and face-offs, as each side patrols up to the areas they claim along the 3,448-km Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Any such issue is resolved through the mechanisms put in place to maintain peace and tranquillity on the border.

CM YK

PM, CMs to interact again today

Centre is expected to announce further relaxations to resume economic activity

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



Narendra Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with all Chief Ministers through a videoconference on Monday afternoon, the Prime Minister's Office said in a tweet on Sunday.

With exactly a week to go before the third phase of the lockdown ends on the midnight of May 17, Mr. Modi will be meeting the Chief Ministers for the fifth time.

Exit policy

Apart from discussing a possible exit policy, the meeting will also discuss the lockdown's impact on the economy.

"PM @narendramodi to hold the 5th meeting via video-conference with state Chief Ministers tomorrow afternoon at 3 PM," said a tweet of the PMO.

The Centre is yet to spell out its plans post May 17, but

is expected to announce further easing of restrictions to restart economic activities.

The announcement came after Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba reviewed the status and management of the novel coronavirus pandemic in different States with the Chief Secretaries via video-conferencing.

Monday's meeting is expected to be a long one, broken into two sessions, as the Prime Minister is expected to hear the views of all the CMs before deciding on the next move.

At the last meeting on April 27, only nine CMs got an opportunity to speak

while a few others gave their views in writing.

In the past couple of days, a few Congress CMs wrote to the Prime Minister urging the Centre to let the States decide on designating affected zones – green, orange and red – which will be the basis of restarting economic activities.

"We need to decentralise power in dealing with the virus. If we keep this fight in PMO, we will lose. The PM must devolve power... trust chief ministers and chief ministers (CMs) have to trust district magistrates," former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi said last Friday at an online press meet.

At the last meeting on April 27, only nine CMs got an opportunity to speak

Nepal to beef up border security

Move follows row over Kalapani region

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI



Pradeep Gyawali

Nepal will increase the number of security outposts and deploy more armed personnel in the border with India, Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali told *The Hindu* on Sunday.

The senior Minister said Kathmandu expects India to avoid any unilateral measures in the Kalapani region and remain committed to the 'fixed border' principle as agreed during the past official talks.

The Kalapani region is claimed by Nepal but India has been maintaining that the new political map of 2019 has shown the territory "accurately" as part of Uttarakhand.

Nepal's decision follows protests in Kathmandu on Saturday after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday inaugurated a link road to Lipulekh pass that will reduce the travel time for pilgrims to the Kailash Mansarovar region.

Manmohan Singh admitted to AIIMS

Former PM complained of chest pain

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



Manmohan Singh

means 100% lockdown with only essential services allowed, in orange zones, some very limited activities are allowed.

In green zones, most of the recent relaxations with regard to economic activities are allowed. But the moment a COVID-19 positive case is found in an area, it becomes a red zone.

It turns orange if no fresh case is reported for 14 days – the incubation cycle of the virus – in a particular area. The zone becomes green only after no fresh cases are reported for 28 days.

"Our administration is doing aggressive screening, where a team of doctors and nurses look for symptoms of COVID-19. Those who show even mild symptoms are further tested. In this way, we can manage the disease,"

Other Chief Ministers of Congress-ruled States, like Bhupesh Baghel of Chhattisgarh, in a written communication to the Prime Minister, made a similar point about letting the State governments decide on opening up specific areas for economic activity.

Stringent norms

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Naval ship brings back 698 from Male

INS Jalashwa docks at Kochi after setting sail from the island nation with stranded people on May 8

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

Naval ship INS Jalashwa carrying 698 Indians from the Maldives arrived at Kochi port a little after 9 a.m. on Sunday. Part of Operation Samudra Setu, the mission brought the first group of Indian evacuees by sea after an international lockdown of all modes of transport took effect about two months ago against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ship berthed around 10 a.m. at the international cruise terminal of the port, which was ready to receive the evacuees, comprising 595 male and 103 female passengers. Among them were 14 children below the age of 10 and 19 pregnant women.

440 from Kerala

Of the arrivals, 440 are from Kerala. The rest are from Tamil Nadu and 18 other States and Union Territories.

Sources in the district administration said that two passengers with fever were shifted to the Karuvellipady taluk hospital near the port



At home: Passengers aboard the INS Jalashwa as it enters the Kochi port. ■ THULASI KAKKAT

area. They will now be tested for COVID-19.

The Kochi city police supervised the clearance and onward transportation of those who arrived according to a protocol for the operation, overseen by District Police Chief Vijay Sakhare.

Passengers who showed

even mild COVID-19 symptoms and those with other health problems were taken care of separately. The passengers had embarked on the evacuation trip after preliminary screening for COVID-19. However, those with symptoms on arrival were isolated. Health, Police and

Department of Immigration personnel in personal protection equipment (PPE) handled their papers. Thermal screening of the passengers was carried out by the Port Health Organisation. Their luggage was disinfected by personnel from the Fire and Rescue Depart-

ment. Kerala State Road Transport Corporation buses took the passengers to their destinations. Specially arranged taxis were available for those who needed them.

Those moving out of the district were escorted to the border from where they were further followed to their homes by personnel from the respective districts.

Two-day voyage

INS Jalashwa set sail from the Maldives on Friday. The naval vessel, based in Visakhapatnam, is manned by a trained medical team and has been engaged in the past in evacuation operations, said a communication from Press Information Bureau.

INS Magar, another naval vessel, is set to start its Kochi voyage as part of Operation Samudra Setu. The vessel is scheduled to bring 250 Indians. While embarkation of evacuees has begun, inclement weather was posing a problem, said sources. The ship would depart either on Sunday night or at first light on Monday, they said.

Navy ready to bring back more Indians from abroad'

S. ANANDAN
KOCHI

With the Navy embarking on a seaborne evacuation of Indians stranded overseas following the COVID-19 pandemic, Vice-Admiral G. Ashok Kumar, Vice-Chief of the Naval Staff, has said that the force is ready to bring back more people from abroad or help the movement of stranded islanders within the country on orders from the Union government.

"The Navy is fully geared up to undertake any such requirements. The scope of Op [Operation] Samudra Setu [which the mission is called] will depend on the number of our citizens requiring evacuation. This is being worked out by various organs of the government. We are ready to deploy more ships and also undertake a number of trips as the situation demands. While we continue to hope for the best, we are ready for the worst," Vice-Admiral Kumar



Vice-Admiral G. Ashok Kumar

told *The Hindu* in an interview done over the phone and e-mail.

INS Magar entered Male on Sunday for continuing the evacuation from the island nation hours after 698 Indians were brought to Kochi by INS Jalashwa.

Different this time'

While the Navy had carried out some massive evacuations in the past, it was altogether different this time around thanks to the specific requirements for COVID-19,

Vice-Admiral Kumar said.

"We had to ensure safety of the crew as well as the evacuees. Since our operational deployments are on fully, the commands had implemented numerous steps to ensure crew safety. The crew remains as a unit for 14 days in harbour before the ship is deployed and proper screening is done," he said.

"The fact that we have not had a single case [of infection] on board any ship is a credit to these measures. For the safety of the evacuees, relevant areas onboard the ships have been sanitised, additional medical gear and personnel – including women officers and Military Nursing Service personnel – and isolation facilities created on board. Crew rationalisation was done in view of safety measures like social distancing. The additional paramedic training conducted for our personnel will come in handy in an emergency."

Five Air India pilots test positive

The Mumbai-based pilots had operated cargo flights between Guangzhou and Delhi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Five of the 77 Air India crew members who took COVID-19 tests to enable them to operate Vande Bharat Mission repatriation flights have tested positive.

The five, all Mumbai-based pilots, had operated cargo flights between Guangzhou and Delhi carrying medical supplies and equipment in April. Four of them had been rostered together, two pilots for each sector to China.

The four flew together and returned from China within hours, not once leaving the cockpit, airline sources said. All the five operate the Boeing 787 Dreamliner.

While an official statement from Air India is awaited, informed sources said all the



Tough luck: The pilots have not left the cockpit after landing in China. ■ ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY

five were asymptomatic and had been home quarantined as per guidelines.

"Though these Mumbai-based pilots had operated cargo flights between Guangzhou and Delhi, officials said it was unlikely that they had gotten exposed to

the virus on duty since it had been close to 20 days since the flight," one of their fellow pilots said.

Two of the five pilots had operated flights on April 18, while the others flew even earlier.

Air India has been operat-

ing through the lockdown period, initially rescuing Indians stranded in coronavirus-affected nations, including Italy and Iran.

Two test positive

Meanwhile, officials said two staff members of the Air India Engineering Services Limited (AIESL) had tested positive on May 7. These two, a technician and a driver, had gone to the hangar of a private jet operator, some of whose private aircraft are maintained by AIESL engineers within Mumbai airport premises. The tests were conducted by the corporate house.

The firm has asked its staff to self quarantine following the development. The two AIESL staff too are asymptomatic.

Maharashtra adds 1000 plus cases again

1,943 new cases take total to 22,171

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

Maharashtra reported its highest, single-day surge in new COVID-19 cases as well as fatalities on Sunday as the cumulative tally rose to 22,171 cases; 53 fatalities took the State's total death toll to 832. More than 1,000 cases were added for the third consecutive day.

As per the State Health Department, while 1,278 cases were reported during the day, a backlog of 665 cases were updated in the final tally as per the ICMR list. These were not part of the day's tally. The State's overall numbers thus rose by 1,943.

Of the 53 fatalities, 19 were from Mumbai, taking the city's death toll to 508. Malegaon in Nashik, a virus hot-spot in north Maharashtra, reported 14 deaths to take its



Patients who recovered from COVID-19 being welcomed by doctors and staff at a facility in Pune on Sunday. ■ JIGNESH MISTRY

26 new cases, two more deaths in Dharavi

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Dharavi reported 26 new COVID-19 cases on Sunday, taking its tally to 859. The area reported two deaths, totalling 29 fatalities so far.

After a spike in the past two weeks, the number of cases seems to have stabilised.

After reporting 50 new cases on May 7, it reported 25 new cases on May 8, another 25 on May 9 and 26 on Sunday. Some areas that reported cases include Transit camp, Matunga labour camp, Kumbharwada, Baliga Nagar.

Among the new cases is a 13-year-old boy from Nehru chawl. About 222 people have recovered. Mahim reported seven new cases.

Awate. As many as 399 persons were discharged, taking the cumulative discharged till date to 4,199, said Dr. Awate.

Mumbai city reported 875 new cases, recording a total of 13,739 cases.

The tally for Pune district rose to 2,689 with more than 95 new cases. Malegaon reported 90 new cases, with a total tally of 562.

398 new cases, 21 deaths in Gujarat

454 patients were discharged, the biggest single-day jump in the State

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD

Gujarat on Sunday recorded 398 cases and 21 deaths, bringing its tally to 8,195 infections and 493 deaths due to COVID-19 so far.

For the last ten days, the State has been recording over 300 cases and 20 plus deaths as a sharp spike in infections continues in Gujarat.

Ahmedabad continues to remain the largest cluster, accounting for over 70% of the cases and deaths. Even on Sunday, out of 398 cases, 278 were reported from Ah-



Arduous trail: Migrant workers returning on foot to their native States from Ahmedabad on Sunday. ■ AP

medabad, while 18 out of 21 deaths occurred in the city.

Ahmedabad's cumulative numbers as on Sunday are: 5,818 cases and 381 deaths.

After Ahmedabad, Surat is the second largest cluster, with 895 cases and 39 deaths so far.

On Sunday, Surat reported 41 cases and one death.

So far, seven deaths each have occurred in Bhavnagar and Anand.

Meanwhile, 454 patients were discharged on Sunday as per the new guidelines on discharge of patients that require no retesting of asymptomatic patients or patients with mild symptoms after ten days of treatment in hospital.

This is the biggest single day jump in the discharge of patients. So far, 2,525 patients have been discharged after recovery, which is likely to increase after the new guidelines.



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ASTROPHYSICS

(An Autonomous Body Under Department of Science &

Technology, Government of India)

2nd Block, Koramangala, Bangalore - 560034.

Notice Inviting Tender

Sealed Tenders are invited for the following works:

1. Sinking of tube well at CREST campus, IIA, Hosakote - Tender Notice No.: 34/IIA/CIVIL/BANG/CREST/2020-21 dated 11.05.2020.

Detailed Tender Document can be downloaded from Institute's Website www.iiap.res.in/tenders.htm. Last date for receipt of Tender is 01.06.2020 at 1500 hours.

Evacuation posed unique challenges, says Vice-Admiral

'Navy ready to bring back more Indians from abroad'

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Different this time'

While the Navy had carried out some massive evacuations in the past, it was altogether different this time around thanks to the specific requirements for COVID-19,

Vice-Admiral Kumar said.

"We had to ensure safety of the crew as well as the evacuees. Since our operational deployments are on fully, the commands had implemented numerous steps to ensure crew safety. The crew remains as a unit for 14 days in harbour before the ship is deployed and proper screening is done," he said.

"The fact that we have not had a single case [of infection] on board any ship is a credit to these measures. For the safety of the evacuees, relevant areas onboard the ships have been sanitised, additional medical gear and personnel – including women officers and Military Nursing Service personnel – and isolation facilities created on board. Crew rationalisation was done in view of safety measures like social distancing. The additional paramedic training conducted for our personnel will come in handy in an emergency."

60-year-old among six dead in Bihar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PATNA

Bihar on Sunday reported the sixth COVID-19 death.

Among the deceased is a 60-year-old migrant worker, who had returned from Delhi and. "He had suffered from the chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and died of cardiorespiratory arrest," Principal Health Secretary Sanjay Kumar.

Earlier, five patients had died in Munger, Sasaram, East Champaran, Sitamarhi and Vaishali districts.

Hopes run high as migrants return to western Odisha

Demands grow for bringing back workers from other districts

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

As a special train carrying 1,200 people pulled in at the Titlagarh Railway Station in Balangir district on Sunday, it raised hopes that other distressed migrant workers in poverty-stricken western Odisha would also return.

Thousands of migrant workers from the region – comprising of Balangir, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Subarnapur and Bargh districts – which is infamous for its poverty and distress migration, are stranded in different parts of the country.

The arrival of the train from Mumbai to Titlagarh marked the first formal return of migrants from other States to the region. Workers from 21 of 30 different districts of Odisha got down at Titlagarh, from where about 50 buses took them in different directions after thermal screening at the station. However, these five districts are yet to receive their own native men and women.

Paltry wages

Every year, about 3 lakh people comprising women



NIV develops test to detect antibodies

Indigenous ELISA test will be used to screen 30,000 samples from 75 COVID-19 hotspot districts

R. PRASAD
CHENNAI

The National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune, has developed an immunological assay — enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) — to detect antibodies that the body develops in response to infection by the SARS-CoV-2 novel coronavirus, an official source told *The Hindu*. The test will detect antibodies in blood samples. ELISA is routinely used for detecting HIV infection.

"This kit was validated at two sites in Mumbai and has high sensitivity and accuracy. Besides, it has the advantage of testing 90 samples together in a single run of 2.5 hours," Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan tweeted.

He also tweeted to say that NIV had transferred the technology to Zydus Cadila for mass-scale production.

The Drug Controller Gen-



While RT-PCR test can detect current infection, ELISA can map past infection, even in asymptomatic cases. ■ THULASI KAKKAT

eral had granted commercial production and marketing permission to Zydus Cadila, he said.

This is the first time India has developed an indigenous ELISA test for coronavirus.

While ELISA tests for coronavirus are already available in other countries, procuring them in large numbers may

be a challenge, particularly during a pandemic. In contrast, availability will be a non-issue when a locally developed test is manufactured in India.

The company that has been licensed to manufacture the ELISA test kit will have about a month to make the tests available as collec-

tion of 30,000 blood samples taken randomly from the general population in the 75 hotspot districts will begin by the third week of May.

Balram Bhargava, Director-General of the Indian Council of Medical Research, could not be reached for comments.

Of significance

The ELISA test developed by NIV gains significance as the rapid antibody tests imported from China were found to be unreliable and hence the States were instructed not to use them for detecting previous novel coronavirus infection.

The ELISA test will be used to screen 30,000 samples from 75 hotspot districts to understand the extent of spread of the virus in the community. India has thus far maintained that there is no community transmission despite there being over

63,500 cases so far from across the country.

Since the ELISA test is based on detection of antibodies, it can only help in knowing if the person has been previously infected by coronavirus. Since it detects antibodies, even people who have remained symptom-free (asymptomatic) during the entire course of the infection will test positive.

While the RT-PCR (reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction) test, which detects the RNA of the coronavirus, enables detection of current infection, it will not be useful if the testing is carried out days after the infection clears as the virus will no longer be present.

However, antibodies developed in response to the coronavirus infection will be present in the blood for a longer duration and hence the ELISA test can help detect past infection.

BPRD scraps online manual on identifying fake news

Twitter users resent inclusion of a few portals to check facts

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A day after it published a step-by-step guide for law enforcement agencies to identify 'fake news' and communally sensitive posts in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD) removed the manual from its website.



STOCKPHOTO

of the think tank under the Union Home Ministry.

Technical errors

Asked why the report was taken down, a senior BPRD official said, "There were some technical errors. The report is being corrected and will be published soon again."

A tweet from the official handle of the BPRD posted at 4.34 p.m. on May 8, where it announced the pu-

blication of the manual, was also deleted on Sunday.

The detailed manual had said "digital news has brought back and increased the usage of fake news or yellow journalism" usually "published with the intent to damage an agency, entity or a person and gain financially or politically often using sensationalist, dishonest or outright fabricated headlines to increase readership."

To explain the communal aspect, the guidelines included a screenshot of a fake video which accused people belonging to a particular community of licking cleaned plates and spoons to "transfer the virus to people at large". It also attached a clip where miscreants used fake URLs to mislead people who wanted to donate to PM-CARES Fund.

Monsoon session may not be delayed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The monsoon session of Parliament, which normally begins in the last week of June or in the first week of July, may still be held on time, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said on Sunday, amid concerns that the coronavirus pandemic may delay its start.

Last year, the monsoon session ran between June 20 and August 7.

The Speaker underlined that it was a testing time due to the COVID-19 crisis, but expressed hope that the session could be held as per normal schedule. "Despite COVID-19 crisis, I am hopeful that the session can be held on time. But it will also depend on the situation prevailing at that time," Mr. Birla said.

Asked whether it would be possible to hold the session with strict social distancing norms still in place in June-July, Mr. Birla said a way out could be found when that situation comes.

Mr. Birla, on whose initiative a control room was set up in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies for better coordination between States in helping people, said this experiment turned out to be very successful. "MPs cutting across party lines reached out to people and helped them during this pandemic-forced lockdown. They should be praised."

In the wake of the pandemic, the Budget session had to be ended prematurely on March 23, over 10 days ahead of its last scheduled sitting on April 3.

NGOs warn of spurt in unwanted pregnancies

Experts point to temporary ban on family planning services and poor access to contraceptives

JAGRITI CHANDRA
NEW DELHI

A temporary ban on family planning services at government facilities and poor access to over-the-counter contraceptives, such as oral pills and condoms, during the nationwide lockdown will result in lakhs of unwanted pregnancies, leading to a spurt in unsafe abortions and maternal deaths, experts have warned.

An analysis, conducted by the Foundation for Reproductive Health Services (FRHS) India, estimates that nearly 2.56 crore couples may not be able to access contraception services during the period after the lockdown and until the return of normalcy by September. This will lead to a loss of 6.9

Access denied

Family planning measures are hard to come by during the lockdown

■ LIKELY CASES

Couples unable to access contraception
2.56 crore

Unintended pregnancies
23.7 lakh

Abortions
14.4 lakh

Unsafe abortions
8.34 lakh

Live births
6.79 lakh

Maternal deaths
1,743

SOURCE: FRHS INDIA

lakh sterilisation services, 9.7 lakh intra-uterine contraceptive devices (IUCDs) and 40.59 crore condoms, among other forms of contraception. As a result, there will be an additional 23 lakh unintended pregnancies, 6.79 lakh child births, 14.5 lakh abortions (including 8.34 lakh unsafe abortions) and 1,743 maternal deaths. The numbers will be higher if there is a longer lockdown period and a slower resumption of family planning services after the restrictions are lifted.

"Footfall at OPDs [outpatient departments] and com-

munity health care centres has gone down. Private clinics have stopped providing general medical services. While chemist shops are open, restrictions on mobility mean people's access to condoms, oral pills and emergency contraceptives is compromised. The purchase pattern behaviour of buyers is that most don't buy contraceptives from neighbourhood shops but from a shop away from their home to maintain anonymity," says V.S. Chandrasekhar, chief executive officer, FRHS India. "At the same time, as the lockdown continues there are likely to be more pregnancies. Many will continue these pregnancies to term, either out of choice or because of inability to access

clinical and medical abortion at the right time."

A lack of access to family planning services also results in the loss of women's agency in child birth, claims Poonam Muttreja, Executive Director, Population Foundation of India.

Ms. Muttreja was referring to a study by the Population Council, which records that 10 lakh women undergo sterilisation or accept IUCDs or an injectable in March alone.

This demand declines by 2-3 lakhs per month in April and May when men return to work. These numbers are likely to be higher during COVID-19-related lockdown as men return home in large numbers and spend more time at home in situations of high stress.

representing the Centre, to justify in the next weeks why the government and the RBI seemed to think that natural justice was not violated when "the government on one hand ceased the working of individuals and on the other hand is asking to pay the loan interest during moratorium".

According to the petitioner, the interest charged during the moratorium would be added up into the EMIs at the end of three-month forbearance. It will have to be paid in one go or be equally divided in all future EMIs. The monthly bill for customers will increase ... it will defeat the very purpose of permitting moratorium on loans."

Petitioner accuses Arnab of misleading SC

Politically motivated, says journalist

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

An application has been filed by a lawyer against Republic TV editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami, accusing him of misleading the Supreme Court.

Advocate Reepak Kansal asked the top court to order perjury proceedings against Mr. Goswami for providing "misleading information" in his plea to quash the FIRs registered against him for spreading hate in connection with his coverage of the Palghar lynching incident.

Mr. Goswami has staunchly denied the charges and termed them "politically motivated".

On April 25, the Supreme Court had granted him interim protection from arrest and transferred the case from Nagpur to Mumbai. Mr. Goswami has already accused the Mumbai Police of bias in their investigation.

The police have, in turn, accused Mr. Goswami of trying to intimidate the investigating officers.

The case is scheduled for hearing on May 11 before a Bench led by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud.

■ SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

One of the foremost scholars of Bengal, Harishankar Vasudevan, a professional historian who was a specialist in Russian and European history, and Indo-Russian relations, died here on Sunday after contracting COVID-19. He was 68.

Son of an aeronautical engineer at the Defence Science Organisation (later Defence Research and Development Organisation) Methil Vasudevan and Sreekuma-

COVID-19 claims life of historian

Harishankar specialised in European history

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

ri Menon, Professor Vasudevan — "Hari" to all — grew up in many places in India, Europe and Africa.

After completing studies at Cambridge University in the early 1970s, Prof. Vasudevan settled in Kolkata as a



Harishankar Vasudevan

Reader in European History at Calcutta University.

He set up the Central Asia programme at Jamia Millia Islamia and worked as the chief of the Textbook Development Committee for the Social Sciences at the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT).

He was involved in projects on Indo-Russian relations, and the Radiating Globalities project initiated by Gayatri Spivak of Columbia University. At the Observer Research Foundation, he was evaluating the overlap between the 'Look East' and 'Look Far East' policies of India, and the relationship between the Greater Eurasia

ideas of the Russian establishment and the Chinese establishment.

One of Prof. Vasudevan's latest engagements was to initiate a process so that a museum-cum-research centre could be developed at the spacious south Kolkata residence of another early 20th century historian Ramesh Chandra (R.C.) Majumdar.

He has seminal works on Indo-Russian trade and military cooperation to his credit, and his works range from early European and 15th century Russian trader Afanasy Nikitin's journey in India to the recent, as yet unpublished memoir of his mother titled *Memoirs of a Malabar Lady*.

Ajit Jogi slips into a coma, says doctor

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
RAIPUR

Former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Ajit Jogi, who was admitted to a private hospital here on Saturday afternoon after suffering a cardiac arrest, has slipped into a coma, a senior doctor attending on him said on Sunday.

His neurological activity is "almost nil" and he is on ventilator, the doctor said.

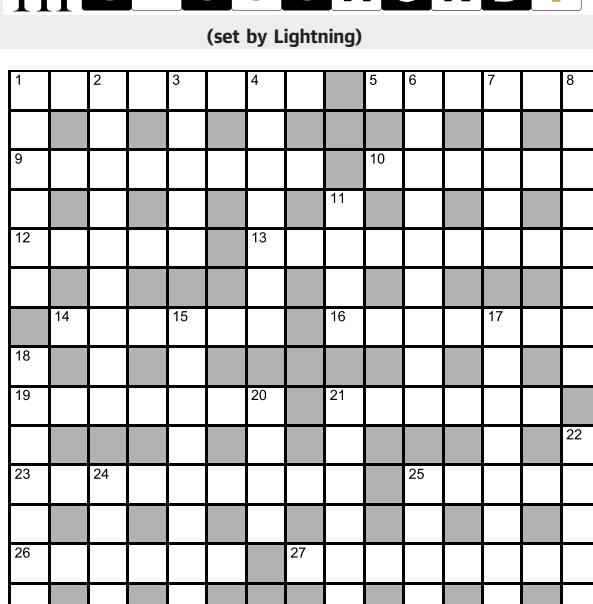
The 74-year-old leader of the Janta Congress Chhattisgarh (J) was admitted to Shree Narayana Hospital

after he fell unconscious at his residence here.

TH CROSSWORD + 12932

(set by Lightning)

Improve your language & problem solving skills. Try our Crosswords site! <https://crossword.thehindu.com>



- ACROSS**
- Unconventional man threw him a bone (8)
 - Sketch is elongated somewhat by cheat (6)
 - Recall joke on husband with tie (8)
 - California should remove leader that has been arrested (6)
 - Lacking public relations, forecast order (5)
- DOWN**
- Surprised by bird in mattress (6)
 - Out thus, primarily celebrates with kite, going crazy (3,6)
 - Middle of film overwhelms daughter (5)
 - A friend you are texting is unskilled (7)
 - Leader's inventory of people? (4,5)
 - Partial indication by mother in Greek letter (5)
 - Scope to exchange top two in summit (8)
 - Shop used to carry musical work (4)
 - Merchandise put up at godown (9)
 - Precise operation designed with optical instrument (9)
 - Maintain what's before starting a point in tennis (8)
 - Dead on boat — it's sinister (4)
 - Settled at home with German on time before night (7)
 - Exercise where one wasted flat disks (6)
 - Shoot, decapitate in farm (5)
 - Jellies regularly manufactured at first with one resin (5)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12931

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Stepping up for society

The pandemic has seen some youngsters put their best foot forward to do their bit with the available resources, technology and innovation



■ DEEKSHA TERI

For the last couple of months, the world has been at a standstill due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Streets are deserted, schools shut, and everyone is confined to their houses.

Even though many schools and colleges have started online classes, students have a lot of time on hand. While some are learning to cook or a new language, others have gone out of their way to use their skills, time, and resources to help the world in these tough times. Here are a few student-led initiatives that caught our eye:

Feed the needy

Two brothers from Chennai, Mohammed Abdul Salam and Sultan Abbas, travelled back to Chennai from Queen's University, Belfast, before India closed its border. During their quarantine period, they thought about the unfortunate circumstances that some people have been facing during the lockdown. "While discussing with my dad, he pointed out that his friend had heard that a large number of daily wage workers in the Thousand Lights area were stranded, without access to food. So, we decided to tackle this and kept a target of 1,000 meals for the area. Soon, the idea took off and we have now worked for more than a month on this," says Abbas.

The brothers have gathered a team of volunteers who help them in their daily task of buying groceries, cooking and distributing the food. "We recently tweaked the approach by serving the food directly to people using biodegradable plates, while maintaining physical and social distancing," Abbas explains.

The initiative is partially funded by the family, and with donations from their friends. They have also managed to raise funds through GoFundMe, and by spreading awareness about it on Instagram, where Queen's University too

spotted it and helped them spread the word. The brothers plan to expand this project in Dindigul and in other areas of Tamil Nadu. You can reach them on Instagram @feedtheneedy2020.

Ally

A research team at Lovely Professional University, Punjab, has developed an interactive smart dustbin called 'Ally'. This can be used in hospitals and medical centres for contactless waste collection and disposal, by opening its lid/flap using a sensory system, leading to a safer work environment for the frontline workers. It follows voice commands and moves along predefined paths autonomously inside a controlled environment. The prototype, which cost ₹20,000 is 3 ft. tall, 1.5 ft. wide and weighs around 5 kg.



Tracking news
Students of Mahindra Ecole Centrale College of Engineering, Hyderabad, under the guidance of their faculty, have developed a live district-wise tracker for COVID-19 cases in India. Developed

by Raghav NS, Ananta Srikanth, Rishab Ramanathan, Rohith Gill, Anchit Sharma and V. Meghana Reddy, the district-wise data is obtained from credible and reliable sources such as the Ministry of Health, Pharmaceutical Technology, and reputed news outlets. A dedicated student team has been assigned to pull out information from relevant sources and update the map on the tracker after thorough cross-checking and verification. This application can also be installed as a web-app on any smartphone. The tracker can be found at <https://covindia.netlify.com/> / <https://covindia.com>

Proximity alerts

Prabin Kumar Das, a B.Tech student (Electronics Communication and Engineering) at Lovely Professional University, Punjab, along with his professors, has developed a device called 'KA-WACH' to promote safe social distancing. The device, which can be worn as a pendant, vibrates and glows in case someone breaches the user's safe space of one metre.

It is also equipped with a hand-wash reminder that beeps every 30 minutes to remind the user to wash his/her hands, as well as a temperature sensor that alerts them through an SMS, in case their body temperature crosses the prescribed limit. The



This low-cost, easy-to-carry device comprises an LED, vibrator, controller, battery, human body temperature sensor, ultrasonic sensor, switch and a storage card.

While some are learning to cook or a new language, others have gone out of their way to use their skills, time, and resources to help the world in these tough times.

Mask up

With the increasing spread of COVID-19, the demand for masks has escalated rapidly, and countries across the globe are grappling to meet the demand while



ensuring the safety and protection of healthcare professionals.

Experts at the AUTODESK Design and Innovation Centre, Innovation Labs at Dayananda Sagar University (DSU), Bengaluru, have come up with a Face Shield, which is an important part of the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE,) required by healthcare professionals. It involves two components: support with quick attach-detach points to rest on the forehead of the user, and a transparent film that protects the face of the user from the viral load. Based on the design, several units have been 3D printed by the DSU team and released to doctors for evaluation.

The product was developed by Vinayaka K., Manager, Autodesk Design and Innovation Centre, DSU; Dr. Suryanarayana, Professor, Aerospace Engineering, DSU; and Ajay P., student, Automobile Engineering, DSC.

E-LEARNING

A question of access

Post lockdown too, there are a plethora of ways in which online education can be made accessible to students across social strata

■ AKHIL SHAHANI

The nationwide lockdown in response to COVID-19 has forced more than 300 million Indian students to stay at home. Although many of India's schools and colleges have started online classes for their students, many youngsters have been left behind.

Connectivity

Virtual classrooms work on the assumption that every student has fast Internet access, a laptop, or smartphone, or reliable electricity connection. Current estimates show that, out of India's 1.2 billion population, only 600 million are connected to the Internet, mostly through smartphones. This creates a huge barrier for students (especially in rural areas) to access online education during this lockdown, as they fall further behind their connected peers, as classes proceed online. Even those with Internet connections may not be able to access the 4G speed needed to view online streaming video lectures.

For those with basic Internet connectivity, teachers could record lectures and upload them on YouTube and email links to their students, who can then download the videos for viewing offline. This does not require a fast broadband connection. Additionally,

Doordarshan has been streaming educational content through its channels Gyan Darshan and Vyas. Schools/colleges could match their semester schedule based on when the respective programmes are beamed on these channels, or also conduct audio lectures through a telephone-based conference call facility.

However, if the government wants to truly enable online education for all, it should consider supplying free basic smartphones and data plans for under-resourced people in rural areas. It could even offer tax breaks for companies and individuals who donate for these much-needed devices and data. The government should also widely publicise the free educational content it has on its portal Swayam, as many Indians may not be aware of it.

Change in teaching methods
A majority of teachers are used to lecturing for 45 minutes, using a blackboard and textbooks. Due to the lower attention spans that students have online, teachers will have to change their methods for online classes, and try to play videos, animation, and presentations by sharing their laptop screens to engage students.

Long-term measures
Once educational institutions re-open, post the lockdown, they should not go back to the same classroom-based "chalk-and-talk" teaching model and should instead consider incorporating technology to enhance their pedagogy. One possibility is adopting a "flipped classroom" approach, where students study subject theories through material online/at home, ahead of classroom sessions. At the classroom, the teacher introduces interactive exercises, discussions, and simulations that facilitate student learning of the material studied in advance. This will ensure better understanding of the subject matter in an interactive manner.

The writer is Managing Director, The Shahani Group

Vernacular content
Another barrier to the penetration of online education is that the vast majority of learning material (videos, animations and documents) are in English, which only a small percentage of the population can fully understand. Most Indians consume vernacular entertainment videos online, rather than English content. EdTech companies should start creating content in major vernacular languages. They would also be able to access a vast untapped market of potential



...teachers will have to change their methods for online classes, and try to play videos, animation, and presentations to engage students.

ETCETERA

ieltsmaterial.com acquired

EdTech startup GetMyUni, recently acquired online IELTS test preparation platform ieltsmaterial.com. Post the acquisition, IELTS material operations have been merged with the startup.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the startup has enabled universities to connect with students using webinars and is also working closely with universities to enable them to take their courses online and prepare the start their academic session, irrespective of campus openings. For details, visit <https://www.getmyuni.com/>

Online coaching by Oliveboard

Learning and assessment platform Oliveboard is providing a range of free mock tests and study material for students. It has online courses for Bank, SSC, Railway, MBA and insurance exams, and provides complete syllabus, day-wise study plan, live classes and live practice sessions on its app and website.

The platform has introduced #GharPe-Coaching, a free course for all banking exams, which will be accessible to students in Hindi and English. It has also launched a daily live test series to help aspirants prepare for their upcoming exams. For details, visit <https://www.oliveboard.in/>

Cost-effective face shield

Panchagunula Jayaprakash, Assistant Professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering, SRM University, Andhra Pradesh, has designed a face shield embedded with 3D printing technology. It has been made available at a nominal cost of ₹20. This face mask alleviates the limitations of the regular masks currently used by doctors, policemen, and journalists. "It has a 100 micron thick transparent plastic sheet attached to the front, which prevents contaminated air, dust, and liquids from coming in contact with people," said Jayaprakash.

Online entrance exams for JGS

Admissions to all undergraduate and post-graduate programmes of Jindal Global University (JGU) across all its schools will be conducted online, under the aegis of the Jindal Scholastic Aptitude Test (JSAT) administered by Pearson VUE. The exceptions to this are the five-year law programme of the Jindal Global Law School (JGLS), and the five-year architecture programme at the Jindal School of Art & Architecture (JSAA).

Candidates from India and around the world can now take the JSAT exam at their convenience, from home starting May 11.

Like centre-based testing, AI-enabled testing solution requires candidates to complete a virtual self-check-in process, which includes enhanced identification, authentication and, after successful validation, candidates will be approved to take the test. They will be monitored live through their device's webcam with the assistance of AI tools.

VALUE ADD

Digital, the way forward

The ongoing coronavirus-led lockdown has given rise to a plethora of possibilities in online higher education, post the pandemic

■ R.W. ALEXANDER JESUDASAN

With the growing fear of COVID-19, many facets of life and livelihoods have come to a standstill. Educational systems are not exempt. COVID-19 has hit Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in India at a time when they were going full-swing to complete the last quarter of the semester and conduct the end-semester exams. Rescheduling these unfinished tasks must be done as soon as possible, as an inordinate delay would affect the future of outgoing students.

Recently, the media has highlighted that the occurrence of similar episodes in the future cannot be overlooked. Thus, this requires both the teacher and taught in all segments of educational systems, in particular HEIs, to be prepared to adopt an online system.

Preparation

Children and the youth: With the advent of computer-based learning across the globe and in particular among toddlers who are exposed to such gadgets, it should be easy to implement some of the learning modules in school education. Coming to those in colleges, and how effective IT-based education could be fostered among the youth, this is the right way ahead as colleges and universities are locked down. The modules suggested ought to be carefully thought of and implemented in a phased manner to give desired outcomes.

Capacity building, a necessity:

Higher education in India and the world over has seen a paradigm shift with regard to its pedagogy and application. While computer-based education has been introduced in most colleges, it needs to be fine-tuned in certain essential areas to ultimately make it effective. Mere availability of equipment, gadgets and broadband connectivity will not bring the desired results. The most important aspect is to provide adequate training to professors and students on the use of online education and to familiarise them with the apps and nuances of the available material.



Strong Internet connectivity, either through cables or Wi-Fi, is fundamental. In future, colleges should embark on a system wherein one-third of the syllabus content will be handled online. This approach should be made mandatory so that there will be a smooth transition from offline to online teaching models. Teachers, at the moment, do not have sufficient exposure and training to handle online classes, and the approach to this endeavour should be serious as its impact will have far-reaching consequences.

Online assessment, a viable alternative: Since multiple online assessment modules are available to gauge individual performances in several areas (for example, psychometric tests), it should not be difficult to create a robust platform to help understand the learning outcomes. Exam systems in universities and autonomous colleges already have a methodology in place to generate outputs pertaining to consolidation of marks and related terrains. All that they have to be involved in is to frame questions and probes available through online systems, evaluation templates, awarding of marks, and computation of data generated. Integrating this recommendation may not be cumbersome as exam offices in colleges are already computerised.

MOOCs such as Coursera, EduCity, and others can be referred to or consulted while developing online modules. Indisputably, online higher education systems are going to reign in the future, as it is easier, faster, cheaper, reproducible and with less personnel engagement.

The writer is Principal and Secretary, Madras Christian College (Autonomous), Chennai.

Pillow talk

SUNALINI MATHEW

I'm exhausted at the end of the day, but my partner feels he needs sex, and I don't. He says I'm holding it back from him. Am I wrong?

Many people are exhausted taking care of home, family and work, during this pandemic. Added to an increased workload could be feelings of uncertainty about the future and anxiety about loved ones, near and far. These are not easy times. Different people react differently; for some, sex is a form of connection and stress release, while for others it is the last thing on their mind. Neither is 'right' or 'wrong'. Could you lovingly communicate to your partner that it is not that you are rejecting him, or withholding sex from him, but that you are simply exhausted? Maybe suggest some other joint activities as a different way of connecting and finding intimacy? It works, to many couples' delight!



Are there any precautions to take while having intercourse as a couple – we've been married many years?

Even if you're living with the person, it's important to know where your partner has been.

If your partner has been in a hospital, for instance, or is a social worker interacting with many people, it's best avoided for at least 14 days. If you have both been home, only stepping out for basic groceries, bathe well before getting intimate. Articles like leather belts, wallets, shoes, and phones are objects the virus sticks to, so avoid touching these before or during intercourse. If your partner has recovered from COVID-19, avoid intercourse for 14 days at least.

Radhika Chandiramani, a clinical psychologist who founded TARSHI (Talking About Reproductive and Sexual Health Issues), and Dr. Murali Chakravarthy, Chairman, Central Infection Prevention and Control Committee, Fortis Hospital, Bengaluru, help us find our way through our most intimate relationships



We are a couple and we seem to be having a great deal more sex than usual. Could this be escapism?

When starkly reminded of our own mortality and that of our loved ones, some people turn inwards while others reach out. Heightened tension can make for heightened desire just as it can have the opposite effect. If you are having more sex than usual, just enjoy it (and make sure you have enough safe supplies)! It can be a search for solace, a respite from worry, a break from boredom, or moments of pure light-hearted fun. If it is escapism, as you wonder, it is still a way for the two of you to jointly deal with the current reality of the pandemic, and an enjoyable way at that.

There's nothing terribly wrong with our relationship, but we just don't feel up to sex... Is that normal?

There's nothing wrong with the people who are not having sex during this pandemic and nothing wrong with the ones who are. There could be many reasons why you are not feeling up to it. With the cloud of fear that many people are living under, it's hard for them to do things that were a part of their lives pre-COVID-19. Don't make 'not having sex' into a drama. And don't compare yourselves with others who are having sex, or more than they did earlier. Remember, everyone is unique. Be kind and gentle with each other; if it happens, it happens, and if it doesn't, that's okay too.

The fundamentals of caring

Ahead of International Nurses Day on May 12, we tip our hats to nursing attendants who without technically being nurses still offer care and support to families

company them.

"They are trained paramedics. One can undergo skill development courses like General Duty Assistant (GDA) and Bed Side Assistant (BDA) approved by the Government to be an attendant. Both these courses are for a duration of three months, but these are not

mandatory qualifications for the role," says Vaibhav Tewari, COO of Portea Medical, a home healthcare company that functions in 21 cities across the country. The company has 2,000 nursing attendants working with them and they are provided with a 15-day training session when they join the firm.



HOW NURSING ATTENDANTS ARE DIFFERENT FROM NURSES

"Nursing attendants provide care and cannot perform any medical procedures like vaccination. Such medical interventions can be done only by a qualified nurse. An attendant also has to look out for any changes in the condition of the person and alert the family or nurse. A qualified nurse can earn almost twice that of a nursing attendant. But it varies according to the organisation that they work in, their responsibilities and their experience," says Dr. Rahul Padmanabhan, a Coimbatore-based consultant in geriatrics and gerontology, and medical director of Dr Rahul's Elder Care, which offers a month-long training programme for attendants he hires.

NEED AN ATTENDANT? REACH OUT HERE

Portea
Portea.com (18001212323)

Life Circle Health Services
Lifecircle.in (140-71326832,
011-66765070, 0172-
6671070)

Medfind
Medfind.in/ (931122543,
9810090345)



Hyderabad-based Life Circle Health Services hires attendants who have completed the GDA or Home Health Aide Certification courses. "The Health Aide certification course is for three months. For those who have not done these courses, we provide them with a three-month training that equips them," says Priya Anant, director of the firm. The company functions in five cities – Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Delhi-NCR, Chandigarh and Guwahati – and has about 500 nursing attendants working with them. "We also have a qualified nurse assigned for every 30 attendants to constantly train them to meet the changing needs of their patients," she says.

For some agencies like Life Circle Health Services, the focus is on geriatric care. Attendants are responsible for not just providing medication and checking vitals of elderly people, but

COULD IT BE THAT...

Health is a collective noun



SUNALINI MATHEW

Every day, for the past seven weeks, Mustafa Quraishi, a former press photographer, sets out in his Isuzu from his Gurugram residence to pick up food – his vehicle can carry upto 2,000 cooked food packets or 70-80 ration kits. He drives into Manesar, at about 3 p.m., mostly alone, doing 120-150 km a day, to deliver food to people in need.

The hot, dusty road, that travels past shuttered establishments and now deserted spaces – Guru Kripa Trading Company, PS Garden Complete Marriage Lawn, and *nasha mukti* (de-addiction) phone numbers painted on walls – can throw anyone into a deep sense of grief. In India, we can manage crowds; empty spaces where people once were, leave us with a hollow sense of hopelessness.

In the first few days of the lockdown, Mustafa had responded to a friend's message on Facebook, then in turn reached out to others who had Isuzus, to ferry grain and oil. "The first day there were about seven or eight cars. From the second day onwards, people dropped out, saying children, parents, backache (as excuses) – these are people who go offroading regularly," he says. Only he and two others have been working throughout.

In the shadow of boxy flats, under-construction high-rise structures, and hoardings proclaiming messages that include words like "large", "luxurious", and "leisure", live construction workers, communities who sell pots, daily wage workers of all kinds. They have little access to food and it is to them that Mustafa and his band reach out to. The poverty is palpable, the living conditions even in the best of times can erode you, and the COVID-19?

"Door hoke khade hoiye (stand apart)," the accompanying policemen tell the residents who are otherwise knotted into little homes under sheets of plastic – if you don't take the police along, people will simply mob you. Mustafa gives out masks to each person in the long



Mustafa at work ■ SUNALINI MATHEW

line waiting for food.

Designer Ritu Kumar has supplied them with 31,000 masks so far. "Raat mein dhona, sabah phenna," he tells people whose clothes have not seen washing for days, his upper-middle class moorings not letting go. Here, hunger and health are distinct.

While the outpouring of cash and kind has been huge, and Mustafa says it has helped that first the Navratri and then Ramzan have pushed people to be generous, what is it that prevents 'people like us' from reaching out with true empathy to 'people like them'? Yes, physical distancing is important, but how many of us have volunteered towards any cause even in the past? "Why don't you volunteer?" Mustafa asks me. I am quiet and he looks me in the eye, taking his focus off the road for an inordinately long moment. Then I say lamely that I have daily pages to produce.

I think about it when I get home. Why am I not volunteering; why have I never? Because if I do, life will never allow me to step back into the coolness of the car and drive back to a home where I insist on organic food and 'wellness practices'. Everything will seem like an extra, and that one more spoon of rice, unnecessary. If I volunteer, I will truly begin to understand that health begins with no one going hungry. And that is a difficult reality to swallow, for those of us who can afford physical distancing.

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Nursing attendants do not perform any medical procedures ■ GETTY IMAGES

also bathing and grooming them, cooking food for them and cleaning their room. The cost of hiring an attendant depends on the city and the kind of work that they are assigned to do. "It can vary from ₹600 to ₹800 for a day," says Priya.

Another area of speciality is child and mother care. It is the primary focus for Delhi-NCR-based Medfind's 100 attendants, who offer 12-hour and 24-hour service. "We have nurses who train the attendants. Our attendants are all GDA certified," says Dr. Aashna Trehan Kapoor, co-founder of the company. The attendants also undergo skill enhancement training once in four months.

Why necessary Sajini says that she learnt the basics of caring from a relative who worked as a nurse in a hospital. "I think the most important thing for an attendant is patience and the right attitude," she says.

Sucharita Sankar who works as an attendant in Kolkata with Portea has completed the BDA certification programme. Her working hours are dependent on the requirement of her patient. "If the patient requires round-the-clock attention, I live with them. Otherwise, I spend the day with them and return home at night." She has been working with an elderly man in Bengaluru for the past one week. "I check his vitals, feed him, and help him move around the house."

The impact that such a service has on the family members is tremendous. Bindu Alex from Kochi, Kerala, who works in a private firm, had an attendant to take care of her bedridden mother. "I did not have the physical strength or the expertise to look after her. I was constantly worried about her health when I was away," Bindu recollects.

She hired the nursing attendant through a local private agency. "The attendant helped my mother move on her bed to avoid bedsores, bathed her, and kept her company. She even used to read my mother her favourite books. They bonded well until my mother passed away last year."



Viral fame
(Clockwise from top left)
entrepreneur
Shweta Subash in
Anita George's
video, Dr
Parasuram
Gopinath and Dr
Meenu Batra
Parasuram, Dr
Erika Patel

■ SPECIAL
ARRANGEMENT

FOR A NOBLE CAUSE

In the case of eight women entrepreneurs from Kochi, helping local farmers and motivating consumers to buy local was what made them do a video promoting pineapple. "Jemol Kuruth Verghese, one of my close friends and a baker, told me that instead of requesting people to buy, perhaps a funky video would attract eyeballs," explains Diwia Thomas. Although greenhorns in filmmaking, they shot their part on smartphones, and then Diwia got Anish Babu Verghese, an award-winning ad filmmaker, to edit the video. "Within five hours of us posting it, it went viral. But what was satisfying was that since then, farmer Bipin Vasu, the reason why we made the video, has been selling a truckload of pineapples in Kochi every day. We did not stop with that. We also started a Facebook page 'Love local buy local' that has details of farmers selling their produce," adds Diwia.

Don't Rush Hour

A Twitter challenge asking people to film themselves and splice it together into one video has taken over social media, and is steering thoughts away from lockdown blues

SARASWATHY NAGARAJAN

When the pandemic and the lockdown that followed suddenly erased packed calendars, people made use of the space to catch up with each other. For author Rachna Bishit, it gave her the time to get back in touch with college friends, 30 years after graduating from St John's College, Agra. "We turn 50 this year and a Zoom chat led to an idea to do a hip number to celebrate our student days when we wore salwar-kameez and had oily plaits. We jived to 'Jab chaye, mera jadoo'. It is quite a hit now," says the Delhi-based writer. Rachna also edited a video for her family, subsequently.

Learning the ropes

Despite restrictions, get-togethers, partying, dancing, team sports and song sessions are on in full flow, but on social media. Across continents, families are coming up with creative ideas and collaborating as cousins match steps, plate dinner and send notes to each other on videos that are shared enthusiastically. Friends and alumni groups too are not far behind in making well-

edited videos that show off their camaraderie. This trend of home videos began with the #Don'tRushChallenge on Twitter. Set to a song of the same name, 'Don't Rush' by Young T & Bugsey, the video showed seven students of the University of Hull in U.K. transforming themselves with make-up. Some of the videos tend to go viral, and are often the ones that pack in a little bit of humour, song or dance, like the video of 60 doctors in OT scrubs jiving to Pharrell Williams' song 'Happy'. Titled 'Song of hope,' the video features medical practitioners from Chennai, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Delhi, Indore, Surat, Pune, Lucknow, Kochi, Kannur, Kolkata, Kanyakumari and other cities.

"Ninety per cent of the dancers are gynaecologists. All of us are working around the clock even during lockdown as babies can't wait, but we are worried about infections. So we were discussing a project to emphasise the importance of mental and emotional health during these trying times. That is how we decided to do this film. A Surat-based friend, Dr. Pooja Nadkarni

Singh, got in touch with Rahul Kedia who directed and edited the film," says Dr Parasuram Gopinath, a gynaecologist and obstetrician in Kochi. He shows off his dance moves in the company of his wife, Meenu Batra Parasuram, a radiologist. Chennai-based Dr. Erika Patel, a fertility specialist, laughs while talking about her nimble moves even when she is eight months into her pregnancy. "Rahul divided the song into six parts and told



GUIDE FOR DUMMIES
Pooja Vrijmohan T has a few tips for those aspiring to make their own video. "Have a micro-script and share it with all participants. This will help them decide where and when to enter, exit, where to look and so on. It also helps the editor. Choose a catchy piece of music that is familiar to most actors in the video. Mobile apps like PowerDirector, Final Cut Pro, KineMaster can be used to edit the videos."

each of us how to go about it. In this rather tense situation, it was fun to do the film," she says.

Letting loose

This idea of having fun is what motivated mom and entrepreneur, Anita George, to rope in 12 of her friends, all from Chennai, to come together for a funky film that shows them pursuing their interests despite the lockdown. "I wanted to show that even while being quarantined at home, we can be active and pursue what we enjoy doing," says Anita.

"[Anita] took a great deal of trouble to come up with an idea that shows us following our passion while at home and practising social distancing," says TV anchor and radio jockey, Paloma Rao, adding, "She told us how to pass the props, and later edited the entire film."

Another film that is making the rounds is a celebration of the culinary 'jugad' of Kozhikode. Made by producer Sheriga Sandeep, her siblings, their cousins and children, the video features 18 people. "It was suggested by my niece Pooja Vrijmohan. Since all of us are devotees of food, we decided to do

one that showcased our skill as cooks. Nine of us cousins and our children, living in the U.S., Australia and India, took part in the video," says Sheriga. Since then, Sheriga's sisters and cousins have come up with more such videos that capture the fun times the cousins have when they gather for holidays and functions.

The same spirit brought together a bunch of amateur footballers, whose day job is being lawyers at the Kochi High Court. "On weekends, we used to play 'sevens', a kind of abridged football match popular in Malappuram, on an artificial turf. The lockdown stopped the matches. That is when some of us wondered if we could kick off with a video to recall those good times," says Millu Dandapani. Each of them shot in their homes and sent the videos to lawyer Vishnu Sharesh in Kannur, who edited it into a seamless clip that shows them passing, kicking and defending.

Former students of Kozhikode and Alappuzha medical colleges, the National Institute of Technology, Calicut, and schools across Kerala have all come up with their own films.

"The idea is to live life to the fullest," says film choreographer Sajna Najam. "Our extended family are our best friends too and we used to hang out a lot. We felt isolated during the lockdown and that is when I thought of a dance video. I suggested we pay a tribute to our family friend and relative, the late (actor) Prem Nazir. They joined in with gusto," she says. Their video has 22 family members grooving to the feisty old number 'Chettikulangara Bharani Naalil'. "A family may not be perfect but to stay united is what is important," Sajna adds.

The power of dosa



Helping hand Jesluck Peter ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SHILPA NAIR ANAND

with masks," he adds. At present, Home Spring sells around 1,500 packets of dosa batter (a kilo priced at ₹55) a day. He does not charge extra for the masks. When there was a shortage of masks, Peter sourced it from Palakkad at ₹12 apiece. He now has a supplier in Perumbavoor, near Kochi, from whom he buys three-ply surgical masks at ₹6 apiece.

Since the start of the lockdown, Peter had wanted to contribute in some way to help people who were most affected. "Thinking of how best to help, I thought of supplying masks which are now obligatory in Kerala. So, why not distribute masks with our food packets and create awareness about its use?" he says.

The dosa batter is currently his company Home Spring's most popular product, which is why "it made sense" for Peter to attach masks to it. "This way, we will be able to reach the most number of people



Make your own burger

Inspired by the many cooking adventures of people around the globe this lockdown, Chennai-based burger joint, BurgerMan, is encouraging their customers to make their own burgers. The idea of a DIY (do-it-yourself) grill box has been on their to-do list, and thus, Grill to Thrill burger kits took form. The DIY burger kits have both vegetarian and meat-based options. The kits contain fresh vegetables, patties, brown buns and sauces according to requirement. All kits come with two flavoured base sauces – BBQ and Mexican. The kits will cater to three or four burgers.

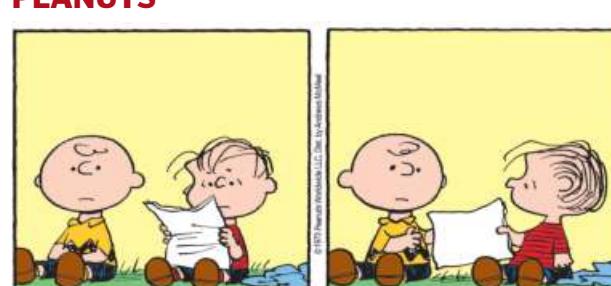
Team Veg three-burger and four-burger kits (with aloo patty) will be priced at ₹500 and ₹600 respectively. Team Meat three-burger and four-burger kits (with chicken patty) are priced at ₹600 and ₹700 respectively. The Mixed Grill Box, which contains two of each, will be priced at ₹650.

To place orders, WhatsApp BurgerMan on 9790988605, or DM on @burgerman.in Instagram page.

POOCH CAFE



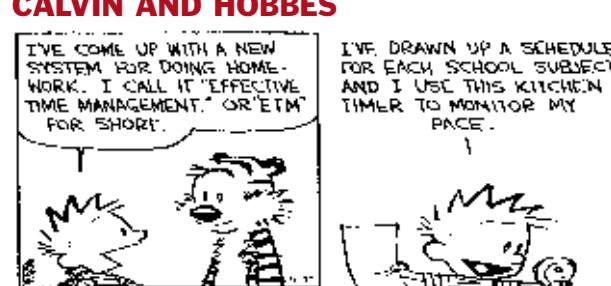
PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



Clusters in S. Korea, Germany show risks of 'second wave'

They are among the countries where restrictions are being relaxed

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BERLIN

A family in China, nightclubs in South Korea and a slaughterhouse in Germany – new clusters of infections are igniting concerns about a second wave even as calls grow in some countries to relax restrictions even further.

In Germany, where thousands have protested remaining restrictions in recent days, health officials say the number of people each confirmed coronavirus patient infects rose above 1 again, reflecting a renewed increase in cases. The number must be below 1 for outbreaks to decline.

COVID-19

Later on Sunday, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was expected to take a different tack, keeping most restrictions in place as he reveals a "road map" for the country that has the most official virus deaths in Europe at over 31,600. His Conservative government was criticised for being slow to react to the pandemic, but after falling ill with the virus himself, Mr. Johnson has taken a tougher line.

14 cases in China

China reported 14 new cases on Sunday, its first double-digit rise in 10 days. Eleven of 12 domestic infections were in the northeastern province of Jilin, which prompted authorities to raise the threat level in one of its counties, Shulan, to high risk, just days after downgrading all regions to low risk.

Authorities said the Shu-



Breath of fresh air: People in Madrid, Spain, on Saturday, exercising after some lockdown measures were lifted earlier last week. ■ AP

lan outbreak originated with a 45-year-old woman who had no recent travel or exposure history but spread it to her husband, her three sisters and other family members.

Train services in the county were being suspended. South Korea reported 34 more cases as new infections linked to nightclubs threaten the country's hard-won gains against the virus. It was the first time that South Korea's daily infections were above 30 in about a month.

Across Europe, many nations were easing lockdowns even further even as they prepared to clamp down on any new infections. Turkey's senior citizens got their first chance to venture outside in seven weeks Sunday. Germany, which managed to push daily new infections below 1,000 before deciding to loosen restrictions, has seen re-

gional spikes in cases linked to slaughterhouses and nursing homes.

German officials have expressed concerns about the growing number of large demonstrations, including one in the southwestern city of Stuttgart that drew thousands of participants. Police in Berlin had to step in Saturday after hundreds of people failed to respect social distancing measures at anti-lockdown rallies.

Reopening in Europe

Chancellor Angela Merkel and the Governors of Germany's 16 States last week cleared the way for restaurants, hotels and remaining stores to reopen. The country's soccer league resumes this week, despite a number of professional players testing positive for COVID-19, and more students are re-

turning to school beginning Monday.

France, which has a similar number of infections as Germany but a far higher death toll at over 26,300, is letting some younger students return to school on Monday after almost two months out. Russia, in contrast, is still reporting rising infections. Figures released Sunday recorded 11,012 new cases, the highest one-day tally yet, for a total of nearly 2,10,000 cases and 1,915 reported deaths. Russian officials attribute the sharp rise in part to increased testing, but health experts say Russia's data has been significantly under-reported.

Worldwide, more than four million people have been reported infected and nearly 2,80,000 have died, over half of them in Europe, according to Johns Hopkins.

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lan outbreak originated with a 45-year-old woman who had no recent travel or exposure history but spread it to her husband, her three sisters and other family members.

Train services in the county were being suspended. South Korea reported 34 more cases as new infections linked to nightclubs threaten the country's hard-won gains against the virus. It was the first time that South Korea's daily infections were above 30 in about a month.

Across Europe, many nations were easing lockdowns even further even as they prepared to clamp down on any new infections. Turkey's senior citizens got their first chance to venture outside in seven weeks Sunday. Germany, which managed to push daily new infections below 1,000 before deciding to loosen restrictions, has seen re-

gional spikes in cases linked to slaughterhouses and nursing homes.

German officials have expressed concerns about the growing number of large demonstrations, including one in the southwestern city of Stuttgart that drew thousands of participants. Police in Berlin had to step in Saturday after hundreds of people failed to respect social distancing measures at anti-lockdown rallies.

Reopening in Europe

Chancellor Angela Merkel and the Governors of Germany's 16 States last week cleared the way for restaurants, hotels and remaining stores to reopen. The country's soccer league resumes this week, despite a number of professional players testing positive for COVID-19, and more students are re-

turning to school beginning Monday.

France, which has a similar number of infections as Germany but a far higher death toll at over 26,300, is letting some younger students return to school on Monday after almost two months out. Russia, in contrast, is still reporting rising infections. Figures released Sunday recorded 11,012 new cases, the highest one-day tally yet, for a total of nearly 2,10,000 cases and 1,915 reported deaths. Russian officials attribute the sharp rise in part to increased testing, but health experts say Russia's data has been significantly under-reported.

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ASK US



K. NITYA KALYANI

Double cover

Q. I'm working in a multinational corporation at Manesar in Haryana. My company has tied up with a general insurance firm with all accident and death maturity benefits. Death cover is approximately ₹70 lakh. Currently, my annual income is ₹70,000. If I take another term insurance policy with a cover of ₹1 crore, then, in case of death, what is the amount that my family will get? I heard that my nominee will get only ₹1 crore from both the insurers, that is, company-paid policy and self-paid policy. Is this correct? If so, is it okay to take a term plan with ₹30 lakh cover?

KRISHAN KUMAR

A. Your company-paid health cover is with a general insurance company and hence, it is likely to be an indemnity policy with a death benefit which will be payable if there is also a valid hospitalisation claim.

You use the word death maturity cover, please verify this as the word maturity is used only in life insurance covers and a general insurance company cannot give a life insurance cover.

Coming to the term policy you want to buy, any life insurance policy that is in force offers coverage regardless of other policies held by the same insured, including the death benefit cover in a health policy. The reverse also holds true. The insured amounts do not matter in this combination of policies.

A health policy's death benefit will apply if it is part of a valid hospitalisation claim.

Your objective appears to be to ensure a ₹1 crore death cover as a protection for your family. You could ensure that by buying a term policy for ₹1 crore as you say. This way, any death claim from the health policy will be payable separately.

Fixed or floating?

Q. I'm looking to buy insurance for my in-laws. They are in their 60s but healthy overall. Should I get a single, family-floater plan or separate plans for each of them?

NAVEENCHANDAR

A. Choosing between a floater and fixed sum insurance plan depends on how much coverage you want versus the premium you can pay.

Very important, it should be based on your perception of the expenses you will incur. If you take a floater cover of say ₹5 lakh, then, this is the total amount available between the two of them for the one-year policy period. So, if one of them is hospitalised and this exhausts the sum insured, and if the other one also requires hospitalisation, then you will fall short.

Separate covers of ₹5 lakh each – though they will cost more – will give them access to that amount for each of them. The likelihood of these possibilities is hard to guess. The other factors that you can take into account are their relatively young age and good health.

But the caveat here is that health status can change momentarily and you can be left high and dry without coverage and unable to buy new or additional coverage after a claim.

You can take a floating cover now and shift to separate covers in a few years.

Please remember that in the first four years or so of a new policy, many pre-existing conditions are not covered. Similar is the case for an increase in sum insured.

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

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

Must you keep off debt mutual funds?

If you have zero tolerance for capital losses, it is best to steer clear of such funds. Bank deposits offer the certainty you may seek

ARATI KRISHNAN

The Franklin Templeton crisis has brought to light many instances of mis-selling and mis-buying in debt mutual funds (MFs), where many folks seem to have signed up for these products without understanding their true nature.

Here are specific situations in which you should avoid investing in debt funds.

Securing the principal

If the top attribute you look for in a debt investment is your principal remaining intact, then debt MFs aren't for you. Unlike deposits or small savings schemes, debt MFs are market-linked vehicles that pass on not just interest receipts, but also capital gains or losses on the bonds they own, to you.

Some categories of debt funds are highly prone to capital losses. Funds which invest in longer-dated government securities or bonds fall in this category.

Gilt funds made 12-13% NAV losses between January 2009 and 2010 as interest rates rose. Funds that invest in lower-rated corporate bonds (credit risk funds) can hit you with substantial losses, if the issuers, whose bonds they hold, default or get downgraded.

In the recent past, we've seen some credit risk funds tak-

ing 20-30% NAV knocks on such write-offs. Even safer categories of debt funds such as ultra-short, short, low-duration or liquid funds are not wholly loss-proof. In the past, liquid, short and low duration funds have taken NAV hits on commercial paper from issuers who got downgraded.

Liquid funds, deemed the safest, experienced a brief period of negative returns in March after big pullbacks from the money market-battered bond prices.

So, if you have zero tolerance for capital losses, it is best to steer clear of debt funds and stick to bank deposits or post office schemes instead.

Predictable income

With a bank deposit or a Sundaram Finance FD it is possible to know exactly at the time of investing, the interest income you're likely to receive every year. Such planning is impossible with debt funds because of the high variability in returns.

Some debt fund categories are more volatile than others. For instance, gilt funds, which delivered a 11% return in 2019, earned just 2% in 2017. Credit risk funds, which surprised investors with 9-11% returns between 2011 and 2016, have averaged a nil return in 2019 after a bunch of debt write-offs.

But even debt fund categories that don't take on very high credit or duration risks tend to deliver volatile returns. In the last ten years, corporate bond funds have seen their annual returns swing from 5.5% to 11% and banking/PSU funds from 5.9% to 10%. Short duration and liquid funds have delivered between 5% and 10%. Knowing which category of debt fund will deliver a good return in the year ahead needs one to make accurate forecasts on interest rate movements and the ability

of companies to service their debt. Even star fund managers haven't been great at this, so it's a tall task for the retail investor.

Yes, setting up Systematic Withdrawal Plans (SWPs) to receive regular cash flows from debt funds can help you deal with this problem.

But while SWPs smoothen out your cash flows, they don't change the underlying nature of returns from a debt fund that remain volatile. So, if you are

a pensioner, senior citizen or self-employed person looking for high predictability

of income, then debt funds aren't for you.

Preserving wealth

Received a big windfall from an employer/relative that you simply want to protect? Are you a high net worth investor who is looking to preserve the wealth you've created for posterity?

If preserving wealth takes priority over growing it, then you have no need to take on the risk of capital losses or bond market volatility with debt MFs.

Such investors have the choice of alternative debt investments that offer reasonable returns with a capital guarantee such as GOI 7.75% taxable bonds, National Savings Certificates (6.8%) or Kisan Vikas Patra (6.9%) which lock in your money for 5-9 years but promise to keep your capital in-

tact. The returns are comparable to debt funds too.

No tax considerations

Tax-efficiency is one of the main arguments offered for signing up for debt funds.

Your interest receipts from bank FDs, GOI bonds and post office schemes are treated as income and taxed at your income tax slab rate. But returns on the growth options of debt funds are treated as capital gains. This leads to two tax advantages.

One, when you hold a debt fund for less than 3 years and set up cash flows via SWP, you pay tax only on the 'return' part of your withdrawals and not on the entire withdrawal amount.

Two, if you hold debt funds for over 3 years, the capital gains are taxed at a flat 20% after adjusting for indexed costs, effectively allowing you to pay tax only on the returns earned over inflation.

This leads to substantially better post-tax returns on debt funds compared to safer alternatives such as bank or post office deposits.

However, this tax arbitrage matters mainly to folks in the 20-30% tax brackets. For those in the 10% bracket or with no tax liability, the tax efficiency may not be incentive enough to take on higher risks.

INSURANCE: COVERING YOUR NEW CAR

Go for the right cover drive

A new car buyer has a plethora of options available in terms of insurance; choosing the apt one is quite a task

C.J. PHILIP

Buying a new car is a major decision in the life of an individual. He/she gets the feeling of having made a wise decision after the deal. Now comes the crucial decision on insuring the vehicle. There are too many confusing and enticing options.

Earlier, the option was to approach an insurance company's office or leave the decision to the dealer who is bound to have an alliance with an insurance company (acting as an agent for commission), to obtain a policy. But today, the customer has umpteen options as listed below, with pros and cons discussed.

The first option is where the dealer issues the policy as an MISP (Motor Insurance Service Provider) – the dealer probably puts in more effort for selling insurance than the car itself. The dealer gets a commission and an incentive for selling the policies. Some dealers even force buyers to take insurance from them under the pretext that in the event of a claim, they will have a problem and cannot get cashless claim settlement.

There is nothing wrong in insuring the car with dealers who are authorised MISPs if the premium quoted is competitive and the service satisfactory.

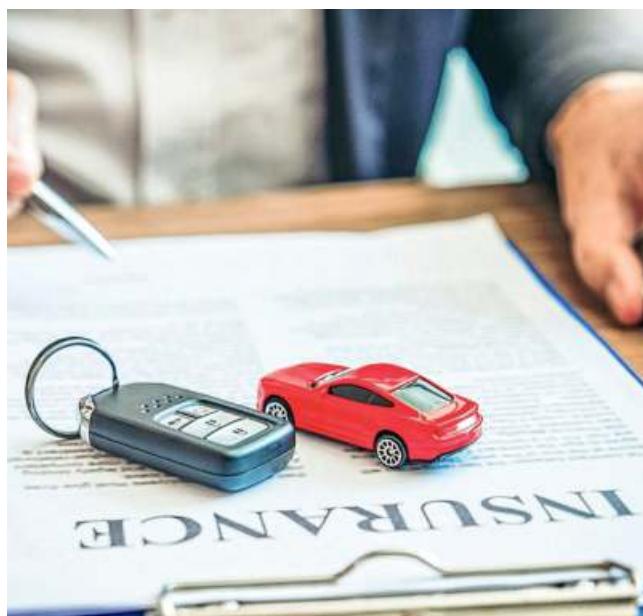
If there is any accumulated no-claim discount on your old car (a maximum of up to 50%), it can be transferred to the new car policy thereby leading to a substantial reduction in premi-

um outgo. You should inform the dealer of the discount to your credit with proof. The policy is also issued across the counter as most companies have tie-ups with the dealers.

With certain dealers, the premium charged is also more as the discount allowed on the own damage portion is limited whereas in the open market, it goes even beyond 70%.

The second option available to the buyer is through brokers of authorised dealers – here again, the policy is issued by the dealer as an MISP through the broker intermediary. Major auto manufacturers have their own subsidiary broking companies to insure the vehicles sold through their dealer network and earn a commission of about 20%. A major auto brand broker controls more than ₹6,000 crore of insurance premium a year. Certain brokers limit the discount on premium to 30% and the car buyer ends up paying more premium whereas in the open market, discounts of up to 70% are offered. The mandatory third-party liability premium is decided by regulator IRDAI.

These brokers also force the companies in their tie-ups to limit the premium discount to 30% in their software so that nobody can go to other channels and get the policy at a cheaper price. It amounts to preventing customers from benefiting from open market competition. The customers can de-



Getting started: A buyer has the option of insuring his new vehicle online or via the dealer, an agent or a broker. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

cide about placing the insurance via this route if they are convinced of the service rendered and premium advantage.

Three, buyers can obtain a policy directly from insurance firms or through general insurance agents – most of us may be dealing with offices of insurance companies/agents for the insurance of our two/four-wheelers, health insurance and other such policies. One can ask for a new car policy with maximum discount from insurers as they compete in offering maximum discount to underw-

rite more of private car insurance. If you have an old car with accumulated no claim discount (NCB/NCD), the same can be transferred to the new policy after paying back the no-claim discount availed in the policy of the old car. Insurance can be taken through the IRDAI-approved general insurance agents also as the premium cost does not rise even if it is insured through an intermediary. But let it be through a trusted agent as there are a few cases of fake policies issued by some agents authorised to use the company's portal.

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The fourth option for buyers is through web aggregators or directly through insurers' customer portals – the tech-savvy, younger generation is used to e-commerce and is more comfortable online. This generation gets a thrill in finding attractive rates and finalising the insurance cover on the Net.

However, while taking a policy, verify the credentials of the web aggregator/insurance company behind the promise or the contract. It is advisable to go through the direct portals of the IRDAI-approved general insurance companies. A word of caution though: be careful while taking policies through web aggregators as a few cases of fraud and issue of bogus policies have been reported.

Claims settlement

Check the arrangements for settlement of claim in the event of an accident. Most firms settle claim directly with the insured.

Find out whether they can settle directly with the workshop by any arrangement. Even in the case of direct settlement with the dealer, please verify the amount and the extent of damage claimed by the dealer as certain unscrupulous service centres might make a claim for inflated amounts without the knowledge of the insured, affecting the renewal of the policy and premium loading.

(The author retired as a general manager of a nationalised insurance company)

Life insurance term plan premium

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

Insurance company	Plan name	Maximum cover Up to (Years)	Annual premium (Rs.) (Male)
Aditya Birla Capital	Life Shield Plan	80	12,998
Aegon Life	iTerm Insurance Plan	100	9,114
Bajaj Allianz	Smart Protect Goal	99	8010
Canara HSBC OBC Life	iSelect+ Term Plan	99	9,284
Edelweiss Tokio Life	Zindagi+ Term Insurance Plan	80	9,309
Exide Life Insurance	Smart Term Plan	75	12411*
Future Generali	Flexi Online Term Plan	75	9,427
HDFC Life	Click2Protect 3D Plus	85	12,601
ICICI Prudential	iProtect Smart	99	15,089
India First Life	e-Term Plan	80	8,260
Kotak Life	Kotak e-Term Plan	75	9,558
Max Life insurance	Online Term Plan Plus	85	10,148
PNB Met Life	Mera Term Plan	99	10,148
Reliance Nippon Life	Digi Term	80	11,012
SBI Life	eShield	80	15,070
TATA AIA Life	Maha Raksha Supreme	100	12,980

*Exide coverage upto 60 yrs for age 30 yrs

Source: www.policybazaar.com

Health insurance premium

Insurer name	Key features	Plan names	Premium (Rs.)
Religare Health	Day Care Treatments Family Floater option Health Checkups Pre and Post Hospitalisation Coverage	NCB Super Premium Care Care with unlimited recharge NCB Super Premium with UAR	9,092 8,265 8,885 9,712
Max Bupa Health	Day Care Treatments Hospitalization at Home Family Floater option Alternate Medicine	Health Pulse Enhanced Health Companion Go Active Medi Classic Star Comprehensive	10,696 9,862 11,747 9,661 11,476
Star Health	Family Floater option Restoration of cover Wellness Benefits	Optima Restore Easy Health Individual Standard	11,024 9,613
HDFC Ergo Health	Family Floater option Rest		



Rivalry and fun: Virat Kohli, seen with Hardik Pandya and Jasprit Bumrah, emphasised the player interaction part while lavishing praise on the IPL. ■ FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

Badrinath live!

Catch former India Captain Chennai Super Kings batsman S. Badrinath in a live chat on Sportstar's Instagram handle (@sportstarweb) on May 11 (Monday) at 7 p.m. IST.

IN BRIEF



Roland Garros likely behind closed doors

PARIS French tennis chief Bernard Guidicelli said on Sunday that Roland Garros could be staged behind closed doors. Guidicelli, who said the French federation had "no regrets" over its decision to move the Grand Slam from May 24-June 7 to September 20-October 4, insisted all options remain on the table. AFP

Balbir Sr. tests COVID negative, remains critical

CHANDIGARH Hockey legend Balbir Singh Sr, whose condition continued to remain critical, has tested negative for coronavirus on Sunday. The 96-year-old, however, remains on a ventilator. PTI

Five La Liga players test positive

MADRID Five players from Spain's top two leagues have tested positive for Coronavirus, La Liga confirmed on Sunday. Players in Spain's top-flight and Segunda division were allowed to carry out individual work at training grounds last week. The five players, who have not been officially named, will now be quarantined at home and tested again "in the next few days". AFP

Rugby India's online tourney from today

MUMBAI Rugby India, the National governing body for the sport, will conduct an online tournament – Try Series – from May 11-24, 2020. The event will feature 32 teams and 80 matches. Teams will advance based on voting by rugby followers. Ex-India player and Rugby India CEO Nasser Hussain says the tournament will be run on RI's social media platforms. Voting will be open for 24 hours after each match.

Boredom-bred online chess goes global

Agartala-based Nirmal Das has so far organised 69 contests across four formats

RAHUL KARMAKAR

GUWAHATI Nirmal Das had on March 28 launched an online chess tournament out of sheer boredom induced by the lockdown.

The intention of this 39-year-old civil engineer in Tripura's Public Works Department was to connect with a dozen-odd players of the board game in his hometown and Agartala. In 44 days, the fee-free tournament played across four formats had 975 participants from across the globe and counting.

Some tournament regulars are from countries as far as Brazil, Germany, South Korea and the Philippines. Many foreign and Indian participants have a FIDE rating

Coaches look at professionalism

Entry-level tennis has become affordable: Sureshkumar

KAMESH SRINIVASAN

NEW DELHI

Professional coaches came up with refreshingly pragmatic answers in providing a robust conclusion to the fortnight-long webinar, organised by Sports Authority of India and the All India Tennis Association (AITA).

Chairman of the coaches education programme Bharat Oza was thrilled with the progress made by the coaches ever since the movement was put into motion in 1999.

Licensing for coaches

He stressed the importance of licensing for coaches on par with other professionals so that everyone could keep themselves updated.

"Grass is always green on the other side," said former Davis Cup and Fed Cup coach Nandan Bal as he viewed the spurt of young players going to Europe, USA and other countries in Asia for training.

"Indian coaches have high technical competence," said Nandan while stressing that many players were ironing out their flaws by going



Sureshkumar Sonachalam.

for rigorous training abroad.

"If the kids reach technical proficiency and are physically ready, they can take advantage of training abroad," said Nandan.

Fruitful venture

Coach Hemant Bendrey sought further tuning of the tournament structure and ranking system for juniors. He also viewed American college tennis as a fruitful venture for Indian players who were maturing late, but felt they needed to retain the focus on tennis to benefit from the system.

Coach Gary O'Brien highlighted the fine work of one's game.

Chandigarh Rural Tennis Scheme (CHART) and asked the coaches to keep about 10% of the earnings in their centres to encourage good players with incentives.

Coach Kawaljeet Singh highlighted the importance of tuning the attitude of the kids towards the ball. He asked the coaches to encourage the kids to gain strong foundation.

Sureshkumar Sonachalam, director of coaching, who anchored the show for two hours every day for 12 days, said that entry-level tennis had become remarkably affordable and that good players would get support as they progressed.

Selection of racquets Nar Singh said there were enough courts and schemes available for everyone, and that travel made it financially hard for many players after a stage.

He also talked about the selection of racquets, string patterns and different strings that can make a world of difference to one's game.

East Bengal issue: FPAI to approach AIFF

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KOLKATA

The Football Players' Association of India (FPAI) is planning to approach the AIFF seeking its intervention after East Bengal Club's investors Quess Corp terminated the players' contract in wake of the COVID-19 pandemic which brought sporting activities to halt.

A number of East Bengal players had approached FPAI after they were told they won't be given salaries after the I-League's remaining matches couldn't be held.

"Previously only three-four players had come... now we have around 12 and we are looking into their contracts. We will approach Quess and after hearing their reply, we will go to the AIFF Player's Status Committee," said FPAI's player liaison officer Siddhartha Bhattacharya.

Two-time World champion Rashmi Kumari (186) and Aisha Sajid (171), with a slam each, finished in that order. Khushboo Rani (114) and Kalaj Kumari (112) were the other contestants.

SYNCO, the company producing carrom boards, offered the players ₹5,000 for each slam.

Rashmi donated the prize-money, along with her own contribution, to the PM-CARES Fund.

"This will be an inspiration and guidance for the young players," said Bharti Narayan, AICF secretary.

Prashant steals the show

Scores three slams in 50-minute solo

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India's top stars took part in an online carrom exhibition event, organised by the All India Carrom Federation on Facebook Live, during the weekend.

Reigning world champion Prashant More thrilled the fans, accumulating 260 points in the 50-minute solo show by each player and smashing three slams along the way.

Vikas Dharia (221) and Sandeep Dive (207) scored two slams each, while former World champion Yogesh Pardeshi (126) had a slam. Abhijeet Tipankar finished with 94 points.

A board was deemed finished with the first miss or after a slam. Every slam fetched 20 bonus points.

"It is a great initiative to take top-class carrom to homes across the world," said Prashant.

In the women's section, Debajani Tamuly topped with 217 points (one slam).



Prashant More.

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Boredom-bred online chess goes global

Agartala-based Nirmal Das has so far organised 69 contests across four formats



Nirmal Das.

of more than 2,000 – a benchmark for quality players. "Chess has been my passion, though not of the digital kind. Boredom because of staying indoors during the initial days of lockdown made me log on to lichess.org, a chess portal. "The idea of an online tournament on this platform

struck me and I decided to give it a try," Mr. Das told *The Hindu* on Sunday.

The tournament started with 15 local enthusiasts, including his son who had participated in the Under-7 Nationals in 2019. About 70 players from Agartala signed up in less than a week followed by 80 more from Assam and other north-eastern States.

Chess lovers from Delhi, Karnataka and other States saw Mr. Das conducting the tournament for 450 players. "It kept getting bigger as players from Bangladesh, Nepal, the Philippines, South Korea, Germany, Brazil and other countries have joined," he said.

"What excites me is that I have been able to provide a platform where any chess player can play against any other, with or without FIDE ranking," Mr. Das said.

Kohli 'absolutely loves' the IPL

Thrilled at the camaraderie between players and meeting other teams regularly

IANS

NEW DELHI

The camaraderie that players share during the Indian Premier League (IPL) is what makes the tournament special for India and Royal Challengers Bangalore captain Virat Kohli.

Kohli would have been leading RCB in the 2020 edition of the T20 league had it not been for the coronavirus pandemic forcing its postponement.

"You do play all your tournaments, which is one team

C The connection the franchises make with the fans of their cities also makes the tournament special

VIRAT KOHLI

just probably meeting another team every second or third day and that's the beauty of the IPL, you are playing in a different atmosphere."

Playing with the best RCB may not have enjoyed too much success in the IPL thus far, but Kohli has shared the dressing room with some of the biggest names in the sport such as A.B. de Villiers and Chris Gayle.

Kohli also said that the connection that the franchises are able to make with fans

of their cities also makes the tournament special.

"I absolutely love that tournament and also for the camaraderie which you share with so many new players that you play with, so many players that you have known for a long time now, not from your own country, those who you don't see often."

"There is one more reason why everyone loves the IPL: there is a connect, of players and fans and of viewers," he said.

China wins Online Nations Cup

Yu Yangyi does the star turn; India finishes fifth

RAKESH RAO

NEW DELHI

China won the inaugural \$180,000 FIDE *Chess.com* Online Nations Cup following a 2-2 draw against USA on Sunday.

China, which lost to USA in the concluding league match on Saturday evening, was declared the winner on the basis of its topping the points table in the round-robin stage.

China won \$48,000, USA \$36,000 and others received \$24,000 each.



Triumphant: The Chinese team that reigned supreme on Sunday. ■ TWITTER.COM/FIDE

final day of the league stage, India lost 1.5-2.5 to third seed Russia.

Vidit and Adhiban lose

As seen during the better part of the league, the poor form of Vidit Gujrathi and reserve player B. Adhiban reflected in India's defeat, its sixth in 10 rounds. Humpy's victory over Olga Girya was the only bright spot for India after P. Harikrishna drew with Sergey Karjakin.

Vidit was the first to lose, to Vladislav Artemiev and later, Adhiban became a victim of time-pressure and committed a series of mistakes despite attaining a

good grip over the proceedings against Dmitry Andreikin.

The results: **Superfinal:** China drew with USA 2-2 (Ding Liren drew with Hikaru Nakamura; Wei Yi lost to Fabiano Caruana; Yu Yangyi bt Wesley So; Hou Yifan drew with Irina Krush)

10th round: Russia bt India 2.5-1.5 (Vladislav Artemiev bt Vidit Gujrathi; Sergey Karjakin drew with P. Harikrishna; Dmitry Andreikin bt B. Adhiban; Olga Girya lost to K. Humpy); USA bt China 2.5-1.5; Europe drew with Rest of the World 2-2.

Standings (after 10 rounds): 1. China (17 match-points), 2-3. USA and Europe (13 each), 4. Russia (8), 5. India (5), 6. RoW (4).

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