

on Sunday



Centre to restart classes 9 to 12 in distance mode from next week
page 6



COVID-19 cases spike to over 600,000 across the world
page 8



Car makers to assist govt. in production of ventilators, masks
page 9



Pujara says staying indoors will be best way to fight COVID-19
page 13

PRINTED AT • CHENNAI • COIMBATORE • BENGALURU • HYDERABAD • MADURAI • NOIDA • VISAKHAPATNAM • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • KOCHI • VIJAYAWADA • MANGALURU • TIRUCHIRAPPALLI • KOLKATA • HUBBALLI • MOHALI • MALAPPURAM • MUMBAI • TIRUPATI • LUCKNOW • CUTTACK • PATNA

NEARBY



Second COVID-19 death in Delhi, nine fresh cases

NEW DELHI
The Capital reported its second COVID-19 death on Saturday, while nine new cases came to light. Delhi has so far had 49 COVID-19 cases out of which 41 are active. The deceased has been identified as a 60-year-old man from Aden, Yemen.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Gautam Buddha Nagar reports nine fresh cases

GAZIABAD
Nine new cases of COVID-19 were reported in Gautam Buddha Nagar on Saturday, taking the total cases in the district to 27. "Three persons tested positive in Noida, while a couple tested positive in Greater Noida's Dadri," said CMO, Gautam Buddha Nagar.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Manipur legislator Shyamkumar disqualified

IMPHAL
Manipur Speaker Yumnam Khemchand on Saturday disqualified Thounaojam Shyamkumar as a member of the Assembly for defection to the BJP. Mr. Shyamkumar was elected as a Congress candidate in 2017, from 7-Andro constituency.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 6

SUNDAY MAGAZINE ▶ 12 PAGES

CLASSIFIEDS ▶ PAGE 14

Govt. shifts focus to hotspots as fresh COVID-19 cases rise to 185

No change in testing strategy, says ICMR; Kerala reports first death in Ernakulam

In combat mode

A look at the key focus areas of the government to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic



The big fight: Srinagar Municipal Corporation workers getting ready to spray disinfectant in the city on Saturday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

Attention on hotspots: Focus on high-disease burden hotspots, details of which will be announced by the Health Ministry

Medical facilities: States asked to ensure adequate number of beds, ventilators and ICU facilities

Tracking the spread: Centre and States will work on

Online assistance: AIIMS in Delhi to provide online clinical assistance and training to doctors and nurses across India

strengthening community surveillance, contact tracing and containment strategy

taking up dedicated COVID-19 hospitals in every State, ensuring that there are adequate number of beds, ventilators and ICU facilities," Mr. Agarwal told reporters.

"Over 17 States across India have already started work on identifying dedicated hospitals. As for the other States we are constantly engaged in discussion for earmarking dedicated COVID-19 hospitals," he added.

The number of confirmed cases, according to data from the Union Health Ministry stood at 909 cases (862 Indian and 47 foreigners),

with 819 active cases and 19 deaths so far. Maharashtra (177), and Kerala (168) have reported the highest number of cases so far.

870 active cases

Reports from State health departments put number of confirmed cases at 974 with 870 active cases. In addition to Kerala's first fatality, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Telangana also reported one more death each, taking the nationwide toll to 24.

Uttar Pradesh now has 61 confirmed patients with 11 new cases while 28 new cas-

es were confirmed in Maharashtra.

Twelve new cases were confirmed by the Karnataka Health Department, taking the total number of in the State to 76. Punjab has 38 cases, while Haryana reported 33 including 14 foreigners. Madhya Pradesh has recorded 30 cases, Jammu and Kashmir 20 with eight fresh cases, West Bengal 15, Andhra Pradesh 14 and Ladakh has reported 13.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6
MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGES 5, 6, 8, 10 & 11

PM sets up new fund to fight virus

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday called for donations to the newly instituted PM-CARES Fund, which he said, has been formed on popular demand to help fight the novel coronavirus.

In a series of tweets, Mr. Modi said, "People from all walks of life expressed their desire to donate to India's war against COVID-19. Respecting that spirit, the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund has been constituted. This will go a long way in creating a healthier India," he said.

He also said the fund will cater to "similar distressing situations if they occur in the times ahead".

As per a PIB statement, the fund will be a public charitable trust under the name of 'Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund'. The Prime Minister is the Chairman of this trust and members include the Defence Minister, Home Minister and Finance Minister. There is already a Prime Minister's National Relief Fund for identical purpose.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

We were proactive, pre-emptive: Centre

'Not lenient towards foreign travellers'

Lockdown was ill-planned'

The Congress and the CPI(M) slammed the Modi government for the "ill-planned" lockdown and general unpreparedness in tackling the coronavirus outbreak. Posting a picture of the crowd of migrants in Delhi, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi tweeted that the government was to blame for the "alarming" situation. ▶ PAGE 7

tion Bureau said. It said India acted much before WHO declared COVID-19 as a public health emergency of international concern on January 30, to put in place a "comprehensive response system" at its borders.

"Screening of incoming air passengers followed by suspension of visas and ban on international flights was much ahead of any other country," the government said, pointing out that Italy and Spain, which are devastated by COVID-19, started screening of travellers after 25 days and 39 days respectively of first reported case.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

If I stay on, I will die of hunger'

JATIN ANAND
GREATER NOIDA

"If I stay here, I will die of hunger, if I contract the infection, I can at least die on my own soil," says Manish Kumar, a migrant worker from Kanpur. He used to work at a cloth factory at Kasna here, which has been shut for a week now.

He was among the thousands of migrant workers rendered jobless by the lockdown — who converged at the 'Zero Point' on the Yamuna Expressway to go home on Saturday. Many of them were bound for Agra, Aligarh and Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh, and some for Bihar.

The U.P. government said 200 buses had been arranged to ferry them to various locations.

FLIGHT FROM HUNGER BEATS FIGHT AGAINST VIRUS ▶ PAGE 7

+ Despite U.P. CM's appeal, workers throng bus stands

Without work or money, they see little point in staying put

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

"Do din ho gaye khana nahi mila abhi" (it's two days since we have got proper food)," said Neeraj Yadav as he trudged along a deserted street, hefting his meagre belongings.

With a small group of friends, Mr. Yadav is heading towards the Qaiserbagh bus station in the heart of Lucknow, hoping for transport back home.

A mason, Mr. Yadav had arrived in Lucknow from the Terai district of Lakhimpur Kheri two weeks ago, hired by a contractor to work at a site near the airport.

Abandoned

However, after the nationwide lockdown was announced to check the spread



ment announced that special buses would be run on Saturday.

"What will we do sitting here when we don't get food or water," asked Mr. Yadav, who has walked 20 km to reach the bus station, surviving on the biscuits and water offered by some residents and the police on the way.

The appeal by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday, that migrant labourers should stay on wherever they are rather than trying to return home, was met with little enthusiasm from the workers.

"Had we got basic facilities here, why would we not stay back," remarked Ravinder Yadav. "After all we had come all the way to work."

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

One destination



Rush hour: People waiting to board buses at Kaushambi on the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border on Saturday after the U.P. government started plying buses to evacuate those stranded in the Capital following a nationwide 21-day lockdown. ■ PTI (REPORT ON PAGE 2)

Nitish upset with States sending back migrants

'Bus rides will defeat lockdown purpose'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Saturday disapproved of some States sending back scores of migrant workers to Bihar in buses.

"The very purpose of the lockdown will be defeated if thousands of migrants are sent to Bihar by buses. My government has asked the Bihar Resident Commissioner in Delhi to coordinate with various State governments and reimburse the costs of their food and stay," he told a news channel.

"COVID-19 will spread if they are ferried together in buses," Mr. Kumar said. "It is better to organise camps locally. The State government will reimburse the costs of these camps," the Chief Minister said.

Mr. Kumar recently announced that ₹100 crore would be released from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund for the food and shelter of Bihar workers stranded in other States. Several MLAs and MPs have announced donations to the State to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic began from March 24 midnight.

He couldn't recall seeing the *kharali haanh* (lesser whistling duck) in the lake when an acquaintance from his house reported a flock on Friday.

"We were used to seeing several species of local and migratory waterfowl in Dighalipukhuri when we were young. They have returned after decades possibly because there aren't any humans around to interfere because of the

lockdown," said Kailash Sarma, a cultural activist who lives beside the Joripukhuri (Twin lakes), a few metres east of Dighalipukhuri.

Talukdar, who heads the green NGO Aaranyak.

He said Guwahati has always had a 'wild' side with the city recording some 200 species of mammals. This is because it is woven around 11 forest reserves, several wetlands including a Ramsar site and hills. Instances of animals

returning out into human habitations have also been reported elsewhere in Assam. A one-horned rhino ambled to Sonapuri from the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, 28 km away. Officials said it was probably because the animal did not face any human obstacles en route.

In Barpeta town, residents have been hearing the howls of the rare black fox more frequently than in the past. One was spotted during the day too.

"Animals once used to roam these areas. If they could undertake an exercise like the NRC [National Register of Citizens], we might all have been ejected and our homes dismantled for the trees to grow again," said Dhananjit Das, a resident of the town.

Return of the native: A flock of lesser whistling duck in Guwahati's Dighalipukhuri lake. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Sri Lanka terms Chennai COVID-19 'high-risk zone'

Alert as 4 test positive after city visit

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka on Saturday reported its first COVID-19 death, of a 65-year-old patient, who had diabetes and renal health complications, Health Ministry officials said. The island nation has 113 confirmed coronavirus patients so far.

Sri Lanka's health officials have also detected four COVID-19 positive cases in people who recently returned from Chennai, prompting authorities to term Chennai a "high-risk" zone.

"Two cases detected today and two more cases from earlier this week were all Chennai returnees, Chennai is definitely a high-risk zone" Director-General of Health Services told *The Hindu*.

Hindu on Saturday. The government has asked all those returned from Chennai in the last 14 days to report to health authorities for quarantine.

Mid-March, Sri Lanka reported four persons – an Indian tourist and three Sri Lankans – who tested positive on arrival from India. With the latest detections, a total of eight cases have originated from India, according to authorities. Nine patients have recovered and been discharged from hospital, according to an official bulletin.

Sri Lanka stopped flight arrivals in all its airports on March 17. For a week now, the island has been on a near-total shutdown and travel between districts has also been banned.

AN-ND-E

Timings

DELHI

SUNDAY, MAR. 29
RISE 06:15 SET 18:38
RISE 09:12 SET 23:02
MONDAY, MAR. 30
RISE 06:14 SET 18:38
RISE 09:52 SET 23:58
TUESDAY, MAR. 31
RISE 06:12 SET 18:39
RISE 10:37 SET 00:00

Delhi Weather

max min

Delhi City 30 13

Safdarjung 30 13

Palam 30 14

Delhi Palam Today

30°C Pleasant and hazy

morning with a warm day is

likely. Mainly clear sky is likely.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow

32°C Warm day with partly

cloudy to cloudy sky is likely.

Dry weather with light winds

are expected.

© Copyright Skymet Weather 2019

All rights reserved.

Air Quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi	45	Gurugram	54
Ghaziabad	39	Faridabad	64
Noida	38	Greater Noida	82
Good	■	Satisfactory	■ Moderate
0-50	51-100	101-200	
Poor	■	Very Poor	■ Severe
201-300	301-400	>400	

Air Quality Index at 4 p.m., yesterday (Average of past 24 hours) [Source: CPCB]

Sea of humanity engulfs Kaushambi bus depot

Bus service announced by Uttar Pradesh government brings relief to migrant labourers walking to their destinations

ANUJ KUMAR
GHAZIABAD

A sea of people flooded the Kaushambi U.P. Roadways Bus Depot on Saturday evening as the State government was forced to resume bus service for 48 hours for migrant labourers to reach their destinations. Throwing the appeal for social distancing to the wind, the passengers rushed to occupy all possible spots on the buses.

Having spent many hours on the road walking, they were simply relieved, notwithstanding the dangers of COVID-19 or the fact that they still had to find the bus to their route.

No match

The police presence could not match the number of people, but the passengers were following basic discipline. Half-a-dozen policemen were stationed on the stairs to the bridge, teeming with people, that connects Anand Vihar bus stand to Kaushambi bus depot.

"We are targeting to clear



Water sachets being distributed near Kaushambi bus depot on Saturday. ■ ANUJ KUMAR

situation.

On the delay, he said, "There was little we could do. We were waiting for orders from the top. Apart from government buses, we are also engaging private ones." Mr. Singh, however, refused to give a specific number of the government and private buses ferrying passengers. "We are providing food to at

least 20,000 people," he added.

Local NGOs and workers of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh could be seen distributing oranges and pulao to passengers. Asked why they didn't turn up on Friday, one of them said, "We were there, you might have missed us."

U.P. Roadways official Sub-

We are targeting to clear it [the rush] by tonight. As you can see, given the number of people, we cannot even test the temperature. But we are informing the district officials of the destination of every bus.

SHAILENDRA KUMAR SINGH
ADM (City)

day," he said.

On speaking to a cross section of migrant workers, however, it was clear that not all of them belonged to the same economic strata. Many of them saw it beneath their dignity to queue up for free food. "I pay ₹2,000 as rent. I would like to buy my food. It is just that I am caught in an unprecedented situation where I don't know whether I would get my salary for the next month. The government should have thought of people like us. When they could bring people from abroad, why can't they send us home," asked Aditya, who works in the kitchen of a popular banquet hall in Ghaziabad.

Looking for a bus to Rishikesh, his colleague Rajesh chipped in, "They line up for our votes, but it seems we are not a part of their plan." Sunil, a daily wager, who was looking for a bus to Hardoi, asked, "What is the guarantee that I would not get the infection in Delhi? At least my village's air is clean."

Arrangements are in place to feed the needy, says Kejriwal

Govt. creates 800 shelters, flying squad teams distribute food

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has supplied ration across 1,000 ration shops in the city to ensure that 71 lakh people receive 7.5 kg of free ration, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Saturday.

Arrangements to feed those in need have been put in place at 568 schools and 238 night shelters in Delhi, he said, even as flying squad teams have also been engaged in distributing food packets across the city.

"The Delhi government is working hard to ensure that the people of Delhi remain safe and healthy. Our capacity for providing food to 4 lakh people across the city is ready. Today, arrangements have been made in 568 schools for the city, and food is also being served in 238 night shelters. Around 800-825 total food shelters have been created in Delhi," he said.

"The Delhi government's flying squads are also distributing food items to the nee-

CThe Delhi government is working hard to ensure that the people of Delhi remain safe and healthy. Our capacity for providing food to 4 lakh people across the city is ready

ARVIND KEJRIWAL
Chief Minister

tors visiting their respective constituencies asking them to appeal to such people to stay in Delhi and to inform them that the government was arranging for food and shelter for them.

"We have been able to stop some of them, but all of the others are worried about their future as they think it is going to be a long process. I want to appeal to them again that the Delhi government has made all arrangements for you and we are trying our best to help you," he said.

Necessary lockdown' "I also want to say that the decision to implement a nationwide lockdown announced by the Prime Minister is absolutely necessary. If we do not abide by the lockdown, we are exposing our nation to the risk of the COVID-19 outbreak as we have observed in other nations. Migrating in huge groups will also expose us to the risk of COVID-19. Please stay wherever you are," said Mr. Kejriwal.

Mr. Kejriwal said he had spoken to the city's legisla-

dy across the city. It was the first day of serving 4 lakh people with food. There must be shortcomings and teething problems in the centres, I hope things will be streamlined from tomorrow and there will be no problems," he said.

Urge migrant workers Mr. Kejriwal sought to urge migrant workers and others leaving the city to stay back stating that arrangements for their stay as well as to feed them had been put in place.

Mr. Kejriwal said he had

spoken to the city's legisla-

dy across the city. It was the first day of serving 4 lakh people with food. There must be shortcomings and teething problems in the centres, I hope things will be streamlined from tomorrow and there will be no problems," he said.

Necessary lockdown' "I also want to say that the decision to implement a nationwide lockdown announced by the Prime Minister is absolutely necessary. If we do not abide by the lockdown, we are exposing our nation to the risk of the COVID-19 outbreak as we have observed in other nations. Migrating in huge groups will also expose us to the risk of COVID-19. Please stay wherever you are," said Mr. Kejriwal.

Mr. Kejriwal said he had

spoken to the city's legisla-

dy across the city. It was the first day of serving 4 lakh people with food. There must be shortcomings and teething problems in the centres, I hope things will be streamlined from tomorrow and there will be no problems," he said.

Necessary lockdown' "I also want to say that the decision to implement a nationwide lockdown announced by the Prime Minister is absolutely necessary. If we do not abide by the lockdown, we are exposing our nation to the risk of the COVID-19 outbreak as we have observed in other nations. Migrating in huge groups will also expose us to the risk of COVID-19. Please stay wherever you are," said Mr. Kejriwal.

Mr. Kejriwal said he had

spoken to the city's legisla-

Residents to get 1.5 times more ration, says Hussain

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Food and Supplies Minister Imran Hussain said that 1.5 times more ration for residents is available at ration shops across the city from Saturday, earlier than Monday, as announced before by the government. He also urged everyone to collect the same from their respective ration shops.

"I appeal to all ration cardholders, the ration you were supposed to get from March 30, it has been decided to give it from today. Ration has started reaching all ration shops and all ration card holders should go to your respective shops and collect 1.5 times more ration. Delhi government is providing it completely free. I appeal you all to maintain social distancing so that we can get rid of COVID-19 from Delhi," Mr. Hussain said.

The Delhi government had earlier announced to provide 7.5 kg of food grains (6 kg of wheat and 1.5 kg of rice) instead of 5 kg of food grains (4 kg of wheat and 1 kg of rice) to each beneficiary.

Authorities sort out complaints of doctors asked to vacate houses

'Such requests by landlords put many lives in danger'

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

The district administration helpline has received a couple of calls regarding landlords asking their tenants – either doctors or people under home quarantine – to vacate their premises immediately. The authorities have, however, intervened and bailed out the complainants.

COVID-19 case

A woman doctor at Gurugram's Civil Hospital and a nurse in a private hospital in the city have tested positive for COVID-19.

COVID-19

Gurugram Deputy Commissioner had also tweeted from his official handle on Friday saying: "Distt Admin is receiving complaints on helpline regarding landlords/house owners asking medical staff, labourers and people under precautionary home quarantine to vacate the house immediately. Such immoral act may lead to registration of FIR against such landlords/house owners [sic]."

"We are taking such complaints very seriously because doctors are our front line soldiers. They are very important in the present situation. Even the home quarantine patients are also just following the directions of the Prime Minister. If a man under

Delhi Police resolves landlord issue

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Saturday intervened and resolved an issue wherein a landlord was asking two students to vacate the house in Mukerjee Nagar area.

DCP (North West) Vijayanta Arya said that they received a panic call from a house where two students were trapped in Mukherjee Nagar. The students said that their landlord had stopped food supply to them and had asked them to vacate the house.

Food supply

"A police team was sent and issues was resolved. We provided food supply to the landlord and convinced him to let the students stay. We are getting calls from various PGs and hostels in Mukherjee Nagar area and we are ensuring food supply and other assistance to them," said Ms. Arya.

Gurugram receives 11K requests for movement passes

'Flimsy' requests delay clearance process for genuine applications: administration

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Less than 48 hours after launching the 'Gurugram movement passes' scheme to allow hassle-free movement to those in an emergency or involved in delivery of essential services, the district administration has received over 11,000 applications.

A majority of the applications, however, sought passes on flimsy grounds such as

"need to take wife to her parents' home as part of a ritual after wedding" or "need to bring back son from his grandmother's place in Punjab" or "need to take the dog to the veterinarian as he is not eating his meals".

Essential services

Chief Executive Officer (Zila Parishad) Kulbir Dhaka, one of the two approvers, told *The Hindu* that the flood of

'flimsy' requests have delayed the clearance process for genuine applications.

"We have 11,157 applications so far. Even if I take one minute to clear an application, it will take me a week to dispose off them all," said Mr. Dhaka, adding that only 2,800 applications have been processed so far out of which 1,586 – mostly associated with essential services – were allowed.

Mr. Dhaka has appealed

to residents to seek a pass only in unavoidable circumstances.

"A pass must be sought in case of a prior appointment with the doctor, but in case of medical exigency, such as heart attack, it can be avoided," he added.

The suppliers of essential services also need passes. Individuals are being one-day passes while organisations are being given passes that are valid for seven days.

Delhiites falling in line to fight COVID-19 outbreak

'The governments are doing their best and we should play our part too'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

people are unaware of the concept... they just forget that they have to," said Govind Rishi, a resident of GK.

Good reminder

It helps when stores draw circles outside establishments to hiring security guards to ensure proper distancing, grocery shops, pharmacies and banks have tried several measures to ensure Delhiites fall in line while maintaining a distance.

"It takes just one person to request everybody to adhere to social distancing and then they follow. It is not like people

are drawing circles outside the shop. Now, people are falling in line," said Amit Yadav, a resident of east Delhi.

For many, seeing adherence to social distancing has come as a surprise. "We stand at a distance from one other whether or not in queues. The governments are doing their best and we should play our part too," said Ali Raza, a 39-year-old resident of Mustafabad who had come to buy medicines.

In riot-hit north-east Delhi, people could be seen lining up outside shops and maintaining social distance without the assistance of any circles or markings.

Many shopkeepers have put up ropes in front of the counters to maintain distance.

"We stand at a distance from one other whether or not in queues. The governments are doing their best and we should play our part too," said Ali Raza, a 39-year-old resident of Mustafabad who had come to buy medicines.

IN BRIEF

COVID-19: BJP issues helpline for the needy

NEW DELHI
The BJP on Saturday issued a helpline number, 8010066066, for necessary assistance to those in need amid a shutdown of non-essential services in the country to contain the community spread of the COVID-19. Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Legislative Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri demanded that the Delhi government ensure that private schools did not seek the payment of fee from students for the following three months.

IP University starts online classes

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University (GGSIPU) on Saturday announced that online classes have been started to ensure that the academic timetable is not hampered in the wake of a nationwide shutdown of non-essential services.

"The GGSIPU, which has more than 100 affiliated colleges and a large number of students in various professional courses, has adopted ICT-based learning platforms both at the university and various colleges to ensure that students do not suffer in the time of complete lockdown due to COVID-19," the varsity said in a statement.

The statement added, "The university has taken active steps in compliance with orders issued by the MHRD and UGC recently which requests all Central and State universities or institutions to adopt e-learning platforms in their respective pedagogy for providing a blended form of learning to the students."



People queue up to buy milk in New Delhi on Saturday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

Search on for contacts of 8 people tested positive for COVID-19

They attended religious event at a mosque in Nizamuddin

SAURABH TRIVEDI

NEW DELHI

After eight people, who attended a religious congregation at a mosque in Nizamuddin in New Delhi, were tested positive for COVID-19, the authorities in Delhi are looking for people who were part of the congregation.

On Friday, a total of six persons tested positive for COVID-19 in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. All of them went to Delhi to attend a religious programme and returned to Port Blair via Kolkata on Tuesday, said a senior officer.

On Thursday, a 65-year-old man infected with COVID-19 died at a hospital in

Stuck at Raja Garden night shelter, people long to get home

Shutdown of non-essential services forces people from other States to stay back

HEMANI BHANDARI

NEW DELHI

At a night shelter in west Delhi's Raja Garden, a 45-year-old woman from Assam's Guwahati, who was not sure how long she would be stuck and when she would get to see her husband who works in Punjab, was in tears.

The nationwide shutdown of non-essential services has forced Rinku Mani Borah to live in the women's section of the night shelter run by DUSIB where all she got was a mat and a pillow.

Her husband had, before the said shutdown, asked her to go to Punjab before "it gets worse". She had even boarded a train on March 21, but when she reached New Delhi railway station, she was told that the train would not go further. The tragedy, however, did not end there.

"I did not know what to do. I asked a police officer where I could go and he said that I could sleep on the platform. When I woke up in the morning, my purse which had ₹3,000, my PAN card, Voter-ID card and my phone were missing," she said. She was asked to leave as railway stations were also being vacated.

She wandered on the streets, went to temples and platforms, asking for help before an autorickshaw driver, Raju, came to her rescue.

"He asked why I was crying. I told him everything and he told me about this night shelter. I came here on Friday," she said, adding that she has spoken to her husband in Punjab and informed him about the situation. "I don't know when I will be able to go home," she said before Khushi, a transgender, brought her lunch.



Food being served to people at a night shelter at Raja Garden in west Delhi on Saturday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Ms. Khushi, whose parents disowned her four years ago, dances at religious events for a living and has been staying at the night shelter since three years.

"These days, because of the disease [COVID-19], I am not getting work. At times, I also opt for begging, but not in Delhi. I go to Gurugram because my parents live in west Delhi only. People in our community have been struggling a lot," she said.

Flaunting her Facebook page, she said, she used to get work from there. "Many people think we already have some kind of disease and this [COVID-19] has added to our problems," she said.

Rinku Sagar, Amit and Tarun, who were on their way home to Agra from Nepal where they work as labourers in a factory, are also

stuck. Their families, they said, are worried for their safety.

Mr. Rinku said that the three of them were asked by their employer to leave for their homes on March 21 and were handed ₹1,500 each, adding that they had left immediately.

COVID-19

They managed to reach Gorakhpur from where they took an Agra-bound train but were stopped at Lucknow and were told that the train would not go to Agra. "We then thought of taking a Delhi-bound train and sat in one, but were stopped by the TTE at Moradabad for not having a ticket," he said. Next, they hitched a ride to Delhi and the driver took ₹800 from them.

A passer-by guided them

to the night shelter where they have been staying since Monday. "We thought of walking as well but we don't have enough money," he said adding that the night shelter was in a "decent condition".

Inhabitants at the shelter stood and sat close to each other, some of them wearing masks, as a traffic police officer right outside and caretakers asked people to maintain distance. While the inhabitants said that "everything is fine here, including the food", they are not provided with soaps or hand sanitizers to wash hands.

"We really need soaps to wash hands. At any given point, there are at least 200 people living here and all stay close to each other. Soaps and sanitizers are the need of the hour," said Ram Singh, a labourer.

Beware of clicking on unverified links: police

Criminals capitalising on COVID-19 fear

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The police have told the public to be aware of clicking on any unverified weblinks while searching for information related to COVID-19 on the Internet.

"We have cautioned people against opening suspicious emails and clicking on unverified links related to COVID-19 being circulated on social media platforms," said a police officer.

In a tweet, the West district police said that cyber criminals are capitalising on the fear among people regarding the virus outbreak.

As per the tweet, the scammers create fraudulent social media accounts claiming to sell and deliver medical products. The victims are asked to pay via bank transfers. "A fraudster, pretending to be a relative currently being treated at hospital for COVID-19, calls the victim and asks them to pay for the cost of the medical treatment," the tweet stated.

The fraudsters send emails related to the pandemic, claiming to be health authorities, with random checks to detect if there is any mass spread of COVID-19, besides recommending home quarantine to many people.

"Medical teams are functioning in the area for the past one week and taking samples to detect any community spread of the virus. We are coordinating with other authorities to track down people who went back to their towns after attending the congregation," said the officer. He added that there is a huge possibility that people, who came to attend the congregation at Nizamuddin and was tested positive for COVID-19.

"We are getting more details of people who attended the congregation and alerting the States to which they belong. We have isolated the people where the event was organised," said an officer.

A senior police officer said that they are assisting medical teams operating in Nizamuddin area and conducting

A fraudster, pretending to be a relative currently being treated at hospital for COVID-19, calls the victim and asks them to pay for the cost of the medical treatment

TWEET BY WEST DISTRICT POLICE

the aim of tricking victims into connecting to a specific webpage and to login with their real email address and password. Scammers then use their credentials to access sensitive information and potentially to steal their money, the police said.

The police have asked people to avoid opening suspicious emails and clicking on unverified links related to COVID-19 circulated on the social media.

Use strong password*

Use strong passwords and multi-level authentication option for social media and banking activities. Educate your family, especially your children, about how to stay safe online.

If you become a victim, please alert the police immediately, they added.

Delhi reports second COVID-19 death, 9 new cases; tally now 49

The deceased was a 60-year-old man from Yemen

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Capital reported its second death due to COVID-19 on Saturday along with nine new cases. Delhi has now reported 49 COVID-19 cases out of which 41 are active.

The deceased (case 42) has been identified as a 60-year-old man from Aden, Yemen. He died at a private hospital on Thursday. "The hospital had sent his samples for testing and came back positive for COVID-19 on Saturday," a Delhi government official said.

Case 45 is an 82-year-old man from Nizamuddin and case 46 is a 46-year-old man from Kalyan Puri, who came into contact with a COVID-19 positive case in Noida.

Case 47 is a 19-year-old

from Todarmal Square with a travel history to the U.K. and case 48 is a 36-year-old from Jahangir Puri. Case 49 is a 69-year-old from Uttam Nagar and case 44 is a 61-year-old man from Sukdev Vihar, whose son has a travel history to Germany and the U.S.

ment, 1,787 samples have been sent for testing for COVID-19 till date in the city.

"A total of 2,09,567 passengers from COVID-19 affected countries have been screened at the Delhi airport and placed under surveillance," an official statement said.

A total of 13,132 contacts have been put under home quarantine so far out of which 11,493 are still under quarantine. A total of 19,873 passengers have been put under home quarantine so far and of that, 5,979 are still under quarantine.

HELPLINE NUMBERS

COMMON HELPLINE — +91-11-23978046

DELHI — 011-22307145

GAZIABAD — 0120 4186453

NOIDA — 8076623612/6396776904

GURUGRAM — 108/ 0124-2322412/

9911519296/ 7015523417/ 9654231756



DM issues order asking landlords to not demand rent for a month

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GAZIABAD

Nine new cases of COVID-19 have been reported in Gautam Buddha Nagar on Saturday, district officials said. With this, the total number of cases in the district has reached 27.

"Three persons have been tested positive in Noida, while a couple has been tested positive for COVID-19 in Greater Noida's Dadri," said Anurag Bhargav, Chief Medical Officer, Gautam Buddha Nagar.

He said six people, who returned from Denmark and were in isolation, have tested positive. The travel



Migrants board a bus in Ghaziabad on Saturday. ■ PTI

history of the other three was being ascertained.

Meanwhile, the Chief Medical Officer has given application for filing an FIR against Ceasefire Private Limited.

"If any landlord asks the tenant to vacate the premises during this period, strict action will be taken against him," the order said.

1897 for not informing the health officials about the visit of a British citizen to the company which has led to 13 cases of COVID-19," said Dr. Bhargav.

In a separate incident, to stop the exodus of hundreds of daily-wage workers from Gautam Buddha Nagar, District Magistrate B.N. Singh has passed an order under the Epidemic Act 1897, directing landlords not to ask for rent from tenants for a month.

"If any landlord asks the tenant to vacate the premises during this period, strict action will be taken against him," the order said.

TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT

Mr. N SELVA KUMAR

PH: 9820350726

selvakumar.n@thehindu.co.in

Mr. MANOJ KUMAR KUSHWAHA

PH: 9994940055

manoj.kushwaha@thehindu.co.in

THE HINDU India's National Newspaper

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

SAD DEMISE

E.M.G. MENON

D.O.B: 15.05.1932 ~ D.O.D: 27.03.2020

Founder

We Two Engineering Pvt Ltd

Chairman: Pallavaram Kerala Samajam

Deeply mourned by

K.C. Leelavathy (Wife)

K.C. Mohanan, K.C. Sethu Menon,

K.C. Suresh Menon (sons) & family

Cell: 98410 13660

OBITUARY

Mrs.G.R.Subbalakshmi (95 yrs)

W/o late GR.Ramsubramanian

of Ganapathi Agraharam

attained the lotus feet of

Lord Maha Ganapathi at 7:30pm on

Thursday 26th March 2020 at Chennai.

Mourned by

GR.Ramachandra,

GR. Lakshminarayana,

Sushila Srinivasan, Saroja Rajaraman,

Malathi Sundararaman, Grandchildren,

Greatgrandchildren, Friends & Relatives

Pray for her soul to rest in peace

Phone : 94440 38152

For enquiries on

announcements in this section, please contact our office at the following number

between 10a.m. and 8p.m.

New Delhi : 011- 43579797

Delhi is under Lockdown until 14 April to contain the spread of Covid-19

A large section of the underprivileged are suffering as a result of the lockdown. The government is taking several steps to ensure no one has to sleep hungry.

- ① 7.5 kg free ration is being provided to 71 lakh people.
- ② ₹ 4,000 to ₹ 5,000 pension is being given to 8 lakh senior citizens, widows and the specially-abled.
- ③ ₹ 5,000 will be given to all registered construction workers.
- ④ Arrangements for distributing cooked food to people are being made at various locations.

DIP/Shabdarth/D/0362/119-20

Come forward and join us in this effort

- ① Ensure no one in your street or colony goes hungry.
- ② If your domestic help is unable to report to work, do not cut their pay. If possible, offer them an advance.
- ③ If you have leased your property and your tenants are unable to pay rent immediately, give them one month relaxation so that they can pay the rent in installments.

This is our duty to society, a true act of patriotism.
If we don't stand with each other in these times,
then when will we?

We will defeat Corona together. Jai Hind!



TAMIL NADU



A scene at the Kasimedu fishing harbour in Chennai; police personnel checking vehicles at Pappanamcode in Thiruvananthapuram; a large number of people gather at the National College grounds that has been converted into a makeshift market in Bengaluru; and distance is hardly maintained among homeless people at the Exhibition Ground at Nampally in Hyderabad on Saturday. ■ B. VELANKANNI RAJ, S.GOPAKUMAR, K. MURALI KUMAR & G. RAMAKRISHNA

KERALA



KARNATAKA



TELANGANA



Kerala reports its first virus death as six more test positive

Total number of patients under treatment is 165; 1.34 lakh are under surveillance

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala reported its first COVID-19 death on Saturday. A 69-year-old man who had been under treatment at the Government Medical College Hospital, Ernakulam, died in the morning. He was buried in Ernakulam as per protocol. The man who returned from Dubai on March 16 was admitted to the hospital on March 22 with acute pneumonia.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the State would continue the surveillance and quarantine process and



Relatives at the funeral of the COVID-19 victim in Kochi on Saturday. ■ THULASI KAKKAT

while Kollam, Palakkad, Malappuram and Kasaragod reported one case each. The total number of patients under treatment is 165. While 1.34 lakh people are under surveillance, only 620 are in isolation wards in hospitals and the rest are on home quarantine.

'Break Corona' scheme

Mr. Vijayan said the government was in the process of linking research organisations, industrial units, manufacturing firms of biomedical supplies and creating an industrial enterprises cluster to mass manufacture respirators, ventilators, personal protection equipment, oxy-

gen cylinders and biomedical supplies on a war footing.

He announced the launch of 'Break Corona' scheme, wherein the government was inviting innovative ideas from society to combat COVID-19. A website, breakcorona.in has been set up with the help of the Startup Mission, through which people can submit their ideas. The government was considering the setting up of an online counselling facility for helping those under quarantine.

Brazen violation

Mr. Vijayan gave vent to his frustration that Karnataka had not yet removed the embankments of earth built on

their side of the inter-State border to deter traffic to and from Kerala.

He said the Kerala government's negotiations with Karnataka to allow minimal freight and ambulance movement along the arterial border roads had made little headway. He could not get through on the telephone to Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa though he had made several attempts. "Mr. Yediyurappa might have been busy," he said.

Mr. Vijayan had on Friday informed Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the situation. In a letter, he had said Karnataka's action was tantamount to a brazen violation of the Centre's directive to keep inter-State borders open for emergency traffic and freight during the nationwide COVID-19 lockdown. Mr. Modi had deputed Union Minister of Chemicals and Fertilizers D.V. Sadananda Gowda to resolve the issue. Mr. Vijayan said he had broached the issue with Mr. Gowda.

"Mr. Gowda said he would talk with the Karnataka government. If the situation continues, Kerala will have to seek the intervention of the Prime Minister," he said.

(Reach suicide prevention helpline at +91 66202000)

74-year-old is Telangana's first casualty

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
HYDERABAD

A 74-year-old man became Telangana's first COVID-19 fatality, as samples taken after his death two days ago tested positive for the infection on Saturday, State Health Minister E. Ra-jender has said.

The man had a history of travel to Delhi. He had been suffering from breathing problems since March 20 and collapsed at home on March 26. He was declared brought dead at a corporate hospital here the same day.

Virus scare: Telangana man kills self

STAFF REPORTER
THUNGATHURTHY

Afraid that he had contracted COVID-19, a 45-year-old man here allegedly immolated himself around midnight on Friday, the Telangana police said. According to the victim's wife, Renuka, her husband was worried about his persistent fever for the past few days.

(Reach suicide prevention helpline at +91 66202000)

Karnataka Ministers not on same page on spread of virus

While Karjol says it has reached third stage, Sriramulu differs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Even as officials have been asserting that COVID-19 community transmission has not yet begun, contradictory statements by Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister Govind Karjol and Health Minister B. Sriramulu on the disease reaching third stage in the State has added to the confusion.

Mr. Karjol told presspersons in Bagalkot that the disease had reached third stage and it was important that people strictly follow precautions. Meanwhile, speaking in Mandy, Mr. Sriramulu said people should "pray that the disease does not escalate to the third stage".

In fact, over the last few days, Mr. Sriramulu and Medical Education Minister K. Sudhakar (also in charge of COVID-19 vigil) have been making contradictory statements on issues pertaining to positive cases.

Jawaid Akhtar, Additional Chief Secretary (Health and Family Welfare and Medical Education), reiterated that there was no community transmission.

"The random sampling study taken up by the Indian Council of Medical Research three days ago has also found that India has not reached Stage 3. This is the latest information I have," he said.



What next? Migrant workers seen at a labour camp in Bengaluru on Saturday. ■ SUDHAKARA JAIN

Admitting that Gowribidur was the largest cluster that had been affected in areas where positive cases have been reported, Mr. Akhtar said the department had started the process of contact tracing.

All the infected persons are primary contacts of the person who died. There is a group of pilgrims who have gone to Ananthapur and another has come from there. Contact tracing has begun and cross-reference is being done. A special officer has been appointed to study the spread," he said.

Overall, 1,090 primary contacts of the 81 positive cases in the State are being monitored.

COVID-19

at the same time, seriously investigate if community transmission was happening. The government decided to go ahead with rapid test modality for COVID-19 detection (IgM/IgG antibody-based tests) in the community to understand if the silent transmission of the virus is happening.

Mr. Vijayan paid his respects to the first victim.

On Saturday, six positive cases were reported in the State. Two of the cases are from Thiruvananthapuram,

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB; MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 19.00 HRS)
Forecast for Sunday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning and gust likely over Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Arunachal Pradesh.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...37.4	20.4	6.6	Kozhikode	...37.4	26.6	6.6
Ahmedabad	...34.4	20.2	6.6	Kurnool	...39.0	23.7	6.6
Aizawl	...27.6	13.6	6.6	Lucknow	5.6	31.6	18.0
Allahabad	0.6	33.7	19.1	Madurai	...37.6	24.1	6.6
Bengaluru	...35.2	19.2	6.6	Mangaluru	...35.5	26.6	6.6
Bhopal	11.8	22.4	17.2	Mumbai	...34.9	23.0	6.6
Bhubaneswar	...37.7	25.0	6.6	Mysuru	...20.0	34.0	6.6
Chandigarh	2.3	27.2	15.2	New Delhi	5.3	28.5	15.7
Chennai	...33.4	24.5	6.6	Patna	...33.1	21.8	6.6
Coimbatore	...36.6	23.8	6.6	Port Blair	...32.2	22.8	6.6
Dehradoon	27.7	13.6	6.6	Puducherry	...33.4	23.2	6.6
Gangtok	23.2	21.0	13.9	Pune	2.7	35.1	19.8
Goa	...34.0	24.8	6.6	Raipur	...35.4	24.7	6.6
Guwahati	...36.4	20.9	6.6	Ranchi	...32.4	20.4	6.6
Hubballi	...37.0	22.0	6.6	Shillong	26.6	19.5	6.6
Hyderabad	...36.7	21.8	6.6	Shimla	9.3	17.1	5.8
Imphal	...27.6	14.9	6.6	Srinagar	12.6	23.8	6.6
Jaipur	...30.2	17.0	6.6	Tiruchi	...38.0	23.0	6.6
Kochi	...33.4	26.2	6.6	Vijayawada	...37.5	23.0	6.6
Kohima	...24.2	12.2	6.6	Visakhapatnam	...32.6	26.8	6.6
Kolkata	...35.2	25.5	6.6				

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

Yesterday

In observation made at 7.00 p.m., Guwahati, Assam recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 261 indicating unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Chandigarh, Haryana, recorded a healthy AQI score of 17.

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.
NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.
PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.

Though animal husbandry has been exempted from

the restrictions and classified as an essential service, the police are creating roadblocks for vehicles carrying chicken and eggs or chicken feed, crucial for rearing broilers and layer chicken,

Ensure pension disbursal by April 1, says A.P. CM

Rice, toor dal to be given to poor free of cost thrice

STAFF REPORTER

VIJAYAWADA

Keeping in view the hard times being faced by the poor on account of the lockdown, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has directed the officials to ensure disbursal of pension on April 1 and ₹1,000 to the novel coronavirus-hit poor on April 4.

Addressing a high-level meeting on the COVID-19 containment measures on Saturday, he directed officials to distribute to the white ration card-holders rice and one kg toor dal free of cost thrice – March 29, April 15 and April 29. This benefit would be extended to the card-holders not covered by the Central government's food security programme.

Mr. Jagan appointed senior IAS officers Satish Chandra and Peeyush Kumar to take care of the people of Andhra Pradesh stranded in other States and on the borders. The Chief Minister ordered that only those agree-

ing for 14 days quarantine be allowed to enter the State, subject to the completion of formalities, so that the spread of the COVID-19 could be contained.

Focus on three cities

Mr. Jagan directed that focus be laid on Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada and Guntur keeping in view the large number of people from these cities having foreign travel history.

He asked the officials to work out a scientific way of regulating the number of rythu bazaars basing on population in cities and towns while not causing hardship in buying essential items and ensuring that there are enough stocks.

A.P. intensifies vigil after High Court's directions

Interim measures will remain in force for a month

STAFF REPORTER

VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government has intensified the vigil on the streets to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as the High Court issued certain directions, as an interim measure, by taking cognizance of the matter on its own.

Chief Justice J.K. Maheswari and Justice M. Satyana Ray Murthy ordered that the directions be in force for a month from March 26.

The most significant of the 14 directions is not to allow any mass gathering on the boundaries of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and that officials of both States follow the national protocol thereof or otherwise related to transport of the public, quarant-

tine and the conduct of necessary tests, and to take due care of women with children and pregnant women.

The court directed the government to ensure the availability of N-95 masks, sterile gloves, starch apparatus, PPE and other essential items to doctors and paramedics and take steps for physical distance between children in remand homes.

All stay orders extended

Another important direction is that all cases in which interim orders were passed by the High Court and the district courts, civil courts, family courts and labour courts and other tribunals over which the High Court has superin-

tendence and the stay has expired two weeks prior or is due to expire in one month will remain in operation for a further period of one month.

Bails and suspensions granted in criminal cases (anticipatory or regular), which are likely to expire in a month, will be extended for a further period of one month. Tenders not finalised should not be given effect for one month; the process may be resumed after the lockdown is lifted.

The High Court further ordered that the information related to patients undergoing health check-up be kept confidential and poor patients not be discriminated against.

Eight killed, 3 injured in lorry-truck collision

FROM PAGE ONE

Govt. shifts focus to COVID-19 hotspots

Long battle against the virus

Jan. 17: Advisory issued to avoid travel to China**Jan. 18:** Thermal screening of passengers from China and Hong Kong**Feb. 3:** E-visa suspended for Chinese citizens**Feb. 22:** Advisory to avoid travel to Singapore; Screening for flights from Kathmandu, Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia**Feb. 26:** Advisory to avoid travel to Iran, Italy and South Korea**March 3:** Suspension of visas for Italy, Iran, South Korea, Japan and China**March 4:** Universal screening of international flights**March 10:** International passengers told to self-monitor**March 17:** Travel from Afghanistan, Philippines, Malaysia prohibited**March 19:** All international flights suspended with effect from March 22

The Union Health Ministry said Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) beneficiaries will be allowed to take three month stock of medicines.

"But we request CGHS beneficiaries who have long-standing ailments, organ replacement and long-term diabetes to stay away from health care centres and have a representative collect the medicines," Mr. Agarwal said.

He announced that All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, will now offer not just doctors but also nurses on-line training programs for management of those infected by the SARS-CoV-2.

+ PM sets up new fund to fight COVID-19

This fund was instituted in 1948 by then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, to assist displaced persons from Pakistan.

The fund is currently used primarily to tackle natural calamities like floods, cyclones and earthquakes. The fund is also used to help with medical treatment like kidney transplantation, can-

cer treatment and acid attack. Mr. Modi said PM-Cares Fund accepts micro-donations too. "It will strengthen disaster management capacities and encourage research on protecting citizens. Let us leave no stone unturned to make India healthier and more prosperous for our future generations," he said.

We were proactive, pre-emptive: Centre

"Though the first case of coronavirus was detected in India on 30th Jan., we had started thermal screening of incoming international passengers coming from China and Hong Kong on 18th Jan. itself," said the release.

Screening of passengers at 30 airports, 12 major and 65 minor ports and at land borders covered over 36 lakh passengers, the Centre said.

It had also started inten-

sive coordination with the States. "A meticulous system has enabled States to track down individuals who tried to avoid surveillance or who did not follow quarantine," the government said, adding that 20 video conferences by Union Health Secretary with State Governments and six by the Cabinet Secretary with the State Chief Secretaries have been held to review the preparedness.

Despite CM's appeal, workers throng bus stands

At the Qaiserbagh and Charbagh bus stations, workers were seen frantically boarding the State transport buses.

As the large groups thronged the crowded bus stations, trying to find the right bus, the protocol of physical distancing was observed more in the breach. Many had to wait for several hours to find the right vehicle.

1,000 buses
At Charbagh, U.P. DGP Hitesh Chandra Awasthi, who was personally monitoring the boarding of buses amid precautions, said the police was trying to prevent an accumulation of the travellers

at the boarding places and trying to send them off as quickly as possible.

Raj Shekhar, official in-charge of the U.P. State Road Transport Corporation, said about 200 buses were deployed to transport people stuck at various points in the district bordering Delhi to their destinations.

The task would continue on Sunday, he said, adding that the details of the buses were being noted down at the starting points. It was not officially clear how many buses the government had deployed across U.P. but the State's publicity team said in a statement that it was using as many as 1,000 vehicles.

Inured to lockdowns, but Valley hit hardest by latest one

COVID-19 has made Kashmiris keep off places of worship and leave apple, cherry and strawberry crops unattended

**PEERZADA ASHIQ
KHIMBER (SRINAGAR)**

Despite being a Friday, the only objects visible on the roads at Khimber village are concertina wires and the only sound is that of rain.

Despite 30 years of militancy, prolonged shutdowns and curfews, the COVID-19 outbreak has proved a greater challenge to the village some 16 km from Srinagar. Forced indoors by the fear of contagion, the lockdown is already taking a toll on the vital strawberry fields and cherry and apple orchards of the region.

Khawaja Ghulam Najar, 82, a regular worshipper at the local Noor-ul-Haq mosque described this Friday as the saddest day of his life.

"Even at the peak of militancy or spells of curfews between 2008 and 2016 or



Testing times: The historic Jamia Masjid closed to avoid large gatherings for prayers during the lockdown to contain the spread of the virus in Srinagar. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

even the August 5, 2019 clampdown, this mosque remained open. For over 40 years, I never missed my congregational Friday prayers. But this virus closed it," said Mr. Najar, a

local shopkeeper.

Kashmir is now in its ninth day of a new lockdown. "We have huddled children and women inside. So far, only the affluent class is affected. God forbid, if

lower middle class contracts the disease, it will prove a disaster," said Fida Muhammad, a wicker-basket maker.

In Gasoo, villagers who grow strawberries on around 86 hectares on ter-

raced gardens are worried that the Valley's first crop of fruit after the prolonged winter, may not make it to the markets.

"It's getting difficult to tend the farms. The plucking will start from the last week of April and it lasts only for one month. The lockdown is already till April 14. What if it's extended? Most of strawberries will be rotten in orchards," says Firqa Jan, a farmer.

The Khimber-Dara belt's cherry gardens are full with hanging buds. "Cherry is the second fruit crop after strawberry. It will be a challenge to ship the crop after plucking starts in May. All inter-district and inter-State transport is banned. This virus may eat up our produce too," said Khalid Dar, an orchard owner.

COVID-19

"This is the time to control the spread of diseases like San Jose scale which kills an apple tree in just two years. Pesticides are not available in the market due to the lockdown, and the movement of tractors is restricted. The trees require regular pruning and grafting. If the situation does not normalise soon, we may lose early apple crop too," said Khalid Dar, an orchard owner.

Seven flights carry medical supplies

Air India, IndiGo deputed for the task

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

Air India and IndiGo operated seven flights to 13 destinations to transport medical supplies, according to a senior official coordinating relief efforts along with the Civil Aviation Ministry.

Air India flew a Boeing 787 from Mumbai to Delhi and back and an Airbus A320 from Delhi to Imphal carrying medical equipment and medicines, according to the airline's spokesperson.

The airlines carried cargo in the belly of their planes. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

nai and Bengaluru. The flight carried three tonnes of cargo for medical requirements.

While all these airlines carried cargo in the belly of their planes, discussions are on between the government and different airlines to allow freight to be carried inside passenger cabins as is being done by many international carriers in other parts of the world.

Armed forces can set up special kitchens'

Admiral Ramdas writes to Modi

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

India is facing an unprecedented challenge due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the likes of which the country has not witnessed since partition, and the armed forces with units across the country should be roped in to "organise and provide food through special kitchens which they can set up and run near their current locations," former Navy Chief Admiral L. Ramdas suggested in an open letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Food stocks can be directly indented from the District Collector of the district in which the armed forces are deployed. This will ensure large numbers of our people will not have to either physically travel distances in search of food nor go to bed hungry," he said in the letter. "I am confident that our armed forces are well equipped and trained to render any other forms of assistance that may be required," he added.

Delhi allows newspaper distribution till 9 a.m.

New Delhi
The Delhi Police on Saturday said that newspaper vendors would be allowed to distribute papers from 4 a.m. to 9 a.m. The order by Delhi Police Commissioner S. N. Shrivastava comes in the wake of reports that newspaper agents and distributors were being stopped amid the lockdown in the wake of COVID-19.

The official said Muhsin dropped out of a government school in Class XI. He also went to a madrasa in Class VII.

He moved to Bengaluru to work in a hotel but returned after a year. He then moved to Dubai where he worked at Emirates Petroleum. On his return, he moved to Malaysia.

"He came back in 2015, stayed for a few months in Kerala only to move to Saudi Arabia in 2016," the official said. He came from Saudi Arabia in 2018 and stayed in Kerala for four months. He left for Dubai the same year and did not return.

Centre plans classes in distance mode

Lessons of classes 9 to 12 to be broadcast on TV, radio channels from next week

**PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
NEW DELHI**



The school break is almost over for students from Classes 9 to 12. The Centre plans to restart classes in the distance mode next week, with teaching via dedicated TV and radio channels in English and Hindi. Human Resource Development Secretary Amit Khare said on Saturday. Many schools have been shut since early March due to the pandemic, even before the countrywide lockdown was announced last week.

"We are planning to start the next academic year virtually. We don't want stu-

dents to waste their time and then suffer when the schools reopen. We do not know how long the shutdown will last. That is a health decision. But the next academic year may get compressed," Mr. Khare told *The Hindu* on Saturday. "Many students

are already studying at home during this shutdown, but this will allow them to do it in a structured manner."

This means that the new academic calendar will begin as usual in April for classes 9 to 12, though the last academic year may have been somewhat truncated, with examinations postponed in some cases. In fact, the CBSE exams for classes 10 and 12 have not been completed.

"We have asked the NIOS [National Institute of Open Schooling] to create a structured programme for schools class-wise. It is being done along with NCERT [Na-

tional Council of Educational Research and Training] using their syllabus," said Mr. Khare, adding that while content has already been prepared for secondary and higher secondary students, work is also starting to prepare material for lower classes as well.

This material, available in Hindi and English, is ready for use by schools following the NIOS or the CBSE syllabus. However, for State boards, the bigger challenge is language. "We have offered DIKSHA [mobile app] to States as a platform to provide content in local languages," Mr. Khare said.

Kabul attacker left a wide footprint

He did small jobs in Bengaluru, Malaysia, Saudi and Dubai before joining IS

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
IMPHAL**

Manipur Speaker Yumnam Khemchand on Saturday disqualified Thounaojam Shyamkumar as a member of the Assembly for defection.

Shyamkumar was elected to the Assembly as a Congress candidate on March 12, 2017, from 7-Andro constituency. The Congress had won 28 seats and the BJP 21. However, the BJP allied with the National People's Party to form a government.

Before he was sworn in as an MLA, Mr. Shyamkumar joined the BJP and became the Minister for Forest and Environment in the government led by N. Biren Singh on March 16, 2017. He was sworn in as a member of the Assembly on March 19.

VIJAYA SINGH
SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI



The gurdwara after the attack in Kabul

meet Singh, had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi asking for an early repatriation of his last remains, as all commercial flights had been cancelled owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sources said the government gave special permission to the Afghan embassy in Delhi to operate several special flights, the first of which flew to Kabul on Sa-

turday, and also put in a request for the return of Tian Singh's body.

A loner with no known friends in India, Muhsin, 29, is said to have contacted his mother about nine months ago Telegram, when he was thought to be in Dubai, a senior official said. Muhsin, he said, had asked his mother to join a group called 'Gentleman' on the app. On March 26, she received a message from a Telegram ID, '@war3030', that her son was dead.

One of his brothers confirmed to security agencies that the photograph of the attacker published by *Al-Naba*, the propaganda wing of the Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP), is that of Muhsin's. The officials have claimed that though Muhsin was never on the radar of the police, the security agencies

had noticed his father's mobile phone number in a WhatsApp group created by Rashid Abdullah, alias Abu Isa, who led the group of 21 men and women from Kerala that had left India in 2016. The official said Muhsin dropped out of a government school in Class XI. He also went to a madrasa in Class VII. He moved to Bengaluru to work in a hotel but returned after a year. He then moved to Dubai where he worked at Emirates Petroleum. On his return, he moved to Malaysia.

"He came back in 2015, stayed for a few months in Kerala only to move to Saudi Arabia in 2016," the official said. He came from Saudi Arabia in 2018 and stayed in Kerala for four months. He left for Dubai the same year and did not return.

CM YK

Virus infections top 600,000 globally

We cannot completely prevent spread at this stage, says Merkel; in Africa, curbs trigger violence

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BERLIN

The number of confirmed coronavirus infections worldwide topped 600,000 on Saturday as new cases stacked up quickly in Europe and the U.S. and officials dug in for a long fight against the pandemic. The latest landmark came only two days after the world passed half a million infections, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University, showing that much work remains to be done to slow the spread of the virus. It showed more than 6,21,000 cases and over 28,600 deaths.

COVID-19

While the U.S. now leads the world in reported infections – with more than 1,05,000 cases – five countries exceed its roughly 1,700 deaths – Italy, Spain, China, Iran and France.

"We cannot completely prevent infections at this stage, but we can and must in the immediate future achieve fewer new infections per day, a slower spread," German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who is in quarantine at home after her doctor tested positive for the virus, told her compatriots in an audio message. "That will decide whether our health system can stand up to the virus." The virus already has put health systems in Italy, Spain and France under extreme strain. Lockdowns of varying severity have been introduced across Europe, nearly emptying streets in cities, including Paris.

Ms. Merkel appealed to Germans to "be patient". Her Chief of Staff said Germany – where authorities closed non-essential shops and banned gatherings of



Geared up: A health worker at a medical centre testing a patient in Paris on Friday. • AFP

Spain counts 832 deaths in 24 hours taking toll to 5,690

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MADRID

The death toll from coronavirus in Spain surged over 5,600 on Saturday after a record 832 people died in 24 hours, and the number of infections soared over 72,000, the government said.

Spain has the world's second-highest coronavirus

death toll after Italy with 5,690 fatalities. Italy saw over 900 deaths on Friday. The number of confirmed cases have jumped to 72,248 as the country moves to significantly increase testing.

Although Spain's latest figures showed a daily increase of more than 8,000 cases, the rate of new infections appears to be slowing.

Trump signs \$2 trillion recovery plan as cases soar

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump signed into law on Friday the \$2 trillion rescue plan to salvage a U.S. economy crippled by the novel coronavirus, on a day the nation's total count of COVID-19 cases surpassed 1,00,000.

Mr. Trump's signature triggers the distribution of millions of relief cheques of up to \$3,400 for an average American family of four. The U.S. has recorded 1,693 deaths from the virus so far.

"I want to thank Democrats and Republicans for coming together and putting America first," Mr. Trump said.

Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour told a news conference that 3,076 more cases had been confirmed in the past 24 hours, bringing the total number of infections to 35,408.

"The condition of 3,026 of those hospitalised is critical in one way or another," he said, adding that 11,679 patients have recovered and been discharged from hospital.

Mr. Jahanpour said that 57 million Iranians had been screened for the virus.

Plane with medical workers and aid reaches Islamabad

China's virus epicentre eases travel restrictions after lockdown

People stranded elsewhere are allowed to enter Wuhan



Inching towards normalcy: People at a train station in Shanghai walking to a train that stops at Wuhan. • AFP

Trains packed with thousands of passengers arrived in Wuhan on Saturday as the Chinese city that was Ground Zero for the global coronavirus pandemic partly reopened after months in lockdown.

Returnees, some wearing two face masks, latex gloves and protective suits, were greeted at the railway station by staff in similar anti-virus gear – a grim reminder that while the city was emerging from isolation, it was still far from normal.

"As the train neared Wuhan, my child and I were both very excited," a 36-year-old woman said. She and her daughter had been away from her husband for nearly 10 weeks. "It felt like the train was moving faster than before, and my daughter said the driver must know we really want to go home."

not be lifted until April 8 when the airport will also reopen for domestic flights.

Travellers were allowed to leave the train station on Saturday after showing a green code on a mobile app to prove they are healthy.

Those who had been overseas were herded to reception desks to be tested for the virus as China battles to control infections brought from abroad.

Beijing sends medical aid to Pakistan to combat coronavirus outbreak

South Asian country, and a previous shipment of masks was sent. Pakistan is a key link in China's ambitious multibillion-dollar 'One Road Project' linking south and Central Asia with China.

Pakistan, with a population of 220 million, currently has 1,408 confirmed cases of the virus, including 11 deaths from the illness it causes, COVID-19. Most of the infected people there were travellers returning from neighbouring Iran.

be able to handle a growing numbers in cases. Iran is battling the worst outbreak in the region.

Qureishi greets doctors

The plane carrying aid to Pakistan was met at the capital's airport on Saturday by Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureishi, who greeted the arriving Chinese doctors and officials.

On Friday, China sent ventilators, masks and other medical equipment to the

ELSEWHERE



Military reaffirms support for Maduro

CARACAS Venezuela's armed forces chief Admiral Remigio Ceballos reaffirmed their support on Friday for President Nicolas Maduro a day after the U.S. Justice Department charged him with "narco-terrorism" and offered a \$15 million reward for his capture. • AFP

Taliban not to negotiate with Afghan team

KABUL The Taliban refused to negotiate with the team announced by the Afghan government, in a potential setback to the peace process. Spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the group would not negotiate with the team as it was not selected in a way that included "all Afghan factions". • REUTERS

Taiwan Foreign Minister invites U.S. scribes expelled by China

Beijing had revoked their accreditations earlier in March

REUTERS
TAIPEI

Taiwan Foreign Minister Joseph Wu extended a personal invitation on Saturday for three major U.S. newspapers to station on the island their China-based journalists whose expulsion Beijing has announced.

China said on March 18 it was revoking the press accreditations of all American journalists in the China bureaus of *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *Washington Post*, which were due to expire at the end of 2020. Beijing also said those affected would not be allowed to work as journalists in the Chinese-run city of Hong Kong. In the past, foreign journalists kicked out of, or barred from, mainland China were allowed to work in Hong



Taiwan Foreign Minister Joseph Wu

foreign correspondents, and none of the three newspapers has a full-time presence on the island currently.

While Chinese-claimed Taiwan is a freewheeling democracy with freedom of expression, it has stepped up controls to help prevent the spread of the virus, and generally only foreigners holding residence permits are currently allowed entry.

China has laid the blame for the situation with the three newspapers at Washington's door, for first restricting the number of Chinese media in the U.S. Last month, Washington demanded journalists from Chinese state media be registered as staff of diplomatic missions, saying it was a response to the growing crackdown on independent reporting in China.

Kong. "As @nytimes, @WSJ & @washingtonpost face intensifying hostility in China, I'd like to welcome you to be stationed in Taiwan – a country that is a beacon of freedom & democracy," Mr. Wu wrote on Twitter. "Yes! You'll find people here greeting you with open arms & lots of genuine smiles."

Taiwan is home to only a small number of permanent

Civil rights icon Joseph Lowery passes away

He campaigned closely alongside Martin Luther King for racial equality

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

U.S. civil rights leader Rev. Joseph Lowery, who campaigned with Martin Luther King, died on Friday aged 98. "Our beloved, Rev. Dr. Joseph Echols Lowery, made his transition peacefully at home" surrounded by his daughters, the Joseph & Evelyn Lowery Institute said, adding "his legacy of service and struggle was long and rich."

Born in Huntsville, Alabama in 1921, Rev. Lowery worked closely alongside leading figures in the civil rights movement and with King co-founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) civil rights group in 1957.

Medal of Freedom award
He was chosen to speak at the inauguration of the U.S.'s first black President Barack Obama in 2009, and later that year was awarded the



Rev. Joseph Lowery, centre, with Barack Obama, then a presidential hopeful, in Selma, Alabama, in 2007. • REUTERS

Medal of Freedom, the country's highest civilian award.

"By being born black, I can't ever remember not being in the movement," Rev. Lowery told *The Journal Constitution* in a 2001 interview. He recalled one day in 1933 that almost set him on a very different path to the civic action, protest marches and impassioned oratory that made his name. As he

was leaving his father's candy store in Huntsville, the 11-year-old Lowery almost collided with a white police officer entering the shop. "Don't you see a white man coming in?" he recalled the officer saying, after referring to the boy using a racial epithet and hitting him in the stomach with his stick.

Incensed, Rev. Lowery went home to fetch his father's gun. But his father was in the house too, and, after taking the weapon away, gave his son a long lecture.

After decades campaigning against racial discrimination during which he was arrested several times, Rev. Lowery was dubbed "the Dean" of the civil rights movement by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

In 2006, he was one of many figures to criticise President George W. Bush at the funeral for civil rights "first lady" Coretta Scott King over the Iraq war, a domestic eavesdropping programme and the government's response to Hurricane Katrina.

Speaking in verse, Rev. Lowery said no weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq but that there were "weapons of misdirection" employed in the U.S. "For war billions more, but no more for the poor," he said to cheers and applause.

Russia to close borders

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MOSCOW

Russia is to completely close its borders from Monday to stop the spread of the virus, the government said on Saturday.

A decree on the government's website said Russia would "temporarily restrict traffic" across national borders to prevent new infections.

The country closed its borders to foreigners last week and grounded all international flights on Thursday as part of increasingly stringent measures to slow the spread of COVID-19 in Russia. Health officials have registered 1,264 cases and four deaths, according to Saturday's official tally.

Russian diplomats and truck drivers will be exempted from the new restrictions.

Countries reporting less than 20% of symptomatic cases

U.K. epidemiologist Adam Kucharski says a big challenge in fighting COVID-19 is that a lot of transmission happens very early on in the infection

NARAYAN LAKSHMAN

Professor Adam Kucharski, who is an Associate Professor and the Sir Henry Dale Fellow at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, specialises in the mathematical analysis of infectious disease outbreaks. He spoke to *The Hindu* about the global coronavirus pandemic, specifically on what nations can learn from models of infectious outbreaks, and even of fake news. Edit excerpts:

In your book, *The Rules of Contagion: Why Things Spread – and Why They Stop*, you talk about Ronald Ross, a Nobel Prize-winning British doctor who in the late 19th century discovered that mosquitoes spread malaria. How can we apply the blend of



Adam Kucharski. • NYT

may still be some infectious people out there, but because these measures are in place, they will have the infection and recover before they pass it on to someone else. That's what we've seen in places like Wuhan.

How, in terms of the mathematics of epidemiology, does

COVID-19 differ from other major infectious outbreaks such as the Spanish flu, SARS or Ebola?

There are a number of broad principles that we can use to understand these infections. These can apply across a number of pathogens, particularly in understanding the magnitude of spread. So, each person who gets infected, on average, how many people are they giving the virus to? For COVID-19, it is about two or three. We can also think about the time scales: if you have one case, how long on average is it until the person infected then shows symptoms? For COVID-19, that's about five days or so.

One of the big challenges or differences of COVID-19, as opposed to SARS or Ebola,

is that a lot of transmission seems to be happening very early on in the infection, when people don't have symptoms or have very mild symptoms. One of the reasons why infections like Ebola and SARS have been easier to control is that a lot of people who are highly infectious have very distinctive symptoms.

That means you can identify them, look at whom they've come in contact with, and make sure those people have been quarantined. However, for COVID-19, a lot of the transmission happens among people who might feel perfectly well, or might have a slight cough, for example. That makes it very hard to pick up all the infections.

India has a relatively low

less than 20% of their symptomatic cases.

Do you see any parallels between deadly pandemics such as COVID-19 and how fake news transmission happens?

There certainly are parallels. For COVID-19, on average, in the early stages, each case would give the infection to a couple of others. In a study of viral Facebook content, it was found that each person on average who shares a viral post will lead to about two more people sharing it. But the big difference is the time scale.

With COVID-19, it takes a few days for that transmission and that new infection to occur whereas online we might be talking about 30 seconds.

ChPT acquires 67% stake in Kamarajar Port

N. ANAND
CHENNAI

Chennai Port Trust (ChPT) on Friday acquired from the Centre 67% stake in Kamarajar Port Ltd. (KPL) for ₹2,383 crore making the latter its wholly-owned subsidiary.

"This agreement comes into force with immediate effect," P. Raveendran, chairman, ChPT, said. "Our immediate focus is to utilise the existing capacity in ChPT to the maximum and carry out expansion in KPL. Our next target is to achieve cargo handling of 100 million tonnes in the coming years."

Soon after remitting the amount, he said both ports would operate as different entities for the betterment of exim trade – KPL as corporate firm and ChPT as trust. Both ports would be in a better position to meet competition from private players such as Adani's Katupalli Port and Krishnapatnam Port. ChPT will continue to handle clean cargo such as containers, cars, liquid cargo, cruise and passenger traffic, while KPL will create additional capacity for all other types of bulk, dry and liquid cargo. "Our combined effort will be to maximise cargo throughput. For the past few years, ChPT has been handling over 50 million tonnes of cargo, and KPL about 35 million."

It will take at least 2 to 3 years to reach 100 million tonnes, due to COVID-19," he said. "In ChPT, we can't go in for expansion due to thick population, traffic bottlenecks and the ban on handling dusty cargoes such as coal and iron ore. KPL is already handling coal. Efforts would be made to speed up the Chennai Port-Maduravoyal elevated corridor," he said.

Merger won't lead to closure of even one branch: Indian Bank

Lender will retain its name post amalgamation, says MD Chunduru

N. ANAND
CHENNAI

The amalgamation of public sector lender Allahabad Bank with Indian Bank from April 1 will not lead to the closure of even a single branch, Padmaja Chunduru, managing director and chief executive officer, Indian Bank, said.

"The amalgamation process is on and we have gone far in this issue. The amalgamated entity will be called Indian Bank," she said.

According to Ms. Chunduru, regular customers may not see any visible change on day one. The change in signage and display boards at Allahabad Bank will be done after a few days due to logistics issue. She said that Indian Bank had wide presence in the South and lesser in the North, which was vice-versa for Allahabad Bank.



Since both banks are on the same technology platform, we don't foresee any problem, says the MD. BIJOY GHOSH

As of December 2019, on a pan-India basis, Allahabad Bank had 3,175 branches and the average business per branch was ₹116.80 crore. Indian Bank has 2,890 branches, including three overseas branches. The number of clients will increase to 11 crore. The amalgamation might see the merger of zonal offices in Lucknow and Kanpur to cut administrative

costs, she said. "Our goal is to ensure that minimum services are not denied to our customers from day one. Since both banks are on the same technology platform we don't foresee any problem," she said.

On the impact of COVID-19, she said: "Our people have been working with minimum staff strength at some branches and others

from home. We have contributed a day's salary to the PM Relief Fund. Moreover, we have come out with five different loans for our customers." Customers need not have to come to the branches for getting loans sanctioned. It can be done online. Disbursements will also be done online. In the case of bigger loans, signing of documents has to be done physically at branches or at their place," she said.

As only four days are left for the amalgamation, staffers are working round-the-clock and even during the weekend to see to it that the process goes through easily, another official said.

Meanwhile, an official of Allahabad Bank said the merger process could face a slight delay in the wake of the nationwide lockdown. (With PTI inputs)

Rise in TV viewership, courtesy COVID-19

197 mn watched PM's address, surpassing the 133 mn viewership of IPL Finals

LALATENDU MISHRA
MUMBAI



The work-from-home directive after the outbreak of COVID-19 has led to a jump in television viewership across the country.

As per the latest report by BARC-Nielsen India, the consumption of television content has increased by over 72 billion viewing minutes, leading to an 8% jump in the period from March 14-20 compared to the last three weeks of January. In urban India, the viewership in week 11 of 2020, around the time when companies announced work-from-home, was the second-highest since 2015. Viewership has risen

by 8% among men, 9% among women and 20% among children.

The average time spent per viewer per day now stands at 3 hours 51 minutes, showing a 2% rise, as per BARC-Nielsen India data.

The growth has been driven by a 20% increase in day-

time viewership at an all-India level. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's March 24 address on 'complete lockdown' was the most viewed event, with the number of viewers surpassing the IPL Finals (133 million), at 197 million.

At ZEE, the non-fiction programming, award show based content and viewership of movies has increased. Time spent by children has gone up for (general entertainment category) GECs and movies by 28% and 26% respectively, ZEE executives said. Prathyusha Agarwal, Chief Consumer Officer, ZEE Entertainment Enterprises Ltd. said, "As the nation is coping

with the COVID-19 outbreak and spending most of their time indoors, TV has been rendered the most sought-after companion to live through these unprecedented times."

"We are witnessing a consumption spike with the average time spent on TV increasing sharply. With the mandatory lockdown in place, the entire family consumption of the TV has seen an above average growth especially amongst males and kids," she said. Even there is a change in the viewing pattern, with children watching more movies and news apart from the regular kids content, she said.

Will ensure timely access to cash: FM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Lauding the efforts of bankers in this difficult time, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said she would speak to all banks to facilitate cash flow and enable timely access to all.

She also assured that she would talk to States and ensure that there are no restrictions in the movement of cash, bankers, vendors or bank mitras.

"Appreciate the service Bank Mitra/Banking Correspondents are undertaking across the country," the Finance Minister said in a series of tweets.

Telecom companies to opt for EMI moratorium

Tariff will remain stable, says COAI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Debt-ridden telecom operators are likely to opt for three-month moratorium to avoid cash crunch during the lockdown, industry body COAI said on Saturday.

The telecom operators have spoken in favour of raising mobile call and internet rates at the earliest, however, they will keep the prices stable during the lockdown period, COAI DG Rajan S. Mathews told PTI.

"There is debt of around ₹1.6-2 lakh crore that telecom operators owe to Indian banks. They will opt for

three-month moratorium in loan repayment to help them maintain cash flow. It is a relief for them," Mr. Mathews said.

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) also assayed fear of hike in tariff by the telecom operators. "Telecom companies understand market situation. They will keep tariff stable for now," Mr. Mathews said. Telecom operators have been asking for fixing minimum tariff for call and data rates. Vodafone Idea has suggested that the minimum rates should be fixed starting April 1, 2020.

Ratan Tata commits ₹500 cr. to battle COVID-19

Tata Sons announces ₹1,000 crore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Ratan Tata, chairman of Tata Trusts, has committed ₹500 crore to fight the COVID-19 crisis in the country.

The funds will be used for personal protective equipment for medical personnel on the frontline, respiratory systems for treating increasing cases, testing kits to increase per capita testing, setting up modular treatment facilities for infected patients, knowledge management and training of health workers and the general public.

"In this exceptionally difficult period, I believe that urgent emergency resources need to be deployed to cope with the needs of fighting the COVID-19 crisis, which is one of the toughest challenges the human race will face," Mr. Tata said in a statement.

Meanwhile, Tata Sons, the principal holding company of the Tata Group, has



Ratan Tata

announced ₹1,000 crore towards COVID-19 and plans to manufacture ventilators. The funding will be over and above the ₹500 crore announced by Mr. Tata.

"The current situation is worrisome and requires our very best action. We will work together with the Tata Trusts and our Chairman Emeritus Mr. Tata and would be fully supporting their initiatives, and work in a collaborative manner to bring the full expertise of the group," said N. Chandrasekaran, chairman, Tata Sons.

Maruti, Hyundai Motor to help govt. with ventilators, masks

MSIL enters pact with AgVa Healthcare, HMIL to get kits

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Following requests from the government, two of the biggest passenger vehicle makers in India – Maruti Suzuki and Hyundai Motor – on Saturday announced plans to help scale up the production of ventilators, masks and other protective equipment in the country.

Market leader Maruti Suzuki said that it had entered into an arrangement with AgVa Healthcare – an existing approved manufacturer of ventilators.

"At the request of the Government of India, Maruti Suzuki India Ltd. (MSIL) examined its ability to assist in

the production of ventilators, masks and other protective equipment... MSIL would work with AgVa Healthcare to rapidly scale

up production of ventilators. The intention is to reach a volume of 10,000 units per month," it said in a statement.

Order from Korea
Meanwhile, Hyundai Motor India Foundation (HMIF), the CSR arm of Hyundai Motor India, said it had ordered COVID-19 Advanced Diagnostic Testing Kits from

Net traffic rises by 30% post lockdown: COAI

Sudden demand chokes networks

MINI TEJASWI
BENGALURU

India's Internet consumption has gone up dramatically as net traffic witnessed a 30% spike post lockdown, leading to a sudden choke in the telecom network across the country, said Rajan Mathews, Director General at Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI).

"We see a sudden and unprecedented countrywide spike in demand for bandwidth, especially after the lockdown, with millions of professionals started working from home and their children playing online games, watching videos and movies online," he told *The Hindu*. Tech capital Bengaluru reported a 100% spike in net traffic, said a top official of a telecom firm, who did want to be named.

Responding to a query on the need for additional spectrum, Mr. Mathews said COAI had asked telecom and

internet service providers (ISPs) to individually approach the Department of Telecom for additional allocation of spectrum.

"It is up to individual telcos to ask for additional spectrum, depending on scientific reasons and economic viability. They need to be very specific why they need more spectrum, where they need and how do they justify their requirements. As of now, no real-time data is available on choke points, although there are plenty of such points." According to Mr. Mathews, many a time, networks are close to crashing and therefore COAI had advised electronic content providers, OTTs and television channels to reduce the density of the content.

"Customers must avoid live streaming, instead download videos and movies. This would ease the pressure on the networks," he added.

Zomato raises ₹12 cr. to 'feed daily wagers'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Food delivery application Zomato, which launched 'Feed the daily wager' initiative on March 24 to provide food support to communities worst hit by the lockdown, has till now raised about ₹12 crore as part of the campaign, its CEO Deepinder Goyal said on Saturday.

The company has also doubled its collection target under the initiative to ₹50 crore, which will be used to distribute food packages to "the daily wager" communities that are currently unable to support their family's food requirement."

STEP Live Junior has interactive exercises, tests, polls, quizzes and a lot more to hold your child's attention and help them confidently communicate in English.

New Batch Begins on 30th March (Monday)

Focus on grammar & vocabulary

Fun-filled 1 hour class per day

Child friendly context

Syllabus that is never taught in school

Entertaining exercises and tests



To know more, visit BIT.LY/SJUNIOR

STEP
LIVE
Junior

SNAPSHOTS



Evolutionary history

Scientists have discovered three new species of toothed pterosaurs - flying reptiles that inhabited the Sahara 100 million years ago. These were part of an ancient river ecosystem in Africa that was full of life, including fish, crocodiles, turtles and several predatory dinosaurs. The new fossils are described in the journal *Cretaceous Research*.



Fish eating Neanderthals
Neanderthals were feeding regularly on mussels, fish and other marine life over 80,000 years ago, according to a study which suggests it was not just the modern humans who sourced food from the sea. The study, published in the journal *Science*, found the first robust evidence during an excavation in the cave of Figueira Brava in Portugal.

Possible transmission of novel coronavirus from mother to child

R. PRASAD

A possible case of transmission of novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) from the mother to the child has been reported on March 26 in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA). The researchers from the Renmin Hospital of Wuhan University and other hospitals found elevated levels of antibodies (IgM) against the coronavirus in a newborn.

The mother was laboratory confirmed to be positive for coronavirus on January 31. A chest CT showed typical signs of infection in both lungs. On February 2, the mother was admitted to the Renmin Hospital in Wuhan. Molecular tests carried out four times confirmed that she was positive for the virus.

Caesarean section

On February 22, the infant was delivered by caesarean in a negative-pressure isolation room. The mother wore an N95 mask to reduce the chances of transmitting the virus to the newborn. The mother did not come in physical contact with the newborn after delivery. The mother's vaginal secretions were negative for the virus.

The newborn did not exhibit any symptoms of infection and molecular tests (RT-PCR) carried out five times – from two hours after birth to 16 days – were negative.

However, the newborn

Silent spread of novel coronavirus in Italy went undetected for weeks

By the time the first case was reported, the virus had already spread to most areas in southern Lombardy

R. PRASAD

Italy reported its first laboratory-confirmed case of novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) on February 20. But according to a study posted in a preprint repository *arXiv*, people appear to have been infected in early January and started showing symptoms by January 14. There apparently seems to have been a silent spread of the virus in the community for nearly 50 days.

By the time the first case was reported, the virus had already spread to most areas in southern Lombardy. Lombardy region, a district of 10 million, is the epicentre of the epidemic in Italy. So a day after the first case was reported, 28 more cases were confirmed, confirming the silent spread of the virus in the community.

Uncovering the trail

Contact tracing and testing of both symptomatic and asymptomatic exposures to positive cases helped uncover the ongoing transmission prior to the laboratory confirmation of the first case. The median age of people infected by the virus is 69 years and 47% of people who were infected required hospitalisation, of which 18% required intensive care. Each infected person



Quick spread: Lombardy region, a district of 10 million, is the epicentre of the epidemic in Italy. • GETTY IMAGES

spread it to 3.1 people, which started decreasing by end of the third week of February. The time between successive cases in the transmission chain, otherwise called as serial interval, was 6.6 days. "We did not observe significantly different viral loads in nasal swabs between symptomatic and asymptomatic," the authors say in the preprint. Manuscripts posted on preprint servers are yet to be peer-reviewed.

"The transmission potential of COVID-19 is very high and the number of critical cases may become largely un-

sustainable for the healthcare system in a very short-time horizon," the authors write. "Aggressive containment strategies are required to control COVID-19 spread."

Progression of disease

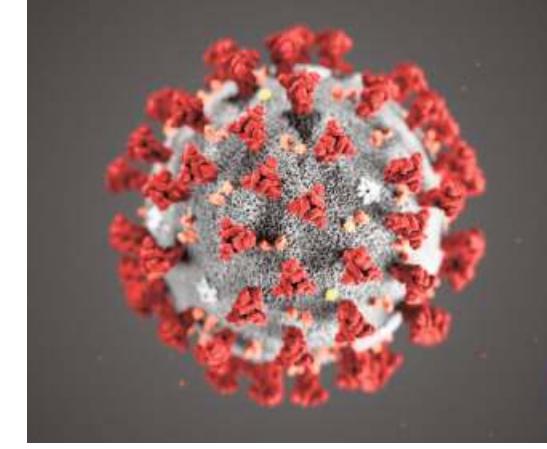
If there were just 530 cases on February 28, it increased to 5,830 by March 8. By early March, cases were reported from several areas in Lombardy region, a district of 10 million, which is the epicentre of the epidemic in Italy. As on March 28, there have been

86,498 cases in Italy, which is nearly 5,000 cases more than China's (81,996), and 9,134 deaths, which is the highest in the world. The authors collected epidemiological data through standardised interviews of confirmed cases and their close contacts. The information gathered included dates of symptom onset, clinical features, respiratory tract specimen results, hospitalisation and contact tracing. The epidemiological analyses were carried out on 5,830 confirmed cases during the period January 14 and March 8.

Immediate response

Contrary to what one might imagine, there has been "almost immediate initial response" by the Regional Health System. The focus was to collect epidemiological data and perform model-based predictions, increase in testing and providing hospital assistance for affected subjects.

The authors say that efforts were taken to limit the spread through contact tracing and isolation. Despite these efforts taken quickly, the number of new cases kept rising steadily leading to "rapid saturation of the health emergency system with a progressive difficulty" in treating COVID-19 patients.



Spiky ball: This illustration provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows the 2019 novel coronavirus. • AP

Strike at the spike and win the war

The spikes made of a glycoprotein are the business end of the virus



SPEAKING OF SCIENCE

D. BALASUBRAMANIAN

During the last six weeks, a series of research papers have appeared that offer medical solutions to defeat the life-threatening coronavirus infection - COVID 19. These are apart from the attempts to produce a protective vaccine against it.

The picture of how the novel coronavirus (scientists also call it SARS-CoV-2) looks is by now familiar to all of us (see the picture above). It is a roundish ball with spikes covering its entire body. These spikes, which are the business end of the virus, are made up of a glycoprotein, and the detailed structure of the spike protein and how it helps in entering the host (what an unwelcome name! but scientists are polite people) cell of the infected individual is seen by a Seattle-based group, using cryo-electron microscopy (<https://doi.org/2020.02.19.956851>) and also in the journal *Cell* [cell.10.1016/j.cell.2020.02.058](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cell.2020.02.058). The spike protein recognises a specific enzyme called ACE2 on the cell surface, kills its activity and enters the host cell, and wreaks damage.

Learn from the past

Go back in literature, and one finds that this activity of the novel coronavirus is actually a historical one. People have studied the catastrophe caused in 1918 by the Spanish Flu pandemic, wherein millions died. The patients suffered severe lung damage, pneumonia, and acute respiratory syndrome, which has recently been seen again in severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) by the pathogen named SARS (called SARS-CoV coronary virus). Research here showed that the enzyme called Angiotensin Converting Enzyme or ACE2 fights against the viral attack and protects against damage (see: "good ACE, bad ACE do battle in lung injury, SARS" <https://doi.org/10.1038/nm0805-821>, and also that ACE2 is beneficial for hypertension, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases (Tikellis C, Thomas MC. Angiotensin-Converting Enzyme 2 (ACE2) Is a Key Modulator of the Renin-Angiotensin System in Health and Disease., *International Journal of Peptide Research* 2012, doi:[10.1155/2012/256294](https://doi.org/10.1155/2012/256294)).

Hence this repeated request by public health officials to senior citizens across the world, and to those with these problems to stay safe at home.

Molecular and genetic basis

Most recently, a very important paper appeared from the Wuhan-based CAS lab for special pathogens, which revealed the genetic sequence of the novel coronavirus, its entry through deactivating ACE2 of the affected individual, plus another important point, namely, treatment of the affected by using the serum of a recently recovered patient. (This is important since it was shown as early as in 2006 by Liu and co-workers, <https://doi.org/10.1086/500469> when the SARS infected the world, treating the affected with the sera of recovered patients offered them the protective antibody IgG.) Hence the suggestion made across the world by some scientists that this can be followed in the present instance of COVID 19, too.

About the same time that this Wuhan work came about, comes another paper in the journal *Cell* from Leibniz, Germany (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cell.2020.02.052>), where the group confirmed that the novel coronavirus' cell entry depends not only of ACE2 but another molecule (and enzyme) in the host cell, called TMPRSS2. They suggest further that the latter can be blocked by a clinically proven protease inhibitor! This is an important advance, since we may now look for such blocking molecules as drugs against the dreaded enemy the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2!

Take Home Lessons

We thus see four different ways of overcoming the enemy. The very first is what people must do (use protective devices and methods, do not allow community spread, stay home and safe); the second is to attempt to use the serum from recovered patients to boost the immunity of the afflicted; the third is to look for drugs to treat the affected and the fourth is to devise successful vaccines. These take time – but hopefully in months and not in years. Let us therefore attempt all of these methods.

A few words about SARS-CoV-2 and COVID 19. Two days ago, the newspaper *The Guardian* of U.K. points out that as many as 35 companies worldwide are racing towards such a vaccine, and at least 4 of them have tested their products on animals. Some have repurposed and modified their earlier vaccines against SARS and MERS to try on COVID 19. And two companies are building vaccines based on the messenger RNA that COVID-19 has. But clinical trials on humans will take time to check on their efficacies and side effects, which may be as long as a year or more. Let us therefore attempt all of these methods.

We know by experience that where there is distress, there is hope; where there is hope, there are efforts; where there are efforts, there are solutions; and where there are solutions, there is success.

How artificial intelligence can aid eye testing

A tool to detect diabetic retinopathy has been developed by Google and an international team of researchers

ASWATHI PACHA



Specialised camera: A montage of images of the retina taken using fundus photography. •

From diagnostics to drug development, artificial intelligence (AI) today has become a valuable extension of the medical field. A new addition to its long list of uses is a hi-tech screening tool developed by Google and an international team of researchers for detecting diabetic retinopathy a diabetic complication in the eye.

A study conducted at two eye care centres in India – Aravind Eye Hospital, Madurai and Sankara Nethralaya, Chennai – which screened over 3,000 patients with diabetes, has shown that the AI's performance exceeded the conventionally used manual grading method used to identify diabetic retinopathy. The AI had a specificity and sensitivity of around 90%. The results were published in *JAMA Ophthalmology*.

A specialised retinal fundus camera was used to take

photos of the eye. "Usually when we need to evaluate the retina, we dilate the pupil to allow more light to enter the eye and illuminate the back of the eye. But in this fundus photography it is not necessary as a coherent beam of light can enter the small gap (Pupil) and take an image in

just two to three minutes," explains Dr. Rajiv Raman from Sankara Nethralaya, Chennai and one of the authors of the paper.

He adds that it is very easy to operate and the cost of the camera has also significantly reduced in the recent past. Tamil Nadu and Kerala go

vernments already have over 150 of these cameras currently in use.

Once the images are taken, it is fed into the computer and the AI tool screens it for diabetic retinopathy. A previous paper published by the team in 2016 in *JAMA* explains how the AI tool was shown over 120,000 images of the retina and taught to identify what each lesion meant. According to the International Clinical Diabetic Retinopathy scale, the AI tool was taught to grade the severity (none, mild, moderate, severe or proliferative) and give an instant report along with the recommendations.

Early intervention

"Diabetic patients are normally asymptomatic when the eye is concerned until the late stages or advanced stage when treatment is difficult or not so effective. So it is important to find the patient at an early stage and help prevent

loss of vision," explains Dr. Kim Ramasamy from Aravind Eye Hospital in Madurai.

"What we have deployed here is an opportunistic screening. We placed the camera at the diabetologist's clinic and trained their technician to take a picture of the back of the eye (retina) and upload it to the AI tool. In about two minutes, the patient can get their eye test report along with the other regular diabetic test reports. Based on this report, the diabetologist can further refer the patient to an ophthalmologist if needed," he adds.

Dr. Ramasamy explains how the team has been testing this AI at even small Health Centres in Tamil Nadu. "When about 100 patients are screened, about 20 will have any level of diabetic retinopathy and only four to five might need intervention. But to track down this small number we absolutely need to screen all the diabetics, and

we currently don't have the facilities now. It would be great if we can have these opportunistic screenings at offices, railway stations or other public places," adds Dr. Ramasamy.

Detecting breast cancer

The corresponding author of the paper Lily Peng adds in an email to *The Hindu*: "Beyond diabetic retinopathy we are also working on a number of other research projects using AI to tackle healthcare problems. Earlier this year, we showed in a research paper that AI models can help detect breast cancer in mammography images more accurately than doctors. Our research is still in the early stages, but it shows that AI can be a path forward to improve screenings for breast cancer and boost the chances of survival."

Ms Peng is a Product Manager at Google Health, California. Ms Peng is a Product Manager at Google Health, California.

dbala@vpe.org



All shook up

Why has the stock market been so volatile? How long will the bear phase last?

ASHISH RUKHAIYAR

The story so far: On Friday, even after the Reserve Bank of India announced a slew of measures to boost the economy in the time of a pandemic, shares fell 1% to close at 29,416 points. The stock market has seen a lot of volatility with the benchmark Sensex having fallen as much as almost 40% from the highs it touched in January.

Where was the Sensex in January?

On January 20, the Sensex touched an all time intra-day record high of 42,274 from where it fell a massive 16,635 points to touch a 52-week intra-day low of 25,639 points on March 24. This assumes significance as a fall of over 20% is typically looked upon as a bear phase in the markets. While the 30-share barometer has recovered 4,177 points or 16% from the lows, it is still experiencing a lot of volatility with underlying weakness. Incidentally, the India VIX index, which is considered a measure of near-term volatility in the market, has surged more than six times this year, rising from 11.7 in December to the current levels of 70.4. The intensity of the fall can be further gauged from the fact that the current month has seen the indices hitting their lower circuit breaker of 10% on two occasions while registering some of the biggest single-day falls as well.

What is the reason for the huge plunge?

The single biggest reason of the ongoing volatility and fall is the global coronavirus pandemic. In India, the number of coronavirus cases stand at a shade below 1,000 (as on March 28) even as the country is in the midst of a 21-day lockdown as part of the government's attempts to curb the spread. The pandemic has led to concerns that global economic growth will get deeply affected. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has

Globally and in India, governments and regulators are going in for stimulus measures to support the economy. But due to the uncertainty around COVID-19, investors are wary of taking risks

Is selling happening across all sectors?

An across-the-board selling frenzy has gripped the markets with no sector insulated from the sell-off. Banking and financials, however, have borne the brunt as investors believe that the economic impact of the pandemic will lead to a rise in bad debts of such entities. Sector heavyweights such as HDFC, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank, State Bank of India, IndusInd Bank and Bajaj Finance, all part of the Sensex, have fallen significantly with some currently trading near multi-year lows. Automobile stocks have also been among the worst hit as most plants are shut on account of the lockdown. Some of the pharmaceutical and fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) stocks have been able to stem the fall to a limited extent though they are currently significantly lower compared to their highs.

Is anything being done to address investor concerns?

Globally, governments and regulators are taking initiatives in the form of stimulus measures to support the economy. For instance, the U.S. Senate and House have approved a \$2-trillion coronavirus relief package. Earlier, the U.S. Federal Reserve announced a \$700-billion stimulus package. In India, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reduced the key interest rate sharply by 75 basis points and allowed equated monthly instalments (EMIs) to be deferred by three months. The repo rate has been reduced by 75 bps while the reverse repo rate has been cut by 90 bps. Further, the cash reserve ratio has also been reduced that will release ₹1.37-lakh crore liquidity. Cumulatively, the RBI measures will lead to an infusion of ₹3.74-lakh crore into the banking system. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), on its part, has relaxed many compliance requirements while tightening the norms for short selling and margins to ensure the smooth functioning of the equity markets.

What is the outlook?

The consensus estimate is pessimistic due to the lack of any positive triggers. While policy makers worldwide are trying to provide stimulus, the uncertainty around the pandemic has made investors risk averse. They feel that since the current crisis is not due to a liquidity crunch, as was the case during the Lehman crisis, it is difficult to counter it with mere liquidity infusion. Most analysts expect the pandemic to affect corporate earnings over the next few quarters. Global financial major Morgan Stanley has lowered its year-end Sensex target by a little over 11% to 32,000, even as it believes that the current bear phase in the stock market is close to its bottom. Analysts are unanimous in their view that the pandemic will hit India's growth rate and hence risky assets like equities are seeing a sell-off from investors across categories.

Can drugs for Ebola be used to treat COVID-19?

What are the medicines being considered for the novel coronavirus pandemic?

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN

The story so far: Globally unknown till under 200-days ago, the virus, SARS-CoV-2, has today, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), caused the world's largest pandemic. Over half-a-million people are under lockdown, over six lakh are infected and nearly 29,000 dead globally. In India, the numbers stand at a shade below 1,000 cases and 24 deaths (as on March 28, 9 p.m.). The number of cases is growing despite the unprecedented measures put in place by the Central and State governments. With the rise in cases, India has now joined the world in the search for drugs to treat COVID-19. Earlier this week, India approved the use of the anti-malarial drug, hydroxychloroquine, as a preventive medication for people at high risk, such as health workers and immediate contacts of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19.

What is causing death in COVID-19 patients?

In India, COVID-19 deaths have been seen in mostly the elderly population with other health issues including diabetes. Emerging data from China and Italy show that COVID-19 patients have severe blood-clotting disorders that lead to respiratory failure and death. Vaccination has been ruled out as an immediate solution, with WHO noting that even if the process is fast-tracked, a vaccine would take over 18 months to be ready for use. The discovery and licensed use of a drug comes with a long-gestation period.

Hence, WHO and other health agencies are re-looking at the efficacy of known therapies and drugs this time to treat COVID-19.

Dr. Raman R. Gangakhedkar, Head of Epidemiology and Communicable diseases at the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), said India, like the rest of the world, does not have the luxury of time to look for new treatment or vaccines right now, "though five vaccines have gone into animal toxicity tests. Our best bet right now is looking at re-purposed drugs".

With this in mind, WHO Director-General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, recently announced the launch of 'Solidarity', a giant multinational trial for testing therapies that researchers have suggested may be effective against COVID-19.

He said, "It is launched to generate robust, high quality evidence as fast as possible." India, on Friday, aligned with the study after having so far stayed away due to its small sample size, according to the ICMR. WHO said, "This is now an all-out, coordinated push to collect robust scientific data from across the world."

What are the drugs being considered?

WHO is looking at some of what doctors and researchers believe are the most promising therapies including a combination of two HIV drugs, lopinavir and ritonavir (used in India also for an Italian patient in Rajasthan), anti-malaria medications, chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine, and an experimental antiviral compound called remdesivir.

As for hydroxychloroquine, a senior Health Ministry official clarified this by saying: "This drug has been brought in at an experimental level and the general public has been cautioned that it is not for use without a doctor's prescription. To counter any shortage of the drug supplies we have banned the export of the finished drug and its component ingredients."

A small study conducted in France found it led to a



significant reduction in viral load in COVID-19 patients.

What does the research say so far?

The drug, remdesivir, developed to treat Ebola and related viruses, is being tested to find out whether it can be used on COVID-19 patients. Says WHO in research material it has released: "It works by shutting down the viral replication. This was first tested in a COVID-19 patient diagnosed in the United States, when his

condition started worsening, according to a case report in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. The condition of the patient improved."

The international health community has maintained that of the drugs in the Solidarity trial, remdesivir has the best potential – the drug shows that it can be used in high doses without causing toxicities

What about anti-malaria drugs?

Chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine are decades-old anti-malarial drugs. Hydroxychloroquine is being looked at in India and the ICMR has said that it is currently studying the drug action in the Indian population with respect to COVID-19. After being left out from the 'Solidarity trial' previously, the two drugs were brought back for consideration when some countries showed interest in its potential.

A study on 20 COVID-19 patients in France who were given hydroxychloroquine showed a significant reduced viral load in nasal swabs. Hydroxychloroquine, in particular, is known to have a variety of side-effects, and can in some cases harm the heart. "People with heart conditions are at higher risk of severe COVID-19," warns cardiologist Dr. Naresh Trehan, who heads Medanta Hospital.

The combination drug, ritonavir/lopinavir, was introduced two decades ago to treat HIV infections. Doctors in Wuhan, China, gave 199 patients two pills of lopinavir/ritonavir twice a day plus standard care, or standard care alone.

There was no significant difference between the groups as per reports submitted on March 15. Says Dr. K.K. Aggarwal, former head of the Indian Medical

Association, "Although the drug is generally safe it may interact with drugs usually given to severely ill patients, and doctors have warned it could cause significant liver damage."

He added that another combination under testing is interferon-beta, which WHO has cautioned might be risky.

Says Dr. Aggarwal, "15% of COVID-19 needs hospitalised care and of these 5% need ICU care. Now with time running out rapidly for the entire world, repurposed drugs are being aimed at to contain the problem, reducing hospital load, freeing critical hospital beds and allowing people to swiftly return to normal work. Agencies are also looking at unapproved drugs that have performed well in animal studies with the other two deadly coronaviruses, which cause Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS)."

Is plasma therapy a possibility?

The world health community is also looking at plasma or antibody therapy for COVID-19 with China using it recently on its patients. WHO had recommended its use against Ebola, and issued protocols for its use to treat MERS but its clear-cut benefit to treat COVID-19 cases is still under investigation.

The novel coronavirus hails from a family on which work has already been done worldwide after SARS and MERS. Says Dr. Gangakhedkar, "This really helps in research in the sense that we don't have to start from scratch. This is vital in our hunt for drugs to contain this virus."

Why is the lockdown necessary?

Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary, Union Health Ministry, says, "The lockdown will give us time delay, maybe push back any surge towards community transmission of COVID-19. It is also helping us to re-draw our strategy to cope with this very strong and infectious virus. India has asked all State governments to be prepared in terms of manpower, hospital facilities and care for patients."

India is now readying its health infrastructure to cope with a virus that has tested the most resilient health-care systems in the world, bringing them to their knees. According to Prof Balram Bhargava, Director-General, ICMR, "This is a crisis like no other and we will have to work together as a nation and an international community. Globally, the problem is being tackled with great urgency. The way out is to find a sustainable solution quickly."

Why has Kerala sought a relaxation of FRBM rules?

When can norms of the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act be flexible? How will it help?

SURESH SESHADRI

The story so far: Kerala was one of the earliest States to announce an economic package of ₹20,000 crore to mitigate the impact on livelihoods and overall economic activity from the sweeping steps taken to battle the COVID-19 pandemic, including the latest 21-day nationwide lockdown. Explaining the rationale for the package, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan wrote in *The Hindu* (March 27, 2020): "While we enforce the lockdown in all its seriousness, we should not lose sight of the other major challenge in front of us. India has a high share of poor in its population, most of whom suffer from multiple economic and social deprivations. They earn their livelihoods from the informal and unorganised sectors, where there is neither job security nor continuity of income flows. Their livelihoods have to be protected through the lockdown period." To help fund the emergency relief package, the State proposes to borrow as much as ₹12,500 crore from the market in April itself and the Chief Minister has urged the Centre to provide Kerala with flexibility under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act so as to ensure that the State's finances are not adversely impacted in the rest of the financial year starting on April 1.

What is the FRBM Act? Enacted in August 2003, the legislation is aimed at making the Central government responsible for ensuring "inter-generational equity in fiscal management and long-term macro-economic stability". In other words, the current generation of the country's administrators must ensure that their management of the country's finances, both in terms of expenditure and revenue, does not leave future generations saddled with the burden of having to service unsustainably high levels of inherited debt that would in turn affect their ability to provide a stable economic environment for contemporary society. To achieve this, the Act envisages the setting of limits on the Central government's debt and deficits as well as mandating greater transparency in fiscal operations of the Central government and the conduct of fiscal policy in a medium-term framework. The rules for implementing the Act were notified in July 2004 and since then every Budget of the Union government has included a Medium Term Fiscal Policy Statement that specifies the annual revenue and fiscal deficit goals over a three-year horizon. The government also uses the Budget to spell out the longer-term glide path to achieve the key objective of reducing the fiscal deficit to 3% of GDP within a specified time frame – one that has shifted from the initial goal of March 31, 2009, to March 31, 2021, when the rules were amended in 2018, and most recently to the setting of a target of 3.1% for March 2023.

To ensure that the States too are financially prudent, the 12th Finance Commission's recommendations in 2004



linked debt relief to States with their enactment of similar laws. The States have since enacted their own respective Financial Responsibility Legislation, which sets the same 3% of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) cap on their annual budget deficits.

Why is Kerala seeking flexibility under the FRBM?

Kerala's current fiscal position means that it can borrow about ₹25,000 crore during the financial year 2020-21. Now, given that it proposes to raise half that amount of debt in the very first month of the new financial year, the State government is understandably concerned that the stringent borrowing cap under the fiscal responsibility laws should not constrain its borrowing and spending ability over the remaining 11 months – a period when it would not only need to continue with its COVID-19 mitigation measures but would also have to meet other expenditure for routine affairs related to the running of the State's socio-economic programmes as well as the post pandemic recovery.

How does a relaxation of the FRBM work?

The law does contain what is commonly referred to as an 'escape clause'. Under Section 4(2) of the Act, the Centre can exceed the annual fiscal deficit target citing grounds that include national security, war, national calamity, collapse of agriculture, structural reforms and decline in real output growth of a quarter by at least three percentage points below the average of the previous four quarters.

Given that the ongoing pandemic could be considered as a national calamity – which in conjunction with the ongoing lockdown to combat it is in all likelihood going to cause a severe contraction in economic output as well – the current circumstances would be apt for suspending both the Centre's and States' fiscal deficit targets. This would allow both the Union government and States including Kerala to undertake the much-needed increases

in expenditure to meet the extraordinary circumstances.

When have the FRBM norms been relaxed in the past?

There have been several instances of the FRBM goals being reset. Most recently, presenting the Budget for 2020-21 in February, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had cited the recent reductions in corporate tax as structural reforms that would trigger the escape clause enabling the government to recalibrate the fiscal deficit target for 2019-20 to 3.8%, from the budgeted 3.3%. The spillover impact of the reforms would also necessitate a reset for 2020-21: from the earlier deficit target of 3% to 3.5%.

But the most significant FRBM deviation happened in 2008-09, in the wake of the global financial crisis, when the Centre resorted to a focused fiscal stimulus: tax relief to boost demand and increased expenditure on public projects to create employment and public assets, to counter the fallout of the global slowdown. This led to the fiscal deficit climbing to 6.2%, from a budgeted goal of 2.7%.

Simultaneously, the deficit goals for the States too were relaxed to 3.5% of GSDP for 2008-09 and 4% of GSDP for fiscal 2009-10.

The precedents are there and given the unprecedented nature of the pandemic and its devastating impact on the global economy, another significant deviation from the FRBM norms is very likely in the current and next fiscal years.

Favelas left to fight it alone in Brazil

The nation's vast shanty towns are facing the twin threat of the deadly coronavirus and hunger

SAO PAULO



Blame it on *City of God*.

Fernando Meirelles's cult flick of 2002 exposed Brazil's underbelly – a shanty town where armed drug lords ruled the streets, everybody robbed everyone else and blood drained into sewers every day. Mr. Meirelles made the word favela (slum) and 'City of God', a dusty patch on the western fringe of Rio de Janeiro, famous across the globe. But Brazil's upper crust showed little interest in the film. It just reconfirmed their prejudice: favelas are breeding grounds of drugs and death, and a threat to the noble lanes.

Last Sunday, City of God became the first favela in Brazil to record a COVID-19 case, sending a shiver

across the country. The news invoked fears of the virus rampaging the slums, gaining strength and then ravaging the posh areas. But the story is entirely different. According to a survey, 70% of cases in Rio were reported from rich areas. Of these, some 40% had just returned from abroad. In São Paulo, which is becoming the COVID-19 epicentre in South America, the first reported case was of a man who had travelled to Italy. In fact, the first few dozens of cases were treated at the Albert Einstein Hospital, a super-expensive private medical centre in São Paulo.

The favelas are worried. They are facing the twin threat of the deadly virus and hunger. "Rich people went abroad and got infected. They came back and passed the virus to their maids and nannies who took it to the favela where people live in small houses close to each other. Now, pe-

ople are getting sick in our communities and rich people are dismissing the maids. We are the victims here," says Vera Mendes, 39, who lost her job as a maid in three of the four houses she used to work for. "They didn't even bother to pay the salary," says Ms. Mendes, adding that a vast majority of her neighbours in Paraisópolis, the biggest favela with 1,00,000 residents, have lost their jobs as domestic helps.

Rate trajectory

It's just a month since the virus came to this country. As of Saturday, Brazil had reported 3,477 infections and 93 deaths, a majority of them in São Paulo State, which has been under a lockdown since Tuesday. As the country follows the infections rate trajectory of Italy and Spain, the lockdowns may be extended. But a significant number of persons from favelas continue to work in supermarkets, food delivery restaurants and pharmacies, and ride-sharing apps are still working. With these



workers using buses and subways, community leaders are worried. "Since last week, the number of suspicious cases in Paraisópolis has grown. Most informal workers who have been dismissed from work are still going out looking for work. If

they do not get immediate relief, we face a huge problem," says Gilson Rodrigues, the president of the residents' union of Paraisópolis.

With the federal government led by far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, who is still mocking the virus as "little flu", delivering little help to the country's working class, the favela residents are taking the matter into their own hands. Mr. Rodrigues is one of the founders of the "GIO in the Favelas", a group that brings together social entrepreneurs from the main favelas in Brazil. The group is providing help to the people in their communities. "We lack two basic things – information and water. We are sharing information about the virus and jobs and bringing water to our people," says Mr. Rodrigues. "There should be a government action to save people's lives. But they are concerned about the economy, not about the people."

Under pressure from firms which have lost big money on the stock market, Mr. Bolsonaro has been

threatening to "open the economy" soon. Attacking State Governors, who have imposed lockdowns, the President has gone to the extent of asking his supporters to organise road shows to demand cancellation of the lockdowns. "I saw a man jumping into the sewer. He dived into it and got out alright. Nothing happened to him," said Mr. Bolsonaro on Thursday, claiming that the Brazilians were immune to the virus.

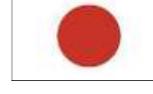
The federal government's response to the pandemic has been so cavalier that drug gangs have stepped in to fill the vacuum in the slums. According to reports in the local media, drug traffickers have imposed a "coronavirus curfew" in various favelas of Rio, including the City of God. In a widely-circulated video this week, gang members can be seen moving in the lanes of the community of 40,000 residents, telling people "to stay at home and chill".

In the time of COVID-19, the City of God is back in the grip of its drug lords.

The Indian who made a Japanese movie

Chauhan's film, *Bad Poetry Tokyo*, won several global awards, including Grand Prize at Brussels

TOKYO



Bad Poetry Tokyo, a small-budget Japanese film, has been the darling of

the international film festival circuit since 2018, winning a slew of prizes. Featuring the greatest hits of cinema vérité – sex, violence, emotional trauma, all filmed with a handheld camera – at first glance it's a standard art house movie. But there is a plot twist. The director, Anshul Chauhan, is a young Indian man with no film background and only a smattering of Japanese.

Mr. Chauhan was born in 1986 in a small town called Mainpuri, near Agra, and was destined for the Army. His father was a soldier and a strict disciplinarian, who brooked no dissent, packing off his son to a military

school in Rajasthan as soon as he was old enough to go. Bullied by teachers and senior students, Mr. Chauhan detested school and ran away several times. At university, the young man defied his father to study geography.

He recalls how everything changed for him one day in 2004 following a chance encounter on a train. Returning home from an entrance exam for a Masters degree in Geo-informatics, Mr. Chauhan struck up a conversation with a fellow traveller who introduced himself as an animator.

He was immediately intrigued and spent the next few years training himself in animation, eventually working at studios in Bengaluru and Pune. In 2011, Mr. Chauhan overheard colleagues talking about a studio, Polygon Pictures, in Japan that was hiring Indians. A few months later,



he was on a plane to Tokyo, to start a job as an animator. It was well paid and steady. And even his father finally seemed reconciled to his life choices.

But this being Mr. Chauhan, the whimsy and ambition were unstop-

pable. In 2013, he woke up one day with a strong, somewhat inexplicable, desire to make a movie. He bought a camera and made a few shorts. Eventually, he quit his job to focus on film-making full time, but had to rejoin a few months later having gone through all his savings. Yet, what he describes as the "movie bug" kept gnawing at him, and in 2017, he left his job yet again to make *Bad Poetry Tokyo*. It was his first feature-length film, and was shot over four weeks in May, paid for with his slim savings. Locations and actors were found via Facebook.

International recognition

By this time, Mr. Chauhan was married to his long-term Japanese girlfriend, Mina, who acted as translator, reworking the script he had written into Japanese. The cast was largely bilingual, which helped the newly minted director achieve his vision with conviction, despite the cultural barriers. Against the odds, the movie won the Grand Prize at the Brussels

International Independent Film Festival. This was followed by a best actress award at the Osaka Asian Films Festival and the prize for best narrative feature film at the Venice Film Week.

Mr. Chauhan was hopeful that the awards would help him secure a commercial release for the movie in Japan but every distributor he approached turned him away. He is reluctant to outright ascribe this refusal to racism. "It was confusing for them. What is an Indian doing making a Japanese movie? No one could understand," he said. Mr. Chauhan's explanation to them was simple. "I live in Japan, so I make a movie here. What can be more normal?"

It took two years for *Bad Poetry Tokyo* to finally see the light of day in its "home" country. Bypassing the distributors, who seemed intent on ignoring him, Mr. Chauhan eventually took a DVD copy of the film directly to a large theatre owner, who was so impressed that he wrote Mr. Chauhan a recommendation letter guaranteeing a screening for the movie at his theatres. It worked.

Mr. Chauhan was finally able to get his film released in Tokyo in January 2020. *The Japan Times* reviewer was clearly impressed. "Set in the quiet Japanese countryside, but full of unquiet emotions... without Chauhan's name on the credits, I never would have guessed *Bad Poetry Tokyo* was by a non-Japanese," the review raved. *Bad Poetry Tokyo* was also scheduled for release in the cities of Yokohama and Nagano. Unfortunately the showings coincided with lockdowns due to the spread of COVID-19. "Only five people showed up at the theatre in Yokohama," said Mr. Chauhan ruefully.

But the film-maker remains undaunted. He has already completed filming his next feature titled *Kontora*, about a young Japanese girl who chances upon her grandfather's diary written during the Second World War. And he is now figuring out the path to his next goal – a Hindi movie with a Japanese connect.

For Afghan Sikhs, it's between violence and exodus

Sikh community leader says the latest attack on a gurdwara will prompt more of them to flee

KABUL



A brutal attack on Wednesday targeting a 400-year-old gurdwara in Kabul claimed 25 lives, including two minors and three women, further terrorising Afghanistan's already dwindling minority Sikh community.

"They had gathered for the morning prayers organised specifically for the nation that was hit by the coronavirus outbreak. They made *mannat* from god to help the nation pass through the coronavirus crisis with as little difficulties as possible," says Charan Singh Khalsa, an Afghan Sikh, who lost many relatives in this week's attack. Two insurgents stormed the historical temple, detonated bombs and opened fire on the worshippers and residents. About

40 families lived on the compound of the gurdwara.

The massacre was claimed by the Islamic State, but authorities believe it to be the work of the Haqqani Network. Either way, for many in the small congregation, this attack was the final straw that broke the camel's back.

"There are less than 100 families of Hindus and Sikhs combined living in Afghanistan. And if you slaughter 25 members of an already small community, what makes you think the rest will want to stay?" asks Mr. Khalsa.

But for Mr. Khalsa, the push was long time coming, with growing number of threats and intimidation. "The Afghan Sikhs have faced a lot of humiliation and persecution over the recent years. Many incidences in the last few years have targeted the Hindus and Sikhs," he says. "My own brother was kidnapped last year and

murdered. We found his body in a grave two months later. More recently, a Sikh home in Kabul was attacked and robbed; an old lady in the house was killed. And earlier this month, on Holi, a Sikh shop was attacked, and its owner was injured," he narrates incidents after incidents, the frustration evident in his voice.

While Mr. Khalsa's frustration was echoed among many in Afghanistan, there was also an outpour of grief and solidarity for the endangered community.

"At a time when the entire world is facing a pandemic, Afghanistan faces the usual killing of innocents by terrorists and evil soldiers," says Lima Ahmad, an Afghan academic. "Yesterday (Wednesday) Harundar Singh lost seven members of his family, including his child, mother, and wife, not to coronavirus, but to the virus called terrorism that has been killing innocent people in Afghanistan for many years," she points out, referring to one of the survivors of the attack.

"In such an uncertain time where most of us are suffering from lockdown and the unknown future, many people such as Harundar Singh are left with no family members,"



Ms. Ahmad says Afghanistan is currently dealing with 110 cases of COVID-19 and threats of a possible medical emergency, which has resulted in the lockdown of two major cities, including the capital and the western city of Herat that borders Iran.

But despite the solidarity, Mr. Khalsa is certain that the gurdwara attack will trigger another exodus of the Sikhs. "This incident will ensure that the remaining few of us will also leave the country. There will be hardly any Sikhs or Hindus remaining in Afghanistan in the coming weeks," he adds, urging government and international organisations to step in and help the Sikhs. "I hope the government and international organisations will at least protect our historical and religious sites here once the community has all left."

Mr. Khalsa clarifies that his appeal does not mean that he doesn't love his country. "I am proud to be Afghan. No matter where we go, we will wear that identity with pride. We will not forget our country, but we have sacrificed so much already. But if something brings you pain, there is only so much you can tolerate," he explains, adding a common Hindi phrase altered to fit the situation, "Agar jaan hai, toh Afghan hai – If I am alive, I am an Afghan."

Solidarity from two metres away

A Sri Lankan editor has started an online journal to collate stories about life during the lockdown

COLOMBO



"How did you Kashmiris survive the lockdown for six months?" Almost everyone who met or called Nurat Maqbool after the 'Janata Curfew' last Sunday asked her, according to an account she wrote in the 'Lockdown Journal', an online platform launched by a Colombo-based editor-writer to record stories of the lockdown worldwide in the time of the COVID-19 crisis.

Kashmiris have seen lockdowns "every other week for the last three decades". But this one, which she experienced in Bengaluru, was not the same. "The lockdown was there [in Kashmir] but it was for a small area and the rest of the world was happy and thriving. Sometimes all of that

gives you hope that things will be better for you as well. But in the lockdown of the world, there is no escape," she wrote on March 22 in the journal.

The journal [lockdownjournal.com], launched by Sunila Galappatti, went live on March 20, and has over 30 entries so far, including from the U.K., India, Jamaica, Nigeria, Portugal, Germany, Sri Lanka and Australia.

The entries are typically short, first person narratives of a full day. While COVID-19 is the running theme, the stories are both similar and different, depending on who and where the writers are. Elogosa Osunde, in Abuja, Nigeria, writes about downloading an app used for group video chats. "It is F's birthday today," she wrote on March 25, apparently about a friend in Lagos. They chat about assorted things – like earrings and live concerts. They laugh and Ms. Osunde sleeps well that afternoon. She wakes up, works on a playlist and goes about with tasks she'd assigned herself. She realises: "Everything is uncertain, everywhere. But where I

am, there's a more specific terror... it's the poverty capital of the world, which means that what works for most of the world won't work for us."

Together in crisis

On what triggered the journal that curates accounts of a day in the life of someone, somewhere, Ms. Galappatti says: "We are actually in all moments together as a world, but our connection to someone far away is less visible, less palpable. It struck me here was a moment where we were very consciously all in the same crisis together."

She added: "At the same time, I find it very dispiriting that it is the nation state that we are falling back on – because it is the infrastructure we have. So we are closing our borders, we are counting within countries. I wanted some way for us to reach across that (safely)."

The journal, describing itself as 'Solidarity from at least two metres away', is an attempt to try and make sense of this together, to have people

share their experiences across contexts, and hopefully discover how people are experiencing it elsewhere. The exercise is open-ended at the moment, with no specific plan for the content that might accumulate, or a visible deadline. Also, Ms. Galappatti is aware that the journal is necessarily written by those least under pressure in this crisis. Those who have "the shelter, sustenance, and the mind-space".

Another reason drives her effort. "We are still living a little breathlessly, because that is what we know how to do. We are still online, offering expertise and one-upmanship in virtue. Yet, we are in a situation that we haven't actually been in before. I thought, what about a quiet, gentle place where we tell stories of ourselves that we may not understand till much later."

Most entries are everyday stories, simply told as they happened to someone. Reading them, you get a now-familiar sense of the general feeling world over, but also a rarer

glimpse of the specific. BBC news journalists, like their counterparts elsewhere, are "essential workers". That is why Charles Haviland left for work on March 24 in London. He took the Tube – less crowded than usual but not empty enough for comfort – and reached the New Broadcasting House. The few who turned up were sitting, separated by empty desks. A colleague distributed oranges, another offered cartons of skimmed milk that he got from a café upstairs, just before it shut down.

After what has now become a 'usual news day' – of death tolls and soaring cases – Mr. Haviland was ready to leave. "It is night when I head for home. By Warren Street station, six or seven people, probably homeless, are gathered much too close together. But what comfort can they find apart from each other? They are talking not in English but in... which eastern European language? I can't get close enough to tell," he wrote about his day.



Meera Srinivasan
is The Hindu's Colombo correspondent

Postponed Olympic qualifiers will take place'

Batra asks NSFs to share athletes' training programme

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI
Indian Olympic Association (IOA) president Narinder Batra on Saturday said the Tokyo Olympics qualification events, postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, will be held once the health crisis is resolved and asked the National Sports Federations (NSFs) to prepare a list of such tournaments in their respective sports.

Batra also asked the top brass of all the NSFs to share a calendar of their athletes' preparations for the Tokyo Games, pushed back by one year to 2021 in view of the worsening coronavirus crisis.

"The qualification events which were postponed will happen again at revised dates once this virus issue is resolved. Draft tentative planning for that. Please share details of all the qualification events yet to happen in your sport," Batra wrote in a letter to the presidents and secretaries of the NSFs.

International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Thomas Bach on Thursday had a conference call with the members in the after-



Looking at the future: Batra wants IOA and NSFs to plan on the extension of contracts of the coaches. ■ FILE PHOTO: PTI

math of the postponement of the Olympics. Batra is an IOC member as well as the president of the International Hockey Federation.

Batra also said the IOA and NSFs need to plan on the extension of contracts of the coaches whose tenures were to end this year.

"As you are already aware that the 2020 Olympics is postponed to 2021, we now need to plan for extension of contracts for HPD (High Per-

formance Director), coaches, support staff, etc. till the end of 2021 as many such contracts are ending in 2020. This process needs to start as soon as possible," the IOA chief said.

Understanding

He added that under the present circumstances, it will be very difficult to give any confirmations "but this is just to get everyone on the same page".

New date 'won't satisfy everybody,' says Coe

"There are demands for the decision to be taken as quickly as possible"

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

World Athletics president Sebastian Coe admitted on Friday that settling on a new date for the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 will not satisfy everybody.

"All sports have made it pretty clear they have particular challenges at particular times of the year," said Coe. "We are probably not going to reach a solution that meets with the approval of every sport. But there does have to be an element of flexibility and there is going to be flexibility for the next two years."

The 2021 World Athletics Championships, for example, are scheduled to be staged in August next year in Eugene, USA.

There is no definite date yet for the rescheduled Olympic Games with IOC chief Thomas Bach saying on Tuesday that the Olympics "must be rescheduled to a date beyond 2020 but not later than summer 2021".

There have been suggestions even that the



Sebastian Coe. ■ FILE PHTOO

All sports have made it pretty clear they have particular challenges at particular times of the year

rebooted Olympics could be held in the spring and so allow athletes to avoid competing in the brutal heat and humidity of Japan's summer.

"There are clearly demands for this decision to be taken as quickly as possible – the athletes and the federations need clarity," added Coe. "Once the decision is made, we can build (the calendars) around it."

This battle can be won only by staying indoors: Pujara

"We have a responsibility to look after our country and family"

EXCLUSIVE

AYAN ACHARAYA
CHENNAI

Even as the novel coronavirus continues to cripple major sporting events across the world, India's Test batsman Cheteshwar Pujara has called on fans to rally around each other.

"These are tough times, not just for our nation but the entire world. The only way we can fight this pandemic is by staying indoors," Pujara told Sportstar.

"It can be frustrating at times. There will be days when you'll have to resist the urge to go out for a casual stroll, but we have a responsibility to look after our country and family and the best way to do it is by remaining in self-isolation at home," he added.

Relaxed routine
Pujara is using the downtime to enjoy a relaxed routine at home with his young daughter. "It's a welcome change for me," he said.

"I like spending time with myself, reading a book or watching TV. That said, I've a young daughter who is so energetic and wants to play



Welcome break: Cheteshwar Pujara, returning from a practice session during the New Zealand tour last month, says people will have to resist the urge to go for a casual stroll. ■ FILE PHOTO

all the time, so half my day goes into taking care of her. I'm also helping my wife Puja with the daily chores."

Pujara reminded that sport needs to take a back-seat for now.

"I feel sport really has the power to bring people together but now is not the time for fans to throng stadiums in support of their teams and players," he said.

"Yes, you still need to stick together but with your family, in your own homes."

"In the aftermath of a crisis such as this, I feel the biggest fight is going to be the one to be indoors."

"For a sportsman, the fight is out on the field; for a soldier, it's the war front, but this particular battle can only be won by staying indoors."

COVID-19 AID



Raina contributes 52 lakh
LUCKNOW
India player Suresh Raina has contributed ₹52 lakh in the fight against coronavirus. "It's time we all do our bit to help defeat COVID-19. I'm pledging ₹52 lakh for the fight (₹31 lakh to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund and ₹21 lakh to the UP CM's Disaster Relief Fund). Please do your bit too," Raina wrote on Twitter.

MPL team owners' kind gesture to groundsmen

MUMBAI
The eight team owners of the Mumbai Premier League (MPL) will be donating ₹1 lakh each in order to help the groundsmen working on the Mumbai maidans and facing hardship due to COVID-19 lockdown. PTI

Bagan gives ₹20 lakh

KOLKATA
Designated I-League champion Mohun Bagan has announced a donation of ₹20 lakh in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic. "Mohun Bagan will donate ₹20 lakh towards the West Bengal State Emergency Relief Fund to be used to combat the deadly coronavirus pandemic," Mohun Bagan announced on its official Facebook page. PTI

COVID-19 IMPACT

Bhutia in AFC's video awareness campaign

NEW DELHI
Former India captain Bhaichung Bhutia will feature in Asian Football Confederation's (AFC) public awareness campaign on the COVID-19 pandemic, the continental body said. "The #BreakTheChain campaign features some of Asia's finest from all across the continent, such as 2018 AFC Women's Player of the Year, Wang Shuang from China PR, Indian legend Bhaichung Bhutia and Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors' and 2016 AFC Champions League winner Lee Dong-gook with several more big names poised to join the series in the upcoming instalments," the



Gobert and Utah Jazz players recover

NEW YORK
Rudy Gobert, the first NBA player to test positive for coronavirus, and all Utah Jazz players and staff have been cleared of coronavirus by the Utah Department of Health, the club announced on Friday. The players and staff members completed a 14-day isolation and quarantine period, and no longer pose a risk of infection to others, according to the health department. AFP

Dybala reveals how he struggled to breathe

MILAN
Juventus star Paulo Dybala revealed on Friday how he "struggled to breathe" after contracting coronavirus. He was one of three Juventus players to catch the virus along with Danielle Rugani and Blaise Matuidi, who both had no symptoms. "I feel better now after some strong symptoms," the 26-year-old Dybala said. "A couple of days ago I was not well, I was struggling to breathe. I gasped for air and as a result I couldn't do anything, after five minutes I was already very tired. Now I'm fine," he said. AFP



Former LaLiga winger dons the white coat

Dovale trades his football boots to serve his country

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
CORUNNA (SPAIN)

Journeyman footballer Toni Dovale put his football boots to one side and slipped into a pharmacist's white coat in the front line struggle against coronavirus in Spain.

The 29-year-old pharmacy graduate and former top-level sportsman had been playing football for a Thai club, but was visiting his family in Spain when the COVID-19 pandemic took hold.

So he decided to pitch in

using the studies which he had yet to put into practice due to his passion for football. "I really was packing my bags to go back when things got complicated," Dovale said.

Travel restrictions
Travel restrictions trapped Dovale in his native La Coruña in the Atlantic coast region of Galicia, where he started his football career with nearby Celta Vigo.

Although Dovale also completed his university studies in pharmacy four years ago, he had never actually worked in the field. Now with the world of sport in limbo the footballer realised the time was ripe to use his studies to help his homeland. "I was playing in Asia then; pharmacy is different there and I was never in Spain long enough to work," he said.



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

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

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

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

**For Download any newspaper in PDF at morning
Go to www.DailyEpaper.in OR  click here**

DailyEpaper.in

ENGLISH

The Hindu
The Indian Exp
Business Standard
Hindustan Times
The Telegraph
Deccan Chronicle
Business Line
The Pioneer
The Financial Exp
The Times Of India
The Economic Times
Mint

HINDI

Dainik Jagran
Dainik Bhaskar
Jansatta
Amar Ujala
Pioneer
Hindustan
Prabhat Khabar
Rajasthan Patrika
Business Standard

TELEGU

Eenadu
Sakshi
Nava Telangana

MARATHI

Loksatta
Sakal
Lokmat

Weekly News

Employment News
Karmasangsthan
Karmakshetra

GUJRATI

Sandesh

Daily Update All Indian Newspaper in PDF

रोजाना सुबह कोई भी न्यूज़ पेपर पीडीएफ़ में डाउनलोड करने के लिए www.DailyEpaper.in को विजिट करें या फिर आप यहाँ क्लिक करें  **click here**

OR

IF You Are Preparing For IAS, PCS, SSC Exam Then Just Download UPSC IAS All in One App From PlayStore. You will get here UPSC Complete Solution Free (All Study Material, Video Lecture, Magazines, Newspaper & The Hindu Analysis Video



UPSC IAS All in One - Mission 2020

Web360 Education

★★★★★ 98

3+

⚠ You don't have any devices.

Add to Wishlist



Click Here 

Download