



Vellore officials pull down walls erected on roads leading to A.P.
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India, China among top three military spenders in 2019, says report
page 8



56% more water in the reservoirs than we had last year: Shekhwat
page 11



Opposition parties write to Gotabaya asking him to reconvene Parliament
page 12

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NEARBY



Manmohan to guide Punjab's revival plan

CHEMIDGARH
The Punjab government on Monday took initial steps towards formulating a post-COVID revival strategy in consultation with a group of experts led by Montek Singh Ahluwalia. Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh accepted Chief Minister Amarinder Singh's request to provide overall guidance.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

Delhi riots: Jamia alumni president arrested

NEW DELHI
Delhi Police Special Cell has arrested Jamia Millia Islamia Alumni Association president Shafi-Ur-Rehman under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for allegedly hatching a conspiracy to provoke communal riots in north-east Delhi, said a police officer on Monday.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Haryana districts restrict movement from Delhi

GURUGRAM
Haryana districts that share a border with Delhi have issued separate directions restricting "unnecessary" movement of people and goods. The move comes in the wake of several COVID-19 cases in the State being traced back to Delhi. Haryana Minister Anil Vij had asked Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to facilitate stay of people from Haryana working for the Delhi government.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Modi hints at graded exit from lockdown, says danger not over

Constant vigilance is of paramount importance, PM tells CMs in videoconference

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday told Chief Ministers that though the lockdown following the COVID-19 outbreak had yielded "positive results" and the country managed to "save thousands of lives in the past one and a half months", the danger of the virus was far from over and "constant vigilance is of paramount importance". He was addressing a videoconference with Chief Ministers.

The signal to the States, many of whom asked for an extension of the lockdown, was clear – that any exit from would be graded, and would take into account case load and virulence.

COVID-19

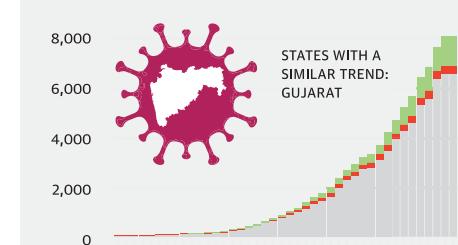
The decision to extend the lockdown itself, sources said, would be taken around May 3, when the current phase ends.

According to those present at the meeting, the Prime Minister, after speaking to the Chief Ministers (nine of whom spoke, while several others sent written submissions), was of the opinion that while economic activity is important, it would be undertaken with some reservations, only within districts and with several caveats. "We have to be brave and bring in reforms that

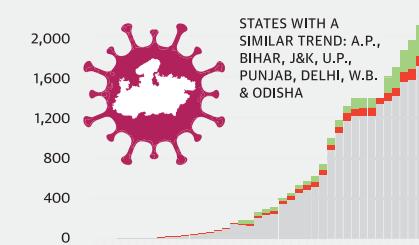
State of affairs

The COVID-19 curve in Indian States can be categorised into four types, based on number of recoveries (green), number of deaths (red) and number of active cases (grey).

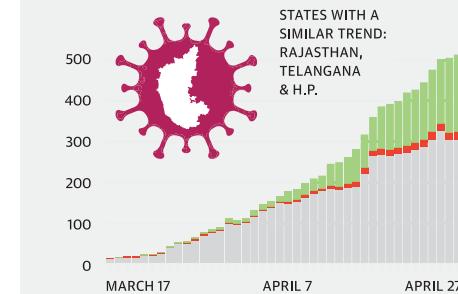
1. Chart depicts Maharashtra's poor recoveries and rising active cases with a high overall case count



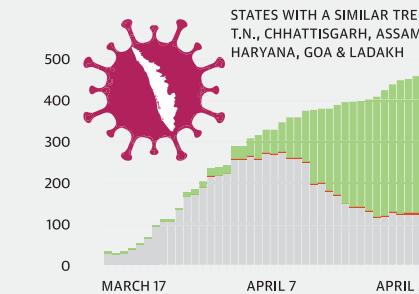
2. Chart depicts MP's poor recoveries & rising active cases with a moderate overall case count



3. Chart depicts Karnataka's rising recoveries and a flattening growth in active cases



4. Chart depicts Kerala's rising recoveries and a reducing active cases trend



touch the lives of common citizens," he said.

Mr. Modi emphasised that all efforts should be made to convert the red zones (where cases have occurred in the past 14 days) to orange (where cases have not occurred in 14 days) and green zones (where no cases have occurred in 28 days). "States should decide minute policies for the three zones. The hotspots and containment

areas will continue to remain sealed," he said.

"The country has seen two lockdowns, both different in certain aspects and now we have to think of the way ahead. Masks and face covers will become a way of life in the days ahead and under the circumstances, everyone's aim must be rapid response," he noted.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

'CBSE exams will be delayed'

Pending exams of the Central Board of Secondary Education will only be held when the government decides to completely lift the lockdown, HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank told students. ▶ PAGE 11

RBI opens ₹50,000 cr. liquidity tap for MFs

But banks may remain risk averse

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced a special window of ₹50,000 crore for mutual funds in view of the redemption pressure that the fund houses are facing.

While announcing the window, the RBI said the liquidity stress was limited to high risk debt funds and the larger industry remains liquid.

Under the scheme, the RBI will conduct repo operation of 90 day tenor at the fixed rate.

Funds availed under this facility will be used by banks exclusively for meeting the liquidity requirements of mutual funds by extending loans, and for undertaking outright purchase of and/or repos against the collateral of investment grade corporate bonds, commercial

papers, debentures and certificates of deposit held by the funds, the central bank said.

Franklin Templeton

The move comes after Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund last week decided to wind up six debt funds that have combined assets under management of nearly ₹26,000 crore on account of illiquid and low-rated instruments in its portfolio.

The fund house said it decided to wind up the schemes to preserve the value at least at the current levels. Their value was getting eroded due to a combination of redemption pressures and mark-to-market losses due to a lack of liquidity on account of the coronavirus impact on the markets, it said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

In place



Line and length: Bags were lined up on the road as people waited in the shade for rations in the Paud Phata area of Pune on Monday amid the lockdown imposed to control the spread of COVID-19. ▶ JIGNESH MISTRY

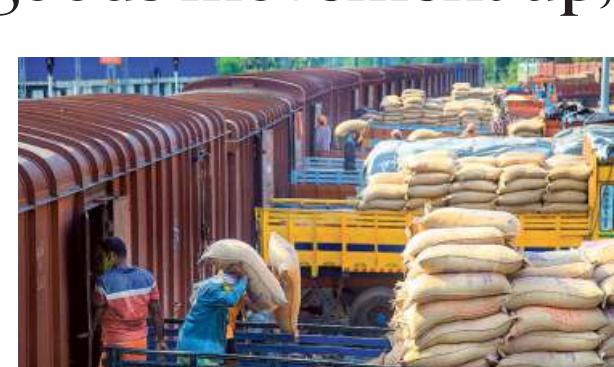
Essential goods movement up, says govt.

'Four out of five agricultural markets are open'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

There has been significant progress in removing bottlenecks and ensuring smooth movement of essential goods, according to Parameswaran Iyer, Chairman of the Empowered Group 5 on Logistics and Supply Chain of Essential Items.

Trucks moving food and medicines were functioning at about 46% on March 30, and had now improved to 76%. Movement of rail rakes is also at three-fourths of the usual rate, while ports are now handling almost 90% of their usual traffic.



On track: Workers transferring rice sacks from a train to trucks at Nagercoil in Tamil Nadu. ▶ PTI

In a key indicator with regard to the food and farm supply chain, four out of five agricultural mandis (markets) have now been reopened, said Mr. Iyer. An online portal had been set up to connect farmers with mandis, cold storage and buyers.

ed positive for COVID-19, the team swung into action to ensure that safe and sanitary supply could be continued.

Overall, there has been a focus on ensuring adequate supply of staples such as onions, potatoes and tomatoes. Supply of milk and LPG cylinders are essentially back to pre-lockdown levels, added Mr. Iyer.

Apart from rail rakes and Lifeline Udan flights, India Post has played a critical role in transporting more than 100 million tonnes of medicines and medical equipment as well as one lakh food packets. The department has also helped facilitate cash transfer worth ₹730 crore to about 34 lakh people, according to Mr. Iyer.

Post-recovery, Tablighis donate blood plasma

Around 300 have volunteered to join COVID fight

ZIYA US SALAM
NEW DELHI

Several Tablighi Jamaat men have donated blood plasma after recovering from the novel coronavirus infection and successfully completing their quarantine period. Around 300 Tablighis, responding to an appeal by their leader Maulana Saad, have volunteered to save the lives of others battling the infection.

Over the weekend, some of the men who were in quarantine in Narela and Sultanpur went to donate blood plasma. Among them were Tablighis from Chennai to attend a jad (meeting) at Markaz [the Tablighi Jamaat headquarters in Nizamuddin] on March 21 and was supposed to leave by Tamil Nadu Express on March 24. Then the Prime Minister declared a lockdown. Like so many others, I was stranded at the centre. On March 30 evening, I was shifted to Rajiv Gandhi hospital and released on April 19," said 42-year-old Farooq Basha.



Two men who attended the Nizamuddin event being discharged after recovery in Moradabad on Monday. ▶ PTI

Mumbai, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh who had come to the Capital to attend events in Nizamuddin but found themselves stranded after the declaration of lockdown.

"I had come from Chennai to attend a jad (meeting) at Markaz [the Tablighi Jamaat headquarters in Nizamuddin] on March 21 and was supposed to leave by Tamil Nadu Express on March 24. Then the Prime Minister declared a lockdown. Like so many others, I was stranded at the centre. On March 30 evening, I was shifted to Rajiv Gandhi hospital and released on April 19," said 42-year-old Farooq Basha.

headquarters in Nizamuddin] on March 21 and was supposed to leave by Tamil Nadu Express on March 24. Then the Prime Minister declared a lockdown. Like so many others, I was stranded at the centre. On March 30 evening, I was shifted to Rajiv Gandhi hospital and released on April 19," said 42-year-old Farooq Basha.

Two days later, Basha got to know about blood plasma therapy. "Allah saved my life. Now, I want to save others. It does not matter that we do not know the person who will benefit. At the end of the day, it is about humanity. I hope it will help improve the image of the Tablighi Jamaat in the mind of the common man," he said, referring to the negative coverage the group received in several sections of the media because of a cluster of cases emanating from the Nizamuddin centre.

Incidentally, Basha went to donate plasma after a day of fasting. "Three other men from our Tamil Nadu group have donated plasma. Our first COVID-19 test was positive, the subsequent two were negative," he said. Basha's colleague Abdul Rehman had done likewise last Friday. The 45-year-old was under quarantine for almost a month – two weeks in a hospital, then another 17 days at home. Did he think of his own health? "What was there to worry? I am 45 and fit. I am a salesman and don't feel any weakness. I just wanted to help the needy," said Rehman.

Timings

DELHI

TUESDAY, APR. 28
RISE 05:44 SET 18:55
RISE 09:24 SET 23:46
WEDNESDAY, APR. 29
RISE 05:43 SET 18:56
RISE 10:19 SET 00:00
THURSDAY, APR. 30
RISE 05:42 SET 18:56
RISE 11:18 SET 00:38

Delhi Weather max min
 Delhi City 34 19
 Safdarjung 34 19
 Palam 35 19

Delhi Palam Today
 34°C Day will be warm with partly cloudy sky. Chances of dust storm over parts of the city.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
 36°C A dry and very warm weather is expected. Night will be pleasant.

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THE HINDU
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Air quality of Delhi-NCR
 Delhi 89 Gurugram 120
 Ghaziabad 66 Faridabad 122
 Noida 92 Greater Noida 78
 ■ Good ■ Satisfactory ■ Moderate
 □ Poor ■ Very poor ■ Severe
 0-50 51-100 101-200
 201-300 301-400 >401
 AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) SOURCE: CPCB

Delhi riots: Jamia alumni chief arrested

He has been remanded in police custody for 10 days

STAFF REPORTER
 NEW DELHI

Delhi Police Special Cell has arrested Jamia Millia Islamia Alumni Association president Shafi-Ur-Rehman under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for allegedly hatching a conspiracy to provoke communal riots in north-east Delhi, said a police officer on Monday.

Mr. Rehman was produced in a city court which remanded him in police custody for 10 days for further interrogation in connection with the case, added the officer.

A senior police officer said that Mr. Rehman was called in for questioning, and after initial interrogation he was arrested for his alleged involvement in the riots that broke out early this year. "During questioning, Mr. Rehman was countered with evidence. We have WhatsApp chats and other technical evidence that prove that he incited the mob during the riots," said the officer. Mr. Rehman's name had cropped up during investigation and questioning of Jamia Millia Islamia students Safoora Zargar and Meeran Haider.



Communal riots broke out in north-east Delhi on February 24 and left at least 53 people dead. ■ FILE PHOTO: SANDEEP SAXENA

Apart from the Crime Branch, the Delhi Police Special Cell as well as the local police is investigating the conspiracy behind the riots. The Crime Branch is investigating heinous cases such as murder and assault. The local police is investigating rioting cases.

So far, 10 people have been arrested by the Special Cell for alleged involvement in the communal riots. Besides Ms. Zargar and Mr. Haider, suspended Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) councillor Tahir Hussain

has also been booked under the stringent UAPA for alleged involvement in the riots.

The arrests have sparked a political uproar with Amroha MP Kunwar Danish Ali tweeting: "Arresting Shifaar Rehman, n others who r on d forefront of protests against CAA n NRC is an attempt to punish Jamiaties who showed d way by leading a peaceful movement.

In Parliament, I had warned d country that UAPA will target innocents. #stopTargetingJMI [sic]."

Bail was, however, granted on the grounds of her pregnancy, other medical conditions, and the fact that the High Court had directed

Jamia student in quarantine at Tihar gets 10 mins. with lawyer

Safoora Zargar is 14 weeks pregnant, faces nutrition issues

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) scholar Safoora Zargar, imprisoned under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act at Tihar jail – where she has reportedly been placed in quarantine – was granted permission to speak to her lawyer for 10 minutes before applying for certain concessions before jail authorities by a court here on Monday.

Ms. Zargar (27), who is 14-weeks pregnant, was arrested and sent to judicial custody on April 10 on the basis of an FIR which accused her of participating in anti-CAA and NRC protests at the Jaffrabad metro station, prior to riots breaking out in the area. She was an active member of the Jamia Coordination Committee, a group of students and alumni of the JMI who had been engaged in carrying out protests outside the university.

At her bail hearing on April 13, the investigating officer opposed the bail on the grounds of "suspicion of involvement of the accused in anti-national activities".

The allegations are baseless and material collected by the investigating officer do not link her to the commission of alleged offences," the lawyers had argued.

The court denied bail noting the nature and gravity of

authorities to decongest jails on account of COVID-19 outbreak. But as the bail hearing was under way, Ms. Zargar was remanded under another FIR, which slapped her with the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, a source close to her said.

She along with others have been accused of rioting, conspiracy, sedition and other charges. At a second bail hearing on April 18, her lawyers argued that she was being falsely implicated in the case, with her name not even featuring in the FIR.

Superficial reply'

Having reportedly filed a "cryptic and superficial" reply on the role of Ms. Zargar in the case, the court told the investigating officer to file a detailed reply on April 20. On the next date, her lawyers argued that she was initially arrested on bailable offences and later more serious offences were added by the Special Cell, the order denying bail reads.

"The allegations are baseless and material collected by the investigating officer do not link her to the commission of alleged offences," the lawyers had argued.

The court denied bail noting the nature and gravity of

the offences in addition to another serious allegation raised in the previous FIR.

Presently at Tihar jail, Ms. Zargar had not been allowed to contact her family on account of curbs due to COVID-19. When briefly contacted by her lawyer on April 25, she said that no maternity exam had been done and she was facing issues with her nutrition.

On Monday, an application requesting she be allowed to talk to her husband twice a week, be provided certain nutritional requirements, hygienic condition were directed to be placed before jail authorities.

An application to have Ms. Zargar examined at AIIMS or Safdarjung Hospital was dismissed stating that it was unclear as to why the medical practitioner at the jail could not examine her. The court also noted that while earlier it had been alleged that Ms. Zargar had been placed in solitary confinement, her lawyer submitted that she had been languishing in jail for over a month now. The 23-year-old accused was nabbed on March 3 from Uttar Pradesh's Shamli. The police registered a case against him under relevant sections of the IPC and the Arms Act.



Shahrukh Pathan
 brandished a gun at a constable during the riots.

Response of police sought on Shahrukh's plea

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday sought response of the police on a plea by Shahrukh Pathan, who allegedly pointed a gun at a head constable during the riots in north-east Delhi, seeking bail on the ground that jails are overcrowded raising the risk of him getting infected with COVID-19.

The plea said due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not safe to remain in jail as it is not possible to maintain social distancing due to overcrowding and sought that he be released on bail. The accused said he has been languishing in jail for over a month now. The 23-year-old accused was nabbed on March 3 from Uttar Pradesh's Shamli. The police registered a case against him under relevant sections of the IPC and the Arms Act.

Families worried as riot-related arrests could lead to contracting COVID-19

Lawyers say it is a violation of fundamental rights as detainees are unable to avail legal remedies due to restrictions



A resident of riot-hit Mustafabad watching while children are busy playing. ■ FILE PHOTO: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Lawyers say it is a violation of fundamental rights as detainees are unable to avail legal remedies due to restrictions

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH

NEW DELHI

Many families in riot-hit areas of north-east Delhi fear that those arrested by the police during the nationwide lockdown could contract COVID-19 while in jail.

"The lockdown is not for the police. It is for us. Who knows one of them has the virus. If we tell them this, they warn us not to teach them the law," said Farhan, a software engineer living in Chand Bagh. He had not seen his brother since the police took him for questioning on March 31.

Mr. Farhan said his brother is a mechanical engineering student and was taking coaching classes in Mukherjee Nagar for government services.

"The police took my brother without any notice. Later, we came to know that he was arrested as he was featured in a video," said Mr. Farhan, adding that the irony is that the video is from outside our house and was taken on March 23 when there was no violence.

After the arrest, he was sent to Mandoli Jail. Due to the lockdown, we have no way of knowing how he is, said Mr. Farhan.

When the police visited the residence, her brother, who is working as a welder, had gone out to buy medicines. "He has seizures," said Mehnaz.

"The next day (on April 11), my brother went to the police station around 11 a.m. When he did not return till 7 p.m., we went to the station and were told that my brother will not be released as he was spotted on the riots video," she said.

In their letter, they highlighted that during the lockdown, investigating agencies have summoned several persons to appear at police stations.

"We are aware of at least five such cases from localities in north-east Delhi," the advocates said.

They said many of these summonses note that failure to comply with it would render the person liable for criminal action. However, as

per the March 24 lockdown order, ordinary residents and citizens are permitted to step out only for essential supplies such as groceries and medicines, the lawyers argued.

He added that others too from his locality are being arrested during the lockdown period. "Most of us don't know what is happening," he lamented.

Abrogation of rights'
 Lawyers providing legal assistance to the riot-hit worry that investigations are on without giving due regard to the health, safety and fundamental rights of the persons concerned. They said the ongoing police actions pose a significant risk to the health of the affected individuals, their families and the public at large in light of the pandemic.

"There has been a complete abrogation of the fundamental rights of the persons concerned as they are unable to avail of the rights that accrue at the stage of summoning, detention, arrest and remand due to the shutdown of courts and unavailability of lawyers," they said.

Advocates Seema Misra, Sowjhanya Shankaran, Maneeka Khanna and Nitika Khatian had made a representation before a State-level High Powered Committee (HPC), formed pursuant to the Supreme Court direction to decongest prisons due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

In their letter, they highlighted that during the lockdown, investigating agencies have summoned several persons to appear at police stations. "We are aware of at least five such cases from localities in north-east Delhi," the advocates said.

They said many of these summonses note that failure to comply with it would render the person liable for criminal action. However, as

DDA to launch e-auction for vacant plots on May 11

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Development Authority will launch an e-auction scheme for vacant residential, industrial, institutional and commercial plots, among others, said officials, adding that the registrations will begin on May 11.

Under the current scheme, 104 residential plots, 49 institutional plots, 51 industrial plots and 58 commercial plots will be put on offer, they said. Additionally, 45 plots under the Ex-

pandable Housing Scheme and nine group housing plots will also be on offer apart from nine plots to set up kiosks and 16 for mobile towers.

The officials said interested stakeholders can register for the e-auction till June 12.

"Bidding for residential and institutional plots will take place on June 15, that of industrial and commercial plots on June 16, for mobile towers and kiosks on June 17 and the rest on June 18," said a senior official.

Extend date for submitting applications: JNUSU to V-C

Students demand exam postponement

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) has written to the Vice-Chancellor of the university, M. Jagadesh Kumar, requesting him to extend the last date for submitting applications for the JNU Entrance Examination (JNUEE) 2020-21. It also asked him to issue a notification to postpone the examination.

The last date for submitting applications is April 31 for the examination, which scheduled in mid-May. The JNUSU said due to the restriction of movement during the lockdown, many applicants are finding it difficult to apply.

"Many aspirants do not have Internet access. Since the offline mode is no longer in prevalence, this creates additional difficulties," the union said.

West Bengal Police Housing & Infrastructure Development Corp Ltd having its office at 3rd floor, Araksha Bhawan, Block - DJ, Sector - II, Salt Lake, Kolkata - 91 is inviting open e-Tender from experienced agency for work of A) WBPHIDCL/ Addl.CE /INT-5(e)/2020-2021 (1st call), A) Balance work for Renovation and up-gradation of Qtrs, Barrack and office etc. at Asnasol Durgapur Police Lines. Estimated Amount put to Tender Rs. 2,44,87,884/- Tender Id: 2020_WBSPH_282259_1, Last date & time of submission of bids online is 21.05.2020 at 16:00 Hrs. For further details please visit www.wbtenders.gov.in

SDI-
 Additional Chief Engineer
 WBPH&IDCL

JHARKHAND BIJLI VITRAN NIGAM LIMITED (CIN : U40108JH2013SGC001702)

Engineering Building, HEC, Dhurwa, Ranchi - 834004, Email:- cec2018@gmail.com, Fax: 0651-2400799

1st Time Extension Notice of NIT No. 306/PR/JBNL/2019-20 for Supply, Installation, testing & commissioning of Three Phase four wire Trivector Energy 0.2s Accuracy class 33KV ABT Meter and system maintenance of ABT metering system for five years under ADP for Electric Supply Area Jamshedpur

Timelines for participating in the all the above e-tender is detailed below:

Sl. No.	Particulars	Estimated Date
1	Pre bid meeting	04.05.2020 at 12:30hrs
2	Last date & time of receipt of Bid documents online	Upto14/05/2020 at 18:00 hrs.
3	Last date of physical submission of tender fee & EMD:	Upto15/05/2020till 15:00 hrs.
4	Technical Bid opening due date	15/05/2020 at 16:00 hrs.

Bid uploading / opening will be through e-tendering norms only. The complete Tender documents can be downloaded through website www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in. Bidder may contact help desk of e-Procurement system at the following web address: www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in.</p

IN BRIEF

14 new cases reported in Gautam Buddha Nagar

GAZIABAD

Fourteen new cases of COVID-19 were reported in Gautam Buddha Nagar on Monday, taking the tally in the district to 129. District Surveillance Officer Sunil Dohare said that of the fresh cases, six were healthcare workers of Super Speciality Pediatric Hospital and Post Graduate Training Institute, which is one of the dedicated COVID-19 hospitals in the district.

Operate ration shops as per govt. guidelines: HC

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday directed that all ration shops in the Capital should remain operational between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. on all seven days and disburse PDS food grains, in accordance with government policy. The order came on a plea filed by The Delhi Rozi Roti Adhikar Abhiyan, which said many ration shops were shut or turned away people saying stocks were exhausted.

'Make arrangements to bring students from Kota'

NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Legislative Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Monday demanded that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal take urgent steps to evacuate students—belonging to the Capital—who are trapped in Rajasthan's Kota due to the ongoing lockdown.

Mr. Bidhuri said Delhi needed to follow the example of other States in getting its students back from Kota. "...I also request you to please make proper arrangements to bring back the students of Delhi present in Kota," the LoP wrote.

JMI to open application for 'free coaching'

NEW DELHI

Jamia Millia Islamia has announced the opening of its online application process for entry into its residential coaching academy that provides free coaching for civil service aspirants for the examination to be conducted in 2021. The coaching facility is for candidates belonging to minority, scheduled caste, scheduled tribe category and women. The last date to apply is June 15 and the entrance test will be conducted in Delhi, Srinagar, Lucknow, Guwahati, Bengaluru and Malappuram (Kerala). A total of 208 seats are available. Applicants have been requested to visit the university website for further details on eligibility, dates and format of the exam.

Congress launches sanitation drive in wards

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Monday launched a sanitation drive across the city titled 'Congress Ke Sipahi, Karenge Corona Ki Dholai' and distributed 1,120 sanitation machines and chemicals to 280 Block Congress Committee wards.

Launching the initiative, Delhi Congress chief Ch. Anil Kumar said that each ward will be given four machines and party workers will carry out the drive.

"Congress workers will make announcements about the sanitation drive on loud speakers to alert people, and will also press into service sprinklers with a capacity of 1,000 litres each to sanitise wide roads," Mr. Kumar said.

He added that the workers will have PPE gear, and maintain social distance during the exercise. "The AAP government and the BJP-ruled civic bodies have abysmally failed to effectively carry out sanitation drives," he added.

The party said that over 106 'Congress Ki Rasoi' had been set up across the Capital to provide meals to thousands of poor people who did not have access to food.

Haryana districts on Delhi border restrict movement

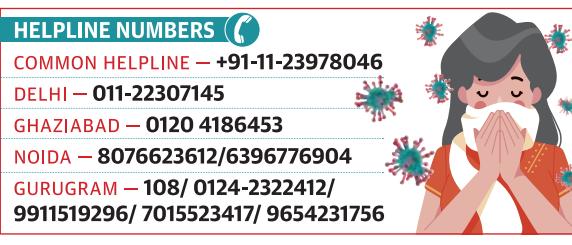
Many cases in State traced back to the Capital: authorities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

Haryana districts that share a border with Delhi have issued separate directions restricting "unnecessary" movement of people and goods. The move comes in the wake of several COVID-19 cases in Haryana being traced back to Delhi.

Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij had on Sunday asked Delhi Chief Minister to make arrangements to control the number of daily commuters between Haryana and the national capital. He had also asked the CM to make arrangements to accommodate Delhi government employees who live in Haryana.

Though it remains business as usual between Delhi and Gurugram, Faridabad Deputy Commissioner Yashpal Yadav told *The Hindu* that movement between Delhi and Faridabad was now being regulated to prevent "unnecessary" movement. He said that people entering Faridabad from



Delhi were being questioned and frisked, and attempts were being made to prevent unwanted movement.

Essential goods

He, however, said the border between the two cities was porous and people from Delhi could just walk up to Faridabad. Mr. Yadav also added that the movement of those providing essential services and transportation of goods could not be completely stopped. He said that two of the three recent COVID-19 cases in Faridabad were traced to Delhi.

Director-General of Police Sateesh Balan, who is also the COVID-19 nodal officer for Jhajjar, said the Superintendent of the Police was di-

rected on Monday to stop unnecessary movement of goods and people between Jhajjar and Delhi.

Mr. Balan said the district administration has been directed to issue fresh curfew passes to reduce movement of people and goods.

Sonipat Deputy Commissioner Anshaj Singh, in written orders, has banned the movement of government employees and people between Delhi and Sonipat.

In separate orders on Sunday, Mr. Singh also stopped the supply of fruits and vegetables from Azadpur Mandi to Sonipat. Of the 21 COVID-19 patients, at least 16 have been linked indirectly to those travelling between the two cities.

Director-General of Police Sateesh Balan, who is also the COVID-19 nodal officer for Jhajjar, said the Superintendent of the Police was di-

11 more infected at Babu Jagjivan Ram hospital

MD of Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital and 68 staffers placed in quarantine

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

Eleven more people working at Babu Jagjivan Ram Memorial Hospital in Jahangirpuri, including a doctor, tested positive for COVID-19 on Monday, taking the total number of infected employees to 75, said hospital authorities.

"Apart from this, three Delhi Police officers posted at the hospital also tested positive today [Monday]. The hospital is not functioning at present and there is no OPD or patients admitted," a hospital source told *The Hindu*.

Meanwhile, the Medical Director (MD) of Delhi government-run Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital and 68 other people who work at the hospital were quarantined after they came in contact with a doctor at the hospital who has tested positive for the virus. "...healthcare workers were traced as per protocol and informed telephonically for quarantine," read a hospital document ac-

curred by *The Hindu*.

M.M. Kohli, MD of the hospital, did not respond to multiple calls and messages. At least 29 people working at



A security guard seen checking the temperature of healthcare staff at Max Hospital where 33 employees have tested positive for COVID-19, in New Delhi on Monday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

the hospital have tested positive for the virus so far.

At Max Super Speciality Hospital at east Delhi's Patparganj, 33 healthcare workers, including two doctors, have tested positive for COVID-19 so far, the hospital spokesperson said on Monday.

On April 15, the hospital had announced that it would test all its workers and the 33 cases, as per the hospital, were reported during this process. "The hospital is being sanitised and the staff

who have tested positive were moved to Max Hospital, Saket, East Wing, which is a

COVID-19 treatment facility. Also, 145 nurses working at the Patparganj hospital have been quarantined," the spokesperson added.

Max Super Speciality Hospital in Patparganj is not a COVID-19 treatment facility and earlier this month, a patient admitted at the hospital for dialysis had tested positive for the virus.

Letters to government

Multiple associations of doctors and nurses on Monday wrote to the Delhi government requesting him to make a hospital a designated hospital for treatment of healthcare workers infected by COVID-19 for the "speedy recovery" and "better care".

Ramchandani, said they had complained to the Medical Superintendent of the hospital that accommodation was not provided for quarantine of six healthcare workers who had come in contact with a patient at the hospital, who later tested positive

Still functioning
The hospital is functioning and it was never closed completely, authorities said.
Earlier in the day, the president of the Nurses Association of GB Pant Hospital, L.D.

Delhi to await Centre order on extending lockdown

The CM had previously supported the decision to observe curbs till April 30

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

Extension of lockdown in the Capital beyond May 3 will depend on directions issued by the Centre, it emerged on Monday after Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal participated in a video conference, alongside his counterparts, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Delhi government sources said that Mr. Kejriwal was not among the nine CMs

who interacted with the PM on Monday. This was because the CM had already done so on April 11 where he had favoured the extension of the lockdown to April 30.

No stance

On Monday, the Delhi CM merely submitted details and required information related to the management of the pandemic, including the number of patients and containment zones.

The Delhi government does not have its own stance on the issue of further extension of lockdown and now awaits directions from the Centre, said sources.

Dual role of Delhi

The Delhi government is awaiting directions pertaining to a graded exit strategy or status quo, sources said, adding that some clarity is expected over the next day or two.

On April 11, Mr. Kejriwal had sought to make a case for a Centre-sponsored relief package and funding on par with other States to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. He had submitted that Delhi had a "dual role" and added responsibilities given the presence of foreign missions in its jurisdiction, a "significant population of foreigners" residing in it, and migrant workers being sustained by it at shelter homes.

ENTERPRISE CONNECT

NTPC provides uninterrupted power supply despite lockdown

All plants adhere to lockdown and social distancing guidelines. The Corona pandemic has failed to dent the spirit of NTPC, India's largest power producer, in providing uninterrupted power supply to the nation. Every power station of NTPC has risen to the occasion and is performing at its optimum level. The COVID-19 crisis has underlined the significance of the power utilities, which have assumed greater significance as electricity is extremely critical in smooth functioning of several sectors of the economy. NTPC is also efficiently managing the coal supplies for continuous supply of electricity.

Beyond power output, NTPC is making rich contribution to the social welfare activities for underprivileged section and migrant workers by providing ration and medical aid. The management of NTPC is monitoring the developments closely so that every corner of the country remains adequately powered in its fight against COVID-19.

DFCCIL Run COVID Protection Special to distribute PPE

DFCCIL has run COVID Protection special on 23rd and 24th April 2020. It distributed Face mask, Hand Sanitizers, Hand Gloves, Tissue papers, Leaflets of Dos and Don't and leaflets to how to make home made face mask.

The total Quantity distributed was 500 Litres of Sanitizers, 3000 Face Mask, 3000 Hand Gloves One Lakh wipe papers. On 23rd All these have been distributed at New Khurja, New Daudhan Junction, New Hathras, New Tunda Junction, New Makhanpur, New Bhadaun, New Ekdli, New Achalda, New Kanchauni, New Bhaupur Stn of EDFC. On 24th it have been distributed at New Rewari, New Ateli Junction, New Dabala, New Bhagya Stn, New Sridamphur, New Mallikpur, New Phulera, New Sakun, New Kishangarh, Madan Pota Cabins of WDFC.

DFCCIL has started the construction work at different places wherever Local StateGovt had permitted. At all these places Social Distancing & norms have been followed strictly.

NHPC raised Rs 750 crore at coupon of 6.80% P.A.

NHPC Limited (A Govt. of India Enterprise) has raised Rs 750 crore today through private placement of bonds at very competitive interest rate of 6.80% p.a. for a loan tenure of 10 years. The issue structure consists base size of Rs.500 crore with Green Shoe option of Rs.250 crore.

The issue was taken very overwhelmingly by the market and oversubscribed 3.87 times i.e. for Rs.2899 crore amid outbreak due to Covid-19. The coupon rate of 6.80% is the lowest in the current fiscal and lower by 30 bps or 0.30% than the prevailing AAA rated 10 years Bonds at 7.10%. NHPC carries highest credit credentials and rated AAA by leading Rating Agencies.

Himachal Pradesh IAS Officers Wives Association contributes towards COVID-19 SDR Fund

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur was presented a cheque of Rs. 4.50 lac by HP IAS Officers Wives Association towards HP SDMA COVID-19 State Disaster Response Fund by HP IAS Officers Wives Association.

Chief Minister thanked the Association for their noble gesture and said that this contribution would go a long way in helping the needy during the time of distress.

North Central Railway continue its endeavour against Covid-19

Hon'ble Prime Minister Sri Narendra Modi appreciated efforts of Indian Railways in Mann Ki Baat broadcasted on 26.04.20. He said that Railway men are working continuously to obviate shortage of essential goods in any part of the country. He specifically mentioned that Indian Railway is running more than 100 parcel trains on about 60 routes.

With this motto to serve, North Central Railway is continuing its endeavour against Covid-19 pandemic at all fronts. Railway Corona warriors are not only ensuring continuous freight and parcel train operations but also fighting COVID-19 with many innovation, social distancing and sanitation efforts.

Himachal Pradesh Government stressing on home-based teaching facility

PSPCL spokesman disclosed that due date of payment of electricity bills of Domestic & Commercial consumers with current monthly/bimonthly bills up to Rs 10,000 and all industrial consumers i.e. Small Power (SP), Medium Supply (MS) and Large Supply (LS) payable from 20th March, 2020 to 9th May 2020 has been extended up to 10th May, 2020 without levy of late payment surcharge.

Spokesman also said that 1% rebate will given to all those Domestic, Commercial, SP, MS and LS Industrial consumers on the amount deposited by the consumers through online digital modes between 21.4.2020 and 30.4.2020 against the current bills (with due date up to 10-5-2020) and/or previous arrears (if any). This 1% rebate will also be given to all the Domestic, Commercial, SPMS and LS Industrial consumers who make part payment of their current bills and/or part payment of arrears between April 21 to April 30, 2020.

Spokesman further said that 1% rebate will also be admissible to all Domestic, Commercial, SPMS and LS Industrial who have made advance payment of their bills and the rebate amount will be adjusted in the next bill of the consumer. Spokesman further added that no rebate will be given to consumers who will make payments during period from 1 to 10 May, 2020. Spokesman further said that Late payment surcharge as well as late payment interest shall be leviable if payments are not made by 10.5.2020 by consumers.

Health check-ups sought at shelter homes in city

Plea also seeks sanitation drives

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Centre for Holistic Development (CHD) on Monday wrote to the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) seeking urgent measures for conducting health check-ups and sanitisation drives in and around shelter homes to contain the spread of COVID-19 among the homeless and destitute people residing there.

Stating that central Delhi had a high concentration of homeless people living on the streets, the CHD said that mass awareness camps and special medical vans and health camps at shelter homes and health camps at shelter homes should be arranged.

"The government has been using mostly virtual mediums to spread information. Most of the homeless community are illiterate and do not use mobile phones or

Compensation announced for families of SDMC workers

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The South Delhi Municipal Corporation approved relief measures for those involved in frontline services provided by the civic body, South Delhi Mayor Sunita Kangra said on Monday.

If doctors, nurses, paramedical staff, malaria workers, sanitation workers, gardeners or other field workers die while performing their duties to combat COVID-19, their families will be given a compensation of ₹10 lakh, she added.

The cost of treatment for those involved in such frontline jobs who contract the virus will also be borne by the municipal corporation. The Mayor, however, sought to assure that all precautions were being taken to ensure safety of all workers.

Netflix told to reply on plea against web series

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday asked Netflix and producers of web series 'Hasmukh' to respond on a petition seeking to stop airing of the web series as it allegedly maligns the image and reputation of lawyers.

Advocate Ashutosh Dubey, who filed the lawsuit, has also sought directions to the web series producers, directors and writer to "tender

unconditional apology online for maligning the image of the lawyer community, which includes judges as they too had been lawyers at one point of time".

He has claimed that in episode 4 of the web series, lawyers have been allegedly referred to as thieves, scoundrels, goons and rapists.

Mr. Dubey has contended that the "statements [made in the series] are highly defamatory and derogatory."

**TO ADVERTISE
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Vellore officials pull down walls on two roads to A.P.

Decision follows constraints in movement of vehicles

STAFF REPORTER
VELLORE

Temporary walls built on two roads connecting Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh were pulled down by the Vellore administration on Monday. The walls were constructed by the authorities on Sunday to prevent movement of vehicles between the two States in the midst of the COVID-19 lockdown.

On Monday, however, taking note of the difficulties in the movement of vehicles carrying essential commodities, tuk-tuk drivers from Katpadi in Tamil Nadu and Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh ensured the demolition of a seven-foot wall constructed at Ponai.

Officials also ensured the demolition of the wall at the Savankunta checkpost.

"This was only a temporary arrangement, and the walls were constructed us-



Barriers removed: Workers demolishing the wall constructed on the Chennai-Ponni-Chittoor road. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ing hollow blocks," a revenue official said.

The district authorities initially wanted vehicles that would pass via the Savankunta and Ponni checkposts, to enter Vellore by taking the Baradhamari and the Christianpet checkposts.

However, since milk and vegetable supply from Chittoor and beyond were disrupted, officials chose to de-

molish the walls.

Officials said six checkposts connecting Andhra Pradesh with Vellore district were under surveillance with health, police and revenue officials monitoring the movement of vehicles.

Only vehicles transporting vegetables, fruits and medicines are allowed from Chittoor, Palamaner, Bagala and V. Kota.

Fewer districts in T.N. report fresh cases

Chennai accounts for 47 of 52 new patients; 81 discharged after treatment

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI/VIJAYAWADA/
HYDERABAD/BENGALURU/
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

For the first time in the last few weeks, fewer than five districts in Tamil Nadu reported fresh COVID-19 cases on Monday.

Of the 52 new patients, 47 were from Chennai. Only two other districts - Madurai and Villupuram - reported COVID-19 cases.

Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka reported one death each from COVID-19, while all big southern States had new positive cases on Monday. Andhra Pradesh had 80 new cases in six districts, out of 6,517 samples tested.

The State reported over 80 cases in a single day for the third time in the past five days and 30% of the total reported so far were detected during this period. The State tally went up to 1,177 and the death toll was 32. Four patients recovered and the number of active cases stood at 911.

Kerala reported 13 new cases on Monday, Telangana two cases from Greater Hyderabad area, and Karnataka, nine cases.

Health officials in Nellore said a 65-year-old person succumbed to the disease.

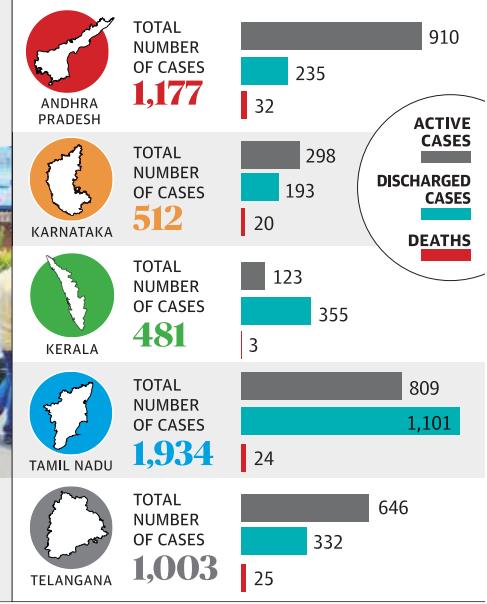
Seven more persons, including six of a family, tested pos-

Strict action

As the number of COVID-19 cases increases across the country, States are taking strict measures to curb the spread



Strict monitoring: A policeman checking passes to stop unnecessary travel in a COVID-19 hotspot area in Nellore, Andhra Pradesh. ■ K. RAVI KUMAR



itive in the district.

The Health Department revealed that over 60% of those infected were in the 16-45 age group. While 6.54% were in the age group of 0-15, 21.48% patients were 45-60.

Telangana had only two samples testing positive on

Monday. Sixteen patients were discharged. Till date, 1,003 cases were recorded in the State. Of these, 646 were active. The two fresh cases were from GHMC area, which includes parts of Rangareddy and Medchal districts.

Kalaburagi district, one of the worst-hit in Karnataka, registered its fifth fatality on Monday.

A 47-year-old person from Aland, who was first treated in Solapur and shifted to ESIC Medical Complex later, was the latest victim. His 65-year-old mother had also tested positive and was in hospital.

Kerala tests community
In Kerala, apart from the routine sampling among those quarantined, 875 samples were randomly collected from healthcare workers, migrants and people interacting more with the community, such as police, from all districts over five days.

Of these, 611 were negative, Chief Minister, Pinarayi Vijayan said on Monday.

As part of an intensive drive, the Health department collected 3,056 population-level samples from select groups across the State on Sunday as a single-day "augmented sampling."

CMs for calibrated easing of curbs

Kerala braces for return of expatriates; Yediyurappa holds meeting with officials

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Chief Ministers of Kerala and Karnataka pitched for a continuation of restrictions till May 15 during the video-conference with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the government had argued against an abrupt lifting of the regulations on May 3 and sought a progressive dialling down aimed at liberating relatively safe localities first. Kerala has asked the Centre to give States more latitude in the matter.

The government could not ignore the spectre of a resurgence of the disease



Crisis meet: Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacting with Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa and other Ministers. ■ PTI

with several thousand non-resident Keralites (NoRks) expected to return as soon as the Centre allowed special flights, he said.

Sources in Karnataka indicated that the State is inclined to have a stricter vigil

in red zones until the areas transit to green zones over a period of time in respect to COVID-19 control. "The decision on how to provide exemption will be based on the Union government's directive," sources added.

Following the interaction with the Prime Minister, Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa had a long discussion with the Deputy Commissioners all districts in the evening. Government sources indicated that economic activities could be further eased in districts coming under the green zone post May 3.

Last week, rural industries were permitted to function keeping social distancing in districts under the green zone. A stricter vigil could be mounted in red zones. "The ban on sale of liquor could continue till the end of May as PM is for this," sources said.

In the past few days, many people who recovered from COVID-19 reportedly re-

Data of virus patients in Kerala leaked

COVID-19 patients from Kasaragod, Kannur receive calls seeking information

STAFF REPORTER
KASARAGOD

Reports of breaches in the data of COVID-19 patients have emerged from Kasaragod and Kannur districts.

Following reports that COVID-19 patients had received calls from unknown numbers seeking information, the Kasaragod District Medical Officer (DMO) has sought an inquiry into the issue. DMO A.V. Ramdas said though he had received no complaints from anyone so far, he had written to District Police Chief P.S. Sabu seeking an inquiry to ascertain the truth.

In the past few days, many people who recovered from COVID-19 reportedly re-

ceived calls from unknown numbers.

Kasaragod District Surveillance Officer A.T. Manoj said the control room had collected details of the patients and their contacts and the information was shared with the State control room.

There was no possibility a breach from the control room which was manned by staff from the Health Department and the National Health Mission.

Meanwhile, Mr. Sabu said an investigation would be held to ascertain how such a breach occurred. He said many patients had been in private hospitals too and the details were with the local bodies as well.

er to curtail the spread of the disease, prepared the link including details of 54 COVID-19 patients and 9,000 of their contacts. This link was used to track the people and was shared with higher police officers.

"The police team should have ensured data security while preparing the link," said T.V. Subhash, District Collector. A report in this regard would be submitted to the Chief Secretary, he said.

Since similar methods were used in Kasaragod as well, it was suspected that private companies were able to source the details through these web-based links.

Mr. Sakhare was unavailable for comments.

117 students head home after return from Rome

They finished quarantine in New Delhi

S. HARPAL SINGH
PIPPARWADA

About 117 students from south India, who were pursuing Masters courses in Rome, Italy, crossed over into Telangana on Monday on their way back home. They, however, had to wait for over eight hours for clearance from the Telangana government for transit entry into the State.

The students were brought back to India by the Central government on March 22 and had undergone 30 days of quarantine at a centre maintained by the Indo-Tibetan Border Police in New Delhi.

The youth were unable to understand why there was such a long delay in allowing the buses carrying them at the inter-State border of Telangana and Maharashtra. It was because of the delay in approval from the State Secretariat in Hyderabad.

They also underwent three tests for COVID-19 in Rome and New Delhi before being permitted to go home.

Raghuramakrishnan

Lockdown deprives Maoists of rations and revenue flow

They are suffering after villages seal borders fearing spread

SUMIT BHATTACHARJEE
VISAKHAPATNAM

Ever since the COVID-19 lockdown has come into force, a number of interior villages in the Andhra Odisha Border (AOB) region have been using innovative means to restrict the entry of outsiders and prevent local residents from venturing out, except for the purchase or collection of essentials.

This has hit CPI (Maoist) cadres hard, as they have been depending on the villagers for their regular ration.

"When getting enough ration for our own families has become difficult, how can we supply essentials to Maoists?" wonders a tribal from the Pedabavalu mandal.

Earlier, the Maoists had been depending on the PDS supply to tribals for their regular ration. Now that it is being regulated, this supply line has been cut off. Moreover, most of the villages have a self-imposed ban on entry.

Recently, some Maoists tried to enter a village but were stopped by the residents at the entry point.

Because of this, the supply of rations, vegetables and livestock were affected, hitting the left wing extremists, says Superintendent of Police Attada Babuji.

This has hit CPI (Maoist) cadres hard, as they have been depending on the villagers for their regular ration.

"When getting enough ration for our own families has become difficult, how can we supply essentials to Maoists?" wonders a tribal from the Pedabavalu mandal.

The Maoists who have retreated to the cut-off area in AOB, have not been coming out due to the outbreak of COVID-19. If one gets infected then the entire squad gets infected and treatment is far from their reach. This has restricted their movement to sporadic forays into the villages, where they are being rejected," says ASP of Chintapalle Satish Kumar.

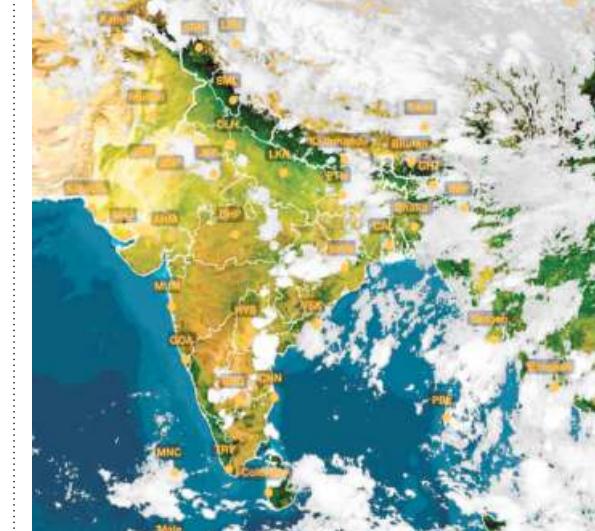
Revenue hit

The lockdown has also hit the revenue flow of the Maoists.

Their main sources of income are collections from contractors, weekly shanais and smuggling of ganja. All the three have come to a standstill.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Tuesday: Thunderstorm accompanied by lightning, hail and gusty winds very likely at isolated places over Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and Telangana; with lightning and gusty winds at isolated places over east Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	... 34.0	20.1	7.8	Kozhikode	... 61.8	36.8	24.0
Ahmedabad	... 41.0	26.3	23.9	Kurnool	... 42.6	29.8	19.8
Aizawl	... 23.9	14.5	—	Lucknow	... 11.0	32.5	19.8
Aligarh	... 20.8	32.0	19.6	Madurai	... 22.1	38.0	24.2
Bengaluru	... 31.6	22.4	—	Mangaluru	... 0.5	36.4	24.4
Bhopal	... —	23.4	—	Mumbai	... 34.2	26.0	—
Bhubaneswar	... 33.9	23.1	—	Mysuru	... 33.9	23.6	—
Chandigarh	... 29.7	21.7	—	New Delhi	... 8.6	35.0	18.6
Chennai	... 3.2	31.0	27.6	Patna	... 0.4	33.8	18.9
Coimbatore	... 35.7	23.4	—	Port Blair	... 32.9	28.4	—
Dehradun	... 4.9	24.5	16.0	Puducherry	... 26.9	34.3	26.4
Gangtok	... 10.6	19.3	12.6	Pune	... 38.2	20.4	—
Goa	... 35.2	26.0	—	Raipur	... 4.0	36.0	20.8
Guwahati	... 33.0	—	—	Ranchi	... 30.0	20.8	18.5
Hubballi	... 37.0	22.0	—	Shillong	... 4.5	21.4	—
Hyderabad	... 39.0	24.6	—	Shimla	... 7.1	21.7</	



Virtual, yet open

The situation forced by the lockdown must be used to improve judicial processes

Amidst the national lockdown, the Supreme Court and several other courts have been holding virtual proceedings. A question of concern to the Bar is whether virtual courts have become the "new normal" and whether it means a move away from the idea of open courts towards technology-based administration of justice without the physical presence of lawyers and litigants. Chief Justice of India S.A. Bobde emphasises that virtual courts are open courts too; and that one cannot describe them as closed or in camera proceedings. The correct way of framing the difference, he says, is to call them virtual courts as distinct from "courts in congregation". A three-judge Bench headed by the CJI, in an order earlier this month, laid down broad norms for courts using video-conferencing and ratified the validity of virtual judicial proceedings. Two aspects are not in dispute: the vital necessity to keep the courts open even during a national lockdown so that access to justice is not denied to anyone; and second, the need to maintain physical distancing. The Supreme Court Bar Association has written to the CJI and other judges that open court hearings should be restored at the earliest, subject of course to the lockdown ending. Citing earlier judgments on the importance of open court hearings, the SCBA has requested that the use of video conferencing should be limited to the duration of the current crisis, and not become the "new normal" or go on to replace open court hearings.

The SCBA also has a specific request: that proceedings held virtually may also be streamed live so that access is not limited to the lawyers concerned, but is also available to the litigants and the public. The court administration should readily agree to this. Advocates appearing in a particular case are now barred from sharing the passwords given to them to join the proceedings through video conference. While it is theoretically possible for the parties to join their lawyers during the hearing, in practice they may be unable to travel to their offices. Media access is also limited. These issues can be resolved through live-streaming. And in the longer term, it should become the general practice. As the use of technology is stepped up, courts should consider other steps that will speed up the judicial process and reduce courtroom crowding. In the lower courts, evidence could be recorded, with the consent of parties, by virtual means. In the higher courts, a system based on advance submission of written briefs and allocation of time slots for oral arguments can be put in place. It may even lead to more concise judgments. Despite the possibility of technical and connectivity issues affecting the process, one must recognise that virtual hearings are no different from open court conversations, provided access is not limited. The opportunity now to improve the judicial process must be utilised well.

Casting out stigma

As India fights the virus, the message of caution is in some places resulting in paranoia

The appalling images of a person flinging water bottles and biscuit packets towards people at a quarantine facility in Agra, Uttar Pradesh that emerged on Sunday show the many things wrong in India's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Those who were supposed to be kept in isolation were seen squashing against the iron grill, desperate to fetch the food and water on the other side. The district administration has since claimed that the issue has been resolved, but not before officials betrayed their insouciance. The hapless, fenced off people were even blamed for getting restless after their food was delayed by several hours. Infected people and health workers taking care of them are facing dehumanising treatment from the rest of the society and they are often housed in a revolting environment in many places. U.P. has been particularly slow in devising a sensitive and efficient strategy. Of the 75 districts in the State, 53 have fewer than 100 isolation beds; 31 have active cases. In terms of ICU beds and ventilator availability, U.P. is among the worst States. Agra had 372 cases, and 10 deaths by Sunday evening. Meanwhile, the State bought faulty personal protective equipment that would have aggravated the risks for health workers. It is an irony that the Centre asked other States to follow the Agra model in the pandemic fight.

Truth be told, U.P.'s debility is not recent or unique. The densely populated heartland of India has a history of bad governance. The shared character of weak State capacity across Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and U.P. has been left unattended by successive governments. The only reasonable goal of the prolonged lockdown could have been buying time for shoring up the limited resources, which is a function of the political leadership. The data presented by the Cabinet Secretary last week reveal a very dismal level of preparedness by U.P., Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, while Rajasthan has managed things better by creating temporary facilities and ramping up existing ones. Most States are, however, treating the lockdown as the solution to the pandemic. The Centre needs to demonstrate leadership in ensuring that States scale up their capacities and communicate this to the public. It needs to particularly reassure health-care professionals that everything possible is being done to protect them. There needs to be a campaign led by the Prime Minister to erase the stigma against patients, and to mitigate the fear of the pandemic itself. The difference between caution and paranoia needs to be emphasised. In India's particular social context, the notion of social distancing has only added to the disease stigma. The Prime Minister has called for social solidarity in the face of the pandemic more than once last week, and that message needs to spread.

The script of disruption and a new order

Across the globe, the geopolitical and geo-economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic could be serious



M.K. NARAYANAN

The COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented, involving as it does far too many variables. The very complexity of the novel coronavirus leads to radical uncertainty. Hence, it is unlikely that the world will ever be the same again. Abnormal could well become the new normal.

Pandemics have often changed the world and reshaped human society. Empires have collapsed. Commentators are already talking of fundamental alterations in governance and business norms. What is left unsaid – and likely to pose an even bigger challenge – is the extent to which the pandemic will impact human values and conduct. There is already concern that a diminution in human values could occur, and with this, the concept of an international community might well cease to exist. Each nation is tending to look inwards, concentrating on its narrowly defined national interests.

Institutions under fire

It is singularly unfortunate that at a time like this, existing international institutions such as the United Nations, the United Nations Security Council and the World Health Organization (WHO) are seen to have failed to measure up to the grave challenge posed by the pandemic.

While the UN Security Council is under attack for being slow in dealing with a situation that appears, at least on the surface, far graver than any military threat in recent decades, WHO has been tarred with the charge of bias and of grossly underestimating the nature of the epidemic. That prestigious global institutions should have been singled out for attack at

this time speaks volumes about the mood prevailing across the world.

Economic shock

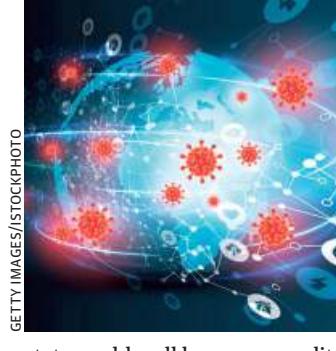
There are many other aspects of the COVID-19 crisis that will drastically impact the globe. On the economic front, the World Bank has already predicted negative growth for most nations. India's growth forecast for the current fiscal year has been put at 1.5% to 2.8%. Contraction of the economy and the loss of millions of jobs across all segments will further complicate this situation.

What is likely to change even more dramatically are certain other aspects relating to political management and security. Both terms are set to gain new meanings. The role of the state as an enforcer of public good will almost certainly become greatly enhanced. The dominant imperative would be to not put limits on the role of the state even where the situation may not be as grave as the present one. Many pieces of legislation of yesteryears that had been relegated to the archives – they were perceived to be anachronistic in a modern democratic set-up – may get a new lease of life. Some pieces of legislation such as the Disaster Management Act already reflect this reality today. Other pieces of legislation could follow in its wake.

This trend is already becoming evident to some extent across the world. Europe has shown a willingness to sacrifice personal liberties in favour of greater state control.

There are no serious protests over the fact that many of the powers being vested in the instruments of state in democracies today, to meet the current challenge, are eerily similar to those already practised by authoritarian regimes such as China.

Post COVID-19, the world may have to pay a heavy price in terms of loss of liberty. An omnipotent



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

A policy road map to tackle COVID-19

The interest of each and the interests of all now coincide, not only within nations but for all humanity



SANJAY REDDY

How will it all end? Policies to address the worldwide crisis brought about by COVID-19 must satisfy three criteria. First, they must aim to minimise the loss of life directly resulting from the disease, while recognising that there remain deep uncertainties about its true nature.

Second, they must restore the elements of economic and social life as soon as possible, so as to avoid disastrous and lasting consequences, including for other aspects of health, schooling, food security and livelihood. The costs of lockdowns have already been massive and will deepen if they result in foregone health treatments, dropouts from school, and permanent closure of businesses. The direct effect of COVID-19 on the life expectancy of the non-elderly will be modest. But the indirect effects of the lockdown on health and well-being may be severe, especially for poorer persons and countries. An approach that values all lives must give attention to the costs as well as benefits of the lockdown, conceiving the public health comprehensively.

Third, they must aim at a glide path out of the crisis, that can reasonably be projected to end it once and for all – not merely to manage it indefinitely through, for instance, periodic lockdowns. That idea has been motivated by abstract epidemiological models which do not take account of other health effects, let alone non-health effects, of draconian policies, and which make mechanical assumptions about individuals. On and off policies can result in deep damage. There are costs involved in starting and stopping schools and business, but beyond this, human beings need regularity to plan and act sensibly.

An effective health system

Three directions for policy are suggested by these three criteria. First, infections which do not lead to fatalities or lasting illness must be treated as on balance desirable, when determining the right balance of policies. This recognises a central trade-off –



avoiding infection versus gaining possible population-level immunity. As long as the disease is circulating and no medical breakthrough has been achieved, lockdowns, mass testing, contact-tracing and quarantining can only buy time. Reducing the flow of persons who get the disease in each moment diminishes the stock of those who have been exposed, which extends the duration of vulnerability of society. This is not speculation but arithmetic, supposing any degree of immunity from having had the disease. Widespread testing and contact-tracing can help to manage the flow of infections and reduce the danger to those especially at risk, but would have to be continued indefinitely until a vaccine is developed, and demands adequate public health infrastructure, severely neglected in many countries. The need to rebuild an effective basic health system is underlined by the few success stories to date in handling the outbreak, such as Kerala.

Testing on a mass scale is far from being achieved even in the most advanced countries, let alone others. To add to this, spreading the illness over time will likely not lower the number of deaths in developing countries to the same degree as in developed countries which possess superior, although still constrained, curative health infrastructure. As already noted, lockdowns and other means of delaying the spread of the disease come at enormous costs to other pressing societal objectives, including health itself (the already reduced rates of control of other infectious diseases in India and other countries provides a case in point).

Due to different circumstances, the appropriate strategies for protecting life may vary across countries even when the end is the same.

Second, policies must make a link between restoration of economic output and adequate investment in containing, indeed ending, the disease. This means that costs of vaccine development, mass testing and other measures attacking the disease must be viewed as enjoying a healthy societal return. The very low contributions so far to the international fund to develop a vaccine for the virus shows the scale of mismatch between the losses already incurred worldwide and likely to be incurred in the future, and investments to limit those losses. Failure to finance vaccine development is not mere free riding, but borders on suicide, since the prospective gains of individual countries would more than justify paying for the needed investment. Private firms are also being encouraged to contribute, but should agree that any breakthrough must be freely available and benefit all. Recognising the interdependence involved in fighting the disease, and its economic and social consequences, the UN must provide the leadership that has been so far missing.

Smart policies

Third, ‘smart’ design of policies can permit restoration of economic and social life. Such policies should be designed and targeted to allow lower-risk segments of the population to return to daily activities, while protecting higher-risk ones. For instance, systematic collection of test results and other data can be used to manage restrictions so that they are local and temporary. Large and

dense gatherings can be prevented, but others allowed, especially those involving younger persons. Financial compensation for lost earnings, and in-kind support to limit social contacts, such as services to deliver essential goods to the home, can be provided to family members and professionals who help the elderly and vulnerable. Public infrastructure for those who have no suitable alternatives, such as residential facilities to support self-isolation where needed, can be developed. Some policy choices will be complementary, for instance because schools must reopen in order that parents can work. Public actions must enable and encourage desired behaviours, rather than restrict and punish undesired ones. Technology can play an assistive role but is no substitute for public understanding and voluntary choices, fostered by supportive public policies that remove obstacles and enhance benefits of the behaviours being sought. An approach that is effective at balancing and achieving the desired goals can and should also be democratic. The aim must be to reduce risks and manage interdependence, rather than to build walls, whether around individuals, localities or countries.

Smart policies can include resumption of contacts across nations, for instance by beginning with testing and quarantines of visitors progressively. Now that infection rates have risen everywhere, the benefit of continued isolation on reducing the spread of the disease is limited, but its other costs are great. It is more feasible to bring the disease under control in one’s own society through internal measures than to ensure its control everywhere. That is likely to be impossible because of war zones, weak states and broken health systems. A country that has achieved a degree of control over the disease can, however, sustain links to the world with confidence, and need not wait for universal success to begin to restore international contacts.

The right perspective is not one of business versus life nor of life versus life, but of life and life, seeking to reconcile goals through sensible measures. The interest of each and the interests of all now coincide, not only within nations but for all humanity.

Sanjay Reddy is professor of economics at the New School for Social Research in New York

Lacking in transparency

Citizens must keep themselves informed and push the government to adopt scientific and people-oriented policies



SUVRAT RAJU

The lockdown of the country has had a devastating social impact. A recent survey of internal migrant workers found that 42% did not even have a day’s worth of rations left. The situation in the agricultural sector is also grim.

Soon after the lockdown commenced, the Prime Minister apologised for the misery that his decision had caused, but claimed that he had “no other option”. However, it is false that a total lockdown was unavoidable. A lockdown is not a permanent solution for the pandemic. Models suggest that, in the absence of other long-term measures, the epidemic could bounce back when restrictions are eased. Therefore, a lockdown is just a method of buying time to prepare the healthcare system for a long battle.

A result of government failure

But if the purpose of the lockdown is to gain time, this begets another question. The World Health Organization declared the novel coronavirus outbreak a “public health emergency of international concern” on January 30. India was lucky because the virus arrived here relatively late. Why did the government not prepare itself despite several weeks of advance notice?

If the government had scaled up testing capability in February, tested and quarantined international travellers from high-risk countries, including asymptomatic travellers, and established stocks of personal protective equipment, a total lockdown could have been avoided. India could not have escaped the epidemic entirely, but it could have minimised damage to the economy, while keeping infections at a manageable level through testing, contact-tracing and, possibly, targeted lockdowns. It follows that the social catastrophe caused by the lockdown is the direct result of the failure of the government to respond to the epidemic in a timely manner.

In his address to the nation on April 14, the Prime Minister remarked that his government took “quick decisions” to contain the disease. This myth has allowed the government to escape accountability for its past failures and emboldened it to charge ahead with problematic policies. An example is the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)’s reluctance to expand the scope of testing. On April 27, India had tested 486 individuals

per million of the population. This is not only more than 50 times lower than the corresponding rate in Italy, it is significantly lower than the rate in Pakistan. Almost a week into the lockdown, on March 30, the ICMR admitted that it was testing at “less than 30%” of its capacity. This raises serious questions about whether ICMR’s strict testing guidelines are partly motivated by the desire to keep the number of reported infections low and disingenuously suggest that the epidemic is in control.

Studies suggest that more than 80% of those infected by COVID-19 are asymptomatic or only mildly symptomatic. Since such individuals can nevertheless infect others, they must be included in the ambit of testing. Otherwise, they could form the base for a rapid spread of the epidemic.

The role of the people

The government must not only collect more data, it must share and analyse this data openly so that people can verify the rationale behind its administrative decisions. Instead, the government has started peddling numbers that make no sense. Just before extending the lockdown, the government claimed that India would have had 8 lakh cases by 15 April without the lockdown. But independent analysts believe that the lockdown’s role in reducing the number of cases in India has been of a smaller magnitude.

In his address, the Prime Minister stated that “several countries” which were “at par with India” a few weeks earlier had gone on to develop “25-30 times” more cases. But the data fail to reveal the existence of any such country. The U.S. and Spain, which have the world’s highest number of infections had, respectively, 53 and 15 times as many cases as India on the day of the address. But these countries have always been ahead of India on the epidemic’s curve. By March 14, they had reported 27 and 63 times more cases, respectively, than India.

A crisis provides the state with a ready justification to shun both accountability and transparency. However, while this might be expedient for those in power, it does not lead to an effective public health strategy. The virus is immune to political spin and data-suppression. This is why the role of the Indian people is crucial, and it goes well beyond lighting candles. We can best contribute in the country’s battle against the epidemic by keeping ourselves informed, holding the government to account, and constantly pushing it to adopt policies that are scientific, transparent and people-oriented.

Suvarat Raju is a physicist with the International Centre for Theoretical Sciences, Bengaluru. Views expressed are personal

Hostage to obscurantism

Pakistan’s experience shows why instrumentalising religion is dangerous

MOHAMMED AYOOB

In the month of Ramadan, Muslims renew their faith by fasting, participating in family and community dinners, and congregational prayers. This Ramadan is unique, however, because of COVID-19, which in most Muslim-majority countries as well as in India has led to the shutting down of mosques and banning of congregational prayers. The holiest sites of Islam in Mecca and Medina have been subject to lockdowns as well. Most Muslims have adjusted to the new reality justifying it with reference to the Prophetic tradition that human life is more important than the performance of religious rituals.

became the Qaid-e-Azam of the predominantly Sunni Pakistan movement. He and his lieutenants viewed Islam in instrumental terms. To them it was the most effective tool to mobilise Muslim masses to aggrandise power while leaving Muslims in the minority provinces, who they considered dispensable, far more vulnerable than they would have been in undivided India. All they were interested in was creating a Muslim-majority state over which they could rule since they could not compete with the Indian National Congress for influence and power in a united India after the British withdrawal.

A slippery slope

Pakistan’s founders were not interested in creating an Islamic theocracy. However, less than two years after Pakistan’s independence religious leaders pressured Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan to include in the Objectives Resolution (which later became the Preamble to Pakistan’s first Constitution) that sovereignty belongs to Allah who had delegated his authority to the state of Pakistan.

This was the first step on the slippery slope towards making Pakistan an ideological Islamic state. It is clear from hindsight that despite a few bumps on the way there was a linear development from the Objectives Resolution to Zia’s Islamisation and the entrenchment of the most reactionary and jihadist elements, the latter encouraged by the military for its own ends, in Pakistan’s body politic.

The message that India should imbibe from the Pakistani experience is that once religion is employed, even for instrumental purposes, as the principal component of a nation’s identity, it is inevitable that the most bigoted religious elements will end up defining the dominant ideology of the nation’s polity. The experience of Israel teaches the same lesson. Established by a secular elite that used religio-ethnic identity for instrumental purposes, it has ended up empowering Jewish fundamentalists who now hold the political balance.

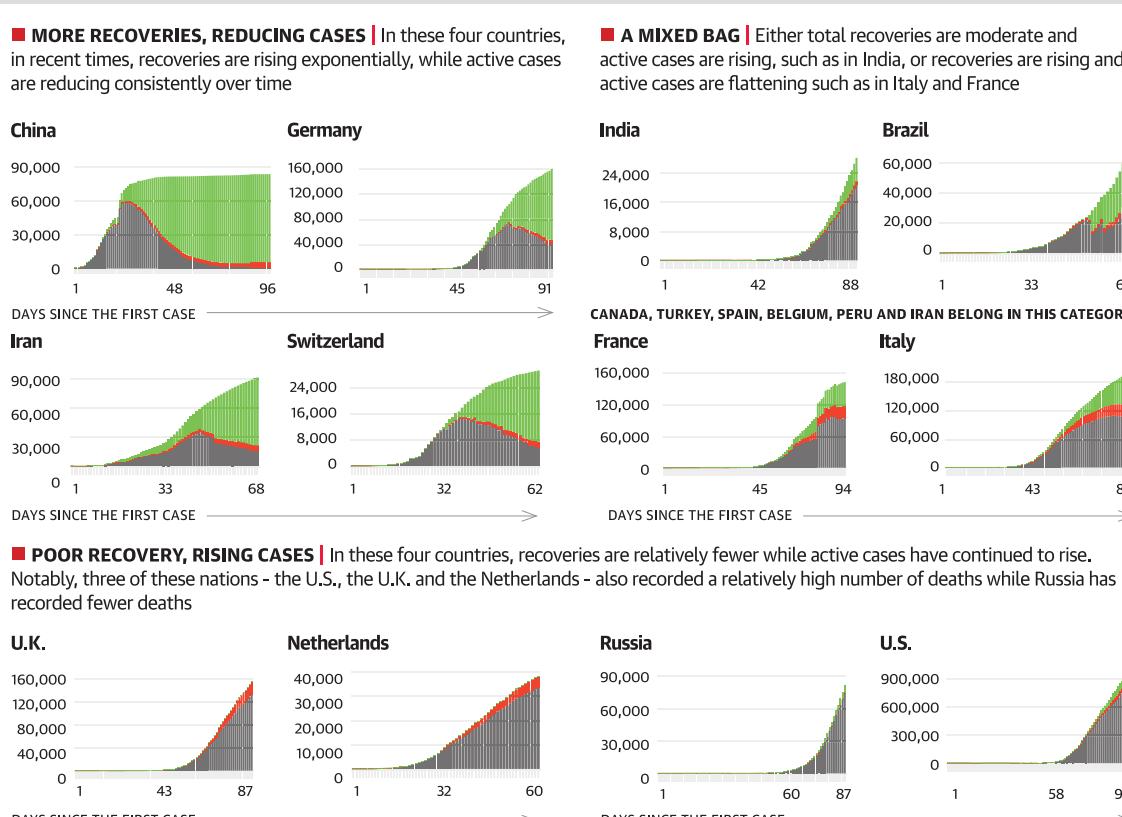
Mohammed Ayooob is University Distinguished Professor Emeritus of International Relations, Michigan State University



DATA POINT

COVID-19 trajectories: The good, the bad and the ugly

COVID-19 curves can be categorised into three types based on the number of recoveries ■, number of deaths ■ and number of active cases ■ recorded over time. The charts depict the trajectories of 12 out of the 17 countries which recorded at least 25,000 infections. By Vignesh Radhakrishnan, Sumanth Sen, Naresh Singaravelu



The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 28, 1970

Veterinary Dispensary Inside Temple

Shops inside temples are a common feature, but a veterinary dispensary functions inside the Angala Amman Temple in Belur, Salem district. There is a blue board of the Animal Husbandry Department on the temple tower stating that the Belur veterinary dispensary is functioning within the temple. When your correspondent approached the temple gate, he was greeted with the bleatings of four famished goats. Enquiries reveal that the veterinary dispensary was located in the temple a couple of years ago since no suitable site was available nearby and a nominal rent is being paid by the department to the temple authorities. People belonging to all religious faiths are permitted to visit the dispensary inside the temple for treating their ailing cattle.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 28, 1920

Domestic Servants Conference.

A Conference of the Madras Domestic Servants of the European Employers was held. The Hon’ble Mr. M.C. Rajah in the course of his presidential address said: “Our demands are elementary. We have to plead hard for the most elementary rights of citizenship. We have often asked that we may be treated as human beings. It is only the Christian missionaries among the European Employers that treat us at all sympathetically but with others our aspirations meet but with little sympathy. In the Legislative Council, I have often been reminded that my interpellations and resolutions relate to trifling matters. They may be trifling and insignificant to those engaged in the game of transcendent politics. They may not be so romantic as big political proposals. But “the toad beneath the hawthorn knows exactly where each tooth-point goes.” The Government seems to be under the impression that by appointing a few men of our community to the councils of the land, they have done their duty to our community. I am often told that my being on the Legislative Council is propulsive of the interest the Government takes in our community. As regards the representation in the Legislative Council, though the Joint Parliamentary Committee had recommended six seats for us, you do not know what amount of difficulty I had in getting five seats reserved for us. I desire that we should be treated as office-servants and not as despisable slaves.

FROM PAGE ONE

Modi hints at graded exit from lockdown

The Chief Ministers of Goa, Odisha, Meghalaya and several others had asked for an extension of the lockdown with some relaxations for economic activities within district boundaries. Odisha asked for an extension till June 3, with time being given to the State governments to bring back migrant workers from their States back to their own.

On this issue, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar asked for a clear nationwide policy. Several States have facilitated the return of migrant labourers from their States and even students stuck elsewhere, while Bihar had stuck to the old lockdown policy, which was to tell people to stay where they are. "Now that several States

have started bringing back their people, we want a uniform policy for this," he reportedly said. He also sought more testing kits as well as personal protection equipment (PPE) for medical and front line workers.

Mr. Modi, while emphasising that the restart of economic activity was important, said the fundamentals of the economy continued to be strong. On the issue of getting back Indians stuck overseas, he said it "had to be done keeping in mind the fact that they don't get inconvenienced, and their families are not under any risk." Several reports suggested earlier last week that the process of evacuating the Indians stuck abroad may begin after May 3.

Mr. Narayanasamy, one of the nine Chief Ministers who participated in the video conference, also made several key suggestions such as a block grant of ₹1 lakh crore

for all States to combat COVID-19 on the basis of population, clearing the pending GST dues, interest-free advances to States by the Reserve Bank of India, rescheduling of Central loans to States for six months and a stimulus package on the lines given by the UPA government in 2008.

"Most of the Chief Ministers were unanimous in telling the Prime Minister that the way in which the corona-affected persons are increasing in the country, there

should be a cautious approach and the Prime Minister should take a call on the basis of the observations given by the Chief Ministers."

V. NARAYANASAMY, PUDUCHERRY CHIEF MINISTER



'No payment made for Chinese test kits supplies'

"For Wondfo, the evaluation committee got four bids and the corresponding quotes received were ₹1,204, ₹1,200, ₹844 and ₹600. Accordingly, the offer of ₹600 was considered. Meanwhile, ICMR also tried to procure kits directly from Wondfo," the ICMR said.

The quotation received from direct procurement had issues, including that it was FOB (Free on Board) without any commitment on logistics issues. As it was on the basis of 100% direct advance without any guarantees, there was no commitment on timelines and the rates were communicated in U.S. Dollars without any clause for accounting for fluctuations, it stated.

Wondfo's exclusive dis-

tributor for India for the kit was selected because they quoted an all-inclusive price for FOB (logistics) without any clause for advance. After receipt of some supplies, ICMR again conducted quality checks on these kits in field conditions. Based on a scientific assessment of their performance, the order in question [Wondfo] along with order in respect of another make found under-performing have been cancelled," it said.

ICMR noted that the States have been advised to stop using the kits procured from Wondfo and Zhuhai Livzon Diagnostics after it found wide variation in their sensitivity despite early promise of good performance for surveillance.

'Evacuation of students not legally proper'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's video conference with Chief Ministers on Monday, raised the issue of evacuation of students from Bihar stranded in Kota, and said it was not "legally proper" to bring them back until the Centre had amended its lockdown guidelines.

"A large number of students from Bihar are studying in coaching institutes of Kota in Rajasthan. Some States have brought back their students but we are adhering to the lockdown guidelines laid out by the Central government, and according to the Central Disaster Act released by the Home Ministry, there is a ban on inter-State travel.

Until the guidelines are amended, it is not legally proper to bring back anyone," Mr. Kumar told Mr. Modi.

VIJAYITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

Days before State governments led by Uttar Pradesh arranged buses to bring back migrants, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) informed the Supreme Court that "so far rural India has largely remained safe from this disease" and if migrants returning on foot are permitted to conclude their journey "there is a serious and imminent potential of the disease penetrating in rural India also."

In a status report filed in the Supreme Court on April 12, Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla said in case of movement of large group of persons travelling together, "the epidemic, which has already taken the form of a pandemic would manifest itself in its still most severe form making it unmanageable."

The country was initially placed under a lockdown on March 24 in wake of the pan-

demic that was extended till May 3. With all forms of public transport suspended and State borders sealed, lakhs of migrant workers in urban areas started walking hundreds of kilometres to reach their homes. On March 28, MHA issued guidelines and asked States to organize relief camps and arrange food for them.

Migration unnecessary
"There is no necessity for migration of workers to shift from place of occupation to

the place of their residence and rush back to their villages. Their daily needs are being taken care of wherever they are working and the daily needs of their family members were being taken care of at their respective villages.... It is submitted that migrant workers travelling barefoot or otherwise in large numbers inevitably and unknowingly defy the social distancing norms which is one of the globally accepted norm for preventing COVID and put their lives

and others' lives in danger," MHA's status report said.

Uttar Pradesh was one of the first States to announce that it would arrange for migrant workers stuck across the country to return to their homes. On Sunday, a batch of workers in Haryana were brought back to Etah in Uttar Pradesh on buses arranged by the State government and were sent to quarantine centres.

The April 19 guidelines issued by MHA asserted that there will be no inter-State movement of labourers. Following UP, other States like Punjab, Odisha, West Bengal, Maharashtra were also coordinating for inter-State movement of labourers who wanted to return home. Bihar has been requesting the Centre to change its guidelines and allow students and workers to return home.

A senior Home Ministry official said there were no fresh guidelines allowing further movement of such migrant workers.

Meghalaya seeks national lockdown beyond May 3
'States can use RRS at panchayat level'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Conrad K. Sangma

with Mr. Modi on Monday.

He suggested setting up of RRS at the panchayat level as well as creation of an economic task force. "The Prime Minister appreciated our experiment with local-level RRS for activating doctors, local administration and police within 60 minutes of detection of cases. He said all the States should replicate this model," Mr. Sangma said.

were coordinating among themselves.

Delhi incident
On March 29, two Delhi government officers were suspended and a showcause was slapped against two other officers for dereliction of duty as thousands of migrants congregated at the Delhi-U.P. border in buses, in a bid to go home.

On March 28, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had tweeted that a 1,000 buses were being arranged to help the migrants reach home.

The MHA's status report, without specifically mentioning the Delhi incident, said, "with a view to initially disperse gathering of such migrant workers at the State borders, some State governments did make arrangement for their travel by bus but eventually a final decision was taken not to permit further movement of such migrant workers."

India among top 3 military spenders: report

'Country's tensions and rivalry with Pakistan, China among major drivers for increased expenditure'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The global military expenditure rose to \$1917 billion in 2019 with India and China emerging among the top three spenders, according to a report by a Swedish think tank, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

"In 2019, China and India were, respectively, the second- and third-largest military spenders in the world. China's military expenditure reached \$261 billion in 2019, a 5.1% increase compared with 2018, while India's grew by 6.8% to \$71.1 billion," the report said.

In 2019, the top five largest spenders – U.S. (\$732

bn), China, India, Russia (\$65.1 bn) and Saudi Arabia (\$61.9 bn) – accounted for 62% of the global expenditure. The annual report 'Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2019' was released on Monday.

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bn), China, India, Russia (\$65.1 bn) and Saudi Arabia (\$61.9 bn) – accounted for 62% of the global expenditure. The annual report 'Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2019' was released on Monday.

"India's tensions and rivalry with both Pakistan and China are among the major drivers for its increased military spending," the report quoted SIPRI Senior Researcher Siemon T. Wezeman. The \$71.1 billion spent

by India on defence in 2019 was 2.4% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). India was at the fourth position in 2018 with Saudi Arabia at the third.

Significant rise

Stating that India's expenditure in 2019 was 6.8% more than that in 2018, the report says the country's military expenditure has risen significantly over the past few decades. "It grew by 259% over the 30-year period of 1990-2019, and by 37% over the decade of 2010-19. However, its military burden fell from 2.7% of GDP in 2010 to 2.4% in 2019."

While India's defence spending excluding pen-

sions, which constitute a significant part, has been growing in absolute terms, it has been going down as a percentage of its GDP as noted by the report. For instance, the defence allocation in the latest budget for 2020-21 which was ₹3.37 lakh crore, excluding defence pensions, accounts for about 1.5% of the country's GDP, the lowest in recent times.

In comparison, Pakistan's military expenditure rose by 70% over the decade 2010-19, to reach \$10.3 billion while the military burden increased from 3.4% of GDP in 2010 to 4% in 2019, says the report. Pakistan was at the 24th position in 2019 compared to 19th in 2018.

IN BRIEF

UIDAI allows CSCs to offer Aadhaar update facility
NEW DELHI

The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has allowed Common Service Centres that operate as banking correspondents to offer Aadhaar update facility. "To make Aadhaar updating easier for citizens, UIDAI has permitted CSCs, which are designated banking correspondents of banks, to offer Aadhaar update services. Around 20,000 such CSCs will now be able to offer this service to citizens," IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad tweeted.

BTAD placed under Governor's Rule
GUWAHATI

Assam's Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) was placed under the Governor's Rule on Monday after the expiry of the 5-year term of the council that governs it. Its election, scheduled on April 4, had been deferred. The BTAD, comprising 4 districts of Assam, falls under the Bodoland Territorial Council formed in 2003.

Air tickets refund: SC seeks Ministry's reply
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday admitted a petition seeking a full refund for airline tickets cancelled due to the COVID-19 lockdown, irrespective of when the booking was done. A Bench of Justices N.V. Ramana, S.K. Kaul and B.R. Gavai admitted the petition filed by NGO, Pravasi Legal Cell, which challenged an April 16 Office Memorandum of the Civil Aviation Ministry. The court sought a reply from the Ministry and the Director General of Civil Aviation.

J&K extends ban on faster mobile Internet

Cites Pak. bid to recruit militants

net," the order added.

The Home Department said restrictions on the speed was in place "in order to curb uploading, download, circulation of provocative videos, guard against rumour-mongering, fake news, prevent the use of encrypted messaging and VoIP services for infiltration and coordinating [militant] activities."

"[The measure] is aimed to defeat the nefarious designs from across the border to propagate [militancy]," read the order.

Mobile Internet was banned in Jammu and Kashmir on August 5, 2019.

However, 2G speed was restored after a Supreme Court direction in January.

MPs' virtual meeting scuttled over security concerns

Set up secure platform for Standing Committees: Sharma

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

If Prime Minister Narendra Modi can do video conferencing with Chief Ministers through a 'secure platform', then Parliamentary Standing Committees should also be able to do so, senior Congress leader Anand Sharma, who heads the Standing Committee on Home Affairs, is learnt to have said in a note to Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu.

Mr. Sharma's note on Monday came after the Rajya Sabha secretariat did not approve of his plan to hold a meeting of the Standing Committee through video conferencing citing con-

cerns regarding "secure online platform".

He had scheduled a meeting on April 28 (Tuesday) where he had planned to speak to the Home Ministry officials regarding the lockdown and had suggested a virtual meeting due to travel restrictions during the on-

going lockdown. Mr. Sharma is now learnt to have asked the Rajya Sabha secretariat to tell the government to 'organise a secure platform for the Committees'.

The former Union Minister is learnt to have said that it was crucial for the Home Affairs Committee to speak to officials as the Ministry is the nodal ministry for coordinating with the State governments, organising relief efforts and a roadmap for a stage-wise opening of the lockdown.

"I have asked the Chairman to reconsider his decision," Mr. Sharma told *The Hindu* but declined to elaborate on his letter.



Anand Sharma

other health services besides COVID-19. He further added that traditional medicinal systems should continue their work," said the Health Ministry.

In its guidelines for home isolation, the Health Ministry said, "Very mild/pre-symptomatic patients having the requisite facility at his/her residence for self-isolation will have the option for home isolation. The patients should be clinically assigned as very mild/mild, moderate or severe and accordingly admitted to COVID Care Centres, dedicated COVID Health Centres or dedicated COVID Hospital."

"For home isolation, a person should be clinically assigned as a very mild case/pre-symptomatic case by the treating medical officer. A care giver should be available to provide care on 24x7 basis and a communication link between the care-giver and hospital is a prerequisite for the entire duration," the Ministry said.

Infiltration attempts

"There were well-founded apprehensions of the field agencies regarding enhanced efforts by Pakistan for recruitment in the ranks as well as infiltration attempts, which heavily depend on high-speed inter-

net," the order added.

The Home Department said restrictions on the speed was in place "in order to curb uploading, download, circulation of provocative videos, guard against rumour-mongering, fake news, prevent the use of encrypted messaging and VoIP services for infiltration and coordinating [militant] activities."

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"I have asked the Chairman to reconsider his decision," Mr. Sharma told *The Hindu* but declined to elaborate on his letter.

The former Union Minister is learnt to have said that it was crucial for the Home Affairs Committee to speak to officials as the Ministry is the nodal ministry for coordinating with the State governments, organising relief efforts and a roadmap for a stage-wise opening of the lockdown.

"I have asked the Chairman to reconsider his decision," Mr. Sharma told *The Hindu* but declined to elaborate on his letter.

The former Union Minister is learnt to

Priyanka seeks action over faulty PPEs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress general secretary and in charge for Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) Priyanka Vadra on Monday raised the issue of 'faulty' personal protection equipment (PPE) supplied to the State's medical colleges, and asked if the Yogi Adityanath government would take action against those involved in the 'scam'.

According to figures given by the State Health Department, 15 of these deaths were reported from Mumbai city, while as many as six were from Amravati city – which had hitherto remained unscathed by the contagion.

Four more deaths were reported from Pune district, and one each from the Aurangabad and Jalgaon districts.

"...Surprisingly, the U.P. government is not bothered about the scam but is concerned about who leaked the information about these faulty kits," she said in a tweet in Hindi.

She also shared a letter by State Director General of Medical Education that had flagged the issue of faulty PPEs supplied to the medical colleges.

"Surprisingly, the U.P. government is not bothered about the scam but is concerned about who leaked the information about these faulty kits," she said in a tweet in Hindi.

She also shared a letter by the government seeking to inquire about the source of the leak.

Students to be sent home from Prayagraj

9,000-10,000 are stranded there

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government on Monday said it would now transport around 9,000-10,000 students stranded in Prayagraj to other districts in the State in a phased manner.

Making the announcement, Awanshi Awasthi, Additional Chief Secretary-Home Department, said 300 buses would be used to ferry the students to their home districts.

The government estimates that around 9,000-10,000 students studying in Allahabad University and other colleges and coaching centres, were stranded in various parts of the district, which is a big hub in coaching for competitive examination.

First phase
In the first phase, the buses from Prayagraj would drop students to Sonbhadra, Mirzapur, Chandauli, Varanasi, Jaunpur, Pratapgarh, Kaushambi, Fatehpur and Chitrakoot districts, with borders close to Prayagraj.

"The same buses will be sent to other districts in the second phase," Mr. Awasthi said. If other States want to take back their students stranded in Prayagraj, they would also be provided permission, he added.

The U.P. government had earlier sent buses to bring back students stranded in Kota, Rajasthan, and migrant labourers stuck in Haryana, due to the lockdown. Over the weekend, more than 12,000 migrants labourers were brought back from Haryana, as per government figures.

Meanwhile, the number of deaths linked to COVID-19 reached 31 in U.P., while the number of positive cases climbed to 1,986, as per the State Directorate of Health Services.

Delhi HC caps price of test kits at ₹400

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has directed a medical equipment importer to cap at ₹400 the price of each COVID-19 rapid test kit, which was ordered by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) at the rate of ₹600 per kit.

In late March, the ICMR placed an order for five lakh WONDFO SARS CoV-2 antibody test kits from China at the rate of ₹600 per kit. The total order value was around ₹30 crore.

However, the landed cost of each test kit works out to ₹245. Which meant that the actual cost for 5 lakh test kits was ₹12.25 crore.

The court noted that from the ₹30 crore to be paid by the ICMR for the 5 lakh kits, ₹18.75 crore was to be shared by the intermediaries – Matrix Labs, Rare Metabolics Life Sciences and Aark Pharmaceuticals.

Directing that the test kits must not be sold at a rate of ₹400 per piece, the High Court said, "a profit mark-up of ₹155 i.e. 61% on the landed cost price of ₹245 is much on the higher side and in any case more than sufficient for the seller, for the kits/tests to be made available in India for urgent extensive tests through the country..."

Massive spike of 522 cases in Maharashtra

On Monday, cumulative tally surged to 8,590 positive cases with 27 more deaths

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI



Full protection: A doctor in a PPE examining patients outside his clinic at Dharavi in Mumbai. ■ AADESH CHOURHARI

were from Pimpri-Chinchwad. The death toll in Amravati, which had just reported a single death almost a fortnight ago, now stands at seven.

High-risk cases

"81% of the deaths reported had high-risk co-morbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, asthma and heart disease. One of them was an HIV patient and one was suffering from cancer," said Dr. Awate.

He added that information on co-morbidities of

four of the patients was not available as yet.

Yet again, Mumbai reported the overwhelming majority of the new cases – 369 – as their city's cumulative tally climbed to 5,776.

Pune district authorities reported a surge of at least 75 fresh cases in Pune city as the district's cumulative active cases rose to 1,066.

With the accretion of fresh cases, the district has witnessed a rise of more than 200 new active cases over three days. As per government figures, the total of pos-

Dharavi reports 13 new cases, tally now 288

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

On Sunday, Dharavi had reported its highest single-day tally of 34 cases. The number dropped to 13 on Monday, bringing the total to 288.

Of the new cases reported, two are from Mukund Nagar, one from Madina Na-

gar, one from Muslim Nagar, which were already marked hotspots of the virus. Cases were also reported from newer parts of Dharavi like Prem Nagar, Gangadhara chawl, Palkar chawl. Dharavi has seen 14 deaths so far.

Dadar and Mahim have not reported any new cases for three days now.

As many as 81 persons were discharged after complete recovery, taking the total number of recovered patients to 394.

As on Monday, there are 31 patients critically ill with severe viral load requiring ventilator support, while 2,961 are stable and under treatment. So far, the State has tested 53,575 samples, of which 2,484 samples were tested in the last 24 hours.

"There are 572 active containment zones in the State currently. After the first CO-

VID-19 positive patient was found in the Pirburhan area of Nanded city, a thorough search of the patient's contacts was done. Laboratory

tests of 80 of his contacts returned negative," said Dr. Awate, adding that, presently, 1,45,677 people across the State were in home quarantine.



A man selling masks in Ahmedabad. ■ VIJAY SONEJI

while five out of the 11 deaths occurred in the city.

Cumulatively, Ahmedabad has recorded 2,378 cases and 109 deaths, with 212 recovered patients.

After Ahmedabad is Surat, with rising numbers and deaths. On Monday, Surat recorded 30 new cases and four deaths. So far, there are a total of 516 cases and 19 deaths in the city, with just 20 patients having recovered and been discharged.

The virus has spread to 30 out of the total 33 districts, but the bulk of the cases and even fatalities remain concentrated in Ahmedabad, Surat and Vadodara, where 13 patients have succumbed to the virus.

Testing times



On the go: A child stepping out of a vehicle after undergoing a COVID-19 test as others await their turn in the Sarai area of northwest Delhi on Monday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

M.P. High Court suspends hearings at Indore Bench

Many employees, including a Judge, placed under quarantine

STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

The Chief Justice of the Madhya Pradesh High Court on Monday suspended hearing of cases by the Indore Bench through video conferencing up to May 3 in view of the COVID-19 spread in the city and as several of its officials had gone into quarantine.

An employee of the Indore Bench Registry was found positive and some officials had been quarantined, said Rajendra Kumar Vani, Registrar-General, in a circular.

The quarantined officials include a Judge.

As per the guidelines dated April 15 and 16, it was directed that urgent matters shall be filed through e-filing or through email and hearing may be conducted through video conferencing.

Four persons died of the disease while undergoing



Daily bread: A vendor of flat bread consumed to break the fast during Ramzan taking his wares to a shop in Bhopal. ■ PTI

treatment on Monday taking the toll to 110, according to the Directorate of Health Services. Three of the deaths were reported from Bhopal and one from Mandsaur.

The State reported 75 cases on the day taking the overall count to 2,165 cases. The tally in Bhopal climbed to 428. So far, 357 patients have recovered.

In Indore, three persons died of the disease on Sunday, taking the toll to 60. The duration of stay for the three men at hospitals was between 10 hours and six days, said Pravin Jadia, Indore Chief Medical and Health Officer.

On the day, 31 persons, or 10% of the 298 samples tested, came out to be positive.

Kanika Kapoor offers to donate plasma for treating patients

Singer had tested positive for COVID-19 on March 20

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LUCKNOW

Bollywood singer Kanika Kapoor on Monday expressed her desire to donate her plasma for treating COVID-19 patients, officials said. She has given her blood sample for testing at the King George's Medical University (KGMU) here, they said.

"Singer Kanika Kapoor on

Monday expressed her desire to KGMU doctors to donate plasma. After this, she was called and her blood sample was taken for testing. If everything is found appropriate in the report (of the blood test), she will be called on Monday evening or Tuesday to donate her plasma, Tulika Chandra, Head of Department of Transfusion Medicine, KGMU said.

"So far, three COVID-19 patients, who have recovered from the infection at the KGMU, have donated their plasma. This includes a resident doctor of KGMU Tauseef Khan, a female doctor from Canada [who was admitted here] and another patient, she said.

Kapoor had tested positive for COVID-19 on March 20.

West Bengal tests a record 1,150 samples

Lockdown curbs to continue till May 21; Mamata vows help for stranded residents

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

The West Bengal government has made arrangements to ensure the return of the State's residents stranded in other States, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has said. In two tweets on Monday, Ms. Banerjee said the State government will provide "possible help to people of Bengal stuck in different parts of the country" to bring them back, and that "All students

from Bengal stuck in Kota [Rajasthan] would begin their journey back soon."

"I have instructed my officers to do the needful. Till the time I am here, nobody from Bengal should feel helpless. I'm with you in these tough times," Ms. Banerjee tweeted.

"I am personally overseeing this and we will leave no stone unturned in ensuring that everyone gets possible help," she tweeted.

Number of COVID-19 cas-

es increased in Bengal from 461 to 504, in last 24 hours. While the number of persons expired remains at 20, the tests gone up by a record 1150 samples, from 10893 on Sunday to 12043 on Monday.

Ms. Banerjee, meanwhile, said that the lockdown restriction will continue till May 21. "Centre will decide on lockdown. But the State will have orange red and green zones. No planes, no trains no inter-state buses," she said. Criticising the Centre

for inconsistent COVID-combat policy, she said that the State has incurred losses of ₹5 lakh crore. "Only burning no earning," she said

No Congress role

Ms. Banerjee also denied any role of Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury in bringing the students back. Earlier, the leader had said that Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot had told him that he could transport the students up to Bengal's border.

Hospitals are following varied

protocols to prevent mother-to-child transmission. ■ GETTY IMAGES

pitals and medical experts across the city are following varied protocols to prevent moth-

er-to-child transmission.

Expert views on the matter differ globally. The World Health Organization (WHO) states that the mother and baby can share the same room and breastfeeding can be done after following strict hand and respiratory hygiene.

The Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention (CDC) states that mother-to-child transmission of coronavirus during pregnancy is unlikely, but after birth, a newborn is susceptible to person-to-person spread.

The civic-run Nair Hospital has carried out over 20 deliveries of COVID-19 positive women. Head of Paediatrics, Dr. Sushma Malik said that they were following the WHO guidelines. "Only in cases where the mother has severe symptoms or the baby is already sick due to some reasons, we are avoiding their contact. In other cases, the mother is kept with the baby and allowed to breastfeed after following the hygiene protocol," she said, adding that all the babies had tested negative for COVID-19 so far.

As the pandemic evolves, hos-

pitals and medical experts across the city are following varied

protocols to prevent moth-

er-to-child transmission.

"We are all learning and the steps we take now will tell us

what works and what doesn't,"

said gynaecologist Dr. Suruchi Desai, who delivered the 36-year-old woman's baby at the Nanavati Hospital through a caesarean section. The woman, a resident of Mumbai Central, has seen her newborn on a video call arranged by the doctors. Not allowed to be in the hospital to avoid unnecessary exposure, the father too saw the baby through a video call and a few pictures sent to him on WhatsApp.

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"We are all learning and the steps we take now will tell us

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INTERVIEW | VIKRAM MISRI

'India working with China to ensure quality of supplies'

With several agencies in India involved in the procurement exercise, ensuring quality may have been not be possible, says Indian Ambassador to China

SUHASINI HAIDAR
ANANTH KRISHNAN

India is working together with Chinese authorities to identify bona fide suppliers of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other medical supplies, says the Indian Ambassador to China, Vikram Misri, stressing that all procurement by the government is going through independent third-party inspection, amid concerns about Chinese supplies.

The External Affairs
Ministry has said more than 400 tonnes of medical equipment from China have arrived in the past two weeks. How are the two countries working together during the pandemic?

■ India is in the process of commercially procuring a large amount of medical supplies from China. Our priority is for quality products to be available at reasonable and stable prices and enable their transport in an efficient and timely manner to India. We have been working together with the Chinese side on identifying bona fide sup-

pliers, facilitating customs procedures and expediting flight clearances, etc. Smooth cooperation in these areas would be an excellent development in our bilateral relations.

Tens of thousands of PPE kits failed quality tests, and the use of rapid antibody test kits had to be put on hold. Why has India continued with imports?

■ China happens to be among the world's largest producers of some of the medical supplies that India is looking to procure at this moment. With regard to

quality issues with the rapid antibody tests, you may have to inquire with the agencies at the Indian end that were involved with the procurement process. Regarding PPE kits, it may be noted that several agencies in India, including private entities, are involved in this procurement exercise and may not have been in a position to look at quality-related issues in detail.

As far as the procurement of PPE kits by the Government of India through the Embassy in Beijing is concerned, we are taking care to ensure that this is confined to a list of approved and qualified suppliers who figure on an official Chinese Government list. Chinese authorities have also added an extra quality inspection requirement for all consignments before they are handed over to customs authorities.



We are also doing our part in the quality assurance exercise by insisting on an independent third-party inspection by reputed agencies [such as SGS Switzerland and Bureau Veritas]. Indeed, it is through this third party inspection that we have been able to detect issues with a recent consignment and have had it returned to the manufacturer for rectification.

China has called India's

... as long as India continues to be a profitable place to do business, I do not expect the trend of investment into India ... to change

decision to push FDI from neighbours through the government route a discriminatory move, violating global commitments. What is your response?

■ There is no prohibition or bar on investments resulting from these procedural changes, which have been made with full cognisance of India's international commitments.

Will this slow the flow of Chinese investments into India?

■ India continues to remain

among the most attractive global destinations for FDI. Capital only seeks returns, and as long as India continues to be a profitable place to do business, I do not expect the trend of investment into India from anywhere in the world to change.

Is India exploring any formal cooperation to learn from mistakes and best practices adopted by Wuhan?

■ Members of the Indian scientific fraternity had participated in a video conference organised by the Chinese side that was dedicated to sharing China's experiences in tackling the COVID-19 crisis.

There may be more such opportunities in future, and we will look forward to participating in them. Right now, the preoccupation in both countries is to deal with the

immediate challenges posed by the pandemic.

Institutes like the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research have collaborated in the past in studies with the Wuhan Institute of Virology. Do you see more such collaborations, or will they come to an end after the pandemic?

■ At the second Informal Summit in Chennai, Prime Minister Modi and President Xi had agreed to celebrate this event through 70 activities. The outbreak has obviously interrupted our plans. We may, thus, not necessarily be able to undertake every activity, but it remains our intention to try and do as much as possible in the time that is available to us. Both sides remain engaged on the issue, and we hope we can resume engagements at the earliest possible, whenever it is safe and healthy to do so.

answer questions on specific programmes of cooperation.

Celebrations for the 70th year of India-China relations have been put on pause. Will the informal summit between Prime Minister Modi and President Xi be postponed this year?

■ Public health issues, epidemiology, vaccine development, etc., are areas with significant potential for cooperation between India and China, given our large populations, and our large pools of scientific and technological manpower. I think it would be mutually beneficial to remain engaged in these areas.

The agencies concerned would be better placed to

these are Indian companies," Congress Lok Sabha member Manish Tewari said in an online press conference.

"Just imagine how many more kits could have been bought... Therefore, we demand an immediate inquiry into this kind of profiteering during the pandemic," he said.

"The government should make all documents with regard to import of medical equipment in the past one month public. "Society should also know who are making such profits even during these times," he added.

Kin receive bodies from UAE

Remains were earlier returned to Abu Dhabi due to confusion over guidelines

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

After days of back and forth, bodies of three Indians from Abu Dhabi were brought back to Delhi and handed over to their families on Monday.

The handing over took place early in the morning at the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA), ending a five-day ordeal for the families, and allowing them to complete the final rites.

The mortal remains of the three men, who were expatriate workers in the United Arab Emirates – Kamlesh Bhatt from Uttarakhand, and Jagbir Singh and Sanjeev Kumar from Punjab – had also earlier arrived on April 23, but were sent back by immigration authorities because there weren't sufficient clearances to admit them into the country.

The case had led to a controversy over government guidelines for the return of bodies during the coronavirus pandemic, as the families pleaded that the bodies should be allowed to remain and not returned to the UAE while permissions were obtained, but to no avail.

"Finally, we are just relieved that we could bring Kamlesh's body back and his parents could see their son's face before his last rites," said his cousin Vimlesh Bhatt, who had driven twice to Delhi from Tehri Garhwal amidst the lockdown order to receive Mr. Bhatt's re-



Sad state: The body of Kamlesh Bhatt, who died in the UAE, was received by his relatives in Delhi. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

mains. "We just wish the government agencies could have moved a little quicker to have avoided the confusion that led to his body being sent back," he added.

Mr. Bhatt, a 25-year-old hotel employee, who was the sole earner in the family, had worked in Abu Dhabi for three years before he died of a heart attack on April 17.

Norms revised

Officials said the confusion last week resulted from the fact that the government had issued three separate advisories. The first from the Ministry of Home Affairs on April 17 that extended the lockdown restrictions at all International Check Points (ICPs), made no mention of mortal remains of Indians who die abroad. This was interpreted as a ban on bringing their bodies back, without prior

clearances and led to the coffins from Abu Dhabi being sent back.

On April 25, after Mr. Bhatt's family appealed to the High Court, and the Indian Embassy in UAE expressed its shock over the return of the bodies to Abu Dhabi, the MHA issued a second note, clarifying that bodies could be brought back, subject to guidelines specified by the Ministry of Health. On April 26, the government appeared to change its position from the total ban further, putting out guidelines that even dealt with the possibility of bringing back bodies of patients who die of the coronavirus.

For COVID-19 victims

The latest guidelines, issued by the Ministry of Health said importing the human remains of confirmed/sus-

(With inputs from Bindu Shajan Perappadan)

SC admits plea against wage cuts for scribes

CSIR to let firms defer fee on use of its technology

These will include diagnostic kits, PPE and drugs

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday admitted a plea challenging the legality of wage cuts, unpaid leaves and termination of employment of journalists by media organisations amid the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, saying it is a serious issue requiring consideration.

The joint petition filed by the National Alliance of Journalists, the Delhi Union of Journalists and the Brihanmumbai Union of Journalists sought a direction from the court to suspend, with immediate effect, the terminations, resignations, wage deductions and directions to go on leave without pay that have taken place in the media after the announcement of the nationwide lockdown.

A Bench of Justices N.V. Ramana, Sanjay Kishan Kaul and B.R. Gavai issued notice to the government, the Indian Newspaper Society and the News Broadcasters Association. They have to file their replies within two weeks.

41 technologies

Currently the 38 labs of the organisation have 41 dedicated technologies to deal with the pandemic. They include a paper strip-based test to detect the virus, various kinds of hand sanitizers, a pre-fabricated makeshift hospital and a 3-D

printed ventilator.

Being a publicly funded organisation, technologies developed by the CSIR are generally available to the industry on a non-exclusive licensing basis, that is any company can earn the right to manufacture and sell a product provided they pay a technology fee.

"The clause for deferred royalty/upfront payment and co-branding will be included as an integral part of the agreement," according to the note.

CSIR Director-General Shekhar Mande told *The Hindu* that the deferment would not apply if a firm planned on exporting such equipment.

The organisation's thrust areas are on developing diagnostic kits. The paper-

based test uses gene editing technology to rapidly test for the presence of the virus and is being validated for mass manufacturing.

Antibody tests

Mr. Mande said the organisation was working to develop serology or antibody tests that were cheap and could be quickly deployed for checking prevalence of the disease in community settings.

The Indian Council of Medical Research on Monday suspended contracts to deploy 6,00,000 antibody tests after they reported inconsistent results from field tests.

Three CSIR laboratories were already part of the network of government laboratories involved in testing for the disease. These were the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, the Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology, the Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine and the Institute of Microbial Technology.

Probe 'profiteering' in imports: Cong.

Rahul says such activities during the pandemic is 'an insult to every Indian'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday demanded an immediate inquiry into the alleged profiteering by some companies while importing rapid testing kits for COVID-19 from China and asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to "act swiftly" against those who are taking advantage of the pandemic.

Former party president Rahul Gandhi said profiteering on testing kits was "an insult to every Indian."

"That any human being would try & profiteer from the immeasurable suffering of millions of his brothers &

he stated. The alleged profiteering came to light after an importer, Matrix Labs, got into a legal dispute with another company, Rare Metabolics, that was to meant to distribute/supply 1 million kits to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

While each kit cost Rs. 245, including taxes, they were being sold to the ICMR for Rs 600 a kit. However, the matter reached the Delhi High Court as the importer and the distributor got into a dispute over pending supplies.

"One had heard that Chinese companies had adopted mercenary pricing but

sisters, is beyond belief & comprehension. This scam is an insult to every Indian. I urge the PM to act swiftly to bring the corrupt to justice,"

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INTERVIEW | GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT

'We have 56% more water in reservoirs than we had last year'

I have asked State Ministers to ensure that there is enough supply of drinking water during the lockdown and in the weeks ahead, says Jal Shakti Minister

NISTULA HEBBAR

Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat speaks on how India is placed in terms of water availability as COVID-19 underlines the necessity of piped supply and the situation in his home State Rajasthan, which remains worrisome:

Under a lockdown with summer approaching and with the injunction of constant hand washing to prevent the spread of COVID-19, how is India placed in terms of just water availability?

■ The plentiful rains last year and heavy snowfall in the Himalayan States have ensured that in terms of just volumes,

we are pretty well off this year. I did a review of 132 reservoirs under the Central government, which are out of the 5,000 total reservoirs but which provide two-thirds of the total supply of water across the country. I am happy to say we have 56% more water than we had last year in the reservoirs, which is 47% higher than the average for the last 10 years. So in

terms of reservoirs, etc., we have no worries. This year too we have been told that the monsoon will be plentiful.

Water is a State subject, what has been the feedback from the States?

■ Every summer there is always an issue with regard to availability etc. This year, because the COVID-19 lockdown has entailed that people stay at home, it is even more important to ensure supply. The first thing I did is to hold review meetings with



We are determined to fulfil our promise of piped drinking water to every home

Water Ministers of all States and asked them to ensure that there is enough drinking

water during the lockdown and the weeks ahead. We have gone over the reservoir situation and of water works. There is enough water to get us through this period, both for drinking and irrigation.

The Jal Jeevan Mission was launched last year and there is a time-table to its implementation, how has COVID-19 affected it?

■ The Jal Jeevan Mission was launched by hon'ble Prime Minister in September last year and yes, it is a time-bound programme, with its

urgency underlined by the fact that COVID-19 is accompanied by lockdowns and the emphasis on hand-washing as a preventative. We have been creative in terms of trying to reach some of our goals despite the lockdown disruption. For example, we have asked all our engineers to complete the drafting and on paper preparatory work for the project.

We have divided the mission works into those where only retrofitting is required, those where existing water bodies need to be harnessed and green field works. This

has been done so that whatever can be done is finished in time. The importance of the Mission cannot be emphasised enough under the present circumstances and we are determined that our promise of piped drinking water to every home be fulfilled in the time-frame suggested earlier.

Your home State Rajasthan and your constituency Jodhpur have been badly afflicted by COVID-19. What kind of information are you getting, since you haven't been able to visit?

■ Jodhpur has been badly affected and most of the cases there are because of the Tablighi Jamaat preachers and the mishandling of the situation.

My constituency also includes Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot's Assembly seat and the curfew or lockdown imposed there was handled very badly and very leniently. We have one example of Bhilwara where things were handled well, but we can't ignore what is happening in Jodhpur and Jaipur, where the administration is not able to get a handle on things.

150 seafarers disembark at various ports

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

More than 150 seafarers have been able to disembark from their ships at various Indian ports since the government order issued last week allowed crew change.

According to industry sources, 47 of the 60 ports have been able to implement the government's standard operating procedures, which include testing and quarantine of mariners disembarking ships.

It is also learnt that nearly 72 seafarers were not able to leave their ships due to the failure of the port authorities to comply with the order of the Home Ministry. These were among the issues discussed at Monday's meeting with Shipping Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, who has promised swift action.

Migrants take sea route out of lockdown

25 workers, who reached Odisha after a five-day voyage from Chennai, placed under quarantine

STAFF REPORTER
BERHAMPUR

Yet another motorboat, this time carrying 25 Odia migrant workers from Chennai, reached Rameyapatna in Ganjam district of Odisha on Monday afternoon.

They had undertaken the arduous sea voyage to dodge the continuing lockdown and reach their homes in Ganjam district. This motorboat also carried 14 others, who disembarked at some place in their home State of Andhra Pradesh, said the returned workers.

Spent ₹1.8 lakh on boat
The 39 migrant workers had collected ₹1.8 lakh to buy the motorboat. They began their voyage from Chennai on April 23.

As most of them are from fishing communities, with experience at sea, they dared to make the 850-km



Home at all costs: Police and media personnel speaking with the migrant workers who reached Ganjam district of Odisha on Monday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

voyage in a small fishing boat. Officials of the Ganjam district administration and police were waiting at Rameyapatna to prevent the

workers from coming into contact with anyone after getting down from the boat. According to Berhampur Sub-Collector Sindhe Datta-

treyra Bhau Saheb, the group will undergo a medical check-up and placed under quarantine. Swab samples of persons with possible symp-

toms will be sent for COVID-19 test.

Earlier, a motorboat carrying 38 migrant workers from Chennai had reached Patiunapur of Ganjam district on April 25 evening. They included 29 workers from the Ganjam district of Odisha and nine others from adjoining Andhra Pradesh, all of whom are now under quarantine in Ganjam district. They had spent ₹2 lakh to buy the boat. Odisha State Transport Minister Padmanabha Behera has ordered a probe into their return despite the lockdown.

On April 20, a motorboat used for fishing, carrying 27 migrant workers stranded in Chennai – including 10 from Odisha and 17 from Andhra Pradesh – reached the Dongruru coast in Andhra Pradesh. All of them were quarantined in the Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh.

CBSE exams will be delayed: HRD Minister

'Textbooks will be made available'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Pending board exams of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) will only be held when the situation is back to normal and the government decides to completely lift the lockdown, Human Resource Development Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank told students and parents during a Twitter interaction on Monday.

Across the country, exams in 12 subjects for Class 12 are yet to be held, while Class 10 and 12 students affected by the violence in north-east Delhi have even more pending papers.

Competitive examinations for entrance to medical and engineering education, such as NEET and JEE, would also be delayed until the situation is conducive, that students would be able to access them.

Although online learning resources and televised teaching sessions had been made available for students to keep up with classes, Mr. Nishank urged parents not to pressure the children to study 24 hours a day.



Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank

Madhya Pradesh doctor sets an example

Post-recovery, Iqbal Qureshi donated blood plasma for COVID-19 patients in Indore

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOJPAL

On Sunday, Iqbal Qureshi, a liver specialist, became the first person in Madhya Pradesh to donate blood plasma for COVID-19 patients in Indore, the hardest-hit city. Specialists hope the antibodies in his blood, when injected in the veins of critical patients, can boost their ability to combat the virus. Until Monday, three patients in Indore were transfused with his plasma.

Almost a week before Indore reported its first COVID-19 case on March 22, Dr. Qureshi developed fever. "I don't remember meeting anyone with an infection, and my immunity is strong. I still don't know how I got infected," he said.

Dr. Qureshi recovered from COVID-19 on April 6. On April 25, a COVID-19 hospital



Iqbal Qureshi

asked him if he was interested in donating the plasma. He replied, "Why not?" "I will donate my plasma again if required," he said. Dr. Qureshi, who skipped the second day of the month-long Ramzan fasting for the donation, said, "That's all right. I am doing it for a noble cause."

3-month wait
For donating the plasma again, Dr. Qureshi may have to wait for at least three

months, said Ravi Dosi of Sri Aurobindo Institute of Medical Sciences, Indore, where the plasma was extracted and transfused. "A donor must be symptom-free, not carry immunological illness or blood-borne disorders," he said. Before donating, a person should have completed at least 14 days in quarantine after being discharged. His/her blood pressure, pulse rate and oxygen saturation levels are monitored before, throughout and after the two-three hour extraction process. In the case of an elderly person, their electrocardiogram is conducted first. "For someone who has completed the 14-day period, the RT-PCR test to check for the disease again is not recommended ahead the next round of donation," he added.

It was Dr. Qureshi's first experience at a hospital as a patient. His long-time patients, whom he would check on frequently, now checked on him. "Some of them even cried on the phone for me. Can you believe that? I was touched," he recalled. The one-way concern back at the office, he felt, was an illusion. The relationship is much deeper. "Even patients care for doctors," he said.

The first week, until the reports of family members and friends, his primary contacts, came in, was the hardest. "I was hallucinating," he said. He heard voices at night. "I could not sleep for more than six hours at a stretch."

In May, Dr. Qureshi will return to duty at the ward for possible COVID-19 patients at a private hospital in Indore. "I am not scared for myself, I have antibodies now. But I am worried about carrying the virus back home."

Chakmas and Hajongs need help: rights group

Their ration cards were seized in 1991

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

A Delhi-based rights body has sought Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention in ensuring food for the Chakma and Hajong communities in Arunachal Pradesh who have allegedly not been included in the government relief economic package.

The Chakmas and Hajongs, displaced in the 1960s by violence and a dam in erstwhile East Pakistan, were settled in parts of Arunachal Pradesh.

"The Chakmas and Hajongs do not have ration cards as the State government had illegally and arbitrarily seized those through an order on October 25, 1991," said Rights and Risks Analysis Group director Su-

treya Bhau Saheb.

Hence the two communities have been forced to buy rice at ₹29 a kg while other vulnerable sections have been paying ₹5 per kg, as per the economic package announced by the State government on April 12. This was beyond the means of most Chakma and Hajong people, resulting in starvation of members of the community who had legally become Indian citizens, Mr. Chakma said.

Reminding that denial of food was a violation of the right to life guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution, he requested the Prime Minister to provide the two communities rice at the subsidised price till June or any time as may be extended by the Centre.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has deferred its decision on a revised academic calendar for college and university students, after an emergency meeting on the issue held on Monday evening.

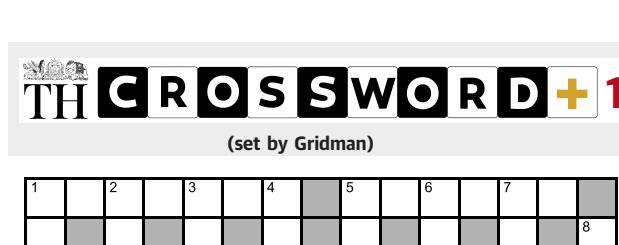
The final guidelines are now expected to be released on Wednesday, after receiving further comments from Commission members and inputs from States, said senior officials.

A UGC panel headed by Central University of Haryana Vice-Chancellor R.C. Kuhad had recommended starting the next academic year by mid August to early September, according to a senior official.

Commission member. It had also suggested a range of options for conducting end-of-semester examinations for the current academic year, from online testing to handwritten exams held after the lockdown is lifted.

Several members made suggestions, especially regarding more flexibility, during the video-conference meeting on Monday, and were requested to submit them in writing by Tuesday, said a person who participated in the meeting.

"The UGC chairman D.P. Singh has been authorised to approve a final decision, and the guidelines will be issued by Wednesday," said a senior official.



ACROSS
1 Beginning to cut *vastra* to make ties (7)
5 Notice man with lady unnoticed – that's proper! (6)
9 Mule disturbed by ultimately clever mammal (5)
10 Winner – one who attracts endlessly in French region (9)
11 True, one goes astray on the way (2,5)
12 With expert losing his head, you in France become twitchy (7)

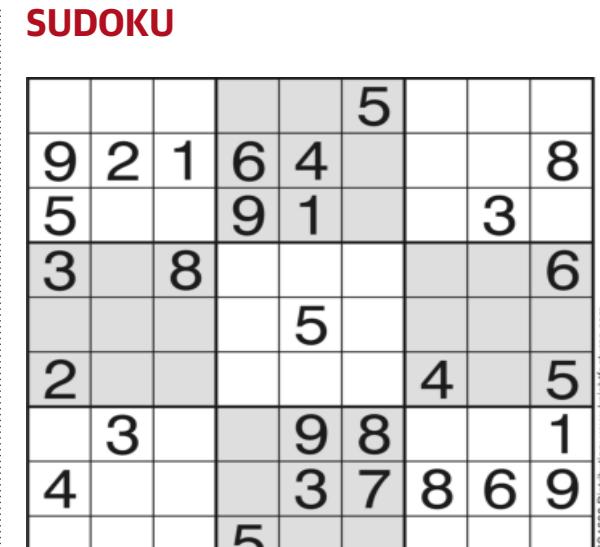
DOWN
1 Moles cleric to repair rare object (10,4)
2 Married exotic lover (7)
3 Stuck on the bottom of the sea? There's a reason! (7)
4 Flame to other hungry one who follows (9)
5 Well at one new country (5)
6 Marie runs around odd poor shops (7)
7 The French bride man's enough space to stretch (7)
8 Each child, least bothered, consumed what's left (8,6)
15 US soldier passes over a coarse Italian leader (9)
17 Girl has a short think-up over one element (7)
18 Fuel gets a company all-round mark of approval (3,4)
19 Pins individual benefit? (4-3)
20 Promenade sees a boy and a dame exercising (7)
22 Be a type of discriminator without a trace of shame (5)

There is no lockdown for your brain!
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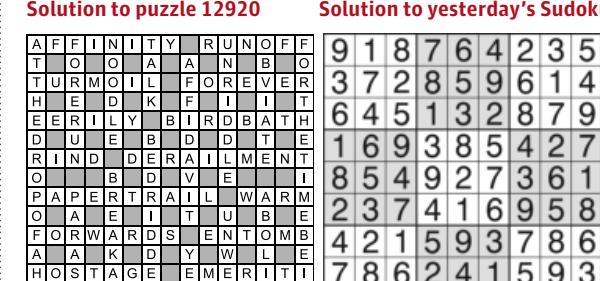


SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12920

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



FAITH

War against ignorance

The Vedas and the Upanishads have been in existence from time immemorial and the dharma taught in them is also eternal and known as Sanatana Dharma. But in the course of time, there arose the palpable danger of the Astika dharma or Vaidika dharma getting submerged in the theories of the nastikas who did not believe in the Vedas. In a discourse, Sri R. Krishnamurthy Sastrigal drew attention to the significant role of Adi Sankara through whose multi-pronged effort the inherent value of Vaidika dharma was established for the benefit of posterity. The acharya has reiterated that every human being should be aware that he is an heir to this good fortune of abiding by this dharma.

One should not miss this opportunity to strive for salvation owing to ignorance of this truth. There is nothing more harmful than spiritual ignorance or Avidya. It is more wily and deceitful than the killer virus for it is capable of enveloping even the effulgent Brahma Swaroopa from people's vision. It can keep people in the dark about not only Brahman but also about the true purpose of one's existence. It leads to attachment to worldly attractions and is the cause of sin, suffering and confusion.

Adi Sankara has dedicated his entire life to eradicate this virus of ignorance. He has enabled people to understand the glory of the Supreme Brahman that the Vedas and the Upanishads extol. To attain Him is the ultimate goal and end of human existence and this is attainable through upasana, or meditation on the ultimate Reality. The paths available are karma, jnana and bhakti and though they appear varied, there is unity of purpose in them. One becomes eligible to attain salvation by learning to tread these in accordance to the sastras until the truth is revealed as a direct experience.

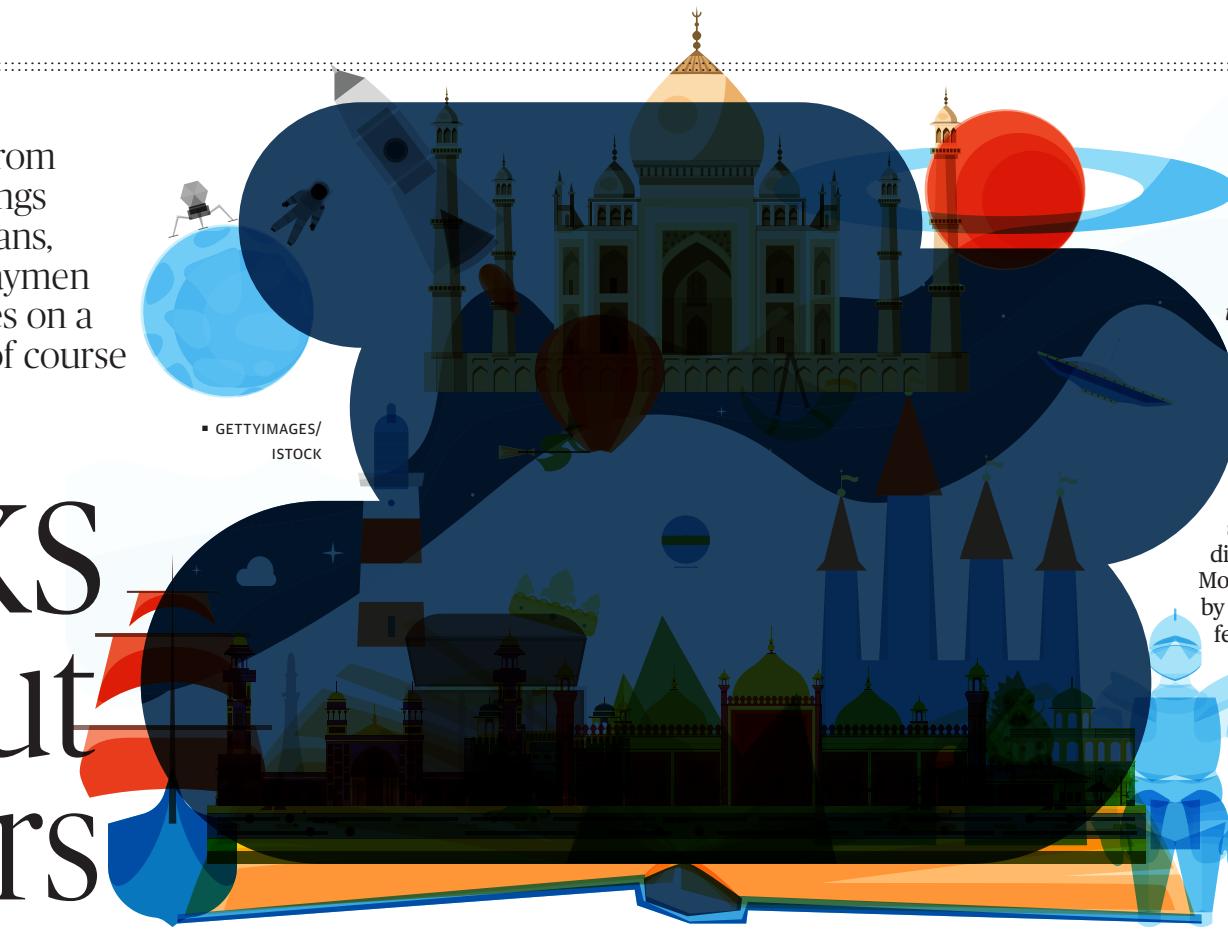
#PeaceKarona, curated from Lahore and Chennai, brings together authors, musicians, policy researchers and laymen from numerous countries on a common, global and — of course — virtual stage

Books without borders

MEGHNA MAJUMDAR

"Negative peace is simply the absence of violence. For example, when the Afghan Government and the Taliban agreed to a three-day ceasefire, we had peace for those three days, technically. But we were still constantly afraid, about what would happen after," Parwiz Mosamim, in Malaysia, explained to his 50-strong audience logging in from India, Pakistan, the U.K. and other countries this past Sunday night.

Parwiz, an Afghani journalist and activist currently studying Public Administration in Malaysia, was among a host of writers, thinkers, musicians, and policy specialist to have shared this common, global stage via Zoom over the past few weeks. Over the next hour, Parwiz and his fellow speakers — Islamabad public policy analyst Ahsan Hamid Durrani, who has worked with the government as well as think tanks; and Mridut Upadhyay, the India-based Asia Coordinator of United Network of Young Peacebuilders — broke down the more aspirational concept of positive peace. The kind of peace that goes beyond the absence of violence. The kind "marked by socio-economic cooperation,



with attitudes, institutes and structures that create and sustain peace," as Ahsan put it.

This particular panel, on 'Social Peace and Positive Peace in South Asia', was the fifth to be put together by a Chennai-Lahore team of two. From April 19 to May 3, Chennai's Sehaj Sahni and Lahore's Anam Gill have scheduled nine of what they call Cross Border Sessions, backed by UNESCO's Category 1 institute Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (UNESCO MGIEP), and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAAC).

Most of Anam and Sehaj's sessions revolve around apolitical tools of peace: literature, music, education. But these do have a slight brush with politics and history — tied as deeply as they are with the human condition. For instance, later that same Sunday night, the duo brought together three eminent writers from India and Pakistan. Gurmehar Kaur, author of *Small Acts of Courage*, joined in live from the U.K. where

Onscreen (Clockwise from left)
Curators Anam Gill and Sehaj Sahni, and author Gurmehar Kaur • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT AND GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

she is currently based, while *Imagining Lahore* author, and journalist Haaron Khalid spoke from Islamabad. Anam Zakaria, author of *Footprints from Partition*, was the third and final panellist, at the session that saw not only the reading of extracts from each of the books and strong callbacks to the Partition, but also deeply personal conversations about clashing mindsets, with many from the audience joining in.

Moderated deftly and cohesively by Prerana Srimaal, assistant professor of History at Jawaharlal Nehru University, this conversation meandered from the rigid definitions and prejudices that each community has about "the other", to the idea that trauma from one incident can be inherited by, and fester in, the next generation, that did not experience it first-hand.

Back and forth

All this was just the discussion of one night: earlier sessions had covered topics like faith, activism and the role of the youth in peace-building. The latter, in fact, runs as a common thread through all the sessions. Says Sehaj, one of the two curators,

"These sessions are the follow-up to a workshop that was held in Sri Lanka in February, attended by youth leaders from the sub-continent. I represented my organisation [the Chennai-based Indian Youth Café] and Sanam was representing hers [the Lahore-based Dialogue Café]."

Sehaj says they had been planning such an event, bringing in voices from around the subcontinent to one place for common dialogue. But with a global pandemic and country-wide lockdowns throwing a spanner in the works, they decided to rely on Zoom instead.

The idea, he says, was to rope in as many people as possible to the dialogue. As Prerana had aptly put, "Engagement cannot happen with people who live in the same bubble as you. It has to happen with people who do not think like you."

To join the sessions, contact Indian Youth Café on Instagram

If everyone cared...

Firework launches a campaign to spark a chain of kindness



PRABALIKA M BORAH

Firework, a short-format 30-second decentralised video platform that was set up in India in 2019, has launched #sparkthejoy, a campaign that encourages people to do an act of kindness. It could be a video of someone offering a packet of biscuit to someone in need, or a bottle of water, or even sacrificing one's footwear to soothe the scalds on the soles of a stranger's feet.

According to Sunil Nair, CEO, Firework, "The platform is powered by a three-step moderation system that includes AI, ML and human intervention that filters out any content that may not be suitable for the audience. It is available on the Google App Store and various other partner platforms. It will also have fitness challenges and milestones that can be taken up through the period."

In addition, the campaign will feature various celebrities, social commentators, corporate heads who will share their thoughts with Firework users around the globe. With Firework's open web capability, one need not visit the platform to watch these videos. In the interest of people across the world, they will be available on all partner websites and platforms.

Spark the joy (#sparkthejoy), is a social impact campaign that has been designed to address issues of mental health related to COVID-19. The campaign is said to be an outreach programme to encourage acts of kindness, spread the message of love and doing good that will spark positivity among people.



Penny for your thoughts

This online class by mentalist Narpath Raman helps one dabble in the art of reading minds

PRIYadarshini Paitandy

The lockdown is making mentalist Narpath Raman do things he never thought he would do: Give away the tricks of his trade.

After seven years of training in the art form of mind reading and performing in front of audiences, he has now started teaching. "I go mad if I am not creatively using my mind, body, and soul in and around mentalism," says Narpath, adding, "Honestly, I never thought I'll give these secrets away. This is valuable wisdom that has taken years of sleepless nights, myriad embarrassments, trial and error, and thousands of dollars. So as a whim, I thought why not coach a select few people."

Narpath is starting with small batches of students and the curriculum is for 21 days, 90 minutes per class. It is a virtual class. "It takes 21 days to build a habit. All of the classes will be recorded

and the video will be sent for later reference," says Narpath. Perfecting the art, however, is a never-ending process. "It'll take at least two years of constant practice and study to build a decent 30-minute act," adds the 29-year-old.

The classes don't straight away dive into tricks. They involve understanding the basics

to have. Next he asks his students to think of a number between 1 and 10. Three out of five think of 7.

"7,8,3," he explains are numbers that people most often think of. Scripting and acting too emerge as important factors to master this art form. It also involves a bit of maths, a great amount of science and more importantly an understanding of how humans work. The process can sound a little complex at first but Narpath says, "If one has been fascinated by human science and the potential of the mind, he/she will grasp faster. Ideally, it boils down purely to how much effort one's willing to put in."

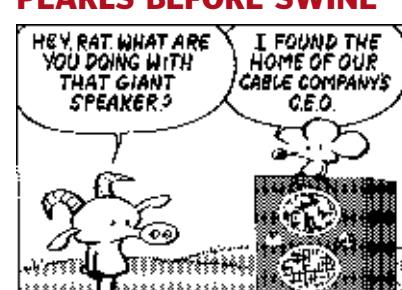
By the end of the 21-day session, the participants — students, actors, IT professionals, business owners, VPs of MNCs in the age group of 20 to 50 — will learn semi-professional mind-reading acts, basic NLP (Neuro-Linguistic programming), approach, confidence, scripting and presentation, and get access to professional material. "I do an interview before taking on a student," says Narpath, adding, "The criteria is that the applicant should be genuinely interested in performing mentalism. If someone wants to attend just so he is privy to the secrets, then this is not the course for them."

The 21-day curriculum, at ₹25,000; team@nextdoormindreader.com

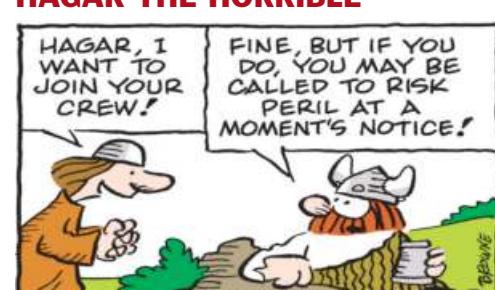
POOCH CAFE



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



PEANUTS



TIGER



CALVIN AND HOBBES



UN warns of a 'human rights disaster'

Countries are flouting the rule of law in the name of fighting coronavirus, says Michelle Bachelet

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
GENEVA

The UN rights chief warned on Monday that countries flouting the rule of law in the name of fighting the novel coronavirus pandemic risk sparking a "human rights disaster".

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet called on countries to refrain from violating fundamental rights "under the guise of exceptional or emergency measures".

"Emergency powers should not be a weapon governments can wield to quash dissent, control the population, and even perpetuate their time in power," she warned in a statement. "They should be used to cope effectively with the pandemic – nothing more, nothing less."

COVID-19

Her comments came after more than 200,000 people have perished in the pandemic and nearly 3 million have been infected worldwide by the novel coronavirus since it surfaced in China late last year. Ms. Bachelet acknowledged that states have the right to restrict some rights to protect public health, but she insisted that any restrictions should be necessary, proportionate and non-discriminatory, and also limited in duration.

"There have been numerous reports from different regions that police and other security forces have been using excessive, and at times lethal, force to make people abide by lockdowns and curfews," she said, lamenting that "such violations have often been committed against people belonging to the poorest and most vulnerable segments of the population".



The flora speaks: A message of support in Bant, Netherlands, created by cutting flower heads in a field of tulips. ■ AP

"Shooting, detaining, or abusing someone for breaking a curfew because they are desperately searching for food is clearly an unacceptable and unlawful response. So is making it difficult or dangerous for a woman to get to hospital to give birth. In some cases, people are dying because of the inappropriate application of measures that have been supposedly put in place to save them," Ms. Bachelet said. She also decried the mass arrests in some countries over curfew violations as "both unnecessary and unsafe." "Jails and prisons are high risk environments, and states should focus on releasing whoever can be safely released, not detaining more people."

The UN rights chief also warned that efforts to rein in dangerous misinformation around the pandemic was in some cases being used as an excuse to crack down on legitimate free speech. "It is important to counter misinformation, but shutting down the free exchange of ideas and information not only violates rights, it undermines trust," she said.

Highest level of alarm

Meanwhile, the WHO chief said on Monday that the agency had sounded the highest level of alarm early on, but lamented that not all countries had heeded its advice.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus pointed out that the WHO warned the COVID-19 outbreak constituted a 'Public Health Emergency of International Concern' on January 30, when there were only 82 cases registered outside China. "The world should have listened to WHO then carefully," he told a virtual press briefing.

Chinese envoy threatens boycott of Australia

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SYDNEY

China's Ambassador in Australia has warned that demands for a probe into the spread of the coronavirus could lead to a consumer boycott of Aussie wine or trips Down Under.

Australia has joined the U.S. in calling for a thorough investigation of how the virus transformed from a localised epidemic in central China into a pandemic that has killed more than 2,000,000 people. In a thinly veiled threat, Ambassador Cheng Jingye warned the push for an independent inquest into the origins of the outbreak was "dangerous".

"The Chinese public is frustrated, dismayed and disappointed with what Australia is doing now," he claimed in an interview with the *Australian Financial Review* published on Sunday.

"If the mood is going from bad to worse, people would think 'why should we go to such a country that is not so friendly to China?'" he added. Mr. Cheng also threatened the flow of Chinese students to Australian universities will be affected. The comments mark a significant escalation in tensions between Beijing and Canberra, whose relations are already strained.

Where is Kim Jong-un?

N. Korean leader's public absence has triggered rumours

STANLY JOHNY

The Internet is abundant with speculations about the health of Kim Jong-un. What triggered the rumours was his absence from the 'Day of the Sun' celebrations on April 15 marking the birth anniversary of Kim Il-sung, his grandfather and the founder of North Korea.

This is the first time Mr. Kim is missing the festivities, the most important holiday in North Korea, since becoming leader in 2011. Mr. Kim was last seen in the state media on April 12 when he visited an air force base.

The first bomb was dropped by *Daily NK*, a Seoul-based media outlet largely run by North Korean defectors, on April 20. It claimed, quoting anonymous sources in North Korea, that Mr. Kim underwent a cardiovascular surgery and was recovering at one of his country's villas.

Japanese magazine *Shukan Gendai* reported last week that Mr. Kim had a heart attack and the North Korean doctors did an emergency surgery to insert arterial stents. The procedure went bad, leaving the leader brain dead, the report claimed, quoting an unnamed Chinese medical source. On April 25, Reuters carried a report, saying China had despatched medical personnel to North Korea.

Not the first time

This is not the first time Mr. Kim is disappearing from the public eye for now, at a time when the coronavirus crisis is shaking the whole world (North Korea's claim is that there's no virus case in the country). There could be at least three possibilities.

The reports about his health condition could be true and he's either in a serious condition or recovering. Two, Mr. Kim, a chain smoker and overweight, could be staying away from the public during the time of the virus crisis. Or his retreat could be part of some tactical plan.

No world leader or intelligence official has confirmed the reports about Mr. Kim's ill-health. When U.S. President Donald Trump was asked, he called the reports "incorrect". Moon Chung-in, a special adviser on national security to South Korea Pre-



Kim Jong-un in Pyongyang in April 2017. ■ AFP

sident Moon Jae-in, said on Sunday that "Kim Jong-un is alive and well". He said Mr. Kim had been staying in the east coast resort town Wonsan since April 13.

On Saturday, 38 North, a North Korea-focussed website, had released a satellite image of a train that "probably belongs to Mr. Kim", parked at the Leadership Railway Station near the leader's compound in Wonsan. "The train's presence... does lend weight to reports that Kim is staying at an elite area on the country's eastern coast," said the report.

Potential successor

Mr. Kim's absence has also triggered speculations on who could be his successor. When reporters posed this question to U.S. National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien last week, he said, the "basic assumption would be maybe it would be someone in the family..."

Mr. Kim's younger sister, Kim Yo-jong, has been seen as a potential successor. His older full-brother Kim Jong-chol has largely stayed out of politics, while Ms. Kim is an important party leader. She is currently the Deputy Director of the Workers' Party's Department of Propaganda and Agitation. She visited South Korea during the 2018 Winter Olympics, and had attended Mr. Kim's summits with Mr. Trump and South Korean leader Moon. Ms. Kim's rise in a party that has been tightly controlled by the men of the Kim family had made headlines. As journalist Barbara Demick wrote in *The New Yorker*, if the speculations about Mr. Kim's health are true and North Korea is trying to identify his successor, "the last man standing" could "quite possibly be a woman".

NEWS ANALYSIS

Mongolian visitors at the Pyongyang airport. But this time, despite speculations, there was no confirmation or negation of the reports from the North Korean side, which in turn is adding fuel to the rumour mills.

So what we know for sure is that Mr. Kim is out of the public eye for now, at a time when the coronavirus crisis is shaking the whole world (North Korea's claim is that there's no virus case in the country). There could be at least three possibilities. The reports about his health condition could be true and he's either in a serious condition or recovering. Two, Mr. Kim, a chain smoker and overweight, could be staying away from the public during the time of the virus crisis. Or his retreat could be part of some tactical plan.

No world leader or intelligence official has confirmed the reports about Mr. Kim's ill-health. When U.S. President Donald Trump was asked, he called the reports "incorrect". Moon Chung-in, a special adviser on national security to South Korea Pre-

Violence rose after Afghan deal, says UN

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KABUL

Violence surged in Afghanistan in the weeks after the U.S. and the Taliban signed a deal supposed to pave the way for a peace process, a UN agency said Monday.

Afghans had enjoyed a period of relative calm ahead of the February 29 accord, but the conflict resumed almost as soon as the deal was signed, and the militant group has since rejected multiple calls for a ceasefire during Ramzan.

"The report tracks a disturbing increase in violence during March at a time when it was hoped that the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban would commence peace negotiations," said the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. More than 500 civilians were killed and over 700 injured during the first three months of the year, UNAMA said.

Pakistan cleric slammed for misogynistic remarks

He linked COVID-19 to 'immodesty'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ISLAMABAD

A Pakistani cleric whose group has been blamed for spreading COVID-19 is facing ridicule after he suggested the pandemic was caused partly by the "immodesty" of women.

Maulana Tariq Jameel appeared on a telethon with Prime Minister Imran Khan last week, when he explained various Islamic religious codes and said humanity had been punished in the past for breaking these. "Who has demolished modesty in my country? Who is making the nation's daughters dance? Who is shortening their dresses? Who should be held responsible?" Mr. Jameel said during the fundraiser hosted by Mr. Khan.

The comment spurred an immediate backlash with leading activists and a government Minister blasting the cleric, while social media users roared the



Tablighi Jamaat Leader Maulana Tariq Jameel

preacher for ignoring his own group's role in spreading the virus. Mr. Jameel is a senior member of the Tablighi Jamaat group which has been blamed for seeding the epidemic in Pakistan by holding a gathering with 1,000,000 participants in March after the virus had already been detected in the country – leading to hundreds of transmissions.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan warned that the remarks "only compound the misogyny entrenched in society".

Reconvene Parliament: Sri Lanka Opposition

'Obtaining sanction for utilisation of funds to fight the pandemic is important'

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Seven Opposition parties in Sri Lanka have urged President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to reconvene Parliament, pledging "responsible cooperation" to his government in fighting COVID-19.

Assuring citizens that they would not draw salaries, attempt to defeat the government or thwart any of the "legitimate actions of the government", the leaders said in a joint statement on Monday: "As members of the dissolved Parliament, we are duty bound to fulfil our obligations to resolve this crisis in a spirit of responsible cooperation extended to the President." Political sources said the statement was handed over to President Rajapaksa's office. He is yet to comment.

Snap polls
Mr. Rajapaksa, who dissolved Parliament on March 2 and called for snap polls on April 25, has maintained that he had no intention to

reconvene Parliament and that the fixing of poll dates was the Election Commission's prerogative.

After COVID-19 hit Sri Lanka – more than 500 cases reported so far – the Commission postponed the election to June 20, a date it said was subject to review.

According to the Opposition parties, the political situation is in a "state of uncertainty" due to the dissolution of Parliament and "the absence of conditions conducive to hold parliamentary elections as stipulated". Several Opposition parties have already voiced concern over holding polls amid a raging pandemic and have instead proposed reconvening Parliament to allow passage of relevant laws to strengthen the novel coronavirus response.

Getting new legislation passed to meet the health crisis and obtaining parliamentary sanction to the utilisation of funds from the Consolidated Fund are "important and urgent" func-

We have failed to use the curfew to reduce the rate of person-to-person spread of the virus

DR. RAVI RANNAK-ELIYA
Health official

tions of Parliament, said the parties.

Former Prime Minister and Leader of the United National Party Ranil Wickremesinghe, former Leader of the Opposition and leader of the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (United People's Front) Sarath Premadasa, Tamil National Alliance leader R. Sampanthan, Sri Lanka Muslim Congress leader Rauff Hakeem, All Ceylon Makkal Congress leader Rishad Bathiudeen, Tamil Progressive Alliance leader Mano Ganesan and Jathika Eela Urumaya leader Champika Ranawaka have signed the joint statement.

Spike in cases
Sri Lanka has witnessed a spike in the COVID-19 positive cases in the last week, we face, and to think outside the box," he said.

raising the number to 557 as of Monday afternoon. So far seven persons have succumbed to the infection while 126 have recovered, according to official health bulletins.

Districts identified as "high-risk" areas including Colombo have been under curfew since March 20.

Amid calls from health experts to step up testing rapidly, the health authorities said they would increase testing to over 1,000 a day.

"We have failed to use the curfew to reduce the rate of person-to-person spread of the virus to a level where epidemic spread cannot occur," said Dr. Ravi Ranank-Eliya, executive director of the Institute for Health Policy, in a blog published on the Institute's website on Sunday. "It is hard to avoid the conclusion that at the root of the failure was a mindset unable to rise to the urgency of the hour, to fully understand the challenge we face, and to think outside the box," he said.

In a crisis year, Sri Lanka gears up for daunting debt repayment

\$2.9 billion of its debt is due this year, at a time when reserves are falling

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

As Sri Lanka battles COVID-19 with its public health expertise and military might, it is gearing up for another imminent crisis – servicing its mounting external debt, of which \$2.9 billion is due this year.

Of the many economic side effects of the global pandemic, the drastic fall in Sri Lanka's foreign exchange reserves – driven mainly by exports, remittances and tourism that have all suffered heavily post COVID-19.

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka recently sought a \$400 million currency swap with the Reserve Bank of India

(RBI), to boost its foreign reserves. "Yes, we have made a request to the RBI for a swap facility for \$400 million," Central Bank Governor W.D. Lakshman told *The Hindu* on Monday.

Sri Lanka has resorted to the currency swap facility with the RBI from time to time to maintain its reserves, but the middle-income country has a daunting road ahead this year, as it must pay a sizeable portion of its foreign debt amounting to 42.6% of the country's GDP in 2019.

Well before COVID-19 emerged a threat, Sri Lanka mulled appealing for loan moratoriums from India and



China, two of its willing lenders. Sri Lanka owes about \$960 million to India, while its debt to China was \$5 billion in 2018.

Debt management

Contrary to the popular "Chinese debt trap" analysis often made in regard to Sri Lanka's economy, the country's debt concerns are not

confined to borrowings from China alone. "Sri Lanka certainly has a debt problem, but it is not necessarily a Chinese debt problem," according to Ganesh Wignaraja, executive director of the Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies.

Along with three other researchers, Mr. Wignaraja re-

cently co-authored a paper on Chinese investments, as part of a study commissioned by the London-based Chatham House policy institute.

Citing 2018 data on Sri Lanka's loans from different lenders, the paper shows that the country's debt owed to financial markets (holders of international sovereign bonds issued in Sri Lanka) are more significant than that owed to multilateral lenders [such as the World Bank, IMF, and bilateral lenders [including China, Japan and India].

Economists like Mr. Wignaraja argue that Sri Lanka's economic situation is better off compared to that of Greece or Argentina at the height of their crises, in terms of meeting its domes-

tic and international obligations – using its reserves, domestic borrowings or by printing money. However, everyone agrees that the debt raised through sovereign bonds in the international money markets is stifling, with little wiggle room or scope for negotiation.

With a \$1 billion-international sovereign bond maturing in October, the alarm bells are already ringing in Sri Lanka.

However, in addition to managing different lenders, it is time for Sri Lanka to consider some fundamental changes to its policy, economists emphasise, pointing to the need for greater attention to the rural economy, mainly agriculture, and a shift from an "urban bias" in policy, as Mr. Wignaraja put it.

Ahilan Kadirgamar, senior lecturer, University of Jaffna, said Sri Lanka's limited foreign reserves are necessary not only for debt servicing but also for essential imports amid falling foreign earnings. In the current situation, he predicts that the government will be squeezed by its demanding foreign lenders, while facing growing discontent from citizens who are denied imported goods that Sri Lanka has failed to substitute in the past.

"Even as the government makes every effort to avoid defaulting on its foreign debt, can it muster the political will to redistribute wealth to ensure the working people can afford a broad basket of goods amidst rising costs for many goods in short supply?" he asked.

MARKET WATCH

	27-04-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	31743	1.33
US Dollar	76.25	0.27
Brent oil	19.58	-9.14

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	271.15	0.50
Asian Paints	1851.35	23.80
Axis Bank	427.30	23.35
Bajaj Auto.	2505.75	60.40
Bajaj Finance	4617.50	227.70
Bharti Airtel	494.05	-0.20
BPCL	355.40	4.95
Britannia Ind	3242.05	179.90
Cipla	608.70	9.40
Coal India	138.10	1.10
Dr Reddy's Lab	3980.30	-22.50
Eicher Motors	13999.50	410.30
GAIL (India)	81.70	0.20
Grasim Ind	498.25	-0.80
HCL Tech.	483.10	15.00
HDPC	1591.45	11.15
HDFC Bank	929.70	-8.35
Hero MotoCorp	1935.20	40.40
Hindalco	108.20	4.55
Hind Unilever	2320.45	37.35
ICICI Bank	347.90	13.05
IndusInd Bank	407.40	24.50
Bharti Infratel	157.40	5.40
Infosys	664.60	6.60
Indian Oil Corp	81.50	0.00
ITC	179.85	-0.20
JSW Steel	157.30	4.05
Kotak Bank	1303.60	64.05
L&T	855.25	4.05
M&M	330.30	-4.00
Maruti Suzuki	5056.35	10.70
Nestle India Ltd.	17950.80	544.75
NTPC	92.35	-1.05
ONGC	68.45	0.85
PowerGrid Corp	159.60	0.45
Reliance Ind	1429.75	12.75
State Bank	180.90	1.15
Shree Cement	19021.85	434.40
Sun Pharma	489.90	2.45
Tata Motors	75.25	1.05
Tata Steel	271.65	4.10
TCS	1836.60	18.05
Tech Mahindra	511.70	8.25
Titan	927.75	21.70
UltraTech Cement	3360.65	52.70
UPL	349.35	13.50
Vedanta	78.45	0.50
Wipro	182.05	4.30
Zee Entertainment	149.75	4.60

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	76.05	76.37
Euro	82.45	82.8
British Pound	94.44	94.85
Japanese Yen (100)	70.92	71.22
Chinese Yuan	10.74	10.78
Swiss Franc	78.2	78.54
Singapore Dollar	53.58	53.81
Canadian Dollar	54.13	54.36
Malaysian Ringgit	17.45	17.54
Australian Dollar	49.05	49.26

Source: Indian Bank

Sundaram Finance cuts deposit rates

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Sundaram Finance Ltd. (SFL) has revised interest rates on deposits with effect from May 1. The interest rates on fresh deposits, or renewals, stand revised to 6.75% from 7% per annum for 12 and 18 months, and to 7% from 7.25% for 24 and 36 months.

The interest rate for senior citizens has been revised to 7% (7.50%) per annum for 12 and 18 months and to 7.25% (7.75%) per annum for 24 and 36 months.

With renewals above 80% consistently, the company's deposit base has crossed ₹3,650 crore, SFL said in a statement.

SEBI halves broker turnover fee

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has halved the broker turnover fee and the filing fee for draft documents.

"In its continuing efforts to help market participants to tide over challenges due to COVID-19, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has decided to reduce broker turnover fees and filing fees on offer documents for public issue, rights issue and buyback of shares," SEBI said in a statement.

The broker turnover fee will be reduced to 50% of the existing fee structure for the period June 2020 to March 2021... Filing fees on offer documents... will be reduced to 50% of the existing fee structure. This will be effective for documents filed from June 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020," it added.

Meanwhile, the new margin framework for derivatives segment, that were announced in February and were scheduled to be introduced from May 1, have been postponed until June 1.

CMYK

Brokers seek action against Templeton

A high-powered panel must take over management of fund house, says brokers' association

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Stock brokers want the government and the capital markets regulator to take strict action against Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund, including appointing a high-powered committee to take over the management of the fund house while examining investment decisions taken by the house.

The Association of National Exchanges Members of India (ANMI), an umbrella body representing about 900 brokers, has again written to the Ministry of Finance and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) seeking urgent action to safeguard further erosion of investor wealth while enabling a plan for investors to get their money in a time-bound manner.

While highlighting the fact that a significant portion of the investments in the six



A picture of Franklin Templeton Investments' U.S. campus. ■ BROKENSPHERE/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

schemes that Franklin Templeton MF decided to wind up in securities that were rated 'A' or lower, the broker body has said that questionable investment decisions forced the fund house to stop redemptions.

"Based on portfolio details published by FTMF of the six funds... it appears

that the profile of some of the companies FTMF chose to invest in and the terms of those investments are questionable. When market slowdown gripped the economy, there was a substantial price erosion in low-rated papers in the debt market where FTMF had invested heavily, forcing them to stop the re-

demption," stated the ANMI letter.

It further stated that as much as 64.73% of the total assets under management (AUM) of Franklin India Low Duration Fund was in securities rated A or lower. In Franklin India Short Term Income Plan, such securities accounted for nearly 59%

total assets. As per the broker body, Franklin Templeton MF invested in long-duration securities even though SEBI norms clearly state that ultra short duration funds can have bonds with a tenure between three months and six months.

"It is surprising that the top management and trustees of FTMF have remained mute spectators to such blatant violation of SEBI Regulations... These long-dated securities with substantial investment in low-rated paper is the real cause of illiquidity that had caused closure of six funds of FTMF," stated the letter.

Meanwhile, in yet another instance of a credit fund taking a hit due to an illiquid debt market, the net asset value of BOI AXA Credit Risk Fund took a 50% hit after marking down seven securities in its portfolio.



Nipping margins: In sectors such as salons, the cost would rise by 30-40%, says RAI chairman B.S. Nagesh. ■ REUTERS

Cost of doing business to see significant rise

Hygiene norms to influence revenue

LALATENDU MISHRA

MUMBAI

As COVID-19 takes its toll on the economy and on human lives, the cost of doing business is set to go up as companies gear up to adhere to new safety and hygiene standards in their daily operations despite likely scaled down business activities will run at lower capacities due to intermittent runs," said Sanjiv Puri, chairman & managing director, ITC Ltd.

The company's hotels business is set to undergo changes in service delivery in conformity with the new normal.

Contact-less service

"In the hotels business, customers have a lot of concern around safety. We have to think about how to redesign our services and deliver non-contact service, how to maintain social distance norms and how to create many more avenues for check-ins etc," he said.

Airlines and airport operators will also have to bear extra costs to take on board fewer passengers, possibly well below existing capacities as well as breakeven levels and deploy more manpower to enforce safety and hygiene norms.

IndusInd Bank profit drops

Gross NPAs rise sharply, drive up provisioning

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

IndusInd Bank reported a net profit of ₹301.84 crore for the quarter ended March 31 as compared to ₹360.1 crore reported a year earlier. The profit declined as provisions increased from ₹1,561 crore to ₹2,440 crore.

The rise in provisions is due to a sharp increase in gross non-performing assets from ₹3,947 crore to ₹5,147 crore for the reporting period.

Gross NPAs were at 2.45% of gross advances, compared with 2.1% a year earlier. The bank has also made a floating provision of ₹260 crore as a buffer to protect against future losses arising out of the nationwide



lockdown that has adversely impacted business activities.

The extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic will impact the bank's operations and financial results depends on future developments, which are highly uncertain," the lender said. The provision coverage ratio rose to 63.34%, higher than

52.53% as of December 31, 2019 and 43.04% as of March 31, 2019. In the post-earnings media interaction, the bank's newly appointed MD & CEO Sumant Kathpalia said the bank had projected different scenarios as to how the economic lockdown would be lifted.

Mr. Kathpalia also said that March collections were over 95% from retail portfolios despite moratorium offered. The bank reported a net interest income of ₹3,231.19 crore for the quarter, up 44.74% year-on-year while the net interest margin for Q4 FY 2019-20 improved to 4.25% from 4.15% during Q3 FY 2019-20 and 3.59% during Q4 FY 2018-19.

Sensex gains on RBI liquidity boost for MFs

Japan's stimulus bolsters global stocks

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Indian equities traded strong on Monday as investor sentiment received a boost with the Reserve Bank of India announcing a ₹50,000 crore special liquidity facility for mutual funds facing liquidity pressures.

An overall strong trend in global markets also acted as a catalyst. The 30-share Sensex gained 415.86 points or 1.33% to close at 31,743.08. Earlier in the day, it gained over 770 points to touch an intraday high of 32,103.70.

Gains in the benchmark were led by financial sector

stocks such as IndusInd Bank, Axis Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, ICICI Bank and Bajaj Finance. The broader Nifty rose 1.4% to 9,282.30.

Last week, Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund decided to wind up six debt schemes amid liquidity issues.

In the markets, more than 1,300 stocks gained while 1,090 declined. Global stocks too surged on Monday after the Bank of Japan announced more stimulus measures to help counter effects of the pandemic. The benchmarks of Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Taiwan and China all gained ground on Monday.

Ex-U.S. employees file case against Wipro

Allege discrimination by the company

MINI TEJASWI

BENGALURU

Five former employees of Wipro have slapped a class-action suit against the IT services major, accusing it of practising 'discriminatory employment practices'. According to reports, the suit was filed in March in the district court of New Jersey. The ex-employees have sought "injunctive, declaratory, equitable, and monetary relief for Wipro's systematic pattern and practice of discriminatory employment practices based upon individuals' race and national origin". A spokesperson said: "Wipro does not comment on pending litigation."

The filing said the five ex-employees – Gregory McLean, Rick Valles, Ardesir Pezeski, James Gibbs, and Ronald Hemenway – have alleged 'discrimination'



against non-south Asian and non-Indian origin staff. Four of the litigants are of American origin, while one is of Iranian origin.

"Wipro operates under a general policy of discrimination in favor of South Asians and against individuals who are not South Asian and not Indian. This general policy of discrimination manifests itself in the same... fashion with respect to Wipro's hiring, staffing, promotion and termination decisions."

The alcoholic beverage industry contributes over ₹2 lakh crore in taxes, sustains the livelihood of 40 lakh farmers, and employs 20 lakh people. A prolonged shutdown of industry is forcing lakhs of farmers and workers into joblessness and poverty," Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) said in its letter to Chief Ministers of all States, barring those under prohibition.

Separately, the All India

Brewers Association (AIBA) has also written to CMs of 13 States, including Maharashtra, Goa, Kerala, Karnataka, West Bengal, Punjab, Haryana and New Delhi, with similar requests.

AIBA noted that State governments generate more than ₹36,

IN BRIEF

**Ashwin, Yorkshire agree to cancel contract**

LONDON R. Ashwin will not play for Yorkshire this season after the English county announced on Monday it was cancelling the overseas player contracts for the 2020 campaign by mutual consent following the coronavirus outbreak. Ashwin and South Africa slow-left-arm Keshav Maharaj were meant to share duties in the First-Class County Championship. AFP

**Grim prospects for tennis return: Nadal**

MADRID World No. 2 Rafael Nadal says he is "very pessimistic" about a full resumption of the professional tennis circuit. In a virtual chat organised by the Spanish Federation of Tennis Nadal said: "In tennis, you need to travel every week, stay in hotels, go to different countries. Even if we play without an audience, to organise any event you need a lot of people involved, which cannot be ignored. AFP

**Archer finds his lost World Cup medal**

LONDON England fast bowler Jofra Archer has heaved a sigh of relief after he was finally able to find his 2019 World Cup winner's medal. On Sunday, Archer took to social media to put out a photograph of the medal on a bed with the caption: "Randomly searching the guest bedroom and boom." Archer had told BBC Radio on Saturday he had lost the medal while shifting to a new flat. IANS

**Giri pulls off a fine win over Carlsen**

NEW DELHI A struggling Anish Giri (in pic) punished in-form Magnus Carlsen for an uncharacteristic blunder and went on to win 2.5-1.5 for his first victory in the \$250,000 Magnus Carlsen Invitational online chess tournament on Sunday.

The results (fifth round): Anish Giri (Ned) bt Magnus Carlsen (Nor) 2.5-1.5; Alireza Firouzja (FIDE) bt Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra) 2.5-1.5.

The proposal gives com-

Perth, the lone perk for a stranded Chennai resident

Neither does Australia want visitors like me to stay back nor has India opened its doors, he says

BISHWANATH GHOSH

KOLKATA

It was in early February that Chennai-resident Viswanathan Raghu, 64, reached Sydney on an extended visit to Australia.

He tried getting back to India on March 13, as soon as the Centre issued a circular that incoming flights were going to be barred from midnight GMT that day, but narrowly missed the cut-off time.

Today, neither Australia wants visitors like him to hang around nor has India opened its doors, as a result of which he was forced to travel to the U.S., where he feels he has higher chances of contracting the novel coronavirus.

"I had uneventful flights from Sydney to San Francisco and then to New Jersey [where his son lives]. But the biggest surprise was that I was never screened or questioned before takeoff at Sydney or after arrival at San Francisco and also at Newark. I picked up my bags and came home," Mr. Raghu told *The Hindu* soon after he reached the U.S. on Monday.

Mr. Raghu, who graduated from the Indian Statistical In-

Tougher for the physically challenged'

Para-badminton World champion Manasi using the time to learn more about their rights

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM
HYDERABAD

Manasi Joshi was crowned para-badminton World champion hours before P.V. Sindhu scaled the summit in women's singles at the 2019 World Championships in Basel.

After that remarkable high, life hasn't changed much for Manasi. She feels that the physically challenged continue to be treated in an indifferent manner and are suffering the most during this lockdown.

Online course
"It is exactly for this reason that I took up an online course on 'Disability Awareness and Support' from the University of Pittsburgh.

"I chose it as it would enlighten me on the rights of the disabled," says the 30-year-old.

Manasi, at home in Ahmedabad now, said: "We seem to have so many privileges

**Family time:** Manasi Joshi (centre, back row) with her parents, sister and brother at home in Ahmedabad. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

and rights, it is important to be aware of what we actually have in the rule book. I have also re-read the Government of India's Rights of People with Disabilities Act, 2016, to know my rights and communicate about it effectively.

"I want to be more of an activist in the future in order to see the disabled get a better deal," she said.

"I have been through my own lockdown, in 2011, because of the accident," said Manasi, who was on her way

to work in Mumbai when the incident happened. In the accident, her left leg was crushed and arms broken, and she also suffered multiple injuries.

"Right now, I am working out, attending online class-

es, sharing my story on various platforms by going live on Instagram or Facebook, cooking, cleaning, or playing games with my family members. I am spending time in a much better way now.

Start all over again

"The biggest challenge will be to prepare for sports once the lockdown is lifted."

"We were scheduled to compete in the qualifying cycle in Spain before the COV-ID-19 crisis hit the world.

"We have to start all over again for the Tokyo Paralympics next year," said Manasi.

To emphasise that the physically challenged were being treated differently compared to the able-bodied sportspersons, Manasi revealed that except for the prize money given by the Government of India for becoming a World champion, she hadn't received anything else worth mentioning.

Yuki is not done yet, his peak yet to come: Koon

TENNIS

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

Coach Stephen Koon, who has worked with Yuki Bhambhani for some years now, is confident that the former junior World No. 1, who rose to a career-best 83 on the ATP Tour, will return to the circuit after the lockdown.

"Yuki is not done yet. His peak is yet to come," said Koon.

In an online chat, Thailand-based Koon felt that Yuki was aiming to break into the top-50 two years ago when he qualified and made the second and third rounds of the big events in Miami and Indian Wells.

"He would have made it, but got injured in Surbiton. He played Queen's on one

**Determined:** Stephen Koon says that Yuki Bhambhani, despite loads of natural talent, had to work hard to make an impact.

leg. At Wimbledon, despite the injury, he managed to take a set off Thomas Fabbiano," recalled Koon.

Yuki played the U.S. Open and the Antwerp event in 2018 before a knee injury kept him away from the courts.

"Yuki knows how to win.

His ball control and the way he takes the ball early are special. He didn't get the right physios and doctors to fix things. When tennis resumes after the pandemic, Yuki will be ready," said Koon.

The coach spoke of how hard Yuki worked to make an impact on the professional

Tour, despite loads of natural talent. "Yuki was a super talent at 16. He won the Orange Bowl and the Australian Open juniors. Then he was winning men's Futures singles titles. It took him the next 10 years or so to establish himself. It is so difficult," said Koon.

Joining his coach on the chat, the 27-year-old Yuki said that he was finally putting the ball at home to good use – to play tennis.

"There is a difference between playing with nothing to lose and when there is something to lose," said Koon, stressing the importance of playing on the junior circuit.

Yuki said that it "motivates you" to play the Grand Slams as a junior and share the locker room with the stars of the game.

F1 start likely in July

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

Formula One boss Chase Carey on Monday targeted the coronavirus-hit season eventually starting in Austria on July 3-5 weekend after the French Grand Prix was cancelled and fans barred from the British race at Silverstone.

The French Grand Prix, scheduled for June 28, was the 10th race of the season to be scrapped or postponed.

"We're targeting a start to racing in Europe through July, August and beginning of September, with the first race taking place in Austria on 3-5 July weekend," Carey said in a statement.

Umar Akmal banned for three years

IANS
KARACHI

The Pakistan Cricket Board has banned Umar Akmal from all forms of the game for three years on corruption charges.

"Umar Akmal handed three year ban from all cricket by chairman of disciplinary panel Justice (retd.) Faizal-Miran Chauhan," tweeted PCB.

Akmal had stated in an interview that he was offered money to skip matches against India. He had also revealed that he was asked to leave two deliveries in a match by the bookies.

"I was once offered \$200,000 for leaving two deliveries. I was also offered to skip matches against India," Akmal was quoted as saying by Geo TV.

Akmal had not requested for a hearing before the Anti-Corruption Tribunal after he was charged for two breaches of Article 2.4.4 of the PCB Anti-Corruption Code in two unrelated incidents.

CA's financial crisis complicated: Speed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MELBOURNE



Former ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed feels Cricket Australia's financial matters are quite complicated and current CEO Kevin Roberts has failed to offer a certain degree of clarity required in these troubled times.

Under financial stress, CA has already put 80% of its staff on 20% salary till end of June, while a handful of others, including the executives, remained on 80% pay.

The decision saved AUD 3 million, which was slammed by critics due to the fact that CA had some AUD 90 million in reserves at the end of March (2020), including AUD 36 million in stock investments.

Speed, also a former CA top boss, pointed out how CA had invested AUD 22 million in 2012, which increased to around AUD 45 million earlier this year be-

fore slipping to AUD 36 million due to the coronavirus shock.

"I think that's been messy," Speed told SEN Radio.

"I saw an article saying cricket has lost millions of dollars on the stock market. Well, before it lost millions on the stock market it made millions of dollars on the stock market and its lost part of its profits, but it hasn't lost anything yet because it hasn't sold. That was an issue."

FIFA proposes five substitutions

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LAUSANNE

FIFA wants to let football teams use five substitutes to cope with expected schedule congestion caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

The game's governing body says the temporary plan could help prevent more injuries due to potential player overload as competitions catch up with a backlog.

The proposal gives com-

Equipment choices make a difference: Harmeet Desai

TABLE TENNIS

S. DIPAK RAGAV
CHENNAI

Reigning Commonwealth table tennis champion Harmeet Desai said the general perception that equipment plays a minor role in a paddler's career is wrong.

Speaking to Sports Authority of India coaches on Monday via video-conference, the World No. 72 cited the transformation of Sweden's Mattias Falck, who profited from a change of rubber, to buttress his point.

"Mattias' backhand was strong but his forehand topspin wasn't," said Harmeet.

"Under the coach's instructions, he used short pimples on his forehand and there was no looking back. He won silver in the World Championships last year."

Customised approach

Harmeet, the current National champion, also highlighted the need for coaches to tailor their approach to a player's requirements. "Soumyajit Ghosh and I were training under [coach and former Euro-

**Harmeet Desai.**

pean singles champion] Peter Karlsson. We were both different personalities. While I was self-driven but used to burn myself out during practice, Ghosh thrived when the coach was in his corner and

backing him. So Peter advised me to take it a bit easy to be fresh for tournaments."

The 26-year-old, who won the ITTF Challenge Indonesia Open in 2019, then spoke about the importance of having a weapon and formulating plans to hide and manage weaknesses.

"For example, [World No. 2] Xu Xin has a weakness on his backhand side and everyone knows it. But at the same time, it is impossible to catch him there because of the way he strategises and covers his backhand side."

Recalling a story about the Chinese system's methods of simulating match situations during practice, Harmeet described how Ma Lin was instructed by coach Liu Guoliang to play Zhang Jian with a 2-0 handicap ahead of the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

China had failed to win the men's singles gold at Athens 2004. Harmeet said Guoliang, in a bid to provoke Lin, had stipulated that he stood to lose 10,000 yuan if he was defeated. Lin went on to win the practice match and gold in Beijing.

Forest Dept. utilises funds for food distribution in Rajasthan district

Needy families in remote areas to get free dry ration kits

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

In a first, the Forest Department in Rajasthan's Banswara district has utilised the funds available under the joint forest management's entry point activities (EPA) for distributing free dry ration kits to over 2,000 poor and needy families living in 74 villages around remote forest areas during the COV-ID-19 lockdown.

The tribal-dominated Banswara district, situated at the trijunction of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, has a rich forest cover and abundant natural resources.

Participation of locals

The EPA, which mainly envisages creation of the community assets, has ensured participation of local communities in the forestry programmes and generated faith among them for the Forest Department.

"The message from Australia to all visitors was clear: Go back."

"The only flight to the U.S. was from Sydney and so my challenge was to find a ticket that took me via Sydney."

"With no end in sight for India letting me in, I had to find some activity to keep my sanity and health going."

"Luckily, Perth had its lovely bicycle trails everywhere, including by the side of highways."

"So I took a spot decision to invest in a used bicycle."

"Initially, I found it hard to be on the bike for even an hour, but soon my leg muscles got used to it and within two weeks I was able to comfortably do three hours every day."

"The weather became cooler and on weekends, I did even up to four hours with my young niece. I fell in love with Perth."

"Finally, she requested her host to let me stay with them and I quickly bought a ticket to Perth. I got a seat on Virgin Australia and there were rumours they will file for bankruptcy leaving me with a worthless ticket."

"Fortunately, my flight took off and very soon thereafter Virgin stopped all flights."

"I had to find a ticket that took me via Sydney."

"With no end in sight for India letting me in, I had to find some activity to keep my sanity and health going."

"Luckily, Perth had its lovely bicycle trails everywhere, including by the side of highways."

"So I took a spot decision to invest in a used bicycle."

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