



How a wholesale market in T.N. turned into a COVID-19 hotspot
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No dispute over new road through Lipulekh pass: Gen. Naravane
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Trump threatens to cut China ties as COVID-19 death toll surges
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NEARBY



City sees 425 new cases; revised death toll 123

NEW DELHI
The Capital on Friday recorded 425 new COVID-19 cases and no deaths, taking the total number of cases to 8,895. The government, however, revised the cumulative death toll from 115 to 123.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Plea in Delhi HC challenges 'corona fee' on liquor

NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court on Friday sought the response of the AAP government on a plea challenging the levying of 70% "special corona fee" on all liquor brands in the Capital. The government has to reply by May 29.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Aarogya Setu app must for Srinagar govt. staff

SRINAGAR
Srinagar Deputy Commissioner Shahid Iqbal Chowdhary has directed Drawing and Disbursing Officers to obtain a certificate that they had downloaded the Aarogya Setu app before the release of salary to staff.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9

New law for contract farming

Centre to push through agri-marketing reforms as part of stimulus package

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ

NEW DELHI

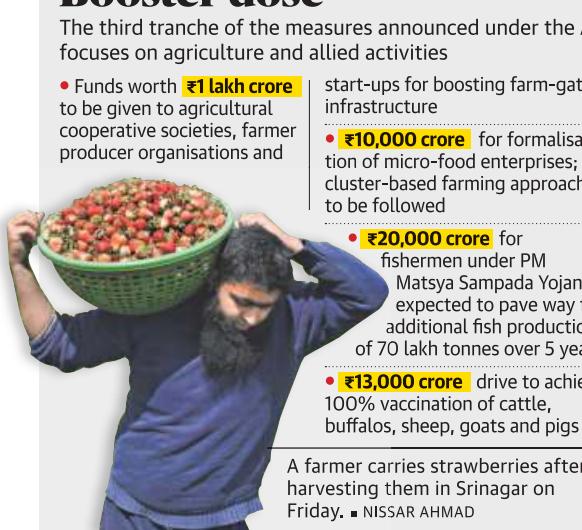
Making long-pending agricultural marketing reforms the centrepiece of the third tranche of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan economic stimulus package, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday announced plans to enact a central law to permit barrier-free inter-State trade of farm commodities and ensure a legal framework to facilitate contract farming.

The third tranche also included plans to invest ₹1.5 lakh crore to build farm-gate infrastructure and support logistics needs for fishworkers, livestock farmers, vegetable growers, beekeepers and related activities, although this includes some previously budgeted money and extensions of existing schemes.

Deregulating produce

The Centre will deregulate the sale of six types of agricultural produce, including cereals, edible oils, oilseeds, pulses, onions and potatoes, by amending the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, Ms. Sitharaman said.

Several agricultural economists and farm activists welcomed the reform and investment announcements, but questioned the lack of immediate support to help farmers survive the current crisis.



A farmer carries strawberries after harvesting them in Srinagar on Friday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

welcomed the reform and investment announcements, but questioned the lack of immediate support to help farmers survive the current crisis.

The Essential Commodities Act was enacted at a time of food scarcity, and needs to reflect current concerns, the Finance Minister said.

"Now what is happening is that farmers are producing. There is an abundance of crops, and this sometimes leads to issues because they would want to export, and

we don't permit that. Because of a flip-flop sometimes, farmers don't get the benefit. Some other times, the consumers suffer. So there is a need to amend the Act," she said.

No stock limit

Stock limits will not be imposed on these commodities except in case of national calamity or famine or an extraordinary surge in prices, the Minister said, adding that even these stock limits would not apply to pro-



Railway Minister Piyush Goyal spars with States over Shramik Specials
page 11

Trump threatens to cut China ties as COVID-19 death toll surges
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Lockdown likely to be extended till May 30

Considerable relaxations likely in green and orange zones

VIJAYITA SINGH

NEW DELHI

The lockdown is likely to be extended till May 30 with considerable relaxations in the green and orange zones. An announcement to this effect is likely to be made on Saturday, officials told *The Hindu*.

An official said lockdown 4.0 would be more about implementing its "spirit" than imposing restrictions.

The current third phase of the lockdown, which was imposed first on March 24 in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, ends on May 17.

Metro rail services in cities would continue to remain suspended as most routes fall in the containment zones, which would continue to be under "curfew-like" conditions.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had sought suggestions from the State governments and they were asked to convey their views by 5 p.m. on Friday. "The suggestions from most States have been received and they have advocated an extension of the lockdown. Every official is



Best practice: A vegetable seller using hand sanitiser in New Delhi before heading out on Friday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

States receiving and sending the passenger will have to decide. They are still reluctant but there are many cases where people are genuinely stuck and have to take the journey. Maybe, airline seats will come at a premium, as social distancing, such as keeping middle seats vacant, will have to be followed", said the official.

Buses would not be allowed in red zones. Autorickshaws and cab aggregators are likely to be allowed in all zones with maximum two passengers.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

sors and exporters.

The Centre has been attempting to reform agricultural marketing through a model Act which it encourages States to adopt.

However, it now intends to enact a central law to allow farmers to sell produce at attractive prices beyond the current *mandi* system, facilitating barrier-free inter-State trade and e-trading.

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'A NEW CHAPTER' ▶ PAGE 15

Space jam



Packing a bunch: Migrant labourers clamber onto a vehicle at National Highway 24 near the Ghazipur border to return to their villages in U.P. and Bihar. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

India surpasses China's COVID-19 tally

Death toll mounts to 2,674; Maharashtra, T.N. and Gujarat report most cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India's COVID-19 case tally shot past China, with a total of 85,761 cases, including 53,219 active ones, according to data from the State Health Departments. The death toll nationwide stood at 2,674.

The country has registered over 3,600 cases and over 100 deaths on average everyday since May 8.

According to the health ministry, India registered 3,967 more COVID-19 cases

COVID-19

and 100 deaths on Friday, taking the total number of cases to 81,970 and the nationwide toll to 2,649.

Stressing the need to focus on high load areas and case fatality management, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said while world-

Surging ahead

The confirmed COVID-19 case count in India crossed China's official tally on Friday. India also has the least doubling time* among the top 15 countries with the most cases

*Doubling time is the estimated number of days it takes for cases to double in a country.

CASES FOR INDIA ARE AS OF 10.15 P.M. ON FRIDAY; FOR OTHER COUNTRIES AS OF MAY 14

Country	Cases	Doubling time
U.S.	14,17,774	43.4
Russia	2,52,245	14
U.K.	2,34,440	42.7
Spain	2,29,540	129.3
Italy	2,23,096	155.1
Brazil	2,03,165	13.3
France	1,78,994	277.2
Germany	1,74,478	181
Turkey	1,44,749	64.2
Iran	1,14,533	46.5
India	85,761	13
China	82,933	7966.2
Peru	80,604	16.4
Canada	74,781	41.9
Belgium	54,288	100.3

wide the total number of cases stood at 42,48,389 with 2,94,046 deaths and the fatality rate pegged at 6.92%, India had managed to keep its fatality rate at 3.23%.

With 933 persons testing

and Gujarat reported the highest number of cases, with the capital cities of Mumbai, Chennai and Ahmedabad accounting for the most patients.

With 933 persons testing

positive, the number of cases in Mumbai rose to 17,512 and the death toll increased to 655 with 34 more deaths, the Brihamumbai Municipal Corporation said.

With 261 new cases, Ahmedabad's tally rose to 7,171 while the death toll reached 479 with 14 more patients succumbing to the infection, officials said.

In a release issued by the Ministry, Mr. Vardhan said, "So far, a total of 27,920 people have been cured. And in the last 24 hours, 1,685 patients were cured. This takes the total recovery rate to 34.06%." It added that the impact of the lockdown was seen on the doubling rate, which improved from 3.4 days in the pre-lockdown week to 12.9 days last week.

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MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGES 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12

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MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGES 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12

Riot affected from north-east Delhi now join COVID-19 fight

Khajoori Khas locals donate PPE kits to GTB Hospital

HEMANI BHANDARI

NEW DELHI

Residents of street no. 29 in north-east Delhi's Khajoori Khas and the cleric of the Fatima Masjid situated there donated PPE kits, masks and gloves to Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital on Thursday. The street, and the mosque, witnessed some of the most gruesome violence during communal riots which broke out in the fourth week of February this year—while several houses belonging to Muslims were targeted by rioters, Fatima Masjid was vandalised and burnt.

Mohammed Munazir, a resident of the area, said he, along with the mosque's imam Mohammed Akram and a few others, decided to pool resources towards a modest contribution for the front-line workers as a mark of solidarity. The group donated 100 PPE kits, 200



A Khajoori Khas resident handing over PPE kits, gloves and masks at GTB Hospital. ■ HEMANI BHANDARI

masks and 200 gloves in all.

"We didn't have enough money earlier after the riots broke out. The monetary situation is slightly better for people now. The doctors, nurses, and police are out on the streets saving people. We wanted to tell them that we are with them in this fight," he said.

The group intends to donate more in the coming weeks if they are able to marshal more resources, he said.

The Allahabad High Court on Friday allowed azan in three districts of Uttar Pradesh — Ghazipur, Hathras and Farrukhabad — where it had been stopped by the district administration citing the Home Ministry's lockdown rules.

In an order passed 10 days after the Bench of Shashi Kant Gupta and Ajit Kumar reserved judgment after hearing arguments of the petitioners and State counsel via videoconferencing, the judges said, "Azaan can be recited by a muezzin from minarets of the mosques by human voice without using any amplifying device and such recitation cannot be hindered with the pretext of violation of the guidelines issued by the state, to contain the pandemic — COVID-19."

The Bench gave its ruling on a bunch of pleas, including those of former Union Law Minister Salman Khurshid and Lok Sabha member from Ghazipur, Afzal Ansari, among others.

Hathras District Magistrate Praveen Kumar Laxkar said he would comply with the High Court order.

Act against DMs' Former Aligarh MLA Zamirullah, who petitioned on behalf of the residents of Hathras, said had the Uttar Pradesh government wanted it, it would have banned azan across the State.

"It was the decision of a few District Magistrates who had let down the State government and action should be taken against them. The HC judgment has vindicated our faith in the judiciary and the Ganga-Jamuni tradition of a country," he said.

Whether loudspeakers will be allowed inside mosques or not is still open to interpretation. The court held that azan may be an integral and essential part of Islam but its recitation through loudspeakers or other

sound-amplifying devices cannot be said to be an integral part of religion, warranting protection of the fundamental right enshrined under Article 25 of the Constitution. "Thus, under no circumstances sound amplifying devices can be permitted to be used between 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. by the district administrations," stated the order.

The judges noted the petitioners didn't plead for use of such devices for azan and went on to say that "until and unless there is a licence/permission from the authorities concerned under the Noise Pollution Rules, under no circumstances azan can be recited through sound amplifying devices."

Timings

DELHI

SATURDAY, MAY. 16
RISE 05:30 SET 19:06
RISE 02:06 SET 13:34
SUNDAY, MAY. 17
RISE 05:30 SET 19:07
RISE 02:37 SET 14:26
MONDAY, MAY. 18
RISE 05:29 SET 19:07
RISE 03:08 SET 15:18

Delhi Weather

max	min
Delhi City 39	24
Safdarjung 39	24
Palam 40	23

Delhi Palam Today
44°C A hot and dry weather with mainly clear sky to prevail during the day. Night remains comfortable. A windy day.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
43°C Rise in temperature. The weather will be hot and dry during the day. Night will be comfortable.

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THE HINDU
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Air quality of Delhi-NCR
Delhi 123 Gurugram 162
Ghaziabad 166 Faridabad 175
Noida 97 Greater Noida 142
Good 0-50 Satisfactory 51-100 Moderate 101-200
Poor 201-300 Very poor 301-400 Severe >401
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OVER 24 HOURS) [SOURCE: CPCB]

Neighbour locks doctor inside house over COVID-19 fears

Doctor had returned from isolation facility after testing positive for the virus

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A 27-year-old doctor in south-west Delhi's Vasani Kunj was allegedly locked inside her house by a neighbour when she returned from an isolation facility where she had gone after testing positive for COVID-19.

Case registered
The police have registered a case and begun an investigation.

The senior resident at a government hospital in north Delhi contracted the virus when she was deployed in a COVID-19 ward last month. She told the police that when she returned home to quarantine herself, she was allegedly asked by residents to leave. She then went to an isolation

All the members of the RWA condemn the act. The neighbour also asked me if he could apologise to the doctor. He then went and told her he was sorry

SNEHLATA RATHI
RWA president

facility from where she returned on Wednesday after being tested negative.

The doctor told the police that when she returned, her neighbour came and started shouting at her and told her that she cannot stay.

The doctor said she tried to explain that she had tested negative but he did not listen and went on to lock her in her

house from the outside saying that she had to leave the place. The doctor then called the Residents' Welfare Association president for help, who informed the police.

COVID-19

RWA president Snehlata Rathi said the doctor had come to the residence on April 26 and was tested positive on April 30.

"We were not aware [about the doctor being infected] till May 5 when Health Department officials came and enquired about her. There was no warning poster outside the residence. We then spoke to the doctor in-charge here who ensured that the doctor went to an isolation facility,"

she said.
Ms. Rathi, however, condemned the act of the neighbour and said that she fully supported the doctor and that the neighbour should not have behaved in the manner he did.

Apology tendered

"All the members of the RWA condemn the act. The neighbour also asked me if he could apologise to the doctor. He then went and told her he was sorry," Ms Rathi said.

A senior police officer said that a case under IPC Sections 342 (punishment for wrong confinement) and 509 (Word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman) was registered against the neighbour and investigation is under way.

Google India seeks time to reply to plea on UPI app

Petition in High Court seeks immediate suspension of operations of Google Pay

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Google India has sought three weeks time to submit its response to the Delhi High Court on a petition seeking to immediately suspend operations of its UPI app, Google Pay, till it complies with interoperability

The court, in the meantime, also asked the Centre and the RBI to respond to all

legations made in the petition about Google India's "wilful and continued non-compliance" of various directions issued by the government and the RBI.

Justice Asha Menon, who heard the case through video-conferencing, granted the Centre, RBI and Google India three weeks to file their responses.

Petitioner Shubham Kapa-

ley approached the High Court after Google Pay did not allow him to contribute to the PM CARES Fund, without making another VPA (virtual payment address) or UPI ID on its own app. He tried to use his already existing VPA/UPI ID for other transactions as well, however, the same issue of denial of interoperability persisted.

The plea claimed that

Google Pay was flouting the rules of UPI interoperability and that it does not allow new users to use their existing VPAs or UPI ID on its platform. It sought for a thorough third party and independent investigation to check compliance of directive and guidelines issued by the National Payments Corporation of India and the RBI.

Students' wings hit out at DU over open book online exams proposal

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Students groups hit out at Delhi University's proposal to hold online open book examinations with some carrying out social media campaigns and others writing to the administration on Friday.

Following a call for a "Twitter Storm", hundreds of students and teachers took to the social media to express their discontentment with the university's move. "It is very clear that students have completely rejected the exercise of online open book examinations in DU. It is preposterous to think of online exams and DU V-C must rethink this decision," said AISA in a statement.

The SFI said that the proposal neglected many serious concerns asso-

ciated with online examinations, including stark disparities in socio-economic conditions of students and in terms of access to internet, speed and other technical issues apart from other problems, ultimately turning it into a "test of privilege".

The group even launched a petition opposing the digital mode of examination which was submitted to the Vice-Chancellor by 23 students of 17 colleges, including student union representatives, and was signed by nearly 3,000 students, along with a mass mailing campaign, the group said.

Students group ABVP also wrote to the V-C with a list of alternative modes of undertaking evaluations and complained that only two days were given by the working committee on examinations to take suggestions.

Rescripting north-east Delhi riots – and the question of justice

While police seek to project a 'conspiracy' behind the riots, all FIRs pertaining to the violence must be opened to public scrutiny

RADHIKA CHITKARA
VIKAS KUMAR

Arshad Alam, Amaan Iqbal, Deepak Kumar, Mohammad Hamza and many others were killed in communal riots that convulsed north-east Delhi in late February 2020. Many more were injured, or victims of arson.

The Home Minister stated on March 11 that "over 700 FIRs" had been filed. Yet about 80 days after the riots started, little is known to the public about the status of most cases as the police aggressively and selectively pursue a few FIRs and seek to project a so-called "conspiracy" behind the riots, led by anti-CAA protest organisers.

Significantly, 38 out of 53 recorded killed in the riots were Muslims, as were majority of those otherwise affected. Most anti-CAA protest organisers being targeted by the police under the supposed "conspiracy" are also Muslims. This line of investigation is being followed with suspicious



The riots in north-east Delhi broke out in February this year.

■ FILE PHOTO: SANDEEP SAXENA

speed, under twin pressures - COVID-19 lockdown and under threat of the draconian UAPA, added to one of the FIRs (FIR 59/20 of 6.3.20) police are pursuing - both curbing the ability and right of those arbitrarily implicated to access legal help.

This has deliberately diverted attention from well-reported facts - BJP leader Kapil Mishra's role, the fact that no FIR still exists against him or other leaders, incidents of communal violence by mobs, including Hindu aggressors, and many instances of communal bias of the police, including illegal detentions of Muslims and refusal to lodge 'missing person' complaints by Muslims.

This diversion is quite likely being abetted also by the problems and weaknesses in routine FIRs filed in riot-related cas-

es (in a manner reminiscent of Gujarat in 2002). FIRs are crucial instruments through which police have control over what is regarded as truth. Discrepancies in recording of FIR can lead to improper investigation and acquittal of the guilty. About 40 FIRs (related to the north-east Delhi riots) accessed by a Delhi-based civil rights group, Peoples Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) and its possession, reveal crucial discrepancies.

One, several Muslim victims

have faced problems while trying to lodge FIRs. Two, in few places they have managed to, charges have been diluted and non-bailable sections against Hindu names have been visibly dropped. Three, there is evidence of a single FIR combining multiple incidents. Four, the police have chosen to be the

complainant even in those instances where there were independent witnesses. Given the evidence in this small sample of FIRs, the communal bias of police in the north-east Delhi riots is evident in the manner in which the FIRs have been lodged by them.

COMMENT

Through this bizarre, blatant rescripting of the narrative of the riots, the subversion of truth is being presided over by the state. This needs to be called out, and halted. It is imperative, for the sake of justice that all FIRs pertaining to the riots be opened to public scrutiny. Collection of evidence - CCTV footage, phone records, etc., and physical evidence and investigation also need to be made transparent and monitored.

Arrests as intimidation

One obvious consequence of the rescripting of the riots is the criminalisation of anti-CAA demonstrations which had gone on peacefully at different sites for months, protests which were

legitimate, constitutional, and which raised very valid concerns. Further, the rescripting has diverted attention from the state's failure to prosecute accused in the massive police attack on Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) students in December

2019,

which also drew extensive international criticism. The JMI authorities, backed by the courts, sought registration of FIR into police action in January 2020. And yet, no FIR has been filed. Is it a coincidence that many of those arrested recently in the so-called

riots "conspiracy" are associated with JMI? Is it a coincidence that prominent persons, like the Chairman of the Delhi Minorities Commission, who question selective arrests of Muslims, are being charged under sedition for a tweet? The intimidatory objective of such arrests and charges is absolutely clear.

In the midst of this noise around the manufacture of a conspiracy, and the attempt to erase the truth of the riots, we must persevere in the 'struggle of memory against forgetting' and ensure that state institutions are held accountable to their constitutional and legal responsibility of treating all citizens equally, ensuring fair recording of riot crimes, systematic collection of evidence, fair investigation and prosecution of all guilty.

Nothing more is needed. Nothing less will do.

Radhika Chitkara and Vikas Kumar are secretaries of Peoples Union for Democratic Rights, a Delhi-based civil rights group.

'Make SOP to stop illegal groundwater extraction'

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Following a plea which alleged that water filling plants were being operated without requisite licenses and supply of contaminated water in several parts of the city, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Friday directed the Delhi Chief Secretary to prepare an appropriate SOP to prevent illegal extraction of groundwater.

"It will be appropriate that the Chief Secretary calls a meeting of all concerned within one month and oversees preparation of SOP. Ministry of Jal Shakti may also take necessary steps," the NGT said.

Doctor stranded in Seoul longing to return home

His wife practises in Delhi hospital

JATIN ANAND

NEW DELHI

A 41-year-old doctor's dream of pursuing a sought-after fellowship at a university in South Korea came true at the end of a three-and-a-half year-long wait in November last year, but for the last month-and-a-half, the Dwarka resident is stranded in Seoul due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As he runs out of resources fast, Gopal Kumar, a cancer surgeon who says he is among 210 Indians in that country which is said to have kept COVID-19 more or less at bay, is consumed by apprehensions - the well-being of his spouse and the rest of the family.

His wife, also a doctor, he says, is very likely to contract the infection herself. He has ailing parents, who are in their 80s, and a six-year-old son - all at high risk of contracting COVID-19.

"I was here for a course in Robotic Head and Neck Surgery which was self-sponsored. I had to stay back as during the lockdown the course was near completion," Dr. Kumar, who is on sabbatical from a prominent private hospital in Gurugram, told *The Hindu* over the phone from Seoul.

"I got this opportunity after waiting for 3.5 years and I am probably the first one from the country to do it. But it turned out to be a wrong decision. My course



Gopal Kumar had gone to South Korea for a course.

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

is over, but not my wait," he said. Dr. Kumar was pursuing his course from Severe Hospital of the Yonsei University Cancer Centre.

He is, however, not of the opinion that his wife, a senior doctor with the Delhi government, should stay at home. He, instead, wishes to return so she can work harder.

"She was supposed to come here towards the end of my course but the pandemic had broken out by then. She is working round the clock and, as part of her duties, visits not only the hospital where she is posted but also containment zones. I am afraid anything can happen," he said.

"She will contract the infection sooner or later, given the circumstances. I don't have any emergency like other Indians who are being taken home. I don't know who will take care of my parents and my son in case my wife falls sick," he said.

Office of the Program Director State Program Management Group Namami Gange, Dehradun, Uttarakhand

Letter No. 255/SPMG/Namami Gange / 2D Animation Dated: 13.05.2020

Request for Proposal for Production of 2D Animation Short Films

SPMG invites sealed Request for Proposal under Single Stage two bid basis i.e. Technical Bid and Financial Bid from reputed and experienced bidders / agencies / firms for "Production of mini-series of 2D animation short films" for SPMG Uttarakhand.

The interested bidders should submit their bids to Program Director, State Program Management Group, Namami Gange, Uttarakhand, 117, Indira Nagar, Dehradun-248006 on or before 18th June, 2020 upto 15:00 hrs.

Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) equal to Rs. 1,00,000/- (Rupees One Lac Only) in the form of Demand Draft / FDR / BG drawn on any scheduled bank in favour of "Program Director, State Program Management Group" payable at Dehradun must be accompanied with the Bid application.

For further details and RFP please visit website: www.spmpguttarakhand.uk.gov.in. Please contact on procurement.spmguk@gmail.com in case of any queries.

SPMG reserves the right to cancel the RFP at any time or amend / withdraw any of the terms and conditions contained in the RFP Document without assigning any reason thereof.

IN BRIEF

Food security allowance to students: NDMC

NEW DELHI
The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) on Friday announced its decision to grant food security allowance to students from nursery to Class 12 of NDMC, NDMC-aided and Navyug Schools. The move has been taken to meet the nutritional requirements of schoolchildren, the NDMC said. The money will be transferred through RTGS to the bank account of students.

DJB releases action plan to meet water demand

NEW DELHI
The Delhi Jal Board on Friday released its action plan to meet the water demand during the summer months. The plan includes rejuvenation of 155 existing waterbodies, creating new lakes and installing 254 tube wells to help improve water availability in deficient areas.

'Increase protection for ration distribution staff'

NEW DELHI
North Delhi Municipal Corporation standing committee chairperson Jai Prakash on Friday appealed to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to ensure security arrangements at ration distribution centres. Due to the late arrival of rations, incidents of commotion and stone pelting by people have come up, Mr. Prakash said.

Website for registration of construction workers

NEW DELHI
The Delhi government on Friday launched a website for renewing and fresh registration of construction workers in Delhi. The decision was taken at a meeting of the Construction Workers' Welfare Board, chaired by Labour Minister Gopal Rai. On Monday, it was decided to provide financial assistance of ₹5,000 for the second successive month to construction workers in the wake of the extended lockdown.

City sees 425 new cases; Minister says time to restart the economy

Delhiites will have to learn to live with COVID-19, says Satyendar Jain

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Capital on Friday recorded 425 new COVID-19 cases and no deaths, taking the total number of cases to 8,895.

The government, however, revised the cumulative death toll from 115 to 123, after adding cases in which the primary cause of death was found to be the virus, according to reports of the Death Audit Committee based on case sheets received from hospitals.

The government added that a total of 463 patients have recovered from the virus so far, leaving 5,254 active cases in the city out of which 1,643 patients are in home isolation.

'Must strike balance'

Speaking after a meeting on the COVID-19 situation in Delhi, Health Minister Satyendar Jain said the government was making all efforts



Food being served to people on a humid afternoon in the Capital. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

to fight the outbreak but it was now time to restart economic activities. "The Delhi government believes there should be a balance between the fight against COVID-19 and economic activities. When the first lockdown was imposed, we were unprepared to fight this pandemic but now we have prepared ourselves to fight this virus," the Minister said.

Mr. Jain added that based on feedback received from Delhiites, the government

has written to the Centre regarding relaxation of lockdown restrictions. The key suggestions from the people is that every person should wear a mask at public places, social distancing should be maintained at all times, and that public transportation should start with limited capacity, he added.

"In the last two months we have learned many lessons. If we wear a mask, maintain social distancing and wash hands regularly

Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases

8,895

Total deaths

123*

New cases in the past 24 hours

425

New deaths in the past 24 hours

0

*8 added to toll based on reports by audit panel

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

1,640 foreign Tablighi members were in India'

Only 66 got infected: Muslim outfit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

As many as 1,640 foreign Tablighi Jamaat members from 47 countries were in India at the time of Nizamuddin Markaz gathering, of whom only 64 tested positive for COVID-19 and two more died of the virus, prominent Muslim organisation Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind said on Friday.

Jamiat president Maulana Arshad Madani said the "highlighting" of Tablighi Ja-

maat cases while talking about the total number of cases in the country had allegedly created an atmosphere of hatred against Muslims.

Mr. Madani said that now when there are more than 78,000 cases, the Tablighi Jamaat figures are not being highlighted.

Out of the total foreign Tablighi Jamaat members, 739 are in Delhi and the rest are in other States, the Jamiat said.

It is in excess of what has been

Plea in HC challenges 'special corona fee' on liquor

Fee was an afterthought and after-effect of overcrowding at vends: petitioner

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday sought the response of the Aam Aadmi Party government on a plea challenging the levying of 70% "special corona fee" on all liquor brands in the Capital.

The Bench asked the Delhi government to reply by May 29 to the petition which has sought setting aside of the May 4 notification imposing the levy.

Petitioner Lalit Valecha, an advocate, has contended that the "special corona fee" is in excess of what has been

HELPLINE NUMBERS

COMMON HELPLINE — +91-11-23978046

DELHI — 011-22307145

GHAZIABAD — 0120 4186453

NOIDA — 8076623612/6396776904

GURUGRAM — 108/ 0124-2322412/

9915159296/ 7015523417/ 9654231756

■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Alcohol worth over ₹170 cr. sold in 10 days

NEW DELHI

Delhiites have consumed liquor worth around ₹170 crore in the 10 days since the city government reopened a handful of outlets on May 4. An official said that the Delhi government has earned an additional ₹70 crore from the sale on account of the 'special corona fee' levied on all liquor. According to official data, liquor sales spiked after introduction of the e-token system under which people are given specific time to buy liquor from outlets.

Govt. is ready to resume public transport: Gahlot

Metro prepares to restart operations

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot on Friday discussed with officials Standard Operating Procedures for the safe resumption of metro and bus services in the city and said that the government was ready to restart public transport.

"If central govt. allows, Delhi is confident of running public PPT.. Social distancing, contactless ticketing and disinfection will be the three pillars of our strategy to run public transport safely. And all of this will be possible only if people of Delhi cooperate. Delhi will be back on its feet only if people and the govt work together [sic]," he tweeted.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation on Friday said that detailed guidelines expected to be followed by commuters travelling on the network will be issued once the government gives



Signs to maintain social distancing at a metro station in Delhi ■

14 more containment zones in Gurugram

Four areas de-notified; 9 cases reported

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GURUGRAM

Fourteen new containment zones, including parts of DLF Phase-II and III, were notified and four areas were de-notified by the Gurugram district administration on Friday, taking the total number of such zones to 34.

Meanwhile, nine more samples were tested positive in Gurugram, taking the total number of COVID-19 cases in the district to 179.

However, 90 patients have been discharged and the number of active cases is only 89. As many as 58 people are under surveillance at quarantine facility. The results of 236 samples are awaited.

High-risk case
Of the nine cases reported on Friday, six are the contacts of a high-risk confirmed case in Rajeev Nagar and one each from Gandhi Nagar, Hari Nagar and Basai Enclave. The Hari Nagar patient is linked to Khanda Mandi case.

However, based on the recommendations of Containment Review Committee, District Magistrate, Amit Khatri, in a four-page order, de-notified Fazilpur Jharsa village in Gurugram block, parts of Sohna

block and Ward No. 11 and 14 of Pataudi block. These areas were listed as containment zones issuing separate orders on April 9 and 23.

Meanwhile, nine more samples were tested positive in Gurugram, taking the total number of COVID-19 cases in the district to 179.

However, 90 patients have been discharged and the number of active cases is only 89. As many as 58 people are under surveillance at quarantine facility. The results of 236 samples are awaited.

Police chief pushes for digitalisation

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

In a move to digitalisation, Delhi Police Commissioner S.N. Shrivastava urged its department to adopt newer technology and register daily diaries online.

"Since the daily diaries are being received online, except for special reason, hard copies may not be printed. All may view the daily diaries online and take necessary action. We may adopt to newer technology and save the paper. All concerned need to be briefed accordingly," the order reads.

The order was marked to Special and Joint Commissioners of Police.

Varsha Joshi was serving as commissioner of the civic body

Senior IAS officer transferred to Delhi govt. from North body

Varsha Joshi was serving as commissioner of the civic body

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

IAS officer Varsha Joshi was transferred from the post of Commissioner, North Delhi Municipal Corporation, to the Delhi government by Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal here on Thursday.

The vocal 1995 AGM batch officer's abrupt transfer has raised questions about the manner in which it was carried out.

Ms. Joshi was one of the senior members of the bureaucracy when the then Chief Secretary Anshu Prakash was allegedly assaulted by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

wal's official residence by AAP MLAs in February 2018. She took charge of the North DMC, which runs six hospitals in the city in December 2018.

A former Transport Commissioner and Power Secretary, she had briefly held additional charge of the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) after the transfer of the previous commissioner, Puneet Goyal.

The current SDMC commissioner Gyanesh Bharti has been assigned additional charge of the North DMC. Ms. Joshi described her tenure as "very satisfying indeed" and

Police chief pushes for digitalisation

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The order was marked to Special and Joint Commissioners of Police.

'Allow cabs to ply, permit restricted use of metro'

Delhi govt's suggestions to Centre

JATIN ANAND

NEW DELHI

Increase time limit for citizens to be outside by two hours, allow cabs operated by aggregators to ply, and permit Delhi Metro to start operations but limit its utilisation to government employees and those providing essential services. These are some of the recommendations made by the Delhi government to the Centre.

Taxis/cabs being operated by aggregators should also be allowed but only if they carry one passenger at a time.

Other suggestions include allowing 50% attendance at private offices and mandatory use of Aarogya Setu app at these sites.

No ease in restrictions has been recommended in containment zones. All these suggestions will, according to the proposal, be reviewed after a week.

Summer season

Commenting on the impact of the change of season on the virus, Mr. Jain said: "There was a time when we all thought that this pandemic will be over by May due to summer. But now we have seen that in the Latin American countries, the pandemic is increasing. The temperature in these countries rises very high. This shows that we have to learn to live with COVID-19."

Services of the Delhi Metro should be limited to government employees and functionaries and these too in cycles between 7.30 a.m. and 10.30 a.m., and then from 5.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.

Passengers with valid passes or those providing essential services should be allowed to use the metro between 10.30 a.m. and 5.30 p.m. Private vehicles should also be allowed but only with two passengers.

Fourth death in Gautam Buddha Nagar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NOIDA

A 71-year-old cancer patient from Noida who was admitted to a Delhi hospital and later tested positive for COVID-19 has died, becoming the fourth fatality linked to the virus in Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar, officials said on Friday.

The man, a resident of Sector 150 in Noida, died due to "multiple organ failure" at the government-run LNJP hospital in the Capital on Thursday night, they said.

Earlier three more men, two of them aged 60 and one 62, have died in Gautam Buddha Nagar with their deaths linked to COVID-19, according to officials.

Meanwhile, four more persons have tested positive, taking the number of COVID-19 cases to 242 on Friday, District Surveillance Officer Sunil Dohare said.

The new patients include a 78-year-old woman from Sector 12, two men aged 22 and 41 from Sector 5 besides a 21-year-old man from Nagla village, the officer said.

TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT

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13 new cases reported in Punjab

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Punjab recorded 13 fresh COVID-19 cases on Friday with six cases surfacing in Faridkot district, according to an official statement.

The Health department said till May 15, the total positive cases reported were 1,932.

Meanwhile, in the wake of the season of vector borne diseases starting in the State, Health Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu has instructed civil surgeons to intensify the measures to prevent and control dengue and other Vector Borne Diseases in collaboration with State Task Force.

"It is necessary to control dengue and other vector borne diseases, which will be the paramount target for State Task Force," he said.

Jharkhand CM takes on Goyal

'Railway Minister's statement that State was not giving NOC to run trains is not true'

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR



Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Friday took on Union Railway Minister Piyush Goyal saying his statement that Jharkhand was not giving permissions for running more trains for which migrants stranded outside were suffering was 'uninformed' one.

In a series of Tweets, Mr. Soren said, "what it seems, Union Railway Minister is not being fed with correct information by his own department. We have already given no objection certificates for running 110 trains. Around 60,000 migrant workers in 50 trains have already returned home."

"I request you (Mr. Goyal) to run more and more trains for Jharkhand. Now, only four to six trains are reaching the State every day. This is not sufficient to bring back about 7 lakh Jharkhandi migrant

Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren

workers. I hope you will help workers on this and help Jharkhandis," the Chief Minister said.

The statement of Mr. Goyal seems to have not gone down well with Mr. Soren. The Railway Minister had said 1,200 trains were exclusively reserved for transporting migrant workers stranded away from their homes and 300 trains can be run daily.

"But, there are many States like West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and

Jharkhand where very few NOCs are coming from. On the other hand, around 400 trains have departed for Uttar Pradesh and 200 for Bihar," he pointed out.

Mr. Goyal further said, "the Jharkhand CM had given a statement that he wants to bring back all migrants. But, he should first give permissions so that trains could be made available."

According to office of Jharkhand Chief Minister, "Mr. Soren had written letters to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and spoken to Home Minister and Railway Minister reiterating numerous times that necessary arrangements be made to bring back migrant workers by trains."

The first Shramik special train had travelled from Telangana to Jharkhand. As around seven lakh workers registered on the State portal expressing their desire to return, the Jharkhand CMO said

it was a herculean task — much bigger in scale and size than Vande Bharat mission — to bring all back home.

In another Tweeter message, Mr. Soren said, "time and again, I have reiterated our commitment to bring home all stranded workers of Jharkhand. On May 12, our Chief Secretary wrote Union Home Secretary, seeking necessary clearances to bring back 319 migrant workers stuck in Andaman and Nicobar Island by two chartered flights."

Awaiting clearances

"It has been four days and we are still awaiting necessary clearances from Home Ministry to initiate the process. Jharkhand government will bear the costs of the flights to Ranchi, if Home Ministry permits us. We need a humane approach now and be sensitive to those who have faced the worst," he pointed out.

Gehlot flays Centre's package after third tranche of relief

'Nothing for the landless labourers and the urban poor'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR



Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Friday criticised the Centre's economic package of ₹20 lakh crore to deal with the impact of COVID-19 pandemic after Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced its third tranche dedicated to agriculture and allied activities. Mr. Gehlot said there was nothing for the landless labourers and the urban poor in the package.

"It was the third day of the Finance Minister's announcements... The first thing the FM should have done was to give a complete break-up of the numbers, figures [and] details regarding the package. It is important for transparency, clarity and for understanding the impact," Mr. Gehlot tweeted.

Mr. Gehlot regretted that 90% of the Centre's rescue package was in the form of bank loans. ■ FILE PHOTO

people were living at near starvation level, he said.

Mr. Gehlot said the States had not been given any financial assistance even though the entire expenditure on fighting COVID-19, enforcing the lockdown and providing support to migrant labourers and relief to the poorest had had to be borne by the States.

Walk to reach home turns tragic

Migrant worker dies of exhaustion near Odisha border

STAFF REPORTER
BHUBANESWAR

A migrant labourer, who was walking back to his home in Odisha's Puri district, died at Laxmannath toll plaza near the State border on Friday.

The man identified as Dhubei Charan Mohanty was working in a company in Kolkata. He lost job following the nationwide lockdown.

Subsequently, he exhausted all savings on food during

past 50 days. The man decided to return home. As there was no easy mode of transport he could avail, walking back home was the only option left with him.

Mr. Mohanty collapsed near Laxmannath toll plaza, the border check gate, about 11.30 am. He was declared brought dead by doctors.

With people found miserably walking in blistering heat, the Odisha govern-

ment, meanwhile, announced a structured strategy to stop people from walking on road.

"We are working on a strategy of providing relief to those walking through Odisha. People will not walk on road to reach home from now. Chief Minister's Relief Fund will be used to ferry them from State's one end to another," said State Director General of Police Abhay.

Scribe's death triggers debate about 'warriors'

Kin waiting for U.P. govt. to declare him a 'corona warrior' and award compensation

ANUJ KUMAR
GHAZIABAD

It's been more than a week since Pankaj Kulshreshtha, a senior journalist working for a Hindi newspaper in Agra, lost his battle with COVID-19, but his family and colleagues are still waiting for the U.P. government to declare him a "corona warrior" and award compensation to his family.

In April, the U.P. government had declared a compensation of ₹50 lakh in case a "corona warrior" died while working during the pandemic. Corona warriors are health workers, staff of local bodies and police. Kulshreshtha, 50, was Deputy News Editor of *Dainik Jagran* Agra edition on the time of his death.

Recalling the chain of events, Gaurav, his cousin, said, "It rained in Agra on

April 24 and *bhaisahib* got wet while returning from office. The following morning, he developed a fever and I took him to SN Medical College OPD. The doctor gave him medicine and said if the fever didn't subside, he should get himself tested for COVID-19."

The fever kept coming back and Kulshreshtha started feeling weak. "On April 28, he got himself tested for COVID-19. But the report came out only on May 2 and he was admitted to SN Medical College on May 3. If the administration had responded in time, my brother might have been saved," he alleged.

Mr. Gaurav's version is at variance with what *Dainik Jagran* reported on May 8. It said Kulshreshtha's report came out on May 4 and the

same day he was admitted to the hospital.

Mr. Gaurav has demanded ₹50 lakh and a government job for his cousin's wife.

One of Kulshreshtha's colleagues, who chose anonymity, claimed that even after a rival newspaper implemented a policy of work from home, *Dainik Jagran* kept calling its staff to the office.

Hemant Tiwari, president of State Accredited Journalist Association, said he had been demanding that journalists be declared "corona warriors" even before Kulshreshtha's demise. "According to Central and State government notifications, print and electronic media have been part of essential services. But both the government and management are yet to respond." Ashutosh Shukla, State Ed-

itor of *Dainik Jagran*, maintained that there was no laxity on the part of the management or administration. "We are in touch with the government on the issue of compensation but before that the management will take care of the family. We will make an announcement within a few days."

'Delays' in response

On the issue of "delays" in response, Mr. Shukla said as soon as they got the information of infection in office, they allowed the desk to work from home and only skeletal staff was coming to the office. "I was personally involved in arranging the ambulance to shift him to Lucknow, but the doctors advised against it as he was already on ventilator support," he added.

Cyclone alert in Odisha

STAFF REPORTER

BHUBANESWAR

With a cyclone brewing over the Bay of Bengal, the Odisha government on Friday put 12 of its districts on high alert and advised them to make fresh assessment on temporary medical centres set up for COVID-19 pandemic.

The well-marked low pressure area over southeast Bay of Bengal is likely to concentrate into a depression over the same region during next 12 hours and further intensify into a cyclonic storm by the evening of May 16, a Meteorological Department bulletin said.

Apprehending that the cyclone could hit Odisha, a high level meeting was convened here to take stock of the situation.

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT e-Procurement Notice INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (in Rs.)	EMD (in Rs.)	Cost of Tender (in Rs.)	Eligible class of contractor	Time Allowed
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Ordinary repair on NH 21 A (new NH 105) Pinjore Baddi Nalagarh Swarghat Road from km 35/00 to 66/275 (SH- Channelization of Mahdev Bridge IV at RD 44/435 (Upstream Side) Channel No. I, II & III	5,80,236/-	12000/-	350/-	Class D & C	Three Months
2.	Ordinary repair on NH 21 A (new NH 105) Pinjore Baddi Nalagarh Swarghat Road from km 35/00 to 66/275 (SH- Repair of pot holes badly damaged road crust in between km 52/300 to 63/00)	20,23,552/-	40500/-	500/-	Class D & C	Three Months
3.	Ordinary repair to Kalka Shimla wangtoo Road on NH 22 (New NH5) from km 131/00 to 145/100 and km 0/0 to 13/00 on Shimla Bye Pass. (SH- C/O PCC Retaining Wall of height 6.10 m and length of 8.00 m for Emergency purpose at Rd — (assumed for rainy season) (Against Deposit works)	5,85,280/-	11750/-	350/-	Class D & C	Three Months
4.	Ordinary repair to Kalka Shimla wangtoo Road on NH 22 (New NH5) from km 131/00 to 145/100 and km 0/0 to 13/00 on Shimla Bye Pass. (SH- C/O PCC Retaining Wall of height 6.10 m and length of 8.00 m for Emergency purpose at Rd — (assumed for rainy season) (Against Deposit works)	5,04,775/-	11000/-	350/-	Class D & C	Six Months
5.	Ordinary repair to Kalka Shimla wangtoo Road on NH 22 (New NH5) from km 131/00 to 145/100 and km 0/0 to 13/00 on Shimla Bye Pass. (SH- C/O PCC Retaining Wall of height 7.62 m and length of 8.00 m for Emergency purpose at Rd — (assumed for rainy season) (Against Deposit works)	7,23,769/-	14500/-	350/-	Class D & C	Six Months
6.	Restoration of rain damages on Pinjore-Baddi-Nalagarh-Nalagarh-Swarghat road on NH-21A (New NH No.105) from km.35/0 to 66/275(SH-Construction of PCC Retaining wall, Toe wall in km.56/670 to 56/680 for the year 2019-20 in the State of H.P. under FDR (new)	12,08,595/-	24,200/-	500/-	Class D & C	Six Months
7.	Restoration of rain damages on Pinjore-Baddi-Nalagarh-Nalagarh-Swarghat road on NH-21A (New NH No.105) from km.35/0 to 66/275(SH-Construction of PCC Retaining wall, Toe wall in km.56/670 to 56/680 for the year 2019-20 in the State of H.P. under FDR (new)	9,76,00,021/-	1008500/-	5000/-	Class A	Twelve months (one Year)

1. The Executive Engineer HPPWD NH Division Solan Distt. Solan (H.P) on behalf of Governor of H.P invites the online bids on item rate, in electronic tendering system, in 2 Cover System for the under mentioned works from the eligible and approved contractors/ Firms registered with PWD Department.

2. Availability of Bid Document and mode of submission: The Bid document is available online and bid should be submitted in online mode on website <https://htplenders.gov.in>. Bidder would be required to register in the website which is free of cost. For submission of bids, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities (CA). "Aspiring bidders who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-tendering in HPPWD may obtain the same from the website: <https://htplenders.gov.in>. Digital signature is mandatory to participate in the e-tendering. Bidders already possessing the digital signature issued from authorized CAs can use the same in this tender.

3. Key Dates:

1. Date of Online Publication	20-05-2020 at 1100 HRS
2. Document Download Start and End Date	20-05-2020 at 1130 HRS to 05-06-2020 up to 1030 HRS
3. Bid Submission Start and End Date	20-05-2020 at 1130 HRS to 05-06-2020 up to 1030 HRS
4. Physical Submission of (i) EMD (ii) Cost of Tender Document	05-06-2020 upto 1030 HRS
5. Date of Technical Bid Opening	05-06-2020 up to 1100 HRS

4. TENDER DETAILS:

1. The Tender Documents shall be uploaded online in 2 Cover: Cover '1': shall contain scanned copies of all Technical Documents/Eligibility Information'. Cover '2': shall contain 'BOQ/Financial Bid', where contractor will quote his offer for each item.

2. SUBMISSION OF ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS: The bidders are required to submit (a) original Demand Draft towards the cost of Bid Security/Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) in the O/o Executive Engineer, HPPWD NH Division Solan H.P as specified in Key dates at Sr. No. 4 on Tender Opening Date, failing which the bids will be declared non-responsive.

3. BID OPENING DETAILS: The bids shall be opened on 05-06-2020 at 11.00 AM HRS in the office of Executive, Engineer HPPWD NH Division Solan H.P. by the authorised officers. In their interest the tenderer are advised to be present along with original documents at the time of opening of tenders. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue.

4. The bids for the work shall remain valid for acceptance for a period not less than 90 days after the deadline date for bid submission.

5. Other details can be seen in the bidding documents. The office inviting tender shall not be held liable for any delays due to system failure beyond its control. Even though the system will attempt to notify the bidders of any bid updates, the Employer shall not be liable for any information not received by the bidder. It is the bidders' responsibility to verify the website for the latest information related to the tender.

6. All rates quoted by contractors shall be inclusive of all modes of leads, lifts & heights and also taxes/levies unless specified to the contrary including service tax as applicable w.e.f. 1st April, 2015 as per Government of India, Ministry of Finance (Department of Revenue) Notification No. 6/2015-Service tax dated 1st March, 2015. All the excavated/surplus earth/dismantle material/waste etc. shall be dumped at the site to be arranged by the contractor unless otherwise specified to the contrary and to the satisfaction of Engineer-in-Charge.

IN BRIEF



905 reach State on train from Delhi

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

After a gap of 60 days, the Thiruvananthapuram Central railway station turned active on Friday to receive the passengers travelling by the special train – the first from Delhi to Kerala following the lockdown. The train arrived at the station with 329 passengers at 5.10 a.m., keeping health, railway, and police officers on their toes. The health screening of the passengers lasted for three hours. Of the 329 people, one with symptoms of COVID-19 was shifted to a hospital.

Jagan releases ₹2,800 cr. for Rythu Bharosa

VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Friday released ₹2,800 crore for the implementation of the 'Rythu Bharosa-PM Kisan' scheme. It will benefit 49,43,590 farmer families. They will get ₹7,500 as first instalment of which ₹2,000, amounting to ₹3,675 crore, was credited in April. In the second instalment, ₹4,000 will be disbursed in October for rabi and ₹2,000 during Sankranti taking the total amount to ₹13,500 for five years.

Wild boar shot dead by forest officials in Ranni

PATHANAMTHITTA

For the first time in Kerala, forest officials in Ranni shot dead a wild boar, invoking the provisions in a government order in March allowing them to gun down crop-raiding wild boars declaring them as vermin. Villagers have been complaining of large-scale destruction of crops by wild boars in many parts of Ranni. A squad led by range officer J. Selin Jose fired at a herd of wild boars that were found raiding crops. A female boar of around five years was killed while the other animals escaped.

As lockdown 3.0 nears exit, no respite from cases in the South

5 patients die in Tamil Nadu; 102 new cases in Andhra Pradesh and 16 in Kerala

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Karnataka reported one more death from COVID-19 infection on Friday, taking the toll to 36.

The virus was spreading in Andhra Pradesh in spite of the lockdown, with 102 new cases confirmed in a 24-hours period ending Friday morning.

Kerala reported 16 more cases on Friday, 13 of which were imported cases and three involved local transmission.

Of the 16 new cases, seven were people who had returned from abroad and six were Keralites from other States. Three had contracted the disease through contact with known/unknown sources of infection.

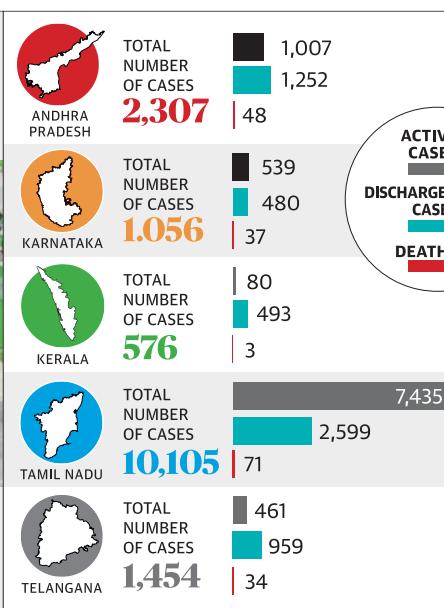
Five cases were in Way-

Awaiting their turn

With the Railways running 'Shramik Specials', many migrant labourers have opted to return to their home States.



Relief soon: Workers being temporarily housed at the Bangalore International Exhibition Centre before their travel arrangements are finalised. ■ ADITYA BHARADWAJ



in spite of the lockdown, the 102 new cases included 57 persons who contracted the virus locally and through the Koyambedu market in Chennai and 45 were migrant workers (34 from Maharashtra and 11 from Rajasthan) who had returned recently.

The State had a total of 576 cases. While 80 were currently undergoing treatment in hospitals, the maximum number, 19, was in Wayanad.

Of the 576 cases, 311 were brought in by people who returned from abroad and another 70 by non-residents from other States. Eight cases were those of foreigners and local transmission resulted in 187 cases in various districts.

The State had 48,825 persons under surveillance, of whom, 538 were isolated in hospitals and the rest on home quarantine.

102 in Andhra Pradesh

In the continuing spread of the virus in Andhra Pradesh

a week since Karnataka reported its first COVID-19 case, the State crossed the 1,000 mark on Friday, also recording the highest single-day spike of 69 cases. The total tally stood at 1,056.

In another fatality, a 52-year-old male resident of Chitaguppa town in Bidar, with travel history to Hyderabad presented with severe acute respiratory illness, and died on May 12 in Bidar. His samples returned positive on Friday.

Mysuru district, which was a cluster hotspot and in the red zone, became COVID-free with all patients recovering and being discharged, and with no mortality.

Among new cases reported on Friday, 20 were expatriates from Dubai as part of the first phase of Vande Bharat mission and 23 had a travel history to Mumbai. Among the 20 Dubai returnees, 15 were from Dakshina Kannada, five from Udupi and one from Uttara Kannada.

The surge in the number

of COVID cases continued in Telangana with 40 more persons testing positive for the virus on Friday. The number of positive cases is nearing the 1,500 mark with the number of cases touching 1,454.

However, there were no deaths during the day and the number of people succumbing to the virus stood at 34.

T.N. crosses 10,000-mark

More than two months after reporting the first case of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), Tamil Nadu's tally of COVID-19 cases breached the 10,000-mark on Friday. As another 434 persons tested positive and five more people died in the State, the total number of cases climbed to 10,105.

Chennai reported 309 cases, taking its overall tally of cases to 5,946.

Five persons, including two men in their 30s, died in Chennai and Thoothukudi.

(With inputs from Vijayawada, Hyderabad, Chennai and Bengaluru Bureaus)

Just over two months and

Centre firm on 14-day quarantine

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOCHI

The Centre on Friday submitted before the Kerala High Court that the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare had reiterated the requirement of 14-day institutional quarantine for Keralites being brought back from abroad, after considering a request of the State government for relaxing the institutional quarantine period.

A Division Bench comprising Justice Anu Sivarman and Justice M.R. Anitha had previously directed the Centre to consider the request of the State government when a few public interest litigations against the government decision to limit the institutional quarantine to seven days came up for hearing. The Centre said that pursuant to the directive, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare considered the matter and reiterated the institutional quarantine period mentioned in the standard operating procedure issued on the basis of opinion of a committee of experts.

Starting his career as a clerk in Vijaya Bank, he claimed to have accidentally turned to a life of crime in Bengaluru to protect his business, a bar and restaurant, from the underworld in the 1980s.

Fast rise

However, his rise in crime was fast. Said to be the brain behind the murder of the then reigning don of the city, M.P. Jayaraj, in 1989 – probably the first shootout linked to the Mumbai underworld here – he was associated with Dawood Ibrahim. His rise earned him enemies and he was attacked when he made an appearance in a city court in 1994.

Facing a host of criminal cases, he fled to Dubai in

Former underworld don Muthappa Rai no more

An associate of Dawood, he later became a philanthropist

K.V. ADITYA BHARADWAJ

BENGALURU

N. Muthappa Rai, 68, former underworld don who had turned to business and social activism in recent years, passed away at a city hospital early on Friday. He was suffering from cancer and had been hospitalised.

Starting his career as a clerk in Vijaya Bank, he claimed to have accidentally turned to a life of crime in Bengaluru to protect his business, a bar and restaurant, from the underworld in the 1980s.

Fast rise

However, his rise in crime was fast. Said to be the brain behind the murder of the then reigning don of the city, M.P. Jayaraj, in 1989 – probably the first shootout linked to the Mumbai underworld here – he was associated with Dawood Ibrahim. His rise earned him enemies and he was attacked when he made an appearance in a city court in 1994.

Facing a host of criminal cases, he fled to Dubai in



N. Muthappa Rai

1996. Though it was Dawood Ibrahim who helped him escape, he slowly gravitated towards the "Hindu faction" in a communally divided underworld. "This put him in good stead to turn a new leaf," said a former city police official who did not wish to be named. He was soon associated with the real estate business, as the city saw a boom in the late 1990s and 2000s.

He was arrested and extradited to Bengaluru by Dubai authorities in 2002. Rai stood trial for a total of eight cases, including the sensa-

tional murder of realtor Subbaraju, but was eventually acquitted of all charges for want of evidence. There has been no major case against him alleging any criminal activity since he returned to India after being extradited from Dubai in 2002.

In 2008, Muthappa Rai started a Kannada organisation 'Jaya Karnataka', which became his public face. Though he had ambitions to convert this organisation into a political party, that never happened. Living in a heavily guarded palatial house in Bidadi, he called himself a businessman involved in the real estate sector. He subsequently turned a philanthropist and was also elected chairperson of the Karnataka Athletics Association in 2018.

The last rites were held at his residence in Bidadi on Friday. Due to restrictions imposed to curtail the spread of COVID-19, only his family members participated.

He is survived by wife and two sons.

Kerala updates monsoon preparedness document

It stresses on four types of relief camps

TIKI RAJWI

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

As part of the preparations for the 2020 southwest monsoon season, the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) is updating its monsoon preparedness document by incorporating guidelines for tackling natural calamity-related exigencies amid the COVID-19 pandemic and also lessons learned from the 2019 floods.

The updated 'Monsoon preparedness and emergency response plan' will be published shortly. The KSDMA has shared the updated version with different government departments for their inputs. It will be discussed at a meeting to be convened by the State Relief Commissioner on May 20.

Four types of camps

Among other things, the revised version highlights the need to have four different types of relief camps/quarantining facilities under each local body and features a 101-point advisory on efficient management practices for relief camps.

Manoj Kumar has pursued his love of Yakshagana despite his handicap

RAVIPRASAD KAMILA

MANGALURU

Loss of a limb could not dilute a teenager's love of the ancient art of Yakshagana and thanks to a steely will, 17-year-old Manoj Kumar has performed on several occasions with growing confidence.

Manoj Kumar of Venoor lost his left leg when he was in Class 6, forcing him to discontinue studies for two

years. But after being fitted with a prosthetic limb, thanks to efforts of the Lions Club of Naravi, he soon returned to school.

Inspiring role model

"When in hospital I learnt about the life of dancer-cum-actor Sudha Chandran. Her life was a morale booster to me. I determined that I should become like her," he said.

CM YK

Prosthesis no bar for this stage-struck Karnataka teenager

Manoj Kumar has pursued his love of Yakshagana despite his handicap

RAVIPRASAD KAMILA

MANGALURU

When he joined Class 8 in the Government Pre-University College in Venoor, Headmaster Venkatesh M. Thulapule was teaching Yakshagana to students and Manoj joined the classes.

"Bairagi was the first role I performed in Girija Kalyana prasanga (episode) in the school," Manoj said. Outside of school, Manoj studied with Ramesh Shetty, an amateur artiste of Hayasi Balaga

of Venoor. He also started exploring opportunities as an amateur artiste with professional Yakshagana troupes with performances of several hours that lasted through the night.

Observing his interest and performance, some of the *melas* (touring troupes) gave him a chance. Since then he has been performing with Yakshagana troupes of Kateel, Sunkadakatte, Bappanadu and Manгалadevi.

"He has been performing some supporting roles with-

out any lacuna," Mr. Thulapule said. Manoj, who is now in Class 10, wants to earn a diploma in electrical servicing. "I want to remain as an amateur artiste and become an electrician," he said.

Mr. Thulapule said since the teenager has good voice, he could emerge as a good *bhagavatha* (singer-cum-director). "I have also suggested that he focus on learning the *himmela* (background music such as singing, playing *chande* and *maddale*) of Yakshagana," the teacher said.

Key conspirator in naval espionage case held

National Investigation Agency arrests Lakdawala in Mumbai

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

VISAKHAPATNAM

An alleged key conspirator in the Visakhapatnam naval espionage case, Mohammed Haroon Haji Abdul Rehman Lakdawala, 49, was arrested in Mumbai by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday.

The case relates to an international espionage racket involving individuals based in Pakistan and at different locations in India.

According to an NIA release, Pakistani spies recruited agents in India for collecting sensitive and classified information on Indian naval ships, submarines and other defence establishments.

Investigation has revealed that a few naval personnel,

some based in Visakhapatnam, had come in contact with Pakistani nationals through various social media platforms and were allegedly involved in sharing classified information for monetary gains. The money was deposited into the bank accounts of the Navy personnel through Indian associates having business interests in Pakistan.

During his visits, he came under the guise of conducting cross-border trade.

During his visits, he came in contact with two Pakistani spies – Akbar alias Ali, and Rizwan – who directed him to deposit money into the bank accounts of the Navy personnel at regular intervals through different means.

During searches at the house of Lakdawala, a number of digital devices and incriminating documents were seized by the NIA. Earlier, investigation had revealed that some Navy personnel were honey-trapped through social media.

Lakdawala was produced in a local court in Mumbai and was being brought to Vijayawada on a transit warrant.

Investigation has revealed that a few naval personnel,

Watermelons come to the rescue of migrant labourers

RAJULAPUDI SRINIVAS

NANDIGAMA

The watermelon has become the preferred food for hundreds of migrant labourers who are making a long, arduous trek back to their hometowns.



A question of quarantine

The Centre and States must have uniform requirements for travellers

As tens of thousands of people move across States, many of them migrant workers and their families travelling as unorganised groups, the Centre finds itself facing a fresh front in the campaign to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. While it was possible to shut down optional public activity and travel early on during the lockdown, those who were stranded within the country and abroad have started returning home. Only some are travelling by trains and aircraft, and the system of quarantine in the States is not uniform. The Centre, as the lockdown regulator, now has the important task of creating a consensus with the States on the quarantine modalities. Confusion surrounding quarantine for passengers who took the first relief trains from New Delhi to various cities, leading to some of them returning to the national capital, underscores the need for agreement. The response so far has been flat-footed in several States. Train passengers arriving in Bengaluru protested that they received no advance notice of institutional quarantine, although they were given an option to stay in hotels for 14 days incurring considerable expenditure. Labourers compulsorily quarantined in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar escaped from the facilities after complaining of bad conditions. In Kerala, the Centre insists on a 14-day institutional quarantine for those arriving by air, rejecting the State's proposal for seven days in a public facility and another seven at home; train passengers were given a home quarantine option. Such a lack of certitude, even as the extended lockdown is set to expire, reflects failure at building consensus.

With further easing of the lockdown, if not full withdrawal, many more will want to move within and between States, by rail and road, besides those returning from abroad. All States have to prepare for this by agreeing on the period of quarantine, and provide, as a baseline, decent and free official accommodation to anyone who wants it. There could be options, including hotels and private accommodation, at non-exploitative tariffs. Such a stratified approach is inevitable, considering that many travellers from areas with high transmission have been testing positive. For thousands of workers moving in groups by road across States, there is both the risk of infection and transmission. This is a daunting scenario as India has crossed 85,000 cases of COVID-19 and slowing the spread depends vitally on joint action. It must be pointed out that the Health Ministry, in its updated advice issued on May 10, approved home isolation for even patients with the virus, if they are deemed to be very mild to pre-symptomatic cases. This indicates a recognition of both the growing case load, the rising pressure on public facilities and the limited scope for paid quarantine. Yet, institutional capacity will have to be ramped up in the coming weeks as part of a cohesive policy.

TASMAC tribulations

TN's zeal for resuming liquor sales amid rising infection reflects its desperation for revenue

The conflict between fiscal health and public health is quite real for the States. Faced with dwindling revenue due to the stagnation in economic activity since the national lockdown began, States are desperate to raise money to combat disease spread and to keep their public health services going. It is this desperation that led Tamil Nadu to rush to the Supreme Court to obtain a stay on a Madras High Court order barring the sale of liquor through its retail stores and mandating online sales alone. The top court seems to be mindful of the need to preserve the policy space of States, reflected in its various interim orders declining to stop liquor sales. In one case, it refused a blanket stay on opening liquor shops; in another it suggested online sale and home delivery, but did not want to impose the option on any government. In TN's case, it has stayed the HC order, paving the way for resumption of sales through outlets of the State-run TASMAC. The Madras High Court initially allowed the State government to open its vast network of liquor shops, subject to several conditions for maintaining physical distancing. However, the State witnessed appalling scenes of unmanageable crowds and serpentine queues when shops re-opened on May 7. As there was overwhelming evidence that physical distancing had been given the go-by, the HC banned across-the-counter sales, and directed that only online sale be permitted.

Popular opinion in TN does not seem to favour the resumption of liquor sales at a time when the number of people testing positive for the novel coronavirus is spiralling. Even those who have no moral objection to liquor consumption would endorse regulations on physical sale, given the great danger of the infection spreading fast. TN is reeling under the effect of a cluster traced to Chennai city's huge wholesale vegetable and fruit market, with the total infection count rising in thousands in recent days. The State government's argument that the HC ought not to have interfered in a policy matter may be sound, and obviously impressed the Supreme Court. However, its claim that online sale is not possible in a State like Tamil Nadu does not really ring true. The reality is that selling liquor online would cut into the unaccounted extra fee that TASMAC staff charge for every purchase. At ₹5 to ₹10 for each sale, this amount runs into crores of rupees annually and is believed to be shared among vested interests. None can realistically discount the possibility that reopening TASMAC outlets may lead to another infection spiral. Now that it has fought bitterly, even at the cost of making a highly contentious decision, to get liquor sales going, the State government has to live up to its promise of preventing overcrowding in the vicinity of its outlets.

NEET is not student-friendly, merit-promoting

In the case of education, over-centralisation is becoming a harsh and painful reality



FAIZAN MUSTAFA

Freedom of individual development is the basis of democracy," observed the Commission (1948-49) appointed by the Government of India "to report on Indian University Education and suggest improvements and extensions that may be desirable to suit present and future". It had among its members Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and was cited by then Chief Justice of India, B.N. Kirpal, in the judgment in *T.M.A. Pai Foundation & Ors vs State Of Karnataka & Ors* (2002).

The Commission added (also cited in the *T.M.A. Pai Foundation* judgment): "Exclusive control of education by the State has been an important factor in facilitating the maintenance of totalitarian tyrannies. In such States[,], institutions of higher learning controlled and managed by governmental agencies act like mercenaries, promote the political purposes of the State, make them acceptable to an increasing number of their populations and supply them with the weapons they need. We must resist, in the interests of our own democracy, the trend towards the governmental domination of the educational process."

But these observations do not seem to have been kept in mind in a judgment this April on the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET), by a three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court, headed by Justice Arun Mishra. NEET was initially struck down as unconstitutional in *Christian Medical College, Vellore* (2013) by a 2:1 majority. In 2016, not only was a review of this judgment allowed but the dissenting judge of the 2013 judgment made NEET compulsory even prior to a full hearing

by the constitution Bench. NEET is an assault on the autonomy of universities and higher education institutions, particularly private, unaided ones. It is ironic that while in all other areas including industrial relations, the government is talking about deregulation, in the case of education, over-centralisation is becoming a harsh and painful reality. Similarly in the name of NEET or the state's power to "regulate", the rights of unaided private institutions and minority institutions cannot be violated as regulation cannot annihilate minority character. Certainly minorities do not have right to "mal-administer" their institutions yet due to admission mal-practices practised by the few institutions, denial of Article 30 rights and Article 19(g) rights of private unaided institutions is absolutely wrong.

Students disadvantaged

Is NEET really student friendly? For example, Tamil Nadu has been opposing NEET. With NEET and similar other national tests such as the Joint Entrance Examination and Common Law Admission Test, coaching institutes are prospering; since most of them are in cities, poorer students from a rural background and who have studied in the vernacular medium face a disadvantage. There is also large-scale variation in the syllabus and standards of the Central Board of Secondary Education and State boards. We cannot overlook some of the advantages a student has if there are multiple tests: if he falls ill or has not done well in one test, he will still have a chance to qualify in another without losing a year. Second, it gives a student a right to select an institution of his choice. Third, the NEET paper was leaked twice in the last four years; therefore, there is not much confidence in NEET's fairness and transparency. Finally, there is the issue of wrong translation. In the 2018 NEET, as many as 49 questions had errors in Tamil translation leading to a Madras



High Court order to award four marks for each of the 49 wrongly translated questions, or 196 marks to all 1.07 lakh candidates of Tamil Nadu. The Supreme Court overruled this order as the High Court had arbitrarily ordered giving grace marks to everyone without examining whether the student even attempted such a question.

Element of class

NEET is considered the best option as our judges genuinely think it promotes merit. But is there a consensus on what merit really means? British sociologist Michael Dunlop Young's book, *The Rise of the Meritocracy* (1958), has popularised what is called "meritocracy" though the idea really goes back to earlier times. Meritocracy requires competition and equality of opportunity. Is it not a fact that the administrators of NEET and judges do believe that the multidimensional construct of merit can be adequately, if not accurately, measured? When NEET and other such admission tests do not meet this fundamental criteria, competition cannot be termed as fair and just, and the equality of opportunity becomes illusionary. There is substantial scholarship in the West (Sacks, Freedle, Wells, Camara & Schmidt) that argues that common admission tests cannot measure abilities that are essential for learning such as imagination, curiosity and motivation. Justice Mishra did concede the point of a lack of commitment of doctors to serve in rural areas (that was a point in *Christian Medical College, Vellore*) but eventually decided in favour of NEET in the name of merit. Empirical research in the United States on standardised common tests has found that these tests are biased

against the poorer and underprivileged sections of population, women and minorities. Thus there is an element of class in NEET that the Indian judiciary has so far overlooked.

Differential treatment

Minority rights are not the violation of the equality provision in Article 14 as the Constitution does permit classification. In fact substantive equality as opposed to formal equality, mandates differential treatment. There are even hundreds of minority institutions of Hindus as linguistic minorities. The Supreme Court itself termed Article 30 as 'an article of faith' in *Lilly Kurian* (1978); a 'sacred obligation' in *Kerala Education Bill* (1957); 'the conscience of the nation' in *Ahmedabad St. Xaviers College* (1974); 'an absolute right' in *Rev. Sidhajbhai Sabhai And Others* (1962) and part of the 'basic structure' in *Kesavananda Bharati* (1973); thus minority rights were held as unamendable and inalienable.

The Court's opinion in *Kerala Education Bill*, on minority rights, has been religiously cited in all subsequent judgments (including the latest judgment on NEET) but without paying much attention to the crucial statement where there was the observation that the key words in Article 30 are 'of their own choice'. Holding 'choice' to be the dominant word, then Chief Justice Das said that 'the content of the article is as wide as the choice of the particular minority can make it'. If a minority institution wants additional qualifications over and above the NEET score, denial of such additional and superior qualifications undermines its choice. Even if one concedes the necessity of NEET, centralised counselling due to which several minority institutions and private medical colleges are unable to fill their seats is indeed an 'intolerable encroachment'. Moreover, every vacant seat is the national loss. COVID-19 has only demonstrated In-

dia's extremely poor doctor-population ratio.

Justice Mishra has rightly relied on *T.M.A. Pai Foundation*, where the Court had held that admission by the management can be by a common entrance test held by "itself or by the State/University". Moreover, it is important that here universities and state were treated on a par and an admission test by the university was considered as good as a test conducted by the State. What a 11-judge Bench really emphasised was that an admission process must be fair and transparent rather than just one test for all institutions. In *Islamic Academy of Education and Another* (2003), a five-judge Bench of the top court clarified the *T.M.A. Pai* judgment and held that institutions which have a special feature and which have been admitting only students of their own community but have a fair and transparent admission procedure for at least the last 25 years can seek an exemption from a common admission test. Certainly it is nobody's case that minority institutions can grant admission on their whims and fancies, but if such an institution follows an identifiable or reasonable methodology of admitting students, the imposition of NEET with mandatory centralised counselling is indeed an unreasonable restriction.

The Supreme Court has consistently held that Article 30 is not so absolute as to be above the law and regulations made in the true interests of efficiency of instruction, discipline, health, sanitation, morality and public order could be imposed. This is a small window and cannot be widened to take over the entire admission process as some of the smaller Benches (including the latest one) have inferred. After all, instruction, sanitation, health and discipline will come into play only after candidates are admitted.

Faizan Mustafa is an expert of constitutional law. The views expressed are personal

The pandemic and the challenge of behaviour change

A well-crafted social marketing campaign can help address the crisis and even prepare for future disease outbreaks



S.N. SRIKANTH

The COVID-19 crisis is far from over, but governments everywhere appear to have either relaxed lockdown parameters or will do so soon. The curve may have flattened, but there will be a greater risk now of being infected.

Containing COVID-19 and restoring our economies requires not just good policy decisions and medical advice; it also needs continued compliance with the recommended behavioural changes that in many ways go against social and cultural conventions. Daunting as they may seem, the drastic changes in behaviour being called for can indeed be brought about. The science of social marketing uses known marketing principles and behaviour change theory to influence people's behaviour for the benefit of both the target audience and of society. Public health, safety and environmental concerns are some of the areas where social marketing can have huge impact.

The Health Belief Model (HBM), developed by Irwin M. Rosenstock others suggests that a person's health-related behaviours ultimately stem from the desire to avoid illness. The two most important constructs of the model are: perceived benefits – the effectiveness of actions available to reduce the threat of the disease, and perceived barriers – the obstacles to

performing a recommended health action. The model also recognises the importance of "cues to action" or triggers which set in motion the process of adopting the desired behaviours. These cues, typically, are emotional, not just informative or educational. The HBM presumes that knowledge or education alone is grossly insufficient to change a person's behaviour. Cigarette sales, for example did not decline significantly for years despite the ills of smoking having been widely publicised.

The Indian example

India is one of the few countries that appears to have recognised the power of deliberately crafted emotive cues to action such as the Prime Minister's call for a voluntary "Janata Curfew", exhorting citizens to show that they care for themselves and their loved ones, and to display their patriotism. People were asked to stay indoors but, at 5 p.m., to also applaud health-care workers and others who are a part of the pandemic battle. The blend of fear, patriotism and gratitude extolled by the Prime Minister appeared to have been just the right buttons to push and people did stay indoors. Yet at 5 p.m., while many applauded from their balconies, hordes of others congregated in large groups, throwing social distancing to the winds. Fear, patriotism and gratitude, even if they were effective as "initiating" cues to action, were insufficient to sustain behaviour change and needed to be periodically rekindled. The Prime Minister later called upon citizens to switch off lights at 9 p.m. for 9 minutes on a chosen day and light

lamps to go "from darkness to hope". As is well known, the number 9 and lighting lamps are powerful positive symbols in India.

In Singapore, the government, perhaps taking a cue, supported an event, "Sing Together Singapore". People at home were encouraged to sing as well and wave a torchlight as gratitude for frontline and migrant workers.

Going back to the main constructs of the HBM, to be effective, the social marketing message would present the benefits as applying direct to the individual, not just indirectly to society at large. And, messaging about barriers should not make the change appear too difficult to engage in or make the cost of adopting the behaviours appear too high. Supportive measures should facilitate the adoption of the desired behaviour.

Here is an example to illustrate this. In the 1970s, Bangladesh undertook an ambitious family planning campaign keeping in mind the country's limited resources. Research showed that while the women were able to readily see the benefits, the men, who were the decision makers at home, could not.

The campaign became successful after social marketers decided to empower women by making female contraceptives available through women rural medical practitioners to switch off lights at 9 p.m. for 9 minutes on a chosen day and light

calls. The marketers also designed a communications programme directed at men highlighting benefits such as better health for their wives, thereby enabling them to look after their husbands and children better.

Gauging receptivity

This writer conducted informal interviews (not scientific by any means) in Chennai to gauge receptivity to recommended behaviours during the pandemic. Here are the findings in relation to some of the recommended behavioural actions and possible messaging and support measures.

Many were not quite convinced of the threat posed by asymptomatic others merely because they were close by. The perceived direct benefits of social distancing were thus moderate at best. Further, one does not have the luxury of observing physical distancing in many situations (especially in densely populated areas). Telling someone to stand away is also difficult because it could be considered rude. Hygiene instructors often ask an audience to colour their hands and then show the imprints they leave everywhere to demonstrate how germs can spread. Would a social marketing campaign that paints a picture of the virus "jumping" onto you if you are close to an infected person work? This needs to be supported by physical barriers wherever possible to supplement hand washing with soap and water.

We know that shame is a powerful disincentive to undesirable behaviour. This writer has considerable experience in projects to make villages open defecation free through the use of Community-led Total Sanitation, a technique that liberally and successfully uses "naming and shaming" to achieve its goals. It is not hard to visualise messaging that shows bystanders strongly disapproving of those who do not comply with the COVID-19 recommendations.

A well-crafted social marketing campaign would help address the COVID-19 crisis and set foundations that will help ameliorate the adverse consequences of future pandemics. Let us build policy from science in the effort to save lives and to put the local and global economies back on track.

S.N. Srikanth is Chairman and Managing Director of the Hauer-Diana Group of Companies of India

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Workers, the real India

Though the travails of migrant workers have been highlighted by the media time and again, their status remains unenviable. They went through the extreme rigours of staying away from home and suffered in silence, having been deprived of livelihoods during the lockdown period. The inhuman treatment meted out to them such as spraying disinfectants on them like cattle cannot be erased from memory. The

government needs to ensure that the free foodgrains scheme reaches bonafide beneficiaries – migrants who are still stationed in their work places. After all, they are the fulcrum of nation building, whose existential concerns should be addressed.

P.K. VARADARAJAN,
Chennai

■ The announcements for migrant workers and small farmers in the stimulus package are short on

complete succour, given the magnitude of the crisis. Many migrant workers have either reached their home towns or on their way home. They will be reluctant to go back to their workplaces out of fear of contracting infection and the great worry of an uncertain future. What they need badly apart from food security is job security. Unfortunately, some States are taking extreme steps such as diluting labour laws. The workers should be treated as equal players to

entrepreneurs in the running of the economy.

Ds. D.V.G. SANKARARAO,
Nellimarla, Andhra Pradesh

■ The ongoing crisis regarding migrant labour serves as an eye-opener to all. Walking on their own on never-ending roads, with family and belongings, shows that the real India which once used to reside in villages, has now migrated to towns and cities elsewhere. Ironically, it is not COVID-19 patients, but the journey of migrant workers that has

become the defining image of the novel coronavirus pandemic in India. The situation is powerful enough to shake our collective conscience – as a citizen and

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:
A sentence in the OpEd page article titled "It's time to give IRS officers their due" (May 14, 2020) that read – "Another [IRS officer], Sushil Chandra (in picture), became Election Commissioner and brought out a classic book on democracy in India after retirement." – is incorrect. Actually, the author of the book on democracy in India is T.S. Krishnamurthy, IRS, who became the Chief Election Commissioner.

The panel on top of the Business page (May 14, 2020), erroneously referred to Mr. Venu Srinivasan as TVS Group Chairman. It should have been Chairman, TVS Motor Company.

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as a consumer of goods made with their labour.

ANISH RANJAN,

Visakhapatnam

How a market turned into a COVID-19 hotspot

The Tamil Nadu government's decision to keep the crowded Koyambedu market open during the lockdown has proved costly. **K. Lakshmi** and **Serena Josephine M.** report on how panic buying at the market has created the State's largest COVID-19 cluster

The normally bustling Koyambedu market in Chennai, touted to be one of Asia's largest wholesale hubs for perishable goods, has come to a complete standstill. The never-ending rows of shops are empty, and an eerie silence has descended upon the sprawling area of 65 acres. The iron gates to the market are closed to prevent further spread of the novel coronavirus, but it is too little, too late. Keeping the market open till May 5 during a raging pandemic has proved costly for the Tamil Nadu government.

Instead of maintaining physical distancing, people thronged the market during the nationwide lockdown without wearing masks. As a result, the huge market complex is now the State's biggest COVID-19 cluster. With cases from the cluster spread over half of Tamil Nadu, Koyambedu has changed the State's COVID-19 trajectory. Other States too have begun to report COVID-19-positive people with a known presence at Koyambedu, or who had contact with those in the market.

Since the imposition of the nationwide lockdown, the Koyambedu wholesale complex comprising the vegetable, fruits, flowers and foodgrains market saw sudden surges in the number of visitors every time there was panic about an impending shortage of essential goods. The complex attracts about 1-2 lakh visitors on normal days. Though the number dropped by less than half during the lockdown, there was a steady flow of consumers. In addition, about 10,000 labourers involved in loading and unloading goods flocked to the market.

Rush during lockdown

T. Venkatesh (name changed), a 57-year-old merchant at Koyambedu, was among the hundreds of traders present at the market during the lockdown. "It is impossible not to mingle with people when you're at the market. I also attended meetings of traders' bodies until April-end. There was greater rush during a certain period of the lockdown," he said. A few days later, Venkatesh experienced a bout of fever and cold. "I thought it was normal sickness, but my family thought it would be better if I got tested for COVID-19. Little did I expect that I would test positive for the disease. After the result came on May 2, I was admitted to a private hospital for seven days," he said. A diabetic, Venkatesh is relieved that he recovered quickly and his family members tested negative for COVID-19.

Like him, many other traders described business during the lockdown period as abnormal. P. Sukumar settled for business on April 25 at the market after unloading produce from the vehicles. Crowds, he said, are not new to him. But what unfolded on that day, before the four-day complete lockdown in Chennai, is etched in his mind. "Normally, retail vendors from distant areas like Arakkonam, Tiruvallur and Gummidiyodipodi begin to arrive first between 2 a.m. and 3 a.m. to purchase vegetables and other goods. But on that day, people from nearby areas too started coming in early," he said. Crowds soon spilled over to the roads leading to the market. Generally, about 2,000 vehicles arrive to fetch goods from the market around 2 a.m., but on that day, it seemed like the number of vehicles had doubled, Sukumar said. Inside the market, hundreds of people without masks jostled for space to buy vegetables in bulk. Vendors estimated that the number of visitors was three or four times higher than on normal days.

For residents in the neighbourhood, the Koyambedu market is a popular choice. This is where they can purchase most of the essential goods under one roof at a nominal rate. Traders were not prepared for such an increase in the number of visitors. It is nearly impossible to control such a huge gathering in a market that is the centre of a large supply chain, they said.

Government agencies, including the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority, Greater Chennai Corporation and the Chennai police, formulated guidelines to decongest the market: they imposed restrictions on vehicle movement and visiting hours; launched mobile vegetable shops to issue passes to visitors; disallowed residents from entering the market; and roped in food aggregators to deliver vegetables and fruits. But none of these measures stopped the crowds from swelling.

Playing the blame game

Soon after the market was closed, and with the number of COVID-19 cases increasing in Tamil Nadu, the blame game for the chaos has started. Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami has blamed the vendors for not cooperating with the government. He said they refused to move to alternate sites citing business losses, despite several rounds of talks. The Opposition parties have blamed the State government for allowing the creation of this cluster.



The Koyambedu wholesale market in Chennai after it was closed on May 5 due to a sharp increase in COVID-19 cases from the cluster. (Below): People throng the market ahead of a complete four-day lockdown in the district on April 26. ■ K. PICHUMANI | M. VEDHAN



D. Rajasekaran, president of the Federation of Koyambedu Wholesale Vegetables Merchants Association, said: "Koyambedu is a large hub of perishable goods where about 90 different items are available. There are several options available now to people, but the market complex's easy access and affordable rates have always been a big draw. Selling vegetables became an alternative business for several people who were rendered jobless during the lockdown. They also started visiting the market during the early hours despite restrictions by the police."

Members of traders' associations said they cooperated with the authorities and spread awareness about COVID-19. They also distributed about 5,000 masks daily to labourers and retail vendors, they said.

Some people said lack of awareness among the labourers on COVID-19 could have caused the rapid spread of the virus. About 10,000 labourers, mainly from other districts such as Ariyalur, Cuddalore and Perambalur, were engaged for loading and unloading the produce. Many of them left the city to their native places in vegetable trucks.

Members of the traders' associations said they had been suggesting since April that the market be closed for a few days or operate on alternate days. They recalled that they withdrew the decision of closing the market on March 27 and 28 following the government's instructions. "It is disheartening to see Koyambedu vendors being solely blamed for the spread of COVID-19. We had kept the shops open to prevent shortage of essential goods and price rise. We are prepared to listen to the government's decisions in the future," said Rajasekaran.

The emergence of a cluster

By May 15, Tamil Nadu recorded 10,108 COVID-19 cases, a figure inflated by cases from the Koyambedu market cluster. The number of cases began to increase rapidly in the last week of April when vendors in Chennai started to test positive for COVID-19. Soon, the market turned into a hotspot for the virus.

By May 4, when the State's Health Department officially acknowledged the cluster in its daily bulletin, the cluster had started to grow in large propor-

tions. It spread silently but quickly to other districts of the State that were less affected by the virus. The majority of the northern districts – Chengalpattu, Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram, Cuddalore, Villupuram and Tiruvannamalai – took a hit. While western districts were spared, the central region – Ariyalur and Perambalur – that was less affected until then bore the brunt too, along with Chennai.

This was nothing like the State's first cluster. Those who attended the Tablighi Jamaat conference in New Delhi account for a little over 1,300 cases. Officials said the Koyambedu cluster could account for about 3,000 cases. The cluster's present case count is approximately 2,500-2,600.

Soon after the retail market was closed, market labourers, who until then had stayed and slept on platforms and in load vehicles, started to leave the city for their hometowns. J. Radhakrishnan, special nodal officer for COVID-19, Greater Chennai Corporation, said the government immediately began to identify and list those who went to the market. "With the cooperation of the market association, we identified 6,900 people who had gone to various districts from Koyambedu, and another 1,300 in Chennai. We quarantined all of them, checked them for symptoms, and tested them," he said.

Noting that contact tracing was very strong, T.S. Selvavinayagam, director of public health and preventive medicine, said they had tracked most of the people who had returned from Koyambedu. Most of them had gone to Ariyalur, Cuddalore and Villupuram. With targeted testing on, officials began to test the samples of all those linked to the Koyambedu market in Chennai and other districts.

However, all this dealt a heavy blow to the ongoing containment measures, and posed many challenges too. "We immediately knew that the Tablighi Jamaat cluster had a new replacement. The Koyambedu market was conducive for disease transmission," an official said. "The labourers, who until then had made the market their home, started to leave the city in groups and in whichever vehicle they managed to get. What we wanted to do is trace them and their contacts as early and as fast as possible. The aim was to track all of them

but the challenge was that the majority were asymptomatic. However, the response from the people was encouraging. They self-reported and gave details on how many days they had worked in the market," he said.

All districts that had business relations with Koyambedu were affected, said K.S. Kandasamy, Collector of Tiruvannamalai, a district that is 185-190 kilometres away from Koyambedu. "Earlier, 300-500 people used to arrive in Tiruvannamalai from Chennai. At the time we had about seven positive cases a day. Now, on an average, we receive 50 people and one-third of them test positive for the infection. Most of them are natives of Tiruvannamalai but reside in the city for work. They are from areas such as Pulanthope, Pallavaram and Tambaram and are somehow linked to the Koyambedu market. They worked in tea stalls near the market, or sold produce in pushcarts. With Chennai turning into a hotspot, many are returning to their hometowns," he said.

Along with Chennai, the neighbouring districts of Tiruvallur and Chengalpattu continue to report a significant number of cases linked to Koyambedu. Shopkeepers and vendors travelled in vehicles from these districts to Koyambedu and purchased vegetables. They got infected and so did their contacts.

In one area, a vendor who travelled in a share auto to purchase vegetables from Koyambedu spread the infection to 25-30 others. Such was the magnitude of the cluster, officials said.

Maintain distancing, wear masks

"The point is you have to imagine what can go wrong," said T. Jacob John, virologist and retired professor of virology, Christian Medical College, Vellore. "Only imagination can tell you what will happen if you keep the Koyambedu market open with the lockdown hanging over your head till May 17. People will tend to hoard. This should have been imagined ahead of time. This lack of imagination is helping the virus," he said. He added that if the government wanted the market to function, it should have organised it in a better way and insisted that everyone wear masks. "In other words, if everyone wears masks, that is equal to imposing a lockdown or is even better than a lockdown. The lockdown is to prevent the asymptomatic infected from infecting others. The minimum distance between two persons should be six feet. If you expect people to assemble in spite of Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, then insist they wear a mask. Then it would be less of a problem. But they did not imagine that people would crowd like this. The damage is done, and there is hardly anything that they can do except contact tracing and quarantining," he said. "If you want to control the speed of infection, diagnose and test mild and moderate cases. If this is done regularly by RT-PCR, we will find more people than through contact tracing."

The lockdown, Professor John said, has not worked very well because it has not been taken seriously by a lot of people. "It has been extremely leaky. It is proven by the fact that the number of cases is going up by leaps and bounds despite the lockdown. People are not taking the lockdown seriously, nor are they wearing masks," he said.

Jayaprakash Mulyil, epidemiologist and former principal of Christian Medical College, Vellore, said one of the most important risk factors for the spread of COVID-19 is the average distance between two human beings. "This is the most important principle. The moment you have crowding, this principle is violated. Whatever you do, you should not allow crowding to happen," he said. "When we have a complete lockdown in the middle of a lockdown, people will buy a lot. So decisions have to be carefully made. You can warn people in advance."

What can crowding do? "Reducing the duration of shopping for vegetables is not a good idea as people tend to rush to buy vegetables. Do everything to prevent crowding," Dr. Mulyil said. "With every decision you make, ask the question, can you increase or decrease crowding? The question is not how long a person spends inside the house. The question is, how often does a person have to get into a crowd?" For instance, a person can spend 23 and a half hours inside the house and then stand in a crowd for half an hour and get infected. "The idea to keep people at home is to avoid crowding. We have succeeded in keeping people at home but all of them come together in shops. Spacing individuals and allowing enough time for them to shop is important. Crowds gather-

er because we do not give enough time to people. This was the problem," Dr. Mulyil said.

"The word cluster came into the COVID-19 story when it was initially said that this virus is imported, and there were a few people around that imported case. That is a containable cluster. The meaning of the word cluster is lost when community transmission starts. That means there are clusters all over the place. Earlier clusters were named so that we can contain the area but we cannot contain 1,000 clusters. This virus is highly transmissible. And it does so without any clinical manifestation," he said.

Managing a market

Management of the Koyambedu market has been a big challenge during the pandemic, said officials of the Market Management Committee and Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority. It is a complex area as various segments are situated in the same place. Shops are closely located. When it was set up in 1996, no one would have designed the market keeping in mind physical distancing or a pandemic, said an official. "We had been talking to the representatives of traders associations about shifting the market for many days. But people continued to visit the market despite the police prohibiting them," the official added.

Since May 10, wholesale merchants are trading at the Thirumazhisai market where space has been allotted for about 200 shops. Individual consumers are not allowed. Business hours are restricted from early morning till 8.30 a.m.

D. Karthikeyan, Member Secretary, Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority, said creating a temporary market in a vacant space in a short time was a challenge. "We are taking a cautious approach so that people don't congregate. Entry to the market has been restricted and screening of vehicles is being done," he said.

The growing cluster points to the need for better planning. A. Srivathsan, Professor, CEPT University, Ahmedabad, said unlike shopping malls, there were compulsions to have the Koyambedu market opened to prevent shortage of essential commodities. However, the decision to shift the market to alternate spaces like Madhavarajam and build temporary markets like in Thirumazhisai could have been thought of earlier, he said. "Sometimes, there is a tendency to overlook some issues in an emergency response. There is nothing wrong in admitting an oversight," he said.

Even without a pandemic, having a market in one large unit is a problem in a rapidly expanding city. "Given the population distribution, a polycentric model is needed in the way we distribute urban amenities. Sanitary inspections were important in the early 20th century. In places like Doveton, market licences were cancelled if there was poor sanitation," he said. "We must come up with more locations for markets, and design and maintain them well post-pandemic. A well-designed market goes a long way in the maintenance of hygiene, irrespective of its size. It needs to be designed keeping in mind not just crowd movement and the convenience of people but also health and sanitation."

Can the concept of goods distribution be sustained in the post-COVID-19 scenario? Urban Design Collective, a Chennai-based collaborative platform of architects, urban designers and planners, has studied how Chennai's Koyambedu and Tirunelveli have coped with the pandemic. Vidhya Mohankumar, architect, urban designer and founder of Urban Design Collective, said, "Our team found that some new ways were adopted to get fresh produce. In Tirunelveli, residents grouped to buy produce on a rotational basis to reduce the number of individual trips to the market."

The team has come up with a model that can be followed post-COVID-19 for distribution in Tirunelveli. Cooperatives for neighbourhood shops and small food enterprises can be formed with a few business owners, they said. One of them can procure goods at the market for the cooperative and reduce crowding at the market.

However, in a major city like Chennai, intermediate delivery service providers would also be appropriate. Residents and vendors can sign up with aggregators who can pick up and deliver supplies. "We must think of multiple ways to become a food-smart city. We can have rooftop gardens in many buildings, including commercial ones. The State government can form 'community thottams (gardens)' at unused land parcels or open space reservation lands at the ward level to grow organic food," said Mohankumar.

Clearly, more than one solution has to be employed with foresight and imagination, so that crises of this scale are avoided in future, even if the Koyambedu market were to get back to regular functioning.



FROM PAGE ONE

New law to push contract farming

Asked how the Centre could enact a law on agricultural marketing, which remains on the State list, the Minister pointed out that inter-State trade falls in the central list.

She added that plans were underway to bring in a facilitative legal framework to oversee contract farming, which would provide farmers with assured sale prices and quantities even before the crop is sown and also allow private players to invest in inputs and technology in the agricultural sector.

Agricultural economist and ICRER professor Ashok Gulati, who has been advocating these reforms for many years, was elated by the announcement. "These are big, bold steps in the right direction which will benefit both farmers and consumers. This is long overdue and should have been done in Modi's first term, but certainly the government deserves compliments for converting a crisis into an opportunity," he said, noting

Lockdown likely to be extended till May 30

Malls would continue to remain shut. "Trains will continue to operate on the current model, only allowed on special routes. It will not be a free for all," said the official.

The issue of migrants walking on the road is a big issue. The States have been asked to utilise around ₹1,092 crore released to them under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) for their welfare," the official noted.

The green zones are districts with either zero confirmed cases till date, or no confirmed case in the last 21 days.

India surpasses China's COVID-19 tally

The 15th meeting of the high-level Group of Ministers (GoM) on COVID-19 was held at Nirman Bhawan on Friday and the group was informed that there are 30 municipal areas which account for 79% of India's case load.

It was also informed that domestic manufacturers has reached the production capacity of nearly 3 lakh PPEs per day and about 3 lakh N-95 masks per day, which is sufficient to meet the requirement of the country in the near future. "In addition, manufacturing of ventilators by domestic manufacturers has also started and orders have been placed," the release said.

Meanwhile, amid rising cases of COVID-19 and as countries in WHO South-East Asia.

Monsoon will arrive on June 5, says IMD

Hereon, the monsoon typically takes 10-11 days to reach the Kerala coast. G.P. Sharma, vice president, meteorology, Skymet, said the cyclone will not hamper this routine progress and that the early onset of monsoon in the A&N Islands will therefore bring the monsoon early over Kerala.

The IMD too expects the monsoon to reach the islands by the weekend. Below-normal summer temperatures in north India and prevailing rainfall from Western Disturbances will delay the monsoon's further progress to Kerala. WD are rainbearing systems that originate in the Mediterranean regions and bring rain to north India.

"In the last two months, WD activity has been heightened. This has lowered temperatures and isn't helping the monsoon to establish," D.S. Pai, Head, Climate Services, National Climate

ing that some of these reforms have been under discussion for two decades.

"It is very smart to push these through at this time. At present, no one can say anything in a crisis," he added, pointing out that *mandi* closures during the lockdown had highlighted the urgent need for multiple channels to sell produce.

'Need-based relief'

Fellow agricultural economist Sudha Narayanan, who teaches at the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, was however, more sceptical of the government's reform push.

"This is the time for relief, which should have been prioritised over reform. Yes, reforms are important and we can learn lessons about them during the crisis, but they should not take the attention away from the impact of the crisis. There is an urgent need to map farmers' current needs and provide relief," she said.

₹1 lakh crore farm infra fund to be financed by NABARD: FM

Farmers seek immediate relief for supply chain disruptions due to lockdown

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

With supply chain disruptions during COVID-19 revealing critical gaps in agricultural infrastructure and logistics systems, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced plans for a ₹1 lakh crore farm infrastructure fund as part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan stimulus package on Friday.

The third tranche of the stimulus package also included plans to strengthen infrastructure in food processing, fisheries, animal husbandry, horticulture, herbal cultivation and bee-keeping with a total funding of ₹50,000 crore, including funds allocated earlier in the budget.

The ₹1 lakh crore Agriculture Infrastructure Fund will be financed and managed by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), the Finance Minister said. Financing will be provided



Big plans: Nirmala Sitharaman and Anurag Thakur speaking in New Delhi on Friday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

to primary agriculture cooperative societies, farmer producer organisations, agriculture entrepreneurs and start-ups to develop cold chain storage and other post-harvest management infrastructure at the farm gate and aggregation points.

"These are good measures, but everything is in the future tense. In the present crisis, farmers are facing huge losses. What is desperately needed now is some immediate compensation rather than funds which will

only have future impact," said Ramandeep Singh Mann, a farmer and activist based in the Punjab-Haryana area.

"The government talks about supply chain disruptions and promises improvements. But they could have just taken over transport and storage facilities during the COVID-19 crisis to help farmers," said S. Kannaiyan, a Tamil Nadu-based farmer and activist who was forced to throw away a portion of his cabbage crop and sell the

rest at a loss due to the lockdown.

The focus hitherto has been on short term crop loans while investment in long term agriculture infrastructure has often not been enough, said Ms. Sitharaman. "The underlying principle is to empower the people, give them resources so that they can produce for themselves and have livelihoods for themselves rather than going for entitlements," she added.

This rationale drives the plan for a ₹10,000 crore scheme to support two lakh micro-food processing enterprises, providing technical support to reach FSSAI health and safety standards, build brands and marketing.

The National Medicinal Plants Board will spend ₹4,000 crore on herbal cultivation over 10 lakh hectares with a special focus on an 800 hectare corridor of medicinal plants on the banks of the Ganga.

Govt. insensitive to farmers, says Congress 'PM, Finance Minister must apologise'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Accusing the Modi government of being "insensitive" towards farmers, the Congress on Friday demanded an apology from the Prime Minister and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for giving a raw deal in the COVID-19 economic package.

While former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram, on Twitter, claimed that Friday's tranche of announcements had zero allocation, former Union Minister Jairam Ramesh said the latest announcements were a "repackaging and remarketing" exercise of what was announced in the Union Budget earlier.

"In our estimate, the fiscal stimulus part of the 2nd tranche of announcements was ₹5,000 crore. Most analysts agree. In today's tranche it is close to zero. Even the FM declined to answer how many of the amounts mentioned today were already part of the Expenditure Budget and how many are additional sums of money," Mr. Chidambaram said.

"Madam Finance Minister, One simple question. What is the ADDITIONAL cash you are putting into the system over the next 6 months? The announcements you made today are mostly contained in your budget presented on Feb 1. Another case of repackaging and remarketing," Mr. Ramesh tweeted.

"Will FM please shed light on basics of 'atmanirbhar arthastra'? On Feb 1 2020 she projected Centre's expenditure at ₹30.42 lakh crore for year 2020/21. Now with 'atmanirbhar bharat'



package what is the REVISIED expenditure figure for 2020/21? Everything else is dramabaaazi," he added.

'Empty promise'

Addressing an online press conference, Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said the ₹20-lakh crore package had proved to be a *jumla* [empty rhetoric] package and reflected the 'voodoo economics' followed by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Surjewala claimed that farmers lost ₹21,000 crore through distress sale of wheat far below the minimum support price (MSP) and an equal amount through other crops like chana, mustard and lentils, while another ₹10,000 crore was lost through distress sale of vegetables and fruits. "Neither farmers nor farm labourers will benefit from these *jumla* announcements of the Finance Minister. Today, farmers and farm workers are frustrated and disappointed," he said.

"One thing is absolutely clear that the so-called ₹20-lakh crore economic package has proved to be a *jumla* package. It reflects the 'voodoo' economics being followed by the PM and the FM," he said.

IPI condemns 'intimidation' of journalists

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The International Press Institute (IPI) has condemned the recent turn of events in India, expressing "grave concern over the misuse of the law by authorities... to intimidate journalists and curtail press freedom".

The statement comes in the backdrop of sedition charges filed by the Gujarat government against Dhaval Patel for writing an article about the possibility of a leadership change in the State owing to the increase in COVID-19 cases.

In Delhi, Mahender Singh Manral, a correspondent of *The Indian Express*, was summoned for questioning by the police for a report on the police investigation into the possibility that an audio clip of Tablighi Jamaat leader Maulana Saad Khan had been doctored. In Himachal Pradesh, 10 cases have been registered against 6 journalists for reporting on the misery caused by the lockdown.

Stifling freedom' "The Indian government has resorted to various tactics to prevent independent media from criticising the government and reporting about the pandemic. In a blatant attempt to stifle press freedom, on March 31, the government unsuccessfully petitioned the country's Supreme Court to bar the media from publishing information about COVID-19 that had not been cleared by the government," the IPI said.

The High Court had found that the procedure adopted for counting of votes was "against the orders of the Election Commission of India (ECI)" and illegal.

It concluded that Mr. Chudasama indulged in "corrupt practice" under the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

Coast Guard ship count hits 150

Defence Minister commissions ICGS Sachet and two interceptor boats

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

A ship and two interceptor boats (IB) were commissioned into the Coast Guard in Goa via videoconference from the national capital by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday. This marks a landmark for the force; it now has 150 ships and boats and 62 aircraft.

"The ships, on joining the fleet, will be deployed extensively for Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surveillance, coastal security and other duties as enshrined in the Coast Guard charter of duties, to safeguard the maritime interests of the nation," the Coast Guard said.

Ship ICGS Sachet is the first in a series of five offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) being built by the Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL). The IBs, C-450 and C-451, are de-



ICGS Sachet is the first in a series of five patrol vessels being built by the Goa Shipyard Ltd. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

signed & built by the Larsen & Toubro Shipyard, Hazira. The 30-metre long boats are capable of achieving speeds in excess of 45 knots and designed for high-speed interception, close patrol and low intensity operations.

The 105-metre long ICGS Sachet displaces approxi-

mately 2,350 tons and is propelled by two 9,100 kW diesel engines designed to attain a maximum speed of 26 knots, with an endurance of 6,000 nautical miles. It is designed to carry a twin-engine helicopter and four high-speed boats and one inflatable boat for swift board-

J&K COVID-19 tally crosses 1,000 with 30 fresh cases

Srinagar tops with 153 cases; Anantnag follows with 145

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR

Thirty new COVID-19 cases, nine from the Jammu division and 21 from the Kashmir division, were reported on Friday. The total number of cases in Jammu and Kashmir has gone up to 1,013.

An official said Srinagar topped the list with 153 cases, followed by Anantnag with 145 cases. In the Chenab Valley's Kishtwar, only one case has been detected so far.

Of the 1,013 cases, 489 are active cases and 513 have recovered and 11 have died, officials said.

Clashes over prayers

Another official said the administration had evacuated 49,218 people through Lakhanpur and brought back 7,264 persons by special trains at Jammu and Udhampur.



At home: Kashmiris, who were stranded in different parts of the country, arriving in Srinagar on Friday. ■ PTI

pur till May 15.

A clash broke out between locals and security forces in south Kashmir's Pulwama against the ban on Friday prayers during the lockdown.

Eyewitnesses said a group of youth clashed with the forces manning the streets in the Rohimoo area after an

attempt to offer prayers at the mosque was foiled.

The locals, according to the eyewitnesses, were demanding that they be allowed to offer congregational prayers at mosques.

Eyewitnesses said a group of youth clashed with the forces manning the streets in the Rohimoo area after an

SC stays decision on Chudasama's election

Gujarat HC had nullified the 2017 poll

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday stayed a decision of the Gujarat High Court which nullified the 2017 election law and education minister Bhupendrasinh Chudasama on grounds of malpractice and manipulation.

The High Court had held that the Returning Officer "illegally rejected" 429 postal ballots during the counting of votes, while the victory margin was only 327.

Congress candidate Ashwin Rathod had challenged his Bharatiya Janata Party rival's victory from Dhola constituency by a margin of mere 327 votes in the 2017 Gujarat Assembly polls.

A Bench of Justices M. Shantanagoudar and R. Subrahmanyam, conducting the hearing through video conferencing, issued notice on Mr. Chudasama's plea and sought response from Mr.

Rathod and other parties in the case.

Seeking a stay order, Mr. Chudasama had said the High Court committed an error. The Minister had submitted that the High Court had not appreciated that Mr. Rathod did not have any reliable and cogent evidence to prove any of the issues. Therefore, Mr. Rathod was not entitled to be declared as duly elected candidate from "58- Dholakia Constituency" for the Gujarat State Assembly Elections on December 14, 2017.

The High Court had found that the procedure adopted for counting of votes was "against the orders of the Election Commission of India (ECI)" and illegal.

It concluded that Mr. Chudasama indulged in "corrupt practice" under the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

Unions to protest against changes to labour laws

Representation to be sent to ILO

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Ten central trade unions said on Friday that it would stage a nationwide protest on May 22 against the changes in labour laws in several States.

In a joint statement, the unions said they would also send a representation to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on the "violations being committed by the Government of India in regard to all the international commitments to labour standards and human rights".

"Taking shelter under the umbrella of the COVID-19 pandemic, every day the government is taking one or the other decision to attack the working class and the common people... who are already in deep distress and miseries in the midst of the lockdown...", it said.

Universal screening began on March 4

RTI reply says screening for passengers from China, Hong Kong started on Jan. 17

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Universal screening for all international passengers at 30 airports across India started on March 4. Over 15.24 lakh passengers were screened for Covid-19 symptoms between January 15 and March 23, according to an RTI reply from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

On March 15, the Prime Minister's Office had said in a tweet: "We started screening entry into India from mid-January itself, while also gradually increasing restrictions on travel. The step-by-step approach has helped avoid panic: PM @narendramodi



Early action: Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata airports had started screening of travellers by January 17. ■ B. VELANKANNI RAJ

#SAARCfightsCorona."

Air travel in India was suspended on March 23, two days before the first phase of lockdown started in the country.

Initially, scheduled inter-

'Small, private entities in danger'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday asked the government not to resort to any coercive action against private companies who had not paid their workers full wages during the lockdown in accordance with a government order in March.

A three-judge Bench led by Justice L. Nageswara Rao indicated that payment of full wages, as directed by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in an order on March 29, may not be viable for small and private enterprises, which are tottering on the brink of insolvency due to the lockdown. The court remarked that the March 29 order was an omnibus one



Bid for survival: The petitions said the direction to pay full salaries against no work was violative of Article 14. ■ AFP

and there were several issues involved that required careful reconsideration from the government.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta sought time to file a detailed response. The court scheduled a hearing for next week.

The hearing was based on a batch of petitions filed by several companies challenging the constitutional validity of the March 29 order

which mandates that industry, shops and commercial establishments, without exception, pay their workers without any deductions in the name of COVID-19.

The petitions said a blanket direction from the government to private establishments to pay full salaries against no work was arbitrary and violative of Article 14 (Right to Equality) of the Constitution.

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

Nagreeka, engaged in manufacture and export of cotton yarns, fabric and textiles, said stoppage of operations had led to losses to the tune of ₹1.50 crore.

Separate petitions have also been filed by MSMEs, saying that they are forced into insolvency.

Can't stop migrants from walking home, says SC

The onus is on the government: Bench

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday said it could not be expected to stop migrants from taking the hard and, for many, life-threatening option of trekking thousands of miles to their villages amid the lockdown.

The application has been forwarded to the Ministry of Civil Aviation for providing details to the applicant.

The RTI reply said that on January 17, the screening of passengers coming from China and Hong Kong had started at the airports in Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata, while January 21 onwards, it was done at four more airports in Chennai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Cochin.

hearing through video conference.

The hearing was based on a petition by advocate Alak Alok Srivastava, who referred to recent incidents of migrants journeying home on their own getting killed on highways. He also referred to the incident where 16 migrants, sleeping on a railway track, were mowed down by a train. The court said it could not pass orders on applications based on news reports; the States ought to act.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta said transport would be provided to all so that they can reach their homes.

No contradiction over new Lipulekh Pass road'
Face-offs unrelated, says Army chief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

There is no "contradiction at all" in the new road constructed through the Lipulekh Pass up to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) to shorten travel time for the Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage, and Nepal may have raised the issue "at the behest of someone else," Army chief Gen. Manoj Naravane said on Friday, without naming any country.

Nepal has protested against the road and called on India to "refrain from carrying out any activity inside the territory of Nepal".

In fact, the Nepalese Ambassador has mentioned that the area east of the Kali river belongs to them. There is no dispute in that whatsoever.

The road which we have made is, in fact, to the west of the river. So I don't know what they are actually agitating about. There are little issues as we go ahead as to exactly where the tri-junction [India-China-Nepal] should be. There has never been any problem on this score in the past," Gen. Naravane said in response to a question at a webinar organised by a Defence Ministry think tank. "There is a reason to believe that they might have raised the issue at the behest of someone else, and that is very much a possibility," he said.

Normally there are 250-300 moves per year. And each move costs ₹1 crore," he said. Units involved in high-altitude postings and counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism had to move but some peace-time movements could be avoided, he said. "We have identified 100 such moves that can be deferred."

He said for major exercises, troops and formations moved to Rajasthan, which could also be avoided for a year without affecting operational performance.

The 80 km road built by the Border Roads Organisa-

+ Supreme Court cuts summer vacation short

Aarogya Setu app must for Srinagar govt. staff

'Move aimed at stopping transmission'

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Deputy Commissioner-Srinagar Dr. Shahid Iqbal Chowdhary has directed Drawing and Disbursing Officers (DDOs) to obtain a certificate that they had downloaded the Aarogya Setu app before the release of salary to all employees, with the effect that all government employees working under his administrative control have installed the app on their mobile phones.

J&K Chief Secretary B.V.R. Subrahmanyam had on April 14 issued guidelines for all red zones in the Union Territory and called for their mapping, including on the size of habitations, geographic distribution of COVID-19 cases, proximity to other habitations, accessibility, geographical barriers and mobility. He also called for "intelligent demarcation of the boundaries of red zones".

"There will be a 100% survey and screening of all persons in the red zone. The results of survey shall be integrated with 'Aarogya Setu' as much as possible. A detailed health screening of the contacts and the survey results would be geographically mapped," the order read.

The application recently came under criticism for reasons of data security. Several employees have raised a red flag over being

forced to download the application.

"The curve is already flattening in Srinagar. The detection of COVID-19 cases is showing a downward trend because of the efforts of the disaster management team. Forcing employees to download the app is a violation of privacy rights. There are genuine fears that the app can access mobile data too," a senior employee said.

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'A self-reliant India will not be isolationist'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A self-reliant India will automatically be a more "internationalist" India as it does not seek self-centred or "isolationist" arrangements, Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said on Friday.

His comments came days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi pitched to make India self-reliant by sustained focus on making the nation's economy globally competitive.

In an address at the National Defence College, Mr. Shringla said all crises alter geopolitics, and there will be significant changes too after COVID-19 blows over, such as re-balancing of hard and soft power, emergence of new multilateral conversations and change in strength of "players".

"As we remain engaged globally, we also need to become 'Atma Nirbhar' or self-reliant, to recover from the crisis," he said, adding, "We do not, however, seek self-centred or isolationist arrangements when we speak of self-reliance. A self-reliant India will automatically be a more internationalist India."

The application recently came under criticism for reasons of data security. Several employees have raised a red flag over being

All India Council for Technical Education

(A STATUTORY BODY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA)
Nelson Mandela Marg, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi - 110070
Ph. No.: 011-26131578, 011-26131580, 011-29581000
Website: www.aicte-india.org

PUBLIC NOTICE FOR CATEGORIZATION OF STANDALONE INSTITUTIONS FOR GRANT OF GRADED AUTONOMY

AICTE invites applications from Standalone Institutions offering PG Diploma courses in Management for the grant of Graded Autonomy from the Academic Year 2020-21. The Institutions who are eligible as per the Gazette Notifications, F.No. AICTE/P&AP/Sls/2019 shall apply in the format available on www.aicte-india.org/approval/graded_autonomy.

The last date for submission of online application is 30-05-2020.

All applicants are requested to read carefully and thoroughly the All India Council for Technical Education (Categorization of Standalone Institutions for Grant of Graded Autonomy) Guidelines, 2019 before submitting online application on AICTE Web Portal.

Advt. No: Approval/05(01)/2020 Member Secretary, AICTE

+

Raman Anusandhan Sansthan / RAMAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE

वैद्युत - 560 080. / Bangalore - 560 080.

दिनांक : 13 मई 2020 Date : 13th May 2020

निदेशक पद के विज्ञापन के लिए शुद्धिपत्र

Corrigendum to Advertisement for the Post of Director

प्रशासनिक कारोबारों से रामन अनुसंधान संस्थान के निदेशक पद के लिए दिनांक 8 अप्रैल 2020 के विज्ञापन के संदर्भ में ईमेल / ड्राफ्ट के माध्यम से आवेदन प्राप्त करने की अंतिम तिथि 10 जून 2020 तक बढ़ाया जाता है।

The Last date for receipt of applications through e-mail / post for the post of Director, Raman Research Institute, against the Advertisement Dtd. 08th April 2020 is extended upto 10th June 2020 due to Administrative reasons.

प्रशासनिक अधिकारी (प्रभारी) / Administrative Officer (I/C)

IISER

Indian Institute of Science Education and Research Berhampur
Established by the Ministry of HRD, Govt. of India

Advt. No. NT-01/20 Date: May 16, 2020

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S. No.	Name of the Post	Pay Level	Number of Post	Mode of recruitment
1.	Superintendent Engineer (Group A)	13	01 Unreserved	Direct Recruitment/ Deputation basis as per TD/T orders in vogue and on annual performance-based assessment process.
2.	Junior Translator (Group B)	06	01 Unreserved	Direct Recruitment
3.	Office Assistant (Multi Skill) Group C	05	01 Unreserved	Direct Recruitment

Commencement of Online application is on May 22, 2020 at 09.00 AM. Last date for submission of online application will be till 05.30 pm on June 11, 2020. Last date for receipt of hard copy of online-submitted application form by 05.30 pm on June 22, 2020. For details visit <https://www.iiserpr.ac.in/Careers > Staff Positions>.

BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE

Office of the Executive Engineer (Project-East),
Nethaji Subhash Chandra Bose Building, 21st Floor,
(PUB), Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bengaluru-560001

No.: EE (P-E)/TEND/1/2020-21 Date: 15.05.2020

INVITATION FOR TENDER (IFT)

(TWO COVER SYSTEM) (Short Term Tender Notification)

(Standard Tender Documents-KW-3)

(Through GOK e-Procurement Portal Only)

The Executive Engineer, Project East, BBMP invites tenders on behalf of the Commissioner, BBMP, Bengaluru from eligible tenderers for the construction of works detailed in the table below.

SL. No.	Name of the Work	Approx. Amt. Put to tender (Rs. in Lakh)	EMD (Rs. in Lakh)
1.	Improvements and Developments of Raghuvana Park and other development works in Ward No. 19, Sanjaynagar.	100.00	2.00
2.	Improvements and Developments of Central Exchange Layout Park and other development works in Ward No. 19, Sajaynagar.	100.00	2.00
3.	Improvements and Developments of Parks and other works in Hebbal in Ward No. 21.	100.00	2.00

U.S. envoy calls out COVID-19-related rhetoric in India

Prime Minister Modi's messages for unity come in for praise

SIRIRAM LAKSHMAN

The U.S. envoy for 'International Religious Freedom', Sam Brownback, called out COVID-19 related rhetoric and harassment in India – especially against Muslims, while also praising Prime Minister Modi's messages for unity.

"In India, we've seen reports of unfortunate COVID-related rhetoric and harassment, particularly against the Muslim community. This has been exacerbated by fake news reports, misinformation being shared via social media. There have also been instances of Muslims being attacked for allegedly spreading the coronavirus," Mr. Brownback said to reporters on Thursday during a telephone briefing about COVID-19's impact on religious

minorities. "Now, I've been encouraged and we've been encouraged by statements from senior Indian officials really urging a unity, and noting the Prime Minister stated even that COVID does not see religion, language, or borders, which is certainly true," he said.

USCIRF classification
Mr. Brownback's comments come weeks after the U.S. International Commission for Religious Freedom (USCIRF), an independent bipartisan commission set up by the U.S. Congress, downgraded India's religious freedom rating to the lowest grade.

Taking note of India's Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register for Citizens, USCIRF had recommended to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo



In India, we've seen reports of unfortunate COVID-related rhetoric and harassment, particularly against the Muslim community. This has been exacerbated by fake news reports, misinformation being shared via social media. SAM BROWNBACK, U.S. ENVOY

that India be classified as a "country of particular concern."

Asked if he believed the Indian leadership's language calling for unity was a reaction to the USCIRF designation, Mr. Brownback, on Thursday, said he did not know.

"I don't have anything particular that I'm attributing the language to, I just noted that it's positive and that's good. And I don't want to always just point to everything negative," he said.

"...the fact that the leader-

ship would say this, great USCIRF did put them out, as you noted, in that light and that got a lot of interest both here and in India, as you might guess. We will be putting our report out -- Secretary [Pompeo] will put out the report from State Department fairly soon, and then we'll -- that'll start the time clock on the Secretary's ultimate determinations on Countries of Particular Concern or watch list countries, and the USCIRF recommendation will be noted and has been noted as well. But I

don't know why they did that, but I'm glad they did," Mr. Brownback said.

Call for release

Significantly, the USCIRF also called for the release of those protesting the CAA, on Thursday.

"During #COVID19 crisis, there are reports #India govt is arresting Muslim activists protesting the #CAA, including Safoora Zargar who is pregnant," the Commission tweeted on May 14. "At this time, #India should be releasing prisoners of conscience, not targeting those practicing their democratic right to protest."

While there was no specific India reference in this context – the briefing discussed a number of countries and minorities – Mr. Brownback's remarks on Thursday began by saying that a number of countries had released prisoners of conscience, and that "some people's lives

were possibly saved by this".

Mr. Brownback also said Sikhs in Afghanistan are seeking to immigrate to safer countries, including India, in response to a question on Sikhs in Afghanistan seeking asylum in the U.S.

Appeal for asylum

Following a May 25 attack on a gurdwara in Kabul, there have been calls, including from Indian American Congressman Ro Khanna, to grant Afghan Sikhs and Hindus asylum in the U.S.

Sikh and Hindu groups in Afghanistan have also appealed to the Trump administration for asylum, *The Wall Street Journal* had reported in April.

Following a March 25 attack on a gurdwara in Kabul, there have been calls for granting Afghan Sikhs and Hindus asylum in the U.S., including from Indian American Congressman Ro Khanna of California.



Policemen in Jaipur distributing biscuit packets and slippers to migrant workers on their way to their homes in other States on Friday. • ROHIT JAIN PARAS

Rajasthan moves to deal with huge migrant influx

State govt. readies management plan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

quarantined.

"Effective quarantine was a major factor which helped contain the spread of novel coronavirus in Bhilwara, Jhunjhunu and other districts," Mr. Gehlot said.

Quarantine management committees have since been appointed from the State to the village panchayat levels.

Additional Chief Secretary, Public Works Department, Veenu Gupta, who heads the State-level committee, said most of the inmates in the quarantine centres in Nagaur district were getting food from their homes. About 19.84 lakh migrants in the State have registered for inter-State movement, and 11.14 lakh will be returning to Rajasthan.

As many as 3.62 lakh migrants have returned home, posing a big challenge of screening, sampling and enforcing quarantine.

The administration has deployed additional police and healthcare teams to ensure timely screening amid the detection of fresh COVID-19 positive cases in the districts which were either free of the virus or were on way to recovery. The highest number of 63 infected migrants have been found in Bangalore, followed by 37 in Pali and 28 in Rajsamand.

Cases in Maharashtra cross the 29,000-mark

State reported another massive surge of 1,576 new cases on Friday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUNE

Fresh COVID-19 cases continued to pile up in Maharashtra with the State reporting another massive surge of 1,576 new cases on Friday to take its total tally to 29,100, while 49 new fatalities have taken the death toll to 1,068.

Of the total cases, 21,467 were active, said State health officials.

State Health Department officials said that as many as 505 persons were discharged today, taking the cumulative number of discharged persons till date to 6,564.

As per figures, 34 of the fatalities were reported from Mumbai city to take the city's



Tough times: An isolation facility with 100 beds being readied at the Nehru Science Centre in Mumbai. • VIVEK BENDRE

High-risk cases

One death each was reported from Panvel, Jalgaon and Aurangabad city.

"65% of the deaths reported today had high-risk comorbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, asthma and heart disease," said Dr. Pra-

deep Awate, State Surveillance Officer.

Of the new cases, Mumbai city reported 933 new cases as the city's cumulative tally crossed the 17,000-case mark to touch 17,671.

Pune district's case tally, as per State health department figures, has risen to

3,482, with the district reporting more than 130 new cases today.

Besides Mumbai and Pune, the other sharp spike in cases came from parts of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), with Thane reporting 110 new cases to touch 1,491, while Navi Mum-

bai reported 64 new cases to reach a total 1,177.

Malegaon in Nashik district, the major virus hotbed in north Maharashtra, reported 14 new cases as the city's total tally reached 663 cases.

Akola reported a rise in 18 new cases to take its tally to 226.

Till date, 2,50,436 samples have been tested in Maharashtra, of which 22,1336 (more than 90%) have returned negative, while 29,100 have tested positive.

"There are 1,473 active containment zones in the State currently. Presently, 3,29,302 people across the State were in home quarantine and 16,306 persons were in institutional quarantine facilities," said Dr. Awate.

Shankarlal had to walk across the Mumbai-Ahmedabad highway as he had no money to hire a vehicle.

After he collapsed on the way, the police took him to a hospital, where he was declared dead before admission.

An accidental death case has been registered by the police.

Migrant dies on way to railway station

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

A 45-year-old migrant worker from Rajasthan, identified as Harish Chander Shankarlal, who walked 30 km to catch a Shramik Special train, collapsed and died near the Vasai Road railway station in Maharashtra, an official said on Friday.

Shankarlal had to walk

across the Mumbai-Ahmedabad highway as he had no money to hire a vehicle. After he collapsed on the way, the police took him to a hospital, where he was declared dead before admission.

Among these people, only those showing symptoms of influenza-like illness will be



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STAY HOME. STAY VIGILANT.

+ Ten deaths, 84 new cases in West Bengal

Anticipatory bail for Siddharth Varadarajan

Two FIRs against him by U.P. police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Ten more deaths due to COVID-19 infections and 84 new cases were reported from West Bengal in the past 24 hours.

The total number of people who have died after being infected by the contagious virus increased to 225, of which 151 deaths were from Kolkata alone. Of the total number of deaths, 72 were due to "comorbidities", where COVID-19 was the "incidental finding".

Of the ten deaths reported in the past 24 hours, five were from Kolkata, three from North 24 Parganas and two from Howrah. The total number of confirmed cases remains at 2,461 and active cases at 1,407.

The State's Urban Development Minister Firhad Hakim said that while the number of cases was decreasing, more cases are coming from high-rise buildings of the city.

While granting anticipatory bail to Mr. Varadarajan, Justice Chandra Dhar Singh found no merit in the State's arguments, among them that the journalist could flee India as he held an American passport.

Additional Advocate General U.P. raised objection that Mr. Varadarajan held an American passport and therefore there was a chance of him fleeing India. The government also argued that the chargesheet was filed by the police after completion of investigation and cognizance was taken on the said chargesheet by the court concerned. So, there was reasonable apprehension of arrest of the journalist in the case.

"I do not find any merit in the argument advanced by learned Additional Advocate General, as the law discussed above in several judgments clarify the situation," the court said. Mr. Varadarajan's counsel submitted that he was willing to cooperate with the investigation as well as the entire proceeding of the trial in the instant case.

On Friday, Ahmedabad crossed the 7,000 mark in the number of cases, with 261 new cases. Now, its total number of cases is 7,171, while with 14 new deaths, the total death count has risen to 479.

Notice against helping migrants sparks row

Police say the notification was issued specifically for a former legislator

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

Police in Bulandshahr triggered a row after a notice issued by a police officer threatened legal action against those offering food and water to migrant workers walking back home.

After drawing flak on social media for the notice, which was widely circulated, the district police on Friday said that while the notice was authentic, it was issued specifically to Bhagwan Sharma alias Guddu Pandit. The former Samajwadi Party MLA had repeatedly violated lockdown norms, said the police.

In the "notice" issued on May 11, the officer in-charge



Bhagwan Sharma

of the Bulandshahr City Circle outpost warned of legal action under the Epidemic Diseases Act if water and food was provided to migrants walking on the road.

No specific person was

mentioned in the notice.

The notice also accused unnamed persons of stopping the migrants outside their home and inviting them in with the "lalach" (dure) of food and water. "This violates the COVID-19 norms," said the notice.

SSP Bulandshahr Santosh Kumar Singh later clarified that the notice was issued to Mr. Sharma for repeatedly "violating lockdown and disturbing social distancing". The notice was taken out of context, he said, adding it was issued because the former legislator was gathering people at his house with the lure of food and water.

The notice was being circulated without the name of

the person in order to tarnish the image of the district police," he said.

The district police have always welcomed efforts of social workers towards providing relief to people and offered them support, he added.

The Twitter handle of the district police said four cases had been lodged against Mr. Sharma in one month for violating lockdown norms.

However, the police said action was taken against the officer in-charge because he did not mention the name of the person on the notice, "due to which certain people misused it". The officer has since been shifted to the police lines.

Back home in Uttar Pradesh, migrant workers find meagre solace in shovels

Having left behind better paying jobs, they are turning to MGNREGA works

OMAR RASHID
SITAPUR

"Chaya wala admi dhoop mein aa jaye to dikkat ho ti hai [a man used to working in the shade will feel uncomfortable under the sun]," says Nizamuddin.

Till mid-March, Mr. Nizamuddin earned his living as a tailor in Delhi's Seelampur. Depending on contracts, he could muster anything between ₹5,000 and ₹10,000 a month. However, the lockdown forced his employer to shut business, consequently leading him back home, Muda Kala village in Sitapur.

After serving the mandatory quarantine period, Mr. Nizamuddin, skilled in the

art of scissors and fine measurements, is now out with a shovel under the May sun, digging to build a pucca road. He is one of the many desperate migrant workers in Uttar Pradesh, who have taken to labour work under the MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) scheme since returning home.

'Must toil'

"When there is no work, one must learn to toil as a labourer. What will I eat otherwise?" he responded, when asked if the new job was proving tough for a tailor. With the aim of providing employment in rural

areas during the lockdown, the U.P. government is engaging labourers at a fast pace. Among these are migrant workers who have lost their livelihoods and made the perilous journey back home.

Mukesh Kumar of Jamuniya has also made the shift from packing bags in a company in Rudrapur, Uttarakhand, to digging a pond in his native village. In Uttarakhand, he took home a fixed monthly salary of ₹9,000 but the lockdown forced the unit to shut. His employer stopped paying him but offered to provide him ration, but it proved too cumbersome amid restrictions so he decided to head back home, and work with a shovel, something which the Intermediate-pass Mr. Mukesh was not accustomed to.



Field change: Labourers digging ponds in a village in Sitapur district. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

As per government sources, the State has so far engaged 27.68 lakh unskilled labourers under the MGNREGA in 46,823 gram panchayats since April 21. Of these, just 2.35 lakh persons are migrants who have recently returned to their home State.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has set officials a target of 50 lakh jobs under the MGNREGA. As the low percentage of migrants engaged in MGNREGA show, they have not really jumped into the work as of now. Officials say this is because many are still under quarantine or perhaps too exhausted from the journey to start any

gruelling physical work right away.

In Neri village, Mevalal and 90 others were busy digging a pond near an uneven patch of land surrounded by mango trees. After months without work, Mr. Mevalal, a landless Dalit who has never left his village, is relieved to be employed again. "I can at least run my house with these earnings," he said.

Slow pace

However, no migrant worker in Neri has yet joined the MGNREGA scheme. Panchayat Mitr Sunil Sharma says he is yet to receive demand for work from them. "They are not interested in working. They have just returned and probably want to rest at home with their kids," he said.

Deputy Commissioner, MGNREGA Sitapur, S.K. Srivastava said many migrants who were "skilled" and had been employed in shops and factories in other cities were not turning up. "Many people don't want to pick up the shovel," he said.

"When the situation is drastic, something must be done. Besides, there is a lot of work in the village. You just need to be willing," said Mr. Pal.

Many workers feel that they would eventually have to return to the cities as farm and rural labour might not be sustainable. But some like Jai Prakash Singh, who worked as a tailor in Gurugram and is serving his quarantine period at a school in Chadda, don't want to return.

"I was already working hard in Gurugram. Now I will do labour work here. What difference does it make?" he asked.

Mizoram man clears loans of four strangers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

A Mizoram man seeking the satisfaction of helping others has cleared the loans of four strangers who were struggling to repay because of the COVID-19 lockdown.

The man, said to have undergone the "pangs of bankruptcy once upon a time", wanted no publicity for transferring ₹9,96,365 to the State Bank of India's Aizawl branch for closing the loan accounts of the beneficiaries. "He came a few days ago and told us to select a few genuine loanees who had mortgaged their property for any business to be self-reliant. He said he wanted to help such people and had a budget of ₹10 lakh," Sheryl Vanchong, the branch's assistant general manager, said.

Centre, States spar over trains

Goyal accuses States of showing reluctance to requisition 'Shramik Specials'

SOBHANA K NAIR
YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
NEW DELHI

The 'Shramik Special' trains started by the Indian Railways to ferry stranded migrant workers are turning out to be the flashpoint between the BJP-led Union Government and Opposition-run State governments.

On Friday, Union Railway Minister Piyush Goyal accused the State governments of showing reluctance to requisition the trains, naming only the Opposition-ruled States.

"The Railways is ready to run 300 'Shramik Special' trains daily to help workers reach their homes, but I am sad that governments of some States like West Bengal, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, are not giving permissions to run these trains due to which workers have to suffer



Happy lot: Migrants going home in a special train to Howrah near the Amritsar railway station on Friday. ■ AFP

away from home," he tweeted. Till Friday morning, the Railways had run 1,000 such special trains.

All the four States immediately countered Mr. Goyal's statement.

Responding to Mr. Goyal, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said there was no permission pending for

any train with the government of Rajasthan and he had been a strong votary for running trains to allow the workers to commute. "But I am not surprised to see the statement by the Railways Minister, they are skilled in passing their failure on to the State government," he tweeted.

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren also rejected Mr. Goyal's claim, saying his government has given NOC for running 110 trains whereas only 50 trains, carrying around 60,000 migrant workers had arrived in the State.

Chattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel said the State had asked for 30 trains but had, so far, only got 14 trains. He also pointed out that the State had already paid ₹1.17 crore for the approved trains and that no other proposal was pending.

Mr. Baghel called the Railway Minister's statement "baseless and factually incorrect". He said once the 30 trains carrying the migrant workers reach, Chattisgarh will take stock of how many more persons from the State are stranded and will then ask for more trains.

Obstacle course



Safety net: A resident receiving essential items from a delivery man outside Fancy Bazar, which was sealed off for containment of COVID-19 cases, in Guwahati on Friday. ■ PTI

We have sought extension of lockdown by 2 weeks: Sonowal

Assam goes for containment, not colour-coded zones

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Assam government has sought extension of the lockdown by two more weeks, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said on Friday.

The government has also decided to mark areas where cases are detected as containment and buffer zones while continuing to regard the districts concerned as green zones. So far, 86 persons have tested positive, with 41 having recovered and two having died. One has migrated to Bihar.

"We have conveyed our stand on the need to extend the lockdown to the Centre, which had sought feedback from all the States by Friday," he told journalists.

He said the government's



cards, he said.

Mr. Sonowal said 6.5 lakh people studying, living or working outside the State had expressed their willingness to return to Assam. He said migrant workers returning to Assam would be considered a skilled force and treated as assets, not liabilities, for absorption in various sectors.

The government allowed trucks carrying livestock into the State while maintaining physical distancing. Transport of pigs remained banned because of the African swine fever that has so far killed almost 15,000 domestic pigs. A notification said the containment zones had been kept out of the purview of the permission for trucks carrying livestock.

Assam's maligned district gives humane touch to lockdown

Hindu man shelters 13 stranded Muslims from Bihar; Muslims cremate lonely Hindu woman

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

The COVID-19 lockdown has revealed the humane face of western Assam's Dhubri, a much-maligned district because of its large population of Bengali-speaking Muslims.

On Friday, Dev Kumar heaved a sigh of relief when he saw off 13 Muslim toymakers on a bus to Bihar. From Khagaria and Saharsa districts of Bihar, these 13 had been his guests since the lockdown began past March 24 midnight.

"They got permission to travel after spending all these days with us. We tried our best to make them comfortable, but they were long-



Exemplary conduct: Dev Kumar, at centre, with some Muslim toymakers from Bihar at his home in Dhubri town.

ing to return to their families especially with the Ramzan month on. I wish they reach home safely," Mr. Kumar, 55, told *The Hindu* from Dhubri town.

Mr. Kumar's great-grandfather had settled in the Nuniyapara area of Dhubri town from Jaunpur in Uttar Pradesh. He has continued with the pottery business

passed down the generations, sustaining his family of eight, including three brothers.

The Muslim toymakers come to Dhubri every year around March and stay temporarily to sell their wares at fairs across the district. Mr. Kumar provides them with raw materials such as bamboo and pottery items.

"We would have had a tough time finding for ourselves had Devji not let us stay at his house and provided us with food as well as facilitated our Ramzan prayers and Iftar," Md. Ajmal, one of the toymakers from Khagaria district, said after the bus with 19 people left for Bihar.

The other six with a different skill set stayed with another Hindu family.

A few days ago, 25 Muslim men had performed the last rites of Shanti Choudhury, a 75-year-old widow of Panbari village. There are three Hindu families in the Muslim-dominated village 20 km from Dhubri town.

"Members of her family were stranded outside Assam and could not come because of the lockdown. As neighbours, it was our responsibility to call a Hindu priest and carry her body for the ritualistic cremation," said Dilower Hussain, a local member of the All Assam Minority Students' Union.

"We have conveyed our stand on the need to extend the lockdown to the Centre, which had sought feedback from all the States by Friday," he told journalists.

He said the government's

cards, he said.

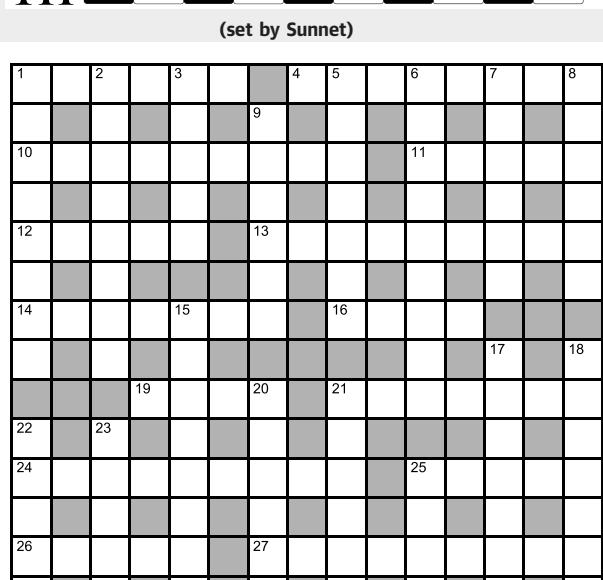
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The government allowed trucks carrying livestock into the State while maintaining physical distancing. Transport of pigs remained banned because of the African swine fever that has so far killed almost 15,000 domestic pigs. A notification said the containment zones had been kept out of the purview of the permission for trucks carrying livestock.

TH CROSSWORD + 12937

(set by Sunnet)

Are you a cryptic lover or a quick solver? Find out Now! @ <https://crossword.thehindu.com>



ACROSS

- Keep the French actors in front (6)
- Perhaps Jack's mother inhaled a spice (8)
- Cleaner city strip (9)
- Say sick and tired of panel (5)
- Uproar in the first quarter (5)
- Heavy toll obtained from Bronte's new measure (5,4)

- A little excited queen can become steady (7)
- Autocrat's automobile took the bend (4)
- Covered cold youth (4)
- Woman enters bar having English spirit (7)
- Drawing out priest before naming (9)
- Drink half the beer? Great! (5)
- Choose to raise one hand instead of the other (5)
- Rewrite it to toast artiste (9)
- Cross had to be fixed to provide means to open and close an old window (4,4)
- Requested plot had a bird originally (6)
- DOWN**
- Solid figure can be obtained by placing yule alternatively in ash (8)
- Artificial incentive to credit notes (8)
- Spoon of salad leaf (5)
- As back's mostly cut (7)
- Wrongly ban modern breed (9)
- More cruel than the average king (6)
- Centre's measure to accept financial instrument (6)
- Brewer's constant compromise to eliminate some spending (6)
- Projectile like orb is twitching (9)
- Lowering cold by jumping up and down (8)
- Red taser mauled with teeth (8)
- Quarrel between dead queen and tramp (7)
- Scarf obtained inside capital city (6)
- Middle-Eastern people confiscated the Spanish gems (6)
- Corona related viral illness spread across nine social events (6)
- Tried hard to hide some rifle's range (5)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12936

FLOW	ER	S	C	A	R	C	E	S	T
E	X	O	S	A	E	Y	E		
S	K	I	J	U	P	A	T	E	M
K	I	J	U	P	A	V	L	F	P
I	N	A	L	L	S	I	T	U	
N	A	L	L	S	I	T	U	L	
A	C	T	R	E	S	G	A	T	
C	T	R	E	S	G				



fitness

CELEBRITY TRAINERS



Vinod Channa,
VC Fitness, Mumbai
Clients: John Abraham,
Ayushmann Khurrana



Urmi Kothari,
Kinetic Living Fitness and
Wellness Boot'ique, Mumbai
Clients: Kubbra Sait,
Sumukhi Suresh, Kaneez Surka

"People who didn't have time to hit the gym are now taking virtual classes, and I charge them half price. The challenge lies not only in keeping the routine interesting, but also making it intensive and rewarding. Most people have developed body pain and stiffness owing to the hours they spend on their beds and sofas. Helping them regain their flexibility and mobility is top priority."

NUTRITION



Lovneet Batra, nutritionist, New Delhi
"Earlier, people were concerned only about weight loss and took to diets like Keto. Now they're focused on good health – immunity, hormonal imbalance and building strength. Eat lentils, seeds and nuts; coriander seeds help tackle high blood pressure; and black pepper, dry ginger and cloves for immunity. Working out at home can be strenuous. Refill yourself 30 minutes after your workout. Consume drinks that are high in protein, such as buttermilk or sattu."

SWIMMING

You can replace a kettlebell with a water can, but what about a swimming pool? "We can't recreate much," laughs Nisha Millet, director of Bengaluru-based Nisha Millet Swimming Academy. But swimming coaches are trying to work their way around this, by concentrating on other components. "Focus on maintaining your strength and a good core, especially a strong back and shoulders," says Manisha Khunger of Gurgaon's Trifitness.

Fitto, a Gurgaon sports academy that has paused operations at its pools, has started online sessions to engage its members in dry-length body weight exercises (that need minimal to no equipment). "The stamina you need for running isn't the same as for swimming. Nevertheless, these exercises will keep you active and in shape," says co-founder Saurabh Aggarwal, a triathlete.

However, with events like the Ironman announced for November in Goa, swimmers are keeping an eye out for opportunities to hit the water. Some – such as Khunger's clients who are in lockdown in Goa – are making the most of open water bodies. "Open water swimming is good because of the lack of contact with other swimmers," says coach Nisha Madgavkar, who won



■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

the 2019 Ironman (40-44 age group). "But you need to get acclimated to the sea first, maybe for a day or two." Millet, on the other hand, is not a big fan. "It is quite a dangerous environment," she says, adding, "You need to teach swimmers the skills in a pool and simulate the condition through exercises – like making four people swim in the same lane so that they bang into each other, because in open water you can't swim straight."

Pick of the week

Concerts, stand-up and other online events you just can't miss. The event preview and calendar will resume in a few weeks.



Language of dance



Virtual anniversary bash



Keeping kids busy



Choose an adventure



Curtains up



A trip Down Under



#LockdownWithWeekend

Catch the digital premiere of *The Unseen Sequence - Exploring Bharatanatyam through the art of Malavika Sarukka* on YouTube today at 9 pm. The 98-minute biographical documentary, written and directed by Sumantra Ghosal, was first released in 2013. It traces the artiste's journey, deliberating the valuable connections and departures that she makes from a hallowed, and often unforgiving, tradition. Streaming till Wednesday, May 20, 9 pm on Aalaap Concept's YouTube channel.

This weekend, tune in to *The Park Chennai*'s social media pages to celebrate their 18th anniversary. Tonight, DJ Ryan Nogar from Goa will spin commercial music on the Pasha Facebook page from 9 pm to 10 pm. On Sunday, indie artiste Varshini Susana Kurien from Bengaluru will sing both originals and covers on The Leather Bar Facebook page, from 8 pm to 9 pm. There is also a takeaway menu of their signature dishes like Thai spiced roast chicken and Greek style eggplant moussaka. ■ 42676000

Chennai-based reading gym, *My Chapter One*, has an ongoing 'A Book a Day' Summer Camp. There's a 30-minute live session with a host, quizzes, online and offline activities, as well as independent reading time. For ages three to seven, at ₹2,499 for 21 days, mychapterone.in For ages six to 12, *Vedantu* has live tutoring sessions on coding. The aim is to increase logical reasoning, encourage creativity and make kids creators of technology rather than just consumers. Sign up for a free trial class on vedantu.com/superkids.

Netflix's new interactive episode of *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* dropped earlier this week. Ellie Kemper returns to her titular role and, this time, she is about to get married to Frederick (played by Daniel Radcliffe). But when she discovers a mysterious book in her backpack, will she make it down the aisle? The show will present you, the viewer, with multiple options that will take the characters on different, hilarious journeys. While it is currently available in six countries, it is set to release in the coming weeks in India.

ADAPTING GYM DESIGN

The post-Covid gym will be a very different space, especially the back-end engineering, believes Kunal Naithani of White Studio Architects. "Visually, they will have more spaced-out configurations, and transitional spaces between zones [free weights, cardio section] will be a lot wider. We will see translucent screens between equipment to minimise physical contact," says the New Delhi-based architect, who has designed Fitness First Health Clubs' centres in the country, and gyms in Mumbai and the capital. Material finishes are also going through deeper scrutiny for viral behaviour (studies of other coronaviruses have found that they remained on metal, glass and plastic for up to nine days).

"From an engineering perspective, new gyms will look at dedicated broadcast studios to record and stream workouts. We are already doing research and development for things like air conditioning and sanitisation systems, which will be critical to ensure consumer safety and health," he says, adding that showers and steam rooms will play an even bigger role. The design exercise will also have a pre-vaccine and post-vaccine brief. "This will be the main challenge. One will have to design it as layers, where space usage is optimal and 'switchable' to adjust to the post-vaccine scenario."

Living room workouts

For trainers, in the meantime, building the right dynamic with clients is the challenge. "Right now, even coaches are learning a lot. One of the main problems we face is explaining why a client should do a certain exercise; it is easier to hand out [exercise] programmes in the gym," laughs Mumbai-based celebrity trainer Praveen Tokas, who uses online platforms such as Zoom and Skype. "For example, each person is taught squats in a different manner. The camera is a limiting factor." While Tokas feels that things may go back to how they were, he stresses that the current situation is quite testing psychologically. "Maybe before the lockdown, someone was used to heavyweight lifting and they can't do that any more. People have had to adjust their goals – it's a mental battle."

A few kilometres away, at Are-na HIT, Zoom classes and online workouts were launched almost as soon as the centre shut for lockdown.

"We plan to continue the virtual sessions because we have many requests coming in; we've also received enquiries from people from other states," says co-founder Ananth Viswanathan, adding that, going forward, though there will be takers for the digital experience, a majority will want the experience of working out together as a group.

But, we wonder, after hosting in-person group sessions for years, was making the virtual shift tough? New Delhi-based Sumaya Dalmia admits it was daunting. Known for her outdoor bootcamps, Pilates and group workouts under her brand, Sumaya, she says, "We've always been known as an offline brand, but the lockdown pushed us to strengthen our online game. We've remained connected with our members via Zoom and personal trainers are continuing their sessions virtually."

Future ready
Going forward, while most believe that people won't stay away from gyms altogether, a hybrid approach – with virtual training and outdoor fitness – will be an appropriate solution for the post-Covid world. "The adoption of virtual training methods will definitely rise. What will be key is tracking progress and results and not just trying out workouts from different Instagram influencers," says Ashok. "It comes down to getting help with goal-setting, adopting a hybrid and balanced approach to training and nutrition, and working with qualified coaches who can take the guesswork out and design sensible programmes, digitally or not."

Dalmia agrees. Impressed with how people have transplanted their routines to their homes, she believes the future will be a mix of offline and online. "I've started practising yoga virtually, with the Alo Yoga app, and I am loving it," she says, adding that as long as clients understand the programmes they sign up for and how to periodise them, they will be fine. "Just because it is Insta-pretty, does not mean it is for you."

Meanwhile, in Bengaluru, Vadakkoot is taking note. She's putting aside her disappointment with Cure.fit and is planning to start virtual classes. And there's only one way to go – up.

– With inputs from Lesley Simeon



Today, join dancer Rukmini Vijayakumar on our Instagram Live series, as she talks about dance as an anchor during the lockdown. She will be in conversation with Akhila Krishnamurthy at 7.20 pm @thehinduweekend. Following this, actor Nimrat Kaur will share the roles that influenced her with Namrata Joshi of *The Hindu*. At 8 pm @the_hindu. On Sunday, Vasudha Rai will talk natural haircare with the founder of Ohria Ayurveda, Rajni Ohr. At 5 pm @thehinduweekend. Follow us on Instagram for details.

Delhi in sepia



A glimpse into the past (Clockwise from left) Humayun's Tomb (Deb Mukharji); tonga ride (Kishan S Rana); Pt. Ravi Shankar and Indira Gandhi (Vinoo Bhagat)

MADHUR TANKHA

The lockdown does have a bright side after all. Three friends, who as Delhi University students in late 1950s and '60s pursued their passion for photography, have now unearthed their old frames of Delhi for an online exhibition. They had explored the city as students, and captured its many avatars in black and white images. Vinoo Bhagat, a lawyer; Kishan S Rana, and Deb Mukharji both career diplomats, met as undergraduates in St Stephen's and were part of the collegians' Photo Society.

The idea of the Three Amigos was born during the lockdown, when they found that the Delhi of those days looked somewhat similar to what the city has become, post-lockdown. Deb, a former Ambassador to Nepal, says, "It does, for all the wrong reasons."

In those days, "We would go into embassies which had no armed guards and request for stamps of the country. Delhi was a peaceful place. And there were vast empty spaces. What is now Vasant Vihar and JNU was then a part of the ridge



ge." There were no ticket counters at the gates of monuments, and visitors could enter free of cost.

But the photographs aren't just a throwback to old times. "These pictures are a beautiful part of our heritage. They deserve to be seen and preserved," he says.

There's the picture of a young Indira Gandhi in 1955, comfortable in the company of friends, for instance. In 1955, when Bhagat, a lawyer by then, took her picture she was known only as Pt. Nehru's

daughter. "I knew Elizabeth Gauba (in the frame), German educationist, whose daughter was to get married that evening," which is how he got the photo.

There's another of Pt. Ravi Shankar, who Bhagat had come to know when he was just 11. The fact that Shankar was learning to play the sitar made him curious about his neighbour in Lalla Shankar Lal Mansion, on then Curzon Road.

The lockdown has been a blessing in disguise for Mukharji, as he sorted through thousands of images that had been scanned and stored in hard disks. There are 45 pictures of the city's landmarks, like Connaught Place, Qutab Minar, Humayun's Tomb, people-less roads as well as mountains, because Bhagat and Mukharji are trekkers.

There's one image they missed though, says Rana: "I wish I had also captured images of the Phat-Phat, which was also the common man's transport. Connaught Place to Red Fort cost just four annas per seat in those four-seaters."

The online exhibition concludes on May 18; flicdelhi.nic.in

FOOD SPOT

When leaves lead you on

A food memory triggers an order of Thai goodness

RAHUL VERMA

A plant with bluish flowers gives much pleasure to my artistically inclined near and dear ones. It gives me great joy, too, but for different reasons. I am reminded of some excellent food that I had in Thailand, prepared with the leaves of the plant, called the Morning Glory. I had never had it in India before that, but I later learnt that its Indian cousin is cooked in various ways across the country. Still, something about the leaves will always remind me

of the delicious food of Thailand.

So, when I heard that one of the best Thai restaurants in town was now delivering food - and had a dish of steamed fish with crispy morning glory on the menu - I was greatly tempted. The restaurant in the Sangam Courtyard complex is called Ziu, and I have had some great meals there. Now, in the period of the lockdown, it

is delivering food across Delhi and Gurugram. Ziu's food was always special, for it served what can be described as nouvelle Thai. There was a tweak to the dishes that greatly enhanced the taste - and the way it looked.

I called up one of the numbers that had been forwarded to me (9958677731 and 011-26180711) and asked for Roasted Chicken Nutmeg Curry Paste and Coriander,



Crispy stuff Stir-fried lamb, Slow cooked chicken in home-made Thai green sauce ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

served on rice (₹455); Slow Cooked Chicken with Mustard Cress and Thai Basil in Home-made Thai Green Sauce (₹725); Stir-fried Lamb in a Red Bird's Eye Chilli and

Crispy Holy Basil Sauce (₹825); and Wok Tossed Silken Tofu and Seasonal Vegetables in Roasted Sticky Rice Powder and Chilli Lime Sauce (₹625). My bill came to

a little less than ₹3,100. And Ziu added (gratis) a dish of Som Tam to my order -- crispy fried shredded green papaya served with freshly pounded roasted peanut, long green beans and spicy bird's eye chilli with a lime dressing.

I had visited Ziu some years ago, and remember being completely floored by the food and the service. The young man behind the restaurant - Gurmehar Sethi - had earlier worked in places such as Nobu Dubai, Mayfair London and Banyan Tree in Thailand. I remember he had told me the word Ziu stood for cultivated. For the food, he explained, went beyond the usual.

I completely agree with him. Take his papaya salad. He has turned this dish around by crispy frying the shredded papaya. To this he adds roasted peanuts and a

bird's eye chilli-lime dressing. The dressing and the peanuts came in separate containers. We mixed it up - and the result was something that I could have made a full meal of.

The appetiser that we had asked for - Roasted Chicken Served on Crispy Rice Crackers - was superb. The rice, like murmurra, had been turned into crunchy little bases, and the minced chicken was nice and spicy. I like



green curries, so I enjoyed the chicken dish. The chicken had soaked in all the flavours of the Thai herbs in the curry, which was neither too runny, nor too thick. The lamb was out of this world. The meat was juicy, yet crispy, and the sauce was deliciously piquant. Though I am not much of a tofu fan (I thought we needed to order something non-meaty for a wholesome meal), I quite liked it, too. The tofu was soft and mild, and the sauces were strong. We didn't ask for the fish with crispy morning glory, for folks at home are these days not as fond of fish as they were. Another time, perhaps.

In these dark days, places such as Ziu offer us a warm little beam of light. Jiyo, Ziu.

The writer is seasoned food critic

When truth is stranger than fiction

Samit Basu on why his new novel, *Chosen Spirits*, is "anti-dystopian"

NEHA BHATT

As the coronavirus pandemic unfolds like a dystopian novel, writer Samit Basu has an odd balm for the nerves: an "anti-dystopian" book. In his new release, *Chosen Spirits*, the author of the *GameWorld Trilogy* fantasy novels and the *Turbulence* series of superhero books turns his attention to the near future. It is one of the few books to be released during the lockdown.

Chosen Spirits is his effort to address the sense of loss that many feel about the India they once knew. "I had a realisation five or six years ago that I hadn't written anything close to the world I actually live in. There was a definite desire to [do so]," says Basu, over a phone call.

The novel is set in the late 2020s, when 'Smarttatts' are tattooed on your wrist - to sense and control ev-



Author Samit Basu ■ REUBEN SINGH

movement and emotion. Smog masks have become essential accessories. Home cleaning crews install spy cams on the sly. News is a lie and no one can be trusted. Why does he call it anti-dystopian? "While I am trying to look at what happens in the near future, there is an attempt to find hope in it. The world it describes is actually easier to live in than the world we are actually looking at 10 years from now. It is the best case scenario," he explains.

It is also uncomfortably close to reality. Unlike the most compelling science fiction books, such as Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and George Orwell's 1984 that imagine the world from a greater distance, *Chosen Spirits* looks at the situation we are already in. Yet, it is uncannily prophetic.

It begins with Joey, a 25-year-old "reality controller" - a professional image-builder in charge of the livestream of celebrities - chancing upon a floral *kolam* with embedded hashtags. It is an invite to a protest against the evacuation of a slum. She is not new to protests: she has memories of the chants at Shaheen Bagh

the Citizenship Amendment Act. Since then, Delhi has settled into an eerie, tech-obsessed chamber of darkness. A narrow stream of light hints at a revolution. When Joey takes her childhood friend, Rudra, under her wing, a series of events, including a sex scandal, threatens to reset power dynamics as things spiral out of control.

Writing the book proved to be a massive exercise in restraint. Basu couldn't "go wild", unlike in his other fantasy writing, and reality often played spoilsport.

"Something I had set three to four years into the future ended up happening the week after I wrote it! Current events also inspired new variations on the predictions. Basically, reality is badly plotted and poorly structured," he quips.

He is currently busy with another web project, a series based on one of his books (but he can't reveal more at the moment). Is a pandemic-inspired book on the cards? Not yet, he says. He is going to wait for this to pass before putting it on paper.

Chosen Spirits (S&S India), is available as an e-book, ₹246, Amazon.in. Read an extended version of this interview on Weekend.thehindu.com

To play The Guardian Quick Crossword, The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.

taxation (6)
5 Perplexed (2,3)
6 French romantic painter, d.1863 - coax idler (anag) (9)
7 Hindering (11)
8 Admonished (11)
12 Make worse (9)
16 Bringing back to prominence (7)
17 Cut capers (6)
19 Let (5)
23 Beast of burden (3)

The solution will appear on May 21, 2020.

Solution No. 13352

THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13353

1	2	3	4	5	6		8
7							10
9							
11	12			13			
14				15	16		
18		19			20		
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24							

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- Across
 - 1 Pass to a different owner (6,5)
 - 9 Novices (9)
 - 10 Sheltered side (3)
 - 11 Track down (5)
 - 13 One of Santa's reindeers (7)
 - 14 Pressing (6)
 - 15 Ornament pinned to clothing (6)
 - 18 Boat using a net to
- Down
 - 2 Embrace (3)
 - 3 Hard-wearing fabric, originally from China (7)
 - 4 Not subject to

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| D | R | E | S | S | E | R | C | C | R |
| A | R | P | I | S | O | L | A | T | E |
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| A | P | R | I | L | U | C | F | S | |
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| O | B | B | N | T | W | E | R | P | |
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| R | T | S | E | P | S | T | E | I | |

AN-ND-E

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	31,098	-0.08
US Dollar	75.58	-0.03
Brent oil	31.55	-0.45

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	309.25	0.85
Asian Paints	1552.95	30.55
Axys Bank	388.55	-13.40
Bajaj Auto	2663.60	-39.05
Bajaj Finserv	4723.25	-67.00
Bajaj Finance	2086.45	-25.55
Bharti Airtel	554.10	14.25
BPCL	88.20	8.50
Britannia Ind	3125.65	6.95
Cipla	570.30	0.55
Coal India	129.60	0.95
Dr Reddys Lab	3735.10	3.10
Eicher Motors	14099.60	67.75
GAIL (India)	85.80	0.35
Grasim Ind	517.85	6.45
HCL Tech	511.25	-6.20
HDPC	1633.80	1.40
HDFC Bank	888.15	-5.55
Hero MotoCorp	2193.55	-47.80
Hindalco	119.25	2.05
Hind Unilever	2032.10	26.05
ICICI Bank	322.70	-4.70
IndusInd Bank	418.70	-9.30
Bharti Infratech	202.50	-7.15
Infosys	652.30	-5.85
Indian Oil Corp	75.50	0.35
ITC	164.65	0.85
JSW Steel	174.30	-0.90
Kotak Bank	1178.30	5.20
L&T	864.40	-7.25
M&M	381.30	-19.15
Maruti Suzuki	5100.40	-13.65
Nestle India Ltd.	16443.80	201.30
NTPC	90.85	1.50
ONGC	76.15	0.00
PowerGrid Corp	159.80	-1.00
Reliance Ind	1459.40	23.45
State Bank	166.40	-1.55
Shree Cement	19180.50	-130.30
Sun Pharma	448.60	-7.35
Tata Motors	84.35	0.55
Tata Steel	273.45	4.90
TCS	1892.90	-9.45
Tech Mahindra	510.55	-5.15
Titan	845.60	-0.40
UltraTech Cement	3583.15	-26.35
UPL	378.90	-12.95
Vedanta	92.95	3.80
Wipro	183.80	-2.20
Zee Entertainment	164.20	-5.45

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	75.37	75.69
Euro	81.50	81.86
British Pound	91.95	92.36
Japanese Yen (100)	70.38	70.69
Chinese Yuan	10.62	10.66
Swiss Franc	77.49	77.82
Singapore Dollar	52.96	53.19
Canadian Dollar	53.63	53.87
Malaysian Ringgit	17.33	17.41
Australian Dollar	48.67	48.92

Source: Indian Bank

+ Lockdown-hit Zomato to reduce workforce by 13%

Food delivery platform to cut pay by 50%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Online food-delivery platform Zomato on Friday said it will reduce its workforce by 13%, while also implementing a temporary pay cut of up to 50% for the remaining employees as nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19 severely affected its business.



work-from-home' a permanent feature to reduce real estate costs.

"Our business has been severely affected by the COVID-19 lockdown. A large number of restaurants have already shut down permanently, and we know that this is just the tip of the iceberg," Mr. Goyal said, adding he expected the number of restaurants to shrink by 25-40% over the next 6-12 months.

In an e-mail to employees, Zomato founder and CEO Deepinder Goyal said the workers affected by the lay-offs will continue to get half their salaries, in addition to health insurance and outplacement support, for the next six months or till they find another job, whichever is earlier.

The company employs about 4,000 people.

The company is also looking at making 'partial or full

Merchandise exports drop over 60%

With global trade stalling on COVID-19, shipments nosedive in April

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

With the global trade coming to a near halt due to the COVID-19 pandemic, India's merchandise exports nosedived over 60% in the last month to \$10.36 billion from \$26.07 billion in April 2019.

Except for iron ore and drugs and pharmaceuticals, all other commodities saw a negative growth.

As per government estimates, service exports for April 2020 – which will be revised later – stood at \$17.60 billion, taking India's overall exports to \$27.96 billion, a decline of 36.65% year-on-year.

"The decline in [merchandise] exports has been mainly due to the ongoing global slowdown, which got aggravated due to the current Covid-19 crisis. The latter resulted in large scale



Silver lining: Only iron ore and drugs and pharmaceuticals managed to buck the trend in April. ■ AFP

disruptions in supply chains and demand resulting in cancellation of orders," the Ministry of Commerce said.

Ravi Sehgal, chairman, Engineering Export Promotion Council said that the over 60% drop in merchandise exports during April 2020 is no surprise given a near halt in the global trade and it

would be a long haul before normalcy returns.

Noting that exporting units, especially in the engineering sectors, are largely SMEs, Mr. Sehgal said while the MSME package would provide liquidity infusion for April 2020 is estimated at \$0.16 billion as compared to the deficit of \$8.67 billion in April 2019.

Trade deficit

The merchandise trade deficit for April 2020 was estimated at \$6.76 billion as against the deficit of \$15.33 billion in April 2019. The statement said, "Taking merchandise and services together, overall trade surplus for April 2020 is estimated at \$0.16 billion as compared to the deficit of \$8.67 billion in April 2019."

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IN BRIEF



Belgian GP likely behind closed doors in August

BRUSSELS Formula One's Belgian Grand Prix could be held behind closed doors at Spa-Francorchamps on August 30, despite a ban on mass gatherings in the country until August 31, Wallonia's minister-president Elio Di Rupo has said. AFP



'Women's IPL with 5-6 teams will be great'

NEW DELHI Swashbuckling India opener Smriti Mandhana feels a full-fledged women's Indian Premier League (IPL) can make a difference in tapping the talent which would help India do well at the global level. "A five or six-team IPL for women will be great for Indian women's cricket, especially for the World Cups," she said. PTI

ATP and ITF extend suspensions till July-end
LONDON The ATP Tour and ITF have extended their suspensions of professional tennis until July 31 due to the pandemic, they said on Friday. The WTA said it will next month provide an update on events scheduled for the latter half of July. REUTERS

Athletes' Commission election postponed

LAUSANNE The International Olympics Committee has postponed the Athletes' Commission election by a year. The election was initially due to be held in Tokyo, with 30 candidates from 30 National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and 19 summer sports running for four positions. IANS

Dortmund ready to restart season

Club's MD Cramer says players will have to get used to playing in empty stadiums

SHYAM VASUDEVAN

Bundesliga – Germany's top flight football – will be the first major European League to restart its season which had come to a halt because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Second-placed Borussia Dortmund will kick-start proceedings when it takes on FC Schalke in the Revierderby on Saturday at 7 p.m. IST.

Must get used quickly

The players will have to get used to playing in empty stadiums and Dortmund managing director Carsten Cramer told *Sportstar* that it will take time for everyone to get accustomed to this new normal.

"It is unimaginable, but I am glad that we start at home. Although we will miss the Yellow Wall and our supporters, I am glad we are starting at home where we are unbeaten this season. It is always a big game when we play Schalke and it will be challenging," Cramer said.



It's play time: FC Schalke squad trains ahead of Saturday's clash against Dortmund. ■ AP

"We have two advantages – one is that we practised in an empty stadium three times, so I think we got some interaction with the empty stadium."

"The second advantage is that we had an experience of playing behind closed doors when we played our last game against PSG in the Champions League. The players are focused

on the game, they want to win and are happy they can start playing again."

The returning clubs have to follow a host of protocols to ensure safety of everyone involved. "We have a booklet of rules to follow. We will have the longest bench ever in our stadium – it is almost 50m long. The distance between two players is close to 2.50m and all players must

wear masks. We can have four ball boys and they must wear gloves. On the stands, we have eight representatives of our club and four of the away team. We share a stand usually visited by 8,000 people with 12 guys," Cramer said.

■ Live telecast on Star Sports Select 1 & 2, 7 p.m.

Chess Gurukul too good for Superkids

RAKESH RAO

NEW DELHI

Fancied Chess Gurukul overcame a slow start and eventually ended the first day as the worthy leader, with 16 game-points, in the inaugural Indian Chess.com League (ICL) on Friday.

In the fifth and last round of the day, Gurukul comprising Aravindh Chithambaram, R. Praggnanandhaa, M. Karthikeyan, Aditya Mittal and R. Vaishali, outplayed second seed Superkids 3.5-1.5.

Even as Gurukul lived up to its reputation, last seed Undercover Agents proved to be the surprise packet of the day. The side stunned third seed Desi Boys 3-2 and,

like Gurukul, stayed unbeaten.

The results: Fifth round: Superkids lost to Chess Gurukul 1.5-3.5; Desi Boys bt Five Fighters 3.5-1.5; Chess Pathshala lost to Undercover Agents 2-3; Cheeky Cheetahs lost to United India 1.5-3.5; Chess Gyaan drew with Chess Thulir 2.5-2.5.

Fourth round: Chess Gurukul bt Cheeky Cheetahs 4-1; Chess Thulir lost to Superkids 1.5-3.5; Undercover Agents bt Desi Boys 3-2; Five Fighters drew with Chess Gyaan 2.5-2.5.

Third round: Chess Pathshala lost to Chess Gurukul 2-3; Cheeky Cheetahs drew with Superkids 2.5-2.5; Desi Boys bt United India 4-1; Five Fighters bt Chess Thulir 3.5-1.5; Chess Gyaan drew with Undercover Agents 2.5-2.5.

Second round: Chess Gurukul

drew with Desi Boys 2.5-2.5; Superkids bt Chess Pathshala 1-2; Chess Thulir bt Cheeky Cheetahs 3.5-1.5; United India bt Chess Gyaan 4-1; Undercover Agents drew with Five Fighters 2.5-2.5.

First round: Chess Gyan lost to Chess Gurukul 2-3; Desi Boys drew with Superkids 2.5-2.5; Undercover Agents bt Chess Thulir 3-2; Chess Pathshala lost to Cheeky Cheetahs 0.5-4.5; Five Fighters lost to United India 1.5-3.5.

Standings (after five rounds): 1. Chess Gurukul (16 game-points), 2. Desi Boys (14.5), 3-4. Undercover Agents, Superkids (14 each), 5. United India (13.5).

6. Five Fighters (11.5), 7-8. Chess Thulir, Cheeky Cheetahs (11 each), 9. Chess Gyan (10.5), 10. Chess Pathshala (9).

■ Several things. The epidemic had spread and I could not go out anywhere. With my son going to work, loneliness and homesickness set in. Plus there were the usual age-related issues.

Athletics in for a major change

Dope cheats being monitored closely, says WA chief Coe

STAN RAYAN

KOCHI

The middle-distance runners taking off a few seconds apart, relay runners with gloves and probably even a lane's gap between 100m runners. The World Athletics is considering a lot of options as it works on finding ways out of the mess created by the coronavirus pandemic and resume competition in August.

But clearly, athletics is in for a major change.

Not identical

"It's not going to look identical to traditional track and field for a few months," said Sebastian Coe, the president of World Athletics, in a video interaction, from London on Friday.

"If we have to bring back competition in the relays, we have to think about the baton going hand to hand, this could clearly be a source of infection. Would it not be possible to wear very light skin-tight gloves. I'm sure

there are ways around this.

"The Italian federation



Sebastian Coe. ■ AP

sent me some very interesting ideas about how you could maintain distance in the 800 and 1500m, not necessarily by starting together but by starting maybe five seconds apart and starting individually," said Coe.

"We also recognise that the first few competitions may be held behind closed doors."

Coe was also clear that despite the lockdown, dope cheats should not feel safe.

"Clearly, our testing procedures now are not what they were earlier. But I want to be clear: No athlete should assume that they are in lockdown and are free

No Indians for Diamond League

KOCHI: The AFI will not be sending its stars for the Diamond League series scheduled to start in August. "We are clear that they are not travelling out of India, preferably not even out of Patiala," said AFI president Adille Sumariwalla on Friday. "They will do the Indian circuit, get into an off-season again by October and go to Europe by 2021, if the situation permits, and then peak for the Olympics."

from it. So, continue to fill in your whereabouts. The days of adding up a number of tests is long gone. Intelligent testing and intelligent analysis are more important now than they have ever been and we're able to do that."

puty Consul-General Rajesh Naik personally kept in touch and designated Dr. Dinesh Vyas to monitor my health. My friends and colleagues also helped me through this period," he said.

Frustration

Admitting it was frustrating to not be able to go home, Diwan was nevertheless relieved at being back in the country.

"Once the External Affairs Minister informed officials here, they have been a huge help. The Indian Ambassador Tarun Sandhu and De-

Stranded Ashok Diwan back in India

Ex-India keeper was hospitalised in the US amid the pandemic

HOCKEY

UTHRA GANESAN

NEW DELHI

Almost two months after he first felt unwell, former India hockey goalkeeper and part of the 1975 World Cup-winning side Ashok Diwan returned from the USA on Friday morning.

Huge costs

"At the hospital, they performed several tests and recommended a brain scan. The tests cost me around \$590 (approx. ₹45,000) and the scan would have cost another \$7,000 (₹5.25 lakh). Reaching home, however, remains another two weeks away.

Diwan was supposed to return on March 20 after his annual visit to his son in California. But he fell ill and was rushed to hospital.

"It was a combination of

several things. The epidemic had spread and I could not go out anywhere. With my son going to work, loneliness and homesickness set in. Plus there were the usual age-related issues.

Several things.

Welcomgroup hotel near Delhi airport, where he will be in quarantine for 14 days.

The former Railways employee reached out to Indian Olympic Association president Narinder Batra on April 9 and thereon, he admitted, things became much smoother.

"It would not have been possible for me to get a seat back home for a while even now if the Indian embassy officials had not stepped in to help.

"Once the External Affairs Minister informed officials here, they have been a huge help. The Indian Ambassador Tarun Sandhu and De-

Seven films to premiere on Amazon Prime

Straight-to-digital release triggers opposition from exhibitors

NAMRATA JOSHI

MUMBAI

A day after announcing the premiere of Shoojit Sircar's *Gulabo Sitabo*, Amazon Prime Video released the list of an additional six films that will be premiering directly on the streaming service. The straight-to-digital slate of films spans five Indian languages and the titles are scheduled to premiere between May and August.

First off the mark, even before *Gulabo Sitabo*, will be J.J. Fredrick's legal drama *Ponmagal Vandhal* (Tamil), starring Jyothika, that begins playing from May 29. It also stars Parthiban, Bhagyraj, Prathap Pothen and Pandiarajan and is produced by Suriya and Rajsekhar Karpoorasanendarapandian.

Another much anticipated title is Anu Menon's *Shakuntala Devi* with Vidya Balan in lead. A biographical drama on the extraordinary life of Shakuntala Devi, mathematics genius, writer and astrologer, who was popularly known as a human compu-



A still from *Gulabo Sitabo*.

ter, it also features Sanya Malhotra and is produced by Sony Pictures Networks Productions and Vikram Malhotra. The date for its release, however, is yet to be announced.

Penguin (Tamil and Telugu) begins streaming from June 19. Starring Keerthy Suresh, it is written and directed by Eshava Karthic and is produced by Stone Bench Films and Karthik Subbaraj.

Law (Kannada) begins playing from June 26. Starring Ragini Chandran, Siri Prahlad and veteran actor Mukhyamantri Chandru, it is written and directed by Naranipuzha Shanavas, it is produced by Stone Bench Films and Karthik Subbaraj.

Sufiyum Sujatayum (Malayalam) starring Aditi Rao Hydari and Jayasurya has also been acquired by Amazon Prime Video but the date for its release has not been announced as yet. Written and directed by Naranipuzha Shanavas, it is produced by Stone Bench Films and Karthik Subbaraj.

Large swathes of Meghalaya used to be, and still are, malaria-prone.

"The British had the foresight to start the plantation to combat malaria and other diseases caused by mosquitoes," Mr. Nongmalieh said from Mawtnum village near Quinine Nongladeh. The nursery on an unknown area fell into disuse by the mid-1950s, Mr. Nongmalieh added.

One of the reasons is that the Forest Department has no control over the area where a few cinchonas grow uncared for.

"We have no jurisdiction over Quinine Garden or wha-

tive is left of it. But our predecessors said the plantation was not much of a success as it involved an exotic species brought from South America," B.S. Kharmaophlang, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Research and Training), told *The Hindu* from Shillong.

The villagers, however, said people in the olden days collected the bark of the plant and ground it to administer to malaria patients. "The COVID-19 pandemic has generated interest among locals in the cinchona tree.

"The government should enlighten us about the curative properties of this tree," Mr. Tongkhar said.

Hydroxychloroquine may not be the answer to SARS-CoV-2 or the COVID-19 pandemic. But quinine, its most primitive antimalarial avatar, has made village in Meghalaya latch on to its past for a curative future.

Welcome to Quinine Nongladeh, a village named after the alkaloid quinine extracted from the bark of cinchona, a plant belonging to the *Rubiaceae* family and classified as either a large shrub or a small tree.

The village, about 70 km south of Guwahati, is on the highway to Meghalaya's capital Shillong. Meghalaya's Forests and

All it took was a microscopic organism to make us more human.

A virus has locked us down in a new world. One where we no longer haggle with the vegetable vendor, because we know he needs the money more than we do.

Today, we respect healthcare professionals, people in uniforms, and delivery agents, leaving no occasion to thank them.

We insist that our house helps stay home and take care of themselves, we make sure they are cared for.

Aged parents do not have to wait for our weekly phone calls, because it happens almost twice every day.

We have, by all means, become more human. This pandemic has changed us, for we have developed new habits. If these are not the habits worth keeping, then what are?

THE HINDU

Mail us about the one new habit that made you happy this lockdown at keepthehabit@thehindu.co.in and we will feature it.

#KeepTheHabit

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