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COVID-19 coverage  
As COVID-19 spreads across the world, information about the disease, messages on preventive measures, news of cures in the process of development, all these are of prime importance. The *Hindu* has therefore decided to publish an e-book on essential information that will be available for free download from our site. Also, the number of articles that can be read for free is now 20 for a period of 30 days.

Editor

## NEARBY



No metro services in Delhi, Noida tomorrow

NEW DELHI  
Following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to observe 'janata curfew' on March 22, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation and the Noida Metro Rail Corporation on Friday announced that metro services will not be available on Sunday. The DMRC said that the step was being taken to encourage people to remain indoors and maintain social distancing. Similarly, the NMRC said the move was part of "preventive measures".

CITY ► PAGE 4

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## Kamal Nath resigns ahead of floor test; BJP set to form govt.

With a strength of 104 MLAs in truncated House, saffron party has clear majority

SIDHARTH YADAV  
Bhopal

Ending 18 days of political drama, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath on Friday submitted his resignation to Governor Lalji Tandon, ahead of the Supreme Court-mandated floor test.

Mr. Nath said he would rather stick to his political values and principles of 40 years than compromise. "I will continue to stick to my values. This is my strength," he told reporters at his official residence. "I will continue to struggle along with each member of the Congress family in people's interest."

Mr. Tandon accepted the resignation and asked Mr. Nath to continue as caretaker Chief Minister, Raj Bhavan sources said.

Earlier, on Thursday night, M.P. Assembly Speak-



Conceding defeat: Kamal Nath addressing a press conference in Bhopal before submitting his resignation. ■ A.M. FAROUKI

er N.P. Prajapati accepted the resignation of 16 rebel Congress MLAs, who are at a resort in Bengaluru since March 9, sealing the fate of the embattled government. The Speaker had accepted resignation of six rebel MLAs on March 14.

The strength of the Congress in the 231-member House was down to 92. On

Friday morning, BJP MLA Sharad Kol, who in the past had cross-voted with the Congress, also quit.

With the resignations, the strength of the Assembly stands at 205, with the simple majority mark at 103. The BJP with 104 MLAs has a clear majority.

Moments after the government fell, BJP leader Arvind

Bhadouriya said independent MLAs as well as those from the BSP and the SP had shifted their support to the saffron party.

Speaking to reporters after Mr. Nath's resignation, former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who is the front-runner for the top post again, said the Congress-led government had fallen under its own weight.

"The BJP has never been in the game of saving or toppling governments. The situation turned so explosive that Congress's own friends got upset seeing the State's downfall under Mr. Nath," he added. Those around Mr. Nath, including Congress MP Digvijaya Singh, created such a situation that the government fell, Mr. Chouhan said, adding: "They must introspect."

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12

## Throwing caution to the wind



Despite the government ordering closing down of malls till March 31 as a preventive measure against COVID-19, people still hanging out at V3S Mall in New Delhi on Friday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA (REPORT ON PAGE 3)

## Four Nirbhaya convicts hanged to death at dawn

Sentence carried out after SC rejects last-ditch appeal

SAURABH TRIVEDI  
SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH  
NEW DELHI

Death row convicts in the Nirbhaya gang-rape and murder case Pawan Gupta, 25, Vinay Sharma, 26, Akshay Kumar, 31, and Mukesh Kumar, 32, were hanged to death in Tihar jail on Friday.

Sandeep Goel, Director General of Tihar jail, confirmed that the four convicts were hanged at 5.30 a.m.

A five-member panel of the Deendayal Upadhyay Hospital forensic department performed the post-mortem and handed over



Final countdown: People at Tihar jail on Friday in anticipation of the death sentence being carried out. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

the bodies to the convicts' families.

A jail official said the convicts had not expressed any

"last wish" or will.

Hours before their hanging, the convicts made a last-ditch appeal at 2.30 a.m. on

Friday before a Supreme Court Bench, which did not stay their hanging.

Earlier, they approached the Delhi High Court on Thursday night, but to no avail.

Outside Tihar jail, several people gathered and started a countdown a minute before the time scheduled for the hanging.

The moment the news of the execution was confirmed by the jail authorities, people broke into applause and thanked the judiciary and the Delhi police for delivering justice to Nirbhaya.

"I was passing by the area when I got to know about the hanging. I am happy that finally Nirbhaya got justice. The convicts should have

been hanged much earlier but they made a mockery of our judicial system," said Jagvir Singh, a local.

### Two refuse to eat

According to the jail authorities, Mukesh and Vinay had dinner on Thursday night, but Akshay and Pawan refused.

"They spent a sleepless night and all of them repeatedly asked the staff on duty if there was any update from the court on their fate. At 3.30 a.m., the jail staff reached their wards to prepare them for the execution and asked them to bathe," said the jail officer.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12  
MORE REPORTS ► PAGE 2 & 12

## Govt. approves land use change

DAMINI NATH  
NEW DELHI

The Centre on Friday notified the change in land use for seven plots in the Master Plan for Delhi-2021, paving the way for the redevelopment of Rajpath and the construction of a new Parliament House and Prime Minister's residence.

The government had announced in October 2019 its plan to revamp the 3-km-long Central Vista from Rashtrapati Bhavan till India Gate, construct a new Parliament and develop a new Central secretariat along the stretch.

## Panel wants police to act on riots case

DMC also asks for list of all detainees since February 23

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Minorities Commission (DMC) has sent a notice to the DCP North East Delhi seeking details about the case of an alleged attempt to murder during communal violence in the area on February 24. The DMC attached four photos of the alleged attempt on Mohammad Zubair at an underpass near Bhajanpura market, which it claimed has been published widely, and asked what action has been taken in the case.

"Since the faces of a number of attackers are clearly

visible and one has been identified from his Facebook page, you are directed to take this accused man into custody and interrogate him to know his role and the role of other attackers seen in the photographs," the DMC said.

DCP (North East) Ved Prakash Surya has been asked to submit the details to the commission by March 26.

### 'Haphazard arrests'

The panel has also sent a notice to the DCP claiming that it has received several reports of haphazard arrests of youth in the age group of 20-30 in the district without any

charges or warrants and that they are being pressured to own up or to implicate others in crimes they have apparently not committed.

"We are getting information that in some cases such arrested youth are forced to pay huge bribes and if they do, they are let off. We take all this as a serious violation of the human and civil rights of the people arrested. You are directed to issue clear instructions to all SHOs under your jurisdiction to desist from such illegal practices," DMC Chairman Zafarul Islam Khan said in his notice to the DCP.

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GURUGRAM

The Haryana government on Friday decided to impose Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code in both urban as well as rural areas across the State, restricting gatherings to not more than 20 people. In Gurugram and Faridabad, the permissible limit will be up to five persons.

Public transport in the State will also remain suspended from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. on March 22 in view of the call for 'janata curfew' by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The decisions were taken

at a meeting held under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Manohar Lal in Chandigarh to review the steps to check the spread of COVID-19.

The general managers of

Thermal screening device being used in Faridabad. ■ FILE PHOTO

at a meeting held under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Manohar Lal in Chandigarh to review the steps to check the spread of COVID-19.

The general managers of

## Haryana restricts gatherings to 20 people

Up to five persons allowed in Gurugram; Section 144 of CrPC imposed Statewide

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

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The general managers of

Thermal screening device being used in Faridabad. ■ FILE PHOTO

## TIMELINE

**December 16, 2012:** A 23-year-old paramedic student and her friend board a bus from Delhi's Munirka bus stand. She was gang-raped and thrown out of the bus.

**December 18-22, 2012:** Delhi police arrest all six suspects.

**December 29, 2012:** Victim succumbs to injuries at a hospital in

**Singapore**  
**March 11, 2013:** Accused Ram Singh commits suicide at Tihar jail.

**September 1, 2013:** Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) sends the lone juvenile convict to a correction home for three years.

**September 13, 2013:** A Delhi court awards death penalty to remaining four.

**March 13, 2014:** Delhi High Court upholds death penalty.

**May 5, 2017:** Supreme Court upholds death penalty.

**July 9, 2018:** Supreme Court rejects review pleas of Mukesh, Pawan and Vinay.

**December 18, 2019:** Supreme Court rejects Akshay's review plea.

**January 17, 2020:** A Delhi court orders hanging of all four convicts on January 22, 2020.

**January 30, 2020:** Supreme Court dismisses curative plea of Akshay.

**January 31, 2020:** Delhi court postpones execution of the black warrants till further order.

**February 5, 2020:** Delhi High Court dismisses Centre's plea against the trial court order, says all four convicts have to be hanged together; directs the convicts to pursue all legal remedies within a week. President rejects mercy petition of Akshay.

**February 6, 2020:** President rejects mercy petition of Akshay.

**February 17, 2020:** Delhi court issues new execution date for March 3.

**March 3, 2020:** Delhi court defers hanging of the four death row convicts.

**March 4, 2020:** President rejects Pawan's mercy plea.

**March 5, 2020:** Delhi court orders death warrants for March 20 (5.30 a.m.).

**March 16, 2020:** Convicts move International Court of Justice. Supreme Court dismisses Mukesh's plea to refile curative, mercy petition.

**March 17, 2020:** Akshay writes a second mercy plea to the President after the first was rejected.

**March 19, 2020:** Supreme Court dismisses Pawan's plea against the rejection of his mercy plea and stay on execution, Delhi High Court dismisses plea challenging lower court's refusal to stay death warrants.

**March 20, 2020:** All four convicts hanged at 5.30 a.m. at Tihar jail.

**MINOR**  
March 17, 2020: Akshay writes a second mercy plea to the President after the first was rejected.

**March 19, 2020:** Supreme Court dismisses Pawan's plea against the rejection of his mercy plea and stay on execution, Delhi High Court dismisses plea challenging lower court's refusal to stay death warrants.

**March 20, 2020:** All four convicts hanged at 5.30 a.m. at Tihar jail.



(From Left) ; Heavy security deployment; a man with a placard; people wave the Tricolour outside the Tihar Central Jail in Delhi on Friday ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR, V.V. KRISHNAN

# Two cremated together, others taken to home States

Neighbours of Nirbhaya case convicts from Ravidas Camp console kin, say they stand by them

**HEMANI BHANDARI**  
NEW DELHI

Amid heavy police deployment, the bodies of Nirbhaya convicts Vinay Sharma and Pawan Gupta reached their residence in Rama Krishna Puram's Ravidas Camp at 2.14 p.m. on Friday. The two, who had spent the last seven years together in jail, were cremated together.

Around 50 men, mostly family members and neighbours, walked about 4 km from the camp to the Green Park cremation ground to attend the cremation.

"Faansi waade [those who have been hanged]" was the term used for the group of men by passers-by as they crossed the roads and streets in full public glare. "Who is attending their cremation?" asked a man to another. "Who knows! Probably only family because they are not martyrs," the other replied.

At 3.05 p.m., they began the rites and the pyre was set alight. Vinay's father was spotted sobbing.

Back in the camp, while locals in the area did not sympathise with the families of the convicts, their neighbours did and sat around them under a white tent outside Pawan's house.

Pawan's father sat with a few men on a bench.

While condoling him, a neighbour said, "There have been more brutal crimes than this. What about the Nithari case?" Another sitting next to him said, "If crime would have reduced by doing this, then we would not have complained but



A view of Ravidas Camp in New Delhi on Friday. ■ PTI

anyone. She is not even crying. We are trying to make her cry, but she isn't. She is saying that he will call her like he used to every day. She has not come to terms with the fact that he is dead," said a neighbour standing outside Pawan's house.

Pawan's father sat with a few men on a bench.

While condoling him, a neighbour said, "There have been more brutal crimes than this. What about the Nithari case?" Another sitting next to him said, "If crime would have reduced by doing this, then we would not have complained but

that has no been the case". A neighbour said that they stood with the families. "If these people were bad, then no one would have stood with them. They are poor and these families are the real victims," he claimed.

#### 'Blame the media'

The neighbours also blamed reporters for the deaths of the four convicts in the 2012 gang rape and murder case and alleged that the media "blew the case out of proportion while there are so many such cases" and that "death sentence was given because of the trial by the media". Pa-

wan's father said that they had already told the police in the morning not to let journalists enter the street.

When the bodies arrived at the camp, a reporter with a national daily was beaten up by Pawan's father and the neighbours when he pulled out his notebook to write.

However, only Vinay and Pawan's bodies had reached the camp. The body of Mukesh Kumar, another convict and resident of the camp, was taken to his village in Rajasthan while his mother sat at home in the camp on Friday afternoon.

She said she spent every

penny that she had to save her son, including a property. She also met the President, she said.

Talking about her last meeting with Mukesh on Thursday, she said that he kept on comforting her that nothing would happen to him as the date of execution had been postponed thrice.

At the mortuary of Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital where the post-mortems of the four convicts were conducted, Central Reserve Police Force and the local police were deployed to ensure that no one except family members were allowed near the bodies.

From around 8.30 a.m. till 1.30 p.m., the post-mortem proceedings became a public spectacle as those who were visiting the hospital came, clicked pictures and took videos. As it took time for the families to arrive to claim the bodies, rumours claiming that "no one will come to claim them" started doing the rounds. However, about two hours after the bodies reached, families of all four arrived.

In separate ambulances, the mortal remains of Akshay Kumar were taken to his village in Bihar, Mukesh's were taken to Rajasthan, and Vinay and Pawan were brought to Ravidas Camp.

# Time to address loopholes in legal system which favours culprits: CM

"We must ensure such an incident never happens in India again"

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, reacting to the hanging of the convicts of the Nirbhaya gang rape and murder case here on Friday, said it was time to address loopholes in the legal system which "favour the culprits".

The tragic incident, he said, had occurred seven years ago and the whole country had been waiting for justice since and it was time to resolve that "no such incident should ever happen" in the country again.

"The convicts were hanged today. It took seven years to get justice for Nirbhaya. Today is a day when we should all stand together and resolve that no such incident should ever happen in India," he stated.

"We have time and again observed... how some people manipulated the legal system and delayed the whole process, despite repeated death sentences being issued. We have to work together to address the various loopholes in our judicial system that favour the



Arvind Kejriwal

the number of loopholes we have in our judicial system... We all have to work together and strengthen the system to ensure speedy justice to the victims," he also said.

Meanwhile, Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari said everyone had to work together to create a society where the "dignity and glory of any woman was not hurt" in any way.

"At home, school, office and all the places, we have to cooperate in maintaining the dignity of women, because the development of humanity is incomplete without women empowerment," he said, welcoming the development.

Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, said justice may have been delayed in the case but was not denied.

#### 'Hanging a milestone'

"This [hanging] will become a milestone in relation to ensuring the safety and security of our mothers and sisters across the country," he added.

# 'Executions brought justice after long wait'

Maliwal says move is a victory for India

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

The execution of the four convicts in the Nirbhaya gang rape and murder case has "brought justice after a long wait of seven years", Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) chief Swati Maliwal said on Friday, even as several activists contended that capital punishment cannot be a deterrent to such crimes.

Continuing with her demands of handing out the death penalty to those convicted of rape within six months of the crime, Ms. Maliwal said, "The hanging of the rapists is a victory for the entire country and of Nirbhaya's parents who fought tirelessly till the end. I appeal to the Centre to bring in more stringent measures where cases are fast-tracked and capital punishment handed out within six months of such gruesome crimes."

"There has to be time-bound punishment and it needs to be severe but severity does not mean death. With rigorous life imprisonment for convicts, crimes can be prevented to a large extent as people will know that the system is there to punish them. The government should ensure that existing legislation are implemented first and efficiency of all agencies is increased," Ms. Raja said.

Meanwhile, activist Kavita Krishnan added that a "State which fails women everyday should not be allowed to absolve its sins by taking away lives".



Swati Maliwal

# 'Executions an affront to rule of law': jurists condemn hanging of convicts



'It does not improve access to justice for women'

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) on Friday condemned the hanging of the four men convicted of the gang rape and murder of Nirbhaya in 2012, while stating that the execution of per-

petrators was an "affront rule of law and does not improve access to justice for women".

Denouncing the executions, the ICJ urged the Centre to abolish death penalty and introduce "systematic changes" to the legal framework to deter violence and improve access to justice for women.

Frederick Rawski, Asia-Pacific Director, ICJ, said: "State-sanctioned executions are little more than public

theatre that risk celebrating and perpetuating violence at the expense of the rule of law. As heinous as these crimes were, the imposition of the death penalty – the deterrent effect of which has been widely debunked – does nothing to improve the lives of women."

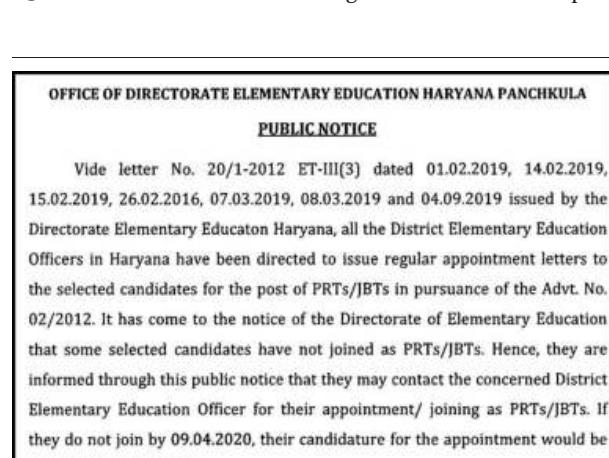
The ICJ called upon the Government of India to join other States and take immediate steps towards ending

the practice of capital punishment, as prescribed by United Nations General Assembly Resolutions.

Senior advocate and human rights activist Vrinda Grover said, "In 2013, the criminal laws were amended. However, seven years later, the graph of rapes has not diminished. Instead of compelling the State to invest in plugging the gaps in the investigation, prosecution

and adjudication of sexual crimes and formulating victim oriented processes, the clamour for execution of the convicts has hijacked the discourse."

"Seven years later, the power of the State to extinguish life stands entrenched, while women and girls in India continue to struggle to live a life of freedom, safety and dignity as equal persons," Ms. Grover said.



# Why midnight hearings in death penalty cases?

SC says it stems from condemned man's hope his case will rise like the Phoenix

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

The Nirbhaya case was the third death penalty case for which the Supreme Court opened its doors for a 'midnight hearing' in recent times. The previous two occasions were in the Nithari killings and Yakub Memon cases.

#### Other such cases

In the Memon case, the Supreme Court had mentioned the "unending character" of such death penalty cases which warrant midnight hearings. The court wondered whether it stems from the condemned man's hope that makes him come back to the apex court at midnight and fight till the last hours of his life, hoping his case would "rise like the Phoenix" and even "possibly harbouring the idea that

it has the potentiality to urge for a second lease of life".

The fourth case of midnight hearing in the Supreme Court, in May 2018, was not connected to death penalty, but concerned government formation in Karnataka. The Congress party had moved the apex court on the eve of BJP leader B.S. Yeddyurappa's swearing-in ceremony as the Chief Minister.

**Woman judge**  
The Nirbhaya case also marked the first time a woman judge, Justice R. Banumathi, led the apex court Bench which held the early morning hearing on March 20. Justice Banumathi's one-line dismissal order on a plea by convict, Pawan Gupta, became the final act of justice administration in the

early hours when the condemned man knocked on the Supreme Court doors at 3 a.m. on July 30, 2015, merely hours before he was to be hanged at 7 a.m.

An exhausted Bench, which assembled in Court Four, had heard arguments made by Memon's lawyers and countered by the then Attorney General of India, Mukul Rohatgi, for over an hour. The Bench finally denied the plea made by Memon to allow him a 14-day reprieve to make his peace.

However, in 2014, the Supreme Court, in another midnight hearing, gave Suresh Kumar some respite in the Nithari killings case. A plea was filed in the apex court just two hours before he was to be hanged in Meerut. The apex court had intervened and postponed his execution.

"A strong message has gone out today and I am hopeful that change will come," Ms. Maliwal added.

However, several activists argued that capital punishment, which has been in existence for a long time, has not proved to be a deterrent as crimes against women continue to happen. Stating that Friday's execution was not "any assu-

Don't visit our offices to collect documents:  
Traffic Police

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Amid the COVID-19 outbreak, Delhi Police on Friday asked the public to not visit the offices of traffic authorities to collect their driving licence or vehicle documents seized by personnel while issuing challans. In an advisory, the Delhi Traffic police said people may visit traffic circles or offices only in case they have urgent and unavoidable reasons to get their documents back.

"They may continue to drive keeping a copy of the challan with them to be presented or shown to the enforcement officer on demand," said Taj Hassan, Special Commissioner of Police (Traffic).

Traffic inspectors will handover their documents with due precautions. These precautions will remain in force till March 31, the advisory stated.

**Air quality of Delhi-NCR**

Delhi	192	Gurugram	175		
Ghaziabad	235	Faridabad	212		
Noida	195	Greater Noida	238		
Good	■	Satisfactory	■	Moderate	■
0-50	51-100	101-200	201-300	301-400	>401

AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) | SOURCE: CPCB

# COVID-19 fallout: Delhi malls told to down shutters till March 31

Government employees engaged in non-essential tasks to work from home

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

All shopping malls, except those mainly retailing essential items such as vegetables and medicines, have been asked to down shutters in view of the prevailing COVID-19 epidemic, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced here.

The order came into immediate effect on Friday afternoon. "All shops in shopping malls in NCT of Delhi shall remain closed till 31st March, 2020 except shops dealing with items of daily needs (i.e. groceries, pharmacy, vegetables/fruits)," the order stated.

**Meeting with Secretaries**

Mr. Kejriwal also issued orders directing Delhi government employees engaged in non-essential tasks to work from home till March 31. In case of essential services, employees above 55 years of age can also prefer to opt for work from home, which shall be decided by the respective heads of departments. The decision was taken at a meeting with Secretaries and heads of various government departments. Only essential em-



A scene at V3S mall in Laxmi Nagar on Friday soon after the government order came into effect. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

## COVID-19

"The health of our officials and employees is very important. We have two public service categories, essential public services, and non-essential services. I want every HoD to make a list of essential and non-essential services," Mr. Kejriwal was quoted as having said at the meeting.

"I would also like to request all the HoDs to make a list of essential employees and non-essential employees. Only essential em-

ployees should be present in office and the non-essential employees can work from home," he said.

### No salary deductions

Delhi government employees who opt to work from home must ensure availability over the phone. During this period no deductions would be made for salaries.

"This is not a paid leave but work from home. During this period, the people who work from home and everyone else will get the salary they get... there will be no

deduction," Mr. Kejriwal said.

Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal said he had directed all HoDs to ensure that all government office premises are disinfected before closure on Friday to reduce chances of the spread of COVID-19.

An order issued by the Delhi Legislative Assembly stated that only those of its staff members engaged in work related to the upcoming budget need to come to work. Other staff must attend work "only on emergent basis, if needed".

# Medical Superintendents can appoint staff on contract: CM

Kejriwal tells them to ensure availability of all resources

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday convened a meeting with all the Medical Superintendents of Delhi government hospitals to assess preparedness to confront a possible Coronavirus disease crisis in the city.

Directing them to ensure adequate availability of all resources and medical staff in the hospital, he said that the Medical Superintendents had been empowered to appoint additional employees on contract for the next three months. He also asked them to immediately procure all necessary supplies such as medicines and ventilators and instructed Health Minister Satyendar Jain to ensure no supplier overstocks essential items like medicines and masks.



An elderly man consulting a doctor after the COVID-19 screening test in the city. ■ FILE PHOTO: BIBEK CHETTRI

quoted as having said at the meeting.

"There has been no community transmission of the virus until now, but we should be prepared to handle the crisis if it happens...Please ensure that all the equipment are operational. If you observe that any of the machines in your hospitals are not working, please get to address that issue immediately," he was quoted as having said.

### Escapes from hospitals

Mr. Kejriwal also directed the hospital authorities to ensure that there were no escapes from their premises.

"We will deploy more security and police personnel if needed. We will speak to

the police authorities and ask them to deploy more police personnel in front of all our hospitals," he said, addressing the possibility of COVID-19 infected patients fleeing quarantine.

The Chief Minister also directed the Medical Superintendents of the hospitals to recruit as much manpower as required under all categories under the Delhi Epidemic Act 1987. The CM also assured that the Delhi government will talk to the Central government to ensure mass procurement of testing kits to Delhi government hospitals. He also instructed PWD officials to resolve all issues pertaining to necessary arrangements in isolation wards.

# Two fresh COVID-19 cases in Haryana; total cases touch 6

New cases reported have travel history to affected countries

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GURUGRAM

Two more positive cases of COVID-19 were reported from separate parts of Haryana on Friday, taking the total number of patients in the State to six. The new cases were reported each from Panipat and Faridabad with travel history to affected countries.

Earlier, four persons, including three women, tested positive for COVID-19 in Gurugram.

According to the latest Health Department bulletin, a 52-year-old woman, who returned to Faridabad from Spain on March 12, and a 21-year-old resident of Panipat, with travel history to England, have tested positive



for COVID-19. The man had returned to India on March 13.

### 5,460 under observation

A total of 156 samples have been sent for examination till date from across the State and six are found positive. The message of 56 samples are awaited. A total of 64 patients have been admitted to different hospitals in the State and 32 of them

have been discharged. As many as 5,460 people are still under surveillance across the State.

Two labs from Haryana – PGIM, Rohtak and BPS Khanpur Kalan – have been designated for testing of COVID-19. Self-Declaration forms for the passengers with travel history from affected countries are available at Haryana Health Department website.

# Centre's response sought on plea against travel ban

Petition seeks quashing of DGCA circular

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday sought response of the Centre on a plea challenging its circular prohibiting travel of passengers from European Union (EU) countries, European Free Trade Association nations, Turkey and United Kingdom from March 18 onwards to contain the spread of coronavirus pandemic.

A Bench of Justice J.R. Midha and Justice I.S. Mehra also issued notice to Ministries of Health and Home Affairs and Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) seeking their stand on the plea by March 25.

The High Court's direction came while hearing a petition filed by Ramesh Chander Goyal, seeking

court's direction to the government to evacuate his son, who is undergoing Master of Science in a University in Scotland, U.K., to India forthwith. The plea further said there are nine other Indian students in the university.

The petition sought quashing of circular issued by the Office of the Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Government of India, on March 16 putting a travel ban in the country.

"No airlines shall board passengers from these nations with effect from 1200 GMT on 18 March 2020," DGCA said in the circular.

It also said that this measure will be enforced till March 31 following which the situation will be reviewed again.

It added that all seven crore trader-members of

# Markets to be shut for 3 days starting today: traders' body

Chemist shops, dairy and consumables stores to remain open

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Markets in Delhi will remain shut for three days starting Saturday, the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) said on Friday. However, the traders' body has exempted chemist shops as well as dairy and general consumables stores from the shut down.

"In the wake of the rapidly growing threat of COVID-19, prominent trade leaders across Delhi have decided to close business establishments for the next three days beginning Saturday to prevent community transmission of the virus," the traders' body said in a statement.

CAIT across the country would close their business on March 22 to join the 'janta curfew' called by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The traders' body said that there was adequate supply of goods at present, but panic buying would strain the supply chain. Keeping this in mind, the CAIT has advised traders to discourage customers from buying goods above a normal quantity.

The CAIT will review the situation on March 23 to decide on future action.



A view of the Sunder Nagar Market as traders' association decided to close it till March 31. The market was closed on Thursday. ■ FILE PHOTO: SANDEEP SAXENA

# Methodist churches stop prayer ceremonies

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The methodist church of Delhi on Friday cancelled all prayer ceremonies till further notice, keeping in view the spread of COVID-19.

"All corporate worship services in the methodist church in Delhi episcopal area, including Sunday worship services, will remain suspended until further orders" a letter from Bishop Subodh Mondal to all pastors in Delhi read.

However "churches, sanctuaries and places of worship" would remain open for worshippers throughout the day to offer prayers or any special needs, it said. Additionally, pastors, local preachers and local church leaders have been instructed to "monitor" crowds and ensure that the number of people gathering is less than 40.

Apart from this, the letter requested that elderly people and children stay at home and join for the worship online, either through Facebook or any other available media. Church officials have also been instructed to see that adequate arrangement for sanitisation is made available in the church premises.

# Students figuring out options to stay on as varsities ask them to vacate

They are worried about travelling back home due to virus scare



People taking preventive measures in the city on Friday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

parents, both of whom are above the age of 50.

With international students being allowed to stay back at the hostel, authorities have made protocols such as restricted entry of visitors as well as closing of various congregating spaces such as common area and reading room, a student here said.

Prajwal Pandey from Nepal said that hostel authorities have informed that truncated food service with fewer options will be made available to them. The hostel has also identified two bedrooms for quarantine in case required, he said.

Amisha, a resident of Ambedkar Ganguly Hostel, said that directions to vacate the hostel was issued to them also, but about five to six hostellers are left behind, who are unsure of what to do. Hostel authorities had reportedly recommended students to go to the State Bhawans if they can't make it back home, she added.

With only a handful of students reportedly staying back, Ms. Amisha said: "We told the authorities that we will make our own food, but they didn't listen."

ASHOK KUMAR  
GURUGRAM

The Sector 10 Civil Hospital here has witnessed a huge influx of patients with symptoms of flu such as running nose and cough over the last couple of days in the wake of COVID-19 threat, forcing the authorities to double the capacity of the Outdoor Patients Department for general medicines to deal with the sudden rush.

Medical Superintendent, Civil Hospital, Maneesh Rathee, told *The Hindu* that the diseases related to ENT and general medicine went up due to change in weather conditions, but the rush of patients with flu was far more this year due to the panic situation arising out of COVID-19 threat.

**Patients ask for virus test**  
"The patients with running nose, sore throat and cough are inundating hospital seek-

really need the help," the institute said.

The IIT-Delhi campus has been in 'partial lockdown' with students asked to leave hostels and visitor's entry banned. The institute has been exploring how to move to the online mode of instruction to ensure that students finish their requirements for the term.

"Since we will be requesting other alumni to help you, please ping to us only if you

not have come for examination in the normal circumstances, he decided to see the doctor to rule out COVID-19.

"I asked the doctor to test me for the virus, but he told me that it was viral and there was no need to worry. I am feeling rest assured now," said Ashutosh, who works with a finance firm.

Sudha, a female security guard, said the patients at the registration counters spilled over to the park outside the building and it was not manageable on a few occasions. "The dedicated counter for the pregnant women too had to be opened for OPD registration to deal with the crowd a day ago," said Mr. Rathee.

Hailing from Uttar Pradesh, Ashutosh, staying at Nathupur village, said he had body-ache and running nose and though he would

COVID-19 threat drives many to hospital

Gurugram hospital sees rush of patients with symptoms of flu; OPD capacity doubled



Patients queue up at the Sector 10 Civil Hospital in Gurugram on Friday. ■ ASHOK KUMAR

ing test for COVID-19. We try to educate them that the COVID-19 test is conducted only in case of a travel history to the affected countries, close contact with affected persons or symptoms such as high grade fever accompanied by dry cough and difficulty in breathing," said Mr. Rathee.

He said the hospital authorities were forced to in-

crease the number of OPD doctors for general medicines to four from two to deal with the rush.

"Sometimes, we even opened the fifth OPD to deal with the patients," said Mr. Rathee.

Doctor Monika at Ayush OPD said she prescribed medicines to her patients for a month now instead of a fortnight earlier to avoid footfall.

Hailing from Uttar Pradesh, Ashutosh, staying at Nathupur village, said he had body-ache and running nose and though he would

Civic bodies come up with alternative modes

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

North Delhi Municipal Corporation said on Friday. Applications for the same can be submitted to notified WhatsApp numbers as per the zonal jurisdiction and prescribed fee can be deposited through PayTM and online payment gateways of the MCD.

Citizens can now apply for domiciliary birth and death certificates through WhatsApp and emails, the

that it would be setting up 'deposit boxes' in each ward of its jurisdiction for collection of property tax, the last date for which is March 31.

Property owners may fill the respective form and attach cheques that can be deposited at these boxes to avoid going to corporation offices, it said.

## &lt;h

## No metro service tomorrow

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI  
Following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to observe 'janata curfew' on March 22, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) and the Noida Metro Rail Corporation (NMRC) on Friday announced that metro services will not be available on Sunday.

The DMRC said that the step was being taken to encourage people to remain indoors and maintain social distancing in view of the COVID-19 outbreak. Similarly, the NMRC said the move was part of "preventive measures to contain the spread of the virus".

Metro officials said that the average daily journeys saw an almost 20 lakh-23 lakh dip, with around 37 lakh journeys being recorded on Thursday. The DMRC had issued a COVID-19 advisory asking passengers to maintain a one-metre distance from others inside the coaches. The advisory also said that no passengers will be allowed to stand and travel inside the metro.

"The advisory is meant to instill self-regulation among passengers. All individuals must come together to fight the pandemic and prevent it from spreading further," said Anuj Dayal, DMRC spokesperson.

Mr. Dayal added that apart from gradually implementing the guidelines mentioned in the advisory, announcements at stations, trains, and publicity messages on social media have also started to raise awareness on the issue.

The advisory also said that frequency of trains might vary depending on the situation and that trains might not halt at crowded stations.

# PM's call for 'people's curfew' is the need of the hour: Delhiites

'Move will help people understand the importance of social distancing'

AISHWARYA TRIPATHI  
NEW DELHI

Welcoming Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for a 'people's curfew' on March 22 as "the need of the hour to break the spread of COVID-19", Delhiites said that the move would also help people understand the importance of social distancing.

Nitin Sharma, an information security officer at AKS IT Services, said he has suspended his Sunday routine of badminton after the curfew call, but is struggling to make his grandparents understand the urgency to follow the self-imposed curfew.

### COVID-19

"My grandparents are continuing with their morning walks believing that the outbreak is a joke. I am able to restrict them up to a limit but this Sunday I am making sure that they strictly follow the curfew rules," he said.

Many are using social media to spread awareness about the nationwide call



Sparse traffic as many office-goers decided to work from home on Friday. • R.V. MOORTHY

and have taken steps such as granting leaves to domestic help, drivers and personal helpers on Sunday.

Female technical officer at AIIMS Saroj Singh felt that the PM's decision was the right way to tackle the situation. "The curfew cannot be a compulsion as healthcare workers like me need to get to work, but it is our duty to be alert and educate people about this required step of social distancing. It will certainly help in bringing down

the multi-folding spreading of the infection," she said.

### Future course

The 14-hour curfew is also being perceived as a preparation step towards a supposedly forthcoming lockdown of the city, and might help in anticipating the public response towards a shutdown of their routine lives.

Delhi-based photographer Shubham Saini, who has called off his birthday celebrations on Sunday, said

that the one-day optional curfew would be of no use if there are no plans to impose a complete lockdown in the near future.

Pointing out a flaw in choosing the weekend to impose the curfew rather than a workday, senior manager at Future Generali Insurance Company Shoeib Anjum said that few people will venture out on March 22 anyway as it is a holiday.

"The PM should have chosen another day," he added.

## 'Shaheen Bagh protest will not stop on Sunday'

Have taken all precautions, say protesters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Women protesters in Shaheen Bagh on Friday said they will continue their sit-in against the amended citizenship law on Sunday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has urged people to remain indoors on March 22 as part of a 'people's curfew' to

mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The women have been blocking a side of a road connecting south-east Delhi to Noida since mid-December to protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

On Monday, the Delhi government had banned the gathering of over 50 people in light of the outbreak, the size of the gatherings has since been reduced to 20 people. "It also applies to Shaheen Bagh," Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had said.

On Friday, the protesters said that not more than 50 women were sitting on the site at any given time.

"On Sunday, we will sit under small tents. Only two women will sit under each tent and maintain a distance of one metre between them," a protester said.

Another protester, Rizvana, said the women had been taking every precaution and they were covered in burqa all the time. "Washing hands regularly is part of our lifestyle.

We offer namaz five times a day and we wash our hands every time," she added.

Ritu Kushik, another protester, said women aged above 70 and children less than 10 years old were not being allowed at the protest site.

"The women are not sitting on mattresses any more. Cots have been brought in and there is a minimum distance of three metres between every two cots. No more than two women can sit on one cot," he said.

## Govt. approves land use change for new Parliament, PM house

Considered all 1,292 objections/suggestions: Housing Ministry

DAMINI NATH  
NEW DELHI

The Centre on Friday notified the change in land use for seven plots in the Master Plan for Delhi-2021, paving the way for the redevelopment of Rajpath and the construction of a new Parliament House and Prime Minister's residence.

The government had announced in October 2019 its plan to revamp the 3-km-long Central Vista from Rashtrapati Bhavan till India Gate, construct a new Parliament and develop a new Central secretariat along the stretch.

In addition, the consultant hired for the project, Ahmedabad-based HCP Design, Planning and Management, has proposed to construct new residences for the Prime Minister and Vice-President near South and North Blocks.

According to the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs' notification, a total of 1,292 objections/suggestions had been received from the public after the Delhi Development Authority notified its intention to change the land use on December 21, 2019. The notification said the Board of Enquiry and

fied plots are in the heart of Lutyens' Delhi, a 3.9-acre plot in Timarpur was changed from recreational to district park.

### Green areas

In a statement, the Ministry said: "This paves the way for the construction of new Parliament building and other projects in the prestigious Central Vista project. This decision will ensure that the green areas and public and semi-public spaces are adequately compensated or enhanced."

Among those who had objected to the land-use change was the Indian Institute of Architects' Northern Chapter, whose chairman Shamit Manchanda said the government's decision was "saddening".

"What is saddening is that there have been no answers given to all the hundreds of objections raised against the change of land use. No studies as to the environmental, traffic and ecological impact of this massive project, if done, have been shared. This is something the citizens of the country must get an answer to," he said.

## HC relief for VHP leader

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday stayed a trial court order directing lodging of an FIR against Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) leader Alok Kumar for allegedly giving a hate speech during a rally in the city last year.

Justice Yogesh Khanna also directed the police to file a status report on Mr. Kumar's plea challenging the trial court's February 18 order for registration of an FIR against him. The High Court has

posted the case for further hearing on May 12.

The trial court order came on complaint filed by social activist Harsh Mander. It had ordered lodging of FIR against Mr. Kumar for inciting violence against members of the Muslim community in Old Delhi's Lal Kuan.

In his petition, Mr. Kumar said that the complaint revolved around a speech made by a swami from Kashi on July 9, 2019, following an incident of vandalism at Lal Kuan in Hauz Qazi.

### IN BRIEF

#### HC dismisses Kamra's plea against flying ban

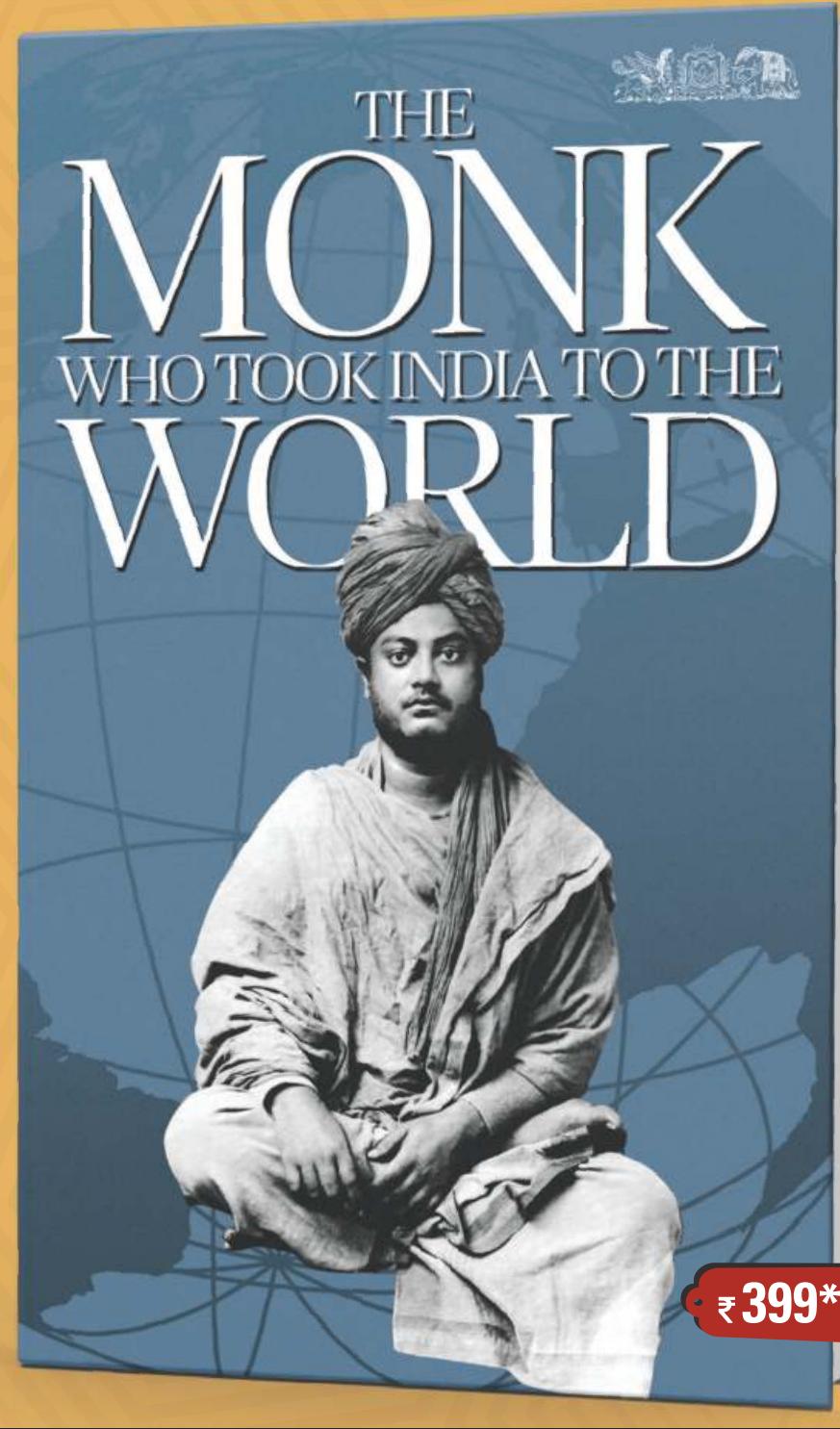
NEW DELHI  
The Delhi High Court on Friday refused to entertain a petition filed by stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra challenging the ban imposed on him by Indigo, Vistaar and other airlines for heckling journalist Arnab Goswami on a flight. The court also raised objection on Mr. Kamra's conduct, noting that such kind of behaviour is unacceptable on a flight. It also refused to pass interim relief on his plea seeking permission to fly on any of the airlines.

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Timings  
DELHI

SATURDAY, MAR. 21
RISE 06:24 SET 18:33
RISE 04:53 SET 15:58
SUNDAY, MAR. 22
RISE 06:23 SET 18:34
RISE 05:29 SET 16:52
MONDAY, MAR. 23
RISE 06:22 SET 18:34
RISE 06:01 SET 17:45

Delhi Weather max min  
Delhi City 31 16  
Safdarjung 31 16  
Palam 31 17

Delhi Palam Today  
32°C A spell of dust storm or thundershower is likely in parts. A partly cloudy sky and warm day is likely.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow  
31°C A comfortable morning is likely. A mainly sunny sky and warm day would continue.

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IN BRIEF

Woman raped by neighbour in U.P.

MUZAFFARNAGAR (U.P.)  
A 22-year-old woman was raped by a neighbour at home and later threatened by him at a village here, police said. Police said the accused is absconding. PTI

# Four new COVID-19 cases in Lucknow, shutdown ordered

Administration's move triggers panic buying in some parts of the city

OMAR RASHID  
LUCKNOW

All eateries including restaurants, dhabas, food stalls, coffee shops and sweets shops in Lucknow will remain shut till March 31, the district administration ordered as the Uttar Pradesh capital reported four new positive cases of COVID-19 on Friday, taking the total in the State to 23.

District Magistrate of Lucknow Abhishek Prakash also ordered offices, establishments and institutes, barring essential services like hospitals, ration shops and medical stores, to be shut in a part of Lucknow till March 23.

The affected area Khurram Nagar, where the fresh cases were reported, falls within Aliganj, Mahanagar, Indira Nagar, Gudamba and Vikas Nagar.

All bars, lounges, hair sa-



An official puts a lock on the entrance gate of Bara Imambara on Tuesday. ■ PTI

loons and beauty parlours have also been asked to shut down till March 31.

Sudhir Singh, King George Medical University spokesperson, said of the four new cases, one, singer Kanika Kapoor, had a travel history to the U.K., while the other three are contacts of a previously found positive case.

Lucknow has so far reported eight positive cases.

Meanwhile, the administration's order triggered panic buying in some parts of the city, even as traders said they were reporting falling business over the last few days due to the outbreak of the disease.

Many vendors expressed anxiety and said they were planning to return to their

native villages as they expected business to be hit.

Raj Kishor Dwivedi, who runs a vegetarian restaurant in the prominent Lalbagh area, said he had purchased a mask for himself as well as his nine staff members. "If this doesn't stop soon, the way it is spreading, it will take a big form," said a worried Mr. Dwivedi.

His sales have been halved over the past week, he said.

Few customers

Yahya Faridi, who runs a cyber cafe, which naturally sees a regular footfall, also said the number of customers coming to his cafe had sharply dipped. *Kripa ek meter ki duri banakar charcha kare* (Please maintain a distance of one metre before talking), reads a notice plastered by him above his computers to warn customers about the need for social distancing.

# First virus death in Punjab

CM asks Centre to allow private hospitals to conduct tests

VIKAS VASUDEVA  
CHANDIGARH

Punjab has reported its first COVID-19 death, after a 70-year-old man died at a civil hospital in Banga town of Shahid Bhagat Singh Nagar district.

The deceased, Baldev Singh, a resident of Pathlawa village, had arrived from Germany via Italy at Delhi airport on March 7 and proceeded to the State on the same day. He was known to have diabetes and hypertension, and was confirmed positive for COVID-19 on March 18, an official statement said on Thursday.



CM Amarinder Singh

tions on March 18.

"The close contacts and family members of the patient are under surveillance and sampling of family members is being done," it added.

Likewise all Board examinations of Class X and XII have also been postponed till March 31. All public dealings in government offices have been called off with immediate effect.

Local Bodies Minister Brahm Mohindra said OPD services in hospitals have also been postponed but emergency services at all hospitals will be continued.

Curb on gatherings

"We have decided to restrict the gathering for any function like marriages up to 20 persons. Also, a decision has been taken to implement the home quarantine protocol for all Non-Resident Indians and passengers who came from any other country in the last 15 days. Mandatory stamping with indelible ink of all such NRIs and passengers will be done in a bid to identify them in case they go out," he said.

# 'Recovered' Italian tourist dies

Curfew in Bhilwara after 6 persons test positive for COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
JAIPUR

An Italian tourist, who had tested negative for COVID-19 after being treated in isolation, died of heart failure at a private hospital here on Friday. The 69-year-old man had arrived in Jaipur as part of a group of Italians on February 28 after visiting tourist places in five districts of Rajasthan.

Medical & Health Minister Raghu Sharma said the man did not die of COVID-19. The Italian, who was stated to be

a chain smoker, had recovered from COVID-19 infection at the Sawai Man Singh Government Hospital on March 14 and was shifted to the private hospital for treatment of lung infection on the request of the Italian Embassy.

The doctors at S.M.S. Hospital treated the tourist and his wife, who was also detected as COVID-19 positive, with a regimen of combination drugs used for malaria, swine flu and HIV. Both of them had twice tested negative for the virus after treatment, though COVID-19 had caused damage to the man's lungs.

Panic gripped Bhilwara town on Friday after six persons, including three doctors of a private hospital, tested positive for COVID-19. Bhilwara Collector Rajendra Bhatt clamped curfew in the city's municipal limits.

A massive screening was initiated after preparing a list of people who came in contact with the infected doctors during the last 14 days.

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## Taking no chances



Passengers with masks inside a train at the Patna railway station on Friday. ■ RANJEET KUMAR

## Heavy rain and snowfall warning in H.P.

# Stay with family to check spread of virus, Akhilesh tells people

SP president wants the anti-CAA protests to continue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
SHIMLA

The Met department has issued a fresh yellow weather warning for heavy rain and snowfall accompanied by thunderstorm and lightning in Himachal Pradesh on Saturday and Monday.

The Shimla Met Centre has forecast rain and snowfall in the State till March 26. However, it has issued yellow warning only for March 21 and 23. The department issues colour-coded warnings to alert the public ahead of severe or hazardous weather.

Meanwhile, light rain occurred at a few places in the State in the last 24 hours, Shimla Met Centre Director Manmohan Singh said.

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**Our beloved**

## Kamalam Neelakantan

passed away peacefully on 19th March 2020.

She was indefatigable in the face of loss and illness and fought valiantly till the end.

***She will be missed deeply for her effervescence and warmth.  
She will forever inspire us to strive towards joy.***

Geeta and Gopal Subramanium  
Gauri and Chinmoy Sharma  
Disha and Giriraj Subramanium  
Adya and Aadityahridaya

### NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY Notification No. 24/2020

#### Important Notice for the Rail Passengers

It is notified for the information of general public that train No. 14555/14556 Tanakpur - Delhi Express were cancelled due to Korona Virus from 19.03.2020 to 31.03.2020 between Tanakpur to Delhi. Now will run of this train from Tanakpur - Delhi from 20.03.2020.

**CPRo / T-92** Chief Passenger Transportation Manager  
About any Passenger Amenity Complaint SMS on Mobile No. 09794845955  
"Never travel on roof and foot boards"



### SEARCH FOR MISSING



General Public is hereby informed that a person namely **Rajender S/o Ram Shah** R/o Raj Nagar Ward No.37, Hindaura, Distt: Kirauli, Rajasthan has been missing since 09.08.2019 from the area of PS Anand Vihar, Delhi. In this regard a FIR No. 29/20 u/s 365 IPC dated 19.01.2020 has been registered at PS, Anand Vihar, Delhi. The description of missing person is as under:

Name: Rajender, Father's Name : Ram Shah, Age : 26 years, Height : 5', Complexion : Fair, Built : Normal, Face : Round, Wearing: Blue Lining Shirt & Gray pant.

If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform the undersigned at following phone numbers.

Website : <http://cbi.nic.in>  
e-mail : [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
Fax : 011-24368639  
Ph. : 011-24368638, 24368641  
DP/26/SHD/2020

**SHO**  
**P.S., Anand Vihar, Delhi**  
**Ph. : 011-22384600**  
**7065036022**

### EAST DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (PR-II)  
SHADHARA SOUTH ZONE  
SCHOOL BLOCK, SHAKARPUR, DELHI-110092  
NIT No.: EDMC/EE (Pr)-II/Sh(S)/TC/2019-20/12 Dated: 19.03.2020

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**

The Executive Engineer (Pr)-II Shadara South on behalf of Commissioner, EDMC invites online item rate tender & percentage rate tender for the work in the tender documents:-

Last Date of Download of tender Document 27.03.2020 at 3.00 PM

Last Date of Bid Preparation and Hash Submission 27.03.2020 at 3.30 PM

Last Date of Close for Bid 27.03.2020 at 3.30 PM to 6.00 PM

Last Date of Re-encryption of Online Bid 27.03.2020 at 6.00 PM to 30.03.2020 at 1.10 PM

S.No.1, Name of Work: Providing green cover to curb air pollution near House No. 217-A Pocket-B to BSES Station near DDA Market, Mayur Vihar PH-II in W.No. 11-E/AC-57 Shah, (S) Zone. Sub-Head: Providing and laying Interlocking Paver Block and tree Guard at different sites in Shadara (S) Zone, Head of account: UDF, Tender Amount: Part-A Rs.54,90,864/- Part-B Item Rate, Earnest Money: Rs.1,12,650/-, Time of Completion: 03 Months, Rates Hold good for: 06 Months, Cost of Tender: Rs.1,000/-, Tender No.: 318729

S.No.2, Name of Work: Providing green cover to curb air pollution at various location in jurisdiction of EE Pr II Shah,(S) Zone in AC 55, 56, 57 & 58. Sub-Head: Providing and laying Interlocking Paver Block and Tree Guard at different sites in Shadara (S) Zone, Head of account: UDF, Tender Amount: Part-A Rs.1,31,93,589/- Part-B Item Rate, Earnest Money: Rs.2,68,050/-, Time of Completion: 03 Months, Rates Hold good for: 06 Months, Cost of Tender: Rs.1,500/-, Tender No.: 318730

The demand draft for tenders cost & earnest money will be deposited in the office of SE (Project)-Shah, South, 3rd Floor, Zonal Office Building, Karkardooma, Delhi-110092. Detailed NIT can be seen from the following website <http://engineering.mcdtenders.com>. (WAP & SMS enabled tenders portal) or from the office of the undersigned. Both tenders cost and Earnest money can be deposited in the form of bank draft of a scheduled Bank in favour of Commissioner, EDMC.

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer (Pr)-II  
Shadara South Zone

R.O. No. 150/DPI/EDMC/2019-20

EDMC'S CITIZENS HELPLINE NO. 155303

### OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER TRANS. LINE MAINTT.

DIV-III JKPTCL UDHAMPUR

Email: [tlmdudh@gmail.com](mailto:tlmdudh@gmail.com) Fax: 01992-270287  
No.-TLMD-III/Udh/7995-98 Dated:-16 /03/2020

#### EXTENSION NOTICE NO:-1

OF E-NIT NO. TLMD-III/UDH/20 of 2019-20 Dated:-13-02-2020.

Due to poor response, the said NIT is hereby extended as detailed below.

#### (A) NIT Detail:-

S. No	Description of NIT	Cost of tender document	Earnest Money (Rs.)
1	"Re-alignment of 220 KV D/C KPTL Between location No. KP175-KP176 at village Baghu Nullah Batote Ramban"	Rs. 5000 (Rupees Five Thousand only)	Rs 3.20 lacs (Rupees Three lacs twenty thousand only)

#### (B) Extension Period:-

1	e-bid submission end date and time	07-04-2020 up to 2:00 PM
	Last date of submission of hard copy of tender fees	07-04-2020 up to 2:00 PM
2.	Date and time of opening of techno commercial bid	08-04-2020 at 03:00 PM
3.	Online Financial e-bid opening date and time	Will be communicated to technico-commercially qualified bidders
4.	Online Financial e-bid opening date and time	Will be communicated to technico-commercially qualified bidders

—sd—  
Executive Engineer  
Trans. Line Maintt. Div-III JKPTCL  
Udhampur

DIP/J: 5455-P

### PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr. P. C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person **Akram S/o Siraj Ahmed** R/o Jhuggi No. 401, LNJP Colony, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence under case **FIR No. 178/14, u/s 379/411 IPC**, has been registered at **P.S. Kamla Market, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said **Akram S/o Siraj Ahmed** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said, **Akram S/o Siraj Ahmed** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused, **Akram S/o Siraj Ahmed** FIR No. 178/2014, u/s 379/411 IPC P.S. Kamla Market is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 24.04.2020.

By Order,

**Sh. Priyga Gupta, MM-08**  
Central Room No.272,  
Tis Hazari Court, Delhi

DP/58/CD/2020  
(Court Matter)

### NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

Dy. CME/Repair for Chief Workshop Manager, N.E. Railway, Mechanical Workshop, Gorakhpur for and on behalf of President of India invites open tenders through on line (E-Tendering) for the following work. S. No. 1. E-Tender Notice No. 26-MWS-GKP-2019-20, "D-Check Schedule Maintenance of GREAVES make 02 No. D.G. Set of Garib Rath Power Car No. 07866 and 07867" Estimated Cost (in Rs.) : 94,38,980/-, Earnest Money (in Rs.) : 1,88,800/-, Last date of tender submission : Upto 11.00 hrs. Date 17.04.2020, Cost of the Tender forms : 5000/-, Period of Contract : 12 Months.

S. No. 2. E-Tender Notice No. & Name of the work : IREPS Tender No. 27-MWS-GKP-2019-20, "D-Check Schedule Maintenance of CUMMINS make 04 Nos. D.G. Set of 02 Nos. Garib Rath Power Car No. 07866 and 07867" Estimated Cost (in Rs.) : 1,70,52,012/-, Earnest Money (in Rs.) : 2,35,300/-, Last date of tender submission : Upto 11.00 hrs. Date 17.04.2020, Cost of the Tender forms : 5000/-, Period of Contract : 12 Months.

S. No. 3. E-Tender Notice No. & Name of the work : IREPS Tender No. 28-MWS-GKP-2019-20, "D-Check Schedule Maintenance of CUMMINS make 04 Nos. D.G. Set of 02 Nos. Garib Rath Power Car No. 07866 and 07867" Estimated Cost (in Rs.) : 1,70,52,012/-, Earnest Money (in Rs.) : 2,35,300/-, Last date of tender submission : Upto 11.00 hrs. Date 17.04.2020, Cost of the Tender forms : 5000/-, Period of Contract : 12 Months.

S. No. 4. E-Tender Notice No. & Name of the work : IREPS Tender No. 29-MWS-GKP-2019-20, "D-Check Schedule Maintenance of CUMMINS make 04 Nos. D.G. Set of 02 Nos. Garib Rath Power Car No. 07866 and 07867" Estimated Cost (in Rs.) : 1,70,52,012/-, Earnest Money (in Rs.) : 2,35,300/-, Last date of tender submission : Upto 11.00 hrs. Date 17.04.2020, Cost of the Tender forms : 5000/-, Period of Contract : 12 Months.

S. No. 5. E-Tender Notice No. & Name of the work : IREPS Tender No. 30-MWS-GKP-2019-20, "D-Check Schedule Maintenance of CUMMINS make 04 Nos. D.G. Set of 02 Nos. Garib Rath Power Car No. 07866 and 07867" Estimated Cost (in Rs.) : 1,70,52,012/-, Earnest Money (in Rs.) : 2,35,300/-, Last date of tender submission : Upto 11.00 hrs. Date 17.04.2020, Cost of the Tender forms : 5000/-, Period of Contract : 12 Months.

S. No. 6. E-Tender Notice No. & Name of the work : IREPS Tender No. 31-MWS-GKP-2019-20, "D-Check Schedule Maintenance of CUMMINS make 04 Nos. D.G. Set of 02 Nos. Garib Rath Power Car No. 07866 and 07867" Estimated Cost (in Rs.) : 1,70,52,012/-, Earnest Money (in Rs.) : 2,35,300/-, Last date of tender submission : Upto 11.00 hrs. Date 17.04.2020, Cost of the Tender forms : 5000/-, Period of Contract : 12 Months.

S. No. 7. E-Tender Notice No. & Name of the work : IREPS Tender No. 32-MWS-GKP-2019-20, "D-Check Schedule Maintenance of CUMMINS make 04 Nos. D.G. Set of 02 Nos. Garib Rath Power Car No. 07866 and 07867" Estimated Cost (in Rs.) : 1,70,52,012/-, Earnest Money (in Rs.) : 2,35,300/-, Last date of tender submission : Upto 11.00 hrs. Date 17.04.2020, Cost of the Tender forms : 5000/-, Period of Contract : 12 Months.

S. No. 8. E-Tender Notice No. & Name of the work : IREPS Tender No. 33-MWS-GKP-2019-20, "D-Check Schedule Maintenance of CUMMINS make 04 Nos. D.G. Set of 02 Nos. Garib Rath Power Car No. 07866 and 07867" Estimated Cost (in Rs.) : 1,70,52,012/-, Earnest Money (in Rs.) : 2,35,300/-, Last date of tender submission : Upto 11.00 hrs. Date 17.04.2020, Cost of the Tender forms : 5000/-, Period of Contract : 12 Months.

S. No. 9. E-Tender Notice No. & Name of the work : IREPS Tender No. 34-MWS-GKP-2019-20, "D-Check Schedule Maintenance of CUMMINS make 04 Nos. D.G. Set of 02 Nos. Garib Rath Power Car No. 07866 and 07867" Estimated Cost (in Rs.) : 1,70,52,012/-, Earnest Money (in Rs.) : 2,35,300/-, Last date of tender submission : Upto 11.00 hrs. Date 17.04.2020, Cost of the Tender forms : 5000/-, Period of Contract : 12 Months.

S. No. 10. E-Tender Notice No. & Name of the work : IREPS Tender No. 35-MWS-GKP-2019-20, "D-Check Schedule Maintenance of CUMMINS make 04 Nos. D.G. Set of 02 Nos. Garib Rath Power Car No. 07866 and 07867" Estimated Cost (in Rs.) : 1,70,52,012/-, Earnest Money (in Rs.) : 2,35,300/-, Last date of tender submission : Upto 11.00 hrs. Date 17.04.2020, Cost of the Tender forms : 5000/-, Period of Contract : 12 Months.

S. No. 11. E-Tender Notice No. & Name of the work : IREPS Tender No. 36-MWS-GKP-2019-20, "D-Check Schedule Maintenance of CUMMINS make 04 Nos. D.G. Set of 02 Nos. Garib Rath Power Car No. 07866 and 07867" Estimated Cost (in Rs.) : 1,70,52,012/-, Earnest Money (in Rs.) : 2,35,300/-, Last date of tender submission : Upto 11.00 hrs. Date 17.04.2020, Cost of the Tender forms : 5000/-, Period of Contract : 12 Months.

S. No. 12. E-Tender Notice No. & Name of the work : IREPS Tender No. 37-MWS-GKP-2019-20, "D-Check Schedule Maintenance of CUMMINS make 04 Nos. D.G. Set of 02 Nos. Garib Rath Power Car No. 07866 and 07867" Estimated Cost (in Rs.) : 1,70,52,012/-, Earnest Money (in Rs.) : 2,35,300/-, Last date of tender submission : Upto 11.00 hrs. Date 17.04.2020, Cost of the Tender forms : 5000/-, Period of Contract : 12 Months.

S. No. 13. E-Tender Notice No. & Name of the work : IREPS Tender No. 38-MWS-GKP-2019-20, "D-Check Schedule Maintenance of CUMMINS make 04 Nos. D.G. Set of 02 Nos. Garib Rath Power Car No. 07866 and 07867" Estimated Cost (in Rs.) : 1,70,52,012/-, Earnest Money (in Rs.) : 2,35,300/-, Last date of tender submission : Upto 11.00 hrs. Date 17.04.2020, Cost of the Tender forms : 5000/-, Period of Contract : 12 Months.

S. No. 14. E-Tender Notice No. & Name of the work : IREPS Tender No. 39-MWS-GKP-2019-20, "D-Check Schedule Maintenance of CUMMINS make 04 Nos. D.G. Set of 02 Nos. Garib Rath Power Car No. 07866 and 07867" Estimated Cost (in Rs.) : 1,70,52,012/-, Earnest Money (in Rs.) : 2,35,300/-, Last date of tender submission : Upto 11.00 hrs. Date 17.04.2020, Cost of the Tender forms : 5000/-, Period of Contract : 12 Months.

S. No. 15. E-Tender Notice No. & Name of the work : IREPS Tender No. 40-MWS-GKP-2019-20, "D-Check Schedule Maintenance of CUMMINS make 04 Nos. D

4 patients in Nagpur stable, says Minister

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NAGPUR

Maharashtra Energy Minister Nitin Raut on Friday said the four Covid-19 patients in Nagpur were stable and the situation in the district was under control.

Mr. Raut, the guardian minister of Nagpur, was addressing a press conference, and did not rule out the possibility of a lockdown if there was a need for it.

Efforts were being taken on a war footing to combat the virus outbreak, he said, and asked people to cooperate with the administration.

"Looking at the situation, the possibility of lockdown cannot be ruled out. In that case, people should cooperate with the administration," said Mr. Raut.

114 travellers from Dubai quarantined

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
PUNE

As many as 114 passengers who arrived here from Dubai by a SpiceJet flight on Friday were put in mandatory quarantine though no passenger on the aircraft showed any major symptoms of coronavirus, a senior official said.

Another passenger, who had mild cough, was taken to the civic-run Naidu Hospital, the official said. All passengers coming from Dubai are kept under observation irrespective of their health condition.

## 'Stop panic buying, reserve food stocks will last seven months'

We have already provided grain stocks for April and May to fair price shops: minister

SHARAD VYAS  
MUMBAI

Maharashtra's food security is not under threat with reserve stocks lasting up to seven months, senior officials said on Friday, hours after Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray announced a lockdown of the State.

Senior Home Department officials put in place an emergency plan, including meeting large traders and wholesale sellers in markets in Mumbai, Thane and Navi Mumbai. At any given time, the government is prepared to provide two months' grain stocks to fair price shops, while the reserves

### COVID-19

can last up to seven months if the lockdown persists, said officials who participated in a meeting to discuss possibilities of hoarding and black marketing in the wake of the coronavirus-related lockdown.

"We are prepared at all levels and have already provided stocks in advance for April and May to fair price shops. In order to curb the spread of coronavirus, which could also infect the beneficiaries of the public distribution system (PDS), we have directed shopkeepers to not carry out the beneficiaries' biometric verification," said Minister for Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Market Yard.

Senior Home Department officials said the police was directed to search large go-



**Shut down:** Traders union of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj market yard, decided to shut the market from March 20 to 22 following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for self-imposed 'Janata curfew' (people's curfew) as a precautionary step to tackle COVID-19. ■ MANDAR TANNU



The deserted Siataburdi market in Nagpur on Friday after Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray appealed for closure of shops till March 31. ■ S. SUDARSHAN

downs and ensure no hoarding was carried out in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. Several godowns were searched for the possibility of stockpiles.

"We searched two such facilities today and found nothing suspicious. We are closely monitoring all the vehicles moving in and out of markets as part of the preventive measures," according to the Inspector General

of Police (Konkan Range) Nicket Kaushik.

Senior officials of the state Food and Civil Supplies Department said advisories have been issued to people to not indulge in panic buying.

"The PDS facility is being made available on e-POS equipment for the period of the shutdown. This will not require the beneficiaries to put a finger or thumb on the

e-POS equipment. There is no need to rush to shops to buy for now. We have goods that will last for the next seven months," said a government official.

Until then, he said, the government was "not taking into account a scenario where we may have to enforce the Essential Commodities Act against the traders found hoarding."

On Friday, Maharashtra reported a total of 52 cases,

## State takes lead to put fliers from U.S. on home quarantine list

Contact tracing led to better understanding of the spread

ADITYA ANAND  
MUMBAI

In its fight against COVID-19, Maharashtra is the only affected State to have included passengers arriving from the United States on its home quarantine list. The government of India list, updated multiple times since the exercise began on January 17, has listed 22 countries on the current list before a week-long curfew on international flights comes into force on March 22.

The U.S. was put on the Mumbai airport's Airport Health Organisation (AHO) list after Health Minister Rajesh Tope issued instructions following his visit to the airport, where staff are grappling with multiple directives, also being frequently updated, from State, Centre, AHO etc.

This would also essentially mean that direct passengers from the U.S. landing anywhere other than Mumbai are not being quarantined. Besides, Mumbai and Bengaluru, other airports are yet to introduce a hand stamping system for those who have been asked to be in home quarantine.

In a late night development, the Union Health Ministry on Friday decided to expand universal screening for all passengers coming from the United States, U.K. and Australia. "They will be either quarantined or isolated depending on their risk profile," the Ministry said in a tweet.

On Friday, Maharashtra reported a total of 52 cases,



A passenger wearing a mask sits in a near-empty Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport in Mumbai on Friday. ■ PTI

list are Iran, Italy, Vietnam, Nepal, Indonesia, Malaysia, China, Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Spain, France, Afghanistan and Philippines. Flights from European Union, United Kingdom and Turkey have been temporarily prohibited.

Agreeing that a common list for the entire country would be the best thing to fight COVID-19, Mr. Tope said the government has been requesting the authorities to thoroughly check travel itineraries of people arriving from international flights to Mumbai for the past one full month. "This check is very important since people have already arrived in the country. We have also observed a trend of some people diverting their travel to a country which is not listed by the Union government and included the U.S. and the European Union, which has since been prohibited to operate flights to India. The flight curfew next week will ease things," Mr. Tope said.

In his press conference, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said he had told the Centre about the need to extend the home quarantine to those arriving from the U.S. and Dubai, as the virus had made it to Maharashtra through these two points initially. Dubai was later included in the list for making a 14-day home quarantine mandatory for even those passengers who used the airport to transit. This list also includes the entire UAE, Qatar, Oman and Kuwait.

Other countries on the

## More homeguards to be recruited to discourage assembly, says Ajit Pawar

Appeals to all to show collective responsibility, stay indoors and curtail travel

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE  
PUNE

The next 15 days would be extremely crucial in tackling the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, said Deputy Chief Minister and Pune Guardian Minister Ajit Pawar and added that more Home Guards would be recruited to discourage assembly across Pune district where the number of positive cases rose to 21 on Friday.

Despite Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray announcing near-lockdown measures for the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, Pune, Pimpri-Chinchwad and Nagpur, dense crowds were witnessed at the Pune railway station as well as the Swargate bus stop, with several anxious groups of students and migrant labourers scrambling to rush back to their hometowns in 'lesser' afflicted districts.

Mr. Pawar warned that if this trend of crowding continued, the government and



Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar addressing a press conference in Pune on Friday amid concerns over the spread of novel coronavirus. ■ PTI PHOTO

Pradesh, Bihar and Chhattisgarh trying to get home. I appeal to people not to panic and fulfil their collective responsibility by staying indoors and curtailing travel," he said.

Admittedly, large numbers of people are still found at the Swargate bus stop and the Pune Railway station. These crowds comprise of students whose anxious parents are recalling them back to their home towns given that the district has registered 21 positive cases or migrant labourers from Uttar

"We are keeping a modicum of bus services in Pune to service the class of cleaners, electricity board staff and others who are providing public services. I again urge people not to crowd near bus stations and indulge in travel when it is not really required. Do not panic, but remember at the same time that this is not a holiday," Mr. Pawar said, exhorting people to remain indoors as much as possible.

He said the State government was well-equipped to deal with containing the pandemic and there was no pressing need as yet to seek funds from the Centre.

He called for humane behaviour to be shown to daily wage labourers and urged employers not to cut their salaries.

"The State government would also be making arrangements to provide essential goods for daily wage earners at nominal prices to ease the burden on them in this hour of crisis," Mr. Pawar said.

### At the helm



Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari with the newly-appointed Chief Justice of Bombay High Court B.P. Dhamadikari during the swearing-in ceremony at Raj Bhavan in Mumbai on Friday. ■ PTI PHOTO

## 8-year-old female leopard rescued in Shirur

Joint team of Wildlife SOS, forest officers bring her safely to Junnar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

An adult leopard, which had caused a panic among local residents, was rescued by the Maharashtra Forest Department and Wildlife SOS from a farmhouse in Shirur in Pune district on Thursday.

The leopard was spotted earlier in the week in Apati Gaon in Shirur wandering outside a farmhouse located next to a sugarcane field. This was immediately reported to the Forest Department and Junnar-based NGO Wildlife SOS who were requested to deploy a rapid response unit at the location to avert a human-wildlife conflict situation.

A press release from Wildlife SOS said that its five-member team accompanied by forest



**Operation leopard:** The rescue team with safety net, restraining equipment and trap cage at Apati Gaon in Shirur. The rescued cat (right) is under observation at Manikdoh Leopard Rescue Centre, Junnar. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

officers and the police rushed to the location with safety nets, restraining equipment and a trap cage. Since operations of this level can be quite nerve-wracking, the team had to exercise caution while

approaching the large and powerful feline. A more careful approach was used by using a food bait to lure it into a trap cage.

The rescue mission lasted several hours after which the

leopard was carefully transported to the Manikdoh Leopard Rescue Centre in Junnar.

The facility provides a transit home for leopards in peril or caught in conflict situations and

currently houses over 30 leopards who cannot be released back into the wild. The leopard has been identified as an eight-year-old female, and is under temporary observation by Wildlife SOS veterinarians.

Kartick Satyanarayan, co-founder and CEO of Wildlife SOS, said, "We are keeping the leopard under close observation while she recuperates from this stressful experience. The area surrounding Shirur and Junnar is right in the middle of leopard territory as the large swathes of sugarcane fields provide ideal hiding grounds for the big cat. During the harvest season, conflict situations tend to escalate as the leopards get displaced from their sheltered homes."

Mahendra Dhore, Wildlife SOS

veterinary assistant, said that rescue operations involving leopards can be dangerous and need careful planning to ensure the safety of the animal and the people. "It is crucial that we spread awareness among the public on issues of conflict mitigation, sensitise people and encourage them to be more tolerant of wild animals," Mr. Dhore said.

Manohar Ramdev Mhasekar, RFO, Shirur, said that awareness boards had been put up across villages. They have a team of 25 trained officers on standby to respond to such situations.

The Indian leopard (*Panthera pardus fusca*) is a Schedule I species, protected under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and is listed as 'Vulnerable' under the IUCN Red Data List.

## School exams postponed in Goa indefinitely

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

PANAJI

All examinations for Class IX to XII, including the board examinations, have been postponed indefinitely in Goa in view of the novel coronavirus outbreak, the state Education Department announced on Friday.

Education Director Vandana Rao said in a circular that the exams were being postponed till further orders.

"In view of the spread of COVID-19 in the country...all examinations from classes IX to XII scheduled from March 21 onwards are postponed till further orders. This includes exams for Class X and XII," she said.

# Foreign dealer bought idol stolen from T.N.

U.S. authorities indict Douglas Latchford in a court in the Southern District of New York

R. SIVARAMAN  
CHENNAI

International antiques dealer Douglas Latchford had purchased a Chandrasekara Shiva, a Chola bronze idol, which was stolen from the Sripurathan temple in Ariyalur district of Tamil Nadu from another dealer Subash Kapoor, who was in Manhattan, the latest filing of U.S. authorities in a court in the Southern District of New York has revealed.

Last year, the U.S. authorities filed criminal charges against Subash Kapoor and seven conspirators, accusing them of operating a \$145-million smuggling ring in Manhattan that dealt with thousands of looted antiquities over 30 years. Kapoor, who is facing criminal charges, has been lodged in Central Prison, Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu.

Recently, U.S. attorneys filed charges against Douglas Latchford and his associate



**International affair:** A file image of Douglas Latchford with his collection of antiquities. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

in the Southern District of New York for smuggling stolen antiquities from Cambodia.

Douglas Latchford, a dual citizen of Thailand and the United Kingdom, was a prominent collector and dealer in south-east Asian art antiquities, especially ancient Cambodian art. From the 1970s, Latchford supplied major auction houses, art dealers and museums

around the world, including in the U.S., with Cambodian antiquities from the ancient Khmer Empire.

From the mid-1960s until the early 1990s, Cambodia witnessed continuous civil unrest and archaeological sites from the ancient Khmer Empire, such as Angkor Wat and Koh Ker, suffered serious damage and widespread looting.

By November 28, 2011, Douglas Latchford shipped the bronze Naga Buddha from London to the dealer in Manhattan. He was also charged with inter-state transport of stolen property, sale and receipt of stolen property, falsification of provenance records in violation of U.S. laws.

Sources said Latchford is known internationally for dealing in Khmer blood antiquities, but what is not known is that before he started collecting Cambodian an-

tiquities, he collected Indian art, especially Chola bronzes. He stashed these pieces in his houses in Bangkok and London.

The filing said, "Latchford allegedly admitted on email that he gave his co-conspirator #2 bronze statues in exchange for false letters of provenance and allegedly purchased the Krishna Dancing on Kaliya from Subash Kapoor."

As part of the indictment, U.S. authorities have seized a Chola bronze of Krishna dancing on the Kaliya serpent. They have also provided the detailed exchanges of how Latchford purchased the Sripurathan's Chandrasekara Shiva bronze for \$650,000 in 2006 (roughly ₹5 crore).

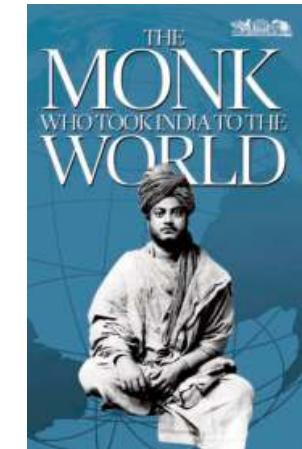
India should formally start proceedings against Latchford to retrieve these stolen idols from Thailand and the U.K.

# Book on Vivekananda will help youth take pride in heritage: PM

He praised The Hindu Group for bringing out compilation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has complimented The Hindu Group of Publications on bringing out a compilation on the life and thoughts of Swami Vivekananda, titled *The Monk Who Took India to the World*.



The front cover of *The Monk Who Took India to the World*. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

undying faith in the dynamism and energy of the youth to become nation-builders. "Swamiji's thoughts and ideals continue to inspire and drive youngsters even today. Ours is a young nation and it is this young India that propels our vision of building a 'New India'."

### Spiritual wisdom'

"The initiative to publish the compilation will help the people particularly the younger generations to take pride in our rich cultural heritage, our roots and spiritual wisdom," Mr. Modi's message said.

"Best wishes to 'The Hindu Group' for all success of the special publication. May the compilation be read and admired widely," the Prime Minister added.

tential. "He gave new energy and a new confidence to the freedom movement of the country," he stated.

Swami Vivekananda, Mr. Modi pointed out, had an

### IN BRIEF



Telangana CM to visit Karimnagar today

HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao will visit Karimnagar on Saturday to monitor the measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Mr. Rao was scheduled to visit Karimnagar on Friday, but the visit was deferred in view of the video-conference conducted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday. The district administration has initiated a series of measures after it was revealed that some people who came from Indonesia to Karimnagar have tested positive for the virus.

## 12 Vietnamese, two guides shifted to Hyderabad hospital

They came to Nalgonda on March 9 from Delhi: officials

STAFF REPORTER  
NALGONDA

District Superintendent of Police A.V. Ranganath announced on Friday that 12 Vietnamese, including two children, and two other accompanying guides, who toured the town for the last 10 days, were shifted to Fever Hospital in Hyderabad.

The operation was carried out around midnight on Thursday after the police came to know about their stay in Nalgonda. A preliminary test was conducted on them, with the help of medical and revenue officials,

and all 14 were shifted to Hyderabad. "Though nobody in the group showed any symptoms of COVID-19, they were shifted as they are foreign nationals, as a precautionary measure," Mr. Ranganath said.

The 12 Vietnamese landed in Delhi on March 4, and reached Hyderabad by train on March 9. They went to Nalgonda on the same day in a hired vehicle, along with the two guides, the police said. According to the Masjid-e-Mahbas, where all of them stayed, the Vietnamese looked healthy.

"They are Islamic preachers allotted here by the Nizamuddin Markas Masjid of Delhi. Such preachers visit here once in six months and stay in mosques," a member said. It was also learnt that the preachers visited a few other mosques in the old town. On Friday, as the news spread with the arrival of electronic media outside the mosque near the District Prison here, Mr. Ranganath was forced to clear the air.

Meanwhile, the police and committee members locked the mosque and sterilised the area.

## 600 foreign students quarantined in A.P.

Students from 31 countries and international faculty are on the KLU campus

RAJULAPUDI SRINIVAS  
VIJAYAWADA

With the government declaring holidays for educational institutions in an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19, about 600 foreign students studying at Koneru Lakshmaiah University (KLU) at Vaddeswaram village in Guntur district were kept in isolation.

The government had ordered the closure of all educational institutions from March 19.

### Hostels to close

Officials instructed the managements of schools, colleges and universities to close their hostels immediately.

KLU international rela-



Checks in place: A mall staff using a thermal scanner to check the temperature of a shopkeeper in Vijayawada. ■ V. RAJU

broad and staying in the hostel – were quarantined and all measures were being taken to prevent the spread of the virus.

### Different countries

"Students from Malaysia, the U.S., Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand and other countries are staying on the KLU campus. As visas are not being issued and international flights too were cancelled to different countries, all the foreign students were quarantined," said Mr. Srinivas Rao.

Dr. Kishore Babu said regular medical checkups were being done and no new students from abroad had entered the campus or into the hostel in the last few days.

## Plea for online liquor lands man in trouble

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOCHI

A tippler who sought a directive to the Kerala State Beverages Corporation (Bevco) to sell liquor through its online portal in view of the COVID-19 outbreak has been fined ₹50,000 by the Kerala High Court for his "reckless, insensitive and insolent action" of filing a frivolous petition during the present trying times.

In his writ petition, Jyothish G. of Aluva said the outbreak of COVID-19 had made it unsafe for him to visit a liquor outlet, which is often crowded, and buy liquor for his consumption.

Hence, he wrote to Bevco with a plea for selling liquor online.

The court directed him to pay the cost to the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund in two weeks.

### Step by step



At arm's length: Railway officials arranged signs for passengers to maintain a safe distance while standing in queue at the Vijayawada railway station on Friday in view of the COVID-19 outbreak. ■ V. RAJU

## Kerala prepares plan to execute package

Target group is daily-wage earners and those who make a living doing odd jobs

N.J. NAIR  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government seems to have charted out a course of action for executing without any hitches the ₹20,000-crore stimulus package drawn up for cushioning the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Since the government is battling a grave resource crunch, doubts have been raised about the options before the Finance Department to mobilise resources for the package. It is understood that the government would avail itself of at least 50% of the annual borrowing limits set for the next financial year by April itself to source funds for the package.

In a tweet on Friday, Finance Minister T.M. Thomas



Safety measures: Employees at a bank wearing masks in Thiruvananthapuram on Friday. ■ S. GOPAKUMAR

Isaac said, "We are front-loading borrowing and spending to the beginning of the new fiscal and redesigning some of the schemes. With a track record of 99% repayment, it should not be difficult to widen the credit window to Kudumbashree."

Earlier, Dr. Isaac had urged Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to

give the go-ahead for front-loading market borrowing for 2020-21 for wiping out the arrears and disbursing pensions to 55 lakh elderly beneficiaries. But the Centre has not heeded the request, sources said.

The accent of the plan is on providing basic amenities to the legions who are facing the threat of being expro-

priated of their spending capacity on becoming unemployed. The target group is mainly daily-wage earners and those who make a living doing odd jobs.

### Dozen new cases

The confirmation of a dozen new cases of COVID-19 on Friday, after a brief lull, has set the alarm bells ringing again in the State. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, briefing the media, spoke of tightened regulations to keep people at home.

The Chief Minister announced a virtual lockdown of Kasaragod district.

Of the 12 new confirmed cases, six were in Kasaragod, five in Ernakulam and one in Palakkad district. The number of patients in the State at present is 37.

## Four held for jumping 14-day home quarantine in Wayanad

They were booked under sections of the IPC, State Police Act

STAFF REPORTER  
KALPETA

The police arrested four persons on Friday in Kerala's Wayanad district for skipping the 14-day home quarantine made mandatory for those returning from foreign countries as part of the precautions against COVID-19.

The arrested were identified as Mohammed Shafiq, 29, of Illikodiyl House at Kunhunippadi, near Muttill; Safer, 32, of Kondanath House at Thomattuchal, near Ambalavayal;

Ashraf, 49, of Karakkulayam House at Pariyaram; and Jose, 35, of Karikkedath House, Adikkolly, near Pulpally. They were working in



Helping hands: Personnel from the Fire Department cleaning the Eloor municipality area on Friday ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the Gulf and had returned to their native places early this month. However, they ignored the directives regarding home quarantine.

They were charged under various Sections of the Indian Penal Code, the Kerala Police Act and the Kerala Public Health Act, sources said.

Meanwhile, Kasaragod MLA N.A. Nelliukunnu and Manjuswaram MLA M.C. Kamrudheen from the IUML, on Friday quarantined themselves at home on learning that a person they had come in contact with at a marriage function had tested positive for COVID-19.

# Lack of clarity left Indians stranded abroad

Airlines blame language of different advisories banning entry of passengers for the confusion at various airports

JAGRITI CHANDRA  
SUHASINI HAIDAR  
NEW DELHI

Many Indians have been left stranded in different parts of the world owing to airlines "misinterpreting" travel advisories issued by the government, according to a senior official of the Ministry of External Affairs.

However, several airlines operating on international routes assert that the circulators lacked clarity, causing utter confusion on the ground.

"At least 20 Indians in London and 32 at Schiphol, Amsterdam, were left behind by airlines because of the misinterpretation of guidelines. Travel advisories barred the entry of passen-

gers coming from Europe or the U.K., but airlines barred those who had travelled from Canada or the U.S. to these countries from boarding," Dammit Ravi, Additional Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, told *The Hindu*.

**Multiple instances**  
He was referring to passengers transiting through the Heathrow airport in London and Schiphol in Amsterdam and being carried by foreign carriers. He added that Indian missions in these countries had requested the airlines to board these passengers but the carriers asked for a clarification in writing.

It is evident from social media accounts that such in-



**About time:** Students stranded in Kuala Lumpur arriving at the Vizag airport on March 18. ■ K. R. DEEPAK

stances are not restricted to one or two countries, but are widespread. Business consultant Rajesh Saigal took to Twitter to post his appeal to External Affairs Minister S.

Jaishankar and ask how India could deny the return of its own citizens. He was offloaded by Singapore Airlines as he transited through Manila. "Almost every country has

banned tourist visas, so people have to be allowed back to their countries. I am only asking you to open your doors to Indians," Mr. Saigal said in a video.

## Transit ignored

*The Hindu* spoke to executives of several airlines, who blamed the language of different advisories banning entry of passengers for the chaos.

A senior executive of an international airline said many advisories omitted the status of passengers in transit, i.e., those travelling from a country from where there is no ban but catching a flight from which there is, or vice versa. This led to much confusion.

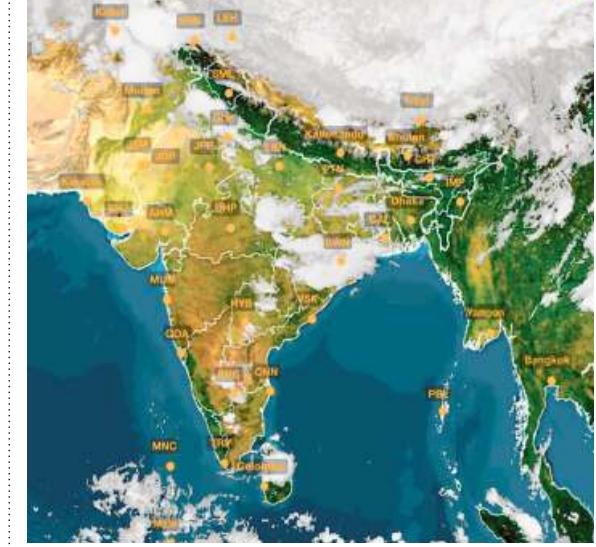
For instance, a circular is

sued on March 16 read, "Travel of passengers from member countries of the European Union, the European Free Trade Association, Turkey and the United Kingdom to India is prohibited with effect from 18th March 2020. The airline shall enforce this at the port of initial departure."

When asked, officials of the Ministry of External Affairs said Indian missions were exploring all options for the return of passengers home, but with the government deciding to suspend all incoming flights from March 22 for a week, thousands of Indians around the world wanting to return have only one day, Saturday, to find a way home.

## WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

**Forecast for Saturday:** Thunderstorms accompanied with lightning likely at isolated places over Odisha, West Bengal, Sikkim, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, eastern Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	... 34.2...	... 27.4	... 21.4	Kozhikode	... 36.0...	27.4	... 21.4
Ahmedabad	... 34.5...	21.4	... 21.4	Kurnool	... 37.9...	26.1	... 21.4
Aizawl	... 25.7...	12.5	... 12.5	Lucknow	... 32.6...	17.4	... 12.5
Allahabad	... 35.2...	16.0	... 16.0	Madurai	... 37.2...	24.4	... 16.0
Bengaluru	... 35.2...	23.3	... 23.3	Mangalore	... 34.8...	24.7	... 23.3
Bhopal	... 32.0...	19.7	... 19.7	Mumbai	... 34.1...	19.1	... 19.7
Bhubaneswar	... 33.7...	18.4	... 18.4	Mysuru	... 35.0...	22.3	... 18.4
Chandigarh	... 28.5...	14.6	... 14.6	New Delhi	... 31.4...	16.4	... 14.6
Chennai	... 35.2...	24.5	... 24.5	Patna	... 31.2...	23.8	... 24.5
Coimbatore	... 36.9...	23.8	... 23.8	Port Blair	... 31.2...	23.8	... 23.8
Dehradun	... 28.2...	12.2	... 12.2	Puducherry	... 33.3...	24.2	... 12.2
Gangtok	... 16.8...	13.2...	8.2	Pune	... 35.7...	18.0	... 8.2
Goa	... 34.2...	22.0	... 22.0	Raipur	... 33.0...	22.0	... 22.0
Guwahati	... 33.1...	16.4	... 16.4	Ranchi	... 1.8...	14.0	... 16.4
Hubballi	... 36.0...	23.0	... 23.0	Shillong	... 18.4...	14.2	... 23.0
Hyderabad	... 13.8...	36.0...	20.3	Srinagar	... 18.5...	7.7	... 20.3
Imphal	... 27.3...	10.4	... 10.4	Tiruvananthapuram	... 35.6...	26.1	... 10.4
Jaipur	... 33.9...	19.4	... 19.4	Vijayawada	... 37.4...	23.8	... 19.4
Kochi	... 33.0...	25.6	... 25.6	Visakhapatnam	... 0.4...	32.6	... 25.6
Kohima	... 26.5...	10.6	... 10.6	Visakhapatnam	... 0.4...	24.6	... 10.6
Kolkata	... 32.5...	22.5	... 22.5				

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

## Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

CITIES

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>x</sub>	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	... 13	... 13	... 13	... 13	... 13	—
Bengaluru	13	60	88	... 158	... 158	—
Chennai	... 5	17	95	... 76	... 76	—
Delhi	... 34	250	... 250	... 250	... 250	—
Hyderabad	... 3	52	33	... 98	... 88	—
Kolkata	22	57	47	... 63	... 63	—
Lucknow	... 4	59	46	... 305	... 305	—
Mumbai	... 50	10	55	... 166	... 166	—
Pune	... 45	16	80	... 70	... 67	—
Visakhapatnam	... —	—	—	—	—	—

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Jodhpur, Rajasthan recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 262 indicating a severe level of pollution. In contrast, Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 39

AQI Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

**SO<sub>2</sub>:** Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

**NO<sub>x</sub>:** Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

**CO:** Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

**PM2.5 & PM10:** Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

## No trains to run on Janata Curfew'

Railways anticipate lack of demand



Arrangements for hassle-free refund of fares to passengers will be made.

structed that adequate arrangements may be made to facilitate hassle-free refund to passengers affected by train cancellations.

"Zonal railways will keep a close watch on the situation at major stations and where needed order special trains to clear rush of passengers who may be stranded at stations despite advance public notice," it said.

**Suburban trains hit**  
The move will impact about 2,400 passenger trains and approximately 1,300 long distance mail/express, and intercity trains. As per the order, such train services that are already running at 7 a.m. on Sunday will be allowed to reach their destination.

All suburban train services in Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai and Secunderabad will be reduced to a minimum as well.

Further, the order in-

## Call centre at AIIMS for COVID-19 aid

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN  
NEW DELHI

In order to provide support to physicians and hospitals across India to manage COVID-19 treatment, the Union Health Ministry has set up a 24x7 call centre at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi. The unit will be manned by top doctors who will offer telephonic guidance on protocols to be followed.

"This support system is crucial to inform hospitals about the new treatment protocols for patients and staff directly dealing with this highly infectious virus. This will also ensure uniformity and quality control in treatment across India," a senior health official told *The Hindu*.

She added that the facility would offer guidance and support to manage critically ill patients and would ensure that the State governments and the Centre worked together.

Meanwhile, the Department of Biotechnology and Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council have now invited project proposals for developing diagnostics, vaccines, novel therapeutics, repurposing of drugs or any other intervention for control of COVID-19 by industry/academia.

## Assam residents stuck abroad to get \$2,000

Tourists from State main beneficiaries

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

The Assam government has decided to transfer \$2,000 to residents of the State who have been stranded abroad for a month and unable to return home due to the global shutdown following the COVID-19 outbreak.

The financial assistance is not for NRIs or people who have been working or studying for a substantial period of time and have houses or hostels to stay in.

"We will be notifying an email ID tomorrow (Saturday) for Assamese people stranded because of shutdown of communication due to the pandemic. We will transfer \$2,000 to their accounts if they went abroad in the last 30 days according to the date of stamping in their passports," Assam's Finance and Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Friday.

"This is for tourists and people who went for training, workshops or seminars and short-term assignments and not for those who have been living abroad permanently or for more than 30 days. If they remain stranded for a longer period of time, we will deal with the situation accordingly," he said.

Mr. Sarma also said the

State government will help the stranded people if their visa or passport expires. "We will take up such cases with the embassy concerned," he added.

## Inflow monitoring

The Finance Minister said all passengers arriving at airports, railway stations and bus stations across the State from outside would be stamped on the hand from March 22. The stamp on the hand of such incoming passengers will read: "Assam needs social distancing. I volunteer to be home quarantined up to..."

He justified the move as a necessity so that people who might be symptomatic do not spread the virus.

Other measures include instructions to railways and operators of public and private commercial vehicles to carry as many passengers as there are seats. "Buses violating this rule will be confiscated," he said.

## Markets under watch

Mr. Sarma also said that municipal officials have been asked to assess the major markets and shopping malls so that they do not accommodate more than a specified number of people calculated on the basis of floor space.

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA KOLHAPUR

In an incident that shows how the fear of coronavirus has become all-pervasive, a man riding a motorbike was thrashed in Maharashtra's Kolhapur on Thursday because he sneezed in public. The CCTV footage of the

incident went viral on social media.

The video showed that a bike-rider stopping and asking another rider why he sneezed without covering his face. This led to a heated exchange, and the man who had allegedly sneezed was beaten up.

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## INSTITUTE OF WOOD SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (INDIAN COUNCIL OF FORESTRY RESEARCH AND EDUCATION)

18<sup>th</sup> Cross, Malleswaram, Bangalore - 560 003.  
No.1-11/2019-20/IWST/Estt./374 Dated:18/03/2020

## RECRUITMENT NOTIFICATION

Applications are invited from eligible candidates for



## The missing notes

Political India should put up a united front against the fast galloping virus

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his address to the nation on Thursday on the coronavirus pandemic, rightly focused on what people should do in what is fast turning into a crisis situation. But there was very little by way of reassurance to the people about what the government was doing, or planning to do, to mitigate the developing crisis. Battling maladies of various kinds all the time, a large segment of the population has developed a detrimental fatalism, against which Mr. Modi had spoken earlier. That complacency has been evident in the social response to the creeping affliction, a nonchalance bordering on irresponsibility. Large gatherings of people at private, State and religious events have continued well after the nature of the disease became clear. The Prime Minister's call for a lockdown on Sunday could prepare the country for stiffer measures if and when the situation so demands. The Prime Minister also held a conference call with Chief Ministers on Friday. To the extent that it communicated a sense of urgency and emergency, the Prime Minister's address was timely. But beyond that it did not achieve much. The States are at the forefront of the fight against the virus, and their capacity is frustratingly uneven across the country. Marshalling all resources available, and launching a complete spectrum defence against the virus is the need of the hour. There are measures that the governments, at the Centre and the State levels, have been taking. For those who expected to hear some reassuring words from the Prime Minister on this, the address was a tad disappointing.

The most effective weapon in the fight against the coronavirus, evidence so far suggests, is social distancing. This requires people to disrupt their lives and livelihoods. The Prime Minister emphatically urged people to keep themselves at home, but did not adequately put them at ease on the looming questions of economic insecurity. There is a task force chaired by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and an early announcement of measures that will alleviate the economic pain will go a long way in seeing the populace through these tough times. It is one thing to instil a collective purpose among the people to meet a common challenge and quite another to do what the governments are supposed to do, and communicate that. While Mr. Modi's address was very forceful on the first, instead of explaining the government's plans to deal with the crisis, he exhorted people to clap for the frontline responders against the coronavirus, who are doing a splendid job, at a particular time. In most parts of the world, this threat to humanity has prompted leaders to put political differences aside, and opposing sides have joined hands. It will be a tragedy if India cannot do the same. To this end, the Opposition should play a more constructive role, and the government must send out a message that it is taking control of the situation.

## Crime and punishment

A society that prefers a male child has already condemned its women to an unequal world

The pre-dawn hangings of four men convicted of the gang rape and murder of a 23-year-old woman may have brought a semblance of closure to her parents, prompting her mother, to say, "Women will now feel safe." On December 16, 2012, the woman was brutally raped in an empty moving bus in Delhi and she died after battling for her life later that month. A little over seven years later, the first date of execution was set for January 22, and the convicts tried all legal avenues possible to escape the punishment. After the executions, on Friday, her mother said, "Families will start teaching their boys that the punishment for such a crime will be severe." But is India any closer to guaranteeing safety for women? In 2012, the government of the day, reacting to the clamour on the streets for justice, set up the Justice J.S. Verma Committee to look into rape laws. The report, filed in a month, led to stringent changes through the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, but several recommendations were simply not considered, including those relating to marital rape and police reform.

On the imposition of the death penalty, the government went against what the Verma report had suggested – that seeking such a punishment "would be a regressive step in the field of sentencing and reformation". Now, repeat offenders in rape cases, even those that unlike the Nirbhaya case did not involve murder, can be awarded the death sentence. The Verma Committee had argued instead for rigorous imprisonment of a convict for life. It is a fact that sexual crimes against women have not come down since the Delhi case. The death penalty could actually encourage the rapist to kill the victim. Going by data in the National Crime Records Bureau report, released in January 2020, a total of 3.78 lakh cases of crimes against women were recorded across India in 2018 compared to 3.59 lakh in 2017 and 3.38 lakh in 2016. The total number of rape cases in 2018 was pegged at 33,356, of which Madhya Pradesh registered 5,450 rapes, the maximum in 2018. The crime rate per one lakh women population was 58.8 in 2018 compared to 57.9 in 2017. At the end of 2018, 33.6% cases were pending police investigation. This raises the key question – what does India need to do to protect its girls and women? It is apparent that laws may have changed, but not mindsets. A society that endorses a preference for the male child has already condemned the girl child to an unequal world. Until Indian leaders, policy-makers and society shed the gender bias and the thinking that they need to protect women as a question of honour, there will be no stopping crimes such as rape, sexual assault and harassment.

# Every man is a part of the main

As literature and history show, crises, which are great levellers, can be overcome by banding together



G.R. GOPINATH

In the Kannada novel, *Samskara*, by Jnanpith awardee U.R. Ananthamurthy, the upper caste Brahmins in a village deep in rural Karnataka, who are caught in the grip of an epidemic face existential dilemmas. Their deeply held religious beliefs and rituals are on test. The chief priest of the village, Praneshacharya, a devout, austere Brahmin, has to provide the answers. His neighbour, Naranappa, an irreverent, rebellious Brahmin, who has a hedonistic lifestyle, and who mocks the Brahmins and their rituals and their superstitions, suddenly takes ill and dies.

### Story of contrasts

There is no one to bury him even as the body begins to decompose inside his house in the 'Agrahara', the Brahmin quarters, because the Brahmins fear they may invite the wrath of the gods and worry about being excommunicated by the head priest of the mutt for cremating a renegade and heretic. They appeal to Praneshacharya to consult the scriptures and find an answer to the problem. Praneshacharya immerses himself in holy texts and prayers but no revelations come to him.

As time rolls by, rats in their thousands die and lie strewn all over the streets, while vultures begin hovering over Naranappa's house. More people start dying in the village and the epidemic kills without discrimination. The village is under the deadly scourge of the plague. The Brahmins are hun-

gry and are not allowed to eat till the cremation is completed. Chandri, Naranappa's companion, is distraught as Dalits cannot enter the Agrahara and refuse to come to her aid. She offers all her jewellery to Praneshacharya and urges him to give it to the Brahmins to bury Naranappa. The Brahmins have by now eaten stealthily. A few relatives of Naranappa lay claim to the jewellery and lobby with Praneshacharya; if they get the jewellery, they will cremate Naranappa. They argue that there may be some provisions in the holy books whereby Naranappa can be cremated under the circumstances they find themselves in.

The scholarly Praneshacharya, who is steeped in iron-clad traditions, is aghast by the unscrupulous behaviour and the greed and does not give his consent till he finds an answer in the holy books. Unable to find any guidance he heads to a temple beyond the village across the woods, and seeks refuge in prayers in the temple. On his way back to the village well past midnight he meets Chandri in the forest who stops him and falls at his feet. He is soon swept away by her irresistible attraction. When he wakes up as the sun rises, he is overcome by shame and remorse, unable to face the Brahmins who are waiting for an answer. He leaves the village under the cover of darkness, devastated.

Chandri, who is desperate to get Naranappa buried at all costs before the body is devoured by rodents, gets a Muslim merchant, a friend, who commiserates with her helplessness, to cart away the rotting body with her help and create it.

This is a powerful story that shatters you and exposes the vanity and hypocrisy and heartlessness of the upper castes and at the same time juxtaposes it and re-

GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO



veals the joyful, earthy humanness and magnanimity of the peasants, Dalits and the robust, healthy cheerful outlook of a lone Muslim merchant of the town, who finds strength and common purpose in fraternity and solidarity rising above petty differences.

### Many meanings

Then, there is another era and continent. In a different context, in Albert Camus' *The Plague*. Here, in the city of Oran in Algeria, an epidemic of bubonic plague breaks out. As dead rats start piling on the streets and people start dying, the authorities, who are in denial and indifferent to the deaths, finally impose a quarantine. Overnight, the people of the city find themselves imprisoned. The total seclusion affects their daily lives and the impact on families suddenly separated from their loved ones throws the town into hysteria and panic. A priest uses the opportunity of the plague, and, invoking his god, preaches refuge in religion to overcome the deadly attack to advance his own standing in the town.

*The Plague* can be read at many levels. At one level it depicts the human condition when natural disasters sweep a city and affect everyone without discrimination and hold sway over the destiny of human beings caught in such a tragedy. It is also about sacrifice, love, friendship, generosity and connectedness while facing death col-

lectively through stoic courage by confronting external forces beyond one's control through fraternity and solidarity. And the story also speaks of the pettiness and the cowardice of those who flee from one's responsibilities to the community. At another level it is an allegorical depiction of the French Resistance against Nazi occupation during the Second World War. The plague is a metaphor for Hitler and the invading German Army.

On the other hand when you are under siege (as it happened to the Jews under Hitler, and France and other countries of Europe which were under occupation by the Nazis Germans during the Second World War), or condemned to live under dictators who are an embodiment of evil (as in Stalinist Russia), when life and death were both uncertain or when you are caught in the inexorable vortex of events of history (such as the partition of India and Pakistan, or the Sikh massacres of Delhi in 1984, the Gujarat riots of 2002, the Syrian war or the recent riots in north-eastern Delhi), and when you have nowhere to run or hide, you realise you may be swept away in the tsunami of hate. You are fated to die, may be perchance to live and your house, shop, or factory may go up in flames depending on your caste, religion, belief and colour of your skin. In times of riots and sectarian clashes that may suddenly flare up or which are stoked by vile politicians and community leaders, and if it rages across regions, and if you happen to be a Jew in a Muslim neighbourhood, or if you are Black or coloured caught in a white supremacist area, or a Hindu in a Muslim-dominated mohalla, a Muslim in a Hindu-majority district or a Dalit in an upper caste locality or a Yazidi or a Christian in a

territory invaded by the Islamic State, your destiny is not in your hands. It is determined by your race and religion and colour. It is decided by the vile things men do when their heart is ruled by hatred, bigotry, obscurantism, stupidity and fanaticism and a lust for power.

### Only destruction

When a pandemic, a tsunami, an earthquake or a flood ravages mankind, it devours everyone – infants and the old, men and women, the sick and the healthy, all races of all religious and people irrespective of their ideological and political denominations. It is blind in its fury and swallows everything in its path, relentless and implacable as it marches on.

A communal or racial flare-up though may appear to the blinded zealot to be to his benefit or to his community's advantage; in the end, the blazing fire of hate will engulf everyone. It will spare no one from both sides of the conflict. It is more destructive than the natural disaster wrought by the gods and is sure to annihilate all.

There is only one way. We must all band together to fight evil. Whether the evil is a scourge of pandemic such as the novel coronavirus outbreak or whether the evil deeds are perpetrated by a few who stoke the fire of hatred, in the end, let us not forget that it will devour us all.

As the poet, John Donne, poignantly said: "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main, ... Any man's death diminishes me, because I'm involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

Captain G.R. Gopinath is a writer and founder of Air Deccan

## Blunting the economic impact of a pandemic

There are a number of helpful actions the government can take in response to the unfolding distress across sectors



RAGHUVIR SRINIVASAN

That screeching noise that you hear is of the wheels of commerce grinding to a halt. The effect of the strong clampdown measures taken by the government to arrest the spread of the coronavirus is beginning to be felt across a swathe of the economy.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his address to the nation on Thursday, said that a task force under Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has been constituted to assess the economic impact of the pandemic and suggest palliative measures.

Here are some suggestions for the task force to discuss.

### Cash transfers

Those such as cab drivers, restaurant waiters, mall workers, domestic help, itinerant retailers and other casual job workers are either already without jobs and incomes or will soon find themselves in that position.

It may not be a bad idea to consider cash transfers of a fixed amount to these vulnerable sections. There are 33 crore accounts under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana that can be leveraged for this purpose. There is also an efficient Public Distribution System prevalent in most States

through which the beneficiaries can be identified for a cash handout.

There are a total of 23.53 crore ration cards in the country according to the National Food Security Portal. Assuming that all of these are below poverty line cards, a transfer of ₹1,000, which is the least that should be considered, will cost the Centre over ₹23,500 crore. Granted that the funds requirement is huge even for this basic amount. We will look at funding possibilities later in this piece.

Last month, Hong Kong announced a cash handout of HK\$10,000 to every permanent resident as a supportive measure. The United States is also weighing the option of a cash handout totalling \$250 billion to its citizens.

### Loan guarantee

Service industries such as airlines, hotels and restaurants and tourism have begun to feel the pinch, and in course of time the pain will extend to the manufacturing sector as well. The immediate problem for the services industry is that the cash spigot has been turned off. There will be revenue and profit issues to deal with later but the immediate crisis is one of cash flows.

While the cash registers have stopped ringing, these businesses have to deal with expenses that cannot be put off such as salaries, lease instalments, loan repayments and so on.

Banks are obviously not going to offer any accommodation to these



businesses given their own issues with sick loans. This is where the government can consider what most of the affected nations in the West have done – offer loan guarantees to affected businesses. Britain has pledged £330 billion of government-backed loans and guarantees, France and Spain have announced €300 billion and €100 billion aid, respectively.

The priority is to keep businesses liquid and that is the reason why these countries have pledged such large amounts as guarantees. The cash machine has to be kept well-lubricated in these difficult times and the government can play a role in that. For a start, it can provide guarantees to working capital loans and link it with assurances from the borrowers concerned that they will secure the jobs in their companies.

### Mortgage holiday

An equated monthly instalment (EMI) holiday can be a huge blessing for individuals and businesses when faced with a job loss, salary cut or loss of revenue. A three-month mortgage holiday should be coaxed out of lenders by the go-

vernment to begin with for businesses in obvious trouble and to those employed by such businesses.

The Reserve Bank of India should show regulatory forbearance in the matter of asset recognition for banks when it comes to these industries. But it should be made amply clear that this is only temporary accommodation till the crisis plays itself out.

God forbid, but if this shutdown prolongs beyond the next couple of weeks, the government may have to look at offering temporary tax relief to businesses. We are looking at an unprecedented situation where revenues are likely to fall off the cliff and cash flows wind down to zero. There are other helpful actions that the government can take such as promptly discharging its bills, refunding taxes without delay, promptly carrying out direct benefit transfers already budgeted for, and, if necessary, even permitting affected businesses to temporarily delay payment of statutory dues such as provident fund and ESI.

### How to finance?

This is difficult but there are viable answers. The resources of the Centre and the States have to be pooled to develop a national response to this unfolding economic tragedy. Kerala, for example, has already announced a ₹20,000 crore package and other States may follow suit. It may be a good idea for the Centre to leverage State resources along with its own.

Second, the government will

have to engage with the private sector while devising assistance measures. There is a lot of expertise and sharp financial minds available in the private sector and these should be tapped into for innovative ideas. The Yes Bank rescue proves the heft of the private financial sector in coming to the rescue of one of its own.

The virus has eaten into the just-a-month-old Budget whose numbers now appear unrealistic.

It is not just tax revenues that are heading for trouble, even the disinvestment budget of ₹2.10 lakh crore now appears unachievable.

Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited and Air India appear destined to remain government companies in the foreseeable future. In this backdrop, it is impossible for the Budget to fund any stimulus programme now. Extra budgetary support will be needed and that is where the idea of a bond issue comes in.

A well-structured, tax-efficient bond issue can be an option to tap into the large pool of domestic savings. The large Indian diaspora can also be tapped into. Remember the Resurgent India Bonds experience of 1998 post-Pokhran? The State Bank of India raised about \$4 billion from non-resident Indians against all odds to help India tide over the immediate impact of sanctions. Why not do something similar now? After all, this is an unprecedented situation for the country as the aftermath of the sanctions in 1998.

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actions and their consequences on nature. We should use this opportunity to rise above barriers of religion, race and region.

VAISHALI SINGH,  
Noida

The President of India, true to his style, quietly spoke from his heart to the readers, with humility, simplicity and straightforwardness. The pick of his message in the wake of the outbreak is clear: We realise how deeply each one of us is connected with everybody else. We are safe if we take care of the safety of others – not only of human beings but also of plants and animals.

C.G. KURIAKOSE,  
Kothamangalam, Kerala

## 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.

**A call to action**  
The Prime Minister's address to the nation seems to have had a remarkable effect (Page 1, "COVID-19: PM calls for social distancing, people's curfew", March 20). When I went out for some essential purchases, it was an eerie experience as there was silence all round. When I did come across a group of people, their voices were muted. The Prime Minister's appeal that there should not be any hoarding is also timely. As a nation we are notorious in shying away from expressing our gratitude to people who do service away from the glare of publicity. Here, the appeal to appreciate the services of those in health services is again an

example of statesmanship. This is an opportunity to demonstrate that irrespective of personal belief, ideology, language, caste and religion, we stand behind the nation.

H.R. BAPU SATYANARAYANA,  
Mysuru

■ This was a thought-provoking speech touching all the key points in the fight against COVID-19. His two most important pieces of advice are: resolve and restraint so that the spread of this viral disease is kept under check. His message of appreciation for health-care workers is praiseworthy. Finally, we should all abide by the golden advice tendered by doctors.

MANI NATARAJAN,  
Chennai

■ Mr. Modi's call for a 'people's curfew' reminds one of the time former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri appealed for unity to counter the food crisis in 1964. One hopes that the chain of action extends to other Sundays till the pandemic is totally under control. The global outbreak requires single-minded and joint efforts by all nations.

# On the frontline, fighting the coronavirus

With 53 confirmed cases, Maharashtra now has the highest number of novel coronavirus cases in India. **Jyoti Shellar** speaks to doctors, medical officers and microbiologists who remain vigilant as the virus continues to spread

**A**t 4.30 a.m. on March 1, a flight from Abu Dhabi landed at the Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport in Mumbai. Among those disembarking from the aircraft was a group of 40 returning from a six-day Dubai-Abu Dhabi tour.

The travellers said goodbye to one another and headed home. Some of them, who live in Mumbai, went home by road. Others began their journey to Pune, Yavatmal, Ahmednagar, Beed and Nagpur. Three women, all senior citizens, went to Belgaum in Karnataka. It is now believed that the novel coronavirus, which has spread like wildfire and brought the world to a grinding halt, travelled with them to Maharashtra.

On March 9, a 51-year-old manager from Pune (to protect his identity, let's call him Praful) and his 42-year-old wife, who were both part of the tour, tested positive for COVID-19. "It was our first foreign tour. Who had thought we would come back to become the index patients of some new kind of virus?" says Praful, who had booked the tour for his 25th wedding anniversary. Praful had saved for over a year and liquidated some of his fixed deposits to pay for the trip that cost ₹85,000 per person. To feel at ease in a new country, the couple also took their 23-year-old daughter along. She too tested positive for COVID-19 the next day, along with the cab driver who ferried them from Mumbai airport to Pune.

"I had started feeling feverish the day we reached home. I popped a paracetamol and went to a doctor the next day," says Praful. At the time, he says, his wife and daughter had no symptoms. "The medication worked initially. But the fever returned. That's when the doctor suggested that I go to the civic hospital to test for COVID-19." On March 9, when he visited the Naidu Hospital, doctors took his throat swab and sent it for testing. His wife, a close contact, was also tested. The reports from Pune's National Institute of Virology (NIV) laboratory arrived a few hours later. Both Praful and his wife had tested positive for COVID-19. This triggered a flurry of activity at the hospital. The couple was forbidden to leave the premises. "We thought that would last 4-5 days. But it's nearing two weeks now," says Praful, who has been admitted in the isolation ward of Naidu Hospital.

What followed was nothing short of an investigation. The minutest movements of the couple had to be pieced together. Two doctors sat with Praful and his wife separately to probe what they had done over the last eight days. One of them was Anil Todsam, the residential medical officer at Naidu Hospital. "History-taking is a tedious task, especially when you are not simply asking medical questions but general questions about their everyday life," he says. Todsam prepared a list of people with whom Praful's wife had interacted. The list was mind-boggling. It included vegetable vendors, the milkman, neighbours, yoga classmates, and a large group of women she had mingled with at a Women's Day event. Todsam began jotting down as many numbers as possible. The exercise took him more than three hours.

On the other hand, Praful had limited contacts. He had been to work one day. Two of his colleagues who sat close to him were put on the watch list. The couple's daughter, a 19-year-old son who did not join them on the trip as he had exams, and the cab driver were also summoned. At the end of the day, a list of nearly 50 contacts was drawn up.

Meanwhile, the larger contact-tracing exercise had begun. "We got in touch with the tour operator and fetched the list of all the group members," says Ramchandra Hankare, the chief medical officer of Pune Municipal Corporation. When Hankare saw the list, he panicked a little. "The group had dispersed to many corners of the State."

## The beginning in Hubei

In December 2019, China first noticed a cluster of patients with pneumonia in Hubei province. On December 31, it informed the World Health Organization about the cases. The cause of the disease was still undetected. The fact that a new virus had surfaced began to be widely discussed and the world closely followed the developments in Hubei. The primary response was to start screening passengers at airports.

On January 18, the international airport in Mumbai, India's second busiest airport, began screening all passengers arriving from China. Travellers feared to have been exposed to the virus were sent to isolation wards as a precautionary measure and their samples were sent to NIV, Pune. By March 1, when the group of 40 returned to India, the screening had been extended to travellers coming from 11 other countries: Iran, Italy, Vietnam, Nepal, Indonesia, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore, Japan, and South Korea. The UAE did not feature on this list.

"The airport was chaotic when we landed. We must have spent nearly



The Kasturba Hospital in Mumbai has been designated as the nodal isolation facility for COVID-19 patients in the city. (Below): Patients with COVID-19 symptoms wait for medical examination outside ward 9 at the hospital. • VIVEK BENDRE/PRASHANT NAKWE



three hours there as many flights had landed around the same time. But we were not screened," recalls Praful. Two days after the couple from Pune became the index patients in Maharashtra, a senior citizen couple from Mumbai, who had travelled in the same group, tested positive for COVID-19 too. By then, the State had activated its Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme cell and informed the civic bodies and district-level officers. "Within a day, the entire Dubai tour group was tracked and brought to hospitals and their contacts were traced. The Karnataka government was also alerted as three people from the group were from there," says Anup Yadav, who heads the Directorate of Health Services, Maharashtra. At first, doctors at the airport screened people but as more countries got added to the list, over 100 doctors from the civic body as well as the State had to be posted there in rotational shifts, he says.

## 'Like soldiers posted on borders'

Vishal Rakh, a 29-year-old speciality medical officer from the civic-run Nair Hospital in Mumbai, was among the first lot of doctors who were posted at the airport for screening. Armed with a thermal gun, an N95 mask, gloves and surgical caps, Rakh's primary role was to detect high temperatures and probe the history of travellers. "For the first few days, travellers were extremely impatient. Many would argue with us because the screening caused them delays. But as news about COVID-19 continued to spread, they began to cooperate," he says. "Most of the travellers are asymptomatic. But they could be in the incubation period and infectious," says Rakh, who has referred two senior citizens to the Kasturba Hospital's isolation facility in the past one week. "Both had a fever, co-morbid conditions, and a travel history to COVID-19-affected countries," he says.

The travellers are divided into three categories. People coming from COVID-19-affected countries and showing symptoms like fever, cough and cold fall in Category A. Those with no symptoms but having co-morbid conditions or who are senior citizens fall under Category B. And those with a travel history but no symptoms fall under Category C. "We had the highest workload during night shifts as most international flights land at that time," says Rakh. He adds

that on an average, they screen 80-90 travellers each during one shift.

At the Kasturba Hospital, Mumbai's nodal isolation facility, 35-year-old resident doctor Avkash Sinha is among those posted on 'COVID-19 duty'. He is the first point of contact at ward 9 where a dedicated COVID-19 outpatient department (OPD) has been opened. He has also been on rounds in wards 27, 28 and 29, which are the quarantine wards for those awaiting results. "Ward 30, which is the isolation facility, is the most restricted ward. Only treating doctors go in and out of that ward. That's where all the patients with COVID-19 are kept," says Sinha, who studied medicine at the Armed Forces Medical College in Pune and has completed Short Service Commission. "We are like soldiers posted on borders. The enemy here is the virus and our efforts are meant to protect the general population," says Sinha, who was posted in Jammu and Kashmir for three and half years. While serving in the Army cantonments, he dealt with infectious diseases like chickenpox.

"As doctors, we are constantly at risk. But we have responsibilities as well," he says. All the doctors have made a pact that they will eat food on time, follow good hygiene and infection-control practices, and be well-rested so that they can serve better, he says. "My parents back home in Jharkhand are concerned. I have assured them that I will be cautious," he says.

## In the laboratory

When fear of the virus crept into India, Pune's NIV was the only laboratory in the country to test samples. By February, the laboratory at Kasturba Hospital was prepared share the load. Trained healthcare staff collect samples from the back of a suspected patient's throat on tiny nylon or dacron swab sticks and dip them in test tube bottles containing a liquid meant to keep the virus viable for testing. These bottles are carried in a thermos-like vaccine carrier to the Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) labora-

tory on the ground floor of the isolation facility at Kasturba Hospital. As the samples arrive, the scientific officers spring into action.

The samples are first put into a lysis buffer solution that helps in breaking the cells and rendering the virus non-viable. Next, the process to extract the RNA of the virus begins, followed by PCR amplification and detection using the real-time PCR system which is connected to a computer running graphs. It is the movement on these graphs that tells us conclusively about the presence of the virus in a sample.

"In a positive test, it takes anywhere between three to five hours to get a screening result and another two hours for the confirmatory result," says microbiologist Jayanthi Shastri, who is at the helm of the Mumbai lab. The lab is working four shifts to test samples 24X7. At present, the facility tests 100-150 samples daily.

"Sample collection is the most critical step in the entire process," she says. "The healthcare staff has to rub the swab stick in such a way that enough cells are collected. If that's not done properly, we cannot interpret the results and the test has to be repeated."

When more and more cases were reported in Hubei, the scientists were not surprised that the virus moved closer home. "We were not in a slumber. The question in our mind was, will this new virus really hit us? Because, for some reason the SARS outbreak in 2002 never did," says Shastri. She adds that preparedness of testing facilities began from January 28 when the Indian Council of

**C** Sample collection is the most critical step. The healthcare staff has to rub the swab stick in such a way that enough cells are collected. If that's not done properly, we cannot interpret the results and the test has to be repeated.

JAYANTHI SHASTRI  
Microbiologist



Medical Research held its very first zoom meeting. "It helped that China released the genetic sequence of the virus on January 11. We got some time to prepare," she says.

Shastri and her team had an added advantage. In 2009, when the H1N1 pandemic hit the world, the Kasturba Hospital's PCR laboratory was upgraded to test respiratory samples for the first time. "Till then we were testing blood samples. But to test respiratory samples, a special set up was needed for the safety of the scientists and technicians who are handling the virus," she says.

Viruses like H1N1 and SARS-CoV-19 latch on to the nasal epithelium. So, the team has to ensure that there is no possibility of aerosolisation (the process of converting some physical substance into the form of particles small and light enough to be carried in the air) in the room where the samples are being handled. Shastri's team of eight, including scientific officers and technicians, wear protective gear like goggles, gloves and medical gowns and work within special biosafety cabinets with HEPA filters that ensure that the harmful pathogens don't come in contact with them.

But they cannot completely ignore the risks associated with their job. "Doctors in wards and OPDs deal with patients. We deal with the virus directly. The risk is equal," says a doctor from the lab, adding that the key is to practice caution instead of being paranoid.

## Basic requirements missing

By Friday, 14 people from the Dubai group tested positive for COVID-19 and five of their close contacts were also infected. In Maharashtra, the number of cases jumped to 53, the highest in India. The death of a senior citizen in Mumbai triggered a debate on the State's preparedness to contain and treat complications. He was on non-invasive ventilator support. Kasturba Hospital, which has admitted all the positive patients from the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, does not have a full-fledged ICU. Medical experts say that negative pressure with changing air conditioning cycles, HEPA filters, ultraviolet lights and anterooms are essential for any isolation facility admitting infectious patients.

"The State's isolation facilities are simple rooms where patients are kept in isolation. The basic requirements of a good isolation facility are missing," says a doctor. Given that we are dealing with a virus that attacks the respiratory system, ventilators and other supportive devices are crucial. "How many of our district hospitals even have intensive care units and ventilators," asks public health activist Abhay Shukla. "The capacity of our public hospitals has to be upgraded before the epidemic accelerates," he says. Dr. Shukla, who is the convener of Jan Swasthya Abhiyan, says the health system in Maharashtra is highly privatised. "In public health

**C** We have implemented lockdowns, restricted movement. But we are dealing with a brand new, sly, mysterious virus and it's hard to predict how it will pan out.

OM SHRIVASTAVA  
Infectious disease specialist

emergencies like these, the State has to in-source private facilities and take control of them," he says.

Experts say that the epidemic is urban so far, but Maharashtra is a globalised State like Kerala, which puts people at high risk. "The population density varies, but we are 50% urbanised. Social distancing and avoiding crowds are steps in the right direction. But we cannot predict how it will turn out."

Such epidemics can throw up surprises. For instance, when three people who were a part of the Dubai tour tested positive in the drought-stricken Yavatmal district, nearly 700 km away from Mumbai, the authorities were taken aback. "We have been reading about it in the news but never thought that the virus would reach us," says Milind Kamble, dean of the government medical college in Yavatmal where the positive patients have been isolated.

Mumbai-based infectious disease specialist Om Shrivastava agrees. The numbers are not overwhelming as of now, he says. "We are in stage two of the epidemic where transmission is still local. Our efforts should be to stop entering stage three, which is community transmission," says Shrivastava. He says the Maharashtra government's response has been commendable so far. "We have implemented lockdowns, restricted movement. But we are dealing with a brand new, sly, mysterious virus and it's hard to predict how it will all pan out," he says. Many experts, including Shrivastava, say that Maharashtra needs to scale up testing. "We should not be complacent. We have to be watchful," he says.

At the Naidu Hospital, the index patients and their daughter have now been shifted to the same room. There is considerable distance between their cots. The couple's son, who did not test positive, has been quarantined on another floor. The trio spend their time watching movies and listening to bhajans on their phones. They are in touch with all the members of the tour group on WhatsApp. Often, the couple skims through pictures from their trip to the Burj Khalifa, Ferrari World, miracle garden, and the mosques. "Everything was so clean and beautiful. I wonder where we got the virus from. It could be from the crowded malls we visited," says Praful. "Initially, people made us feel like culprits. Our names and photos were circulated. It was disturbing," he says. "This is a flu. Why does one have to stigmatise so much?"

FROM PAGE ONE

## Four Nirbhaya convicts hanged to death

The convicts refused. They even declined the morning tea. They were then taken for a final medical checkup. "Mukesh, Pawan and Akshay changed their clothes. But Vinay refused to change. A sobbing Vinay fell to the ground seeking forgiveness. He said he did not want to die and pleaded with the jail staff to leave," the officer said.

The convicts were then taken to the gallows. They were hanged at the same time.

The bodies remained sus-

pended for half an hour before they were taken down. The resident medical officer then declared them dead, said a senior officer.

The March 20 hanging has come after a series of postponements.

The first death warrants were issued by a trial court on January 7 last for January 22 but it was postponed by the court to February 1 and then further postponed to March 3.

On March 5, the trial court issued fresh death warrants for March 20.

## Kamal Nath resigns ahead of floor test

Other BJP leaders in the running for Chief Minister are party chief whip Narottam Mishra as well as Union Ministers Narendra Singh Tomar from Gwalior and Thawarchand Gehlot from Nagda, a prominent face for the party from the Scheduled Castes.

Taking to Twitter, former Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia, whose switch to the BJP along with a bloc of 22 MLAs triggered the collapse of the 15-month Nath government, declared that the people of the State had won.

"I have always believed that politics should be a medium of public service, however the State government strayed from this path. (With PTI inputs)

## 236 virus cases; PM holds meeting with CMs

As the number of cases in Maharashtra rose to 52, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray called for more testing laboratories during the video-conference with the Prime Minister. The new cases were in Mumbai, Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad.

Later in a public address, Mr. Thackeray announced that all shops, private establishments and offices in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, Pune, Pimpri-Chinchwad and Nagpur would be closed from midnight on Friday till March 31, with exception of banks, essential services and shops selling essential commodities.

In Kerala, 12 new cases, including five Britishers, were reported, taking the total number of cases to 37 even as more than 44,000 persons are under observation, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said.

Tamil Nadu imposed restrictions on vehicular traffic from neighbouring Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Only vehicles carrying essential supplies and people on essential travel would be allowed.

The State has suspended bus and Metro Rail services

## Singer's COVID-19 status has politicians worried

The U.P. government also said officials had been instructed to identify the persons present in the three functions attended by Ms. Kapoor, keep them under isolation, and carry out medical tests.

With Ms. Kapoor's announcement, Lucknow recorded four new positive cases on Friday, taking the total cases in the capital to 8 and 23 in the State.

U.P. Health Minister Jai Pratap Singh, who was among those at the dinner party, also went into self-isolation, sources said. Apna Dal president and MP Anupriya Patel said she was present with MP Dushyant Singh on Thursday and would take to self-quarantine.

Ms. Kapoor had travelled from London to Mumbai on



Kanika Kapoor

March 10 before coming to Lucknow as there were no direct flights. She said she had observed signs of flu for the past four days and after testing, found herself positive for COVID-19. "My family and I are in complete quarantine now and following medical advice on how to move forward. Contact mapping of people I have been in touch with is underway as well," she said.

# Justice has prevailed, say PM and Ministers

The hanging is a message for every criminal: Irani

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

Justice has prevailed, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted after the four men, convicted of raping and murdering 23-year-old Nirbhaya, were executed early on Friday.

"Justice has prevailed. It is of utmost importance to ensure dignity and safety of women. Our Nari Shakti (woman power) has excelled in every field. Together, we have to build a nation where the focus is on women empowerment, where there is emphasis on equality and opportunity," he said, without directly mentioning the Nirbhaya case.

Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani told reporters, "I greet this day with aplomb that justice has finally been done to Nirbhaya. The hanging is a message for every criminal that one day the law will catch up with you. It will



**In the end:** An ambulance bringing the bodies of the four convicts for post-mortem examination to the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital in Delhi on Friday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

send out a strong message to criminals that they cannot escape the law".

### 'Time to introspect'

Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said it was time for introspection by the judiciary and the government to ensure that death row convicts not be allowed to manipulate the system to delay for seven years.

"It's a day of satisfaction that a daughter, who underwent so much pain, has got justice," he told reporters outside the Parliament House.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal called for a collective resolution to plug loopholes in the system. "After seven years, Nirbhaya case convicts were hanged today. It's a day to take a resolution

that we will not allow another Nirbhaya case. Police, courts, State governments and the Centre should resolve to collectively remove loopholes in the system to let this not happen to any daughter," he tweeted in Hindi.

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said, "Let us always remember that anyone who outrages the dignity of wo-

men will not be forgiven. Let us create new India where every woman is respected and given equal opportunity," he tweeted.

"I will keep fighting for the daughters who are fighting a legal battle. My daughter got justice and now I will ensure other women also get justice. What happened to my daughter should never get repeated," she said, and urged all parents to report crimes against their daughters.

Party leader Ameen Yajnik said, "I think Nirbhaya's justice is delivered by the judicial system because of whatever evidence was there but the implementation of the Nirbhaya Fund is not happening. It is a sorry state of affairs. I think the government should speak up about the plan or the road map for giving safety and security to the women of this country".

## Faith in the system restored, says mother

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

Justice was delayed but not denied, said Nirbhaya's mother, after her daughter's rapists were hanged.

"It is a victory for all women and daughters. I want to thank everyone, judiciary and government for this. The way the courts acted proactively in the last 24 hours, in the dismissal of all petitions filed by the convicts, has restored my

men will not be forgiven. Let us create new India where every woman is respected and given equal opportunity," he tweeted.

### Nirbhaya Fund

The Congress targeted the Modi government for not doing enough including non-utilisation of the Nirbhaya Fund that was meant to enhance the safety of women.

## LS passes Bill on national importance tag for IIITs

"They have recorded 100% placement"

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha on Friday passed a Bill to confer the status of Institution of National Importance (INI) on five more Indian Institutes of Information Technology.

The Bill proposes to bring the five institutions – located in Surat, Bhopal, Bhagalpur, Agartala and Raichur – under the Indian Institutes of Information Technology (Public-Private Partnership) Act, 2017, similar to the other 15 IIITs established under the scheme through public-private partnership.

These five IIITs, along with the 15 others, will be able to use the nomenclature of Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech) or Master of Technology (M.Tech) or Ph.D degrees. The status will also help the institutes attract students required to develop a strong research base in information technology.

Human Resource Development Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal said such institutes had recorded 100% placement.

These institutes followed the reservation policy announced by the government, he said, clearing the doubts raised by some MPs.

Ram Kripal Yadav of the BJP underscored the need for opening more such institutes in Bihar. Saugata Roy of the Trinamool Congress supported the Bill and urged the government to look into the curriculum of these IIITs to put them on a par with the IITs.

After feedback from industry, the norms will come into effect on April 1

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has for the first time introduced leasing of defence equipment as a new category for acquisition in the draft Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) 2020.

The draft was released by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday for further suggestions from industry before being finalised for promulgation. It will come into effect from April 01, 2020, and supersede DPP 2016. "This DPP would remain in force till 31 March 2025," the draft said.

Other proposed measures include making after-sales support part of the capital acquisition contract, higher indigenous content in acquisitions and incentives for local material and software and emphasis on product ex-

port under offsets. The draft was finalised by a committee headed by the Director General (Acquisition), which was set up in August 2019.

Leasing has been introduced as a new category for acquisition in addition to the existing 'Buy' and 'Make' categories to substitute huge initial capital outlays with periodical rental payments, the draft stated.

"Leasing is permitted under two categories, Lease [Indian] where Lessor is an Indian entity and is the owner of the assets and Lease [Global] where Lessor is a Global entity. This will be useful for military equipment not used in actual warfare like transport fleets, trainers, simulators, among others," the draft stated.

The draft proposed increasing the indigenous content stipulated in various ca-

tories of procurement by about 10% to support the 'Make in India' and a simple and realistic methodology had been incorporated for verification of indigenous content for the first time, the MoD said.

It included "assurance of procurement on a single vendor basis from Aero Engine manufacturing unit and chips from FAB manufacturing units established in the country."

New chapters have been

introduced for procurement of software and systems related projects due to fast obsolescence, Post Contract Management to facilitate and provide clear guidelines, given long time of defence deals. Another new category introduced is 'Buy' (Global - Manufacture in India) with minimum 50% indigenous content on cost basis of total contract value.

The scope and options for product support have been widened to include contemporary concepts like Performance Based Logistics (PBL), Life Cycle Support Contract (LCSC) and Comprehensive Maintenance Contract (CMC) to optimise life cycle support for equipment. "The capital acquisition contract would normally also include support for five years beyond the warranty period," it added.

## Courts can order passport surrender in contempt cases: SC

"This is in order to ensure the presence of the parties"

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has held that courts are empowered to order parties in a contempt case to surrender their passport in order to ensure their presence in the proceedings.

"In order to ensure the presence of the parties in the contempt proceedings, the court is empowered to pass appropriate orders, including the surrender of passport," a Bench of Justices R. Banumathi and A.S. Bopanna held in a judgment pronounced on March 19.

The court clarified that contemporaries would only be depositing their passport with the court.

The court was hearing a



contempt case in connection with a civil suit on partition of a disputed property in Delhi. A Single Judge of the Delhi High Court had ordered one of the parties in the dispute to surrender his passport. However, a Division Bench of the court set aside the Single Judge order on August 1, 2018. It held that there was no need to "detain" the passport and ordered its return.

But Justice Banumathi agreed with the Single Judge's order. "The order [of the Single Judge] was passed to ensure the presence of the first respondent [contemnor] and compliance of the order of the court. It cannot be said that the Single Judge exceeded the jurisdiction or committed an error in ordering the surrender of the passport," Justice Banumathi wrote in a 21-page judgment.

The court referred to a 2003 decision in David Jude vs. Hannah Grace Jude, in which the top court directed the Centre to cancel the passport of the contemnor to ensure her appearance before the court on the date of hearing.

Mr. Mehta said the "broad and omnibus" directions arbitrarily passed by the High Courts would have a "catastrophic" strain on national finances, and in fact, on the nation's ongoing

## SC stays orders by HC on tax recovery cases

Solicitor General makes a plea

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday stayed the interim orders passed by the Kerala and Allahabad High Courts to defer Central and State tax recovery proceedings, including the GST, till April 6 on account of the COVID-19 outbreak.

A Bench led by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar ordered a freeze on the implementation of the High Courts' orders on an urgent motioning made by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta for the Centre.

Mr. Mehta said the World Health Organisation for its response," Mr. Mehta said. The orders were passed by High Courts on March 19. The courts also extended limitations to conclude tax assessments.

battle against the pandemic and its monthly commitments like payment of salaries.

### Fully committed

"The government is conscious of the prevailing situation and will take suitable measures to alleviate any hardship... The government is fully committed to using all its resources at its command to deal with the situation arising out of the coronavirus pandemic and it is taking pro-active precautions and measures... It has also been praised by the World Health Organisation for its response," Mr. Mehta said. The orders were passed by High Courts on March 19. The courts also extended limitations to conclude tax assessments.

### IN BRIEF



Peter Mukerjea released on bail from Mumbai jail

MUMBAI

Former television executive Peter Mukerjea, accused in the Sheena Bora murder case, was released from jail on Friday after being in prison for over four years. He was granted bail by the Bombay High Court on February 6, but it stayed the order as the Central Bureau of Investigation wanted to appeal against it. He was released after the stay ended on Friday.

### CBI books 4 ex-officials of Mahanadi Coalfields

NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered a case against former officials of the Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL), a subsidiary of Coal India Limited, and 25 coal-consumer companies for allegedly causing a loss of ₹97 crore to the exchequer during 2013-17. The then Chief Manager (Finance) Kaberi Mukherjee, then Senior Manager (Finance) Anil Kumar Bhowmik, then Senior Manager (Finance) Deba Jyoti Chakraborty and then Deputy Manager (Finance) Srivalli Veeraghanta were named in the FIR.

### NRC rejection slip issuance delayed

GUWAHATI

The National Register of Citizens (NRC) authority in Assam has deferred issuing rejection slips to the 19,06 lakh people excluded from the updated list of citizens because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The process was expected to start on Friday.

## Eight killed in blast at cracker unit in Sattur

Unit was making fireworks illegally

**S. SUNDAR**  
SATTUR

In one of the worst accidents in the fireworks industry here, eight workers were killed and seven out of the nine injured were critical after an explosion at Rajamal Fireworks in Chippiparai on Friday afternoon.

The majority of the deceased as well as injured were women. Most of the victims were from neighbouring Tenkasi and Thoothukudi districts.

The unit's owner, R. Ga-

nesh, 37, of Vellaiyapuram near Sivakasi, had a licence only to make small crackers, and had violated norms by attempting to manufacture "fancy" (aerial) crackers, Collector R. Kannan, told *The Hindu*.

Stating that the workers lacked knowledge about handling certain chemicals, he said that mishandling could have led to the accident. The exact cause of the fire that sparked the explosion around 3.10 p.m. is under investigation.

The ED informed the court that it had found 19 more companies linked to Kapoor and his family. Kapoor was remanded in judicial custody till April 2. The ED told the court that it was trying to unravel the money trail, and how the

money was brought into these new companies. It had earlier claimed that Kapoor

# House session under a cloud

MPs including Dushyant Singh, Anupriya Patel, Derek O'Brien in self-quarantine

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

At least seven parliamentarians have so far announced self-quarantine after coming either directly or indirectly in contact with persons affected by the COVID-19.

Three lawmakers – BJP MP Dushyant Singh, Apna Dal MP Anupriya Patel, and TMC MP Derek O'Brien – announced the self-quarantine on Friday.

Earlier this month, Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan, BJP MP Suresh Prabhu and Sukhendu Shekar Ray of the Trinamool Congress had gone into self-quarantine after coming in direct or indirect contact with affected patients. Another BJP MP Varun Gandhi is the latest lawmaker to self-quarantine.

The parliamentarians' decisions have led to growing chorus to defer the ongoing Parliament session.



Derek O'Brien

The second part of Budget session is only scheduled to end on April 3.

Earlier in the day, Rajya Sabha Chairman Venkaiah Naidu read out the leave application of Mr Ray, who sought leave for "self-quarantine" because of growing number of coronavirus affected persons.

In his leave application, he quoted the government's orders to avoid large gatherings.

This prompted deputy

leader of the Congress Anand Sharma to point out that Parliament is functioning as an exception to the government's own decisions.

"Firstly, the Epidemics Act has been invoked in Delhi and in the rest of the country. So, is Parliament exempt from the laws which Parliament makes? Government has invoked the Epidemic Act in Delhi," Mr. Sharma said.

Flagging a Press Information Bureau notification which recommended that those above 65 years should not venture out of their houses, he said, "I am above 65. Hon. Chairman is above 65. There are so many Members above 65. So, what example is Parliament setting about the respect for the laws of the land and government's notification?"

At this Mr. Naidu immediately responded with:

"God Bless you! Nothing will

happen to you and me."

Announcing his self-quarantine, Mr. O'Brien said in a video message: "About 44% of MPs in Rajya Sabha and 22% in Lok Sabha are 65 years or above. The government preaches one thing and practices another."

Speaking during the Zero Hour, when parliamentarians are allowed to raise issues of public importance, at

## COVID-19

least three members spoke on issues related to the outbreak.

CPI(M)'s Jharna Baidya demanded that biometric authentication for public distribution system should be suspended till the outbreak was reined in.

She said the Left government in Kerala had already brought in this change.

# MPs call for concrete steps

'Ministers touting alternate therapies without evidence'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan told the Lok Sabha on Friday that the government was following scientific and validated protocols for testing COVID-19, even as the government faced flak from MPs for Ministers "touting alternate therapies without scientific validation and confusing the public at large".

Dr. Vardhan made the intervention during the Question Hour, while his Cabinet colleague, Minister for AYUSH Shridip Naik, was facing questions on his Ministry's advisory on traditional medicine systems with regard to COVID-19.

"I want to assure all the members that we're doing testing and treatment as per scientifically advised protocols," Dr. Vardhan said in response to Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) MP Ritesh Pandey's question on why more testing was not being done.

Dr. Vardhan said the many theories over the origin of the COVID-19 in China were not something to dwell on.

"I do not think there is any need for any apprehen-



**For scientific protocols:** Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan speaking in the Lok Sabha in New Delhi on Friday. ■ PTI

sion. A lot of things are making the rounds on WhatsApp and all. At the moment, as per our conversations with the WHO, there is neither any authenticity nor any substance in those reports," he said in response to a direct question from Congress member Manish Tewari, who had apprehensions over the origin of the virus as not being "naturally occurring" but the result of a scientific experiment gone wrong.

Dr. Vardhan said that as far as the reports of origin of the virus was concerned, it was an ongoing process and that the Chinese government had informed the WHO at various stages. "Every time a new virus comes,

it gets mutated and a new virus comes. China reported the first case in their country to whole world on 30th of December when they said that they have noticed some cases of pneumonia, which have an unknown aetiology and they were not able to pinpoint the actual cause of that. On 7th January, 2020, they reported to the World Health Organisation that they have been able to establish that this is probably a new coronavirus," he said.

Congress MP from Nalgonda Uttam Kumar Reddy said that due to the AYUSH Ministry's advisory, the Telangana government was distributing medicines claiming they can deter COVID-19.

It gets mutated and a new virus comes. China reported the first case in their country to whole world on 30th of December when they said that they have noticed some cases of pneumonia, which have an unknown aetiology and they were not able to pinpoint the actual cause of that. On 7th January, 2020, they reported to the World Health Organisation that they have been able to establish that this is probably a new coronavirus," he said.

Congress MP from Nalgonda Uttam Kumar Reddy said that due to the AYUSH Ministry's advisory, the Telangana government was distributing medicines claiming they can deter COVID-19.

It demanded that a financial package be instituted for sectors particularly hit by the pandemic. The informal sector should also be remembered during such a hand-holding exercise, the party said.

# States discuss measures taken to check COVID-19

They seek funds from PM Modi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

From demanding financial support for those who may be out of work because of social distancing to offering scientific laboratories in their States for testing, the Chief Ministers of several States discussed with Prime Minister Narendra Modi the action taken to deal with COVID-19.

Mr. Modi said the threat of the pandemic was common for all States and underscored the need for the Centre and the States to work together. He said that while the participation of citizens was necessary to combat the challenge, panic should be avoided.

He said the next 3-4 weeks were crucial to containing the spread of the virus, and the most important measure for containment would be "social distancing".

"The Janata Curfew called by the Prime Minister can have a positive impact. The government of Maharashtra too has taken timely steps to stop the spread of the disease. However, even if the present number of patients looks small, we need not be delusional about the spread of the disease, looking at the pattern all over," Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray told the Prime Minister, according to a release issued by the Chief Minister's office.

Mr. Thackeray has also requested that the capacity of testing centres and laboratories be increased.

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik requested that Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme workers be paid wages for at least 50 days. He also asked for funds for families covered under the National Food Security Act, additional instalments for farmers under Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi and an economic package for various sectors.

Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao requested Mr. Modi to utilise the facilities at the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) in Hyderabad for testing suspected cases. The CCMB had the capacity to test 1,000 samples at one go, he said in a statement. Mr. Patnaik requested that Indians stranded in international airports be "airlifted," and there be restrictions on international travel.

Mr. Modi suggested that the Chief Ministers conduct videoconferences with trade bodies to prevent black-marketing and price increases.

The COVID-19 Economic Response Task Force set up by the Centre, he said, would formulate the strategy to devise a "suitable approach" to effectively tackling the economic challenge.

**GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH, APEWIDC, VIJAYAWADA**

Door No.9-76, Sai Fortune Heights, Block-A, Vaddeswaram, Guntur (Dt)-522502.

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"e-Procurement Notice Inviting Tender for Ceiling Fans, Water Supply & Sanitary Items"

a) NIT No : 48 : procurement of ceiling fans to Govt. Schools in Andhra Pradesh, ECV Rs.30.00 Crores (2<sup>nd</sup> Call)

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Submission of bids through online : from 23-03-2020 to 30-03-2020 up to 15.00 Hrs and will be opened at 15.30 Hrs.

For all details, visit e-procurement Platform @ [www.apaprourement.gov.in](http://www.apaprourement.gov.in)

Sd/- Managing Director, APEWIDC, Vijayawada.

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, DEPARTMENT OF SPACE Construction & Maintenance Group, ISRO HQ, LPSC Campus, 80 Ft. Road, HAL II Stage, Bengaluru -08 Ph:080-25037-192/193/388 Fax: 080-25203763**

**Corrigendum-1 Date: 19.03.2020**

On behalf of the President of India, applications are invited for prequalification of Structural Design Consultancy firms for the following steel structure.

**Title of work: Pre-qualification of Structural Design Consultancy firms for Detailed Engineering of Steel Structures for New Launching Station for Small Satellite Launch Vehicle at Tiruchendur, Tamil Nadu.**

Tender Notice No. CMG/ISRO-HQ/C/C/16/2019-20

Date: 02.03.2020

Approx. cost Rs.140.00 Crore

Period of Completion Two (02) Months

Period during which the tender document can be downloaded From 10:00 Hrs on 03.03.2020 to 16:00 Hrs on 13.03.2020

**Extended Upto: 06.04.2020 16.00 Hrs**

Last date and time for receipt of tenders Upto 14:30 Hrs on 20.03.2020

**Extended Upto: 15.04.2020 14.30 Hrs**

Due date and time of opening of tenders 15:00 Hrs on 20.03.2020

**Extended Upto: 15.04.2020 15.00 Hrs**

Cost of tender Document Rs.590/- (Incl. GST) + Rs.500/- extra for Postal Requisition

Detailed tender notice and Tender documents can be downloaded from [www.isro.gov.in](http://www.isro.gov.in)

Sd/- Group Head, CMG, ISRO HQ

INTERVIEW | P. CHIDAMBARAM

# Coronavirus does not respect moral armaments'

'₹5 lakh crore will be needed to deal with economic crisis'

SANDEEP PHUKAN



**Former finance minister P. Chidambaram says the government should seize the moment and go for a lockdown in view of the COVID-19 crisis, and suggests a roadmap to deal with the economic fallout.**

You would have heard Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech carefully. What did you make of it?

■ I can understand the Prime Minister's desire to not cause panic. At the same time, the Prime Minister should not give the impression that things are under control and will be under control by these symbolic measures. Coronavirus does not respect moral armaments.

You supported the Prime Minister's message last night and have changed your position now...?

■ I have not changed my position. As a citizen, I am bound to support the Prime Minister when he appeals to the nation in an emergency or a crisis. But immediately thereafter, I pointed out that the Prime Minister's appeal does not go far enough. I have no doubt that he will be compelled to come back to the people in two or three days with tougher measures, including social and economic measures. I believe they [the Modi government] are borrowing the idea of NYAY [minimum income guarantee scheme], which was in our manifesto, and they are planning [to provide] a certain monthly allowance to the very poor people, whether it will cover 20% or 25%, I do not know. I am very happy about it.

Do you think that the government will have the fiscal space to do so?

■ The government has to create the fiscal space for it. I think the shortfall in Budgeted revenues will be more or less made up by the savings in crude oil prices. The total government expenditure in 2020-21 will be a little over ₹30 lakh crore and all State governments put together will spend between ₹40 lakh and ₹45 lakh crore. We are, therefore, talking about a scale of expenditure in the region of ₹70 lakh to ₹75 lakh crore for the whole country. To tide over the crisis, caused by a lock-down, and economic hardship, the government may have to mobilise about ₹5 lakh crore.

You have been advocating a partial lock-down. Many

would argue that that's not feasible in India without better social security.

Moreover, the Constitutional system doesn't allow it.

■ You will be surprised how

resilient people are. I am convinced, after reviewing developments in the rest of the world, that it is imperative to lock-down our towns and cities for two to four weeks. I agree it will be more difficult to implement a lock-down in rural India. The only way to ensure that we don't move from stage two to stage three [in the epidemic] is to seize the moment. Every epidemiologist tells us that this moment will pass in 10 to 14 days.

The first thing the govern-

ment should do is, by law, direct that all registered em-

ployers shall maintain

silence down by 2%, our economy will also slow down by up to 2%. I have no knowledge about the length of the impact of COVID-19, but let's assume that the worst phase will be contained, say, in four to six months. So the economic package we are talking about is for four to six months.

current levels of employment and wages. The economic losses that they will suffer must be compensated by tax credits, deferred credits and outright grants in some cases. Once you ensure that all registered employers maintain current levels of employment and wages, the informal sector who will not be compensated. For them, you will have to make a monthly payment on the lines of the NYAY programme.

Second, in agriculture, I think the PM KISAN amount should be doubled straightforwardly, the other half amount should be paid straight away, and tenant farmers should be brought within its scope. The bulk of agricultural labour will also be partially protected.

I think the Prime Minister should have addressed a video conference with all Chief Ministers several days earlier, which he is doing today. I think our Constitution is resilient enough and flexible enough to be interpreted to give such powers to the executive. Several State governments are ahead of the Central government. Punjab has stopped all public transport, Maharashtra has declared Section 144 in many parts of Mumbai.

In terms of numbers, what do you think would be the impact of COVID-19 on the Indian economy?

■ If the world economy

slows down by 2%, our economy will also slow down by up to 2%. I have no knowledge about the length of the impact of COVID-19, but let's assume that the worst phase will be contained, say, in four to six months. So the economic package we are talking about is for four to six months.

# Probe death of patient, says Congress MP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Former Union Minister and Congress MP Manish Tewari on Friday demanded an inquiry into the death of one of his constituents who was suspected of being COVID-19 positive after returning from Australia, but was found dead at Safdarjung Hospital in New Delhi on March 19.

Minister of State for Home G. Kishen Reddy was present in the Lok Sabha when the Congress MP from Anandpur Sahib made the demand during Zero Hour.

"This young man was from my constituency, and had just flown in from Sydney. He was checked and his temperature was said to be high. After that, without any information being given to his mother who was with him, he was whisked away," said Mr. Tewari.

# Nepal to contribute to COVID-19 fund

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Nepal has announced a contribution of 10 crore Nepali rupees for the SAARC COVID-19 Emergency Fund. The announcement was made by Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli who also declared other measures to safeguard Nepal during the crisis.

# Italy's toll hits another one-day record

Country adds 627 fatalities; Wuhan reports no new cases for first time since COVID-19 outbreak began

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

GENEVA

Italy reported a dramatic surge in coronavirus (COVID-19) deaths on Friday as the pandemic spread further across the planet, but Wuhan in China reported no new cases, sparking a glimmer of hope. Worldwide fatalities from the pandemic swept past 10,000, with the number of infected people topping 2,50,000, according to an AFP tally.

Italy, already the worst-affected country in the world, added another 627 fatalities, taking its reported total past 4,000 despite government efforts to stem the pandemic's spread.

## 36.6% of deaths

The nation of 60 million now accounts for 36.6% of the world's COVID-19 deaths.

Governments and central banks continued to throw unprecedented sums of money into the economic battle, hoping against hope that a deep global recession could somehow be dodged.

## COVID-19

In a rare incident of encouraging news Wuhan, the Chinese city where the new coronavirus first emerged in December, reported no new cases in 24 hours. "Wuhan provides hope for the rest of the world that even the most severe situation can be turned around", World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a virtual news conference. But hours earlier, California, among the worst hit State in the United States, told its 40 million residents to stay at home, the most drastic move yet in the U.S.

The California measures will, however, not be en-



**In emergency gear:** Members of Spain's Military Emergencies Unit disinfecting the Josep Tarradellas Barcelona-El Prat airport. ■ AFP

forced by police, unlike in France, Italy, Spain and other European countries where people face fines if they break the rules. Britain, meanwhile, ditched its more relaxed attitude on Friday, telling cafes, pubs, bars, restaurants, nightclubs, theatres and leisure centres to close.

Germany's biggest State Bavaria on Friday became the first region in the country to order a lockdown, imposing "fundamental restrictions" on going out for two weeks. The strict measures follow the template set by China, as a lockdown imposed in Hubei province, where the virus first emerged, appeared to have paid off. Italy, which has seen more than 1,500 fatalities in the past three days alone, has now recorded the five highest one-day tolls officially registered around the world and a total of 4,032.

China's death count was steady at 3,248, according to the AFP tally of official data.

Europe now accounts for more than half of the fatalities linked to the COVID-19 disease around the world.

## U.S. suspends visa services

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

The United States said on Friday that it was suspending all routine visa services around the world due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

U.S. embassies and consulates will still consider emergency visas if they have adequate staff, the State Department said. "In response to significant worldwide challenges related to the CO-

VID-19 pandemic, the Department of State is temporarily suspending routine visa services at all U.S. embassies and consulates," a travel advisory said.

The State Department had already said it was suspending visa issuance at most posts overseas. But Friday's order was global and, while temporary, there was no date set for services to resume.

## Iran vows to defeat virus

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

TEHRAN

Iran's Supreme Leader and President promised on Friday that the country would overcome one of the world's deadliest viral outbreaks just as it had faced down sweeping U.S. sanctions. In messages marking the Persian New Year holiday Nowruz, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani both trumpeted Iran's success in withstanding U.S. sanctions on the country's vital oil sector.

difficult. Ayatollah Khamenei paid tribute to the sacrifices of the country's doctors and nurses in tackling the virus, which has infected at least 18,407 people in Iran and killed 1,284, according to an official tally.

In his message to Iranians, broadcast shortly after the Supreme Leader's, Mr. Rouhani trumpeted Iran's success in withstanding U.S. sanctions on the country's vital oil sector.

## Netflix, YouTube reduce image quality in Europe

This is to ease pressure on the Internet

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BRUSSELS

Netflix and YouTube will reduce the default image quality of streaming video in Europe to ease pressure on the Internet, the firms said on Friday, as demand soars with millions confined to their homes over COVID-19 fears. EU Commissioner for the Digital Economy Thierry Breton urged Internet giants to switch from high definition to the former standard definition.

Late on Thursday, entertainment platform Netflix agreed, and on Friday Google's video-sharing service YouTube said it would follow suit. "Following the discussion between Google's CEO, Sundar Pichai, YouTube's CEO Susan Wojcicki and Commissioner Thierry Breton we are making a commitment to temporarily switch all traffic in the EU to



**It was here:** A faded flag of the Islamic State in Raqa, Syria, the terror outfit's former capital. ■ NYT

Standard Definition by default," said a Google spokesperson.

Separately, Netflix will "begin reducing bit rates across all our streams in Europe for 30 days," a spokesperson for the streaming giant said in a statement.

"We estimate that this will reduce Netflix traffic on European networks by around 25% while also ensuring a good quality service for our members," the statement added.

President Donald Trump is scrapping this year's G7 summit at Camp David near Washington due to the COVID-19 crisis and will instead hold the event by videoconference, the White House said on Thursday.

The United States heads the group of seven wealthy democracies in 2020 and Mr. Trump had been due to host fellow leaders at the presidential retreat known as Camp David in June.

**Responding to COVID-19**  
Instead, the summit will now take place remotely "in order for each country to focus all of its resources on responding to the health and economic challenges of COVID-19," White House spokesman Judd Deere said.

Mr. Trump's national economic director Larry Kudlow, who is the U.S. point-man for the summit,

## Over 1,000 dead in Spain

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

MADRID

The COVID-19 death toll rose to 1,002 in Spain on Friday after 235 people died in 24 hours, and the number of cases approached 20,000, the Health Ministry said. The spiralling number of infections has propelled Spain into the top four worst-hit countries in the world.

## Pakistan reports third death

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday asked people to self-quarantine for at least another 45 days as the country reported its third COVID-19 death and the total number of cases rose to 464. The third death was reported from Sindh where the number of cases rose to 238, according to provincial spokesman Murtaza Wahab.

## Malaysia Army to enforce curbs

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KUALA LUMPUR

Malaysia will deploy the Army to support police in enforcing tough restrictions to halt the spread of the COVID-19, Defence Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob said on Friday. The country reported 130 new cases on Friday, taking its toll to 1,030, the highest for any Southeast Asian country.

## China says Trump is trying to 'shift blame' for pandemic

U.S. President had slammed Beijing's 'lack of transparency'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BEIJING

Beijing accused U.S. President Donald Trump on Friday of trying to "shift the blame" for the global coronavirus pandemic in an escalating row between the two powers.

Mr. Trump charged on Thursday that the world is "paying a big price" for China's lack of transparency on the outbreak when it emerged in the central city of Wuhan late last year.

China has been criticised for suppressing information and punishing whistleblowers during the early stages of the contagion, which has

killed more than 10,000 people. "Some people on the U.S. side are trying to stigmatise China's fight against the epidemic, and shift the blame onto China," Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said.

## Great sacrifice

"This approach ignores the great sacrifice made by the Chinese people to safeguard the health and safety of humankind, and slanders China's major contribution to global public health."

Mr. Geng said China has shared data with the U.S. throughout the health crisis.

The exchange marked an

escalation in the bitter war of words between China and the U.S. over the past week.

China's announcement this week of mass expulsions of American journalists sparked a media freedom row that coincided with Mr. Trump's ramped-up usage of the term "Chinese Virus", which he claimed was in response to Chinese misinformation suggesting that the virus originated in the U.S.

In recent days, Chinese state media has been heavily critical of Mr. Trump.

Mr. Trump, on his part, has defended his description of the virus, saying it was "not racist at all".

## Virus kills priests who bless the dying

10 clergymen have succumbed in Italy's Bergamo diocese



A priest in the Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere. ■ REUTERS

virus's target from the day the Catholic country's first death was reported four weeks ago.

Like doctors, Italy's priests come in contact with the disease's most serious cases. And like doctors, priests are known to congregate among themselves in close quarters, creating the

perfect conditions for contagion.

A count by Italy's ANSA news agency on Thursday put the number of medics killed by the disease at 13.

Figures reported by Italian media suggest the death toll among priests is higher. At least 18 priests have been reported killed.

## ELSEWHERE



### U.S. reaffirms security partnership with Pak.

WASHINGTON  
U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper, in picture, on Thursday held a telephonic conversation with Pakistan Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa, and reaffirmed the U.S.'s commitment to a long-term security partnership, the Pentagon said. Mr. Esper expressed his appreciation for Pakistan's support to the Afghanistan reconciliation process. PTI

### Hypersonic missile test successful: Pentagon

WASHINGTON  
The U.S. Defense Department announced on Friday that it has successfully tested an unarmed hypersonic missile, a weapon that could potentially overwhelm an adversary's defence systems. The Pentagon said a test missile flew at hypersonic speeds — more than five times the speed of sound, or Mach 5 — to a designated impact point. AFP

### 23 Iranian prisoners escape on Nowruz eve

TEHRAN  
Twenty-three inmates escaped from an Iranian prison while guards were making preparations for a Persian New Year amnesty, state news agency IRNA reported on Friday. It said the detainees escaped overnight from a facility in the western city of Khorramabad, the capital of Lorestan province, just hours before the start of Nowruz. AFP

### Greece arrests Turkish 'far-left extremists'

ATHENS  
Greek police on Friday said 11 people had been arrested as suspected members of a Turkish far-left extremist group after a raid on hideouts found heavy weaponry in a tunnel. A police statement said the "foreign" suspects will be arraigned as members of the Revolutionary People's Liberation Army-Front, a far-left group in Turkey. AFP

## Sri Lanka declares curfew

MEERA SRINIVASAN

COLONBO

The Presidential Secretariat on Friday announced an island-wide curfew, to be enforced until Monday morning, in a bid to enhance Sri Lanka's response to the COVID-19 outbreak that has so far infected 70 persons. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has asked public and private sector to 'work from home' next week, while all educational institutions remain closed.

Meanwhile, police arrested the Mayor of Dambulla town, in the Central Province, for organising a public even amid a public health crisis.

The Mayor had organised the race to celebrate the annual harvest festival, local media reports said.

The police had earlier restricted the curfew to night time in the western coastal areas.

## Netflix, YouTube reduce image quality in Europe

This is to ease pressure on the Internet

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BRUSSELS

Netflix and YouTube will reduce the default image quality of streaming video in Europe to ease pressure on the Internet, the firms said on Friday, as demand soars with millions confined to their homes over COVID-19 fears. EU Commissioner for the Digital Economy Thierry Breton urged Internet giants to switch from high definition to the former standard definition.



**It was here:** A faded flag of the Islamic State in Raqa, Syria, the terror outfit's former capital. ■ NYT

Standard Definition by default," said a Google spokesperson.

Separately, Netflix will "begin reducing bit rates across all our streams in Europe for 30 days," a spokesperson for the streaming giant said in a statement.

"We estimate that this will reduce Netflix traffic on European networks by around 25% while also ensuring a good quality service for our members," the statement added.

President Donald Trump is scrapping this year's G7 summit at Camp David near Washington due to the COVID-19 crisis and will instead hold the event by videoconference, the White House said on Thursday.

The United States heads the group of seven wealthy democracies in 2020 and Mr. Trump had been due to host fellow leaders at the presidential retreat known as Camp David in June.

**Responding to COVID-19**  
Instead, the summit will now take place remotely "in order for each country to focus all of its resources on responding to the health and economic challenges of COVID-19," White House spokesman Judd Deere said.

Mr. Trump's national economic director Larry Kudlow, who is the U.S. point-man for the summit,



**Crisis meet:** U.S. President Donald Trump at a teleconference with State Governors at the Federal Emergency Management Agency headquarters, in Washington on Thursday. ■ AFP

informed his counterparts of the decision, Mr. Deere said in a statement.

"The White House also informed the other G7 members that in order to continue close coordination, the President will convene the leaders via video teleconference in April and May just as he did this week," he said.

In a call between Mr. Trump and France's Presi-

dent Emmanuel Macron on Thursday, they agreed "to continue close cooperation on resolving the pandemic and minimising its economic impact, in coordination with the G7 and other international partners," the White House said separately.

G7 countries — Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States — are all in crisis mode

to stop the spread of the virus and equally to try and halt financial panic that threatens to send their economies into recession.

## Controversy over venue

The G7 summit is held by the presiding country each year, but Mr. Trump's preparations had already been marred by controversy over his initial attempt to host the event at his own golf club in Florida. Last October, the White House announced that the Trump National Doral Golf Club near Miami had been chosen out of 12 possible sites. The White House insisted there was no conflict of interest in using a Trump business and claimed there was no equally suitable property in the country.

Following strong resistance in Congress, Mr. Trump switched tack in December, saying he could use Camp David, a historic presidential retreat, instead.

## MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	29916	5.75
US Dollar	75.20	-0.11
Gold	41705	3.46
Brent oil	27.30	4.28

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	256.40	-1.95
Asian Paints	1742.95	141.75
Axis Bank	428.15	-0.10
Bajaj Auto	2242.30	75.70
Bajaj Finserv	6233.05	447.55
Bajaj Finance	2951.90	205.80
Bharti Airtel	462.65	17.90
BPLC	317.85	17.60
Britannia Ind	2467.80	149.65
Cipla	392.80	18.10
Coal India	132.80	9.25
Dr Reddys Lab	2897.25	273.30
Eicher Motors	15678.45	632.00
GAIL (India)	80.80	11.40
Grasim Ind	529.40	38.35
HCL Tech	444.90	31.45
HDFC	1753.95	136.35
HDFC Bank	882.85	-12.70
Hero MotoCorp	1815.10	103.25
Hindalco	105.50	5.75
Hind Unilever	2051.70	213.40
ICICI Bank	345.70	7.15
IndusInd Bank	440.35	-3.70
Bharti Infralet	148.15	24.10
Infosys	585.20	39.65
Indian Oil Corp	90.60	2.65
ITC	175.50	13.65
JSW Steel	175.75	12.45
Kotak Bank	1262.35	51.50
L&T	864.70	21.60
M&M	322.60	8.40
Maruti Suzuki	5079.20	259.65
Nestle India Ltd.	14145.50	1025.20
NTPC	81.25	2.90
ONGC	72.35	11.30
PowerGrid Corp	157.25	10.10
Reliance Ind	1017.95	100.25
State Bank	209.85	6.20
Shree Cement	18903.65	1172.20
Sun Pharma	365.25	4.85
Tata Motors	77.30	4.35
Tata Steel	297.75	25.90
TCS	1797.45	161.10
Titan	576.35	46.35
Tech Mahindra	904.90	1.40
UltraTech Cement	3573.85	407.80
UPL	300.15	3.40
Vedanta	75.45	6.10
Wipro	179.20	16.85
Zee Entertainment	144.90	3.70

## EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	75.04	75.36
Euro	80.41	80.75
British Pound	88.23	88.62
Japanese Yen (100)	68.17	68.46
Chinese Yuan	10.60	10.65
Swiss Franc	76.32	76.66
Singapore Dollar	51.86	52.09
Canadian Dollar	52.60	52.83
Malaysian Ringgit	17.07	17.15

Source: Indian Bank

## Royal Enfield clears BS-IV inventory

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

Royal Enfield, a division of Eicher Motors Ltd., has announced that it has cleared all its existing inventory of BS-IV motorcycles across dealerships, thereby becoming fully compliant with the new BS-VI emission regulations.

This has been achieved ahead of the mandated timeline, according to the company.

The company had introduced BS VI-compliant motorcycles in early January with the Classic 350 dual-channel ABS being its first motorcycle to move to the new emission norm.

Thereafter, the firm has ensured a seamless transition from BS-IV to BS-VI across its entire motorcycle portfolio, as well as across all its dealerships in India, it said in a statement.

Starting March 21, all Royal Enfield stores across India will retail only BS-VI motorcycles, thereby becoming one of the first automotive brands in the country to fully transition to the new emission norm, ahead of time, it said.

## Apollo Tyres top brass to take pay cut

## YUTHIKA BHARGAVA NEW DELHI

Apollo Tyres on Friday said its leadership team had decided to take a voluntary pay cut due to the impact of COVID-19 on the industry.

While the company's CMD Onkar S. Kanwar and vice-chairman & managing director Neeraj Kanwar will take a 25% reduction in their salary, the senior management will be taking a salary cut of 15% during these 'tough, testing times'.

"This is an incredibly difficult time for our employees and their families. We are in uncharted waters but as 'one family' we will work together and make the necessary sacrifices to steer Apollo Tyres in the right direction," Mr. Kanwar said.

## Sensex breathes easy, surges 5.8% as DIIs inject ₹4,367 crore

Indices mirror global markets, VIX drops 7%; FPIs net sell ₹4,623 crore

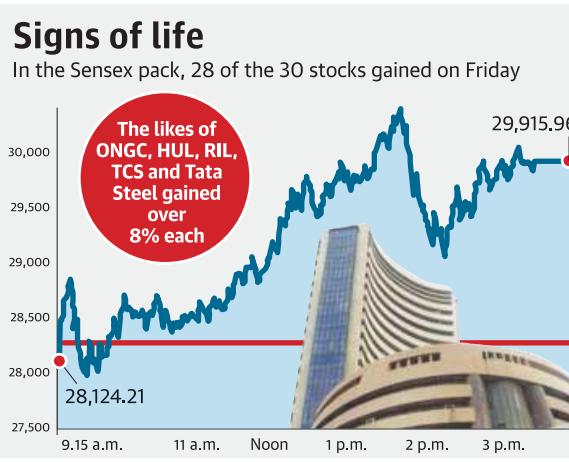
## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

After four days of continued sell off in the equity markets, Indian benchmarks gained strong ground on Friday amid a global rally in stocks.

The 30-share Sensex gained 1,627.73 points, or 5.75%, to close at 29,915.96. The broader Nifty settled the day at 8,745.45, gaining 482 points, or 5.83%.

This was the first gain for the indices after four consecutive days of losses. The India VIX index, a barometer for volatility, also fell a little over 7% on Friday.

The benchmarks of Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia, China, Malaysia, Singapore and Philippines all ended Friday with strong gains. "Indian markets bounced back on the back of



positive global cues," said Gaurav Dua, head, capital market strategy and investments, Sharekhan. "The news flow on COVID-19 continues to be mixed with an exponential jump in new cases in the U.S. though

there is an improving trend in China. Volatility could persist in the near term," he added. While most frontline stocks gained ground on Friday after falling to multi-year lows, many side counters lost ground as well, as a little

over 1,000 stocks declined against 1,426 gainers.

Foreign investors, however, continued their selling activity with net sales pegged at ₹4,623 crore even as their domestic counterparts were net buyers at ₹4,367 crore.

In the Sensex pack, 28 of the 30 stocks gained on Friday with stocks like ONGC, HUL, Reliance Industries, TCS, Tata Steel, Asian Paints, HDFC, Tech Mahindra and ITC all gaining over 8% each.

HDFC Bank lost 1.39% after research firm Bernstein downgraded the stock to 'underperform' citing concerns related to the bank's higher exposure to unsecured consumer credit risk compared with other banks.

The research firm cut its target price for the bank from the earlier ₹1,400 to ₹750.

## Gandhi and Narayan in Yes Bank board

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has appointed R. Gandhi and Ananth Narayan on the reconstructed board of private sector lender Yes Bank as additional directors.

Mr. Gandhi is a former RBI Deputy Governor. He was in the earlier board that was superseded by the banking regulator after a moratorium was imposed on the lender earlier this month.

Ananth Narayan is an associate professor, S. P. Jain Institute of Management and Research.

He was earlier with Standard Chartered Bank, Deutsche Bank and Citibank.

Both of them have been appointed for a period of two years from March 26, when the new board would take charge.

## COVID-19: SBI opens emergency credit line

To help clients tackle liquidity mismatch

## MANOJ SAHA MUMBAI

The State Bank of India (SBI) has taken the lead in providing relief to its customers to tide over the crisis caused by the spread of COVID-19,

of ad-hoc facilities to tide over the current crisis situation," the circular said.

Customers can avail up to 10% of the existing fund-based working capital limit and the maximum amount they can get is ₹200 crore. The loan can be availed of in one go.

"However, the total additional exposure, including the present facility, should not exceed 25% of the fund-based working capital exposure," said the circular reviewed by *The Hindu*.

There will not be any processing fee or prepayment penalty for such a loan.

The loan is repayable in six equal monthly installments after a moratorium of six months from the date of disbursement of the loan. The purpose of the loan is to meet the temporary liquidity mismatch arising out of COVID-19.

## SEBI steps in to tackle volatility

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

The Securities and Exchange Board of India has raised the margins in the cash segment while tightening norms for position limits in derivatives, as volatility continues to rise in the stock market.

The aim was to ensure effective risk management and market integrity, a statement said. The marketwide position limit in certain stocks in derivatives has been revised to 50% and the penalty on an entity found to exceed permissible limits has been enhanced to 10 times of the current minimum and five times of the maximum penalty structure.

## RBI sets contingency plan in motion

## Aim is to protect financial markets

## MANOJ SAHA MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has put in motion a contingency plan in the wake of the spread of COVID-19 to ensure that the financial markets continue to function smoothly.

A property in the vicinity of the primary data centre has been identified to host 150 personnel of the RBI and service providers. About 70 support staff were also isolated within the hotel on a continuous basis.

Since information technology infrastructure forms the backbone of most businesses, and especially the financial system, RBI data centres play a crucial role.

Similar arrangements have been made at other data centres too to run systems with maximum services whenever there is a need to shift operations from the current location.

About 600 people belonging to third-party service providers are generally deployed at data centres for non-IT and IT services, apart from 60 RBI officials.

"All residents have been asked to be prepared for the separation, while being assured that one can leave the group in case of any family or other emergency," said a source. This plan was implemented from Thursday to ensure continuity of critical services of the RBI.

A property in the vicinity of the primary data centre has been identified to host 150 personnel of the RBI and service providers. About 70 support staff were also isolated within the hotel on a continuous basis.

Similar arrangements have been made at other data centres too to run systems with maximum services whenever there is a need to shift operations from the current location.

As per a previous estimate, the poultry trade in Maharashtra was losing more than ₹10 crore a day due to lack of appetite for chicken. "Though there is no direct

link between chicken and the virus, people will stay away from poultry as long as the fear is there. It will impact poultry firms like Venky's and SFL and any other company linked to this business. In this quarter, their revenues will be lower and the trend has been reflected in

their share prices on account of this direct impact," said Ambareesh Baliga, independent equity analyst.

Poultry farmers are bearing the brunt due to the price crash. "The business has collapsed. Now, prices have crashed to ₹20 a kg. Earlier, I used to sell 150 birds day, now it has come down to a dozen," said Salim Momin, a poultry dealer from Lalbagh, Mumbai.

In Tamil Nadu, which produces nearly one crore broiler chicken a week, the industry is badly hit.

"The broiler sector in the State has suffered nearly ₹600 crore loss in the last one month," said R. Lakshmanan, MD of Shanti Feeds and president of Broiler Coordination Committee.

He told *The Hindu* that the farmgate price for broiler in Tamil Nadu was fixed at ₹15-

₹20 a kg on Thursday and ₹25-₹30 a kg on Friday. "The prices went to almost nil level and are reviving for the last two days. Retail off-take is improving now," he said.

The poultry sector has appealed to the Centre for restructuring of bank loans, moratorium for a year and interest subvention support. "We fear the industry will lose sustainability if there is no support from the government," Mr. Lakshmanan said.

Prices of eggs have also seen a decline.

P. Selvaraj, zonal chairman of the National Egg Coordination Committee, Namakkal, said egg prices had slumped to ₹2.15 each (farm gate price). "We fixed the price at ₹2 an egg. The actual price at which it is sold by farms is ₹1.25," he said.

Prices of maize that goes into making poultry feed has reduced significantly.

Grain merchant Devendra Vora, proprietor, Friendship Brokers, APMC Market, Navi Mumbai, said maize prices have been falling over the last 2-3 months.

"Since demand for poultry feed has come down, maize prices have suffered. Due to the coronavirus effect, prices have fallen to ₹1,500-₹1,600 per 100 kg from ₹1,900 in January."



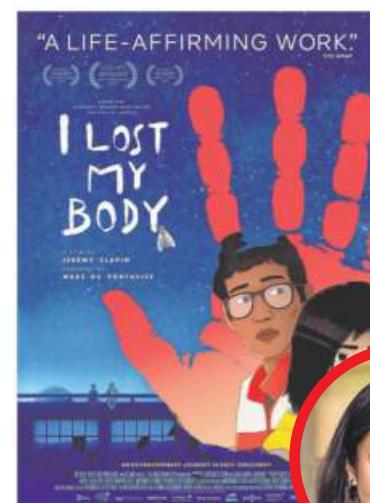
Anurag Kashyap, filmmaker

You should watch nothing soppy because that will make you touch your face to wipe away the tears. Or even horror because that will also make you touch your face. I would suggest thrillers and drama. • *Watchmen*, the series • All seasons of *Breaking Bad* – this would be a good time to revisit them • *Succession* • Stand-up comics • The entire body of work of your favourite directors



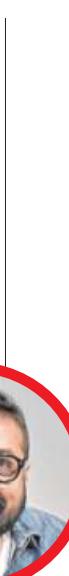
Taapsee Pannu, actor

Honestly, I am just catching up on films that I missed watching last year and reading all the scripts [on which] I have to get back with an answer. I rarely watch films multiple times; I feel you're wasting time when there are so many new ones you can watch. My advice to the homebound: watch *Homeland*.



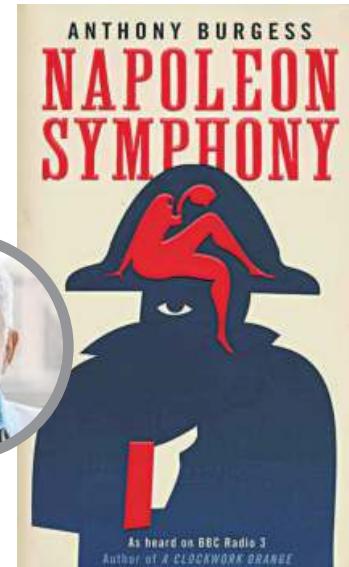
Rasika Dugal, actor

I've scheduled specific activities for myself. A running challenge – 3 km a day for 10 days. I've always been scared of committing to a challenge, so this is a new one for me. I am two days down, let's see how I fare. This is in addition to my regular workout/yoga class (we might all need good immunity soon). I am starting music classes from Monday. I love singing; it calms me. I've also signed up for a free online course on edX – on religion, conflict and peace. With all that's been happening in our country, I've felt a sense of hopelessness like never before. An academic insight into polarisation and religious conflict might help. Meanwhile, I'm cooking – the only skill I feel I imbibed genetically. I'm also reading my backlog of scripts and watching a film or a series every day. Having just finished *The Spy*, I'm now watching *Unbelievable*. I would recommend *I Lost My Body*, a drama/fantasy animation film. Beautifully scripted and skilfully visualised, it takes you through a journey of loneliness and love in a city. A *Marriage Story* is another. I think the subject [a marriage gone wrong], though fairly common, is one of the hardest to capture in cinema. Yet this film makes you feel the frustration, sadness and confusion of a failing marriage as if you are in it. And, finally, *Gulon mein rang bhare*. Currently on top of my list of favourites is Ali Sethi's version (from Coke Studio season 12) of the Faiz Ahmad Faiz ghazal. Interestingly, it was written when he was in jail in Rawalpindi in 1954.



Naseeruddin Shah, actor-filmmaker

I've been catching up with the Anthony Burgess books I haven't yet read. There are few better writers of the English language; I'd suggest giving him and Bernard Shaw a try. Read and spend time with the family rather than binge-watching some series. I've also been [brushing up on] Urdu poetry and teaching myself to read and write the script since it is time [approaching three score and ten and possibly Alzheimer's] that one must learn something new.



Jivraj Singh of Parekh &amp; Singh, musicians

The last few days, we've been writing songs, playing instruments, reaching out to friends and family, exercising, and sitting quietly. **Watch:** *Ugly Delicious* and *Dave* (Lil Dicky). Food+travel and comedy are good distractions. **Learn:** The MIT lecture, 'How To Speak by Patrick Winston'. It is amazing. Also, the sound of chalk on blackboard is really soothing! **Listen:** Nischay has a playlist, P&S Top Picks, on Spotify – everything here sounds really good. **Read:** Anything that appeals to your interests, but doesn't excite or disturb you overmuch. Good writing, like good sound, can be inherently soothing.

Leading names from the entertainment industry curate viewing lists and share their living room experiences to tide us over social distancing in this critical period

# What should you watch?

listen    read    play    learn

NAMRATA JOSHI

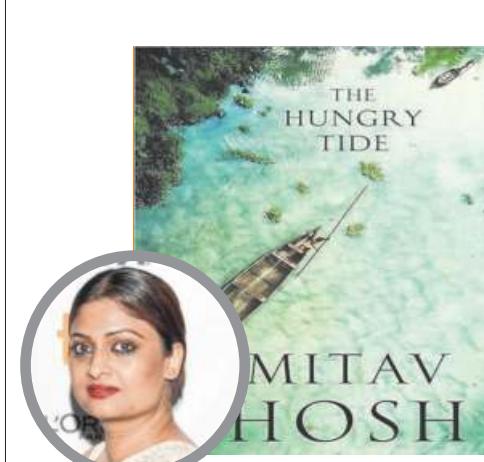
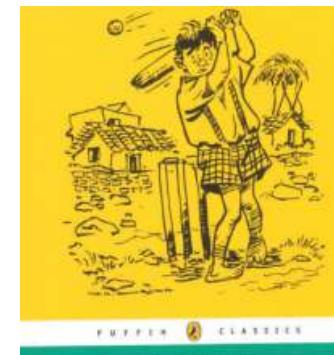
They say, rules are meant to be broken. We say, don't. For some, the suddenly-imposed social distancing has a strange way of playing mind games. Misanthropes may get a strong urge to party, children and parents may drive each other up the wall. But while seclusion, and the uncertainty about coronavirus, could take a toll on our mental health – loneliness, anxiety about the future, concern for loved ones – it can also be a time to rediscover simple pleasures. Creative people across the world are sharing how self-isolation needn't be all bad; they do it all the time, to introspect, learn, create. And they are extending a helping hand, curating what we could try in the days to come to keep our sanity and sense of self intact.



Twinkle Khanna, actor-author-columnist

Self isolating is not unique for people who write; I've had periods when I am trying to finish a manuscript. The only conundrum this time: you have a house full of people competing for the remote and desk space.

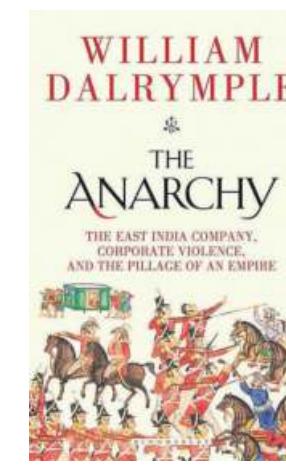
I am trying to do an interesting experiment where we can all give each other space and yet do things together. So I am reading books based on movies and then watching the movie with my family. We are watching *Electric Dreams* on Amazon Prime Video and I am rereading an anthology by Philip K. Dick. Strangely enough I never got around to reading R.K. Narayan's *Malgudi Days*, so I am ordering a copy of *Swami and Friends* and then will see that on Prime as well. Since F Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* is part of my son's course work, we will also watch the movie. I've had Satyajit Ray's *Feluda Omnibus* for a while and plan to do the same [read it and then watch the adaptation], so we can all discuss it together. I am listening to podcasts like the Slate's *The Secret History of the Future* while I walk my dogs. I've visited the Van Gogh exhibit at the Tate last year, but now want to take a virtual tour of the one in Amsterdam. A lot of museums have virtual tours, so this would be the time to travel the world of art without leaving your couch. And finally, I had signed up for a masterclass with Margaret Atwood – because I adore her – and now I may just find the time to do it.



Geetu Mohandas, actor-director

I'm not someone who binge watches. I enjoy my solitude and, when I am on a break, I enjoy reading. Right now, I am re-reading for the nth time Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*. He is one of my favourite authors. At one time, I wanted to adapt his *Sea of Poppies* and I wrote to him in Goa. He said the rights of the book were with someone else. However, I am so happy I was able to interact with him. In addition, I am fine-tuning my script for my next film. It is in the last stages. Now that my daughter, Aradhana, is at home, my 'me time' is extremely limited. I have to keep her engaged. She is allowed only one hour of TV viewing. So I am really busy.

– Inputs from Deborah Cornelius, Kenneth Rosario, Sangeetha Devi Dundoo, Saraswathy Nagarajan, Aparna Narra and Susanna Myrtle Lazarus



Ankur Tewari, singer-songwriter

Right now, I'm playing a lot of Last of Us, a zombie killing game in a post-apocalyptic world, because it is similar to what's happening outside. I also suggest playing FIFA because it is such a social game; you can play it online with your friends. This is a great time to read books. I usually pick up non-fiction, and William Dalrymple's *Anarchy* is a great one to keep you away from screens and social media where there's a lot of half-baked information and hysteria. I'm reading Leonard Cohen's *The Flame*, compiled by his son Adam – a collection of his poems, some of which have been made into songs. I've also been making playlists and old-school mix tapes, and sending them to friends [I did a deep dive into the '80s for a friend's birthday]. And live jams on Instagram.



Adil Hussain, actor

With shoots cancelled, I'm mostly watching films at home. I spend most of my free time reading pending scripts. I'm watching films and shows [many recommended by friends] on OTT platforms. *Succession*; Nadine Labaki's *Capernaum*; *The Loudest Voice* on the CEO of Fox News, Roger Ailes – it has Russell Crowe in a fantastic performance after *Beautiful Mind*. I found the documentaries *Dirty Money* and *The Bleeding Edge* very revealing. I'm also working my way through a hard drive with films curated by my acting teacher in Puducherry. I saw this wonderful Chinese film from 2013, *The Nightingale*, directed by Philippe Muyl. I think Mubi has some wonderfully-curated films.



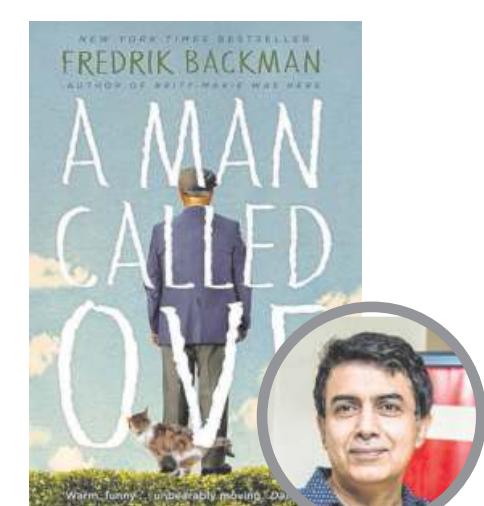
Rajiv Menon, director

I was running a writers' room that, of course, has been put on hold. But I still come into the office to write. This time has also given me a chance to catch up on fiction books. I just finished *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrik Backman; it was light reading. Apart from Carnatic music, I've been listening to 'The Planets' [a seven-movement orchestral suite] by English composer Gustav Holst. From the UK Top 40, my picks are 'Blinding Lights' by The Weeknd and the new James Bond track, 'No Time to Die', by Billie Eilish. It is quite distinct from earlier Bond theme songs, and I like the lyrics as well. I managed to watch a couple of Malayalam movies too – *Anjaam Pathiraa* and *Ayyappanum Koshiyum*. The latter's soundtrack was also great.



Kenny Sebastian, comic

Catch *Don't be that Guy* (my comedy special on Amazon Prime Video), *The Most Important Person in the Room* (my soon-to-be-released Netflix special), and *Bahubali* part 1 and 2! And play *Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order* and *Need for Speed Heat*. They are so immersive, they help while away time effortlessly. My comfort viewing is usually classic Hollywood films from the '80s and '90s that I grew up with. I recently binged the *Indiana Jones*, *Back to the Future*, and *Matrix* series. I love watching older specials like Dave Chappelle's *Killin' Them Softly*. My favourite go-to platform is YouTube. From when I was 17, I love watching videos of all genres; it is how I learned my skills! I am also reading *Creativity, Inc* by Ed Catmull.



Kajal Aggarwal, actor

Among podcasts, I enjoy listening to [Indian American entrepreneur and investor] Naval Ravikant. I love how he talks about his learnings and gives his suggestions. This confidence comes from a place of knowledge and time invested in reading. *The Stuff You Should Know* podcast, hosted by Josh Clark and Charles W Chuck Bryant, is super interesting. I often catch Ted Talks and one of my favourite motivational speakers is Brene Brown. I also listen to Simon Sinek. There are a lot more fantastic talks out there. I like listening to audio books, especially while cooking, working out [doing my cardio] or any activity that doesn't require my 100% attention. Listening to these while completing your mundane chores is a great way to multitask and make it interesting.



Richa Chadha, actor

I'm watching everything I think I should catch up on and some releases that I missed, like the Ayushmann Khurrana-starrer *Dream Girl* and director Rohena Gera's *Sir*. I'm also watching *High Maintenance* on Hotstar, though I'm a little late to the party. Like the rest of the world, I watched *Contagion* and now I am watching *Pandemic*. I am also reading a book by [Serbian political activist] Srdja Popovic called *Blueprint for Revolution*, which is about laughter and activism. I'm enjoying my other hobbies, too, like gardening on my balcony. I'm getting back to a lot of work I had left behind and I'm writing my book finally [on an outsider's struggle in Bollywood]. I worked on a pitch presentation for a show last night, for something that Ali [Fazal] and I are trying to set up. **Comfort film:** *Mr India*. **Read:** *Autobiography of a Yogi* because it is about spirituality and happiness. **Watch:** documentaries on health, environment and sustainability like *What The Health* and *Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret*.



Radhika Vaz, comic



If you are that rare human who is being confronted with free time for the first time, here is how you can do some quarantine pass. **Exercise:** while this is what I like to do least, I'm using this forced confinement to build the discipline muscle. Yoga is my weapon of choice. Try 'Yoga for Beginners', a free app. **Watch:** I've just binged two shows on Netflix. *After Life*, the most darkly hilarious take on death [OK, I know that perhaps a show about death isn't the best recco at a time like this, but if we are going to die then you really wouldn't want to miss this], and *The IT Crowd*. **Listen/Watch:** I am slightly obsessed with Hollywood gossip. YouTube houses my beloved Wendy Williams and Heather McDonald. Wendy has a TV show, but they stream long segments. Same for Heather's podcast, *Juicy Scoop*. Both women are hilarious.



# Why gullies are great levellers

Bishwanath Ghosh on his new book, *Aimless in Banaras*, how the city has opened up to him, and why it has made him less scared of death

NEHA BHATT

In his new book, *Aimless in Banaras*, author and writer-at-large with *The Hindu* Bishwanath Ghosh argues that the only way to experience the city is to wander through its *gullies* and *ghats* with an open mind. Doors will open automatically. It was at his mother's cremation there – after her sudden death in 2009 – that he felt inspired to write a book on the city. But it would take him a while to get to it. He had just finished working on his first book, *Chai, Chai*, an offbeat travelogue, and he had moved on to several other city biographies, including *Longing Belonging: An Outsider at Home in Calcutta and Tamarind City*, about his observations on Chennai. But Banaras remained on his mind.

Over multiple visits, the city opened up to him like no other place. And he isn't alone: Banaras has, for decades, inspired many writers, notably Geoff Dyer (*Jeff in Venice, Death in Varanasi*), Diana L. Eck (*Banaras: City of Light*), and Aatish Taseer (*The Twice-born: Life and Death on the Ganges*). It is easy to fall into the trap of the stereotypical imagery, to appropriate its spirit of spirituality and culture as a stray traveller, and yet Ghosh manages to render it afresh with a lively, energetic first person voice. The appeal of *Aimless in Banaras* (published by Westland Books) is how it unfolds like a free-wheeling conversation with the city and its people – strolling along the *ghats*, dropping in at the *akharas*, sipping tea at roadside stalls, where the writer bumps into and befriends all manner of Banarasis, from a young RJ to a boatman, and weaves their stories into his wanderings. Excerpts from an interview:

**Over the course of researching and writing this book, did your perception of Banaras change?**

■ When you submit a synopsis for a book, you have a certain idea in mind. But in a place like this, the moment you have a schedule or an itinerary, you become blind



constructed (by flattening over 300 buildings) for tourists to access the Manikarnika ghat from the temple. Compared to the other cities I've written about, such as Chennai and Kolkata, I felt I truly internalised Banaras. It changed my perspective on life.

Roaming the *ghats*, I learnt so many things, like the uncertainty of not knowing when we are going to die is as certain as the fact that we will die. So I better make the most of what I have today! The streets of Banaras become your guru. It has made me a much more peaceful person. I'm less scared of death.

**You write that the people of Banaras are among the happiest on Earth.**

■ Banaras is a chain of about 80 *ghats*, where bodies burn all the time, and you realise this is how it is going to end, on a pyre. Banarasis are not arrogant people. The *gullies* are great levellers. It is where people from different economic backgrounds are friends and wind down together; they believe 'be *mast*' (be relaxed), that's what life is about.

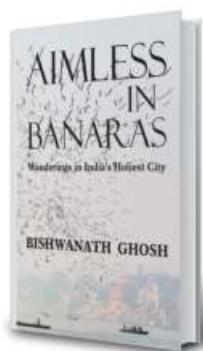
**There has been some criticism that the book has a white man's gaze.**

■ I was not a spectator, I was a participant. Someone who cremated his mother there can't have a white man's gaze; it is ridiculous. I was probably as local as a Banarsi.

**Banaras has been the subject of several books. Did that make it difficult for you in terms of writing a fresh perspective?**

■ When I was writing the book, I wrote on a sticky note on my desk: "Stay clear from everything already known about Banaras." So it is all absolutely first hand. It is easy to fall into the trap of the history and mythology, but I just wrote what I experienced.

Available online at Amazon: ₹399



to the rest of the city. Walking from Point A, not knowing where point B is going to be is the only way to look at the city. You don't have to have a purpose.

There was a break of about three years between two of my visits, which gave me the chance to see how the city has transformed more starkly after Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister. Several *ghats* have been refurbished, with a beautiful corridor being

# Literature is for life

The Hindu Lit For Life is postponed to 2021, but the winners of The Hindu Prize will be announced on March 25

R. KRITHIKA

"To be a writer, start reading first," said Pakistani author Mohammed Hanif in 2011. That year, 1,000 people attended, and the bookstore at Lit For Life (LFL), *The Hindu*'s annual literature festival in Chennai, was just a table. By 2019, the store had grown exponentially. That year LFL drew around 40,000 visitors for 88 sessions across three days.

Unfortunately the 10th edition of the festival in January 2020 had to be cancelled due to a challenging environment. The Hindu Prize 2019 was scheduled to be announced on March 28th at an award ceremony in Chennai. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been decided to cancel the event. It will now be announced in the pages of *The Hindu* on March 25th.

The Hindu Prize was instituted in 2010 to honour writers who have spent their lifetime mining the human spirit through their words and ideas. Winners were chosen by an independent panel of judges. Children's writing was not forgotten. The Hindu Young World Goodbooks Awards was introduced in 2016.

The Hindu Prize Non Fiction was introduced in 2018. Authors whose books were shortlisted for the prize include Anjum Hasan, Shovon Chowdhury, Anita Nair, Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar among several others.

The list of renowned names from varied fields at the festival – Alexander McCall Smith, Lionel Shriver, Ferdinand Mount, Raghu Rai, Omar Abdullah, Romila Thapar, Gulam-mohammed Sheikh, Thol Thirumavalavan, Kanimozi Karunanidhi, Amish, Ravinder Singh, Damon Galgut, Sanjana Kapoor, Maheesh Dattani, Bama, Imayam, Mike Brearley, V.V.S. Lakman, chef Manu Chandra, chef Thomas Zacharias, chef Alfred Prasad – bore testimony to the festival's unique vision and character,



Full house At one of the sessions in 2018 ■ R. RAGU

## THE HINDU PRIZE 2019 SHORTLIST

- Non Fiction
  - Polio: The Odyssey of Eradication by Thomas Abraham
  - The Transformative Constitution: A Radical Biography in Nine Acts by Gautam Bhatia
  - India, Empire, and First World War Culture by Santanu Das
  - Early Indians: The Story of Our Ancestors and Where We Came From by Tony Joseph
  - The Anatomy of Hate by Revati Lal
- Fiction
  - Latitudes of Longing by Shubhangi Swarup
  - The Queen of Jasmine Country by Sharanya Manivannan
  - Heat by Poomani translated by N. Kalyan Raman
  - The Assassination of Indira Gandhi by Upamanyu Chatterjee
  - Tell Her Everything by Mirza Waheed



which celebrated the spirit of creativity and the strength of the written word.

Support to freedom of speech has remained the cornerstone whether it was passing a resolution to support author Perumal Murugan in 2015 or celebrate his return the next year. In 2018, author Taslima Nasrin told the festival audience that "Freedom of speech cannot exist without the freedom to offend."

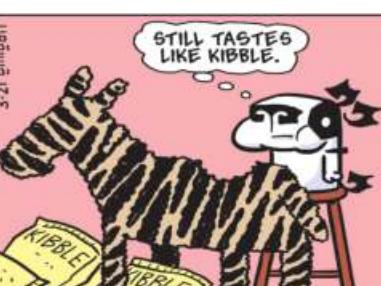
The Hindu Lit For Life will be back in January 2021, refreshed, bigger, and better.

As Festival Director Dr. Nirima Lakshman once said, "The reason we called it Lit for Life is because we believe literature is for life and literature lights you up."

## PAST WINNERS

- Requiem for Raga Janaki by Neelum Saran Gour (2018)
- Interrogating my Chandal Life: An Autobiography of a Dalit by Manoranjan Byapari (2018)
- Temporary People by Deepak Unnikrishnan (2017)
- When Jinnah Came to our House by Kiran Doshi (2016)

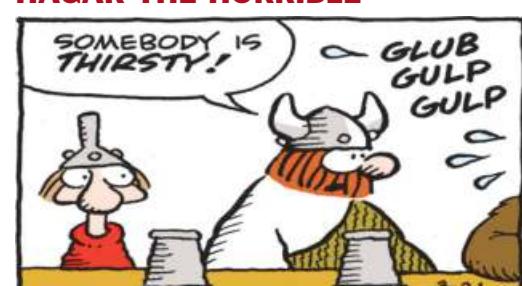
## POOCH CAFE



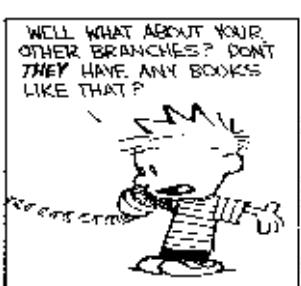
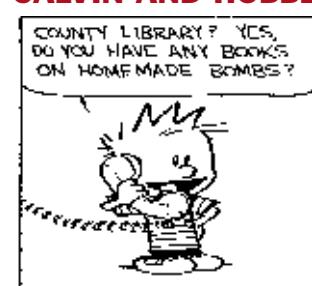
## PEANUTS



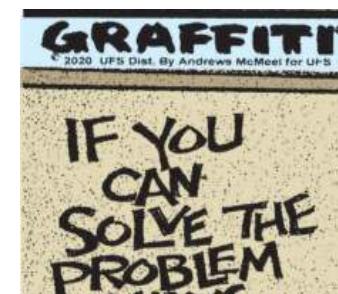
## HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



## CALVIN AND HOBBES



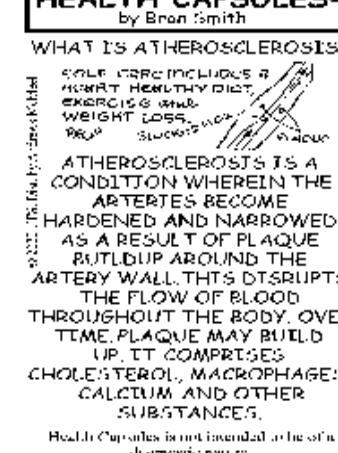
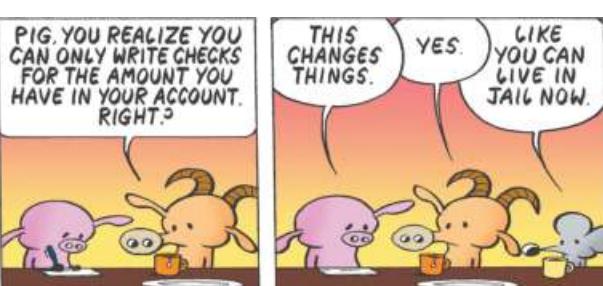
## TIGER



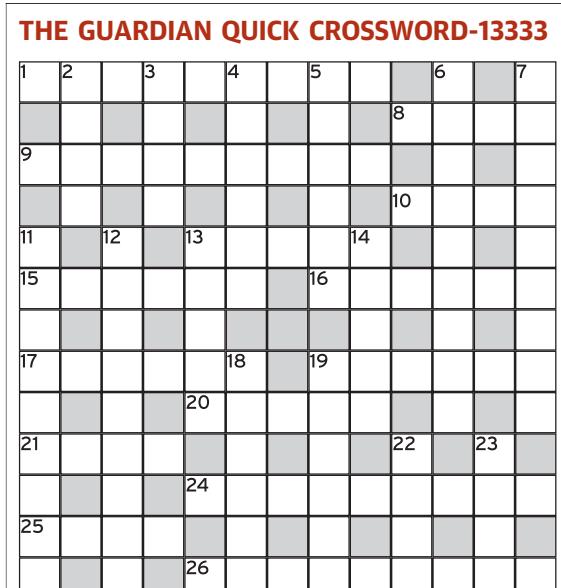
## WUMO



## PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



## THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13333



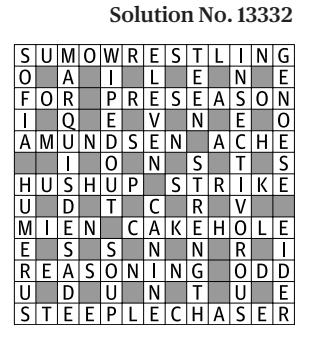
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To play the Guardian Quick Crossword, The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.

- 5 Asian religion – no hits (anag) (6)
- 6 Person one detests – ie not beer (anag) (4,5)
- 7 Restraint used to slow a wheel's rotation (5,4)
- 11 People who hide on board, hoping not to pay for the trip (9)
- 12 Someone from Dar es Salaam? (9)
- 13 Oddity (5)
- 14 Largest UK cinema chain (5)
- 18 Small measure of semi-solid food (6)
- 19 Car – cat (6)
- 22 Seal(ed) (4)
- 23 Othello's nemesis (4)

The solution will appear on March 23, 2020.

Solution No. 13332



# Legendary footballer P.K. Banerjee passes away

An attacking forward, he enriched the sport as a coach too

**Y.B. SARANGI**  
KOLKATA

Two-time Olympian Pradip Kumar 'PK' Banerjee, one of the greatest footballers of the country, passed away here on Friday afternoon following prolonged illness. He was 83 and is survived by his two daughters and brother Prasun, a former India football captain and a current Member of Parliament.

PK was 'suffering from sepsis and multi-organ failure due to pneumonia with a background of Parkinson's disease, dementia and heart problems' and had been on life support at a city hospital since March 7.

Born on June 23, 1936 in Jalpaiguri, PK shifted to Jamshedpur at an early age and shone as a teenager while representing Bihar in the Santosh Trophy. An attacking player, he turned out for Aryan Club and Eastern Railway, netting more than 190 goals, before hanging up his boots in 1967.

PK, who represented India in 36 official matches and sported the captain's armband in six of them, scored 19 goals for the country.

**Debuting with a bang**

PK made his international

debut on December 18, 1955, against Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in the Quadrangular Cup in Dhaka. He scored five goals, the maximum by an Indian in his debut tournament, in the country's title triumph.

He was part of three consecutive Asian Games – 1958 (Tokyo), 1962 (Jakarta, where India won gold) and 1966 (Bangkok) – and holds the record of scoring maximum number of goals (six) for India.

He represented the country in the 1956 Melbourne Olympics and played a pivotal role in the 4-2 victory against Australia in the quarterfinals. India eventually finished fourth. PK captained the National side in the 1960 Rome Olympics and scored the equaliser against France in a 1-1 draw.

As a coach at the club level, he won 30 trophies for East Bengal and 23 for Mohun Bagan. He was Bagan's coach when it held Cosmos (USA), that had the legendary Pele in the ranks, to a 2-2 draw.

PK also served as a Technical Director for the Tata Football Academy from 1991-97 and was a noted commentator.

As a mark of respect, the AIFF kept its flag half-mast at its headquarters in Delhi. Its president Praful Patel said, "he will stay synonymous with the golden generation of Indian football. Pradip-da, you will remain alive in our hearts."

Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju tweeted "...a legendary figure in the world of Football in India. It's a massive loss for the nation's footballing fraternity. I pay my heartfelt tributes to the departed soul."

**Awards galore**

PK was the first footballer to receive the Arjuna Award in 1961 and was awarded the Padma Shri in 1990. He was bestowed with the FIFA Fair-play Award in 1990 and the



**Man with the golden boot:** P.K. Banerjee was an inspirational player during Indian football's golden era in the 1950s and 1960s. ■ THE HINDU ARCHIVES

## Colossus of Indian football

**AMITABHA DAS SHARMA**

KOLKATA  
The demise of P.K. Banerjee signals the passing of the 'golden era' of Indian football.

PK, who strode the Indian football world like a colossus with his multifaceted talent, enriched the sport as a player, coach, administrator and commentator.

What made PK a legend was his larger-than-life status both as a footballer and then as a coach. For many of his peers and players of later generation, PK belonged to that realm of excellence which very few footballers in the country have reached.

At a time when football was mostly played in the five-forward system, PK excelled both as a right-winger and a centre-forward thanks to his speed, skill and power.

### Teenage prodigy

Showing his talent at an early age, PK made his Santosh Trophy debut for Bihar at 15. Scouts from Kolkata (then Calcutta) clubs took note of his precocious talent and he started his club career with Aryan FC in 1954.

In order to support a large family, PK opted to take up a job in Eastern Railway which was a purely amateurish set-up. Soon after he joined, the Railways team made its way up the rungs of the famed Calcutta Football League and won the title in 1958, the first time a team outside the 'Big Three' – Mohun Bagan,



**Capable guide:** P.K. Banerjee was a successful coach thanks to his fantastic game-reading ability and excellent man-management skills. ■ FILE PHOTO: G.P. SAMPATH KUMAR

East Bengal and Mohammedan Sporting – had done so.

PK, who earned his National cap in the Quadrangular tournament in Dhaka in 1955, was part of the team that took part in the 1956 Melbourne Olympics where India beat host Australia 4-2 in the quarterfinals – with PK assisting hat-trick hero Neville DeSouza. In the next Olympics at Rome, PK, skippering the side, scored an equaliser to hold France 1-1.

In 1962, India won the Asian Games gold at Jakarta, beating a formidable South Korean side 2-1 in the final with PK scoring once. PK also played in the 1958 and 1966 Asian Games.

He started his club coaching career in 1972 and became extremely popular thanks to his fantastic game-reading ability and excellent man-management skills.

He had the unparalleled ability to motivate players with his careful selection of words laced with metaphors and anecdotes.

The passing of PK has created a void that will be hard to fill.

## A perfect human being: Balaram

Tributes pour in for P.K. Banerjee from all over

**V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM**  
HYDERABAD

Prominent personalities from all over the country paid glowing tributes to P.K. Banerjee on his demise in Kolkata on Friday.

"His commitment and passion to the sport was something unique. More importantly, he was a perfect human being – the way he made youngsters and seniors in the team feel comfortable is something many modern generation stars can learn," said T. Balaram, a member of the illustrious 'troika' along with P.K. Banerjee and Chuni Goswami in the 1950s and 60s, to *The Hindu*.

"I had the privilege of being his teammate for two Olympics (1956 and 1960) and three Asian Games (including the gold-medal winning team in 1962). It is rare to see a more complete team-man than PK, who had amazing speed and ball control," said Balaram.

**Genial**  
Nonagenarian Samar Banerjee, who also played alongside PK, said, "I was the captain of the Indian team in 1956 Melbourne Olympics and PK was the right winger.

He had the unparalleled ability to motivate players with his careful selection of words laced with metaphors and anecdotes.

The passing of PK has created a void that will be hard to fill.



**Lavish in praise:** Sourav Ganguly and Sachin Tendulkar highlighted the positive vibes that one got from P.K. Banerjee. ■ PTI

very speedy and positive player who had the ability to score. He was full of life and jovial."

"He was our captain at the Rome Olympics. A wonderful dribbler with great speed. He was powerful and strong on both feet," noted Simon Sunderaj, another of PK's contemporaries.

"Heartfelt condolences on the passing of the great Indian footballer PK Banerjee! Have fond memories of meeting him on a few occasions and the positivity he spread. May his soul Rest In Peace!" tweeted Sachin Tendulkar.

Sourav Ganguly, in his tweet, noted: "Lost a very dear person today... someone who I loved and respected enormously... someone who had so much influence

in my career when I was a 18-year-old boy... his positivity was infectious... may his soul rest in peace...."

### Big loss

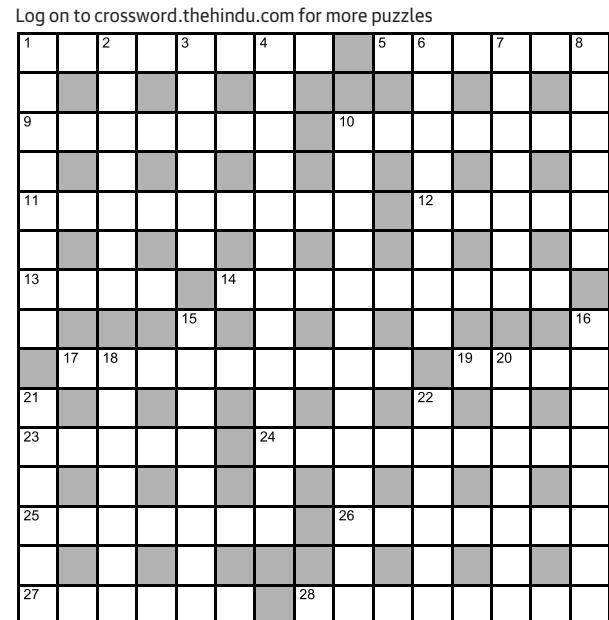
"He was a great human being. A very happy soul and a father figure to me," said former India captain Bhaichung Bhutia. "It is a big loss to Indian football. He is one of the greatest footballers and coaches India has ever seen."

Indian football's biggest player currently, Sunil Chhetri, said, "He was a pioneer in every sense of the word, and his achievements will forever have a place in Indian footballing history. Rest in peace," Chhetri said.

(With inputs from Y.B. Sarangi and agencies)

## THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12889

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



### ACROSS

- 1 Unawareness of old big cat having eaten four (8)
- 5 Aches for a long time with Poles (6)
- 9 Setter backs Hindi talk essentially sick and relating to clots (7)
- 10 To rig a mixie involves some paperwork (7)

### DOWN

- 1 Exaggerate the importance of soft song finished first (8)
- 16 Father's procured weapon with security code (8)
- 18 Control run around partner on ship (7)
- 20 Leave pets? (4,3)
- 21 Manage the cost of a foreign car (6)
- 22 The French officer's beginning to destroy key (6)

## SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★

### Solution to puzzle 12888

M	O	V	E	A	W	A	Y	B	L	O	G
B	U	I	I	U	I	U	O				
A	V	O	C	E	T	E	N	C	A	M	S
S	E	L	C	L	I	B	W				
T	A	R	N	I	S	H	E	D			
A	S	D	H	E	G	M					
N	E	E	D	L	U	M	B	R	O	O	M
D	L	I	N	E	O	I					
J	N	G	O	D	T	I	M	E	N	N	S
F	L	I	C	K	O	G					
R	N	I	R	U	M	A					
O	F	F	E	S	E	M					
N	U	S	S	N	C						
T	E	L	L	S	I	T	T	I	G	H	T

### Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

## CA, NZC not revoking NOCs as of now

Concerns over participation of foreign players due to travel restrictions

### IPL

**AYAN ACHARYA**  
CHENNAI

Even as COVID-19 continues to cripple major sporting events, the cricket boards of Australia, England, South Africa and New Zealand are still open to the idea of sending their players to India for IPL-13, should it happen.

The final approval is subject to the respective governments giving the go ahead and providing adequate preventive measures to combat the pandemic.

The Indian sports ministry on Thursday issued a fresh directive to federations in the country to suspend all events, competitions and trials until April 15, and with the introduction of restriction on air travel from regions in Europe or Asia, there are concerns over the participation of foreign players in this year's IPL.

**Working with players**  
A Cricket Australia (CA) spokesperson said the board was working with players and their managers on ensuring, "they are aware of all the facts before they consider playing overseas. This information is being shared as part of ongoing discussions.

"The NOCs will most likely be issued along with information to ensure all players are fully informed before making individual decisions. As you can see, it is a very fluid situation."

The IPL-bound Australian players are in a limbo after the country's Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Wednesday issued an indefinite level-4 travel ban but Pat Cummins (KKR) and Josh Hazlewood's (CSK) manager Judie Andersen of Maximum Group International said there was "nothing from CA (on revoking NOCs) at the moment but they are reviewing the situation. Regarding the IPL, other than a tentative date of April 15, there



**I'm ready:** KKR's new signing Tom Banton. ■ AP

have been no further updates."

### Same sentiment

Meanwhile, the New Zealand Cricket Board (NZC) too has echoed the same sentiment.

According to NZC, there has been "no consideration given to revoking NOCs. Instead, NZC is focusing on ensuring our professional players, men and women, receive the most relevant information, advice and guidance as it comes to hand."

Elsewhere, sources close to KKR's new signing Tom Banton have indicated that the England international was intending to play if the IPL went ahead. "Tom will follow government advice and be guided by his core employer Somerset CC as well as ECB. He really hopes the IPL can go ahead as long as safety is in place with regard to the coronavirus," said the source, on condition of anonymity.

At home, after a washout of the series opener in Dharmshala, India's two remaining ODIs against South Africa were cancelled as a precautionary measure.

However, CSA has refrained from taking a stance – at this point – on its players featuring in the IPL. "Given the time still left, we have not yet contacted our colleagues at the BCCI about this," said CSA's Head of Media and Communications.

# PK da ensured we focused on the future

An achiever, yet down to earth, and someone who would speak his mind

## TRIBUTE

LEANDER PAES

Memories march on as I write this. It has taken me a while to come to terms with the fact that P.K. Banerjee, or PK da as I would call him, is no more. As my condolences go out to his daughters and family, I am searching for words, travelling in a time machine to go back to those days, when I learned the basics of football from the one and only, PK da!

He was a friend of my father (Dr. Vece Paes) and someone who was always there to guide me. Be it in tough times or in happier days, PK da would be the one to ensure that we focused on the future, and that's how I would like to remember him.

### Incredible goal

I can recollect watching him play in a match between Mohun Bagan and Eastern Railway. Coming from a family which has allegiance to Mohun Bagan, I was naturally a green-maroon supporter, but I was awed to see PK da scoring the winning goal for Eastern Railway from 30 yards out with that famous left leg. It was incredible!

So, a few years later, when my father took me to train under him, I was very excited. But if you are PK da, you

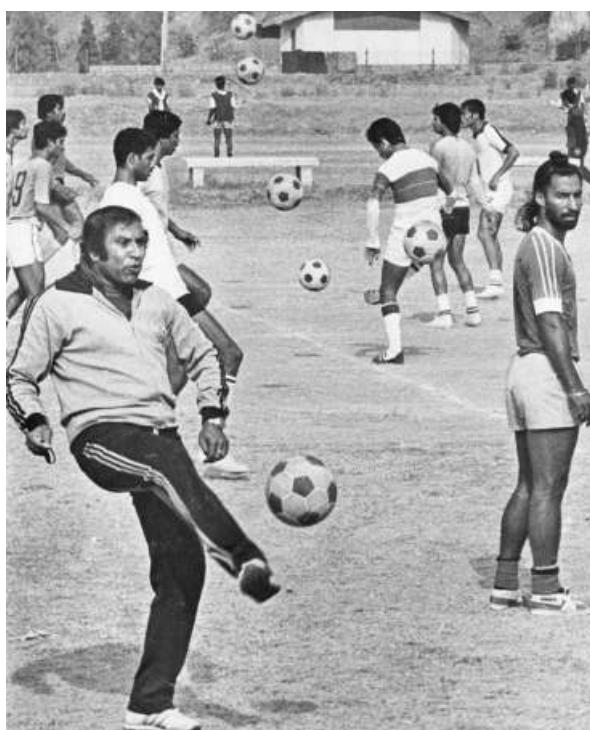
knew how to make friends! Soon, he became my mentor, pal and a guide. He had a solution for every problem and taught me how it was important for a player to utilise both the legs for balance and to keep the opponent guessing. And interestingly, we did not have a fixed training spot. Some days we would be at the CC&FC, other times, it would be the Mohun Bagan ground, or even at the maidan near the Red Road in Kolkata.

**Powerhouse of energy**  
A joyful gentleman, PK da was a powerhouse of energy. He would crack jokes, tell us anecdotes from various football matches he played and, most importantly, would ensure that we overcame every challenge. It was PK da, who introduced me to the philosophy of my favourite footballer Johan Cruyff, which was to play the Dutch style of 'total football'.

Later, I have been to Barcelona, have read a lot on Cruyff, but I still owe it to PK da for introducing me to that concept.

"After every game, he would hug us, advise us on how to tackle tough situations, and would always have a positive approach. 'Never give up', he would say.

After I switched to tennis, he would still keep a tab on



**Master at work:** P.K. Banerjee was one of the rare footballers who excelled as player as well as coach. ■ THE HINDU ARCHIVES

my performances and would advise me on a thing or two. That was him – always ready to help out a fellow-sportsman.

After I took up the racquet sport, he had told my dad that I would go far.

As I returned to Kolkata after winning the Junior Wimbledon title, PK da greeted me with a smile at the South Club and said: "I told you so..." He hugged me tight and



Leander Paes.  
■ FILE PHOTO: V. SREENIVASA MURTHY

then said: "Now, get me a Wimbledon title and a medal in the Olympics..."

After Atlanta 1996, I met PK da again and his one-liner was back: "I told you so..."

### Just a phone call away

Such men are rare these days – achievers, yet down to earth, and someone who would speak his mind. When he would chat with me, who would say that he was such a

great footballer! He joked with me, advised me and every time I needed help -- PK da was just a phone call away.

The last time I met him, a few years ago, he greeted me with that infectious smile and said: "I am proud of you, champ..."

I will miss you PK da. You will live among us. *Bhalo theko!*

(As told to Shayan Acharya)

**We urge all Olympics-bound shooters and national coaches to refrain from coming to the range till further notice, and request that they continue with their respective training schedules from their home base, as best as they can," said the president of the NRAI, Raninder Singh, in a statement.**

Requesting the senior coaches to refrain from tra-

vel, the NRAI president urged the shooting fraternity to not lose focus on the main goal of best performance in the Olympics in Tokyo, as and when it was held.

With 15 shooters having qualified for the Olympics, the original plan was to announce the Olympic team after the World Cup in Delhi, which has subsequently been postponed to May.

In an attempt to compensate for the requisite scores, the NRAI went ahead and conducted the selection trials for all the Olympic qualified shooters.

### Some suspense

Even though most of the shooters would comfortably be holding on to their Olympic quota that they had won in the World Championship,

World Cups and the Asian Championship, there could be some suspense in a couple of events, as to who would be chosen by the national federation to represent the country in the Olympics.

With the situation fluid, the NRAI realised that there was no urgency to finalise the Olympic team, as the world of sports had been compelled to face weeks of inac-

# Football fraternity mourns PK's death

Y.B. SARANGI

KOLKATA

The Indian football fraternity on Friday mourned the death of the legendary P.K. Banerjee, a fine player and a great coach of his times.

Subhas Bhowmik, a reputed player-turned coach, admired PK's knowledge of football. "PK was technically very sound and had great tactical knowledge. His management was immaculate. There are very few great players in this world who also became great coaches. PK was one of them... I have my doubt that another PK will be born in our country," said Bhowmik, who was part of the 1970 Asian bronze-winning squad, jointly coached by PK.

### Caring nature

Manoranjan Bhattacharya, another well-known player-turned coach, lauded PK's caring nature. "He understood each and every player well. He communicated well

and knew how to motivate the players individually."

"Every year he used to call the players for lunch at his house, where home-cooked food was served."

Bhattacharya shared an anecdote to stress PK's coaching ability. "In the 1980s, once 14-15 players of the first 18 left East Bengal and practically it was a new team (I was part of that team). Still, we remained almost unbeaten, barring the loss to a South Korean side in the DCM semifinal."

### Tactical knowledge

Subrata Bhattacharya underlined PK's tactical knowledge. "Nobody understood better than P.K. Banerjee when to use which player. On several occasions he made me play as a forward (Subrata was known as one of the great defenders of the game). His method of practice was also very good."

Another well-known footballer, Shyam Thapa, was

sentimental. "I am so sad. I was away but I knew he would not die until I reach Kolkata. I reached a few hours ago, just before he breathed his last. He was a great man, a great footballer and a great coach. I got name and fame because of him. I became a coach because of him. He was like my God Father."

### Mamata's tweet

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee tweeted "Heartbroken & saddened at passing away of football great P.K. Banerjee – Winner of Arjuna Award, Asian Games Gold, Centennial Order of Merit FIFA, Banga Bibhushan, 2-time Olympian & many more. PK Banerjee's unparalleled contribution to Indian football will be etched in our memories & he will continue to serve as an inspiration for generations to come. Condolences to fans, family and the sporting fraternity for this irreparable loss."

# Lahiri's team sweeps BAC elections

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

The panel backed by the outgoing secretary Atanu Lahiri has swept the recently-held Bengal Chess Association (BCA) elections.

Atanu's brother Santanu Lahiri beat Grandmaster Dibyendu Barua to take the president's post in the elec-

tions held as per the Calcutta High Court order. Amar Roy

will function as the working president.

Dilip Ranjan Chakraborty and Anirban Hazra have been elected the secretary and treasurer respectively.

The BCA election is significant as it may have a bearing on the outcome of the AICF

elections.

Barua had accused Atanu of misappropriating Government funds and misusing of powers. Barua's move was supported by AICF secretary Bharat Singh Chauhan.

Subsequently, Atanu, who denied the charges, filed a criminal defamation case against the two.

# AFI elections, AGM put off

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOCHI

Meanwhile, the public dealings at the NRAI House in Tughlakabad have also been stopped till the end of the month.

It has been stated that no visitors would be allowed at the shooting headquarters, and senior NRAI officials would work from home.

restrictions in place to stop the spread of the coronavirus and also as our members would have to travel from different corners of the country," said AFI president Adille Sumariwalla in a federation release on Friday.

The AFI has also decided to virtually close its office in New Delhi from Saturday and a majority of its staff will be working from home.

# NRAI postpones Olympic selection panel meeting, coaching camps

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) has postponed the Olympic selection committee meeting which was scheduled for Friday.

With the growing uncertainty triggered by the coronavirus pandemic, the NRAI also decided to postpone all the coaching camps scheduled for April.

"We urge all Olympics-

bound shooters and national coaches to refrain from coming to the range till further notice, and request that they continue with their respective training schedules from their home base, as best as they can," said the president of the NRAI, Raninder Singh, in a statement.

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# Club owners not on same page over restart of season

Chennai City hoping it is called off; others want it to continue at a later date

## I-LEAGUE

AASHIN PRASAD  
CHENNAI

The latest directive from the Indian government to call off all sporting events and camps until April 15 in view of the COVID-19 pandemic has put the fate of the I-League in doubt.

With 23 matches left to be played, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) has adopted a wait-and-watch approach.

The clubs, however, are in a quandary and are not on the same page on the issue.

Chennai City FC's domestic players have been sent home, while its foreign players are under self-isolation at the club's home base in Coimbatore.

"I am hoping the foreign players can also fly home this week," said CFC owner Rohit Ramesh. Chennai City is currently placed seventh in the table with 21 points from 16 matches.

**Logistical nightmare**  
With the several logistical nightmares in mind, Rohit is hoping the Federation calls off the ongoing season instead of a looking at a delayed restart.

"Completing the rest of

the fixtures in May-June will have logistical implications with respect to cost of hotels, travel, etc. Our expense will go for a toss. And players will want to stay with their families during this time and their health is more critical. I hope the AIFF consults with the AFC to arrive at a decision," he said.

Contrary opinion  
However, his opinion isn't shared by other bosses. V.C. Praveen, Gokulam Kerala owner, which is in the hunt for a second-place finish, is hopeful of the league's restart in May.

"Things have improved but I am not sure what the future holds. If the league resumes in the first week of May, we will be able to finish the season. We only have 15-20 matches [23] to play," said Praveen.

Aizawl FC is currently in the relegation position with five matches left to play. "I am keen for the season to be completed. We have four home matches left and I am hopeful of a top-five finish. But now, the coronavirus situation is more important than football," says Robert Royte, the club owner.

East Bengal has used this period to offer the players a

mid-season break until March 31. Debabrata Sarkar, a senior club official, is hopeful of an end to the season.

**Kick-off times**  
Punjab's owner Ranjit Bajaj felt his club's facility won't allow it to host matches in May. Punjab has had 2 p.m. kick-offs for its home games all season since the Guru Nanak Stadium in Ludhiana does not have floodlights. "It will be too hot to play our home games at 2 p.m. in May," said Bajaj.

**Contract conundrum**  
The clubs will also have to work their way around the contracts and player eligibility if the league continues till the start of the summer transfer window. The player contracts are not uniform across clubs – Chennai City has players signed on until June 30, while several clubs have deals until the end of May.

The AIFF and the AFC have decided to look into the need of amendments or temporary dispensations to the FIFA regulations on the status and transfer of players to protect contracts for both players and clubs and adjusting player registration periods.

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**Mirabai sure-shot for Olympics**  
In a meeting of the Executive Board of the International Weightlifting Federation held on March 17-18 via video conference, the world body has made some recommendations to the International Olympic Association (IOC) regarding the Olympic qualifying events. One of the key recommendations, sources said, may close the qualification process.

Mirabai currently occupies third place in the women's 49kg world rankings.

## WEIGHTLIFTING

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Weightlifting's Olympic qualifying schedule has gone haywire due to the Covid-19 pandemic but India's Mirabai Chanu is a sure-shot for the Tokyo Games, if they are held.

Mirabai currently occupies third place in the women's 49kg world rankings.

Olympics qualification slots will be decided based on the current world rankings.

"Mirabai is certain to qualify for the Olympics, she is currently at third spot in the world rankings. The top eight from the world rankings after the end of the qualification period automatically qualifies for Tokyo Olympics," Indian Weightlifting Federation secretary general Sahdev Yadav said.

This would mean the

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## IN BRIEF



## Warne's gin distillery shifts to hand sanitiser

**SYDNEY** Australian cricket great Shane Warne has halted production of gin at a distillery he co-owns to make medical-grade hand sanitiser for hospitals in these "challenging times". He responded to PM Scott Morrison's plea for companies to help during the COVID-19 crisis. The company halted gin production and is now pumping out 70%-alcohol hand sanitiser. AFP



## FB scrambles as use soars in time of isolation

**SAN FRANCISCO** Facebook has said it would place "authoritative" coronavirus content at the top of user feeds as it scrambled to keep up with increased usage and stem the flow of misinformation on its platform and WhatsApp messaging. It has nearly doubled server capacity to power WhatsApp. AFP



## Church forgives sins of those stricken by virus

**VATICAN CITY** The Catholic Church on Friday granted forgiveness – under certain conditions – for the sins of the faithful struck by COVID-19. The Vatican decree also covers healthcare workers and relatives who care for their sick family members. The condition involves the sick saying a certain number of prayers. AFP

# Dating prescription: chat now, meet later

In the time of pandemic, people take the 'opportunity' to know each other better before hooking up

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
NEW YORK

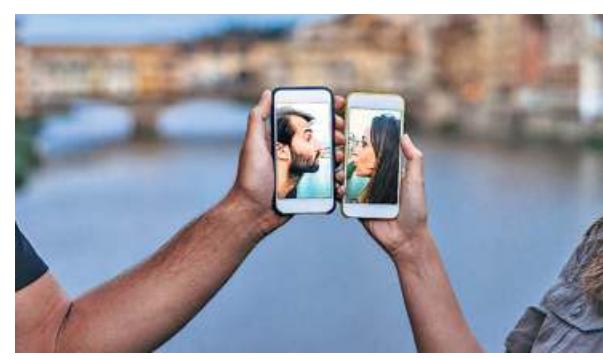
With governments clamping down on social interactions to contain COVID-19 spread, dating sites are discouraging dates and asking users to get to know each other virtually instead.

"We don't know who needs to hear this, but now is NOT the time to go out with your date to a bar," leading match-maker OkCupid tweeted on Monday.

"FaceTime, Skype, call, text, call, message on our app... all very romantic right now," it added.

Dating sites contacted by AFP refused to divulge their traffic since COVID-19 started shutting down U.S. cities this week but it appears their usage is far from slowing.

Even if some academics would like them to suspend their activities entirely, "It's time to shut down Tinder and all online dating services," tweeted U.S. writer Matt Stoller.



**Love is viral:** Sites are offering ideas for remote interactions, including an online video game date. •GETTY IMAGES

"If someone seems like they're not taking the crisis seriously or they're making fun of it for me personally that's a turnoff," said comedian and author Lane Moore.

She helped created the show "Tinder Live," in which she interacts with matches in real time, and thinks COVID-19 could be an "opportunity" for people to bond.

"I'm talking to a guy right now who I met on Tinder

"es," tweeted U.S. writer Matt Stoller. "No more Internet-enabled interactions among random people until the #coronavirus crisis has passed," he added.

## COVID-19

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"I'm talking to a guy right now who I met on Tinder

Live and we're both talking about how this coronavirus stuff is impacting our lives so that can be a good way to know somebody," she said.

Ms. Moore, from New York, says many of the men she meets on Tinder want to cut the conversation short and jump straight to meeting in the flesh.

She thinks it's a good thing that now men are being forced to chat more first.

"That's something that women have always wanted because it's an opportunity to meet someone you like the first time but also try to make sure that they're safe," Ms. Moore explained.

The dating site Coffee Meets Bagel (CMB) is proposing several different ideas for remote interactions, including an online video game date. "This is going to be important for us to think outside the box in crazy times like this," said CEO Darrow

Kang. CMB is also organising an online group discussion, which it has never done before.

## Jump in user base

Yale University student Ileana Valdez and five friends spent just a few hours setting up a dating site for students, whose classes have been cancelled on Thursday.

The site, OKZoomer, a nod to the popular expression "Ok boomer", which millennials use to refer to older people, picked up 6,500 users in less than a week, according to Ms. Valdez.

"Social distancing allows us to focus on conversations and building up existing and new relationships," the computer science student said.

She feels that the big dating apps are focused on "hookups," and argues that OKZoomer sets the ground for "meaningful relationships."

# Organisers postpone Cannes Film Festival

New dates may be in June-end, July

**REUTERS**  
PARIS

The Cannes Film Festival, the world's largest, was forced to postpone its latest edition in May due to the spread of SARS-CoV-2, organisers of the annual event on the French Riviera said on Thursday.

The postponement follows weeks of speculation over whether the festival, which draws thousands of filmmakers, celebrities and executives to the city, would be able to go ahead between May 12-23.

"At this time of global health crisis, our thoughts go to the victims of the COVID-19 and we express our solidarity with all of those who are fighting the disease," the statement said.

France is in its third day of a lockdown aimed at containing the spread of the coronavirus. Almost 11,000

cases have now been officially diagnosed and 372 people have died.

The organisers, who had announced U.S. director Spike Lee as president of the jury, said that several new dates were under consideration, including the end of June-beginning of July.

**'Not the first time'**  
It is not the first time the festival has been postponed. Its inaugural event in 1939 was cut short after the opening screening of the *Hunchback of Notre Dame* because of Germany's invasion of Poland the next day. The prizes were eventually awarded in 2002.

It was also interrupted in May 1968 amid student and labour protests sweeping across France.

The announcement is another blow to the film industry.

# Finland is again world's happiest

People feel a sense of belonging, trust and enjoy each other'

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
HELSINKI

with countries such as Switzerland, New Zealand and Austria.

Luxembourg also edged into the 10th spot for the first time this year.

The happiest countries are those "where people feel a sense of belonging, where they trust and enjoy each other and their shared institutions," John Helliwell, one of the report's authors, said in a statement.

Meanwhile, the countries at the bottom are those afflicted by violent conflicts and extreme poverty, with Zimbabwe, South Sudan and Afghanistan classified as the world's least happy nations.

Finland's top spot in the

happiness list has previously been met with raised eyebrows in the country whose population of 5.5 million is said to shy away from spontaneous demonstrations of joy, valuing instead the quiet and solitude of the country's vast forests and lakes.

The country's long dark winters were reputed to be behind high levels of alcoholism and suicide, but a decade-long public health drive has helped cut rates by more than half.

Finland's residents enjoy a high quality of life and security, with rates of inequality and poverty among the lowest of all OECD countries.

# Doctors on call, WhatsApp in Kashmir

Numbers shared on social media for patients to reach out for advice from home

**PEERZADA ASHIQ**  
SRINAGAR



Hundreds of doctors in the Kashmir Valley on Friday volunteered to post their contact numbers on social media platforms to hold free online consultations for patients in order to control footfalls and mingling in hospitals and private clinics in view of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Dr. Salim Khan, Professor and Head of the Department of Community Medicine at Srinagar's Government Medical College, initiated the process, especially at tertiary care medical facilities like the Shri Maharaja Hari Singh Hospital.

"We requested all hospitals and clinics to voluntarily share their contact numbers on social media so that patients can call them from their homes without venturing out. It will help a great deal in containing the spread of COVID-19 as hospitals are the most vulnerable spaces otherwise," said Dr. Khan.

shad Hussain, Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Government Medical College.

The Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK), a body of Valley-based doctors, made public the numbers of 21 doctors.

"People suffering from general ailments can limit visiting hospitals as doctors have volunteered online consultations on WhatsApp groups as well as on telephone..." DAK president Dr. Suhail Naik said, adding, "This approach is going to decrease the large cohort of people visiting hospitals and is a successful method to contain the spread of COVID-19."

# COVID-19 HAS SHOWN US THAT FAKE NEWS IS A REAL ISSUE.

It seems fake news on social media is spreading faster than the virus itself. And answers are harder than ever to come by. Now we aren't medical experts, but we know how to get to the truth. By thoroughly researching and verifying every word before it's actually printed. So in these uncertain times, might we ask you to wait. Wait before you share something you have no way of confirming. Wait until the truth in print makes its way to your doorstep.

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