



Four militants killed in gunfight in south Kashmir's Shopian  
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Run trains for migrant workers: ex-Railway Minister Dinesh Trivedi  
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Very unfortunate that Pak. is exporting terror even now: Army chief  
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Myanmar releases 25,000 prisoners amid virus fears  
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## NEARBY



Delhi reports 67 new cases, 4 deaths

NEW DELHI

Delhi reported 67 new COVID-19 cases and four deaths on Friday, taking the toll to 42 and the total number of cases to 1,707. Twenty-one patients were also discharged, taking the total to 72.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Close to 6 lakh labourers from Jharkhand stranded

BHUBANESWAR

The Jharkhand government on Friday said close to six lakh migrant labourers are stranded at over 12,000 locations across the country. The information was said to have been gathered with the help of Chief Minister Special Assistance Scheme Mobile App launched recently by Chief Minister Hemant Soren.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

U.P. buses to bring students stuck in Kota

LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government on Friday said it had sent 300 buses, including 200 from Agra, to bring back students of the State stranded in Rajasthan's Kota. A government official in Agra said 200 buses were sent from the district while another 100 were dispatched from Jhansi in Bundelkhand.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9

## Post-lockdown, India's infection growth rate has slowed down

Earlier, cases were doubling every 3 days; now it is 6.2 days, says Centre

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN  
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry on Friday said the doubling rate of positive COVID-19 cases was now down to 6.2 days, compared to 3 before the nationwide lockdown that began on March 25.

India reported 1,076 new cases and 32 deaths in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 13,835 and 452 deaths. As many as 1,749 persons have been cured/discharged after recovery. The active cases now are 11,616.

However, according to reports from the State Health Departments, the total number of positive cases are 14,250, of which 11,853 are active cases. As many as 493 persons have died of the disease.

The ICMR said there was no evidence suggesting that novel coronavirus is showing any signs of mutation.

### Doubling rate

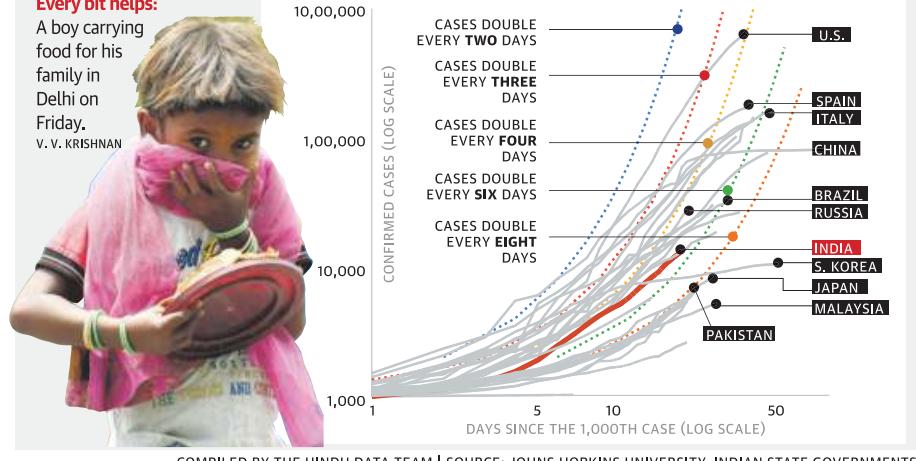
Health Ministry Joint Secretary Lav Agarwal, addressing the daily press briefing, said: "Before the lockdown, the doubling rate was about 3 days, but according to data in the past seven days, it stands at 6.2 days. Also, India has registered an average growth factor of 1.2 % since April 1, compared to 2.1 in

### Rate of growth slows

The chart shows the progression of confirmed COVID-19 cases since the 1000th case in select countries. In the first week of the lockdown, cases in India were doubling every four days. Two weeks later, the cases are doubling between five and six days, similar to that in Brazil and Russia

#### Every bit helps:

A boy carrying food for his family in Delhi on Friday.  
V.V. KRISHNAN



COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM | SOURCE: JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY, INDIAN STATE GOVERNMENTS

the two weeks preceding that [March 15 to March 31] which is about a 40% decline."

Nineteen States/UTs (Kerala, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Puducherry, Bihar, Odisha, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, J&K, Punjab, Assam and Tripura) have shown a lower rate of increase of cases to some extent.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8  
MORE REPORTS ON PAGES ▶ 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12

## None will go hungry, says Adityanath

The Uttar Pradesh government is standing firm with its citizens, irrespective of the section of society they belong to, said Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. "We are taking care that nobody in the State goes hungry. We will make the same arrangements for those who have come from other places," he said. ▶ PAGE 11

## What Centre gave won't do: Pinarayi

The financial package announced by the Centre to tackle the COVID-19 crisis is inadequate, says Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan. States with their limited resources will have to shoulder the greater burden of economic crisis that will follow. Altogether just ₹7,000 crore had been allotted additionally to the States, he said. ▶ PAGE 11

Wuhan admits to errors, hikes toll by 50%

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
WUHAN

China's coronavirus ground-zero city of Wuhan on Friday admitted missteps in tallying its death toll as it abruptly raised the count by 50% following growing world doubts about Chinese transparency.

The U.S. has led the charge in questioning China's handling of the pandemic and how much information it has readily shared with the international community since the virus emerged late last year.

Among the measures announced was liquidity infusion of ₹1 lakh crore, of which ₹50,000 crore is exclusively for non-banking finance companies (NBFCs), via banks. The NBFCs have experienced liquidity shortage since banks have not offered them any moratorium for repayment, while these entities have had to extend the moratorium option to their customers.

Authorities in Wuhan initially tried to cover up the outbreak, punishing doctors who raised the alarm online in December.

Wuhan's epidemic control headquarters said in a social media posting on Friday that it had added 1,290 deaths to the tally in the city. That brings the total deaths in the city to 3,869. But the city government only added 325 cases, raising the city's total number of cases to 50,333.

The change also pushes the nationwide death toll up by nearly 39% to 4,632.

The official toll in the country of 1.4 billion people, however, remains well below the number of fatalities in smaller nations such as Italy and Spain.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 14  
EDITORIAL ▶ PAGE 6  
MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGE 15

## RBI to pump in ₹1 lakh crore

More funds for NBFCs, Nabard, Sidbi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday announced a slew of liquidity measures to ease financial stress and increase credit flows, while indicating that more room was likely to emerge for reduction in interest rates as inflation softens.

The U.S. has led the charge in questioning China's handling of the pandemic and how much information it has readily shared with the international community since the virus emerged late last year.

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The RBI will extend another ₹50,000 crore to refinancing agencies like Nabard, Sidbi and National Housing Bank.

Help for States  
Separately, RBI also said it has increased the ways and means advances (WMA) limits of States by 60%, over and above the level as on March 31, 2020.

The move was aimed at providing greater comfort to the States for undertaking containment and mitigation efforts, and to plan market borrowing programmes bet-



RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das at a press conference in Mumbai on Friday. ▶ PTI

ter, the RBI said. On April 1, the RBI increased the limit by 30%. The increased limit will be available till September 30, 2020.

Citing the retail inflation numbers of March, which was at 5.9%, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said inflation could be on a declining trajectory.

"...Early developments suggest that inflation is on a declining trajectory, having fallen by 170 basis points from its January 2020 peak," Mr. Das said, while announcing the liquidity measures.

He said recent data showed a softening of food inflation by around 160 bps though in other categories of the CPI, inflation pressures remained firm.

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## Salaried borrowers continue EMIs, ignore moratorium offer

Bankers say that most MSMEs, though, have opted for it

MANOJIT SAHA  
MUMBAI

The option of a moratorium on loan repayments announced by the Reserve Bank of India last month has mostly been availed of by micro, small and medium enterprises while salaried class borrowers have, till now, largely refrained from it, bankers have said.

Last month, the RBI announced that banks and other financial institutions would give an option to borrowers of term loans for deferring payment of instalments falling due between March 1 and May 31, 2020.

The move was aimed at addressing the liquidity crunch faced by businesses and individuals due to the economic lockdown imposed to help contain the COVID-19 pandemic.

"About 85-90% of busi-

borrowers who had availed of the standing instruction facility to pay the equated monthly instalment (EMI). Such borrowers were required to inform the bank if they wanted to opt for the moratorium.

"We have not seen many such individuals opting for the moratorium, which is understandable as their income flow has not been impacted," the official said. "The government employees for example... why should they opt for moratorium since their salaries have not stopped?" the banker added.

Borrowers opting for the moratorium would have to incur a cost as the interest not paid in these three months would be added to the principal component.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## Now the video will play in Newspaper



Minor forest produce in exemption list

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

In the latest set of lockdown relaxations, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has added the collection, harvest and process of minor forest produce to the list of activities that will be permitted. The additional directives were issued on Thursday.

Minor forest produce include non-timber items such as bamboo, roots, seeds, fruits, flowers and plants. A number of people from the Scheduled Tribes and other forest dwelling communities depend on the collection and sale of such items for their livelihood. Reports show that police have been preventing forest dwellers from leaving their homes to collect minor forest produce due to the restrictions.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## Woman delivers baby in police vehicle

Grateful parents name newborn 'Kundan' after the SHO of Khyala police station

HEMANI BHANDARI  
NEW DELHI

The wife of a 25-year-old factory worker went into labour on Thursday night and delivered her baby inside a police vehicle. Grateful for the timely help of the policemen, the couple has decided to name the newborn after the area Station House Officer.

No vehicle in sight  
Sushil, who hails from Jharkhand and resides in a rented accommodation in Raghbir Nagar, said his wife Mini went into labour around 9 p.m. on Thursday but there was no vehicle to rush them to hospital. "She was in pain and we had no vehicle around us. We walked till the police post five minutes away, went inside and asked



Police personnel and others helping a woman deliver her baby near Khyala in West Delhi. ▶ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the immediate help they required. After the situation got better, we were taken by the policemen to the nursing home. Both my son and wife are in good health," he said.

The next day, Mr. Sushil made it a point to meet the Station House Officer of Khyala police station and thank him for the help. Overwhelmed, he also decided to name the boy after Mr. Kundan.

"I have named him Kundan because Kundan sahib and other officers helped us so much. I am really thankful to them. Maybe even my son will become a policeman like him when he grows up," the father said.

"I have also heard he is doing this [naming the son after him]. We were only doing our duty," said the SHO.

## Frantic Odia migrants call home for help

Lockdown extension deepens misery for workers from State stranded across the country

SATYASUNDAR BARIK  
BHUBANESWAR

Packed into a 150-sq.-ft. room in Bengaluru, Amulya Mallick, a plumber, along with nine others from Odisha, said they had been skipping dinner for the last five days in order to stretch their depleting food stocks. Back in Talapada village in Odisha's Balasore district, his worried wife Saraswati has borrowed money twice from close relatives and transferred it to husband's account.

In Tamil Nadu's Tiruppur, Swapneswar Sai (28), along with his wife and 30-month-old son, is desperate to take the first train back to their village in Mayurbhanj. Their immediate concern is their inability to pay rent of ₹2,000. He has been frantic-

cally calling friends in Odisha to send money to his account. As many as 120 labourers from Mayurbhanj district, who were employed in a garment manufacturing unit before the lockdown began, have a similar tale to share.

The extension of the lockdown has left hundreds of migrant workers from Odisha stranded in Mumbai, Hyderabad, Aurangabad, Goa, Bengaluru and Tirupur anxious and desperate.

### Supplies dry up

Many have received offers of help. Several have got rations. But the food supplies dry up after two or three installments. Back in Odisha, resource-scarce family mem-

bers don't know how to bring their loved ones back.

"I urge governments both in Karnataka and Odisha to ensure safe return of my husband and his friends. Till they board trains, the government must ensure they get two square meals a day," pleaded Ms. Mallick.

Scores of videos of migrant workers pleading to governments with folded hands are circulating on social media. "We have been trying to link Odisha migrant workers either with the State government or the local administration where they are stranded. As we cannot move, we keep prodding authorities with our phone calls. But beyond a point, everything comes to standstill," said Satyosundar Barik, who is part of a virtual volunteers' group.

A ND-NDE

for help," he said.

At the police post, they ran into a woman constable later identified as Suman. She informed others and soon a police vehicle was arranged to take the couple to a private nursing home in Paschim Vihar.

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**Timings****DELHI**

SATURDAY, APR. 18
RISE 05:53 SET 18:49
RISE 03:31 SET 14:47
SUNDAY, APR. 19
RISE 05:52 SET 18:50
RISE 04:04 SET 15:40
MONDAY, APR. 20
RISE 05:51 SET 18:50
RISE 04:35 SET 16:32

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	38	26
Safdarjung	38	26
Palam	39	26

Delhi Palam Today
30°C The morning will be comfortable. Day will be very warm with cloudy sky. Spell of dust storm and shower is likely.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
30°C The morning will be comfortable. Day will be very warm with cloudy sky. Spell of dust storm and shower is likely.

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Air quality of Delhi-NCR
Delhi 105 Gurugram 98
Ghaziabad 127 Faridabad 110
Noida 100 Greater Noida 117
■ Good ■ Satisfactory ■ Moderate 0-50 51-100 101-200
■ Poor ■ Very poor ■ Severe 201-300 301-400 >401
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) SOURCE: CPCB

**IN BRIEF**  
**SDMC Mayor provides accommodation for staff**

NEW DELHI  
South Delhi Mayor Sunita Kangri instructed officials to provide accommodation for staff coming from outside Delhi on Friday. Noting that many sanitation and Domestic Breeder Checker (DBC) staff coming from outside the city were facing issues crossing the border on a daily, the Mayor instructed officials to provide accommodations at community centres and at the staff quarters in Tilak Nagar.

**One-third virus patients in Noida have recovered**  
NODA  
Thirty-three of the 92 coronavirus patients in Gautam Buddha Nagar have recovered and discharged from hospital, a number which has brought some cheer to the district which is among the worst affected in Uttar Pradesh. This 35% recovery rate is better than the 13% recorded at the national level.

**BSES**  
BSES Yamuna Power Limited, New Delhi  
**DECLARATION OF INDICATIVE SHORTAGE/SURPLUS OF POWER FOR 2020-21 ON BYPL (BSES) WEBSITE.**  
In accordance with the direction issued by Hon'ble DERC, BPL has uploaded details of its power shortage/surplus in different time block for 2020-21 on its website ([www.bsesdelhi.com](http://www.bsesdelhi.com)) Interested parties are requested to visit BYPL's website on regular basis and send the competitive sale/purchase/banking offers mentioning detail terms and conditions. Applicants may refer to the various terms and conditions of the latest BYPL tender related to power Sale/ Purchase/ banking, already available on its website. The offers may be submitted to the HOD, Power Management Group, BSES Yamuna Power Ltd, Shakti-Kiran Building, 2nd Floor, A-Block, Karkardooma, New Delhi-110032 (Tel: 011-41247779/85, Fax: 011-41247787)  
**HEAD (PMG)**  
BSES Yamuna Power Limited  
Regd.Off: BSES Yamuna Power Ltd, Shakti Kiran Building, Karkardooma, New Delhi-110032 Tel: 011-41247787 Web site: [www.bsesdelhi.com](http://www.bsesdelhi.com)

**DIESEL LOCOMOTIVE WORKS, VARANASI - 221004****E-Tender Notice**

Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/Maintenance, DLW, Varanasi acting on behalf of President of India invites E-Tenders for the following work: SN.1, Tender No. EL/1016/W-1128, Name of Work: Repairing & Overhauling of Desert Coolers installed in DLW. Approximate Cost: ₹ 2,82,205/- (Rupees Two Lakh Eighty Two Thousand Two Hundred Five only), Completion Period: 45 Days, Tender Cost: ₹ 1,180/- (Rupees One Thousand One Hundred Eighty Only), Earnest Money: ₹ 5,700/- (Rupees Five Thousand Seven Hundred only). Tender opening date and time: 08.05.2020 at 15.30 hrs. Note: For details and to participate e-tender visit Indian railways website [www.dlw.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.dlw.indianrailways.gov.in) & <http://www.irpe.gov.in> and tender can fill up on the same website. CORRIGENDUM-1, Due to some unavoidable circumstances following changes are issued to above Tender Notice. Officially Published Tender Notice: SN.1, Tender No. EL/1010/W-1127, Approximate Cost: ₹ 14,84,731.08 (Rupees Fourteen Lakh Eighty Four Thousand Seven Hundred Thirty One and Eight Paise only), Opening Date: 30.03.2020 at 15.30 hrs., Revised Tender Notice: Tender No. EL/1010/W-1127, Approximate Cost: ₹ 14,84,731.08 (Rupees Fourteen Lakh Eighty Four Thousand Seven Hundred Thirty One and Eight Paise only), Opening Date: 30.04.2020 at 15.30 hrs. Note: For details and to participate e-tender visit Indian railways website [www.irpe.gov.in](http://www.irpe.gov.in) & PRO/DLW/E-01 Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/Maintenance

f / diesellocoworks "Website: [www.dlw.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.dlw.indianrailways.gov.in)"

# Private schools told to charge tuition fee on monthly basis

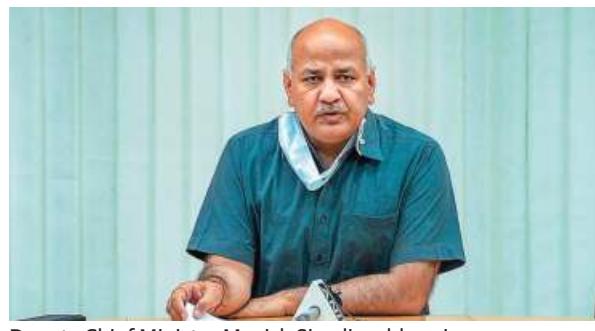
Govt. orders schools to not hike fees, warns of strict action in case of violation

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

Private schools in Delhi will be allowed to charge only tuition fee and that too on a monthly basis till the time the COVID-19 lockdown ends and schools reopen, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said on Friday. The schools will not be allowed to increase fees, or charge parents an annual fee or transportation fee.

"Trusts run private schools and they are not run for profit. We are receiving complaints that private schools have hiked their fees and those students who fail to pay the charges are being dropped from online classes. I would request the private schools to not stoop down to this level," said Mr. Sisodia, who is also the Education Minister.

He said that the schools will not be allowed to



Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia addressing a press conference on Friday. ■ PTI

charge fees on a three-month basis. "They will charge only tuition fee for one month... fees under other heads like transportation will not be charged," he added.

**Salaries of staff**

Mr. Sisodia said that online education must be provided to all students. "Even if parents are unable to pay the fee, students will not be cut from the classes," he added.

ded. The Minister added that the schools will have to pay salaries to all teaching and non-teaching staff regardless of whether they are contractual or non-contractual. "Any shortfall in revenue to pay salaries will be met by parents' associations," Mr. Sisodia said.

Strict action under the Delhi Disaster Management Act and the Delhi School Education Act will be taken against any school that vio-

lates the order, the Minister added.

The country is under a lockdown since March 25 due to COVID-19 outbreak. The lockdown has now been extended till May 3. Schools were closed and exams postponed at least two weeks before the lockdown was announced, online classes are being conducted by private schools as well as Delhi government-run schools.

Several parents have been approaching the government with requests for fee waivers during the lockdown period.

FICCI Arise, a collegium of stakeholders who represent different facets of school education, said the latest move will put private schools in jeopardy and that the government needs to come up with some measures to save the institutions.

# College students seek help over rent payment

Students' groups sent memorandum to CM

**STAFF REPORTER**

NEW DELHI

Malayali students' group Maithry and Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), on Friday wrote to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, regarding the issue of students paying rent.

Several students from various States, including Kerala and Northeast, had returned home during the mid-semester break due to which they were back home before lockdown, Maithry's letter highlighted.

However, many students received incessant calls from house owners, demanding rent for the last two months. However, several students were not in a position to pay rent as the lockdown had hit the livelihood of their parents.

Laxmi, a first year student at Zakir Hussain College, said that she was required to pay around ₹14,000 for the last two months. It could go up to ₹21,000 if the lockdown continues. She said she could not afford it, as that the only source of income of her family is from a rented store, which is shut.

Sneha, a third year student of Hfundi College, who is still in Delhi revealed that many students were being forced to pay rent even though they were not residing at their accommodation.

ABVP in a statement said: "Despite strict government instructions to forego involuntary rentals and untimely evictions until the pandemic subsides, violation of the directive has become common public knowledge."

It recommended a direct benefit transfer of a baseline amount to the accounts of resident students, as enforcing the rent order was improbable. Among other recommendations to the CM, in a memorandum, were setting up a helpline for counselling and fee waivers in State-run schools.

# Unable to feed family, man found dead

**ASHOK KUMAR**  
GURUGRAM

A daily-wager who had been without a job for a month due to the lockdown was found dead in Saraswati Kunj, the police said on Friday.

He was perturbed over not being able to feed his family, including four children, said his in-laws. His father-in-law said the painter had exhausted his savings. For the past few days, the family was dependent on food provided by the villagers.

"Getting even one square meal a day was not a certainty. Sometimes we had to go without food," said the father-in-law, who migrated from Bihar 20 years ago.

His father-in-law had an accident six months ago and is unable to walk without support. Not able to arrange money, the daily-wager sold his phone worth around ₹10,000 to buy some ration and a small ceiling fan on Thursday. "He also handed over ₹400 in cash to his wife," said his mother-in-law. Even before the lockdown, he did not have much work due to economic slowdown, the family said.

The father-in-law said they had to borrow around ₹5,000 from neighbours to arrange for the funeral.

**Suicide prevention helpline:** Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health, Telephone: 011-4076 9002, Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-7.30 p.m.

# Laboratory workers allege non-payment of salaries

**ASHOK KUMAR**  
GURUGRAM

Several employees of a pathology laboratory in Sector 44 here have taken to Twitter seeking redress to their grievances after the company did not pay them salaries for March.

The employees are all from the tele-sales team of Hindustan Wellness, who are engaged in selling preventive health check-up packages. Tagging media houses, Haryana CM and even the PMO, the employees said they were unable to pay their rents and meet other expenses due to non-payment of salaries.

The company's spokesperson said they were a start-up struggling financially due to the lockdown and the salaries are deferred till June 15. "We have not laid off even a single employee. We have compensated majority of the staff and remaining will be paid in a staggered way over a period of next 2-3 months," the company said.

# Some schools start online classes; fees a sticky issue

Parents say it is unfair for schools to charge full fees; they face a tough time managing children at home

**ASHOK KUMAR  
SHINJINI GHOSH  
SIDHARTH RAVI**  
NEW DELHI



Delhi and Haryana governments have issued orders to private schools on fees and salaries. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

as school reopens."

**Books, board games**

Noida resident Ananya Sengupta, mother of an 8-year-old girl, said: "There has been no reduction in fees, rather there has been an 8% hike. We are playing innumerable games with her to keep her engaged like board games and 'hit-the-ball-into-the-cup' type games."

For Mitali Basu, parent of a six-year-old girl studying in DPS R.K. Puram, keeping her child engaged in a constructive manner has been a task. "We have to constantly come up with new ideas to keep her engaged. Because she is unable to go to the park or meet friends in school she is getting impatient with each passing day. We are relying on activity books and storybooks," said Ms. Basu.

While the Delhi government has issued orders to

private schools on fees and salaries, the Haryana government too has asked schools to seek fees on monthly basis during lockdown. It also said that those parents who are unable to pay should not be forced, and that transport fee for the first quarter be waived.

**Unpleasant experiences**  
However, in a few cases, the parents had unpleasant experiences with the school authorities, who allegedly adopted arm-twisting tactics to force parents to deposit the fee.

In response to a post on "Gurgaon Parents for Better Education", a Facebook forum for parents, students and educational institutions, by *The Hindu*, Namita Chaudhary Kanth, a parent, shared that she had to pay

# Siblings help raise fund to keep Inspector's community kitchen going

16-year-old girl, her 20-year-old sister raise ₹50,000 for initiative that feeds slum dwellers, migrants in south-east Delhi

**JATIN ANAND**  
NEW DELHI



contributing just food and ration to it," said Ananya who returned to the Capital from the U.S. in early March due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We heard about the kitchen from our parents who have been contributing and decided to go beyond

which imparts underprivileged children, especially girls, learn life skills like computers, basic English and math. Utilising a popular online crowdfunding platform, the two said they were able to raise ₹50,000 within three days.

As reported by *The Hindu* on April 5, Inspector Kumar, while performing duties related to his deployment as Night Checking Officer on March 27, came across a stream of migrant workers braving the rain to inch as close as they could to their hometowns in the dead of the night.

Posted as Inspector Investigation at the local police station, Mr. Kumar tried but could not succeed in finding shelter for them given apprehensions related to the infectious nature of COVID-19 despite knocking on several doors.

Over the next 12 hours, however, he was successful at utilising his failure for something better.

Since then, the Sarita Vihar resident has overseen a community kitchen set up by him in his and the Kapoor siblings' neighbourhood in the C block seeking to ensure that stranded migrant workers, out-of-work daily wagers or unemployed cobblers, watchmen, e-rickshaw drivers and housemaids among others residing at slum clusters such as Madanpur Khadar, the Mohan Cooperative Area or in the vicinity of the Jasola redlight do not go hungry.

"These have 5kgs of aata, 1

kg each of rice, dal, oil and one soap; what these kids have done is more than commendable. Every drop counts. We are now able to reach around 800 individuals per day



People standing inside circles marked as they queue up to collect food being provided by the Delhi government; (right) government workers seen spraying disinfectant on Prithviraj Road in New Delhi on Friday. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN, R.V. MOORTHY



## DMRC distributes food to 300 people in city

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation DMRC on Friday distributed food to around 300 people at three locations across the Capital.

The food packets were arranged with resources from a canteen at Shastri Park Depot, officials said.

"To attend to the people in need of care and support, around 300 food packets were distributed to the children and women at Nigambodh Ghat Hanuman Mandir and the pocket adjacent to Bangla Sahib. We shall try to take up more such initiatives during this period of lockdown," the DMRC said.

A DMRC official said, "We will continue making efforts to carry out such initiatives."

## Police intercept migrant workers leaving city, lend help

They considered returning to their villages after running out of ration or having been evicted by landlords

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Seven labourers, who were walking with luggages to reach their village in Uttar Pradesh's Hardoi after being evicted by their landlord due to non-payment of rent amid the ongoing lockdown, were restored to their rented accommodation, police said on Friday.

On Thursday, during patrolling, two policemen found the seven labourers at Barapula walking towards Sarai Kalen Khan. They had luggage with them, the police said.

"When they were intercepted, they revealed they were let out by their landlord due to non-payment of rent and were walking to their village in Hardoi," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Atul Kumar Thakur.

The labourers were then given water and food, Mr. Thakur said.

They used to work as casual labourers in Delhi's Jalandhar. Their landlord Madan Lal, who happens to be

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Delhi reported 67 new COVID-19 cases and four deaths on Friday, taking the toll to 42 and total number of cases to 1,707. Twenty-one patients were also discharged, taking the total to 72.

Meanwhile, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Friday intervened in the termination of a doctor from the Hindu Rao Hospital, run by the North Delhi Municipal Corporation.

Dr. Piyush Sharma, a DNB student in the orthopaedic department of the hospital, was terminated from duty for "bringing disrepute to the institution", an order issued by the hospital stated.

The commissioner of the North DMC had said that Dr. Sharma had intercepted personal protection kits being donated to the hospital by an NGO, and then distributed the kits to the staff

himself.

The news of termination received backlash on social media with Harjot Bhatti of the Progressive Medicos & Scientists Forum (PMSF) calling it a vindictive act and demanded revocation of termination.

Taking cognizance of the issue, Dr. Vardhan later tweeted: "I have spoken to Varsha Joshi Ji on the phone and asked her to call the aggrieved doctor and resolve the issue. Please wait for her action. I'm sure she will take appropriate remedial steps [sic]."

Ms. Joshi said that she would find an appropriate

solution adding: "Grateful for your support, guidance and leadership at all times" in a response to the Minister.

Dr. Sharma was unreachable for a comment.

Later in the day, Dr. Vardhan chaired a video conference with L-G Anil Baijal, Delhi Health Minister Satyendra Jain and Medical Superintendents of central and State government hospitals and Municipal Commissioners of Delhi.

The Minister told the officials not to neglect other patients during COVID-19 outbreak. "I am receiving a lot of complaints regarding de-

nial of treatment to patients suffering from critical ailments other than COVID-19 such as patients requiring dialysis, suffering from respiratory or heart disease, those who require blood transfusion and pregnant mothers," he said.

"It is a testing time for everybody in lockdown; patients who are really ill and require urgent medical attention are venturing out with great difficulty to reach the hospital for treatment in this situation. We should not turn them away," he said.

"If I tell them that I have tested positive, they will worry a lot. So, I have not told them about it. I have told my younger brother and my sister's husband in Dubai," Akash told *The Hindu* over phone from Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital (RGSSH).

## DSCI staff admitted at RGSSH complain of lack of facilities

31 people connected to cancer institute have tested positive

NIKHIL M BABU  
NEW DELHI

Total number of COVID-19 cases	1,707
Total deaths	42
New cases in the past 24 hours	67
New deaths in the past 24 hours	4

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

During the last 10 days, 30-year-old Akash\*, a staff of Delhi State Cancer Institute (DSCI), has been talking regularly to his parents back in his home town, but he has been hiding something from them: Akash was tested positive for COVID-19 and is admitted at a hospital.

Another staff, who tested positive and admitted at RGSSH, wrote in an internal WhatsApp group of DSCI staff: "Today morning 10 a.m. I went to ask water to drink, no one is ready to listen, [they were] just sitting in front of me. I called them by knocking the door [they were] simply sitting with no response at all. I was shocked. If they behave with staff like this, then how they deal the other general patient? This is such horrible and irresponsible worker here [sic]."

**Group dissolved**  
A senior DSCI official, part of the group, then dissolved the WhatsApp group. "On director's instructions, I am dissolving the group," the official wrote on the group, screenshots of which were accessed by *The Hindu*.

**Multiple issues**  
He complained about "lack" of facilities at RGSSH, where he and other staff from DSCI are currently admitted.

Another DSCI staff, who was tested positive and admitted at RGSSH, where the hospital is located, became a hotspot for COVID-19 cases.

"My results came on April 6 late evening and I waited for an ambulance, but I did not get one and I reached the hospital on my

own. Here, they throw the daily medicines inside our room and leave the food outside the door on the floor. Can't they at least keep the food and medicines on a table or chair outside the door?" he asked.

Another staff, who tested positive and admitted at RGSSH, wrote in an internal WhatsApp group of DSCI staff: "Today morning 10 a.m. I went to ask water to drink, no one is ready to listen, [they were] just sitting in front of me. I called them by knocking the door [they were] simply sitting with no response at all. I was shocked. If they behave with staff like this, then how they deal the other general patient? This is such horrible and irresponsible worker here [sic]."

**DSCI director's reply**

Responding to the allegations, B.L. Sherwal, Director of DSCI, told *The Hindu* that full-body PPE kits were not needed in DSCI as it is not a COVID-19 treatment facility.

On the lack of facilities and other issues, he said, "Whatever our staff are pointing out might be true. For the first time we are facing something like novel coronavirus and there could be small problems. All of them have my number and they can reach out to me whenever they want."

"In March, around the lockdown, we asked the authorities for PPE multiple times. At that time, Dilshad

Garden had already become a hotspot for the virus. Though we do not treat COVID-19 patients, we have an OPD and a lot of people came to meet patients who are admitted at the hospital. How will we know who is infected by the virus and who is not?" he asked.

"These many staff getting infected could have been completely avoided if the authorities had given us PPE initially," he lamented.

"I was tested negative two days ago. According to procedures, I have to be tested again within 24 hours and if I am negative again, then they have to discharge me. But they are yet to test me and I am stuck here. There is no proper system here and procedures are not being followed," Mr. Akash complained.

## Contractor found transporting 37 workers to market arrested

Case registered against accused; workers shifted to a shelter

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 50-year-old labour contractor was arrested after he was found taking 37 labourers to Palwal Mandi in Haryana, the police said on Friday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South-East) R.P. Meena said that the accused contractor has been identified as Brijesh, a resident of Haryana's Palwal.

During questioning, it was revealed that the contractor was intending to "supply" the labourers at Palwal Mandi. "It was also revealed that the contractor took the workers from Okhla Mandi and Chatarpur.

The police said that around 1.30 a.m. on Friday, Prahaladpur police station and staff, deployed at Okhla T-

point picket, intercepted a truck on suspicion. "The vehicle was checked and the police found that 37 labourers were inside it. Their contractor was also present with them," Mr. Meena said.

During questioning, it was revealed that the contractor was intending to "supply" the labourers at Palwal Mandi. "It was also revealed that the contractor took the workers from Okhla Mandi and Chatarpur.

The police said that around 1.30 a.m. on Friday, Prahaladpur police station and staff, deployed at Okhla T-

Chhatarpur," the officer said.

The police said that a case under Sections 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life), and 270 (malicious act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) of the Indian Penal Code and Section 3 of Epidemic Act has been registered and that the labourers have been shifted to a shelter in Madanpur Khadar.

## Delhi mall to provide drive-in testing facilities

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Select Citywalk in collaboration with Dr. Dang's Lab is set to provide drive-in testing facilities for COVID-19, the group said on Friday.

In order to avail the facility, one is required to make an appointment on the Dr. Dang's Lab website and provide relevant documents and details of the car.

The petition seeks directions to Mr. Kejriwal and Delhi government to prohibit and stop dissemination of COVID-19 data allegedly on the basis of religious or communal classification.

The samples will be collected from inside the car by the designated medical officer," the Select group said.

The entire process is estimated to be over in 10-12 minutes, said a statement issued by the group.

"The reports will be emailed and will be available on Dr. Dang's website within 24-36 hours. Dr. Dang's testing facilities for COVID-19 are government-approved and are at the government-mandated price."

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**THE HINDU**

India's National Newspaper

## Hit-and-run: policeman injured, driver arrested

Case registered, truck seized: police

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 40-year-old truck driver was arrested for allegedly driving rashly and injuring a traffic policeman in south-east Delhi's Sunlight Colony area, the police said on Friday.

The accused has been identified as Danish, a resident of Dholi village in Faridabad district, they said. A case has been registered against him at Sunlight Colony police station.

The incident took place on Thursday night when Sub-Inspector Prakash Chand of traffic circle Lajpat Nagar, along with other staff, were checking vehicles at Maharani Bagh picket, the police said.

## Plea seeks direction to restrain CM, govt. from classifying COVID-19 cases

It amounts to religious profiling, alleges petition moved in HC

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A petition filed before the Delhi High Court has sought direction to restrain Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Delhi government from classifying some COVID-19 cases as "Tablighi Jamaat" or "Masjid Markaz", alleging it amounts to religious profiling.

The petition by advocate M.M. Kashyap claimed that after the Tablighi event, the Chief Minister, via his tweets, "deliberately" classified several affected cases under a separate caption – "Masjid Markaz".

"He [Mr. Kejriwal] deliberately and with malafide intentions mentioned Masjid



Markaz to give impression ...that more than 60% of COVID-19 cases is due to the Muslim community," the petition said.

The plea claimed that such reporting has led to "communal antagonism" and perpetrating of hatred against a specific religious community.

It contended that when the atmosphere was already tense and sensitive in Delhi following the riots in northeast parts of the city, such reporting would only deteriorate the situation.

The plea said that it was the need of the hour that the nation was united in the fight against COVID-19 and that giving communal angle to the cases would hamper the same.

The petition seeks directions to Mr. Kejriwal and Delhi government to prohibit and stop dissemination of COVID-19 data allegedly on the basis of religious or communal classification.

The samples will be collected from inside the car by the designated medical officer," the Select group said.

The entire process is estimated to be over in 10-12 minutes, said a statement issued by the group.

"The reports will be emailed and will be available on Dr. Dang's website within 24-36 hours. Dr. Dang's testing facilities for COVID-19 are government-approved and are at the government-mandated price."

"Each station will have a dedicated sample collection officer for the procedure."

## Policemen attacked in Tonk, 3 hurt

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
JAIPUR

A contingent of policemen on patrolling duty to enforce the lockdown was attacked by a group of people in a curfew-bound area in Rajasthan's Tonk city on Friday. Three policemen, injured in the incident, were admitted to Saadat Government Hospital in Tonk.

Tonk's Additional Superintendent of Police Vipin Sharma said the policemen patrolling in Kasai Mohalla of Panch Batti area had asked some people roaming unnecessarily in the streets to stay inside their homes. "The accused started beating the policemen. An extra force was sent to the spot to bring the situation under control," he said.

The injured police constables were identified as Rajendra, Raja Ram and Bhag Chand.

## Close to 6 lakh labourers from State stranded: Jharkhand govt.

Food and lodging provided to 4,47,261 people stranded at 10,153 locations so far'

SATYASUNDAR BARIK  
BHUBANESWAR

The Jharkhand government on Friday said close to six lakh migrant labourers were reported stranded at over 12,000 locations across the country.

"As many as 5,97,187 migrant labourers have been reported stranded at 12,257 places. So far, the government has mobilised food and lodging for 4,47,261 labourers stranded at 10,153 places," according to Jharkhand's Department of Labour, Planning and Training.

The department said complete information was also being collected from the people to provide assistance at all levels.

Information about stranded labourers was said to have been gathered with the



The State government said information was being gathered to provide assistance at all levels. ■ FILE PHOTO

the help of the 'Chief Minister Special Assistance Scheme Mobile App' launched recently by Chief Minister Hemant Soren.

### Database of labourers

According to the government, the application helped in creating a database of migrant labourers

and enabled the Jharkhand government to mobilise assistance.

When all public transport came to a grinding halt following announcement of lockdown last month, hundreds of workers stuck outside Jharkhand had probably opened an account in social networking site 'Twitter' in

order to communicate with Mr. Soren.

The CM had instead forwarded those messages to his counterparts eliciting their assistance to residents of Jharkhand.

"I have no idea how the State government has come to such a particular number. If the statistics are true, then the methodology and tool used for arriving at the astounding number should be followed by all high migration States," said Umi Daniel, head of the Migration Information and Resource Centre (MiRC), Aide et Action South Asia, an international voluntary organization.

A 'State Level Corona Control Room' has been set up by the State government which functions through toll free helpline number 181.

dangerous to life) and 270 (malignant act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life).

According to the administration, the person who tested positive had recently come to Unnao, around March 29, and was living in a rented apartment in the Sadar area.

Despite the lockdown, Mr. Yadav said the person along with 10 friends was regularly gathering and holding meetings in mosques in different areas.

"When police got information, they were apprehended and a medical test was conducted," Mr. Yadav told *The Hindu*.

A case was registered against the person and his contacts under Indian Penal Code Code Sections 188 (disobedience to order), 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease

lockdown).

The person is also accused of "hiding" in the rented apartment in Unnao and concealing travel history, said the officer.

### No link with group

The U.P. Directorate of Health Services in its latest COVID-19 bulletin listed the Unnao positive case under the Tablighi Jamaat bracket but did not provide details. However, the police said there was no link between the man tested positive and the Tablighi Jamaat.

District Magistrate Ravindra Kumar said an area of 1 km had been sealed after the case emerged. Around 10-12 close contacts of the man have been kept under quarantine and tested, while sanitisation work of the entire area is on, he added.

## Jam-packed



Villagers travel in a crowded three-wheeler after collecting essential items in Birbhum district of West Bengal on Friday. ■ PTI

## Odisha govt. to go for large-scale testing in Bhubaneswar

The State capital has emerged as a hotspot with 46 people testing positive for COVID-19 so far

PRAFULLA DAS  
BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government on Friday announced to undertake large-scale testing of samples in Bhubaneswar city which has emerged as a hotspot with 46 persons testing positive for COVID-19 so far.

Addressing the media through videoconferencing, State Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy said that 5,000 more samples will be collected and tested in the capital city over the next seven days starting from Friday.

**'No case in last 2 days'**  
Mr. Tripathy said of the total of 7,577 samples tested in the State till Thursday midnight, as many as 1,958 samples or



A COVID-19 awareness painting on a road in Bhubaneswar on Friday. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

38% of the total belonged to Bhubaneswar. No positive case was detected during the past two days in the State where six laboratories were testing samples to detect COVID-19 at present, he added.

While static camps will be

set up at some locations, mobile camps will also visit vulnerable areas to collect samples for testing, said Mr. Tripathy, while adding that the special drive was aimed at making Bhubaneswar safe.

Mr. Tripathy said that priority for testing during the special drive will be given to those with travel history and severe acute respiratory infection; healthcare and sanitary workers; senior citizens with co-morbid condi-

tions; and slum dwellers who were unable to maintain social distancing strictly. Many samples will also be collected on random basis, he said.

### Combat plan

Bhubaneswar has already been divided into three zones with two IAS officers each working as COVID-19 observers with overall charge of containment and prevention of the disease in the city, said Mr. Tripathy.

Stating that wearing of masks was already made compulsory, he informed that the Department of Health & Family Welfare has also made spitting an offence by issuing a notification on Thursday.

## 14 new COVID-19 cases reported in Punjab, tally climbs to 211

CM orders rapid testing in containment zones of the State

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

With 14 fresh COVID-19 cases reported on Friday, the total number in Punjab have touched 211, according to an official statement.

State Health Department said out of the 14 new cases reported on April 17, five cases are from Patiala, four each from Jalandhar and Ludhiana districts while one case is from Ferozpur district.

So far 30 patients have recovered in the State, it added.

The State has so far seen 14 COVID-19 deaths.

Punjab Chief Minister

Amarinder Singh, meanwhile ordered strict enforcement with regard to the compulsory wearing of masks in public, and asked the police to take stringent action, including imposition of challans, against violators.

### Protection of employees

The Chief Minister also issued strict directives for protection of all employees on the frontline duty, including health, agriculture, police and revenue departments.

Capt. Amarinder said there could be no compromise with the lives of the pe-

ople and the government's priority continues to be on saving and protecting the citizens of Punjab. "I can get a factory started again but cannot bring a Punjabi back to life," he said in a statement.

He directed the health department to launch rapid testing in all the 24 containment zones of the State.

Four Punjab districts (Jalandhar, Pathankot, Nawanshahr and SAS Nagar) have been declared hotspot as per the Union Health Ministry.

The State had so far been conducting these tests in Jalandhar and SAS Nagar.

## Rain forecast makes farmers a worried lot

They fear damage to standing crop

VIKAS VASUDEV  
CHANDIGARH

Rain with gusty winds forecast during the next 24 hours in parts of Punjab and Haryana has raised the anxiety of farmers, who are in the midst of harvesting the wheat crop.

Farmers, who are already concerned over delay in harvesting and increased expenses this season on account of the ongoing nationwide lockdown, are now under the fear that the inclement weather would damage the standing crop in the field and the harvested grain in the mandi (market yard).

According to the India Meteorological Department, light to moderate rain and thundershowers are expect-

## Tribals using indigenous practices to sustain during lockdown

With a storehouse of knowledge on food gathering and cultivation, they have embraced pragmatic food management

MOHAMMED IQBAL  
JAIPUR

Faced with the challenge of sustaining themselves, tribal communities in southern Rajasthan are utilising their indigenous practices of food and agricultural management to tide over the difficult period of nationwide lockdown enforced to control the COVID-19 pandemic. Tribals have adopted a number of micronutrient-rich plant foods as their daily dietary intake.

The Banswara district, situated at the tri-junction of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, is rich in natural resources and has abundant edible materials which are nutritious for the local population.

**'More rain next week'**  
"Rain at the time of harvesting is not good for the crop," he added. Mr. Paul said that next week, between April 22 and 23, there is a possibility of light rain in the region as well.

tribal communities have embraced a sagacious food management after the rabi crop harvesting.

A large number of tribals, who had migrated to the towns in Gujarat to work as labourers, have come back to their native villages after the lockdown started. Jayesh Joshi, secretary of Banswara-based Vaagdhara, which works on tribal livelihood issues, told *The Hindu* on Thursday that the kitchen gardens developed in the tribal households during the last few years were helping in regular supply of vegetables and spices to these labourers.

Turmeric, which is one of the items produced in kitchen gardens, has been especially helpful for the tribal communities during the crisis when the shops are

closed. Besides the daily usage of turmeric, several tribal families have converted it into the powdered form for use in the food preparation and other essential tasks.

Ramji Ninama, a farmer in Banswara district's Sundrav village, has built a huge stock of turmeric powder for the

use of local residents. He is among the beneficiaries of a project undertaken by Vaagdhara for promoting nutrition sensitive farming system, which was aimed at reducing the vulnerability of marginalised sections by ensuring their food and nutrition security.

use of local residents. He is among the beneficiaries of a project undertaken by Vaagdhara for promoting nutrition sensitive farming system, which was aimed at reducing the vulnerability of marginalised sections by ensuring their food and nutrition security.

Significantly, none of the 59 COVID-19 positive cases detected so far in Banswara district is from the tribal communities. Mr. Joshi pointed out that the tribal's social customs, such as scattered living, greeting each other from a distance and eating warm food, would protect them against the virus infection.

### Resource management

"Though the tribals generally do not have access to market-based products of oil, spices and sugar, they are assured that they will not remain hungry," Mr. Joshi said, while affirming that their food security had been ensured through their own resource management in agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, pasture and medicinal products.



Tribal women of Banswara district in Rajasthan showing a local produce they consume. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

closed. Besides the daily usage of turmeric, several tribal families have converted it into the powdered form for use in the food preparation and other essential tasks.

Ramji Ninama, a farmer in Banswara district's Sundrav village, has built a huge stock of turmeric powder for the

# Kerala ready for post-lockdown phase

New COVID-19 cases touch another high in Karnataka at 44, Andhra Pradesh records 38 new cases

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/  
VIJAYAWADA/BENGALURU/  
CHENNAI

Kerala's COVID-19 graph continued to flatline, with just one person newly testing positive for COVID-19 and 10 others recovering from the disease on Friday.

Of 395 cases reported in Kerala so far, 138 were under treatment in hospitals. Except for two, the remaining 255 had recovered. The lone

## COVID-19

case reported on Friday was from Kozhikode, a contact of an imported case.

The number of persons currently under surveillance in the State was 78,980, of whom 526 are isolated in hospitals and the remaining 78,454 in home quarantine.

### A.P. has 38 cases

Andhra Pradesh reported 38 new COVID-19 positive cases on Friday and the death toll

### Taking no chances

The government is leaving no stone unturned while arranging for the movement of Army personnel during the nationwide lockdown



**Special care:** A train being sanitised in Bengaluru on Friday to transport Army personnel, who have completed their training and are rejoining their units in north India. ■ ANI

stood at 14. The total number of cases reached 572 (523 active) from 534 (500 active) on April 16, the Health Department said.

Of the 38 new cases, 13 were from Kurnool, six from Nellore, five each from Anantapur and Chittoor, four

each from Guntur and Krishna and one from Kadapa. Besides 523 persons were under treatment, 35 have been discharged.

Telangana's total cases stood at 766, of which 562 were active, 186 had been discharged and the death toll

stood at 18. In another spike, a staggering 44 new positive cases were confirmed in Karnataka, taking total infections to 359, the Health department said on Friday.

The 44 new cases were a new daily high. "Today is a very negative day as far as

the numbers are concerned, as there are 44 new cases," Primary and Secondary Education Minister Suresh Kumar told reporters.

### 56 new cases in T.N.

Tamil Nadu reported 56 more COVID-19 cases and 103 patients were discharged after treatment, bringing up the total of those who had tested positive for COVID-19 and returned home after treatment in the State to 283.

The total count of COVID-19 cases stood at 1,323. Of the new cases, Thanjavur accounted for 17, while 11 more persons tested positive in Chennai. The city continued to top the tally with a total of 228 patients.

A majority of the 56 patients who had tested positive were contacts of COVID-19 patients. Apart from Thanjavur and Chennai, 10 more districts reported new cases. Till now, a total of 29,673 samples had been sent for testing in the State. (With PTI inputs)

## No full stops in India



**Gaps still remain:** A woman coming out of a barricaded red zone in the Akkayapalem area of Visakhapatnam to buy essentials during the nationwide lockdown on Friday. ■ K.R. DEEPAK

## IN BRIEF



### Officers suspended for allowing car festival

Taking a serious note of the huge gathering on Thursday at the Siddalingeshwara temple car festival at Rawoor village in Kalaburagi district of Karnataka, Chittapur Child Development Project Officer Rajkumar Rathod, who was designated as sectoral magistrate, and sub-inspector of police Vijayakumar Bagavi, attached to the Wadi station, have been suspended, pending an inquiry.

### Jagan launches one lakh rapid testing kits

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Friday launched one lakh rapid testing kits, which were despatched from Seoul in South Korea in a chartered flight. The kits display results in about 10 minutes and they would be despatched to all districts in four to five days. Mr. Reddy said COVID-19 testing will gain momentum with the arrival of the new kits.

### 20 Iranian students from Telangana, A.P. evacuated

Unable to put up with the loneliness due to coronavirus outbreak and the subsequent lockdown, over 20 Iranian students staying in Hyderabad and neighbouring Andhra Pradesh left for their homeland on Friday. While none of them had any symptoms of COVID-19, they never stepped out of their houses or hostels during the lockdown period. As many as 191 Iranian nationals stuck in different cities in India were evacuated on a special flight from the Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport in Mumbai.

## New indigenous kit may soon accelerate testing

It can speed up the process by 15 times and cut costs by two-thirds

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

A research laboratory funded by the Department of Science and Technology has developed a rapid diagnostic test that can potentially speed up the testing of a batch of suspected COVID-19 samples by 15 times and cut costs by two-thirds.

The Chitra GeneLAMP-N, made by scientists at the Sri Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST), Thiruvananthapuram, has already been licensed to Agappe Diagnostics Ltd., an Ernakulam-based company. If approvals come through, about 20,000 kits could be made by the month-end, said Asha Kishore, director, SCTIMST.

Union Health Minister Harsh Varshan tweeted: "Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences & Tech, Trivandrum, an Institute of National Importance, of the @IndiaDST, has developed a diagnostic test kit that can confirm #COVID19 in 2 hours at a low cost."

@IndiaDST, has developed a diagnostic test kit that can confirm #COVID19 in 2 hours at a low cost."

Though qualified by the National Institute of Virology's sister organisation – NIV Alappuzha – as fit to be offered as a diagnostic, the kit awaits formal approval by the Indian Council for Medical Research and its manufacturers, and a licence from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation.

Rapid-Reverse Transcriptase Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) tests are considered the gold standard for detecting the virus. It involves extracting RNA from a swab, collected from the throat or nose, converting it into DNA, magnifying the quantity of DNA and using chemical probes to bind target genes that distinguish SARS-CoV2 from other viruses. While it takes two hours to extract RNA from a given

**Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences & Tech, Trivandrum, an Institute of National Importance, of the @IndiaDST, has developed a diagnostic test kit that can confirm #COVID19 in 2 hours at a low cost**

HARSH VARSHAN, Union Health Minister

batch of samples, the analysis can take two-and-a-half hours to detect the presence (or absence) of virus in a given batch.

**'Analyse in 10 minutes'**  
By employing its in-house technology called reverse transcriptase loop-mediated amplification of viral nucleic acid (RT-LAMP), it zooms in on regions of the virus' nucleocapsid (N) gene and can analyse a batch in 10 minutes.

Most RT-PCR kits focus on two different genes, the E (envelope) gene and the RdRP (RNA dependent RNA polymerase) gene. The WHO recommends a E and RdRP

test, while the U.S.'s Centres for Disease Control requires an N Gene test. "The N-Gene test is a confirmatory test and widely employed in Germany and China among other countries. However, the design of it is complicated and can be expensive. However, we've managed to develop it satisfactorily while keeping costs low," said Dr. Kishore. The CDC protocol says three regions of the N gene must be analysed but the Chitra-model tests two to confirm the identity of the virus.

Anoop Thekkuveettil, a senior scientist of the biomedical technology wing of the institute, was able to develop

the kit in 3 weeks, she said.

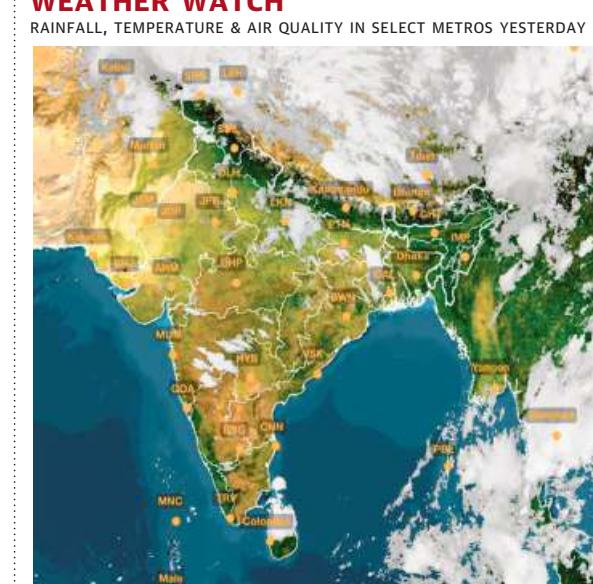
Tests conducted at the NIV Alappuzha showed that it detected 100% of all reference COVID samples and successfully detected 100% of non-COVID samples. While some kits approved by the ICMR and currently in use for diagnosing the infection have a similar 100% profile, some don't. In the spirit of accelerating testing, the scale of the pandemic has moved regulatory agencies around the world to ease standards and facilitate the availability of more kits.

A total of 30 samples can be tested in a single batch and the unit consists of an RNA extraction machine, which too is locally developed. Probes, a critical aspect of PCR testing and frequently imported, for this test can be procured from several places in India. "Everything can be made and developed in India, except for some sensors in the analysis machine," Dr. Kishore emphasised.

He said the Centre did not seem to be aware of the gravity of the current crisis. The RBI should direct banks to

## WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 19.00 HRS)  
**Forecast for Saturday:** Thunderstorm with lightning and gust likely in Assam, Meghalaya, West Bengal, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...~30.6...	21.7	7.5	Kozhikode	...~37.4...	28.2	
Ahmedabad	39.5...	27.4		Kurnool	...~41.1...	27.8	
Aizawl	28.7...	15.8		Lucknow	...~36.0...	24.4	
Allahabad	43.4...	24.4		Madurai	...~39.4...	26.0	
Bengaluru	34.9...	23.5		Mangaluru	...~36.4...	26.9	
Bhopal	...~26.2			Mumbai	...~34.2...	26.2	
Bhubaneswar	37.4...	26.7		Mysuru	...~34.9...	23.3	
Chandigarh	34.1...	22.3		New Delhi	...~37.8...	23.8	
Chennai	34.6...	28.1		Patna	...~35.8...	24.2	
Coimbatore	37.2...	25.4		Port Blair	0.8...	27.2	
Dehradun	33.6...	20.2		Puducherry	...~35.5...	27.2	
Gangtok	23.6...	12.5		Pune	...~39.1...	22.0	
Goa	34.4...	27.7		Raipur	...~40.7...	26.1	
Guwahati	24.4...	28.0...	18.3	Ranchi	...~37.8...	23.4	
Hubballi	36.0...	23.0		Shillong	12.0...	22.0...	
Hyderabad	39.4...	25.6		Shimla	...~17.7...	13.8	
Imphal	6.2...	16.2		Srinagar	3.0...	13.8...	10.0
Jaipur	39.8...	27.0		Thiruvananthapuram	44.8...	34.2...	24.4
Kochi	34.4...	33.6...	27.2	Tiruchi	...~39.4...	27.2	
Kohima	12.6...	20.2...	11.8	Vijayawada	...~37.9...	25.0	
Kolkata	2.0...	35.0...	25.7	Visakhapatnam	...~32.8...	27.6	

TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 19.00 HRS)

**Forecast for Saturday:** Thunderstorm with lightning and gust likely in Assam, Meghalaya, West Bengal, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

CITIES	SO. NO.	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	23	30	11	57	■■■
Bengaluru	09	23	50	173	■■■■■
Chennai	06	14	38	17	■■■■■
Delhi	21	27	16	59	■■■■■
Hyderabad	05	48	26	84	■■■■■
Kolkata	09	10	22	34	■■■■■
Lucknow	07	21	52	237	■■■■■
Mumbai	06	05	102	36	■■■■■
Pune	28	10	49	35	■■■■■
Thiruvananthapuram	06	40	06	64	■■■■■

Observation made at 7.00 pm. Singhrao, Madhya Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 208 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Aizawl, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 28.

**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.

## Wildlife photographs will add to relief funds

Award-winning photographer Benny Ajantha from Kerala is selling many of his works online

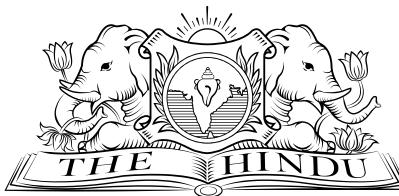


Photographs of Malabar starlings, a baby monkey with its mother and a wasp taken by Benny Ajantha. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

on Facebook. Those wishing to purchase the photographs may remit ₹500 a picture either to the CMDRF (donation.cmdrf.kerala.gov.in) or

the PMNR (pmnrf.gov.in/en/online-donation). They should send the digital cash receipt along with the selected photographs and their

email ID to Mr



## Helping a lending hand

The RBI has made life easier for banks; it has given the govt. the cue for a fiscal support plan

**T**he RBI has infused oxygen into the financial system with a second set of measures announced on Friday by Governor Shaktikanta Das to combat the lockdown impact on the economy. Most are aimed at maintaining liquidity, the economy's lifeblood, though there are some regulatory proposals aimed at making life easier for banks, NBFCs and borrowers. It is now clear the bank prefers to calibrate its moves based on constant feedback from the ground – the way it should be. In what should be reassuring for the markets, Mr. Das was categorical that the RBI would do what it takes to support the economy and also monitor the evolving situation. Indeed, the RBI has been very generous in its liquidity maintenance measures in recent times and particularly so after the lockdown began in March. There will surely be consequences for the economy but that is a worry for another day. The overarching objective now should be to keep the economy afloat by deploying all the instruments at the RBI's command.

The central bank has learnt from its experience of the Targeted Long Term Repo Operations (TLTRO) till now when banks preferred to deploy the funds in bonds of PSUs and large corporates. The RBI has called out this risk-off attitude of the banks while announcing a further ₹50,000 crore TLTRO – all of this has to be invested in bonds and paper of NBFCs and microfinance institutions. The response to the next round of TLTRO will be interesting to watch. Similarly, by reducing the reverse repo rate by another 25 basis points to 3.75%, the RBI has made it furthermore unattractive for banks to indulge in 'lazy banking' by parking excess funds with the central bank rather than lend. As much as ₹6.9-lakh crore was parked with the RBI as on April 15. This is the time when banks will have to be liberal in extending help for working capital loans and overdrafts to their borrowers, including MSMEs. The government could help here by extending a scheme of credit assurance cover that will encourage banks to be more liberal in their risk outlook. By clarifying that there will be an asset classification standstill during the moratorium period for accounts that were not already NPAs as of March 1, the RBI has brought relief to borrowers who were worried that opting for the moratorium may turn them into NPAs. State finances have got some breathing space through the increase of WMA (Ways and Means Advances) limit to 60% over the level as on March 31. The special refinance facility of ₹50,000 crore extended to NABARD, SIDBI and NHB will help these institutions to prop up their respective constituents. The central bank has done what it can. It is now over to the government for the fiscal support package.

## A season of change

It is time for the Meteorological department to incorporate lessons from the new normal

**I**n the season of the abnormal, the IMD has announced that the monsoon this year would likely be normal. The agency follows a two-stage forecast system: indicating in April whether there are chances of drought or any other anomaly and then a second update, in late June, with a more granular look at how the monsoon will likely distribute over the country and whether danger signs are imminent. 'Normal' means India will get 100% of its long period average, with a potential 5% error margin. The IMD's April forecast, experience suggests, is not much to go by especially if the agency declares it 'normal' as rarely, if ever, do weather models catch signs of an impending shortfall or a large excess in April. Also being a part of a hierarchical government set-up, the agency defaults to being conservative. In April last year, it said the monsoon would be 'near normal', an arbitrary category. Private forecasters expected a shortfall, predicated on the development of a future El Niño. The IMD did account for this but said it was unlikely El Niño would strengthen enough to dampen the monsoon. It however kept its estimate on the lower side of 'normal'. In the end, India received excess rains, the highest in a quarter century.

The April forecast is a vestige of the agency's reliance on the 'statistical forecast system' where values of selected meteorological parameters are recorded until March 31 and permutations of these are computed and compared to the IMD's archive of weather data. It is also reflective of an era when landline telephones were the state-of-the-art in personal communication. Along with connectedness, weather forecasting has metamorphosed. Climate, as well as technological change, allows new weather variables – such as surface temperatures from as remote as the southern Indian Ocean and regular updates from the Pacific Ocean – to be mapped. Powerful computers mathematically simulate the weather based on these variables and extrapolate onto desired time frames. Using these dynamical models is a change the IMD has incorporated and experimented with for years. It made two key changes this year: reducing the definition of 'normal' rainfall by 1 cm, to 88 cm and, officially updating monsoon onset and arrival dates for many States. This was long due and constituted acknowledgement of the accumulated impact that global warming has been having on monsoon patterns, particularly for cities and States. The monsoon was arriving later in many places, had long weak spells, and lingered longer. This has already heralded thinking, in the agency, on whether India should move to a new monsoon-accounting calendar instead of the century-long tradition of June-September. This would signal a truly momentous break from the past. Just as COVID-19 is forcing introspection on the links that tie people, trade and ecology, it is also time for the IMD to incorporate the lessons from the new normals.

# A virus, social democracy, and dividends for Kerala

The State has managed the crisis by building on legacies of egalitarianism, social rights and public trust



PATRICK HELLER

**T**he global coronavirus pandemic is a natural, albeit brutal experiment. Just about every part of the world has been impacted and the range of responses we are seeing at the national and subnational levels reveal not only existing inequalities but also the political and institutional capacity of governments to respond. Nowhere is this more so true than in India. The national government ordered a lockdown but it is States that are actually implementing measures, both in containing the spread and addressing the welfare consequences of the lockdown. A number of States have been especially proactive, none more so than Kerala.

**F**lattening the curve and how Though Kerala was the first State with a recorded case of coronavirus and once led the country in active cases, it now ranks 10th of all States and the total number of active cases (in a State that has done the most aggressive testing in India) has been declining for over a week and is now below the number of recovered cases. Given Kerala's population density, deep connections to the global economy and the high international mobility of its citizens, it was primed to be a hotspot. Yet not only has the State flattened the curve but it also rolled out a comprehensive ₹20,000 crore economic package before the Centre even declared the lockdown. Why does Kerala stand out in India and internationally?

Kerala's much heralded success in social development has invited endless theories of its cultural, historical or geographical exceptionalism. But taming a pandemic and

rapidly building out a massive and tailored safety net is fundamentally about the relation of the state to its citizens. From its first Assembly election in 1957, through alternating coalitions of Communist and Congress-led governments, iterated cycles of social mobilisation and state responses have forged what is in effect a robust social democracy. The current crisis underscores the comparative advantages of social democracy.

To begin with, social democracies are built on an encompassing social pact with a political commitment to providing basic welfare and broad-based opportunity to all citizens. In Kerala, the social pact itself emerged from recurrent episodes of popular mobilisation – from the temple entry movement of the 1930s, to the peasant and workers' movements in the 1950s and 1960s, a mass literacy movement in the 1980s, the Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad (KSSP)-led movement for people's decentralised planning in the 1990s, and, most recently, various gender and environmental movements. These movements not only nurtured a strong sense of social citizenship but also drove reforms that have incrementally strengthened the legal and institutional capacity for public action. Second, the emphasis on rights-based welfare has been driven by and in turn has reinforced a vibrant, organised civil society which demands continuous accountability from front-line state actors. Third, this constant demand-side pressure of a highly mobilised civil society and a competitive party system has pressured all governments in Kerala, regardless of the party in power, to deliver public services and to constantly expand the social safety net, in particular a public health system that is the best in India.

Fourth, that pressure has also fuelled Kerala's push over the last two decades to empower local government. Nowhere in India are local governments as resourced and as capable as in Kerala. Final-



ly, all of this ties into the greatest asset of any deep democracy, that is the generalised trust that comes from a State that has a wide and deep institutional surface area, and that on balance treats people not as subjects or clients, but as rights-bearing citizens.

### Chain of decision-making

So how has this built-up capacity translated into both flattening the curve and putting broad and effective welfare measures in place? A government's capacity to respond to a cascading crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic relies on a very fragile chain of mobilising financial and societal resources, getting state actors to fulfil directives, coordinating across multiple authorities and jurisdictions and maybe, most importantly, getting citizens to comply. An effective response begins with programmatic decision-making.

From the moment of the first reported case in Kerala, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan convened a State response team that coordinated 18 different functional teams, held daily press conferences and communicated constantly with the public. Kerala's social compact demanded no less. Not only did Mr. Vijayan directly appeal to Malayalees' sense of citizenship by declaring that the response was less an enforcement issue than about people's participation, but also pointedly reminded the public that the virus does not discriminate, destigmatising the pandemic.

Second, the government was able to leverage a broad and dense

health-care system that despite the recent growth of private health services, has maintained a robust public presence. Private provisioning of a public good has never made much sense, but as anyone watching the chaos in the United States has learned, there is nothing like a pandemic to expose the obvious coordination problems that for-profit health systems face. Kerala's public health-care workers are also of course highly unionised and organised, and from the outset the government lay emphasis on protecting the health of first responders.

Third, the government activated an already highly mobilised civil society. As the cases multiplied, the government called on two lakh volunteers to go door to door, identifying those at risk and those in need. A State embedded in civil society – the women's empowerment Kudumbasree movement being a case in point – was in a good position to co-produce effective interventions, from organising contact tracing to delivering three lakh meals a day through Kudumbasree community kitchens.

### Pivot of local governments

Fourth, you can get the politics right and you can have a great public health-care system, but its effectiveness in a crisis like this will only be as good as the infamous last kilometre. And this is where two decades of empowering local governments have clearly paid off. Whether in focussing containment efforts in hotspots, tracking down those who have been exposed or managing the broad array of direct benefits that have been distributed to migrant workers, the elderly and the differently abled, the key has been the capacity of state actors and civil society partners to coordinate their efforts at the level of panchayats, districts and municipalities.

The pandemic is a physical exam of the social body, and never has public trust been put to a greater test. In democracies, com-

pliance must be elicited. Asking citizens to stay at home, to give up work, and to trust that the individual sacrifices they make now are essential to preserving the well-being of the community going forward is never easy to do and especially not against an invisible enemy. Trust is hard to measure, but survey work that colleagues and I, working with the Bengaluru non-governmental organisation Janaagraha, recently conducted in 10 Indian cities that included Kochi, shows that across a wide range of measures, and across all classes, castes and religions, Malayalees have extremely high levels of trust in both their institutions and locally elected local representatives. This, more than anything, points to the robust nature of Kerala's social compact.

Beyond the peak, every country in the world, and especially India, will be dealing with the economic and welfare consequences of the pandemic for years. This brutal, unpredictable, external shock is laying bare the most essential as well as the most complicated challenges of democratic citizenship. In moments like these, the authoritarian temptation for some is irresistible. U.S. President Donald Trump has claimed "total" authority and is threatening to usurp the power of Governors, the Bharatiya Janata Party has exploited the crisis to communalise the pandemic and to silence its critics, and things are as bad as they are to begin with because of China's authoritarian DNA. At a time when India's democracy was already in crisis, it is important to be reminded that Kerala has managed the crisis with the most resolve, the most compassion and the best results of any large State in India. And that it has done so precisely by building on legacies of egalitarianism, social rights and public trust.

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## Institutional fixes and the need for ethical politics

As Madhya Pradesh politics shows, the anti-defection law continues to be circumvented to bring down governments



MATHEW IDICULLA

longer coronavirus lockdown. Much of India was already in a lockdown when Mr. Chouhan took oath. Since no other Minister was sworn in, Madhya Pradesh does not presently have a cabinet or a dedicated Health Minister at this time of a health emergency.

**N**ew method of bypass The political skulduggery in Madhya Pradesh represents a new method of bypassing the anti-defection law and toppling elected governments. The H.D. Kumaraswamy-led Congress-JD(S) government was brought down in July last year in a similar manner with 17 MLAs of the ruling coalition resigning and joining the BJP. Under this novel method, a set of legislators of the party in power is made to resign from the Assembly to reduce the total strength of the House enough for the BJP to cross the halfway mark to form government. In the ensuing by-elections, the members who resigned were then fielded as BJP candidates (most of whom have been re-elected in the case of Karnataka). The same practice is likely to be repeated in Madhya Pradesh soon.

This method of mass defection circumvents the provisions of the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution (better known as the anti-defection law) that prescribes the grounds for disqualification of legislators: voluntarily giving up par-



ty membership and voting or abstaining to vote against party directions. Though resignation is not mentioned as a ground for disqualification, the Speaker in Karnataka disqualified them for the rest of the Assembly's term, thereby barring them from contesting the by-polls. While the Supreme Court upheld the disqualification, it struck down the bar from contesting by-polls. In Madhya Pradesh, since the Speaker has accepted the resignation of the MLAs, the defectors can in any case contest the by-polls.

The recurrence of this model of defection signals the exploitation of the inherent weaknesses of the anti-defection law. While solo legislators jumping ship might have reduced "horse-trading" seems to have gone from retail to wholesale. This threatens the underpinnings of India's electoral democracy since such surreptitious capture of power essentially betrays the people's mandate in a by-poll.

Hence, the anti-defection law,

general election. Further, as the by-polls are held after the alternate political formation has assumed office, the turncoats now have an upper-hand in the election as members of the ruling dispensation.

### Rethinking the law

In this context, it is important to examine whether the anti-defection law fulfils any purpose. This law raises fundamental concerns regarding the role of a legislator in a parliamentary democracy. It denies the legislator the right to take a principled position on a policy matter and reduces her to an involuntary supporter of the whims of party bosses. The constitutionality of the Tenth Schedule was challenged for violating the Basic Structure of Constitution with regard to parliamentary democracy and free speech, but the Supreme Court in *Kihoto Hollola v. Zachilhu* (1992) in a 3-2 verdict upheld the law while reserving the right of judicial review of the Speaker's decision.

Hence, the anti-defection law, on the one hand, severely restricts the freedom of a legislator and makes her a slave of party whips. On the other hand, it has not been able to meet its primary objective of preventing horse-trading and continues to be circumvented to bring down elected governments. This calls for reforms that address

concerns at both ends of the spectrum. For addressing the first issue, as the Dinesh Goswami Committee also suggested, the scope of the binding whip should be restricted to a vote of confidence. For addressing the second issue, it is best to institutionalise the Karnataka Speaker's decision to bar the defected members from contesting in the ensuing by-poll, if not for a longer period, and thereby disincentivise MLAs from jumping ship.

These reforms would require a constitutional amendment to the Tenth Schedule, an uphill task under the current circumstances. Even if these measures are introduced, our politics might come up with other ingenious ways to circumvent them. As the orders in the Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh cases show, the courts also cannot be relied on much to curb defections. We are facing a deeper challenge of the corrosion of India's parliamentary system, for even in jurisdictions without such anti-defection laws, we do not see "horse trading" and "resort politics". Hence, beyond institutional fixes, we also need a popular articulation of an ethical politics that causes the public to shun such political manoeuvres.

Mathew Idiculla is a lawyer, researcher and writer based in Bengaluru and a consultant with the Centre for Law and Policy Research

## 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.

### Hospital ordeal

It is incredible to read about the sorry state of one of the famous metropolitan cities and the commercial capital of the country (Page 1, "Mumbai runs out of beds in ICUs, patients suffer", April 17). If China can build a huge hospital within a few days, and with hundreds of beds equipped with all facilities, it is unfortunate that it is dismal in India. Can anyone imagine a more pathetic situation than what had happened to the 49-year-old man who had to run from pillar to post waiting for an ICU bed and finally breathing his last without getting medical aid from any one of the five hospitals he visited in the city. This is a shocking case of

callousness, unpreparedness and a total lack of foresight. If this is happening in a great city like Mumbai, what about the rural areas of Rajasthan, Bihar and Odisha? Why the Centre and State government have driven Mumbai residents to this misery is unintelligible. The biggest question is this: will they wake up now to save people of Mumbai from perishing unattended?

J. EDEN ALEXANDER,  
Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu

**Entrance examination**  
The pandemic and the crisis it has created as affected education gravely. As we know, the questions in the Joint Entrance Examination-Main (erstwhile AIEEE) are basic

in nature while those in JEE-Advanced (erstwhile IIT-JEE) are more analytical in nature (Editorial page, "A case to use JEE-Main instead of JEE-Advanced this year", April 17). There should be no move to dilute the quality of intake in the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology.

NAVEEN SHEKHAR,  
Siwan, Bihar

■ JEE Mains and Advanced are totally different exams. It may not be an exaggeration to say that an average student can clear the JEE Main cut-off by sheer cramming and making intelligent guesses. This is not the case with the JEE-A. It is a very comprehensive check of a student's understanding of concepts.

While making a guess that 90% of students have a rank difference of 100 in both exams, one is ignoring the marks distribution for the exams. While many students are above 90 percentile in JEE-M, JEE-A has a much sparse distribution. IITs are facing a crisis because of the relaxation of admission norms in some instances. The IITs are the most premier academic institutions of the country. They should have students having the best cognitive abilities and intelligence.

HARNIT SINGH SUDAN,  
Jammu

■ With his sound arguments, the writer has given words to the concerns of several IIT and NIT aspirants who find themselves in the deep end

now. An indefinite postponement of the JEE-Advanced examination will only disrupt the academic schedule. Delaying evaluation and the counselling process will further delay commencement of classes. Therefore, it is reasonable to reduce the academic burden on students. In the wake of virtual learning becoming

### CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

The opening sentence of the OpEd page article titled "Harmonising with nature" (April 16, 2020) has been recast to read: "A quote attributed to Aristotle Onassis says 'is during our darkest moments that we must focus to see the light'." The sentence has been recast to clear the confusion whether the quote should be attributed to Aristotle Onassis, the business tycoon, or philosopher Aristotle.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-28525963; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers' Editor, The Hindu, Kasturi Buildings, 859 & 860 Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002, India. All communication must carry the full postal address and telephone number. Personal visits are welcome. The Terms of Reference for the Readers' Editor are on www.thehindu.com

# Short on labourers, a long harvest

Even though a record crop is expected this year, the lockdown may have robbed farmers of the chance to reap profits. There are no migrant labourers to help with harvesting and procurement, and no transport facilities to take the produce to markets in many parts of the country, report **Vikas Vasudeva** and **Priscilla Jebaraj**

Jagtar Singh is a man in a hurry. It's April 15, and with temperatures starting to soar, the government has just begun procurement of the winter wheat crop. Migrant workers have fled Jagtar's village, Kailon, in Punjab following the announcement of a lockdown to contain the novel coronavirus pandemic. As a result, there is shortage of farm labour in the village. Jagtar, 47, and his family of six are rushing to harvest their single acre of farmland themselves and sell the crop as early as possible, to prevent it from getting damaged for want of storage space.

"We have permission to harvest during the lockdown, but there's no labour available. So, my entire family has been manually harvesting the crop for the last two days," Jagtar says. "So far, we have been able to harvest less than half the field. It's a time-consuming process. After harvesting, we will have to get the threshing done. It will at least take another week to complete the harvest."

Usually, 90% of the wheat in Punjab and neighbouring Haryana is harvested using combine harvester machines. But with physical distancing norms in place now, for many small farmers, that system has been thrown out of gear.

"This year, things are tough," says Jagtar. "I own a small farm. In the neighbourhood, many like me have small landholdings. Earlier, most of us used to jointly harvest the wheat using combine machines as it was economical and would save a lot of time. But this season we can't jointly hire the machine as everyone is being issued a coupon by the government through commission agents for bringing their produce to the mandi to ensure that people don't congregate. As the date and time will differ for most of us, it becomes difficult to synchronise harvesting," he says.

Jagtar's head drops as he calculates the time needed for the entire harvesting process. What usually takes two or three days will now take at least 10 days.

The major worry is how to store this harvested produce during this extended period, says his brother Ranjot Singh. "We have to keep the harvested crop in the open field. We don't have any space to store it in our small house, which is around two kilometres from the farm," he says. "What if it rains or if it gets stolen? Our efforts will be ruined. The longer the produce stays in the field, the higher the risk." To add to their woes, the family has outstanding debts to the tune of ₹3 lakh with the bank and commission agents and cannot afford crop damage.

Unfortunately for them and other anxious farmers across the northern plains, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecast says a western disturbance is likely to affect the western Himalayan region, which could bring scattered rain and thunder showers over the region on April 17 and 18. Standing crops and harvest stored in the open could face widespread damage.

#### The coupon system

Wheat is the major rabi crop in the winter farming season in India, and the only one bought by government agencies at the pre-set minimum support price (MSP) of ₹925 per quintal. This year, over 31 million hectares of farmland have been sown with wheat across the country, and a record harvest of 106 million tonnes is expected.

In western States such as Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and even Rajasthan, warmer weather means that the wheat harvest was already under way when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the country, and is now largely over.

However, the bulk of the country's wheat is grown in Punjab and Haryana, an area known as the bread basket of India. The prolonged winter delayed the maturing of the grain and pushed harvesting dates by at least a week.

With Prime Minister Narendra Modi first announcing a lockdown until April 14, State authorities set procurement dates after that date. Punjab opened its mandis on April 15, while Haryana will follow suit on April 20. In a bid to stagger procurement and prevent congestion at mandis, Haryana has offered incentives to farmers who can delay selling their produce until May or June.

At the annual agriculture conference held on the first day of procurement in Punjab, Agriculture Commissioner Suresh Malhotra reiterated the physical distancing and sanitisation instructions meant to protect both farm workers and end consumers from SARS-CoV-2: "Keep a distance of 4-5 metres between workers. Sanitise all tools, machinery and packaging materials. Don't touch your mouth, nose and eyes without washing your hands with soap. Wear masks or at least cover your nose and mouth with gamchas and chunnis. Keep farm produce in the open, preferably in the sun, for 48 hours before storing."

The long list was presented to the States, via video conferencing due to the lockdown, along with another long list of actions taken by the Centre to fa-

sit, it will only help mitigate infection risk at procurement centres," he says.

Shamsher Singh from Harialpur village says his family's harvesting has been going at a slow pace. "Today, I have come to the mandi only to enquire about the mechanism. Of the 15 acres in which we have cultivated wheat, so far we have harvested crop in about 2-3 acres. We have kept the harvested crop in a shed, waiting for the coupons. But most of my neighbours don't have sheds or storage space. It's a difficult time," he says.

The Bharatiya Kisan Union's general secretary in Punjab, Jagmohan Singh, points out that as one coupon only allows sale of 50 quintals, it will be a difficult task for farmers with big landholdings to sell their produce. "50 quintals of wheat is approximately what you get from 2.5 acres. How will farmers with large landholdings sell their produce? How many visits will they have to make to the mandi," he asks.

#### Lifting and transporting produce

The Punjab Agricultural Marketing Board has stated in its guidelines that Deputy Commissioners in their areas will ensure that the sold produce is lifted within 48 hours.

The government is still making arrangements for packaging and storage materials. Against the total requirement of 4.82 lakh gunny bales, 3.05 lakh have been made available till April 12. Likewise, the arrangements for the 47,000 tarpaulins against the total demand of 52,570, and 29,261 mesh nets against 32,805, have already been made.

To ensure that farmers get their monetary return at the earliest, the amendment of the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act has been notified to ensure that farmers are paid electronically through commission agents within 48 hours after the produce is lifted.

Commission agent Shyam Mittal emphasises that it's the lifting and transportation of produce to the storage points that will put to test the government's claim of "foolproof" preparedness for hassle-free procurement of wheat. "There's a shortage of labour. The skilled labourers, who are usually from Bihar, are experts in stacking the bags in godowns and stores. But since the lockdown, most of them have gone back to their native place," he says.

Labourers are also demanding higher

wages this year, given the lockdown. "Last season, the payment was fixed around ₹14 per bag (50 kg) and this year it has been fixed around ₹15 by the market committee. But labourers are demanding ₹20/bag. After the bags are packed, it's the lifting of the produce, which is done by government agencies, that will need to be swift. Otherwise it could pose a serious problem," says Mittal.

At the end of the day, time equals money. Most of the precautions put in place to prevent the spread of infection translate to extra cost for the farmer. The government needs to announce a financial incentive to farmers to cover their enhanced expenses due to staggered procurement, says Surinder Singh of Popna village. "Storing the produce at home means incurring additional costs of labour and transportation. Also, fire incidents during the harvesting season usually go up, which is a major concern for crop safety. The government, whether at the Centre or State, should adequately compensate farmers," he says.

"Industrial lobbies are pushing the government for a bailout and economic package because of COVID-19 losses, but farmers' losses will be much higher. They are yet to get any financial support from the government apart from the PM-KISAN income support of ₹2,000 which was due anyway," says Devinder Sharma, an agriculture scientist and food policy expert. "During a lockdown, an auto firm may shut down production and may not be able to sell cars. But a farmer has no choice. He has to continue production with or without labour. He has to harvest the crop even if it then rots in the field, or if he makes losses in getting it to the market."

#### Watermelons, grapes go to waste

The problem may be more acute for those selling perishable crops such as fruits and vegetables. In Maharashtra's Beed district, banana farmer Bhagwan Deshmukh had hoped that this year's harvest would help him pay off his outstanding loans. However, since the lockdown was imposed and transport came to a halt, he has not been able to find a trader to transport his yield. "Now the only option left for him is to sell the land to return the money to the land," says Kalidas Aapet, a worker with the farmers' group Shetkari Sangathan, which is aiding Deshmukh. With APMCs closed

and transport to take produce to customers unavailable, farmers are in shock.

In the western district of Solapur, Siddheshwar Hembarde and Sanjay Birajdar had hoped to gain large profits from their watermelon crop, planted on two and three acres, respectively. On March 16 and 17, Hembarde sold 95 tonnes of watermelon at ₹8 per kg. As Birajdar waited for the trader, the lockdown was announced and transport came to a standstill. "He distributed watermelon for free in the entire village," says Aapet, noting that it was just a difference of four days. "The government in its initial order did not specify fruit transport as an essential service. There was confusion. It led to the destruction of fruit crop all over the State," he says.

Abjijit Zambre is a grapes farmer in Maharashtra's Sangli district, known for producing export-quality grapes. "The initial yield of grapes, before the COVID-19 scare, was sold without any hassle. However, the problem started once the lockdown was imposed. The traders refused to pick up the yield giving reasons of ban on transport. Prices were slashed according to the wishes of the traders. Grapes have to be sold without delay and farmers had to sell the crop at much lower prices," says Zambre.

In the mosambi-growing region of Aurangabad and Jalana, farmers looked forward to a good year after two consecutive seasons of drought and hailstorm. Farmers usually sell the crop while it is on the tree to the trader, who brings his own labour to harvest the fruit and load it in the trucks. "With the availability of water, this year's crop was sure to bring huge money. But as the lockdown was announced and movement of labour was stopped, no trader was available to purchase the crop. It's all gone now. The impact of this virus is much bigger than any drought," says Aapet.

#### The policy-implementation gap

The Centre announced a slew of relaxations and support measures for agriculture in the first two weeks of the lockdown. All agricultural and horticultural activities, markets, labour and transport were supposed to be exempt from lockdown restrictions. Subsidies on crop loans were extended for late repayment. States were asked to relax regulations and allow direct purchases by bulk buyers and retailers. The digitally connected e-NAM marketplace system was touted, along with a logistics module connecting farmers and traders to a network of almost 8 lakh trucks and 2 lakh transporters. The Railways introduced 67 routes for perishable produce. An Agri Transport Call Centre was set up to handle transport issues.

However, as farmers from different parts of the country reported, many of these policies were not uniformly implemented on the ground, especially in the first few weeks. "Movement on the ground has been the real problem. In many cases, the Centre's instructions have not percolated down to District Magistrates and Superintendents of Police, resulting in the harassment of farmers and agricultural traders, and supply chain disruptions," says former Agricul-

ture Secretary Siraj Hussain, who is now a fellow at the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, Delhi. "Nationally, we must recognise that the implications of COVID-19 go beyond health issues."

In a bid to shield farmers from logistics hurdles, both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have launched initiatives to buy winter paddy directly from farmers at the village level, rather than expecting them to come to the mandi. In Andhra Pradesh, the responsibility of procuring the State's expected harvest of 57 lakh tonnes has been given to agriculture assistants at village secretariats.

The idea is to ensure MSP to farmers who are battered by restricted transport, untimely rains, and damaged crops, says K. Kannababu, the State's Agriculture Minister. Owing to the recent rains in April, several crops were severely damaged. "As per the preliminary enumeration, paddy, maize and horticulture crops in over 30,000 hectares were damaged. The government is going all out to procure even the damaged crops," he says.

The Telangana government has also promised procurement of "every grain of paddy" at MSP rates. Although the State Agriculture Minister, S. Nirjan Reddy, says the government was prepared to open up to 8,500 procurement centres to purchase paddy in villages, only 2,720 centres had been opened as on April 14. The State is also dealing with a shortage of gunny bags. Farmers in other States are closely watching the experiment of village-level procurement to see whether it is a viable option.

In some parts of the country where the rabi harvest has already come to a close, sowing of the kharif or summer season crop has already begun. In fact, government data show early sowing of paddy with the sown area almost 40% higher than usual by April 10. The IMD forecast of a normal monsoon has bolstered the Agriculture Ministry to target an all-time record production of foodgrain of 298.3 million tonnes in 2020-21.

"The lockdown has proved one thing: agriculture is truly the backbone of the Indian economy. Coronavirus or not, farm production goes on because the demand for food will always be there. And so long as we meet our kharif and rabi production target, we are happy," says Sharma. "But the cost to the farmer, to agricultural workers, is not taken into account in that process."

He pointed to the tragic images of lakhs of migrant workers trudging back to their villages due to the lockdown. "This reverse migration proves that they were actually agricultural refugees, who left for the cities only because they could not make a living in the fields," he said. "Everyone is talking about the need to invest in public health once the COVID-19 crisis is over. Our farmers, agricultural workers are also front line workers during this time and they also deserve attention. If we can invest in agriculture and overhaul it so it is profitable, then we will have actually learned something from this crisis."

*Alok Deshpande, Aditya Anand and Appaji Reddem contributed to reporting*



Unexpected rainfall and the lack of farm hands is proving to be a nightmare for farmers in Punjab and Haryana. (Below): An aerial view of the closed APMC wholesale vegetable and fruit market at Vashi in Navi Mumbai.

■ AKHILESH KUMAR, YOGESH MHATRE



cilitate agricultural activity. "We have exempted all agricultural work from lockdown restrictions. Mandis can function with at least 50% of their workforce. Although migrant labour may have left, local labour is available, so there is no need to panic. Anyway, most Punjabi farmers use machines for harvesting," said Malhotra. As many as 17,500 combine harvesters are available in the State.

Punjab is expecting a bumper wheat harvest this season with production likely to touch 182 lakh tonnes. The government estimates that around 137 lakh tonnes of this will arrive in the market, most of which will be purchased by government agencies. The cash credit limit of ₹22,900 crore has already been approved by the Centre to ensure prompt and seamless procurement operations in the State. On day one (April 15), government agencies procured 3,119 tonnes of wheat across the State. To ensure smooth procurement of wheat in all 22 districts of the State, as many as 3,691 purchase centres or mandi yards have been set up. To avoid crowding, maintain safe physical distancing norms, and ensure smooth procurement, a detailed action plan has been chalked out to undertake procurement by staggering arrival of produce in the mandis by issuing coupons fixed with holograms to the farmers through commission agents (Artiyas).

"With each coupon a farmer will be entitled to bring one trolley of about 50 to 70 quintals of wheat. A farmer will be entitled to take multiple coupons each day or on different days depending on space in the purchase centre in order to avoid rush in the mandis," says Viswajeet Khanna Additional Chief Secretary (Development), Punjab.

At the Kharar grain mandi just outside Chandigarh, farmers are discovering that this system is cumbersome and costly in practice. "I harvested the crop with a combine machine. There's no shortage of combines. I have brought over 80 quintals of wheat for sale without any hassle. But the actual problem will start now," says Baljinder Singh, 67, of Rasan Heri village. "I have another lot of harvested produce that I need to bring for sale. But I don't know how many days later I'll be given the next coupon. All that time, the crop will be out in the open as there's no storage space."

Citing cost and health concerns, he says the restriction of one trolley per coupon should be removed. "If a farmer can bring his entire produce in one vi-



FROM PAGE ONE

## Infection growth rate has slowed down: Centre

Mr. Agarwal said the recovery rate (number of people discharged) too had improved, standing now at nearly 13 %, while the ratio between the recovered positive cases and fatalities was at 80:20, which was much higher than several other countries.

Indigenous manufacturer of RT-PCR (reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction) kits had started and 10 lakh units a month would be produced from May. "Rapid antibody detection kits' manufacture, with a capacity of 10 lakh kits a month, will also be started. Five lakh kits are distributed to districts on the basis of high case burden," he said.

The Ministry had shared forecasting tools with States/district administrators for better planning of infrastructure across COVID facilities based on the assessment of case loads. Cumulatively, 1,919 dedicated COVID-19 hospitals have been identified at both the Central and State levels, Mr. Agarwal noted.

ICMR spokesperson R.R. Gangakhedkar said that while scientists would take some time to know which quasi-species of COVID-19 was predominant in the country, mutation (which is currently not seen), if any, will not likely make potential drugs and vaccine ineffective.

"The ICMR is going to conduct a study in order to

find out the potential effect of BCG vaccine in the fight against COVID-19," he stated, noting that the vaccine would not be recommended even to health workers till the results of the study are obtained.

On Friday, the 12th meeting of the Group of Ministers (GoM) on COVID-19 discussed the impact of the extended lockdown. Mr. Agarwal said, "The GoM discussed the creation of new rapid and accurate diagnostics that may give results within 30 minutes; augmentation of the testing capacity through 30 labs; development of innovative pooling strategies to boost the number of people who can be tested; indigenous synthesis of critical components that are limiting domestic test kit production; and increased viral sequencing, which can help in epidemiology and to identify potentially important mutations."

Progress was reported on vaccines development spanning inactivated virus, antibodies to major antigens, monoclonal, and RNA based vaccines. Convalescent plasma therapy had also been initiated on some sites, he pointed out.

The ICMR said Union government was now working with global partners to ensure that effective vaccines were developed and made available as soon as possible.

## Salaried borrowers continue to pay EMIs

"Some borrowers from the micro and medium enterprises have opted [for it]," said the managing director of another public sector bank. "But personal loans, term loans like housing loans and vehicle loans, credit card loans, which carry higher rate of interest... many people have not opted [for a moratorium]."

"In any case, the interest meter is running," the official added, indicating that those who are in a position to repay ha not opted for the

moratorium since they were aware of the cost.

Some private sector lenders, including housing finance companies, however, are still entertaining requests from their customers on the moratorium issue.

"A clear picture on how many of the salaried borrowers have availed themselves of the moratorium will emerge after some time, as customers still have some more days to indicate their choice," an official from a private sector lender said.

## To ease situation, RBI to pump in ₹1 lakh crore

Mr. Das also said onion prices have continued to decline while PDS kerosene prices have slumped by 24% in the first fortnight of April and domestic LPG prices declined by 8%.

"In the period ahead, inflation could recede even further, barring supply disruption shocks and may even settle well below the target of 4% by the second half of 2020-21," he said. He added that such an outlook would make policy space available to address the intensification of risks to growth and financial stability brought on by COVID-19.

"This space needs to be used effectively and in

time," Mr. Das commented. The RBI had reduced the repo rate by 75 bps to 4.4% on March 27.

The central bank has also reduced the reserve repo rate – while keeping the repo rate unchanged – by 25 bps to 3.5%. This was to discourage banks from parking their excess liquidity with RBI at the reverse repo rate.

Observing that the surplus liquidity in the banking system has risen significantly in the wake of government spending and the various liquidity enhancing measures by RBI, Mr. Das said banks parked ₹6.9 lakh crore on April 15 through the reverse repo window.

## Minor forest produce in exemption list

The new MHA guidelines have also expanded the types of plantations that will be permitted to resume activities with half their workforce from April 20 onwards.

Earlier, tea, coffee and rubber plantations were given exemptions from the lockdown.

Now, bamboo, cocoa, arecanut, and spices plantations – most of which are clustered in the southern States – will be added to the list, along with their harvesting, processing, packaging, sale and marketing.

Cooperative credit societies, which are crucial to

provide crop loans to farmers, will be exempted. Non-banking financial institutions, including housing finance companies and microfinance institutions, will also be allowed to function with a bare minimum of staff, the guidelines said.

The Home Ministry has also added to the list construction activities in rural areas. They will be exempted from the lockdown from April 20. They include construction projects related to water supply and sanitation, as well as the installation of power transmission lines and telecom optic fibre and cable.

## RBI sops will not help common people: Cong.

Ajay Maken presents a 10-point charter to Delhi government; Rahul Gandhi praises Chhattisgarh for COVID-19 response

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The measures announced by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to mitigate the effects of the ongoing lockdown because of the coronavirus [COVID-19] pandemic are disappointing and do not provide 'any actual benefit' to the common people, the Congress said on Friday.

Addressing the media through video-conferencing, senior Congress leader Ajay Maken said the announcements have no meaning at a time when the economy has come to a halt.

"The problem before the people is that when they have no work or business. What will they do with a loan and how will they repay? The

announcements made by the RBI have no meaning. The Congress and the people are disappointed with the announcements. The government should take more measures to mitigate the problems of the poor and the vulnerable," Mr. Maken said.

**Aid for daily wagers'**

The former chief of the Congress in Delhi also put out a 10-point programme for the Arvind Kejriwal-led Delhi government to help migrants and daily wagers who have lost their incomes during the nationwide lockdown.

Mr. Maken asked the Delhi government to waive school fees; dispense with the fixed power charges for shopkeepers and pay 75% salaries of

schoolteachers and offer micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) 75% of their employees' salaries and daily wagers who have lost their incomes during the nationwide lockdown.

Delhi Education Minister Manish Sisodia on Friday said that no private school in the national capital can hike fees. However, he said that schools can charge a one-month tuition fee at this time instead of the quarterly fees that is usually taken.

In his charter, Mr. Maken also demanded a ₹7,500 cash incentive to migrants, an unemployment allowance, advance payment of pension to senior citizens and widows and risk allowance to sanitation and frontline health workers.

Making a point about

ramping up testing facilities, the Congress leader alleged that the pizza delivery boy who tested positive in south Delhi on Thursday was initially refused testing by a government hospital as he didn't have foreign travel history.

**Strict precautions**

The Congress leader also wanted to know whether Delhi had entered the community transmission stage (stage-3) as 135 people have been kept "under investigation".

"We suggest that standard operating procedures for delivery boys be prepared and notified as regulations so that they are binding on everyone. Protection gear, including sanitisers, masks, and gloves, should be provided by employers

including sanitisers, masks, and gloves, should be provided by employers," he said.

Mr. Maken also cited the example of the Rajasthan and Punjab governments, both Congress-ruled States, where many of these proposals have been announced.

On Twitter, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi also praised the Congress-ruled States. "Rajasthan, Punjab, Chhattisgarh and Puducherry are putting up a strong fight against COVID-19. New, special hospitals are being readied, like in Chhattisgarh, this 200-bedded hospital especially for coronavirus treatment has been readied in merely 20 days. Where there is a will, there is a way," Mr. Gandhi said.



We suggest that standard operating procedures for delivery boys be prepared and notified as regulations so that they are binding on everyone. Protection gear, including sanitisers, masks and gloves, should be provided by employers

AJAY MAKEN,  
Senior Congress leader

## IAF attack chopper lands in Punjab field

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

An AH-64E Apache attack helicopter of the Indian Air Force (IAF) made a precautionary landing in a field in Hoshiarpur district of Punjab near Pathankot on Friday. The crew and the helicopter are safe, the IAF said.

The Apaches are the latest induction into the IAF.

"The helicopter, after approximately one hour of flying, had indications of a critical failure and carried out a safe landing west of Indora, Punjab. The captain of the aircraft took correct and prompt actions to recover the helicopter safely," the IAF said in a statement. "The aircraft will be recovered after necessary rectification," it added.

India got 22 Apaches from Boeing under a ₹13,951.57-crore deal in September 2015. The first batch was formally inducted in September 2019.

On Thursday, an IAF Cheetah utility helicopter made a precautionary landing on the Outer Ring Road after developing a technical snag shortly after take-off from the Hindon air base.

"The two terrorists were killed in an encounter in Da-



On their toes: Soldiers standing guard during an encounter with Hizb-ul-Mujahideen militants in Shopian district of south Kashmir on Friday. •PTI

## Four militants killed in J&K

Operations carried out in Kishtwar and Shopian

**PEERZADA ASHIQ**  
SRINAGAR

Four militants, including two who had snatched weapons from policemen, were killed in separate operations in Jammu and Kashmir.

Two terrorists, who had

snatched two service rifles and killed a policeman in Kishtwar's Dachan on April 13 using axes, were killed in an encounter in Chenab Valley's Kishtwar, the police said on Friday.

"The two terrorists were killed in an encounter in Da-

chan area of Kishtwar. The police, the Army and the CRPF were deployed in a difficult terrain after a tip-off. The two weapons have been recovered," the Inspector General of Police, Jammu, said.

An official said the two locals were chased by a joint team of security forces in the upper reaches of Dachan for the past two days.

The police identified them as Basharat Hussain and Ashiq Hussain, both residents of village Tander, Da-

chan. Hussain was released 24 days ago from jail. He was earlier arrested under Sections 363 and 376 (kidnapping and rape) of the Ranbir Penal Code.

**Gunfight in Shopian**

Two Hizb-ul-Mujahideen militants were killed in a gunfight with security forces in south Kashmir's Shopian on Friday.

An official said the gunfight took place at Dairoor, Keegam of south Kashmir's Shopian district.

## Pakistan is exporting terror, says Army chief

'Launch pads across LoC are active'

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

It is very unfortunate that at a time when India and the whole world are fighting the COVID-19 menace, Pakistan continues to foment trouble and resorts to firing heavy calibre artillery, killing innocent Kashmiris, Army chief Gen. Manoj Naravane said in Kashmir on Friday. He asserted that all terror launch pads across the Line of Control (LoC) were active.

"While we are busy not only helping our own citizens but the rest of the world by sending medical teams and exporting medicines, Pakistan is only exporting terror. This doesn't auger well," he told news agency ANI.

"Even in hinterland, Pakistan backed terrorists are resorting to targeting innocent civilians with the aim of coercing them into following their *azadi* narrative," he stated.

### Kashmir visit

Gen. Naravane is on a two-day visit to Kashmir to review the security situation following the recent escalation in infiltration attempts and cease fire violations

(CFV), including exchange of heavy artillery fire, that has resulted in civilian causalities on the Indian side.

Gen. Naravane said local formation commanders were implementing the summer strategy based on various assessments. "Operations short of war are available to us to provide befitting response to our adversaries," he noted.

On COVID-19 cases in the over Army, which has 1.3 million personnel, he said that so far, there have been only eight positive cases – two doctors and a nursing assistant.

"Four others are responding well to treatment and we had one case in Ladakh. He is now free of the coronavirus and has rejoined duty," he added.

## SC says bail to Goyal only after probe

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday did not grant immediate bail to Sandeep Goyal, accused in a GST fraud case, even as it directed the investigation into the case to be completed in three months.

Mr. Goyal is accused of creating about 555 fake firms across the country to evade GST payments. The firms were used to issue invoices to the tune of ₹74 crore. The Rajasthan High Court had denied him bail in the case in February.

A Bench led by Justice Mohan M. Shantanagoudar recorded in the order that Mr. Goyal should be released on bail if the probe into the case is not completed in three months.

On the other hand, if the investigation is completed, a report shall be filed before the court concerned.

"In case, the investigation is completed and the report is filed within three months from today, it is open for the petitioner to move the trial court for bail, if he so chooses. If such an application is filed, the same shall be considered on its own merits by the trial court," the apex court order said.

The Centre, through Additional Solicitor General K.M. Natraj, submitted that the investigation was still pending. He submitted that more fake firms created by the petitioner were being detected, and so, this was not the right time for allowing him bail.



## Bengal Governor says BJP MPs' relief work being hindered

Action is politically motivated, states Jagdeep Dhankhar

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
KOLKATA

West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday alleged that the State administration was impeding the relief work being undertaken

by BJP MPs. In a series of tweets, where he mentioned four MPs representing the BJP, the Governor said he was concerned over the "politically motivated actions" meted out to the MPs by police and administration.

He said he had raised the issue with the Lok Sabha Speaker.

"Concerned at politically motivated actions meted out

to MPs @Drsubhassarkar @johnbarlabjp @ArjunSinghWB @RajuBistaBJP by police and administration @MamataOfficial in over zealous mode. Flagged issue @lokshabhaspeker," a tweet by the Governor said. Mr. Dhankhar described the action by State officials as "major misconduct".

Bankura BJP MP Subhas Sarkar said the State government had lodged a criminal

case against him for raising questions on social media over the "hasty cremation" of two deceased in Bankura.

The Governor made the remarks after the MPs whom he mentioned in his tweet alleged that the State government officials were not allowing them to distribute food and other materials.

Bankura BJP MP Subhas Sarkar said the State government had lodged a criminal

## INTERVIEW | YOGI ADITYANATH

# 'We are taking care that nobody in Uttar Pradesh goes hungry'

We are taking harshest action against those trying to convert this infection into a community infection, says Chief Minister

NISTULA HEBBAR  
NEW DELHI

**At the helm of India's most populous State, Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath details his government's strategy to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and ensure the revival of the economy post the lockdown in an email interview.**

**Uttar Pradesh is one of the most populous States in India. What has been your strategy in combating the challenge of COVID-19 so far?**

■ There is no doubt that Uttar Pradesh is the largest state in the country in terms of population and in such a situation the battle with COVID-19 becomes even more challenging. We worked hard to turn every challenge into an opportunity. As soon as alarm about the coronavirus was sounded, our government started taking some rapid measures.

In the first week of March, on the call of Hon'ble Prime Minister, we started the proceedings for prevention of corona. Special programmes

for training of physicians, paramedical and nursing staff etc. were ensured. The Panchayat Raj, Rural Development and Urban Development Departments were directed to conduct comprehensive awareness programmes. We formed 11 committees. For the citizens of Uttar Pradesh residing in other States, 32 nodal officers were deployed (16 IAS, 16 IPS). Through the CM Helpline 1076, we asked the village heads to communicate and make people aware of the virus in the villages.

On March 24 itself, we took action to send an amount of ₹1,000 through RTGS to the accounts of more than 21 lakh construction workers under the Workers' Maintenance

Scheme. Thus, we were the first to provide relief to the people who depend on their daily wages. Secondly, starting from a single testing lab, today there are 14, and we are doing 2,500 tests daily. With this, Uttar Pradesh is the first State to do pool testing.

We are manufacturing PPE kits, masks, and sanitizers in U.P.. This is the reason that the situation in the State is very much under control today. Our 27 districts are already corona free, including Pilibhit. Two cases were found there but today there is not a single case of corona there. This would not have been possible without the support of corona warriors and the public.

**Can you explain the Agra Model in detail and how it was designed?**

■ The first cluster of coronavirus in Uttar Pradesh was reported in Agra after which



**The State government is working on a long-term strategy to give momentum to the economy**

the State government took full caution and started working with better strategy. We identified all the hotspots in the district, and deployed rapid response team, started sampling in bulk, installed call centre, ensured doorstep delivery and all the houses were sanitised.

We made necessary arrangements here and prevented the corona from spreading by creating a containment

zone. Contact tracing of infected persons was done through Rapid Response Team (RRT). Information was gathered about their visits and who did they come in contact with. The hotspots and 38 epicentres were then identified, and shown on the map out of which 10 epicentres have been completely closed now.

Along with this, a 3-km containment zone and 5-km buffer zone were made. A micro plan was created for each area to reduce the outbreak of corona. 1,248 special teams were formed which included the people of Municipal Corporation and Health Department. These teams surveyed about 9.3 lakh people from house-to-house and screened 1.65 lakh homes. Of these, 25 hundred people were identified with symptoms like cough, cold, fever and 36 people had a travel history. Everyone was investigated. This brought the situation under control.

**Migrants from Uttar Pradesh made their way back home from various parts of the country. How do you see its impact, both in terms of disease surveillance and the economy?**

■ See, the whole country is fighting to save humanity right now. In such a situation, the Government of Uttar Pradesh also stands firm with every citizen irrespective of which section of the society they belong to. The State government is providing all possible help to those citizens who are returning.

They all are being monitored by the medical team and administration. The government is arranging for their food. About four lakh people are in shelter homes or quarantine centres. They are being transported home with food grains after completing the period.

We are taking care that nobody in the State goes hungry. Secondly, for those who

have come to Uttar Pradesh from other places, the government will make the same arrangements for them, too.

Naturally, the world economy is falling apart due to lockdown. The situation is very challenging for Uttar Pradesh too. But it is equally important for the State government to take care of the 23 crore people as much as the State's economy. This is why Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also spoken about 'Jaan bhi, Jahaan bhi'.

During this lockdown, the government has directly and indirectly connected about one-and-a-half lakh people in the State with jobs. After the lockdown is over, Uttar Pradesh's economy will grow faster. I can say this with certainty. If people from outside do not want to return, they can work in their respective districts under the One District One Product (ODOP) programme or they can be absorbed in the industries.

■ See, I have repeatedly said that in Uttar Pradesh, we will not let anyone break the law. Secondly, we are taking the harshest action against those who are trying to convert this infection into a community infection during lockdown.

If someone assaults our health workers, police personnel, then action against them is necessary. The attack on the medical team in Moradabad is an unforgivable crime and we are strictly dealing with this situation. The message to all these people is that they should behave according to the needs of the country and society.

(Full interview at <https://bit.ly/CovidYogi>)

## Indore registers eight deaths in a day

256 new cases in M.P.'s most populous city; 40% jump in testing in the State in a day raises questions

STAFF REPORTER  
BHOJPAL

Indore on Thursday registered eight deaths in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and 256 new cases, the most for the city in a day.

On Wednesday, the count in the city stood at 586. With reports from New Delhi detecting 218 new cases and from the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Medical College, Indore, 26, the number of cases grew by 43% to 842.

Among the eight deaths, five patients died on Thursday, while the rest died previously and their samples tested positive on the day. The toll in the city has climbed to 47, which constitutes 5.5% of the patients in Indore so far.

On Thursday, men aged 52, 63, 52 and 80, and a woman aged 63 died of the illness. For them, the duration of the illness ranged between three and five days and none had any comorbidity.



**Moment of relief:** Medical staff cheering four COVID-19 survivors after their discharge from an Indore hospital. ■ PTI

fracture, testing patterns nationwide and discrepancy with data received from the testing centres.

On Thursday, nine of the 10 laboratories tested the samples. Going by the number of samples claimed to be tested, each lab in the State, which has reported the third highest number of cases in the country, tested on an average 361 samples.

The number is extraordi-

narily high, as 263 laboratories across the country tested 103 samples on an average on Thursday, according to data from the Indian Council of Medical Research.

In New Delhi, boasting the second highest number of cases among the States, 2,179 samples were tested by 18 labs on Thursday, with each lab testing 121 samples on an average. Whereas, laborato-

ries in Kerala tested 665 cumulatively, and 54 samples on an average each. Since the outbreak, laboratories in Rajasthan have tested 125 cases on an average, while those in Maharashtra, which has most cases, have tested 45.

### 'Working full time'

"This only means our testing capacity is increasing and we are working full time. Our full focus is on that..." Additional chief secretary (health) Mohammed Suleiman told *The Hindu* on Friday.

There was a spike, he explained, as the government was receiving results of samples it had sent to New Delhi two days ago. However, even

excluding the 642 sample results of Indore residents that were received from the National Institute of Biologicals, Noida, on the day, the jump is beyond the State's capacity.

## Screen Rohingya for COVID-19: MHA to States

Advisory comes after reports of refugees' visits to Nizamuddin event and other gatherings

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has informed States that "Rohingya Muslims" and their contacts may need to be screened for COVID-19 infection as some of them in Telengana, Delhi, Punjab and Jammu attended the Tablighi Jamaat event at Nizamuddin in March.

**Give ₹35,000 to PM-CARES for bail: HC**

STAFF REPORTER  
BHUBANESWAR

The Jharkhand High Court has granted bail to a former Member of Parliament and five others on condition of contributing ₹35,000 each to the PM-CARES Fund and down-loading the Aarogya Setu mobile application.

Six petitioners – including former BJP MP Som Mandandi – were convicted in a case pertaining to their involvement in a rail roko agitation in Pakur district in 2012.

They were in judicial custody since February.

All the convicts had moved the High Court, seeking quashing of the sentence, and the case was pending before the court.

**'Self-quarantine'**  
Komal Kamra, co-founder and director (development) of the Foundation, said that within two weeks of the first case of coronavirus infection in the country, the group had networked with

## Call to declare spinal cord injury patients 'high-risk'

Patients' group writes to Ministries

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

People with spinal cord injury want the Union Health Ministry to declare them "high-risk" category patients for COVID-19 infections.

In a letter dated April 15, MHA wrote to all States and Union Territories, stating that "It has been reported that Rohingya Muslims attended *iltefamas* (congrega-

tions) and other religious congregations of Tablighi Jamaat and there is a possibility of their contracting COVID-19."

It said Rohingya residing in camps in Hyderabad had attended Tablighi Jamaat congregation at Mewat in Haryana and had visited Nizamuddin markaz (centre) in Delhi. It further said Rohin-

gya living in Shram Vihar near Shaheen Bagh in Delhi had also gone for Tablighi activities and have not returned to their camps.

"Also, presence of Rohingya Muslims after attending Tablighi Jamaat work has also been presently reported from Derabassi in Punjab and Jammu area," the letter said.

The letter, however, did not specify the period when the Rohingya visited the Nizamuddin markaz.

After alerts were sent by Telangana and J&K, MHA wrote to all States on March 21 to "identify, screen and quarantine" foreign Tablighi Jamaat members who were travelling to different parts of the country.

The letter, however, did not specify the period when the Rohingya visited the Nizamuddin markaz.

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**OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL MEDICAL EDUCATION & TRAINING, UTTAR PRADESH 6<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR, JAWAHAR BHAWAN, LUCKNOW.**  
No. ME-3/2020/661 Lucknow: Dated : 16 April, 2020  
**THE TIME SCHEDULE OF FIRST ROUND OF ONLINE COUNSELLING OF UP NEET PG-2020**  
The Time Schedule for the Admission through Online Counseling in the State Uttar Pradesh for Government Medical/Dental College/ Private Medical/Dental Colleges/Institutions/Universities for Postgraduate (MD/MS/Diploma/MDS Courses) is as follows:-

Date of Online Registration	17 <sup>th</sup> April, 2020 (From 10:00 AM To 23 <sup>rd</sup> April, 2020 Till 2:00 PM)
Online Security Fee Payment	17 <sup>th</sup> April, 2020 (From 10:00 AM To 23 <sup>rd</sup> April, 2020)
Expected date of declaration of merit List	24 <sup>th</sup> April, 2020
Date of online choice filling & locking	27 <sup>th</sup> April, 2020 (From 2:00 PM To 30 <sup>th</sup> April, 2020 Till 2:00 PM)
Declaration of result of seat allotment	1 <sup>st</sup> / 2 <sup>nd</sup> May, 2020
Date for downloading allotment letters & admission	4 <sup>th</sup> May, 2020 to 09 <sup>th</sup> May, 2020

► Registration & Security Money will be deposited through Debit Card/Credit Card/Net Banking.  
► For further important and detailed information kindly visit the website regularly <https://upneet.gov.in> and [www.updgme.in](http://www.updgme.in)

DIRECTOR GENERAL

## U.P. buses to shift students stuck in Kota

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government on Monday said it had sent 300 buses, including 200 from Agra, to bring back students of the State stranded in Rajasthan's Kota, a hub of coaching centres for competitive examinations.

A government official in Agra said 200 buses were sent from the district while another 100 were dispatched from Jhansi in Bundelkhand.

Additional District Magistrate (City) Agra Prabha Kant Awasthi said that though the number of students of U.P. stranded in Kota was not known, each bus would carry 25 students.

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said the move by U.P. could be followed by other States. "Students in Kota can be sent to their home states on the consent of the concerned State government so that these young boys & girls do not panic," Mr. Gehlot said on Twitter.

Bihar CM Nitish Kumar, however, expressed his reservations over the move, and called it an injustice and against the principle of lockdown.

(Inputs from Patna and Jaipur)

## Priyanka seeks task force for economic revival in U.P.

She asks CM to include experts

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has urged Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to set up a task force for the economic reconstruction of the State, the party said on Friday.

In an April 16 letter, released by the party a day later, Ms. Vadra highlighted the problems faced by different sections of people because of the lockdown.

"Corona pandemic has brought with it economic destruction. U.P.'s glass industry, brass industry, carpet industry, weaving, furniture making, leather industry, hosiery, clay pottery, fishery and other household industries have received a big jolt. Lakhs of weavers in the State are facing immense hardship as the economy of the State and the entire country has come to a standstill," Ms. Vadra said.

**Shortage of food**  
"I request you that, for the reconstruction of the economy of the State, please constitute a task force with well-known experts on economy and planning."

Ms. Vadra pointed out that many unregistered workers were facing shor-



tage of food and money. "Unregistered workers should also be given guarantee of economic relief. There are also reports of ration not being available. Kindly ensure that ration is being given to people even without ration card. Also I would request you to give pulses, edible oil, salt and spices along with wheat in the ration," she said.

In the two-page letter, she also requested the Chief Minister to announce an economic package for the MGNREGA workers and farmers who had been hit by unseasonal hailstorm, clear the past dues and an assurance to buy the crop of cane farmers and facilitate the use of combine harvester machines for the Rabi crops.

**BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE**  
Office of the Executive Engineer, K R Pura Division,  
Old Madras Road, K R Pura, Bengaluru - 560 036  
Date: 17.04.2020  
No: EE/KRP/TND-01/2020-21  
**INVITATION FOR SHORT TERM TENDER (IFT)**  
(Two Cover Tender) (Through GOK e-Procurement Portal only)

The Executive Engineer (K.R. Pura) invites Item Rate tenders from eligible tenderers for the works detailed in the table given below. The tenderers may submit tenders for any or all of the works given in the table in appropriate class registered in Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike/CPWD/KPWD/Railways/MES/any State or Central Govt. Organisations.

Sl. No.	Name of the Works	Approx. Value of Work (₹. in Lakhs)	EMD (in ₹.)
1.	Drilling of New Borewells in Horamavu and surrounding areas in Ward No.25 Horamavu	100.00	200000.00
2.	Sinking of New Borewells, erection of Motor Pumpsets and Electrification to newly drilled borewells and providing water supply pipelines to new borewells at Horamavu and surrounding areas in Horamavu Ward No.25	100.00	200000.00
3.	Sinking of New Borewells, erection of Motor Pumpsets and Electrification to newly drilled borewells and providing water supply pipelines to new borewells at Horamavu Agara and surrounding areas in Horamavu Ward No.25	100.00	200000.00
4.	Sinking of New Borewells, erection of Motor Pumpsets and Electrification to newly drilled borewells and providing water supply pipelines to new borewells at Horamavu Babusapalya, Chelikere and surrounding areas in Horamavu Ward No.25	100.00	20000

# More healthcare workers test positive in Mumbai

Wockhardt and Jaslok hospitals to resume services after containment; the number of infections in the city touches 2,120

JYOTI SHELAR  
SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE  
MUMBAI/PUNE

With seven deaths and at least 118 new COVID-19 cases reported on Friday, Maharashtra's death toll touched 201, with 3,320 cases so far. The number of cases in Mumbai rose 2,120 with 77 new cases, according to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). The number in the Dharavi area reached 101.

Among the new cases, 23 were reported from Pune, four from Malegaon in Nashik and one from Thane district, said officials. Till date, 300 patients across the State have been discharged after a complete recovery.

Even as more frontline warriors such as doctors and nurses tested positive in Mumbai, two large hospitals that had been declared containment zones after numerous staff and doctors had been infected, are likely to resume their services soon.

Sion Hospital on Friday confirmed seven resident doctors and seven nurses – including a staff nurse, an assistant matron and five nursing students – had tested positive for the coronavirus. While two nurses have been discharged, the rest are undergoing treatment at Seven Hills Hospital in Marol.

#### Under quarantine

Two asymptomatic resident doctors are quarantined in a bungalow, while the rest are in quarantine in the hospital. An official at Sion hospital said, "We have demanded individual rooms for the doctors so that they do not mingle with each other and stay segregated." Two more junior resident doctors at Bombay Hospital tested positive on Friday, taking the tally



**The worst-hit:** An aerial view of Worli, where the highest COVID-19 positive cases were reported on Friday. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

of infected staff at the hospital to six. Consultant physician Dr. Gautam Bhanali said the two doctors, who are attached to surgery and oncology departments, are asymptomatic.

At the civic-run KEM Hospital, the tally of coronavirus cases rose to 10 after two resident doctors tested positive on Thursday. Dean Dr. Hemant Deshmukh said most of the positive staffers were not on COVID-19 duty.

Wockhardt and Jaslok hospitals, which were declared containment zones, are on their way to resume full-fledged services. Additional municipal commissioner Suresh Kakani said the hospitals are sanitising their equipment and premises.

"They will reopen as gen-

eral hospitals. We have asked them to also cater to COVID-19 patients and provide separate entry and exit for them. We have asked them to ensure restricted entry to COVID-19 patient areas. For example, if the facility is on the seventh floor, the elevator while moving from the ground floor to the seventh floor should not stop anywhere in between," said Mr. Kakani.

In Pune, 400-odd resident doctors in Sassoon and BJ Medical College and Hospital, affiliated to the Medical Association of Resident Doctors, along with workers of Sassoon Hospital, undertook a symbolic protest against the government's decision to transfer its dean Dr. Ajay Chandanwale.

## Maharashtra seeks ₹10,000 cr. for 5 months

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Ajit Pawar on Friday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, urging the Centre to rescue Maharashtra from an economic mess as a result of the lockdown.

The Centre should provide an economic subsidy of ₹10,000 crore each for the next five months, increase the cap on fiscal deficit to 5%, and clear the pending compensation on account of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) to the tune of ₹15,558

crore, he said.

"Maharashtra is putting up a good fight against the virus on all fronts and will surely win it, but for it to be successful, the Centre must cooperate with it on the economic front," the letter said.

"Maharashtra has the power to overcome the COVID-19 crisis on its own but due to the lockdown announced by the Central government from March 24 to May 3, the economy of the State is stagnated. Maharashtra's reported GST income was down by ₹27,000 crore in March."

In order to tackle the rising number of cases, the BMC is in need of trained health staff.

# Defence medical corps to join fight

50 AFMS hospitals to handle COVID-19



**Taking stock:** Rajnath Singh reviewing the functioning of the Armed Forces Medical Services in New Delhi on Friday. ■ PTI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) has stepped up efforts to assist the civil administration in fighting COVID-19. As part of this, orders have been issued notifying 50 AFMS hospitals as dedicated COVID hospitals and mixed COVID hospitals for isolation and treatment, the Defence Ministry said on Friday after a review meeting on the Ministry's efforts by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

"These hospitals have a combined bed capacity of 9,038 patients. Civilian COVID-19 cases would also be admitted in these hospitals as a surge capacity to augment the state healthcare facilities," the Ministry said in a statement.

Lt. Gen. Anup Banerjee, Director General of AFMS, informed Mr. Singh that following emergency financial powers granted to DGs MS and further down the hierarchy, procurement of essential health equipment such as face masks, sanitizers, Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) and ventilators was on smoothly at a fast pace, the Ministry stated.

In addition, training ac-

tivities have been suspended at the Army Medical Corps (AMC) Centre and College, Lucknow, and Armed Forces Medical College (AFMC), Pune, and approximately 650 medical officers undergoing post-graduate training at the AFMC would be reverted to units for providing medical cover depending on the situation.

A list of retired AMC officers and paramedical staff had been readied and they may be requested to volunteer for working in AFMS hospitals at their current home stations if the need arose.

Forty-three officers and 990 paramedics have volunteered till date, it stated. Six viral testing labs had been established with the help of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) at various AFMS hospitals.

#### DRDO's new products

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) said in a statement that it had introduced new products to aid in the fight against COVID-19 – an automatic mist-based sanitizer dispensing unit and an Ultraviolet-C Light-based sanitisation box and hand-held UV-C device.

## Gujarat death toll touches 41; 170 new cases in a single day

Curfew clamped on Rajkot hotspot that reported 20 cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
AHMEDABAD

Gujarat saw a sharp rise in the number of COVID-19 cases on Friday with 170 new cases and five deaths, taking the death toll to 41 and the total number of cases to 1,099 and 41 deaths as on Friday evening.

Thirteen people were discharged after treatment and complete recovery from the infection.

#### City clusters

Three main clusters in the State so far are in Ahmedabad with 622 cases out of which 21 have died while 24 have recovered. Vadodara with 142 cases, six deaths and seven recoveries, and Surat with 140 cases, five deaths and 10 recoveries.

After bringing major hotspots in Ahmedabad and Surat under curfew, the government also imposed curfew in a hotspot in Rajkot



**Viral impact:** The walled city in Ahmedabad was deserted on Friday because of the curfew. ■ VIJAY SONEJI

from where more than 20 cases have been reported.

With cases being reported new areas, the State government announced that all COVID-19 infected persons will be provided free treatment in all designated hospitals across the State.

The government has set up one 100-bed designated COVID-19 hospital in every district besides multiple hospitals including a 1,200-bed

civil hospital and a 2,000 bed COVID-19 care centre in Ahmedabad.

There are 963 infected persons undergoing treatment at various hospitals; nine others are critical and on ventilator support.

The State has so far tested 23,438 samples. The government also announced that state government offices will reopen from April 20 with limited staff.

## Rajasthan initiates rapid testing

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
JAIPUR

Rajasthan became the first State to carry out rapid testing for COVID-19 on Friday. Beginning at 5 p.m., 52 persons were tested at the Urban Primary Health Centre in Jaipur's Topkhana Desh locality, also known as the Jaju Government Dispensary. All the 52 persons tested negative.

Though the rapid test is not a confirmatory diagnosis for the SARS-CoV-2 infection, it helps in quickly isolating a person who tests positive in order to contain the spread of the virus.

Additional Chief Secretary (Medical & Health) Rohit Kumar Singh said the tests would be conducted on a large scale in the hotspots. "The tests will be done at designated points on people with symptoms and on super spreaders... such as vegetable-vendors, shopkeepers and grocery store persons."

## Kisan Rath will link farmers to transport options

They will have access to a network of over 5 lakh trucks and 20,000 tractors

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

In a bid to ease the disruption of agricultural supply chains, especially for perishable produce, the Agriculture Ministry has launched a Kisan Rath mobile application, which will connect farmers and traders to a network of more than 5 lakh trucks and 20,000 tractors.

The application, developed by the National Informatics Centre, is meant to



Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar launching the application in Delhi. ■ PTI

help farmers and traders who are searching for vehicles to move produce. This

includes primary transport from the farm to the mandis, local warehouses or the collection centres of farmer producer organisations, as well as the secondary transport from the local mandis to intra-and inter-State mandis, processing units, railway stations, warehouses or wholesalers.

The application will lead to on-boarding of over 5 lakh trucks through transport aggregators as well as 20,000 tractors from the custom hiring centres run by farmer groups. Refrigerated vehicles will also be available.

"It will be a stepping stone towards provision of timely transportation service at competitive rates for farmers and traders, besides achieving a reduction in food wastage," said a Ministry statement.

The application can be downloaded from Google Play Store.

## COVID-19 patient from Nagaland in limbo

His home State says it has no positive case because he was tested in Guwahati

RAHUL KARMAKAR  
GUWAHATI

His COVID-19 positive status seems to have made a 33-year-old man from Nagaland's commercial hub Dimapur "stateless".

The man belongs to a major trading family that was one of the first Hindi-speaking settlers in Nagaland, which was part of Assam until December 1, 1963.

He tested positive at the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) on April 12, hours after he was shifted from a private hospital in Dimapur in a critical condition.

The ambulance driver and those who had accompanied the patient tested negative but were quarantined at the GMCH.

Dimapur is about 280 km



**Taking precautions:** The man tested positive at the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital on April 12. ■ PTI

east of Guwahati.

Nagaland's Department of Health and Family Welfare has, however, has been maintaining the State has no positive case. Its periodic updates say: "The positive case of Nagaland have (sic) been added to the tally of Assam State as sampling was done

in Assam..."

"Yes, since he has tested positive there (GMCH), his case is not included," Nagaland's Home Commissioner Abhijit Sinha told *The Hindu*.

But the Dimapur man finds no mention in the Assam government's update on

DIPR/DDU/2020-21

**KARNATAKA EXAMINATIONS AUTHORITY**  
Sampige Road, 18th Cross, Malleshwaram, Bangalore-560 012 Phone: 080-23460460 (5 lines)  
Fax: 080-23461576 e-mail: [keauthority-ka@nic.in](mailto:keauthority-ka@nic.in) Website: <http://kea.kar.nic.in>

Date : 17.04.2020

**NOTIFICATION**

**PGET-2020 - CENTRALISED AND COMBINED COUNSELLING FOR ADMISSION TO POST GRADUATE MEDICAL AND DENTAL (DEGREE AND DIPLOMA) COURSES FOR THE YEAR 2020-21 IN THE STATE OF KARNATAKA**

As per Government order No. MED 48 RGU 2020 Bengaluru, dated 16-04-2020, Karnataka Examinations Authority, Bengaluru is inviting application online from the eligible candidates who have qualified in NEET-PG-2020 or NEET-MDS-2020 and desirous of applying for the available PG Medical and Dental Degree / Diploma courses in Government Medical and Dental colleges, Government Quota seats in Private and Minority Medical and Dental Colleges and Private seats in Private Medical and Dental colleges (KPCF, KRLMPCA, AMPCK and Private Universities) located in the State of Karnataka for the academic year 2020-21. Interested candidates can apply online from **5.00 pm on 17.04.2020 to 20.04.2020 up to 11.59 pm** and pay the registration fees on or before **21-04-2020**. Please note that SC/ST/OBC eligibility criteria are applicable to Karnataka SC/ST/OBC candidates only.

Information Bulletin-2020 detailing admission eligibility criteria and other details are hosted on the KEA Website <http://kea.kar.nic.in> for the information of the candidates.

Mere qualifying in NEET-PG 2020 / NEET MDS 2020 does not confer any right on the candidate unless the candidate fulfills eligibility conditions / uploading of documents / certificates. Further, only the candidates who complete the registration process including online document verification are eligible for PG Medical / Dental seats in Government / Private Colleges in Karnataka. Registered but not verified / Unregistered candidates will not be allowed for any admission either through KEA or by the College, as after the mop-up round, the list of registered and verified but un-allotted candidates will be sent by KEA to colleges to fill-up vacant seats, if any. (As per GOI instructions)

#### NOTE :

- All the candidates who have qualified in NEET-PG 2020 / NEET-MDS 2020 are hereby advised to register online and complete the document verification process through online to become eligible for admission to PG Medical / Dental (Degree/ Diploma) Courses in the State of Karnataka.
  - Candidates should compulsorily upload all the relevant documents in PDF format through KEA portal. The documents needs to be uploaded as per their claim in the online application form to become eligible for entry options and further seat allotment, failing which the candidates will not be considered for allotment of seats in the state of Karnataka through KEA / College.
  - Documents should not be sent through e-Mail / Post / Courier. The candidates have to upload the documents in PDF format through their KEA login portal only.
- For more details please visit KEA Website <http://kea.kar.nic.in>

Sd/-  
(Suralkar Vikas Kishor IAS),  
Executive Director, KEA &  
Member Secretary, Entrance Test Committee.

## INTERVIEW | PINARAYI VIJAYAN

# 'Centre's financial package, amounting to just 0.7% of GDP, is inadequate'

All States are in financial distress as revenues have stopped and public healthcare expenditure has increased manifold, says the Kerala Chief Minister

**SOBHANA K NAIR**  
NEW DELHI

*States with their limited resources will have to shoulder the greater burden of economic crisis that will follow COVID-19, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said in an e-mail interview, adding that Kerala plans to open up the construction sector in the non-hotspot areas to help migrant workers earn a living during the lockdown.*

Kerala has managed to flatten the COVID-19 curve, which other States are still struggling to do. What is it that got it right?

■ The State administration, socio-political and voluntary organisations and the general public at large are jointly taking on this menace. I feel that the flattening of the curve has happened because of this united resolve. At the same time, we are guarded against any complacency that can creep in at any time and any juncture.

As you may recall, we had to undertake a tedious path of observation, detection, prevention, chasing the contacts, isolation and treatment as part of the strict regime we adopted right from the beginning. The country's first COVID-19 case was detected in Kerala on January

30 after a student who returned from Wuhan in China was tested positive. Two more Wuhan returnee students later tested positive. Following the detection of cases, we declared a 'State calamity warning' and over 3,000 contacts of these patients were placed under surveillance. We managed to do contact tracing well.

Till date (as on April 16), there have been a total of 387 confirmed cases of COVID-19 infection in Kerala and 167 patients are currently under treatment in various hospitals across the State. 264 of the confirmed cases were people who had come to Kerala from outside the State and from abroad, eight were foreign nationals and 114 were cases of local transmission.

Kerala's inalienable strength is our excellent social infrastructure built over

an extended period of time.

When this government assumed office in 2016, we constituted four missions to address Kerala's new generation problems. One of the four, "Aardram" mission, is to improve our public health sector to global standards. We already converted 170 primary health centres to Family Health Centres, with more facilities. We provided more doctors, nurses and technicians to facilitate this. In the second phase, we are converting 504 PHCs to Family Health Centres.

And finally, we make it a point to have maximum possible testing done on a daily basis to ensure that our protocols are in position.

**During the Prime Minister's meeting with the Chief Ministers, you had suggested that post April 14, when the first round of lockdown was to end, the migrant workers should be allowed to return home in special trains. The Union Government doesn't seem to be heeding to your advice.**

■ First of all, I differ with the

coinage of 'migrant' workers. For us, they are guest workers. We treat them at par with our own people and ensure that every welfare measure initiated by our government should reach them too. We have extended full assistance in the form of food, proper shelter and healthcare to them.

It is quite natural that they want to join their families in this hour of crisis. The biggest hardship these workers face is transport lockdown, which prevents them from reaching home. We have been seeing frightening visuals and scenes with regard to the movement of workers in other places. I do hope that the Central government as well as respective States take appropriate measures to cater to these people. I have requested the PM for special non-stop trains, if possible, so that the guest workers can reach their home and help their families.

As part of our relaxation, we are going to permit construction activities in non-hotspot zones with appropriate safeguards. This should ensure that most of



**Kerala's inalienable strength is our excellent social infrastructure, built over a period of time**

the guest workers are engaged and provided means for livelihood. The government also has decided that guest workers should be engaged in cleaning up the public places and waterbodies like wells, ponds etc. We need to instill confidence in them and make them feel that they are part of our society.

**What is the long term impact of the lockdown on the economy that you foresee?**

■ This is an unprecedented situation and it is difficult to

gauge the exact nature of the impact at this juncture. The economy will be crippled, millions of job losses and crores of people adversely affected.

States with their limited resources will have to shoulder the greater burden of economic crisis that will follow the COVID-19 pandemic. The financial package announced by the Centre is inadequate. Altogether just ₹7,000 crore has been allotted additionally to the States. Many countries, including the U.S.A., the U.K., and Japan have announced financial stimulus packages ranging between 12%-20% of their GDP. In some of the packages, there are special schemes for protecting jobs in the private sector through employment subsidies to the job providers.

Our stimulus package is just 0.7% of the GDP. I do hope that the Union Government comes out with a large and substantive package to support the States, who are the primary responders.

All states, including Kerala, have criticised the Union government for not

releasing GST payouts to the States and financial aid. Has GST specifically curtailed State governments' financial freedom?

■ As you may be aware, we had our own reservation on GST roll out. However, we went along with it expecting justice and fairness from the Centre. I am sorry to say that even the promised and committed amounts have not been disbursed to States.

Kerala has to get more than ₹3,000 crore as GST compensation, which has been withheld by the Centre. Along with this, there has been complete reluctance on the part of the Centre in supporting the States in dealing with the pandemic. Let me tell you that a State like Kerala, which has created elaborate paraphernalia to fight this menace got only ₹159 crore.

The suspension of the MP's Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) for two years would further hit us as these funds become essential for funding COVID-19 related activities and development works. Few of our MPs had announced their in-

tention in procuring PPE, testing kits and other medical equipment using their MPLADS but now we stand to lose them. The MPLADS fund is for the people of the MP's constituency and not for the Central Government's fundraising.

All States are in financial distress as revenues have stopped and the public healthcare expenditure has increased manifold to contain the outbreak. In this difficult scenario, we will have to borrow from the open market to continue the work and also to ensure that there is no break in our efforts due to lack of funds. Therefore, permission may be granted to State Governments to issue special Pandemic Relief Bonds.

We have also requested the Prime Minister to increase our borrowing limit to 5%. Similarly, loans from external agencies for epidemic control measures and reconstruction activities may be exempted from the State's borrowing limit. The government is expecting a favourable response in this regard.

(Full interview at: <https://bit.ly/CovidPinarayi>)

## IN BRIEF



## Report on reopening of industries on Monday

The S. Krishnan Committee, constituted to frame guidelines for opening of select industries and for the way forward after lockdown, will submit its report to the State government on Monday. Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami said in Salem on Friday.

## Curbs on export of paracetamol lifted

■ The Centre on Friday removed restrictions on exports of medicines made from paracetamol amid the outbreak of COVID-19. However, restrictions on exports of paracetamol's active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs or raw materials) will continue, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade said. PTI

## Telecom operators extend validity

■ Three private operators – Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea – on Friday announced extension of validity of packs for certain users. While Jio said that its users will receive incoming calls, Airtel and Vodafone extended the benefit to about 120 million low income customers till the end of the lockdown on May 3.

## Emotional support helped win battle, say COVID-19 survivors

While the virus takes a toll on the body, mental well-being is key, says survivor



Robin and Reena had tested positive after their relatives came to Kerala from Italy in March. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

**BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN**  
NEW DELHI

High fever, mind numbing tiredness and constant emotional support from the medical staff – that is what most COVID-19 survivors across India remember of their battle against the virus, which first emerged in China and now has infected over 2 lakh people worldwide and killed over a lakh in under five months.

"We can overcome, that is the spirit with which I fought this virus this past month," says Bengaluru-based professional Venkat Raghav, 50, who believes that he may have picked up the virus while on a business trip to the U.S. in March.

"I developed high fever and by then the news about the virus was available and the Indian government too was disseminating information. So I decided it was best not to take chances and I isolated myself from the family on my return. Later, at the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Chest Diseases (RGICD), it was confirmed that I had high virus load, following which I got admitted to the hospital and a day later, I was found COVID-19 positive," he says.

Now cured and at home,

Mr. Venkat claims his greatest achievement through it all was that he was able to keep his immediate family – wife and two teenage children – uninfected.

Recalling his treatment and the support he got from the hospital staff, he notes that while the virus takes a heavy toll on the body, mental well-being is the key to fighting the disease.

"I was in isolation, the fever rarely comes below 101.4° F and the weakness and pain is unexplainable. I pulled through because everyone around me stayed very positive," he says.

**Delhi patient**  
The COVID-19 fever doesn't kill you but the guilt can, confides Rohit Dutta, who was among Delhi's-NCR first

COVID-19 patients in early March. "I had come back from a trip abroad and had also organised a small get-together of close family and friends. Later, I got to know that I was positive. I was admitted to Safdarjung Hospital and believe me the guilt that I could have infected children...never really left me. It is under this frame of mind that one day while during treatment I got a call from a lady who abused me for bringing in COVID-19 to north India. I was shaken. I refused to take calls from unknown numbers after that," he says.

Now a month after the ordeal, Mr. Dutta, a businessman, is back with his family and says that he is relaxing.

"COVID-19 forces you to rethink and take a relook at

life. Industries are closed and we feel that things may take a while to come back to normal. But what this virus has taught me is to stay positive. The body may give up, but the mind has to stay strong. The Safdarjung Hospital staff became my family. Each staff there cared for me as if I was their family member," he observes.

**Seven infected in family**  
Robin Thomas, from Kottayam, Kerala, a medical staff himself, says the fight against the pandemic is also about staying positive.

"Seven persons in my immediate family, including me, were infected. The only silver lining was that my 4-year-old has tested negative so far. The 21-day hospital stay were the best and worst days of my life," he says.

"The first week in quarantine with my wife and child, I thought we would have to say goodbye to our child. We were looking for jobs [both he and his wife are medical professionals] in Italy and never thought that we would hit such a huge roadblock."

Mr. Thomas and wife Reena tested positive after her parents and brother came to Kerala from Italy in March and tested positive.

## Situation is grim in Howrah, says Mamata

CM for deployment of armed police

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court for a direction to the government to conduct COVID-19 tests among the tribal population living along the Godavari river valley area.

The petition, filed by Pentapati Pulla Rao, said the river belt, where the tribal people live, was close to the Polavaram irrigation project area. A large number of migrant workers was still on the project site and they did not have sanitisers and masks. These workers lived in close proximity to the tribal population.

## A 2,700 km trip to meet son

Kerala woman reaches Rajasthan

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A 50-year-old woman travelled 2,700 km in a car across six States in three days to meet her critically ill son, a BSF jawan in Jodhpur, despite strict lockdown due to COVID-19.

Sheelamma Vasan said the condition of her son, Arun Kumar, 29, suffering from myositis (inflammation of muscles), was improving.

line, a VHP organisation, also helped in arranging a cab and two drivers free of cost to take them to Jodhpur.

The family was informed by a doctor at AIIMS in Jodhpur about Mr. Kumar's condition, following which they undertook the journey from Kerala through Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat to reach Rajasthan.

Union Minister V. Muraleedharan, office of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Congress leader Oommen Chandy helped the family get necessary travel passes. Volunteers of Hindu help

line, a VHP organisation, also helped in arranging a cab and two drivers free of cost to take them to Jodhpur.

After getting the necessary passes, Ms. Vasan, accompanied by her daughter-in-law Parvathy, set off on the journey from Kerala through Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat to reach Rajasthan.

The jawan, who had come to his village in February, had expressed a desire to meet his mother and wife.

"Due to God's grace, we have reached here without any problems," she said.

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The family was informed by a doctor at AIIMS in Jodhpur about Mr. Kumar's condition, following which they undertook the journey from Kerala



## Instapick

**Sunsets from Maldives:** ▶ Tired of the same old view from your terrace or balcony? Head to Instagram for a live streaming of the sunset from Maldives, courtesy The Residence resorts. On Saturdays @theresidencemaldives and Wednesdays on @residencemaldivesdhigurah. From approximately 6.30 pm IST.



## Talking point

**Public art:** ▶ Despite the shelter at home advisory in place, some street artists have been defying orders. Rebel Bear depicted a couple in quarantine together, masks and all, in Glasgow. In Berlin, graffiti artist Erne Freethinker pictured Gollum saying, "My precious" to a roll of toilet paper. And anonymous street artist Banksy's latest work reveals he has a pest problem – rats in his bathroom. The image is accompanied by the cheeky caption. "My wife hates it when I work from home."

## Pick of the week

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



### Design at home

With season staples like the Salone del Mobile being pushed to next year, and several other fairs, expos and conferences also cancelled, the design community has come to a grinding halt. To make up for this, *Dezeen*, a digital magazine, launched the *Virtual Design Festival* on April 15, with a schedule that is on till June 20. Visit [virtualdesignfestival.com](http://virtualdesignfestival.com). London Craft Week, which was set for April 27 to May 3, will run as an online event on the same dates with masterclasses, demos, studio and workshop tours. On [londoncraftweek.com](http://londoncraftweek.com)



### On a field trip

The love of sports has not waned during the lockdown. MS Dhoni Cricket Academy is offering Facebook Live classes for trainees, while Gen-Next Cricket Institute, mentored by R Ashwin, is providing coaching sessions with the off-break bowler himself. Great Goals, a Chennai-based sports academy, is sending a daily football tutorial to keep the players' skills tuned. In addition, live Zoom classes are being conducted, with coaches and students in attendance. For ages five to 15. Details on [greatgoalschennai.com](http://greatgoalschennai.com)



### Singers unite

Canadian rappers Tory Lanez and Drake have broken the record for most Instagram Live viewers with over 3.1 lakh people tuned in at one point. Drake was a guest on Lanez's *Quarantine Radio*, which earlier featured Megan Thee Stallion, Timbaland, Chris Brown and DMX. Follow @torylanez on Instagram for more episodes. Closer home, Sony Music South has launched a series called *Vetta Concert*. The lineup includes GV Prakash Kumar, Ghibran, Jonita Gandhi and Shashaa Tirupati. On all of Sony's social media platforms.



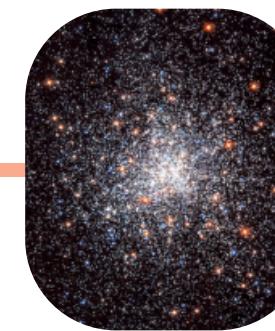
### Lady Gaga and friends

*One World: Together At Home* is being curated by Lady Gaga for Global Citizen and the World Health Organization. While stars from India, including Priyanka Chopra Jonas and Shah Rukh Khan, are set to make an appearance, artistes Lisa Mishra and Vishal Mishra will be performing. Singers Meghan Trainor, Rod Stewart, Kristen Annie Bell and bands like Train, The Lumineers and others have been streaming live concerts on @gblctzn on Instagram in the run up. Tomorrow, on VOOT, Colors Infinity, Comedy Central and VH1 India, from 5.30 am.



### Write to get published

There are book readings and free resources aplenty to keep kids occupied during the lockdown. But why not encourage them to write their own stories? The Scholastic Writing Awards, for Classes IV to IX, calls for short stories in English, in humour, horror, sci-fi/fantasy and adventure genres. The deadline is June 30. Details: [swa.scholastic.co.in](http://swa.scholastic.co.in). For the adults, the CRAFT Short Fiction Prize, which closes for entries on April 30, allows international submissions up to 5,000 words. Register on [craftliterary.com](http://craftliterary.com)



### Space escapades

The Hubble telescope explores the universe 24 hours a day, seven days a week. That means it has observed some fascinating cosmic wonders through the year, including on your birthday. Check out some cool space images: today, it is the globular star cluster, M79, located 41,000 light-years from Earth. NASA and the ISS National Lab have also developed programmes and activities for children, including a training programme to become a home astronaut, build a hovercraft and launch rockets. On [nasa.gov](http://nasa.gov)



### #LockdownWithWeekend

Today, our Instagram Live series is all about dogs! Rashi Narang, founder of pet accessory brand, Heads Up For Tails, will be in conversation with Aashish Mehrotra (@borktales on Instagram) and his two dogs, Heidi and Lucifer. Sam Ali, head designer at House of Kotwara, and her pack of around 10 dogs, will also join in for an interactive session. At 5 pm. Tomorrow at 5 pm, columnist Vasudha Rai will teach us how to create a home spa with ingredients from the kitchen. On Instagram, follow @thehinduweekend



## The Test (Amazon Prime Video)

The regeneration of the Australian men's cricket team is one of the great sporting redemption stories in recent years. After Steve Smith, Cameron Bancroft and David Warner were found guilty of ball-tampering during a test match against South Africa in 2018, Cricket Australia banned them for a year. Losing Smith and Warner, two of the finest players in the world, plus the psychological impact of the episode, meant that Australia kept losing for a while (at one point conceding a world-record 481 runs against England in a one-day international at Trent Bridge). *The Test* (which premiered last month) is the behind-the-scenes documentary of how a new coach (Justin Langer) and captain (Tim Paine) turned it all around.

As lockdown extends, and with it, the lack of live sports, some films for the starving superfan

# Game, set, watch

ADITYA MANI JHA

With every major sports event put on hold – at least for the next couple of months or so – journalists have been coming up with fun, thoughtful ways to fill the vacuum. ESPN Cricinfo, for example, has been reporting on classic matches from the past as though they were yet to happen. However, reading about it isn't enough for the starving superfan. Here are five sports-centric films on the Internet to tide you over until normal service resumes.

### Borg vs McEnroe (Netflix)

Before Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal played that epic Wimbledon final in 2008, most tennis fans considered this 1980 final to be the greatest in the tournament's (and, arguably, the sport's) history. On one side, Bjorn Borg, the undisputed champion of the men's game, armed with an irresistible combination of topspin and baseline power. On the other, John McEnroe, the fiery young upstart with a throwback serve-and-volley game and a temper for the ages. Directed by Danish filmmaker Janus Pedersen, *Borg vs McEnroe* (2017) isn't just an excellent blow-by-blow narrative about the game – it is also a very well-executed character portrait of both players. Shia LaBeouf, in particular, is brilliant as the mercurial McEnroe.

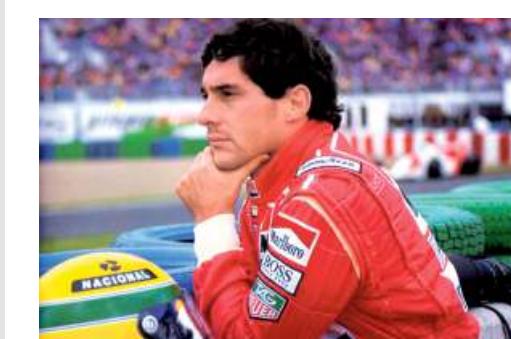


### Miracle (YouTube)

Yes, it deals thick and fast in sporting clichés, but Gavin O'Connor's 2004 film belongs to that endangered Hollywood species – the predictable, yet moving, studio entertainer. It is the fictionalised story of American ice hockey coach Herb Brooks and how he led a team of college amateurs to an Olympic gold medal in 1980. At the time, their victory over the Soviet Union, who were the heavily-fancied four-time champs, was dubbed the "Miracle on Ice". Kurt Russell excels as Brooks: a complex, stubborn, charismatic man unafraid to flaunt his ruthlessness.

### Senna (YouTube)

*Senna* is British filmmaker Asif Kapadia's documentary on the high-flying life and tragic death of Brazilian Formula One champion Ayrton Senna (who died in a crash at the 1994 San Marino Grand Prix). It is now widely considered to be one of the finest sports documentaries of all time. Some sequences – like the one that shows Senna's efforts to make racing a safer sport – reverberate with Shakespearean foreshadowing, while others hit you like a gut punch. Not an easy watch, but essential viewing all the same.



## Bobby Robson: More than a Manager (Netflix)

Any documentary on the most beloved England football manager of all time would've been watched and enjoyed by fans around the globe. It helps that *Bobby Robson: More than a Manager* is a triumph of both style and storytelling. A marquee lineup of football stars paying tribute to the late Robson doesn't hurt either. This is led by Jose Mourinho, the self-styled 'Chosen One' and the most sought-after coach in the contemporary game. The film's real strength, however, is its willingness to break up the templates of the sports documentary and infuse a bit of cinematic flair into the proceedings (like its bold choice to open with a lengthy description of Robson's nasal melanoma of the 90s, right before he joined Barcelona).



**Rural tales** (Clockwise from left)  
Stills from *Mannphodganj Ki Binny* and *Hasmukh* • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the genre has been *Mirzapur* (putting aside the debate on its quality) that brought a certain swag to the small town world. "Much as *Gangs of Wasseypur* did for the ones on the big screen. It also made Hindi swear words sound cool," says Chandra.

Since then there have emerged varied narratives under the larger umbrella of the small-town genre. The two seasons of OML's *Laakhon Mein Ek* looked at the commercialisation of education and medicine. There was also *Kota Factory*, on the iconic coaching classes culture in the small town of Rajasthan. An idea that may well have emerged from the makers' own growing up years in these cities.

The supply is also being determined by the demand. A huge audience has opened up in tier 2 towns for the streaming platforms, riding on the omnipresence of mobiles and the growing spread of 4G networks. "Everyone I met in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar had seen *Mirzapur* and *Chacha Vidhayak*.

When I went to Allahabad for the shoot of *Mannphodganj*... I was treated with respect when they got to know of my *Chacha Vidhayak* association," says Chandra.

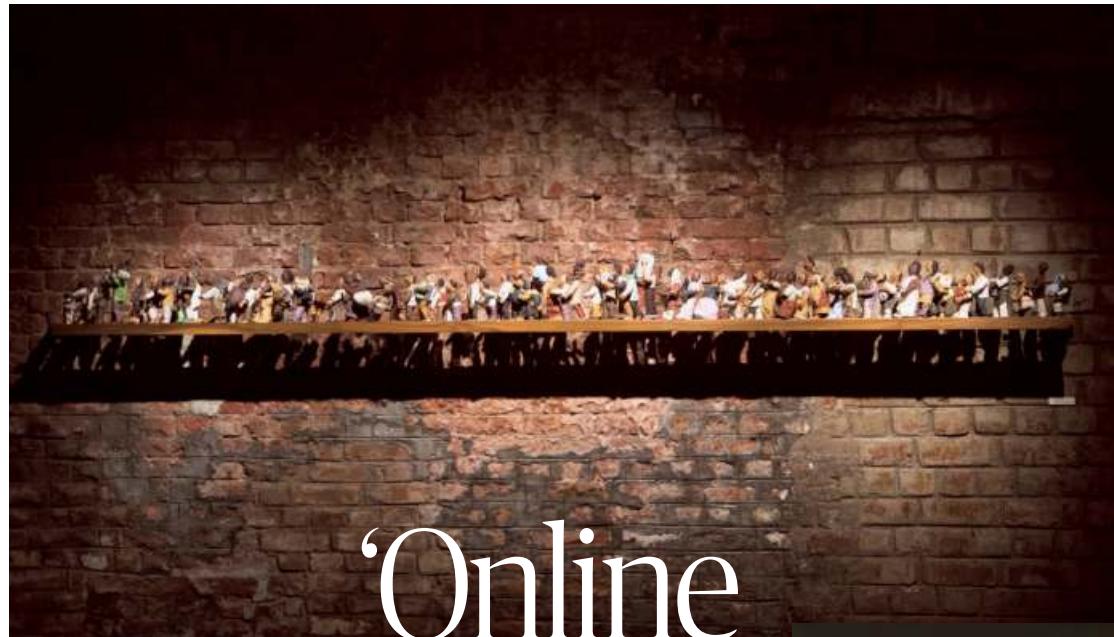
**The dark side**  
However, the

reason for backing these shows has to go beyond the logic of eye balls and numbers, or for that matter the flavour and setting. "You will have to show the ugly underbelly, however uncomfortable it might be," says Chandra. Something that *Jamtara – Sabka Number Aayega*, on the phishing scam in Jharkhand tried to do, but also got widely criticised for its excessive use of coarse language.

Chandra's next – a show from Tiger Baby – takes him back to the heartland. Based on serial killings in Rajasthan with Sonakshi Sinha playing a cop, he says, "We have localised the characters, milieu and lingo. It is to do with caste and gender politics, and the misogyny rampant there as well."

This Friday's new Netflix offering, *Hasmukh*, plans to add yet another new dimension to the genre. It takes its comedian protagonist Hasmukh on a journey from Saharanpur to Mumbai, where he murders his way to on-stage success. "It is not a gangland, heartland narrative," says lead actor Vir Das. "The small town will, however, remain till the last scene," promises co-writer Suparn Verma.

Or, as actor Ranvir Shorey puts it pithily, it is about the small town as a point of view: "It is about Saharanpur looking at Mumbai's entertainment industry."



Digital access (Clockwise from far left) Sudipta Das' 'Crossing Over' at Gallery Latitude 28, 'Virgin of the Rocks' at The Louvre, a Moche ear ornament at The MET, and Bhavna Kakar

# 'Online viewing rooms are like groping in the dark'

**Think digital**

With Art Dubai being rescheduled to 2021, Kakar's artists like Niyeti Chadha Kannan and Noor Ali Chagani are featured in the fair's online catalogue, which is open to the public. She and her team are also working on facilitating a virtual viewing of their exhibition, *The Print: Matter in Matrix*, with an e-catalogue and a video walk-through uploaded on their social media channels.

In fact, video walk-throughs are becoming the staple. Vadehra Art Gallery, Art Alive, India Art Festival and many others are regularly planning these, especially for shows that were on the cusp of premiering before the pandemic shut everything down. Renu Modi, director of Gallery Espace, recently joined a digital showcase extended by Art Basel Hong Kong, which was forced to cancel its annual fair.

GEORGINA MADDOX

*The pandemic has hit the art world like a tsunami and it will take a couple of years to recover. The online space will have to be used in more imaginative ways by the art world – some of us will participate, while others will be drawn to a different vocation*

DEVIKI DAULET-SINGH,  
founder, PHOTOINK

“ ”

As curators think beyond the white cube and museums go digital with rare collections, a more imaginative use of the online space is needed

Saint-Paul de Mausole. There is also a growing interest in the animated 2017 Dorota Kobiela and Hugh Welchman film, *Loving Vincent* (you can pay ₹75 to get the 95-minute film from YouTube or Google Play).

#### No longer reserved

With travel restrictions and social distancing likely to be the norm for some time to come, the new status quo demands change. In the world of art, this has meant podcasts, art blogs, live streaming, virtual exhibitions, and short films to hold our interest in the upcoming art calendar. It has also meant access to rare collections. Istanbul University recently opened Sultan Abdülhamid II's Yıldız Photography Collection, one of the richest visual archives in the world, on digital media. The Me-

Ganesha Shivaswamy Foundation: "To commemorate 150 years of Ravi Varma, we've partnered with the foundation – which has also brought together 10-12 important private and public collections, including the ones at the Mysore Palace and Baroda Palace. The virtual collection of 150 paintings will be launched soon on Google Arts & Culture," says Apparao.

Experimenter Radio: Kolkata's Experimenter Art Gallery has a dedicated Spotify channel, with playlists featuring current favourites of artists, writers, curators and collaborators from around the world.

tropolitan Museum of Art has put thousands of objects online for free viewing, most of which were in its reserved collection. "Art, like every other sector, is focussing on its digital presence," says Bhavna Kakar, director of Gallery Latitude 28 and editor-publisher of *TAKE on Art*. The task in hand: to re-establish the various mediums – painting, sculpture, performance and photography – to maintain its relevance and have global impact, while being physically absent.

**Qualitative differences**  
The online space is not uncharted territory for the art world, but it does hold more promise now. Whether it can successfully surrogate the white cube and physical viewing of an artwork, however, remains to be seen. "In the aftermath of anything drastic, such as the Renaissance or World War II, there has always been a revival, but it is too early to say what it will be for Covid-19. With consumption going down, and only virtual options available for some time to come, there may not be a space for people like us. That is when we will have to rethink," says Chennai-based gallerist and curator Sharan Apparao, who feels "viewing rooms are a little like groping in the dark. So, at the moment, I'm relying on our reputation, our network of artists and collectors, and social media".

Art critic and curator, Ranjit Hoskote, feels that while the online experience has become a little more defined – you can focus on the work that you want to, and do it at your own time – it can't be a stand-in for physically being there. "Online studio visits are qualitatively different. It is a question of temporality: when you visit someone at their studio, the encounter unfolds in a certain way, but when you have a Zoom meeting, predefined as 40 minutes, it is so very different. In one sense, it may be far more sharply defined, but there is also a pressure to get quickly to the outcome," he says. The more real problem now for curators like himself is freight. "The next question is, if we don't have the possibility of transporting things, how are exhibitions going to happen?"

With inputs from Surya Praphulla Kumar

## FILM REVIEW

# Documenting the personal and the political

In filming resistance, the camera in *5 Broken Cameras* becomes an ally

NAMRATA JOSHI

A documentary co-directed by a Palestinian and an Israeli is reason enough to watch it. Its humanistic, anti-authoritarian stand is another. What truly stands out about *5 Broken Cameras*

is the manner in which the voice, mind, heart, soul and point of view of the person behind the camera, becomes the most compelling presence.

The film is about the rough and tumble of Emad Burnat's (also the co-direct-



**Memory grabs** A scene from the film ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

tor) life. Protests in his hometown Bil'in on the West Bank grow as their agricultural land and olive groves start getting run over by ever-expanding Israeli settlements. His five cameras – one of which he had

#### 5 Broken Cameras

(Documentary)

**DIRECTOR:** Emad Burnat and Guy Davidi

**RUN TIME:** 94 minutes

**STORYLINE:** Protests grow as Israeli settlements spread into and consume the West Bank's farmlands, and a Palestinian farmer starts to document with the camera he had bought in 2005 to record the birth and growing up of his youngest son Gibreel

begin hanging on to Burnat's lovely words that reveal his profundity of thought. He films to hold on to the memories – in which pain alternates with joy and fear with hope even as old wounds get layered by new ones. The personal and the political are never separated but are intertwined tightly.

Each birth of his four sons marks a different phase in their life as well as that of Palestine. Each of the kids has a different childhood from the other. The first son was born in 1995 in the times of relative peace when they could go to sea. When the third came there were the dead and the wounded in the hospital he was born in. Gi-

breel is born at the time of barriers and of Israeli settlements closing in. His first two words on turning one are 'wall' and 'cartridge'.

From filming special family events to societal, political incidents, Burnat transitions into an inadvertent filmmaker. There is the personal, familial visual diary he builds through his images, the very fond character sketches of his friend Adeeb and Phil. There is the former's endurance and the latter's spirit and the zest for life they share in common. They are also the significant players in Burnat's diligent chronicling of the political demonstrations. Burnat's cameras become the site where the cinematic, per-

sonal and political come together. In filming resistance they also become an ally and tool of protest and end up facing the wrathful consequences of it.

There is a line in the film where Burnat talks of why people respond with ease to Phil. It's because of a certain guilelessness and innocence and positivity. Says Burnat: "Hope is not easy to find in adults." Neither can you deep dive for it in Bil'in. And yet, you are still left feeling an overwhelming admiration for the people who are still chipping away at their despair.

The film is currently streaming free of charge in the Visiting Room of the Dharamshala International Film Festival website

## FOOD SPOT

# Remember the time

Nirula's, a brand of our youth, comes to us when we need some TLC the most

a tall glass of Hot Chocolate Fudge – ice cream on top of gooey chocolate with lots of nuts, served with a long spoon that went all the way to the bottom of the glass.

Then times changed. American fast food flooded the metros. And Nirula's died, reopening some years ago. The owners had changed and many of the outlets were closed. But, as I discovered earlier this week, it didn't lose its nostalgic magic.

To beat the lockdown gloom, we wanted to have something that reminded us of happier times. So we thought of Nirula's. I placed my order through Swiggy's. And within an hour, our dinner was on the table – thin crust Hawaiian Chicken Pizza ₹380, Hot Shoppe Non-veg Pizza (₹523) and spicy, Grilled Chicken Breast (₹290). The chicken, I was told, had

been marinated overnight with herbs and came with a hash brown, coleslaw and two slices of bread. The Hot Shoppe pizza, the menu said, was loaded with meat, and included a mix of mozzarella and cheddar cheese.

The Hawaiian Chicken Pizza was excellent – mildly sweet and tart at the same time, with a light and crispy base. I didn't mind the thick Hot Shoppe pizza either, though I don't really think it was loaded with meat.

Then times changed. American fast food flooded the metros. And Nirula's died, reopening some years ago. The owners had changed and many of the outlets were closed. But, as I discovered earlier this week, it didn't lose its nostalgic magic.

Young readers who have grown up with all kinds of international food brands will find it difficult to imagine the kind of excitement that Nirula's sparked in our hearts. We would save up money to go there for special treats. My favourite was the sausage, mushroom, and onion pizza, on which I'd spread their special mustard; and the Mahaburger which had two juicy mutton patties squeezed in between soft buns, and was eaten with lots of coleslaw, onion rings, and ketchup. We used to have all this with

**Old favourite**



The chicken breast seemed more fried than grilled, but it was juicy and moist and I loved it.

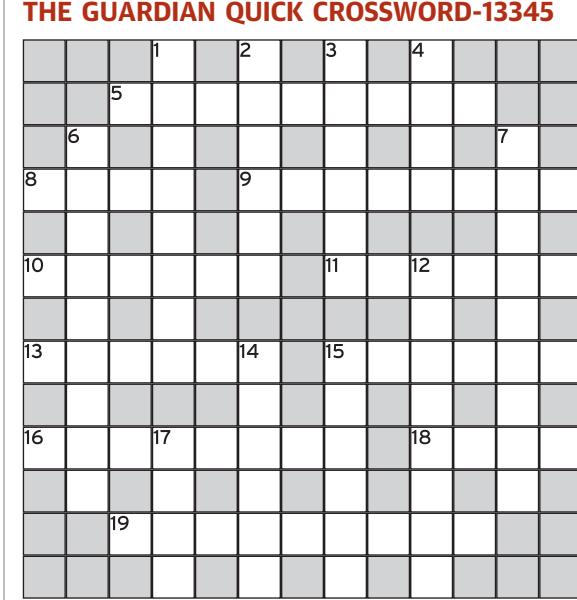
It is not an exhaustive menu anymore, but some of the old favourites are still there: the old Cheese, Capsicum, Onion, Mushroom Pizza (₹239); and Mutton Sausage, Capsicum, Onion Pizza (₹315); Paneer Tikka Pizza (₹286) and Chicken Tikka Pizza (₹286). The Big Boy Mutton Burger is there (₹220), as is the Mahaburger (₹239). I used to love their footlongs, and those are there as well, including the Hot Shoppe Footlong (loaded with meat again, I bet, for ₹205).

If you are missing old times, you could open your arms to old Nirula's once again. If you are not, you could try out a place that a young friend was raving about. It's called Nomad Pizza Traveller Series, and has all kinds of pizzas – from New York special pizza (choice of spicy pork, chicken sausage or flame-grilled chicken with roasted pepper, onion and pimento, ₹595) to the Neapolitan Prosciutto en Rucola pizza (Parma ham, rocket leaves and Parmesan, ₹735).

The Nirula's pizza worked for me. Speaking words of wisdom, it said, let it be.

The writer is a seasoned food critic

## THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13345



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

**4** Sudden sharp feeling (4)

**6** Voice-amplifying device (9)

**7** Middle-class (9)

**12** Harem – or silage (anag) (8)

**14** Device for finding one's way (6)

**15** Town officials (6)

**17** Butting animal (4)

The solution will appear on April 23, 2020.

Solution No. 13344

A	B	P	V
C	O	S	M
L	I	O	G
O	H	N	S
B	U	O	R
Y	L	G	I
D	E	C	A
N	T	I	N
A	Y	O	T
S	T	P	L
P	A	E	O
A	R	L	D
M	E	T	I
E	R	G	N
G	R	N	B
R	O	O	B
O	M	A	L
W	E	L	T
A	T	O	D
T	A	O	R
E	R	A	E
Y	Y	N	E

RAHUL VERMA

When I find myself in times of trouble, comfort food comes to me. Locked up inside my house, I have been thinking of all the time that we spent outside the four walls once upon a time. There was an age, as a callow youth in flared bell-bottoms, when I was hardly ever home. Meals were eaten in other people's houses. And when we had money, we ate at Nirula's.

Young readers who have grown up with all kinds of international food brands will find it difficult to imagine the kind of excitement that Nirula's sparked in our hearts. We would save up money to go there for special treats. My favourite was the sausage, mushroom, and onion pizza, on which I'd spread their special mustard; and the Mahaburger which had two juicy mutton patties squeezed in between soft buns, and was eaten with lots of coleslaw, onion rings, and ketchup. We used to have all this with

**Old favourite**

Hot Shoppe Non-Veg Pizza

# China's economy in worst downturn since 1960s

In the March quarter, the economy shrank by 6.8% while retail sales fell by 19%; forecasters do not see recovery this year

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIJING  
China faces a drawn-out struggle to revive an economy that suffered its biggest contraction since possibly the mid-1960s after millions of people were told to stay home to fight the virus.

The world's second-largest economy shrank by 6.8% from a year earlier in the quarter ending in March after factories, offices and shopping malls were closed to contain the outbreak, official data showed on Friday. Consumer spending, which supplied 80% of last year's growth, and factory activity were weaker than expected.

## COVID-19

China, where the COVID-19 pandemic began in December, is the first major economy to start to recover after the ruling Communist Party declared the virus under control. Factories were allowed to reopen last month, but cinemas and other businesses that employ millions of people still are closed. There are signs that after an "initial bounce," the recovery in activity has since slowed to a crawl," said Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics in a report.

"China is in for a drawn-out recovery."

The last contraction this big was 5.8% in 1967 during the upheavals of the ultra-radical 1965-75 Cultural Revolution, according to Iris Pang of ING. Forecasters earlier said China might rebound as early as this month. But they say a sharp, "V-shaped" recovery looks increasingly unlikely as negative export, retail sales and other data pile up. Instead, they expect a gradual crawl back to growth in low single



**No masking the slowdown:** A mural at Wuhan's Leishenshan Hospital in Hubei, China. The COVID-19 toll for the city, where the outbreak began, was revised on Friday. • AFP

digits in the coming quarters. For the full year, forecasters, including UBS, Nomura and Oxford Economics, expect little to no growth.

In total, China has reported 4,632 deaths after the total for Wuhan, the city at the centre of the outbreak, was revised upward on Friday. The mainland has announced 82,367 cases.

### Possible job losses

Retail sales fell 19% from a year earlier in the first quarter. That improved in March, the final month of the quarter, to a decline of 15.8%. But consumers, jittery about possible job losses, are reluctant to spend despite government efforts to lure them back to shopping malls and auto showrooms.

That is a blow to automakers and other companies that hope China will power

the world economy out of its most painful slump since the 1930s. That is a political challenge for the ruling party, which bases its claim to power on China's economic success. The party appealed to companies to keep paying employees and avoid layoffs during the shutdown. But an unknown number has failed, adding to public anxiety.

The economy already was squeezed by a tariff war with President Donald Trump over Beijing's technology ambitions and trade surplus. Last year's growth sank to a multi-decade low of 6.1%.

Exports fell 6.6% in March from a year earlier, an improvement over the double-digit plunge in January and February. But forecasters say demand is bound to slump in America and Europe as anti-virus controls keep shoppers at home.

REUTERS  
TOKYO

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made a forceful appeal to the nation on Friday to stay indoors to avoid further the COVID-19 contagion, in his sturk remarks since the crisis began. New cases hit a daily record in the capital, Tokyo, before the speech in which Mr. Abe said this week's nationwide expansion of a state of emergency was prompted partly by fear that medical services could fail in rural areas home to many elderly.

"Please avoid going out," Mr. Abe said, adding that reductions in person-to-person contact in Tokyo and Osaka, two of Japan's



Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. • Reuters

hardest-hit regions, were still well short of targeted levels. "Everything depends on the action of each individual."

Mr. Abe, who has seen his support hit over his handling of the pandemic, also apologised for confusion over a plan to

Nigeria charges 142 over unrest

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LAGOS

Nigerian authorities have laid charges including murder, robbery and street violence against 142 people over unrest during the coronavirus lockdown, police said on Friday.

The suspects were arraigned at a magistrate court on Thursday for alleged incidents in Ogun state, which abuts the country's economic hub, Lagos. "They were 142 in number and were accused of murder, robbery, illegal possession of arms and disturbance of public peace," said police spokesman Abimbola Oyeyemi.

# Trump gives State Governors options on lifting restrictions

Social distancing measures to stay

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON  
U.S. President Donald Trump has given Governors a road map for recovering from the economic pain of the COVID-19 pandemic, laying out a "phased and deliberate approach" to restoring normal activity in places that have strong testing and are seeing a decrease in COVID-19 cases.

"We're starting our life again," Mr. Trump said during his daily press briefing. "We're starting rejuvenation of our economy again."



A healthcare worker in New York City. • Reuters

encouraged to maximise social distancing and limit gatherings to no more than 50 people unless precautionary measures are taken. Travel could resume.

Phase three envisions a return to normalcy for most Americans, with a focus on identification and isolation of any new infections.

Mr. Trump said recent trends in some States were so positive that they could almost immediately begin taking the steps laid out in phase one. "They will be able to go literally tomorrow," Mr. Trump said.

The guidelines recommend that States pass checkpoints that look at new cases, testing and surveillance data over the prior 14 days before advancing from one phase to another.

Governors of both parties made clear they will move at their own pace.

At the earliest, the guidelines suggest, some parts of the country could see a resumption in normal commerce and social gatherings after a month of evaluating whether easing up on curbs has led to a resurgence in cases. In other parts, or if virus cases pick up, it could be substantially longer.

# Food supply chain disruption a concern'

Loss of jobs and income has impacted people's ability to afford food: World Bank

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

CHENNAI  
Disruptions in domestic food supply chains are a pressing issue as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds, World Bank President David Malpass told reporters on a tele-briefing on Friday.

Labour shortages are impacting logistics and loss of jobs and income has impacted people's ability to afford food, he said.

"So we have a double problem of both the supply and the demand sides being disrupted in such a critical area as food and agricultural supply chains," Mr. Malpass said, making specific references to the situation in parts of Africa in this context.

The Bank would have pandemic-related programmes in 100 countries by the end of April, Mr. Malpass said,



World Bank head David Malpass. • Reuters

with \$160 billion of financing over the next 15 months, \$50 billion of which will be on grant and highly concessional terms. India had received a \$1 billion health sector emergency loan from the World Bank earlier in April.

### Major recession

"We're expecting a major global recession — our estimates suggest a much deeper downturn than the Great Recession [2007-09]," he said. The World Bank had recently projected a 1.5%-2.8% growth rate in this fiscal year.

Earlier in the day, as per his prepared remarks to the Bank and the International Monetary Fund's shareholders at the Development Committee, Mr. Malpass had pointed to the "huge" capital outflow from developing countries in the COVID-19

context and suggested steps to improve debt transparency and investment quality that, Mr. Malpass said, were critical to reversing these capital flows.

### No free ride

Mr. Malpass also told the Development Committee that commercial creditors of governments should not "free ride" and need to help sovereign debt reduction efforts.

### Bilateral loans

Days ago, the G20 group of countries agreed to freeze bilateral loan repayments from 76 countries that are eligible for IDA assistance.

In response to a question on countries restricting export of medical supplies, Mr. Malpass said he hoped countries would not use the crisis to close or block markets and suggested a barter system.

"We should allow markets to function, markets to clear, and the supplies to go to those most in need."

# Bolsonaro fires Health Minister, calls for reopening of Brazil economy

Mandetta did not appreciate the need to protect jobs'

REUTERS

BRASILIA

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro fired his Health Minister on Thursday after clashing with him over how to fight the new coronavirus, and again called for States to end stay-at-home orders that he said were hurting the economy.

Few global leaders have done more than Mr. Bolsonaro to play down the pandemic, which has killed nearly 2,000 Brazilians. He has called the virus "a little flu" and criticised State Governors for imposing restrictions supported by health experts and the popular outgoing Minister, Luiz Henrique Mandetta.

In televised remarks met with pot-banging protests in



Former Health Minister Luiz Henrique Mandetta. • AFP

we need to start having some flexibility," Mr. Bolsonaro said. The government cannot afford emergency aid to the poor for much longer, he added.

### Still unprepared?

"Do not think we are past a peak in growth of the virus. The health system is still not prepared for an acceleration," Dr. Mandetta warned in his parting comments at the Ministry.

Incoming minister Nelson Teich, asked at a news conference about the Ministry's position now that he was in charge, said there will not be any "sudden changes" in policy. However, he added: "There is a complete alignment between me and the President."

# Spain toll nears 19,500

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

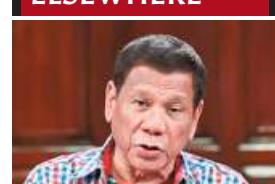
MADRID  
Spain's death toll spiralled towards 19,500 on Friday as the government revised its data collection methodology despite controversy over a system that counts only deaths among those who tested positive.

The country reported 585 new fatalities in the past 24 hours, but it was difficult to compare with previous tolls after the government amended its counting mechanism.

The total number of deaths in Spain now stands at 19,478, the third-highest in the world after the United States and Italy.

The government issued revised guidelines overnight for reporting deaths in order to standardise the data sent in from the country's 17 autonomous regions.

## ELSEWHERE



### Duterte warns citizens not to violate lockdown

MANILA  
Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has threatened a martial law-like crackdown to stop people flouting a virus lockdown in the nation's capital. Mr. Duterte spoke a day after authorities reported an upsurge of cars on Manila's roads. AFP

### Pandemic could kill 3,00,000 in Africa: UN

JOHANNESBURG  
The COVID-19 pandemic will likely kill at least 3,00,000 Africans and risks pushing 29 million into extreme poverty, the UN Economic Commission for Africa said on Friday, calling for a \$100 billion safety net. The World Health Organization (WHO) warned on Thursday that Africa could see as many as 10 million cases in three to six months. AFP

# Behind Germany's battle, a fight for Merkel's crown

The Premiers of two of the biggest States are the prime candidates to succeed the Chancellor

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BERLIN

Sporting events may be on hold in Germany, but the race to succeed Chancellor Angela Merkel is gathering pace as the country makes cautious progress in the fight against the coronavirus.

North-Rhine Westphalia State Premier Armin Laschet, 59, and his Bavarian counterpart Markus Soeder, 53, locked horns this week as Germany announced tentative steps to ease restrictions on public life. Mr. Laschet and Mr. Soeder head Germany's biggest States by population and area respectively — and also the two worst hit by the coronavirus — and have played a key role in the decision to start reopening schools and smaller shops.

Yet the two prospective Merkel successors have clashed over the question of how quickly Germany should relax its coronavirus curbs. Mr. Laschet is a prime



Succession battle: German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Bavarian Premier Markus Soeder in Berlin. • VIA REUTERS

candidate to be the next leader of Ms. Merkel's CDU party, having thrown his hat in the ring when the Chancellor's hand-picked successor Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer stepped down earlier this year.

With increased testing and the widespread distribution of masks, Mr. Laschet is hoping to revitalise the German economy quickly after it entered into recession this

week. He has also warned of collateral problems such as unemployment and a rise in domestic violence, and his State government even suggested schools could reopen from as early as next week, rather than the May 4 restart mooted elsewhere. That was quickly slapped down by Mr. Soeder, who warned against "one-upmanship" in the race to relax restrictions.

### Popular in Bavaria

And while State Premiers agreed with Ms. Merkel to reopen schools gradually from May 4, Mr. Soeder has decided to push back that start day by a week. The moves angered his colleagues, but Mr. Soeder's hard line has gone down well with Bavarians.

"People have recently voted for the CDU/CSU because of Ms. Merkel and because of the party programme," he said.

He has appeared less frequently alongside Ms. Merkel. And in March, he was derided by Germany's biggest-selling *Bild* daily as an example of "how not to wear a mask" after he appeared at a hospital wearing a mask that failed to cover his nose.

Yet as Mr. Neugebauer also points out, not all German voters like a strongman.

"To mark Myanmar New Year, by respecting humanitarian ground and peace in mind of the people, the President pardons altogether

# Myanmar to release 25,000 prisoners

Amnesty comes amidst virus fears

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

YANGON

More than a quarter of Myanmar's prison population is being released, the President's office announced on Friday, after calls grew to ease pressure on overcrowded jails with coronavirus fears gripping the country.

The Southeast Asian nation grants an annual amnesty to thousands of prisoners to mark its April New Year holiday, but this is the largest recorded in recent years. It comes as governments around the world — including the U.S., parts of Europe, and Colombia — grapple with overcrowded prisons as fears spiral of virus outbreaks behind bars.

"To mark Myanmar New Year, by respecting humanitarian ground and peace in mind of the people, the President pardons altogether



A health worker spraying disinfectant outside Insein prison. • Reuters

24,896 prisoners from various prisons," a statement from the President's office said.

So far Myanmar has officially confirmed 85 cases of COVID-19, including four deaths, but experts fear the real number is many times higher because of the low numbers being tested. The President's office said 87 foreigners included in the amnesty would be deported.

## MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	31,589	3.22
US Dollar	76.39	0.62
Brent oil	28.34	3.05

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	268.15	0.55
Asian Paints	1756.25	13.15
Axist Bank	478.80	56.25
Bajaj Auto	2379.15	45.60
Bajaj Finserv	4999.70	300.10
Bajaj Finance	2308.15	88.15
Bharti Airtel	502.45	2.00
BPLC	360.10	4.70
Britannia Ind	2832.15	-4.65
Cipla	598.00	-2.45
Coal India	148.75	1.35
Dr Reddy's Lab	3929.55	68.90
Eicher Motors	14770.35	1399.00
GAIL (India)	89.70	0.45
Grasim Ind	545.55	1.80
HCL Tech.	455.25	-4.50
HDPC	1680.60	54.85
HFDC Bank	910.30	30.55
Hero MotoCorp	1835.90	53.25
Hindalco	124.15	3.60
Hind Unilever	2385.00	-51.10
ICICI Bank	375.55	33.55
IndusInd Bank	474.45	39.05
Bharti Infralet	168.30	-3.20
Infosys	628.75	4.90
Indian Oil Corp	86.00	1.30
ITC	188.10	1.75
JSW Steel	177.30	6.65
Kotak Bank	1186.25	55.40
L&T	932.90	21.25
M&M	363.20	6.50
Maruti Suzuki	5505.00	374.20
Nestle India Ltd.	17324.30	-570.95
NTPC	95.50	0.40
ONGC	76.30	0.85
PowerGrid Corp	167.75	4.35
Reliance Ind	1224.00	55.95
State Bank	193.25	4.75
Shree Cement	18946.75	17.85
Sun Pharma	457.10	-6.60
Tata Motors	76.85	2.20
Tata Steel	293.35	4.45
TCS	1806.20	90.15
Tech Mahindra	509.85	-7.80
Titan	975.50	-9.75
UltraTech Cement	3534.05	-5.05
UPL	363.30	0.10
Vedanta	84.10	1.40
Wipro	187.00	-0.85
Zee Entertainment	140.15	4.60

## EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	76.19	76.51
Euro	82.45	82.80
British Pound	94.71	95.11
Japanese Yen (100)	70.65	70.95
Chinese Yuan	10.77	10.82
Swiss Franc	78.40	78.74
Singapore Dollar	53.46	53.69
Canadian Dollar	54.03	54.26
Malaysian Ringgit	17.41	17.52
Australian Dollar	48.19	48.40

Source: Indian Bank

## India eases paracetamol export curbs

N. RAVI KUMAR  
HYDERABAD

The Centre has permitted the export of formulations made from paracetamol. The government has, however, decided to continue with the restriction on export of paracetamol APIs placed on March 3.

On Friday, a Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) notification said the March 3 order is "further amended to the extent that the formulations made from paracetamol, including FDC (fixed dose combinations), under any ITCHS code... are made 'free' for export with immediate effect. However, paracetamol APIs will remain restricted for export."

A common fever medication globally, paracetamol is the most sought after and widely-used drug ever since the COVID-19 outbreak.

According to sources, India is among the leading manufacturers of paracetamol globally. Some of the major producers are Farmson Pharmaceuticals, Grangules India, Sri Krishna Pharma and Bharat Chemicals. The production capacity is estimated to be 5,000 tonnes a month. From an export perspective, it is a low-value, high-volume product.

## NBFCs get ₹50,000-cr. liquidity booster

Banks to get funding via targeted long-term repo operation, invest in CP, NCDs, bonds of these entities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced a host of measures to provide liquidity support to non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), apart from giving them certain benefits for loans extended to the commercial real estate sector.

To begin with, banks have to invest the funds availed under targeted long-term repo operation (TLTRO), in investment grade bonds, commercial paper, and non-convertible debentures of NBFCs. RBI stipulated that small and mid-sized NBFCs and micro-finance institutions (MFIs) should receive at least 50% of these funds.

## Auction on April 23

Banks can avail ₹50,000 crore through the targeted

## Monetary antidote



- RBI provides special refinance facility of ₹25,000 crore to NABARD for refinancing regional rural banks, cooperative banks and micro finance institutions; ₹15,000 crore to SIDBI for on-lending and refinancing; and ₹10,000 crore to NHB for supporting housing finance companies
- Banks can avail themselves of ₹50,000 crore through targeted long term repo operation (TLTRO)
- They must invest funds from TLTRO in investment grade bonds, commercial paper, and non-convertible debentures of NBFCs
- Small, mid-sized NBFCs and micro finance institutions should receive at least 50% of these funds
- Of this, 10% to be invested in MFI securities, 15% in securities issued by NBFCs with asset size of ₹500 crore and below; and 25% in securities of NBFCs with asset sizes in the ₹500 crore-₹5,000 crore range

long-term repo operation. The first auction of TLTRO for ₹25,000 crore will be conducted on April 23.

Of the 50% stipulated for smaller entities, 10% has to be invested by banks in securities of MFIs, 15% in securities issued by NBFCs

with asset size of ₹ 500 crore and below; and 25% in securities issued by NBFCs with asset size between ₹500 crore and ₹5,000 crore.

"These investments have to be made within one month of availing liquidity from the RBI," the banking

regulator said. The RBI clarified that investments made by banks under this facility would be classified as 'held-to-maturity' (HTM), even in excess of 25% of the total investment permitted to be included in the HTM portfolio.

"This will, in turn, ease the liquidity problem faced by NBFCs and MFIs to some extent, if their lender bank does not provide moratorium on payment of instalment and interest which they are extending to their customers," said Deep Shankar Tripathi, MD & CEO of Aadhar Housing Finance.

NBFCs and housing finance companies are facing liquidity pressure since banks have not extended any repayment moratorium to these entities even if NBFCs have to provide the same for their borrowers.

The RBI has also decided to provide special refinance facility of ₹50,000 crore to NABARD, SIDBI and NHB to enable them to meet sectoral credit needs. This would comprise ₹25,000 crore to NABARD for refinancing regional rural banks (RRBs), cooperative banks and micro finance institutions (MFIs); ₹15,000 crore to SIDBI for on-lending/refinancing; and ₹10,000 crore to NHB for supporting housing finance companies (HFCs).

The regulator has also allowed non-banking institutions to extend the date for commencement for commercial operations (DCCO) by an additional one year, without treating the same as restructuring, if the project is delayed due to reasons beyond the control of the promoter.

"With the objective of ensuring that banks maintain sufficient buffers and remain adequately provisioned to meet future challenges, they will have to maintain a higher provision of 10% on all such accounts under the standstill, spread over two quarters – January-March and April-June.

The regulator has also provided extension in resolution timeline for stressed assets. Current norms stipulate lenders to hold an additional provision of 20% if a resolution plan has not been implemented within 210 days from the date of default. Now, the period for resolution plan has been extended by 90 days.

According to stressed asset resolution norms, lenders are required to implement a resolution plan in respect of entities in default within 180 days from the end of review period of 30 days. Now, the RBI has said that for accounts within the review period as on March 1, 2020 to May 31, 2020, this would mean an account will continue to be in the same status on June 1, 2020 as it was on February 29, 2019.

Brickwork Ratings estimated additional provision requirement could increase the total provisioning of banks by around ₹35,000 crore in the March-June 2020 period, assuming special mention accounts are about 4% of total banking advances and have been accorded moratorium.

"The tone of RBI is one of empathy and support to needy sectors. The targeted LTRO focused on mid-sized NBFCs and micro-finance institutions is positive. The 90-day extension in non-performing assets reckoning for stressed standard assets as on March 1 effectively postpones NPA classification for accounts that were slipping into NPA between March and May," said Padmaja Chunduru, MD & CEO, Indian Bank.

It is a timely move by RBI, said D. Lakshminarayanan, MD, Sundaram Home Finance. Additional funds to housing finance companies via the National Housing Board is a confidence-boosting move, he added.

## TVS Motor buys Norton Motorcycles for ₹153 cr.

Deal also includes associated brands

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

TVS Motor Company Ltd. has acquired Britain's iconic sporting motorcycle firm Norton Motorcycles (UK) Ltd. in an all-cash deal for a consideration of ₹153 crore (£16 million) through one of its overseas subsidiaries.

An asset purchase agreement with Norton Motorcycles Holdings Ltd. and Norton Motorcycles (U.K.) Ltd. was concluded to acquire certain assets, including the brand Norton and other associated brands, TVS Motor Company said in a regulatory filing.

## Interesting acquisition

"This would be one of the most interesting acquisitions of a storied motorcycle maker in recent times and will reflect TVS Motor Company's and India's rapidly rising prominence in the international two-wheeler market," the company said.

"This transaction is in line with our effort to cater to the aspirations of discerning motorcycle customers.

"Norton will continue to retain its distinctive identity with dedicated and specific business plans. TVS Motor will work closely with customers and employees in building the success and pre-eminence of the Norton Motorcycles brand," he said.

TVS Motor Company also announced the upcoming products of Norton Motorcycles such as Commando, Dominator and V4 RR.

Market share of established companies drop, says report

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Amid a huge spike in demand for hand sanitiser in the country during the past months, new entrants and smaller brands have come to the rescue of the consumers.

According to a report by market researcher Nielsen, smaller players jumped in to exploit the demand surge, capturing 61% of the market in March, with the top three brands accounting for the remaining 39%. The share of top three brands dropped from 85% in both January and February.

About 152 new players entered the segment in March,

## Industry hails RBI move

"Steps will boost liquidity, benefit NBFCs and MSMEs'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI/CHENNAI

Companies and industry associations have welcomed the steps taken by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to deal with the economic impact of COVID-19.

Chandrapratap Banerjee, Director General, CII, said "The RBI's continued resolve to ensure that the availability of liquidity, especially for stressed sectors, remains adequate is commendable. The launch of the TLTRO 2.0 is expected to ensure that MFIs and small and mid-sized NBFCs remain well lubricated."

"[The] RBI Governor has done his side of the job perfectly. Now, the end beneficiaries will have to wait to know how the benefits percolate and how soon. The RBI, government and FIs [financial institutions] need to think out of the box in ensuring that the funds flow into MSMEs quickly as we have only 12 days left for month-end commitments," said K.E. Raghunathan, past national president, All India Manufacturers Organisation (AIMO).

"Akshay Mehrotra, CEO, EarlySalary, said, 'As a fintech lender and small NBFC, we need much more support to emerge stronger in these times. We are hoping SIDBI and PSU bank funds will trickle down to smaller NBFCs like us. The much-needed support to realty-focused NBFCs with a one-year extension for delayed projects will help. Unfortunately, suspense still abounds moratorium to NBFCs.'

TVS Group chairman Venugopal Srinivasan said it was a sign of continued efforts to stimulate economic activity and protect jobs.

"The long-term repo oper-

ation (LTRO) for non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and micro-lenders is a good tool to ease liquidity without tinkering with policy rates, and ₹50,000 crore is a substantial amount. This should restore confidence, especially among MSMEs that provide a significant portion of the country's jobs and is integral to all supply chains," he said.

"The tone of RBI is one of empathy and support to needy sectors. The targeted LTRO focused on mid-sized NBFCs and micro-finance institutions is positive. The 90-day extension in non-performing assets reckoning for stressed standard assets as on March 1 effectively postpones NPA classification for accounts that were slipping into NPA between March and May," said Padmaja Chunduru, MD & CEO, Indian Bank.

It is a timely move by RBI, said D. Lakshminarayanan, MD, Sundaram Home Finance.

Additional funds to housing finance companies via the National Housing Board is a confidence-boosting move, he added.

"These measures are bound to encourage banks

to lend more, thereby improving the credit flow and giving more purchasing power to home buyers and investors."

Niranjan Hiranandani, president, Assocham and NAREDCO said, "For real estate, the announcement that loans given by NBFCs to real estate companies would get

Kapil asks religious institutions to donate big



Kapil Dev. • FILE PHOTO

VIJAY LOKAPALLY  
NEW DELHI

India's World Cup-winning captain Kapil Dev, on Thursday, called upon the country's major religious institutions to contribute generously from their coffers and strengthen the fight against COVID-19. "This is the time for us to come together. All the official agencies are engaged in this humongous exercise, but we still need support from all possible platforms," Kapil said.

Lauding the efforts of the police and health workers, Kapil observed: "I expect big religious institutions to help the government in its battle against the deadly virus. The police and health workers are giving their best and deserve our support. We need funds to buy medical equipment and I am sure a large part of this campaign can be met if the religious institutions come forward at this stage."

**Need of the hour**  
Even as reports come in about shortage of medical equipment, Kapil said: "The devotees have always donated to the religious institutions in good times. Today, the need of the hour is to provide the best of equipment to our doctors and nurses so that they can also save their own lives while serving those infected by the virus."

Kapil emphasised: "India has a large number of temples, gurdwaras, churches and masjids, which undertake charitable exercises. I know Gurudwara Sri Harmandir Sahib has already offered to take the responsibility of buying medical equipment. I now expect the others to rise to the occasion."

Kapil added, "Never has mankind faced such a calamity and the issue to be addressed urgently is the procurement of medical equipment for carrying out tests and ventilators for affected patients. I am confident the government will receive support from all the religious institutions of the country."

## 'Crucial for India to regroup first'

With qualification secured, Mithali focuses on planning for the World Cup

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM  
HYDERABAD

India's qualification for next year's ICC World Cup should ease a lot of pressure on the players, said captain Mithali Raj.

In a chat with *The Hindu* on Friday, the 37-year-old said that till now the players were not sure how to prepare for the World Cup qualifiers.

"In that context, this is welcome news amidst the crisis because of COVID-19 that is threatening the world," she said.

### Not sure

"Definitely, this is good news even though we are not still sure when the conditions will improve and sporting activity will resume," Mithali said.

It may be mentioned here that India reached the 2017 World Cup final under Mithali's captaincy, and also beat the West Indies in the last one-day series it played in November 2019.

"With the issue of the World Cup settled, we can plan the preparation much



Relieved! Mithali Raj says India sealing a World Cup berth is welcome news in view of the uncertainty that the pandemic has created. • FILE PHOTO: V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

better as there will be enough time when the situation improves, hopefully, by August this year," said Mithali.

### Specific objective

Mithali, in line to play her sixth World Cup, said: "It is important for the team to regroup first, plan about the

coaching camps with the specific objective of winning the trophy.

"Of course, a lot depends on the kind of international schedule women's cricket can afford in the run-up to the World Cup. But, by all means, with India qualifying for the tournament, the focus can shift to planning for

the event in order to realise the big dream of winning the World Cup," she said.

Mithali hopes that things would improve early so that the athletes can at least go to the stadiums and start training. "For now, the focus cannot be on competitions but on resuming training sessions," she said.

## ICC on the horns of a dilemma

Fate of WTC and ODI League hangs in the balance

AMOL KARHADKAR  
MUMBAI

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a state of uncertainty all over the world. Sport is no exception, with sports bodies unsure of when live sport will resume, even if in front of empty stands.

The International Cricket Council (ICC), meanwhile, finds itself in a Catch-22 situation vis-a-vis its restructuring plans.

While the T20 World Cup (scheduled to be played in Australia from October 18) is in limbo, the two additions in the ICC calendar – the World Test Championship (WTC) and the ODI League Championship – are in danger of being shortlisted.

While WTC is in its maiden two-year cycle, with the final scheduled for June 2021, the ODI League is scheduled to be held between May 2020 and March 2022.

Thirteen teams are set to compete in the ODI League, with each side supposed to

feature in eight series of at least three matches each.

While the ICC has been in constant touch with all stakeholders, some of the influential members, including India, have sensed that a condensed international calendar upon resumption will eat into their own bilateral arrangements and T20 leagues (read income through broadcast rights).

### Big Three's plan

As a result, the 'Big Three' have been planning to pressurise the ICC into cancelling at least one of the events.

The proposal is likely to be discussed at the next ICC Board meeting, likely to be held in June.

ICC executives and member Board officials hope that in the next couple of months, the world would have started recovering from the pandemic and they will be in a position to at least start chalking out the future course of action.

## Advisory on Zoom puts coaches in a fix

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM  
HYDERABAD

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs' advisory that the Zoom meeting platform is not for use by Government Officers/officials for official purposes has put some leading coaches like chief national badminton coach Gopi Chand in a fix.

Gopi had tied up with well-known fitness trainer Dinaz Vervatwala using the Zoom app since April 1 to conduct online training.

"Now the advisory certainly means we have to rethink on the whole issue. We will take a call today or tomorrow on what to do next in this regard," Gopi told *The Hindu* on Friday.

"We will have to explore other platforms to ensure that we are in touch with the players and also their daily training schedule. We just cannot afford to be out of the radar in this regard," said Gopi.

"We will have look for a platform which facilitates interactive sessions."

## Sardar using social media to help people keep fit

Hockey icon reconnecting with his spiritual roots at his ancestral village

UTHRA GANESAN  
NEW DELHI

connecting with his spiritual roots.

Sardar Singh was one of the fittest players in the Indian hockey team and the former India captain has lately taken to sharing his workout sessions on the social media.

The ongoing lockdown has given him lot more time to do so.

The pandemic hit soon after Sardar returned from Canada. He spent a few days in Chandigarh before shifting to his ancestral village in Sant Nagar, Sirsa. "The lockdown meant your couldn't even leave your flat in Chandigarh. Here it is easier and safer," Sardar told *The Hindu*.

Along with his parents, elder brother Didar Singh and his family, Sardar is also re-

suming his workout sessions on social media.

"Once this is over, I plan to complete my police training (he is with Haryana Police) and may think of getting into coaching also (he is already a selector with Hockey India). Let's see," he says.

As for the current situation, the Padma Shri and Khel Ratna awardee admits there is uncertainty.

"As of now, no one knows when things will get normal, or will it be back to old normal at all. But one thing is sure – only if you are healthy you can go ahead in future, whatever it may be like," he said.

"That's what I used to do on field also, lead by example. But on social media,

"I am waiting to



Staying in shape: Sardar Singh working out with his nephews at his family home in Sant Nagar, Sirsa. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## Women's hockey team to raise funds for poor

To launch an eighteen-day fun fitness challenge

UTHRA GANESAN  
NEW DELHI

The Indian women's hockey team, currently locked down in Bangalore, has decided to raise funds to help the poor affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Beginning Friday, the team would be launching an 18-day fun fitness challenge to raise funds for poor and migrant families through crowdfunding.

"Every day we are reading in newspapers and on social media about so many people struggling for food and so decided to do something as a team.

"We thought an online fitness challenge would be the best way to do it and through this, we can also urge people to adapt to an active lifestyle during the nation-wide lockdown. Our goal is to raise enough funds to feed at least 1000 families," captain Rani Rampal said.

"A few days back when my father said, 'if you did not play hockey and lift us out of poverty, maybe we also would have been in the same condition as so many poor people today,' it broke my heart. We know the pain of not getting food," she added.

The players would give a new fitness challenge every



day and tag 10 people on their social media handles to take it up and donate minimum ₹100 to the fundraiser.

"We hope people support us. All of us come from poor backgrounds and have been through struggles for food and other basics.

"Today we are in a position to help," vice-captain Savita added.

**Donation to NGO**  
The funds would be donated to Delhi-based NGO Uday Foundation and the proceeds used to provide basic necessities for patients across locations, migrant workers and slum dwellers. Rani had also sponsored food for more than 150 families through Delhi Police in the initial days of lockdown.

## Develop attitude of a champion, Nieva tells boxers



Santiago Nieva. • AFP

Y.B. SARANGI  
KOLKATA

Santiago Nieva, the high performance director of Indian boxing, wants the boxers to emerge stronger from the COVID-19 crisis.

Nieva said boxers should develop the attitude of a champion. "The present situation teaches us the importance of adaptability. Champions are capable of adapting to new situations. We should remain strong and focused. We need to deal with it in-

stead of complaining," Nieva told *The Hindu*.

According to Nieva, India, having booked nine quota places in the Tokyo Olympics, has an advantage.

"We are better off than many other countries in Europe and America. We are lucky to have secured a good number of qualifying spots. We just have to refocus when we resume our camp."

Nieva said given the situation, the boxers' training was going well. "We are waiting to

start our camp properly. Maybe we can do that in a couple of weeks (when the lockdown ends)."

Nieva was happy that Indian boxers were accepting the situation and using their time well. "We have to be positive. We have more time now to prepare, which is excellent."

Nieva, who conducted an online 'Train the trainers' programme for boxing coaches on Friday, said COVID-19 had a role to play.

We are lucky to have secured a good number of qualifying spots. We just have to refocus when we resume our camp

"Such online courses have been going on internationally by other federations, schools, colleges and universities. This (pandemic) has hurried it (the process of starting here). We need to do this in the future as well," he said.

## No dearth of tricksters in Mizo folklore, says expert

They are the popular staple of most cultures

RAHUL KARMAKAR  
GUWAHATI

The trickster is a common and popular staple of most folklore and Mizo folklore has a fair share of them, says R. Thangvunga, professor in Mizoram University's Department of Mizo language.

The self-seeking 'Machivellian trickster' sits at the top of the list of bad hats in Mizo folklore, says Prof. Thangvunga.

The manipulative 'Odyssean trickster' comes second in his analysis published in the university's journal followed by the humorous 'Dickensian trickster', the boastful 'Herculean trickster' and the witty trickster posing problems that require intelligence.

According to Prof. Thangvunga, most folklore tends to ignore the underbelly of a society or community and focus on stories of heroism and semi-supernatural deeds of one's ancestors.

Such stories "boost the collective ego of one's community more effectively than pots of rice beer to a safe level of ethnic pride."

Such tales, he says, may not have played any significant role in "preserving our tribal ethnicity as well as providing a shield against the infiltration of a Machivellian breed of more advanced nations".

But the Machivellian trickster existed in Mizo folklore before such infiltration. The professor cites the example of brothers Chhura and Nahia to make a point.

Nahia often makes younger brother Chhura the butt of profitable jokes, once proposing to exchange houses so that Chhura and his wife could watch the stars while going to bed. It wasn't until the monsoon that Chhura realised his folly.

Prof. Thangvunga cites Keimangi, the daughter of the chief of the 'tigermen',

assigned to bewitch and take revenge on tiger hunter Hultungamawna, as an example of the Odyssean trickster, manipulator and opportunist.

The lazy Samdala is an example of the Dickensian tricksters, lacking intellectual finesse for any ulterior motive but providing comic relief often at their own expense. He offers to be eaten by a tiger only if he is carried to the top of a hill, but once he reaches his destination, he scares the tiger away with the story of an animal-eater.

The tale of Thailungi, a 10-year-old girl sold off by her stepmother, qualifies as that of a Herculean trickster who uses gimmicks to accomplish impossible missions. He cites the story of Chemteii, who stops her father from being robbed of inheritance by using her intelligence to find answers to tricky questions by the local king.

them how the simple act of reducing the brightness of their laptop screens can help reduce power usage," she explained.

The seven-minute long song features leading vocalists – Bombay Jayashri, Shankar Mahadevan, Kaushiki Chakraborty, Hansraj Hans, Mahesh Kale, Abhishek Raghuram, Sweta Mohan, Abhay Jodhpurkar, Md Pallavi. It has been composed by Amrit Ramnath.

ek Raghuram, Sweta Mohan, Abhay Jodhpurkar and M.D. Pallavi. It has been composed by Amrit Ramnath.

It features Sayee Rakshit on the violin, Abinandan David on the guitar, Sumesh Narayanan on the mridangam and percussions, M.T. Aditya on the tabla, and singers Karthik, Amrit and Sree-

nidhi Venkat on the chorus vocals.

Ms. Jayashri said, "As artistes, all of us do our bit. This album is one and so are concerts or songs performed for the earth. Personally, too, I don't use single-use plastics and try as much as possible to reuse and recycle things. Last year, I had written to the city sabhas requesting them to provide reusable water bottles to artistes and many of them had implemented it," she said.

**'Absolutely spellbound'**  
Mr. Jodhpurkar said that when he heard the song, he was absolutely spellbound. "It is an honour for me to be a part of a multilingual anthem featuring such legendary singers of our nation," he added.

Musician and vocalist Shankar Mahadevan recalled how he and Ms. Jayashri learnt music from the same guru in the initial years in Bombay and said he was happy to have lent his voice to the song composed by her son.

## IN BRIEF



Author Sepulveda passes away due to COVID-19  
MADRID  
Chilean author Luis Sepulveda, best known for *The Old Man Who Read Love Stories*, passed away on Thursday of COVID-19 in a hospital in the Asturias region of Spain where he lived for several decades. He was 70. REUTERS



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