



BYJU'S

# Introducing

BYJU'S LIVE▶

## #LearnFromHome

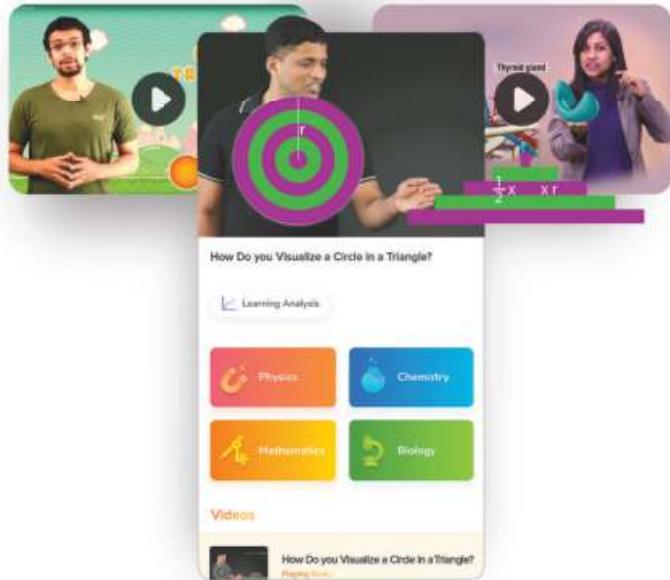
Attend FREE LIVE CLASSES by India's best teachers



CLASS	DAYS
CLASS 4	Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays
CLASS 5	Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays
CLASS 6	Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays
CLASS 7	Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays
CLASS 8	Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays
CLASS 9	Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays
CLASS 10	Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays
CLASS 11 ( JEE, NEET 2022 )	Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays
CLASS 12 ( JEE , NEET 2021 )	Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays

View the complete schedule on the App

### How does BYJU'S #LearnFromHome work?



1 Watch and understand concepts daily through **engaging** and **interactive video lessons**



2 Attend live classes by BYJU'S teachers regularly and **clear your doubts**



3 Master concepts with **personalised lessons** and unlimited practice tests

BYJU'S®  
The Learning App

CLASSES 4 - 12

To start learning,  
Download the App for FREE



Click on '**Live Classes**', and book your **FREE classes**

To Know More Call

+91 92435 00460

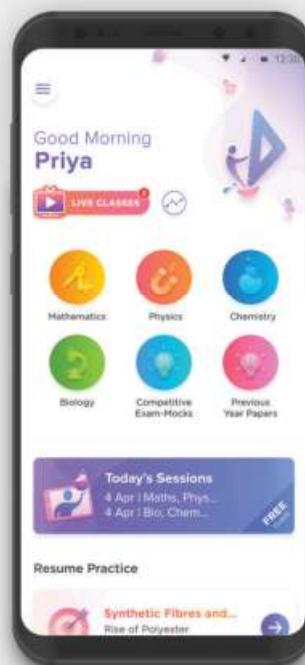


# BYJU'S

## It's time for school

Free online classes by India's best teachers

How to access BYJU'S #LearnFromHome free online classes?



**Step 1**

Download  
**BYJU'S - The Learning App**  
and click on the  
'Live Classes' tile



**Step 2**

Select your  
preferred topic and  
'Reserve for Free'



You can reserve multiple  
'Live Classes' too



**Step 3**

Prepare for  
**Live Classes**  
by going through  
the recommended  
lessons on the app

## Why is BYJU'S the best way to #LearnFromHome?



Access personalised  
video lessons on  
BYJU'S - The Learning App



Attend live sessions  
by India's best  
teachers at home



Practise and revise  
topics with personalised  
tests and quizzes



Gain complete  
understanding of complex  
maths and science concepts



Get a head start on  
your next year's  
academic syllabus



Make the best  
use of your time  
at home



Prepare from video  
lessons on BYJU'S App



Attend live classes  
by top teachers



Revise on  
BYJU'S App



Best way to  
learn at home

To start learning,  
Download the App for FREE



Click on 'Live Classes', and book your FREE classes



CLASSES 4 - 12

To Know More Call  
**+91 92435 00460**



P. Chidambaram suggests ₹1 lakh crore package for MSMEs page 8



We will have to be on guard for at least a year, says Srinath Reddy page 10



By any calculus, India qualifies for UNSC seat, says Syed Akbaruddin page 11



After virus scare, British PM Boris Johnson becomes father page 14

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

## NEARBY



Delhi reports 2 deaths, 125 new COVID-19 cases

NEW DELHI

Two deaths and 125 new COVID-19 cases were reported in Delhi on Wednesday, taking the toll of dead to 56 and the total cases to 3,439, said the Delhi government. The doubling time for cases in the city has increased to 13 days.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

### 'Haryana-Delhi border sealed to curb spread'

GURUGRAM

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Wednesday said his government had taken the "tough decision" to seal the State's border with Delhi to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Vehicles supplying essentials such as vegetables and milk are allowed, he said.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

### 85-hour, 3,345-km drive to Aizawl with a body

GUWAHATI

An ambulance from Chennai covered 3,345 km in 85 hours to bring the body of a 23-year-old man home in Aizawl on Tuesday. This followed a similar travel through six States for 72-year-old Mukul Chandra Dhar of Tripura's Dhalai district, who died before reaching home.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 11

# Home Ministry clears inter-State movement of stranded people

Nodal authorities will register such persons and facilitate their travel

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

More than a month after the nationwide lockdown owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) issued guidelines to allow inter-State movement of stranded migrant workers, tourists, pilgrims, students and others.

Public transport, including trains and buses, continue to remain suspended and the State governments have been asked to appoint nodal authorities to register such stranded persons and facilitate their movement.

The MHA spokesperson tweeted on Wednesday that new guidelines to fight COVID-19 will come into effect from May 4 "which shall give considerable relaxations to many districts." Details regarding this shall be communicated in the days to come," the tweet said.

**Quarantine mandatory**  
The MHA said such persons should be kept in home quarantine for 14 days unless an assessment by a medical team recommended institutional quarantine.

For individuals who wanted to travel in their private cars, permission should be taken from the State authori-



Seeking their due: Labourers protesting in Telangana on Wednesday for back wages and better facilities. ■ MOHD ARIF

ties, an official said. "If someone has to cross multiple States to reach their destination, then the State authority where the travel will originate, will coordinate with the respective State authorities and issue a pass accordingly," a senior Home Ministry official stated.

The BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh was one of the first States to arrange for the return of stranded migrant workers to return to their homes.

The guidelines issued by the MHA on April 19 asserted that there would be no inter-State movement of labourers.

Following Uttar Pradesh, States like Punjab, Odisha,

Punjab extends lockdown by two weeks

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Punjab on Wednesday became the first State in the country to announce that it would extend the lockdown till May 17, while permitting the opening of shops in a staggered way on rotation for four hours every morning from April 30.

Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, in a video address, also unveiled steps for limited lifting of lockdown restrictions from April 30 in the non-containment and non-red zones. The situation will be reviewed after two weeks and further relaxations will be announced if the pandemic is in control, he said.

The limited relaxations from Thursday include permission for opening all registered shops, except those in multi-brand and single-brand malls, with 50% staff strength from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

# India reports 70 deaths, highest in a single day

Death toll mounts to 1,008 even as 22,982 cases are active

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

India reported 70 COVID-19 deaths – the highest in a single day – in the past 24 hours. The total death toll as of Wednesday evening had reached 1,008 and propped India among 17 countries that had over 1,000 deaths. The total confirmed active cases were 22,982 and 7,796 had recovered, the Health Ministry website said in its evening update.

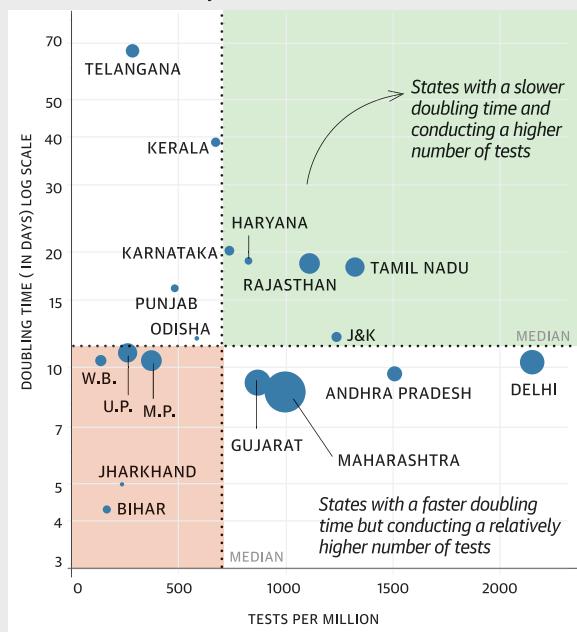
At a conference, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said that in the last three days, India's doubling rate was 11.3 days. Although global mortality rate was around 7%, India's was around 3%, and around 86% of those who died had a co-morbidity, he said.

**COVID-19**  
Data from the State Health Departments put the nationwide death toll at 1,067 and the total number of positive cases at 32,741, with 23,334 active ones.

Preeti Sudan, Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, said non-COVID essential medical care ought not to be neglected. Patients needing care such as dialysis, cancer treatment, dia-

## Testing times

The doubling time for cases in Telangana and Kerala has slowed down to 67.3 and 38.9 days recently. Cases have doubled in 9.2 and 8.7 days in Gujarat and Maharashtra, but they are better off in terms of testing unlike M.P. and U.P. Chart compares time taken for cases to double, with the number of tests conducted per million people in the States. Size of the circles correspond to the total infections as of Tuesday



betics, pregnant women and those suffering from cardiac ailments must be given adequate care. She also urged States to promote the Arogya Setu App which was a self-assessment tool useful in the prevention efforts of the government, said a press

statement. The customary daily briefing for journalists, conducted by the Health Ministry, was not held on Wednesday.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

MORE STORIES ON ▶ PAGES 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 14

# Only 30 lakh found NREGA work in April

This is 82% lower than in previous year



Labourers at an MGNREGA work site in Amethi. ■ PTI

## India remains on U.S. Priority Watch List

SRI RAM LAKSHMAN

India continues to be on the 'Priority Watch List' of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) for lack of adequate intellectual property (IP) rights protection and enforcement, the USTR said in its Annual Special 301 Report, released on Wednesday.

India remained one of the most challenging economies for IP enforcement and protection, the report said, using language it has used previously. Algeria, Argentina, Chile, China, Indonesia, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Ukraine and Venezuela are also on the Priority Watch List. While India made "meaningful progress" to enhance IP protection and enforcement in some areas over the past year, it did not resolve recent and long-standing challenges, and created new ones, the report said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## Lockdown blues



With eateries closed and beach goers keeping away, birds find it difficult to get food. A flock of pigeons on the Marina beach in Chennai on Wednesday. ■ R. RAGU

# India's crossover star Irrfan Khan passes away

A loss to the world of cinema and theatre, says PM Modi; President Kovind calls him a rare talent

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

One of Indian cinema's leading actors and its most recognised face internationally, Irrfan Khan passed away in Mumbai's Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital on Wednesday. He was admitted on Tuesday night for a colon infection and died at 11.11 a.m. the next day because of resultant complications.

Mr. Khan is survived by his wife, screenwriter Sutapa Sikdar and two sons, Babil and Ayan.

His last rites took place on Wednesday at the Versova Kabristan in Mumbai in the presence of his family, close relatives and friends, including filmmakers Vishal Bhardwaj, Tigmanshu Dhulia and Abhinay Deo. "We pray for

his peace and we hope he's in a better place today. He was strong in his fight, and we all have to be strong too in this loss," a statement released by the family said.

Mr. Khan, 53, was detected with neuroendocrine tumour in March 2018 and he battled it for several months in London. He returned early last year to shoot for Homi Adajania's *Angrezi Medium* – his last film – but had to get back to London again in September for

his final scenes. While Mira Nair's *Salaam Bombay* (1988) is credited as his debut, he had to struggle long and

further treatment.

Mr. Khan's nonagenarian mother Saeeda Begum passed away on Saturday morning in Jaipur, and according to agency reports, he paid his last respects to her through video conferencing.

Born in Jaipur, Mr. Khan started his illustrious innings in acting with a stint at New Delhi's National School of Drama.

While Mira Nair's *The Namesake* (2007), based on the Jhumpa Lahiri book by the same name, made him gain more ground internationally. Wes

hard to make space for himself in the world of films.

He acted in a lot of television shows through the 1980s and the 1990s, including the popular *Banegi Apni Baat*.

### Notable projects

The films to truly get him noticed were Tigmanshu Dhulia's *Haasil* (2003) and Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* (2004). But even before them, the buzz around him had started growing strong abroad with Asif Kapadia's *The Warrior* (2001), in which he played a brutal warrior on the road to redemption.

Ms. Nair's *The Namesake* (2007), based on the Jhumpa Lahiri book by the same name, made him gain more ground internationally. Wes

Anderson's *The Darjeeling Limited* (2007), Michael Winterbottom's *A Mighty Heart* (2007), Danny Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008), Ang Lee's *Life of Pi* (2012) and Marc Webb's *The Amazing Spider-Man* (2012) were his other notable projects.

*Paan Singh Tomar* (2012), in which he played an athlete-turned-dacoit, got him the National Award for Best Actor. He was honoured with the Padma Shri in 2011.

He was a "rare talent and a brilliant actor," tweeted President Ram Nath Kovind. Prime Minister Narendra Modi described Irrfan Khan's death as "a loss to the world of cinema and theatre".

Mr. Kovind called Irrfan Khan a "rare talent" and "a true icon of Indian cinema".

MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGE 16

# BJP MLA threatens 'Muslim' vendor

After video goes viral, legislator says scolded man for lying

OMAR RASHID

LUCKNOW

A BJP MLA in Uttar Pradesh was on Wednesday caught on camera allegedly threatening and berating a "Muslim" vegetable vendor in Lucknow and commanding him to not be seen in the area again.

The video was widely shared on social media, triggering outrage against Brijbushan Rajpoot, MLA from Charkhari, Bundelkhand.

In the video, Mr. Rajpoot is seen without a mask, scolding the vegetable vendor and repeatedly asking him to state his name. The vendor, who is wearing a mask, hesitantly murmurs that his name is Raj Kumar.

"Your name is not Raj Kumar, speak the truth, what is your name," the MLA asks the vendor. "Sahi bolo war-

na maar maar ke theek kar dunga tujhe" (Speak the truth, or I will beat you and set you right), he warns him.

### 'Abused' over identity

Mr. Rajpoot, who is allegedly standing at the gate of his Lucknow residence, then threatens a boy who is with the vendor to reveal his name if he wants to "avoid consequences". The boy, who appears to be the vendor's son, blurts out, "Azir-Ur-Rehman". Following this, the MLA abuses the vendor for hiding his Muslim identity and chases him away.

After the duo leaves, the 38-year-old BJP MLA is heard speaking aloud: "He is a Muslim but lying and using a Hindu name to sell vegetables."

Later, talking to a news agency, Mr. Rajpoot said he reprimanded the vendor for allegedly lying. Sixteen vegetable sellers in Kanpur and one in Lucknow have tested positive for COVID-19, the MLA said.

In another video clip, BJP MLA from Barhaj constituency in Deoria district, Suresh Tewari was allegedly seen telling people not to buy vegetables from Muslim vendors. The video, which emerged on Tuesday, has been widely shared on social media, triggering a controversy. "I am saying openly don't purchase vegetables from Muslims," the MLA can be heard saying in the clip.

U.P. BJP spokesperson Chandra Mohan said the party would look into the circumstances in which the MLA issued such a statement.

M ND-NDE

## Timings

DELHI

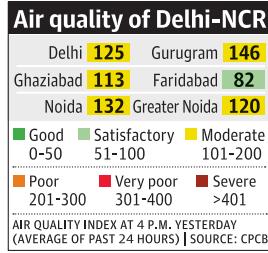
THURSDAY, APR. 30
RISE 05:42 SET 18:56
RISE 11:18 SET 00:38
FRIDAY, MAY. 01
RISE 05:41 SET 18:57
RISE 12:21 SET 01:28
SATURDAY, MAY. 02
RISE 05:40 SET 18:57
RISE 13:26 SET 02:13

**Delhi Weather** max min  
Delhi City 37 23  
Safdarjung 37 23  
Palam 38 23

**Delhi Palam Today**  
37°C A warm and cloudy sky to prevail. Night will be pleasant. Light spell of duststorm and thundershower is likely.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
38°C Rise in day temperature. A warm and partly cloudy sky to prevail. Night will be pleasant.

© Copyright Skymet Weather 2019  
All rights reserved.



## IN BRIEF

## 'Include MCD staff in compensation scheme'

NEW DELHI  
Excluding MCD employees from the list of corona warriors was "condemnable and inhuman", said State BJP chief Manoj Tiwari. BJP leader Ramvir Singh Bidhuri demanded that MCD workers be included under the government's ₹1 crore compensation scheme.

## Check violation by CWG village residents: HC

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI  
The Delhi High Court has asked a nodal officer to check on violation of lockdown guidelines and social distancing norms by the residents of Commonwealth Games Village (CWGV) near Akshardham Temple and report it to the authorities concerned.

The High Court was hearing a fresh application by one of the residents alleging violation of lockdown and social distancing norms by the residents of the locality.

Justice Yogesh Khanna said the nodal officer will act with the aid and assistance of the Facility Management Service Agency and CWGVAAO (CWG Village Apartment Owners' Association) staff to keep a check on any violations within the village. It asked the nodal officer to file a report within four weeks.

## DIESEL LOCOMOTIVE WORKS, VARANASI - 221004

CORRIGENDUM-2

Due to some unavoidable circumstances following changes are issued to above Tender Notice. Originally Published Tender Notice: SN.1, Tender No. EL/1010/W-1127, Approximate Cost: ₹ 14,64,731.08 (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-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: 30.04.2020 at 15.30 hrs., Revised Tender Notice-2: Tender No. EL/1010/WV-1127, Approximate Cost: ₹ 14,84,731.08 (Rupees Fourteen Lakh Eighty Four Thousand Seven Hundred Thirty One and Eight Paise only). Opening Date: 29.05.2020 at 15.30 hrs. Note: For details and to participate e-tender can be seen in Hindi version also on website www.dlw.indianrailways.gov.in & http://www.ireps.gov.in.

PRO/DLW/E-02 Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/Maintenance

1 / diesellocomworks "Website: www.dlw.indianrailways.gov.in"

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that this person

**Named:** Unknown, **S/o:** Unknown, **R/o:** Unknown, **Age:** 25/30 Years approx, **Sex:** Male, **Height:** 5'6", **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Buit:** Thin, **Face:** Round, **Hair:** Black, **Wearing:** Pink Colour shirt & Jeans Pant Sky Blue Colour, White Baniyan, Cocacola Colour Underwear & Bare footed, has been found dead at Shop No. 6, Near Lucky Bus Service and Nagpal Dairy on footpath on 27.04.2020 in the area of PS Kotwali, Delhi.

In this regard a DD No. 9-A, U/s 174Cr. P.C. dated 27.04.2020 has been lodged at P.S. Kotwali, North District, Delhi. Dead Body has been kept preserved in Subzi mandi, AAA Govt. Hospital Mortuary for 72 hours for identification.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out

information about this person but no clue has come to light so far.

Any person having any information or clue about this person may kindly inform to the following.

**SHO**

P.S. Kotwali, Delhi

DP/197/N/2020(UIDB) Ph.: 011-23977100, 8750870121

# 'We must do our duty, can't be scared'

Officers stationed outside a quarantine centre in Sultanpuri share their convictions and concerns

HEMANI BHANDARI  
NEW DELHI

Under the scorching afternoon sun, five Delhi Police officers stand guard outside a quarantine centre in Sultanpuri that is currently home to dozens of people brought in from the Nizamuddin centre.

"Duty comes first irrespective of the deployment," said the officers who have been tasked to maintain law and order.

Wearing masks, gloves, as well as head and shoe cover, the constable and head constable-rank officers shared what it is like to be deployed outside a centre with high health risk and how their families are coping with the deployment.

**Taking precautions**  
At the gate, a constable maintains record of all people entering and exiting the centre, including medical staff. "I try to touch the pen or the register as little as possible," he said.

There is also a fever gun



A Delhi policeman checks the temperature of a healthcare worker at a quarantine centre in Sultanpuri on Wednesday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

and a bottle of sanitiser next to the register on the table. A tent has been set up near the gate where the officers are able to keep their belongings along with a few extra shoes and head covers. There is also a sharpow where the men can take a break.

"It is a 12-hour-long shift. We come at 8 a.m. and leave at 8 p.m. Thereafter, we get

24 hours of rest. This will continue for a week and then our deployment will change to another location," said a head constable-rank official.

**Unable to go home**  
However, they will not be able to go back home.

The officers on duty outside the quarantine centre have been provided rooms in

hotels or guest houses.

As soon as they reach their rooms, one for each official, most of them call their families immediately after bathing and changing.

"The first thing my wife asks me is whether I had to touch any person. I calm her down and tell her everything is fine and that we take necessary precautions," said an

officer.  
A constable-rank woman official posted at the gate said she has two daughters aged 16 and 18 who understand that she has to go for duty and there is no looking back. "Kaam hai to kaam hai, darr nahin saktey isme (If there's work, there's work. We can't feel scared)," she added.

A young constable, who is from Aligarh, said that his mother is scared for his well-being. "If we deny our duty then who will work? We joined the force to serve the nation. It needs us now. We will not back down," he said.

While admitting that there is nothing above duty, the officers shared a few grievances, including not being provided sanitisers at every checking point. They are available only at the main gate. "The quality of masks is also not very good. It keeps getting torn. We are also given limited gloves and masks because of which we have to keep sanitising the gloves," said a head constable.

# Police action an attempt to instil fear: Kawalpreet

Her cell phone was seized on April 27

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Kawalpreet Kaur, president of the Delhi unit of All India Students' Association (AISA) on Wednesday said that Delhi Police's action of seizing her mobile phone was an attempt to instil fear and intimidate students for their activism.

Delhi Police on April 27 had seized Ms. Kaur's mobile phone in connection with investigations into the north-east Delhi riots.

Stating that as a student activist she had remained active in mobilising students against attacks on public funded institutions, movements on social and gender justice and participated in peaceful demonstrations against the CAA, NPR and NRC, Ms. Kaur termed the police action as "outrageous".

In a statement Ms. Kaur said: "Delhi Police's action of seizing my phone is outrageous and is an attempt to instil fear among us all.

Worse is that all this is happening at a time when the entire world is in lockdown faced with a pandemic and it is difficult to hold mass protests and access legal help... let us stand united against the intimidating tactics of Delhi Police amidst lockdown."

## 'Struggle must go on'

"It is deeply shocking and disturbing to know that the police is trying to intimidate me for my activism, for speaking in defence of the Constitution. Our struggle to uphold our Constitution and democratic rights must go on despite the government's attempt to intimidate and silence voices of democracy and peace," the statement read.

The students' association on Tuesday had alleged that the seizure memo handed to Ms. Kaur cited a First Information Report with a "slew of charges including the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

## Response of govt. sought on plea questioning quarantine norms

Petitioner says he wasn't tested in over a month of isolation

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday sought response of the AAP government on a plea by one of the 72 families, which had contact with a COVID-19 infected pizza delivery person, claiming that he was put under quarantine for over 30 days.

Justice Hari Shankar issued notice to the Delhi government on the petition by photojournalist Amit Bhargava who was put under quarantine from midnight of March 24-25, when he had first contact with the delivery person, till April 28 – for a period of over 30 days as against

the stipulated 14 days.

Mr. Bhargava also claimed that he has not been tested for the virus since he was put under quarantine. He said his efforts to avail of private testing were also in vain, as he was unable to consult a doctor in person during his quarantine period, and labs will not test without a prescription.

**Cites revised guidelines**  
The petition pointed out that the "Revised Guidelines on Clinical Management of COVID-19" dated March 31 issued by Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, provides for "asymptomatic direct and

high-risk contacts of a confirmed case should be tested once between day 5 and day 14 after contact".

"Respondent has failed to test the petitioner for COVID-19 which is essential to his right to life and health as guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution. Petitioner was unable to avail of testing either, though he attempted to," the plea said.

He sought direction to the authorities to formulate a policy that enables people in home quarantine to access private labs for COVID-19 testing, so that they do not need to burden the government hospitals for free tests.

## HC declines to stay NBE's decision

It extends training of doctors pursuing DNB over pandemic

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has declined to stay the National Board of Examination's (NBE) decision to extend the training of doctors, who are in the final year of training of the Diplomate of National Board (DNB), on the ground that it has been adversely impacted by the ongoing pandemic.

The doctors have challenged the NBE's notice which states that their training has been adversely impacted by the ongoing pandemic and it has been decided to extend the period of training of all DNB/Fellowship National Board

students, whose tenures were ending between April 1 and June 30, 2020, in all specialities, by six weeks and until further notice.

The court, in its order, issued notices and sought response of the Centre and NBE on the petition and listed the matter for further hearing on May 14. The court said given the pan-India impact of the NBE's notice, it would be appropriate to seek the authorities' response.

training of the DNB course, conducted by the NBE. They joined the DNB course between April and June 2017 and were scheduled to complete their training between April and June this year.

The doctors have challenged the NBE's notice which states that their training has been adversely impacted by the ongoing pandemic and it has been decided to extend the period of training of all DNB/Fellowship National Board

students, whose tenures were ending between April 1 and June 30, 2020, in all specialities, by six weeks and until further notice.

The court, in its order, issued notices and sought response of the Centre and NBE on the petition and listed the matter for further hearing on May 14. The court said given the pan-India impact of the NBE's notice, it would be appropriate to seek the authorities' response.

## Policeman found dead in washroom

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A 59-year-old head constable was found dead inside a toilet in the barracks in New Police Lines at GTB Nagar on Wednesday. No note has been recovered, police said.

A senior police officer said that the deceased has been identified as a head constable posted in the IT Cell. After the information was received, officers reached the spot and found him dead inside the toilet.

The body was moved to Babu Jagjivan Ram Hospital for a post-mortem and inquest proceedings have been initiated. The deceased is from Rajasthan's Alwar.

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

## Life lessons



Moving on: (Clockwise from top) An old man feeding his goat during the nationwide lockdown in the Capital on Wednesday; rickshaw-pullers transporting chicken in Dwarka; a deserted view of the New Delhi Railway Station. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA, V.V. KRISHNAN, R.V. MOORTHY

## Do not charge rent from vendors: Cong. to govt.

Party seeks monthly aid for sellers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Wednesday wrote to Lieutenant Governor and Chief Minister of Delhi not to charge license fee/rent from small shopkeepers, kiosk and vendors in the NDMC and MCD areas and demanded that a monthly relief of ₹6,000 be extended to them.

Delhi Congress president Ch. Anil Kumar, in his letter, wrote that vendors are being asked to pay the monthly license fees by the NDMC though they have been out of work since the lockdown.

"When the whole of Delhi is under lockdown, the NDMC should not charge monthly license fees from the kiosk vendors, small shopkeepers and vendors, who are out of business

## IN BRIEF

**Former JNU student charged under UAPA**

NEW DELHI  
The Delhi Police has added charges under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) against former JNU student Sharjeel Imam, officials said on Wednesday. Imam was arrested allegedly for instigating and abetting riots with his speech delivered on December 13. PTI

## Haryana seeks details of stranded students

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GURUGRAM

The district administration here on Wednesday released an email ID for parents of the students stranded abroad to provide details to the authorities. The Haryana government has been furnishing details of the students to help them return.

Deputy Commissioner Amit Khatri said the parents can write to the district administration on covid19gurugram@gmail.com with the subject "overseas support". The parents would be sent Google forms wherein they can furnish the information. Mr. Khatri said the number of such students was relatively high in Gurugram compared to other districts.

# Haryana-Delhi border sealed to curb COVID-19 spread: Khattar

Faridabad administration also bars cross-border movement of people in district

ASHOK KUMAR  
GURUGRAM

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Wednesday said the government had taken the "tough decision" to seal the State's border with Delhi and the movement of people was stopped except in important cases to prevent the spread of COVID-19. He, however, said the vehicles supplying essential commodities such as vegetables and milk were allowed.



Police personnel stop commuters at the Delhi-Faridabad border during the nationwide lockdown, on Wednesday. •PTI

### High rate of cases

Mr. Khattar, in his address to the State, said 28 cases in four districts neighbouring Delhi – Gurugram, Faridabad, Jhajjar and Sonipat – were traced back to Delhi over the past six days. He said these people were either working in Delhi or were their family members, friends or relatives. Mr. Khattar said the infection rate was very high in Delhi and there was a lot of movement of people between Haryana and the national capital.

Mr. Khattar said he had sympathy with the people being inconvenienced due to the sealing of the border, but the decision was made to prevent the spread of CO-

VID-19. He added that there was a need to swallow the "bitter pill", referring to the sealing of the border.

### Essential commodities

"The essential commodities vehicles carrying vegetables and milk are permitted, but only one person is allowed besides the driver. Both need to home quarantine after the duty hours to avoid contacts with others. Similarly, those working in Delhi can stay in the Capital or take leave to stay in home quarantine in Haryana. The Deputy Com-

missioners have been directed to allow the movement of people only in case it is important," said Mr. Khattar.

Meanwhile, Faridabad administration barred the cross-border movement of people in the district from Wednesday noon. As per the District Magistrate orders, doctors, paramedical staff, policemen and other government employees were not allowed to enter or exit the district after noon. The movement of vehicles with essential commodities and those carrying Union govern-

ment passes were exempted.

Sonipat has already sealed its borders with Delhi barring the movement of government employees and common people, and the supply of vegetables from Azadpur Mandi.

Jhajjar administration also reviewed the movement passes issued to the people travelling to Delhi and decided to cut the "unnecessary" movement. Gurugram administration, however, has not issued any orders barring cross-border movement of people.

# City reports 2 deaths, 125 new cases; doubling time 13 days

No new cases in 90% of containment zones, says Jain

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Two deaths and 125 new COVID-19 cases were reported in Delhi on Wednesday, taking the toll to 56 and total number of cases to 3,439. Of the total cases, 1,092 people have recovered and there are 2,291 active cases.

Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Wednesday said that the doubling time for number of COVID-19 cases in the city has increased to 13 days, which is higher than the national average of 10 days.

"It (virus) is not spreading fast. Earlier in Delhi, the doubling time of cases was four-five days," the Minister told media.

He added that as per central government guidelines "people without symptoms or light symptoms can be isolated and treated at home... they do not have to go to the hospital".

### More doctors infected

The Minister further informed that although the number of containment zones in the city was increasing, 90% of the areas have not reported new cases. He also said that over 200 people working in hospitals have been infected.

A resident doctor of Lady Hardinge Medical College (LHMC), who was interning

### Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases	3,439
Total deaths	56
New cases in the past 24 hours	125
New deaths in the past 24 hours	2

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

at RML Hospital has also tested positive. "She is asymptomatic and has been isolated," a LHMC Hospital official said.

On a related development, 13 family members of an infected dietitian working at Lok Nayak Hospital have contracted the virus, a hospital official said. At least six people working at the hospital have tested positive so far. Earlier in the day, an official at Delhi government's Babu Jagjivan Ram Memorial Hospital, where a total of 75 employees have tested positive, said that no new cases were reported on Wednesday.

Days after the Personnel Secretary of District Magistrate (South West) tested positive for COVID-19, two more people working at the office were confirmed infected on Wednesday, an official said. The DM had tested negative and the office was sanitised and is functioning.

Meanwhile, the Delhi government ordered all Deputy Commissioners not to send any sample for COVID-19 testing to the National Institute of Biologicals in Noida till May 3 due to "considerable pendency" in testing.

## Medical staff test positive in Gurugram

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GURUGRAM

A paramedical staff from Medanta Hospital and two nurses of Civil Hospital tested positive for COVID-19 on Wednesday, taking the number of cases in the district to 54.

Earlier, three nurses and a paramedical staff from Medanta had tested positive during random sampling of the staff. The results for samples of two more staff nurses from hospital are awaited.

Chief Medical Officer, Gurugram, J.S. Punia told *The Hindu* that in wake of the growing number of cases from Medanta Hospital it could be decided to take away COVID-19 tag from the hospital.

Sources in the administration said the situation emerging from increasing number of COVID-19 cases from Medanta would be reviewed on Thursday.

Meanwhile, 21 people in Civil Hospital were quarantined after two nurses tested positive for COVID-19.

## After Centre order, Delhi govt. plans movement of migrants

Kejriwal in touch with counterparts from other States

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday said the Delhi government was in the process of formulating a plan regarding the movement of migrant workers to their respective States.

Mr. Kejriwal's statement came in the wake of the Ministry of Home Affairs issuing an order allowing the interstate movement of stranded tourists, pilgrims, students and migrant workers. The Delhi government was also in touch with its counterparts in other States, he said.

### Buses to be used

"The order regarding migrants was passed today by the Union Home Ministry. In this regard, we are talking to other state governments. All of us are in the process of planning this and will inform you about the way forward in a day or two. Until then, you should stay at home and follow the lock-



Migrant workers, trying to leave for their hometowns after the nationwide lockdown was imposed, at Kaushambi bus terminal. •FILE PHOTO: SANDEEP SAXENA

down," Mr. Kejriwal tweeted.

State governments, according to the order, are to make arrangements and utilise buses for the movement of such residents of their respective States. Only the

asymptomatic among such individuals, the order stated, will be required to stay in home quarantine after reaching their destinations unless assessment by local authorities requires institutional quarantine.

## Daily stock dips at Azadpur Mandi

It received 5,000 tonnes of fruits, vegetables, down from the usual 7,000 tonnes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The total daily stock of fruits and vegetables at the Azadpur Mandi has dipped by 2,000 tonnes due to the closure of the Haryana-Delhi border, said authorities.

Adil Khan, chairman of the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (Azadpur), said the daily procurement of fruits and vegetables at the market after the national lockdown stood usually at 7,000-8,000 tonnes.

It was 5,000 tonnes on Wednesday.

### Border closure

"Though the procurement has reduced, the stock of both fruits and vegetables currently available is adequate. The prices too are stable and no fluctuation in the prices of either has been noticed," he added.

According to Mr. Khan, green vegetables such as lady fingers, bitter gourd, ridged gourd, bottle gourd, and cucumbers among others, which are usually supplied from Sonipat in Haryana



A vegetable seller at Azadpur Mandi in New Delhi on Wednesday. •SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

na did not arrive due to the border closure which has been in effect since earlier this week.

As many as 11 confirmed cases, one of which has resulted in a death, have surfaced from the mandi – the

largest wholesale fruits and vegetables market in Asia – between April 20-26.

Though a senior government official put the number of COVID-19 cases connected to the market at "around a dozen", Anil Malhotra, member of the marketing panel has alleged there were "at least 20" such cases which need to be probed.

hotra, member of the marketing panel has alleged there were "at least 20" such cases which need to be probed. According to Mr. Malhotra, a majority of the over 1,400 shops in the market are shut.

## Police launch 'Covid Kawach' in South East

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

To keep a strict vigil in containment zones of South East district, Delhi Police on Wednesday launched 'Covid Kawach', a scheme to check "unwanted movement" of residents and spread awareness about the virus.

There are 17 containment zones in south-east Delhi. Under the new scheme, eight e-rickshaws have been hired to patrol the areas.

### Thanking doctors

Meanwhile, the South district police performed a 'parikrama' of AIIMS as a sign of respect to doctors who are in the frontlines of the fight against COVID-19. Earlier, the New Delhi district police had performed a similar exercise at Bangla Sahib.

Atul Thakur, DCP (South), said that the police is also visiting houses of doctors and paramedical staff. "We met doctors at AIIMS and paid a siren tribute to them," he added.

## Nurse association wary of rising virus cases

Adopt precautionary approach, it says

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The United Nurses Association's National Capital Region Chapter (UNA-NCR) and Public Services International (PSI) on Wednesday said that they were concerned at the "spiralling" number of health workers testing positive for COVID-19 in the National Capital Territory of Delhi.

They also wrote a letter to the Delhi government "demanding a change of course towards a precautionary approach to this worrying situation".

"Hospitals are enraging as hubs of infection, at least 223 health workers have already tested positive in Delhi and more than 400 are on quarantine, most of them are nurses. If this continues, who will take care of the patients when they need it as

many as are unable to work?" said Joldin Francis, UNA-NCR General Secretary.

The letter also demanded that the government should institute an empowered task force, that includes medical professionals including nurses' unions in the public and private sector.

"In view of the fact that COVID-19 carriers are also asymptomatic, health workers dealing need to protect and be provided with appropriate PPE as if all patients were suspected COVID-19 cases. The Government should provide all health care workers with PPE in public hospitals and ensure that there are also provided in private hospitals. That is their right in law," said Anand Grover, senior advocate and former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health.

## Medical student tests positive

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A first-year postgraduate female student at Kasturba Hospital tested positive for COVID-19 on Tuesday night, a spokesperson of the North Delhi Municipal Corporation, which runs the hospital, said.

The patient is in home quarantine as are the seven doctors and four nurses who were in primary contact with her. The contacts will be tested soon.

The student left the hospital after developing symptoms on April 21, following which authorities undertook contact tracing and sanitisation. The patient is asymptomatic, the official added. All the departments of the hospital are functioning. At the Rajan Babu Tuberculosis Hospital, also run by the civic body, a 52-year-old employee, who had gone to a private hospital for dialysis, was sent for testing and found to be infected. At Hindu Rao Hospital, where a nurse was infected, 76 of her contacts have been identified out of which 30 have tested negative so far.

"I have not told my family as I do not want them to worry about me. From the time I tested positive, it was my colleagues who stood beside me. From making constant phone calls to getting me things like soap, food, they have done everything

## 'Healthcare workers should demand PPE kits from hospitals'

COVID-19 survivor grateful to colleagues who helped him

NIKHIL M BABU  
NEW DELHI

From the first week of April, the life of Hashir\*, a 30-year-old nurse working at Delhi State Cancer Institute (DSCI) turned upside down as he tested positive for COVID-19, got admitted to a government hospital, tested negative twice for the virus, and is currently in a 14-day quarantine.

Talking to the *The Hindu*, the nurse said, "All healthcare workers should be extra careful while working. You can help others only if you are fit and alive."

Addressing fellow health-care workers, he said, "You should all demand PPE kits even if the hospital is reluctant."

Mr. Hashir said that his family does not know anything about it and he would not have survived had his colleagues not been there for him.

"I have not told my family as I do not want them to worry about me. From the time I tested positive, it was my colleagues who stood beside me. From making constant

not a COVID-19 treatment facility, the hospital was closed for sanitisation on April 1 after a doctor had tested positive. Two of the patients later died.

"I was scared for myself as I knew a lot of people had died of the disease. Also, no medicine has been invented yet," Mr. Hashir said.

He also said that if the hospital authorities had provided staff with PPE kits in March, they could stop staff from getting infected "to a large extent".

### Virus hotspot

The nurse said that when the lockdown was announced in March, they had asked the authorities for PPE multiple times as Dilshad Garden had already become a hotspot for the virus, but in vain.

Mr. Hashir added that he is not afraid now and will join duty once his mandatory quarantine period was over.

"I also want to go home so that I can tell my parents about all these in person," he said.

"I have not told my family as I do not want them to worry about me. From the time I tested positive, it was my colleagues who stood beside me. From making constant

### TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT

Mr. N SELVAKUMAR  
PH: 9820350726  
selvakumar.n@thehindu.co.in

Punjab sees a spike with 33 new cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Punjab on Wednesday saw a spike in fresh cases of COVID-19 as 33 new cases surfaced, taking the total tally to 375 in the State, according to an official statement.

State health department said on April 29, as many as 11 new patients were reported from Ludhiana, eight from SAS Nagar, three each from Faridkot and Hoshiarpur districts. Two each were reported from Patiala, Bathinda and SBS Nagar districts while one each surfaced from Jalandhar and Sangrur. The total active cases in the State at present are 252. Punjab has so far seen COVID-19 related deaths. As many as 104 patients have so far recovered, it added.

In Union Territory of Chandigarh eight fresh cases were reported, taking the total count to 67.

## 7 Haryana districts to decide relaxations at the block level

5.5 lakh workers and labourers back at work in the State, says Chief Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GURUGRAM

Expressing satisfaction over his government's efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 infection, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal on Wednesday said certain relaxations were allowed to the industry in the State as per the Ministry of Home Affairs guidelines after April 20.

An estimated 5.5 lakh workers and labourers were engaged in work in the State and brick kilns were allowed to operate employing 2.07 lakh labourers, he said.

The Chief Minister said relaxations in the seven most affected districts of Gurugram, Faridabad, Nuh, Palwal, Sonipat, Panipat and Panchkula would be decided at the block level, but



15,500 migrant workers in Haryana relief camps sent back to their respective States, says CM ■ FILE PHOTO: V.V. KRISHNAN

the plan for the rest of the State would be at the district level. He informed shops in the villages were allowed to open and in situ units, with the workers staying inside the premises, were also allowed.

He also said the Information Technology companies

could work with one-third strength and the rest of the industries with half the staff.

### '308 cases so far'

Mr. Lal said the number of COVID-19 infections in Haryana doubled every 21 days, compared with the na-

tional average of eight days. The State has recorded 308 cases of COVID-19 so far, and 224 people out of them have recovered. Besides three deaths, the State has 81 active cases. The situation would have been better had not numbers increased due to a religious congregation in Delhi in March, he claimed.

### Extra wages

The Chief Minister also said the industries, in consultation with the workers, could work for 12 hours, but need to pay the extra wages as per the law.

He said that 15,500 migrant workers in relief camps in Haryana were sent back to their respective States after a quarantine period of more than a month.

## INTERVIEW | AJAY KUMAR LALLU

# 'U.P. govt. hiding real figures'

If we test people, reality will come out, says State Cong. chief

OMAR RASHID  
LUCKNOW

*Uttar Pradesh Congress president Ajay Kumar Lallu, an MLA from Tamkuhi Raj in Kushinagar, claims the BJP government in the State is hiding the real figures of COVID-19. The Yogi Adityanath government is misleading people through an illusion of numbers, he says in an interview. Excerpts:*



tests are being done.

Are you saying that the government is hiding the real figures?

■ Of course. This is the illusion of numbers. They are trying to entangle people of U.P. in numbers. If we test people, the reality will come before us. I feel many districts, which the government claims have no cases at all, if there is random testing conducted, cases will come up in large numbers. The speed of testing is slow and is only at some marked places.

Many migrants who arrived in U.P. from other States have been escaping from quarantine centres. Is this due to some

miscommunication or lack of basic facilities and assurances?

■ Quarantine centres are in a bad shape. I can say with full confidence that it is the various NGOs and local leaders who are providing food to people in quarantine centres. In Fatehpur, Congress people are supplying food. The government is not working the way it should. Even if those under quarantine want to stay, they can't. There are no facilities, no power or fan or arrangements to stay. I watched a video from Bhadohi where a dog was seen loitering around the place where food was being prepared for such people. The food was unhygienic. People are being compelled to leave the quarantine centres.

The lockdown will go on till May 3. This has caused a lot of economic hardship and strained the rural economy. Do you feel the lockdown should be extended beyond this?

■ Apart from lockdown, increased testing and treatment of those infected, there is no other solution to this illness. As of now, the government has made no arrangements. It has fully failed in terms of preparations.

## Valley doctors pitch for decent burial of virus victims

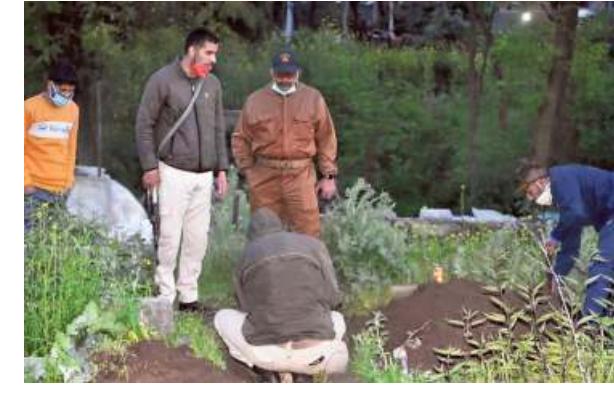
80-year-old's death ignites debate over adoption of better protocol by the J&K administration

PEERZADA ASHIQ  
SRINAGAR

A viral picture on Wednesday of the burial of an 80-year-old COVID-19 victim in Srinagar being attended only by a few policemen and not by any family member evoked shock among the locals, who commented profusely on the issue on social media platforms, and a debate for adoption of a better protocol by the administration on burials.

Dr. Arshad Hussain, psychiatrist and professor at the Institute of Mental Health And Neuro Sciences-Kashmir, warned of further stigmatisation of people and families afflicted with COVID-19 infections.

"If we have to remove stigma from COVID-19 infection, it is imperative to revisit the practice of burials of patients who die of the disease. Such patients are being taken care



Policemen help with burial of an 80-year-old COVID-19 victim in Srinagar without family members. ■ J&K POLICE VIA TWITTER

of by hospital staff, equally posing risk of contracting the disease, and once any patient dies, the ability to infect others is drastically reduced, with, of course, proper care. We can provide these bodies a decent burial," he said.

A resident of Srinagar's Rainawari, the COVID-19 victim died in the Chest Disease

Hospital within a day of her admission on Tuesday. The authorities immediately quarantined all the family members and disallowed their participation in the last rites.

The burial picture, circulated by the police, showed policemen helping in digging a grave and lowering the body into it. None of the rela-

tives or neighbours were present.

Dr. Hussain said burial in Kashmir was not only a religious act but also had cultural connotations of closure for the bereaved. "The dead almost get a new address in our culture and the graves have an elaborate epitaph. The process of burial itself is very elaborate with lots of cultural sensitivities, including how many people come for burial. It helps in overall grief resolution."

### Burial with precautions

Dr. Hussain advocated burials "with precautions which are scientific and rational". "Religious leaders need to take the lead in this. They should inculcate the new norm of social distancing at burials. It becomes important to remove stigma and shame from COVID-19 infection," he said.

Director General of Police Dilbag Singh complimented the SHO, Rainawari, for performing the burial and the last rites. "The SHO's team has done commendable community service," he said.

## Una police using mobile app to streamline people's entry in H.P.

Over 12,500 people have returned since govt. relaxed restrictions

VIKAS VASUDEVA  
CHANDIGARH

After a huge rush of people started making a beeline at the borders of Himachal Pradesh following the government's decision to allow its residents stuck in other States to return home, the police in the border district of Una have taken the lead in using mobile-based app to streamline their entry.

### Punjab border

Una district, which shares border with Punjab, saw as many as 12,579 people returning to the district in 2,765 vehicles between April 26 and April 28 – the highest among all districts in the State.

"There has been a rush of

people. We have started doing mobile app-based entry of data for persons entering from Una district, which is saving precious time of the public and the police personnel," said Karthikeyan Gokulachandran, Superintendent of Police, Una.

Mr. Gokulachandran said by use of this technology, the police will be recording the details of people, vehicles etc in the mobile phone, which will be saved at the backend for easy access.

"We will do away with paper and ensure the procedure is faster and details are common. The data is getting updated directly at the backend in real time. We do not need to compile it again on Excel or Google sheets now.

It saves many manhours, dual entry, time and makes the mechanism more efficient. Also, when we keep updating the information on paper, then we have to compile it and by the time it is done, the dynamics change and the data becomes obsolete," he said.

"Earlier only two counters were entering the data and now we can have 30-40 men entering data standing next to vehicles, easing out the situation," he added.

### With e-passes

According to government data, around 23,000 people have returned to their home town in their own vehicles across the State after securing e-passes since relaxation orders.

## Call for HIV test on returning migrant workers in Odisha

14-day quarantine can help fight HIV too, say activists

STAFF REPORTER  
BERHAMPUR

Social activists working to prevent the spread of HIV have appealed to the Odisha government to test all returning migrant workers for the disease during their stay in quarantine centres due to the threat of COVID-19 infection.

The Association for Rural Upliftment and National Allegiance (ARUNA), involved in HIV prevention and rehabilitation of HIV-positive persons in Odisha since 1994, has written to the State government regarding it.

According to the organisation, Odisha is now showing declining trend of HIV infection. To strengthen the continuing fight against it, the present situation of documented return of migrant labourers

and their 14 day quarantine can also be used as a tool to fight HIV, said Lokanath Mishra, executive committee member of ARUNA.

Past studies have revealed that most HIV positive persons in Odisha are migrant workers especially the single-male migrants. According to Mr. Mishra, till now it has been a challenge for Odisha State AIDS Control Society and its partner bodies to test migrant workers for HIV.

### Ganjam most affected

In Ganjam district, the most AIDS prone region of Odisha, HIV screening of most migrant workers has not been possible. Majority of HIV positive cases of Ganjam district are migrant workers working in textile mills of Surat in Guj-

arat. Large numbers of these migrant labourers are left out from HIV tests.

In next few weeks a huge number of migrant workers will return back from different States to Odisha including Ganjam. As per order of the State government all of them will have to undergo quarantine for 14 days for COVID-19 threat. ARUNA feels it is an opportunity to screen large number of these migrant workers, who are also vulnerable to HIV infection.

"If taken up, this large scale screening of high risk population for HIV in Odisha will set an example before the entire country. It will also significantly reduce further spread of HIV during this critical period of spread of COVID-19," said Mr. Mishra.

## Rice millers issue appeal to Centre, Punjab govt.

'Release pending refunds of market fee'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Reeling under losses amid the ongoing lockdown following COVID-19 outbreak, the Rice Millers Exporters Association, Amritsar has asked the Centre and the Punjab government to come for its rescue so that the agro-processing industry can be revived.

While assuring the government of its support to overcome the bleak economic scenario presently gripping the nation, the association has urged the State government to immediate release pending refunds of market fee and RDF for at least six months," he said.

He added that the Central government had been giving the exporters under MSME an interest subvention on bank export limits but it was withdrawn in April this year. "It should be immediately restored," he said.

## Rajasthan mission puts focus on high-risk groups

Emphasis on people suffering from high BP, heart disease, cancer living in COVID-19 containment zones

MOHAMMED IQBAL  
JAIPUR

A mission to save the lives of people in the high-risk groups has been launched in Rajasthan with the emphasis on identifying old people above 60 years, people suffering from high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer and pulmonary disease, pregnant women and children below 10 years of age living in the COVID-19 containment zones.

Additional Chief Secretary (Medical & Health) Rohit Kumar Singh said here on Wednesday that the "mission life saving" would identify the high-risk people at the early stage of COVID-19 infection, track their medical history for targeted attention and treat



A medic collects a swab sample of an elderly woman in the Walled City of Jaipur. ■ FILE PHOTO: PTI

sion's primary objective was to save the lives of the vulnerable to the maximum possible extent.

Information about the high-risk groups will be culled from the Mahatma Gandhi Ayushman Bharat health insu-

rance scheme's data base, non-communicable diseases' data base, senior citizens' pension documents, electoral rolls, ration cards and the records of government pensioners. The information will be used for preparing list of patients in each municipal ward and village.

"We are also tracking the history of their treatment under the health insurance scheme from the data available for the last four years. The patients will be quickly identified for respiratory and other vulnerabilities like kidney, hypertension, diabetes and similar conditions," Mr. Singh said, adding that this would enable the doctors to pay special attention to them.

## 'Chariots' to spread awareness about COVID-19 in Bharatpur

Similar vehicles are making rounds of the hotspot areas

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
JAIPUR

Five e-rickshaws converted into 'chariots' are alerting the people about the symptoms of COVID-19 and generating awareness about the measures to contain its spread in Rajasthan's Bharatpur city. Over 110 persons have so far tested COVID-19 positive in the district and two of them have lost their lives.

The order for initiating the "mission life saving" was issued on Tuesday and sent to all District Collectors and Chief Medical & Health Officers. The mission's activities will include survey in containment zones, health check-up through mobile OPD vans and passive surveillance.



Bharatpur SP Haider Ali Zaidi flagging off the chariots. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

formation to the public. Similar vehicles equipped with loudspeakers and publicity material are making rounds of the district's hotspot regions, such as Pahari, Kaman and Nagar. They are also helping the people by supplying food, dry ration

kits and essential items during the lockdown.

Bharatpur-based Lupin Foundation, which has fabricated the chariots, has also taken the responsibility to assist the "corona warriors" by providing digital thermometers, face shields, face masks, gloves, sanitiser and other equipment to them. The messengers travelling on the chariots have appealed to the people to stay indoors. Lupin Foundation's executive director Sita Ram Gupta said the people had realised the significance of work done by health workers and police personnel.

# One dies in Karnataka, A.P. grapples with spread

Stranded people abroad to be flown back to Bengaluru, Kerala says community sample survey shows no spread

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/  
VIJAYAWADA/BENGALURU/  
HYDERABAD/CHENNAI  
Karnataka's Tumakuru district recorded the death of a COVID-19 patient on Wednesday and the State reported 12 new cases.

The virus continued to infect more people in Andhra Pradesh, which reported 73 new cases in 11 districts, and Kurnool and Guntur remained hotspots. Kerala had 10 fresh cases Wednesday, of whom eight had contracted the disease through 'contact with known or unknown sources'.

Kerala Chief Minister, Pinarayi Vijayan reiterated that there was no community transmission in the State. "There seems to be a widespread campaign that Kerala is up against the community spread of COVID-19. There have been no developments that are uncontrollable. However, the threat of community transmission is very real," he told the media.

Kollam accounted for six

of the 10 new cases while Thiruvananthapuram and Kasaragod had two cases each.

Mr. Vijayan said that the results of 391 samples out of

## COVID-19

the 3,101 samples randomly collected from select groups on a single day, as part of an "augmented testing" drive, were awaited from the lab. Only three samples of the 3,101 tested positive. Results of another 25 would be released after re-confirmation.

With the detection of 73 new cases, the tally in Andhra Pradesh rose to 1,332. The State had conducted 7,727 tests, the highest number tested in a day, taking the total samples tested to 88,061.

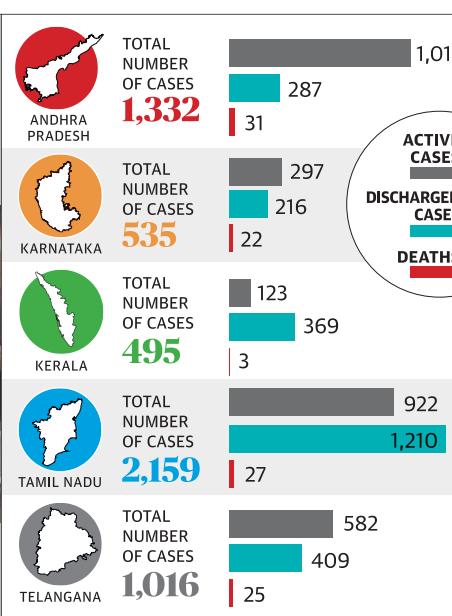
Among fresh cases, 29 were from Guntur, the second most affected district after Kurnool, which reported 11 cases. Krishna district reported 13 cases while Ka-

## Keeping hunger at bay

As it has become tough for people to get food and other essentials during the nationwide lockdown, the government has taken steps to provide them free of cost at various centres



Patient wait: Transgenders collecting ration kits at a distribution centre in Hyderabad on Wednesday. ■ G. RAMAKRISHNA



dapa, Prakasam and Anantapur districts had four cases each. Chittoor had three cases, West Godavari two and East Godavari, Srikakulam and Visakhapatnam one case each.

In Telangana seven more cases were reported on Wednesday, all from Greater Hyderabad limits, taking the total to 1,016. The medical bulletin said 11 districts including Siddipet and Mulugu were COVID-free.

With the death in Tumakuru district the toll in Karnataka stood at 21. The 12 new cases reported raised the tally to 535.

A 73-year-old man admitted on April 25 to a hospital in Tumakuru with Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) died on Wednesday.

The State plans to bring back Indians stranded

abroad. As many as 10,823 persons from Karnataka were stranded including 4,408 tourists and visitors, 3,074 students, 2,784 migrants and professionals and 557 ship crew.

## T.N. records two deaths

Tamil Nadu's capital saw another spike in the number of COVID-19 cases on Wednesday. Ninety-four of the 104 cases reported in the State were in the city. Two more persons, including a 27-year-old pregnant woman, died of COVID-19 in the city. The number of persons with an unlinked source of infection (primary) increased to 37 on Wednesday.

Also, 82 persons across the State were discharged.

This took the total number of persons discharged to 1,210. As on date, 210 persons were discharged in Chennai followed by 121 in Coimbatore, 91 in Tiruppur, 69 in Erode and 66 in Dindigul. A total of 922 persons continued to be on treatment.

## Safe harvest



Taking precautions: A plantation worker plucking tea leaves at Nelliampathy in Kerala; and, right, a person loading bananas on a truck in Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu, on Wednesday. As agricultural operations are permitted during the lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19, workers are increasingly taking precautions against the virus. ■ K.K. MUSTAFAH & M. SRINATH



## IN BRIEF



Buses to ferry labourers stranded in Guntur  
KURNool  
The Andhra Pradesh government, with the help of State Road Transport Corporation, has begun transporting 4,641 stranded migrant labourers from Guntur district to various places in Kurnool. The first batch of 159 buses arrived here on Wednesday. This is said to be the biggest passenger transport operations during the lockdown period. All the migrant labourers were seated in compliance with the social distancing norms.

## Fishermen stranded in Gujarat to reach A.P.

GUNTUR  
More than 4,500 fishermen from the Andhra Pradesh, who were stranded at Veraval port in Gujarat owing to the lockdown, are being brought home in 65 buses and they are expected to reach their native districts by Thursday afternoon, Minister for Marketing, Fisheries and Animal Husbandry Mopidevi Venkata Ramana Rao has said. Initially, the government had thought of bringing the stranded fishermen through the sea route, but the plan was shelved due to logistical issues. Of the 65 buses, 57 have started their journey.

## Aero India 2021 is on, at same time and place

BENGALURU  
The 13th edition of Aero India will be held from February 3 to 7, 2021. The venue remains unchanged again — Air Force Station, Yelahanka, according to the event site of the Ministry of Defence. The dates of the two-yearly international military and civil air show are normally announced in October. There was no immediate information why the announcement was made more than five months ahead.

## Construction workers turn restive near Hyderabad

Three officials injured after they throw stones

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

SANGAREDDY

Tension prevailed for some time near the Indian Institute of Technology-Hyderabad (IIT-H) on Wednesday when hundreds of workers came out, demanding that they be sent back to their native places. At one point, they pelted stones at a patrol vehicle, injuring three officials, including an assistant sub-inspector.

Police were deployed in large numbers on the premises where about 2,400 workers are staying.

The situation was brought under control after MLA T. Jayaprakash Reddy, Collector M. Hanumantha Rao and Superintendent of Police S. Chandrasekhar Reddy held talks with the workers and pacified them.

According to the police, a large number of workers, mostly migrants from diffe-



Tipping point: Workers staging a dharna in Sangareddy district on Wednesday. ■ MOHD ARIF

rent parts of the country, are involved in construction activity on the IIT-H premises. Alleging that they had not been paid for the past three months, the workers raised slogans against the contractor. They also alleged that the food supplied to them was of poor quality and showed the heaps of food thrown into the dustbin. Even the toilets were in a ve-

ry bad condition, they said.

The police brought the situation under control by using force.

"Pending wages for two months would be paid by Thursday evening. Representatives of the construction companies have accepted that. The work would commence from Friday," the MLA, the Collector and the SP told reporters.

This is where a wearable device developed by the faculty of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and city-based doctors, in collaboration with MIISKY Innovation Pvt. Ltd., could come in handy.

The device, a smartwatch, can measure various vital parameters of individuals under isolation on a real-time basis.

Linked to a smartphone via Bluetooth, the smartwatch will record the patient's blood oxygen saturation and body temperature, said Hardik J. Pandya, Assistant Professor, at

## A smart way to watch over COVID-19 patients

### AFSHAN YASMEEN

BENGALURU

With the Union Health Ministry announcing new guidelines for home isolation of people who either have very mild COVID-19 symptoms or are in the pre-symptomatic phase, it will now be a mammoth task for the authorities to monitor their health status and also ensure they do not violate home quarantine norms.

This is where a wearable device developed by the faculty of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and city-based doctors, in collaboration with MIISKY Innovation Pvt. Ltd., could come in handy.

The device, a smartwatch, can measure various vital parameters of individuals under isolation on a real-time basis. Linked to a smartphone via Bluetooth, the smartwatch will record the patient's blood oxygen saturation and body temperature, said Hardik J. Pandya, Assistant Professor, at

the Department of Electronic Systems Engineering at IISc.

The team that has developed this device comprises, besides Dr. Pandya, students at BEES Laboratory and doctors from Aster CMI and Sri Shankara Cancer Hospital and Research Centre and researchers from MIISKY Innovation Pvt. Ltd.

Sonal Asthana, Senior Consultant Transplant surgeon in Aster Integrated Liver Care team, said the device will also help get the location details of the wearer. "The location details will help ensure that the individual is adhering to quarantine norms. A warning can be sent to authorities if the user crosses over from one zone to another. Also, if the temperature rises or the oxygen saturation level falls below 93%, the wearable device alerts the local tracking centre about the impending need for hospitalisation," he explained.

The device, a smartwatch, can measure various vital parameters of individuals under isolation on a real-time basis. Linked to a smartphone via Bluetooth, the smartwatch will record the patient's blood oxygen saturation and body temperature, said Hardik J. Pandya, Assistant Professor, at

## WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB; MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)  
Forecast for Thursday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning, hail and gusty winds very likely at isolated places over Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Telangana and Maharashtra; with lightning and gusty winds at isolated places over Punjab, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

In a letter to the State government, the High Court Registrar General has requested the State government to exempt salaries of High Court judges from the government's salary deferral order.

In a letter to the State government, the High Court Registrar General said salaries and allowances of the Chief Justice and the judges

## A mobile game to beat boredom, keep the virus at bay

IIT-Tirupati researchers gamify the COVID-19 safety protocol, reinforcing masks, handwashing and more

### AD RANGARAJAN

TIRUPATI

Finding a solution to COVID-19 may take time, but learning to tackle its spread is now child's play.

The Indian Institute of Technology Tirupati (IIT-T) has developed a web and mobile game to make the process interesting.

'SurviveCovid-19,' the Mario-style lightweight survivor game was developed on a 2D platform by the Research in Intelligent Software & Human Analytics (RISHA) lab of IIT-T's Department of

Computer Science and Engineering. The game, played around 800 times so far, is all about a person, who must step out of his house to buy groceries and return safely when the dangerous virus is around. It is one of the most common scenarios and is universally applicable.

The gameplay requires the individual to protect himself from the virus that chases him in the endeavour. He must choose to wear a mask, use sanitiser, eat immunity-boosting fruits and stay-



away from others (physical distancing) on the street. The man moves around the

screen based on the player's cursor key movement.

### 'Effective tool'

The game was developed by academician Sridhar Chimalakonda, mentoring his students Dehejaj Vagavolu and Akhila Sri Manasa Venigalla. "The game is useful not only to beat boredom during the lockdown, but also in encouraging people to stay indoors and practice health measures," says Dr. Chimalakonda. He adds that awareness through games would be more successful

with the younger generation, rather than in the form of campaigns or media advertisements.

The game designed for Android-based mobiles has been evaluated through a remote qualitative user survey, using 20 volunteers. "The results are promising with all the questions in the survey having a mean value greater than 3.6," says one of the researchers. A full-fledged research paper on the first such COVID-19 game, is to be produced, the team says.

## Ordinance route to defer pay in Kerala

High Court had stayed the govt. order

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala Cabinet has cleared a draft Ordinance empowering the government for deferring six days' salary of employees and teachers for five months to face the extraordinary fiscal crisis triggered by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan told reporters here on Wednesday that there was a steep fall in income and the crisis was unbearable. The decision on deferral was made to overcome the crisis. Since the High Court had pointed out that the decision was legally untenable, the Cabinet decided to recommend the Governor to promulgate an Ordinance, he said.

The Ordinance will also empower the government to impose a 30% cut in the salary, allowances and honours of Ministers and MLAs for a year. The draft explains that in the event of any disaster or public health emergency, it shall be competent and lawful for the government to defer up to one-fourth of the total salary of an employee in any institution owned or controlled by the government,



Pinarayi Vijayan

including aided and grant-in-aid bodies.

The High Court had said there was no sanction of law for the order to defer the salary and its amounts to deprivation of property of the employees and teachers who were affected by it. Hence, the government had to issue the Ordinance under extraordinary circumstances, it said.

Finance Minister T.M. Thomas Isaac clarified that the government had the powers to deduct up to one-fourth of the total monthly salary of an employee for the management of the crisis that stemmed out of the public health emergency, but would strictly go by the earlier decision to defer the salary.

## Exempt judges' salaries from order: Kerala HC

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOCHI

The Kerala High Court Registrar General has requested the State government to exempt salaries of High Court judges from the government's salary deferral order.

In a letter to the State government, the High Court Registrar General said salaries and allowances of the Chief Justice and the judges

cannot be varied or deferred by the State government thorough an executive order. As per Article 221 of the Constitution, High Court judges are paid salaries as determined by Parliament and they shall not be varied to their disadvantage after appointment.

The letter was sent on April 27, a day before a single judge stayed the salary deferral order.

■ Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)  
SO<sub>2</sub>: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.  
NO<sub>2</sub>: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, 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.  
PM<sub>2.5</sub> & PM<sub>10</sub>: 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.



## Strategic shift

India is now forced to reserve its health-care facilities for those who need it the most

**O**n March 28, only 130 districts of India's 736 had reported COVID-19 cases. The Health Ministry's strategy then, after the national lockdown, was to ensure State supervision of those who manifested symptoms – as well as their high-risk contacts – and who had a travel history. Suspected high-risk contacts or those likely to have been exposed to the infection were subjected to varying degrees of State quarantine. Those not showing signs of the disease or 'mild' manifestations, were put in care centres and those noticeably sicker, in hospitals. The idea always was that if the sick and their contacts were segregated from the community long enough, the transmission chain would be broken and the disease extinguished. As April ends, the number of affected districts stands at 401 and confirmed cases have risen by a 1,000 a day; the daily death count hovers between 50 and 60. In a containment strategy tweak, those with a mild form of the disease, or are presymptomatic, would have the option of home quarantining. But their homes ought to have self-isolation facilities, a full-time caregiver, and daily health-status reports given to the district surveillance officer.

The Health Ministry has not explained what prompted this relative relaxation. However, anecdotal evidence suggests doctors and health-care workers have been disproportionately vulnerable to the infection and a single case leads to entire hospitals being shut down. Unlike in the U.S. and western Europe, India's hospitals are not yet clogged with seriously ill patients. It could be due to India's relatively low case-count and also people not turning up fearing infection. Allowing home quarantine could be seen as health authorities inferring that quarantining in public facilities posed more risks. The presymptomatics (mild illness) and asymptomatics (no signs) did not benefit from treatment and were potent virus spreaders, and therefore endangered the staff and health workers. They also stretched State resources in maintenance. The Ministry also found that among those who tested positive, there were two presymptomatics or asymptomatics for every symptomatic. The disease spread, it appears, is now beyond the ability of the state to contain, by quarantine, and it was far more prudent to fortify health workers and hospitals with the best facilities available to handle patients. Officially, there is no community transmission in India but at this magnitude of cases, it does not practically matter. Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi are powering the spread of cases and only consistent declines here can broach discussion on the end of the pandemic. From a month ago, India, on paper, is equipped with better supply channels of personal protective equipment, infusion pumps (for oxygen), hospital beds, laboratories for testing and PCR kits. If the lockdown is lifted on May 3, the rationale behind the government's containment strategy will be put to a stringent test.

## President under probe

Bolsonaro faces a political setback as Brazil struggles with economic and health crises

**B**razilian President Jair Bolsonaro's decision to sack the country's federal police chief has come back to haunt him. First, Sérgio Moro, one-time Bolsonaro ally and Justice Minister, announced his resignation in a press conference, accusing the leader of trying to interfere in the federal police. Then the Attorney-General moved the Supreme Court seeking authorisation for a probe into Mr. Moro's allegations. On Tuesday, the top court approved a 60-day probe into the President's actions. The police were reportedly investigating two of the President's sons, both public officials, over alleged fake news dissemination, corruption and mafia group ties. While the President and his sons have dismissed the allegations, the move to quickly replace the police chief with a "friend" of one of the President's sons, has strengthened Mr. Moro's claim that the President wants someone in the police "from whom he can collect intelligence". The probe comes at a time when the President's handling of Latin America's largest coronavirus outbreak is already under fire. Mr. Bolsonaro, who wants the economy to be reopened sooner, sacked his Health Minister Luiz Henrique Mandetta earlier this month over disagreements.

Mr. Bolsonaro is not new to controversies. From his incessant attacks on political rivals, activists, environmentalists and sexual minorities to the controversial handling of the Amazon fires, he has triggered sharp criticism. But this time, he is perhaps facing his biggest crisis as President. Mr. Moro and Dr. Mandetta were relatively popular figures in his Cabinet. The alliance with Mr. Moro, a former judge, had been particularly strong. Last year, a media report showed that Mr. Moro had colluded with the prosecutors who led a corruption investigation against former President Lula da Silva. Lula was convicted in 2018 when he was leading in the presidential election. His exit enabled an easy win for Mr. Bolsonaro. With Mr. Moro's resignation, Mr. Bolsonaro has lost a powerful ally, and is now surrounded by his unpopular far-right Cabinet colleagues and family. Hundreds are dying from COVID-19 and the government appears to be clueless about its containment. Brazil's economy is expected to contract 5.3% this year, a sharp fall from the government's rosy projections made earlier. Mr. Bolsonaro's approval ratings are also steadily falling. Left-wing Senators have already launched a campaign to impeach him. According to a recent poll, while 45% Brazilians support his impeachment, 46% want him to resign. All these point to an isolated, unpopular President who is losing allies and followers and facing a police probe at a time when the country is going through grave political, economic and health crises.

# Afghan peace and India's elbow room

Though sidelined from regional discussions on Afghanistan, India must still pursue the ample chances in seeking peace



SUHASINI HAIDER

**E**arlier this month, the United Nations Secretariat held a meeting of what it calls the "6+2+1" group on regional efforts to support peace in Afghanistan, a group that includes six neighbouring countries: China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; global players the United States and Russia, and Afghanistan itself. India was conspicuous by its absence from the meeting on April 16, given its historical and strategic ties with Afghanistan, but not for the first time.

### Left out, but some recovery

In December 2001, for example, the Indian team led by special envoy Satinder Lambah arrived in Germany's Petersberg hotel near Bonn, where the famous Bonn agreement was negotiated, to find no reservations had been made for them at the official venue. In January 2010, India was invited to attend the "London Conference" on Afghanistan, but left out of the room during a crucial meeting that decided on opening talks with the Taliban.

In 2020, the reason given for keeping India out of regional discussions on Afghanistan was ostensibly that it holds no "boundary" with Afghanistan; but in fact it is because New Delhi has never announced its support for the U.S.-Taliban peace process. In both 2001 and 2010, however, India fought back its exclusion successfully. At the Bonn agreement, Ambassador Lambah was widely credited for ensuring that Northern Alliance leaders came to a consensus to accept Hamid Karzai as the

Chairman of the interim arrangement that replaced the Taliban regime. After the 2010 conference, New Delhi redoubled its efforts with Kabul, and in 2011, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Afghan President Karzai signed the historic Strategic Partnership Agreement, which was Afghanistan's first such agreement with any country.

### New Delhi's stand

As planners in South Block now consider their next steps in Afghanistan, they must fight back against the idea that any lasting solution in Afghanistan can be discussed without India in the room, while also studying the reasons for such exclusions. To begin with, India's resistance to publicly talking to the Taliban has made it an awkward interlocutor at any table. Its position that only an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned, and Afghan-controlled process can be allowed is a principled one, but has no takers. Kabul, or the Ashraf Ghani government does not lead, own or control the reconciliation process today, comprising the U.S.-Taliban negotiation for an American troops withdrawal, and intra-Afghan talks on power sharing. The U.S.-Taliban peace deal means that the Taliban, which has not let up on violent attacks on the Afghan Army, will become more potent as the U.S. withdraws soldiers from the country, and will hold more sway in the inter-Afghan process as well, as the U.S. withdraws funding for the government in Kabul.

New Delhi's decision to put all its eggs in the Ghani basket has had a two-fold effect: its voice in the reconciliation process has been limited, and it has weakened India's position with other leaders of the deeply divided democratic setup in Kabul such as the former chief executive Abdullah Abdul-



lah. Meanwhile, India's presence inside Afghanistan, which has been painstakingly built up since 2001, is being threatened anew by terror groups such as the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), believed to be backed by Pakistan's establishment. Intercepts showed that the brutal attack, in March, that killed 25 at a gurdwara in Kabul was meant for the embassy in Kabul, and intelligence agencies had warned of suicide car bomb threats to the consulates in Jalalabad and Herat last December.

While the government has said that the novel coronavirus pandemic prompted its decision to clear out both consulates this month, the truth is that a full security reassessment is underway for them. Either way, India's diplomatic strength in Afghanistan should not appear to be in retreat just when it is needed the most.

### What dents India's goodwill

The government must also consider the damage done to the vast reservoir of goodwill India enjoys in Afghanistan because of recent events in the country, especially the controversy over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. The building blocks of that goodwill are India's assistance in infrastructure projects, health care, education, trade and food security, and also in the liberal access to Afghans to study, train and work in India.

Above all, it is India's example as a pluralistic, inclusive democracy that inspires many. Afghanistan's majority-Muslim citizens, many of whom have treated India as a second home, have felt cut out of the move to offer fast track citizenship to only Afghan minorities, as much as they have by reports of anti-Muslim rhetoric and incidents of violence in India.

While many of these are problems of perception, New Delhi must move swiftly to regain the upper hand in the narrative in Afghanistan. India's assistance of more than \$3 billion in projects, trade of about \$1 billion, a \$20 billion projected development expenditure of an alternate route through Chabahar, as well as its support to the Afghan National Army, bureaucrats, doctors and other professionals for training in India should assure it a leading position in Afghanistan's regional formulation.

Three major projects: the Afghan Parliament, the Zarjan-Delaram Highway, and the Afghanistan-India Friendship Dam (Salma dam), along with hundreds of small development projects (of schools, hospitals and water projects) have cemented that position in Afghan hearts nationwide, regardless of Pakistan's attempts to undermine that position, particularly in the South. As a result, it would be a mistake, at this point, to tie all India's support in only to Kabul or the Ghani government; the government must strive to endure that its aid and assistance is broad-based, particularly during the novel coronavirus pandemic to centres outside the capital, even if some lie in areas held by the Taliban.

### Making a leap

India must also pursue opportunities to fulfil its role in the peace efforts in Afghanistan, starting with

efforts to bridge the Ghani-Abdullah divide, and bringing together other major leaders with whom India has built ties for decades. It would be an utter tragedy if the Taliban were to enter the government in Kabul as the U.S. deal envisages, to find the opposing front collapse as it did in 1996.

The conversation India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar had with the U.S.'s Special Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad last week, where they discussed India's "engagement" in the peace process, appears to open a window in that direction.

An understanding between Iran and the U.S. on Afghanistan is necessary for lasting peace as well, and India could play a mediatory part, as it did in order for the Chabahar project.

Finally, New Delhi should use the United Nations's call for a pause in conflicts during the novel coronavirus pandemic, to ensure a hold on hostilities with Pakistan. This will be even more difficult than it sounds, given the abyss that bilateral relations have fallen into in the past year over Kashmir and the rise in firepower exchanged at the Line of Control.

However, if there is one lesson that the U.S.-Taliban talks have imparted, it is that both have found it necessary to come to the table for talks on Afghanistan's future. For India, given its abiding interest in Afghanistan's success and traditional warmth for its people, making that leap should be a bit easier.

Above all, the government must consider the appointment of a special envoy, as it has been done in the past, to deal with its efforts in Afghanistan, which need both diplomatic agility and a firmness of purpose at a watershed moment in that country's history.

[suhasini.h@thehindu.co.in](mailto:suhasini.h@thehindu.co.in)

## A critical study of Trump, the postmodernist

In his COVID-19 response, the U.S. President shows that he follows his wavering instincts more than scientific advice



DIPANKAR GUPTA

**C**OVID-19 has brokered ideal ring conditions for a straight fight between scientists and postmodernists. So far, the two have been shadow boxing under hypothetical conditions. While there were, indeed, many practising scientists, there was no recorded case of a practising postmodernist, that is till Donald Trump arrived on the scene. Now the fight can get real.

Yes, indeed, postmodernism has many known thinkers in its ranks and some of them, in fact, are hugely celebrated. However, outside of theory, neither Jacques Derrida or Jean-François Lyotard, or Jean Baudrillard, or any known postmodernist, ever presented a live case of someone who empirically led a postmodernist life. They had the recipe, but where was the curry? Mr. Trump changed that. As far as one can tell, so far, he is the only celebrated case of an actually functioning, full time, postmodernist person. This is why he should be examined critically, not dismissively, as many tend to do.

### Divergent views

Scientists and postmodernist come to the ring from different training schools and their reactions to COVID-19 illustrate this divergence perfectly. Scientists to

day are looking for a uniform text to explain COVID-19. They are searching for a fundamental core that would not just help in finding a cure for the disease, but would also add to our knowledge of the virus's etymology. In-depth comparative analysis is meant to facilitate an overall agreement and, if things go according to plans, major authors, from China to the United States, will come to a consensus. This may, or may not, happen, but that is the goal.

Diametrically opposed to this perspective are the postmodernists. Be prepared, they have no patience for science. For them the real is substituted, as in Baudrillard, by the "hyper real" which is related, at best, to the tactile world through the medium of signs. Derrida, the lead singer of postmodernism, declared that a text is a dubious phenomenon as "it hides its composition and the rules of its game...." This concealment allows for meta narratives to pretentiously claim "truth". Lyotard limpidly articulates the consequence of this view when he states: "Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity towards meta narratives ...." Now what exactly does this big word "meta narrative" mean? Answer: Anything that is connected to the enlightenment ideal of science and technology, and that also includes contemporary advances in artificial intelligence.

Instead of the grand, or meta, narrative of science, postmodernists prefer what Derrida would call "free play". This is a shifting, flirtatious condition, unconstrained by any methodological

principle that science is obliged to work under. There is now no "origin" and no "zero degree", or, as Baudrillard would argue, we only experience the "hyper real". If one were to accept Hélène Cixous, it is important that we "fly", under such conditions, on independent propulsion. A more radical reading might even conclude that scientific theories are patriarchal and gender laden. Finally, as the bestselling author, Hélène Hegemann, said, "There is no such thing as originality, only authenticity." If the author is authentic to the self, every text is as good as any other.

Where does all of this leave science? Under a rock!

**Trump and 'authenticity'**

Now watch how Mr. Trump is actually a living, breathing, in fact, a breathtaking postmodernist. He is not faithful to any one position, but can move freely between them without constraint because he believes, and so do his followers, that he is truly authentic. Mr. Trump initially commended the Chinese when COVID-19 first entered the U.S. and said he had "very good conversations" with Xi Jinping and had "much respect for him". He soon changed tack and accused China of being "knowingly responsible" for spreading the disease

which he said was, after all, a "Chinese virus".

Mr. Trump has also sounded messianic on many occasions. At one time he confidently proclaimed that, "One day, it's like a miracle – it [COVID-19] will disappear." As recently, as two weeks back he prophesied: "I said it is going away – and it is." He wished hard that COVID-19 would up and leave so that on "Easter Sunday, and you'll have packed churches all over our country." Evidence for any of this? None. Yet, on another register we must admit that Mr. Trump was being authentic because everything he said was straight from the heart.

Likewise he pumped up the demand for hydroxychloroquine, calling it a "game changer" and a "gift from heaven". When he was confronted by contrary evidence from the other corner of the ring, by Dr. Anthony Fauci (the scientist heading the White House's COVID-19 Task Force), Mr. Trump retorted, "I am not a doctor. But I have common sense." He was, in other words, in close contact with the "hyper real". There were speculations, at one time, that perhaps it was not all hyper real. He was probably rooting for hydroxychloroquine because he has financial interest in Sanofi, a pharma company that produces the drug. But that would be too realistic an explanation.

This is why, true to his postmodern condition, he has now dumped his once near complete conviction in hydroxychloroquine and is seriously dating cleaning agents instead. He seems to be quite sure these liquids can knock

out COVID-19 virus "in a minute...by injection inside". This frightened disinfectant companies, including the producers of Lysol, to issue a public notice warning people not to put cleaning liquids into their blood stream. Such "scientific" reactions leave Mr. Trump unuttered as he is not faithful to any text. He sways, bobs and weaves by instincts that come straight from the heart.

There have been some facile comparisons between Mr. Trump and other world leaders who have shown dictatorial tendencies. The big difference between them lies in the fact that Mr. Trump believes in nothing for more than a short duration. On the other hand, those like Jair Bolsonaro (Brazil), or Rodrigo Duterte (the Philippines), have long-term commitments to a single point of view.

Mr. Bolsonaro, for example, has remained steadfast in his dismissal of COVID-19 as a threat. He has been consistently contemptuous, from start to finish, of any attempts to curb the virus. It was as if SARS-CoV-2 was just a little grit in one's mouth. Mr. Trump, as we have seen, is different. He has playfully toyed with different texts and recommended a variety of cures, always reading out of hyper-real situations that spring authentically from inside him.

Would Derrida or Lyotard, or any postmodernists, ever have known that one day, sitting in their corner, pugilistic as ever, would be Donald Trump, the President of the United States?

*Dipankar Gupta is Retired Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University*



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to [letters@thehindu.co.in](mailto:letters@thehindu.co.in) must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

### Plight of workers

It is astonishing how a 100 million-plus strong workforce, the backbone of the informal economy, has largely remained hidden from the attention of society and policymakers (Editorial page, "Vividly imagining the life of migrant workers", April 29). It remains to be seen whether the public sympathy generated by their lockdown-related travails would translate into the making of rights-based social security policies. The Centre, the home States, and the host States would have to share the burden of creating a social safety net

for the workers so that we do not expose them to the cumulative deprivations of joblessness, homelessness, and hunger in the future. It is surprising that narratives about migrant workers skip an important plot in the script – the chronic socio-economic backwardness of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal to which most of the migrant labourers belong. The political rulers and elites of these States should be held accountable for the distress migration.

V.N. MUKUNDARAJAN,  
Thiruvananthapuram

Union Health Ministry has done a U-turn on plasma therapy (Page 1, "Ministry does U-turn on plasma therapy", April 29). Initially, we were told that there is no health emergency. But we seem to have come to that point. Then, we were told to wait for the rapid test kits. They too appear to be faulty. Finally, there was a ray of hope with the theory of plasma therapy. That too has been dashed. The pace of events suggest that there is a lot of false hope being given to buy time. It is time the Centre and States come out with a clear strategy.

K. GANESH,  
Coimbatore

**Nostalgic rewind**  
The 1970s were a golden period as far as entertainment was concerned ('Open Page', "The period drama on the idiot box", April 26). I had a transistor radio then and TV sets such as Dyanora and Solidaire were famous. My son and daughter used to visit houses in the neighbourhood to watch cricket matches, Wimbledon and the French Open which were relayed by Doordarshan. Those days, Doordarshan screened Tamil films on Saturdays and Hindi films on Sundays. During this period, my brother-in-law bought a Dyanora TV set

which was viewed as a boon by my children. I had avoided buying a TV set as I felt their studies would be affected. But the pressure grew and I bought a Solidaire set in 1978. The TV would be on the whole day at times – for sporting events, 'Ramayana' or 'Mahabharata' and serials, and even Olympos Ozhiyum. It took a while for me to restore order in the house. When there was no TV, we would be running to some house to view programmes and when it was there we would be switching it off every now and then. How ironical.

D. SETHURAMAN,  
Chennai

**Saliva use**  
If the repellent sight of using saliva to polish cricket balls makes a retreat in post-COVID-19 scenario, it would be a desirable side-effect of the

# Coping with today, planning for tomorrow

While we stay resilient and optimistic, we must take this opportunity to prepare for a post-COVID-19 economy



RAMASUBRAMANIAN & ARUNA MOHAN

*"And once the storm is over, you won't remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won't even be sure, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm, you won't be the same person who walked in. That's what this storm is all about" - Haruki Murakami, in *Kafka on the Shore**

As we tackle COVID-19, several issues continue to baffle us. One, does a negative PCR swab test rule out the infection? Even though the PCR test is currently considered the gold standard, it has only 60-70% sensitivity in picking up the infection. Two, can patients become re-infected? Up to 10% of patients in China and South Korea who were discharged from hospitals after recovering from the infection subsequently tested positive by nasal swab PCR. The implications are unclear. Three, do masks for the public help? With increasing evidence of transmission from asymptomatic persons with COVID-19 and the possibility that masks may partially help prevent viral transmission, cloth masks for all public is likely to be recommended. Four, will an early vaccine release help the pandemic? Vaccines, if effective, will be a definitive answer to the pandemic. However, vaccines need to undergo safety and efficacy studies in an animal model followed by human volunteers, which will take up to 12-18 months. Five, is plasma therapy an answer? It is too premature to expect that it will cure the infection. It appears less promising than it appeared initially.

**Understanding viral dynamics**  
We need to understand that the lockdown has helped only to slow down the progression of the infection and has done precious little to eradicate it. Flattening the curve only gives the healthcare system a breather, to prepare for the onslaught of the virus. The real problems will start when the lockdown ends.



"Once the lockdown is lifted and life resumes, there is bound to be a surge in the number of cases, with no indication that the exponential growth of the virus will stop." Health workers conduct door-to-door thermal screening in a containment zone in Chandigarh on April 29. ■ AKHILESH KUMAR

At present, infections are doubling every eleventh day in India. Once the lockdown is lifted and life resumes, there is bound to be a surge in the number of cases, with no indication that the exponential growth of the virus will stop. This will cease only if a significant number of the population is infected or immune. In fact, the pandemic will end only when over 60% of the population is infected, leading to herd immunity, or if a vaccine is available, both distant options at this time. We will be in a position to lift the lockdown only if we have had no new cases for at least two weeks. This would wreak havoc on the economy of any country and be detrimental to the health of infected persons, and also deleterious in the management of non-COVID health issues.

What are the options? Will a partial and periodic lockdown for weeks help? Can we lock down the entire world till we stop the pandemic? Both of these will lead to massive unemployment and recession and ruin the economy. It appears prudent to try to save lives now rather than stave off a potential future catastrophe. Even when the ban is lifted, several industries may not show revival for up to a year. So the current lockdown, however harsh it may seem, is our best option.

## Realistic optimism is key

Jim Collins, a business strategist, in his iconic book *Good to Great*, talks about the 'Stockdale Paradox', named after Admiral Stockdale of the U.S. Navy, who was imprisoned and tortured for seven years during the Vietnam War. The psychological duality of 'balancing realism with steadfast optimism' defined his endurance and survival.

All of us are weathering the same storm, but we are not in the same boat. The implications of this crisis vary from financial catastrophe to emotional black holes. We are on different ships looking to survive, and survive we will. One has to be realistic, yet solid in the belief that 'this too shall pass'.

We need to face this period of turbulence with calm efficiency. "Maturity of mind is defined as the capacity to endure uncertainty" said John Finley, an English historian and mathematician. During a crisis like this, India needs to invest in com-

munity education and community participation. Trust in the government is an important component in any emergency health response. An increased expenditure in a robust public health system is important to building trust and confidence. We also need to bolster infectious diseases surveillance.

The media and the public health system should ensure that the correct messages reach the common man. Whether the concern is with risk of infections from dead bodies, or the safety of groceries or newspapers, scientific and evidence-based information needs to be disseminated. One should realise that the cure should not do more harm than the disease. Hence, we need to temper enthusiasm about treating COVID-19 with wishful therapies and gather evidence by scientific and randomised trials.

## Opportunities for innovation

While the clear priority right now is to cope with the number of cases and the economic havoc that the pandemic is wreaking, it is also time for the community and the government to take steps to minimise the pain of another pandemic. Humans cope with trauma by repressing its memory. The temptation to forget COVID-19 and move on will be overwhelming. But India must let not let that happen. These crises create opportunities for innovation. We need a vision of a post-COVID-19 economy that is not 'simply a return to normal'. A new normal can build upon what we have discovered under lockdown, about making a living and living well. Let us work on an economy that conserves earth resources, avoids future pandemics, and enhances physical and mental well-being.

Finally, as Thomas Sowell, sociologist and economist at Stanford University, said, it is time to realise that "there are no solutions to managing a crisis of this nature, only trade-offs". Our destiny is in our hands, so let us keep them sanitised, let us maintain physical distancing, and let us pray for wisdom to make wise choices in this war against the virus.

Dr. Ramasubramanian is Consultant, Infectious Diseases, Apollo Hospital, and Director, Capstone Clinic; Dr. Aruna Mohan is Consultant Paediatric Dentist, and Director, Capstone Dental Care

# Limitations of online learning

Direct human engagement is a crucial component of education



SHYAM MENON

India has been under lockdown in a desperate attempt to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. Even when the lockdown gets lifted eventually, the government may not allow large congregations in restricted physical spaces, including campuses.

Universities and colleges were in the middle of the second semester of their academic year when the lockdown was enforced. There was anxiety, particularly about the graduating batches of students, lest the ongoing session should be declared a 'zero semester'. This prompted a number of local initiatives. There were attempts from individual teachers to keep their students engaged. A few universities made arrangements for teachers to hold their classes virtually through video conferencing services such as Zoom. The transition to virtual modes was relatively less difficult for those institutions that had, even prior to the lockdown, adopted learning management system platforms. All the above were well-meaning attempts to keep the core educational processes going through this period.

## Strategy to enhance enrolment?

An April 13 report quoted the UGC Chairman as saying that to maintain social distancing, e-education was the only way out. This was clearly meant to prepare the higher education community for the exigencies of a protracted period of closure of campuses.

However, close on the heels of this, he was also quoted as saying that online education was likely to be adopted as a strategy to enhance the gross enrolment ratio in higher education. This prompts many questions about the appropriateness of what may be an effective contingency measure to tide over the pandemic crisis to be deployed as a long-term strategy for enhancing enrolment in higher education. One, how far will online education help support greater access to and success in higher education among those who are on the margins? Two, how equipped are digital forms of education to support the depth and diversity of learning in higher education? Three, is there an unstated political motivation for this shift in strategy?

Higher education has an influx of students who are first-generation aspirants. They have no cultural capital to bank on while struggling their way through college. Access is not merely enrolment. It also includes effective participation in curricular processes, which includes negotiating through language and social barriers. These students are

also from the other side of the digital divide which makes them vulnerable to a double disadvantage if digital modes become the mainstay of education. Unless they receive consistent hand-holding and backstopping, they tend to remain on the margins and eventually drop out or fail. It is therefore necessary to think deeply and gather research-based evidence on the extent to which online education can be deployed to help enhance the access and success rates.

## What learning involves

Acquisition of given knowledge that can be transmitted didactically by a teacher or a text constitutes only one minor segment of curricular content. It is this segment that is largely amenable to online and digital forms of transaction. But learning in higher education means much more than this. It involves development of analytical and other intellectual skills, the ability to critically deconstruct and evaluate given knowledge, and the creativity to make new connections and syntheses. It also means to acquire practical skills, inquire, seek solutions to complex problems, and learn to work in teams. All these assume direct human engagement - not just teacher-student interaction, but also peer interactions. Deconstructing given knowledge in relative isolation is never the same as doing it in a group. Arguably, some of this can, to some extent, be built on to digital platform. But curricular knowledge has a tendency to adjust its own contours according to the mode of transaction and the focus of evaluation. It gets collapsed into largely information-based content when transacted through standard structures of teaching-learning and examination. While digital forms of learning have the potential to enable students to pursue independent learning, conventional and digital forms of education should not be considered mutually exclusive. Online learning needs to be understood as one strand in a complex tapestry of curricular communication that may still assign an important central role to direct human engagement and social learning.

Institutions of open and distance learning (ODL), established during the mid-1960s to 1980s, were a consequence of explorations for less expensive models for provisioning access to higher education. ODL may also have been considered by governments at that time "as a safe strategy (in the light of instances of campus turbulence) for managing mass aspirations for higher education without necessarily effecting large congregations on campuses" (Menon, 2016). One wonders whether there is a similar motivation behind the enthusiasm for online education.

Shyam Menon is a Professor at the Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi and former Vice Chancellor, Ambedkar University Delhi

# A greater impact on women

COVID-19 poses a threat to women's livelihoods as well as increases their burden at home

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES

Early signs are that SARS-CoV-2 poses a greater direct health risk to men, and particularly older men. But the pandemic is exposing and exploiting inequalities of all kinds, including gender inequality. In the long term, its impact on women's health, rights and freedoms could harm us all.

Women are already suffering the deadly impact of lockdowns. These restrictions are essential, but they increase the risk of violence towards women trapped with abusive partners. Recent weeks have seen a global surge in domestic violence. At the same time, support services for women at risk face cuts and closures.

This was the background to my recent appeal for peace in homes around the world. Since then, over 143 governments have committed to supporting women and girls at risk of violence during the pandemic. Every country can take action by moving services online, expanding domestic violence shelters and designating them as essential, and increasing support to frontline organisations. The United Nations' partnership with the European Union, the Spotlight Initiative, is working with governments in more than 25 countries on these and similar measures.

But the threat to women's rights and freedoms posed by COVID-19 goes far beyond physical violence. The deep economic downturn accompanying the pandemic is likely to have a distinctly female face.

**Entrenched inequality also means that while women make up 70% of healthcare workers, they are vastly outnumbered by men in healthcare management, and comprise just one in every 10 political leaders worldwide.**

Even at the best of times, women do three times as much domestic work as men. That means they are more likely to be called on to look after children if businesses open while schools remain closed, delaying their return to the paid labour force.

Entrenched inequality also means that while women make up 70% of healthcare workers, they are vastly outnumbered by men in healthcare management, and comprise just one in every 10 political leaders worldwide. We need women at the table when decisions are taken on this pandemic, to prevent worst-case scenarios like a second spike in infections, labour shortages, and social unrest.

Women in insecure jobs urgently need basic social protections, from health insurance to paid sick leave, childcare, and unemployment benefits. Looking ahead, measures to stimulate the economy, like cash transfers, credits, loans and bailouts, must be targeted at women.

The pandemic has made it clear that women's unpaid domestic labour is subsidising both public services and private profits. This work must be included in economic metrics and decision-making. We will all gain from working arrangements that recognise people's caring responsibilities, and from inclusive economic models that value work at home.

This pandemic is not only challenging global health systems, but our commitment to equality and human dignity. With women's interests and rights front and centre, we can get through this pandemic faster, and build more equal and resilient societies that benefit everyone.

Women are disproportionately represented in poorly paid jobs without benefits, as domestic workers, casual labourers, street vendors, and

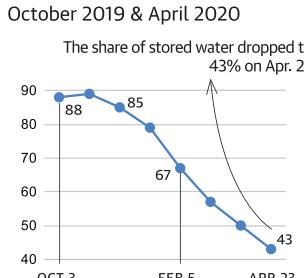


## DATA POINT

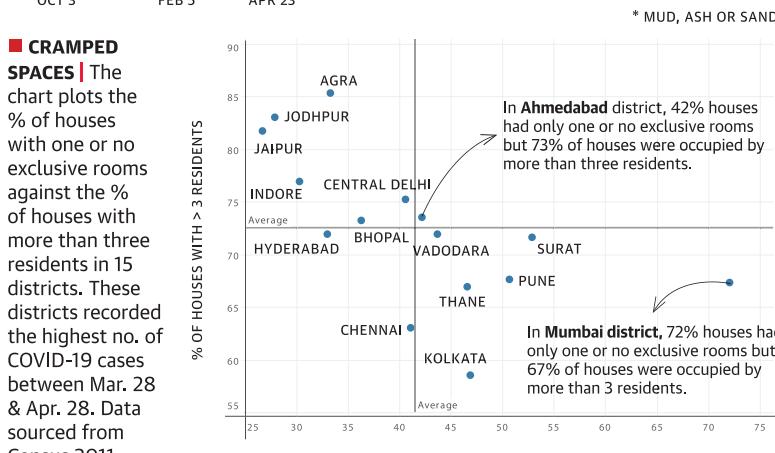
### Prevention measures, a privilege

As a large number of poor people have no access to soap and water and live in extremely crowded spaces, they find it difficult to practise handwashing and physical distancing, which are key interventions against COVID-19. The situation may now worsen with reservoirs drying up. By Vignesh Radhakrishnan and Sumant Sen

**DRYING UP** | Stored water as a % of total capacity in 123 major Indian reservoirs declined between October 2019 & April 2020



**CRAMPED SPACES** | The chart plots the % of houses with one or no exclusive rooms against the % of houses with more than three residents in 15 districts. These districts recorded the highest no. of COVID-19 cases between Mar. 28 & Apr. 28. Data sourced from Census 2011



**SOAP AND WATER A LUXURY** | Data from the NFHS survey (2015-16) show that only 24% of the poorest households have access to both soap and water, while 21% did not have access to either

Wealth quintiles *	Soap & water (%)	Water only (%)	Soap or other agents* but no water (%)	Water and other agents, but no soap (%)	No water, no soap, no other agents (%)	Total (%)
Poorest 20%	24	20	11	23	21	100
Second	43	23	7	14	13	100
Middle	60	21	5	7	7	100
Fourth	78	14	3	3	3	100
Richest 20%	93	5	1	1	1	100

\* MUD, ASH OR SAND | QUINTILE REPRESENTS 20% OF A POPULATION

**STRIKING DISTANCE** | A significant % of slum population share toilets, fetch water from sources away from their homes and dwell in crowded units

**34%** of slum households had no latrines within their premises

**43%** of slum households with drinking water source not within their premises

**45%** of slum households in which more than 3 persons shared only one or no exclusive room

## The Hindu

### FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 30, 1970

### India and the Chinese Missile

The launching of a Chinese satellite foreshadowing the development of a long range nuclear missile within the next few years has led to apprehension that the Chinese threat to India's security has increased and to the feeling that steps should be taken to develop similar weapons in the country. The Defence Minister said in the Lok Sabha that, since the decision not to make nuclear bombs in India was unchanged, no investigation had been made of our capacity to make the bomb and its delivery system. This caused an uproar among the Opposition parties which wish to make political capital out of this issue. It is unfortunate that there has been no rational debate in Parliament as to whether China really poses the kind of nuclear threat to India which would justify enormous expenditure on the development of an Indian counter-weapon.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 30, 1920.

Bringing Coorg to Madras  
(From third editorial)

There is a large volume of public opinion in Coorg in favour of its amalgamation with the Madras Presidency. This small province is under the administration of the Government of India through the Mysore Resident who is also the Chief Commissioner of Coorg. In him are combined all the functions of a Local Government and a High Court. The Secretariat is at Bangalore where the Assistant Resident is styled Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Coorg. During the regime of Lord William Bentinck Coorg was transferred to the Government of the East India Company in accordance with the general wish of the inhabitants. "No people of India," says Mr. W. Hunter, "have given more decisive proof of their loyalty to the British Crown." The "Garden of Eden" as His Excellency Lord Willingdon called it is a much-coveted place for the European planters who have made monumental profits in coffee plantations. The native subjects appear to resent the undue domination of the European settlers over them and demand amalgamation with the Southern Presidency as the result of which they hope to enjoy the "blessings of Reform" and escape the evils of one-man-rule. A rare opportunity has presented itself to the Government of India to apply the principle of self-determination to the inhabitants of Coorg and grant their prayer by sanctioning the amalgamation as prayed for.

## FROM PAGE ONE

**MHA clears movement of stranded people**

"All States and Union Territories have been asked to designate nodal authorities and develop standard protocols for receiving and sending the stranded persons. The authorities shall also register the stranded persons within their States and UTs. In case, a group of stranded persons wish to move between one State to another State, the sending and receiving authorities may consult each other and mutually agree to the movement by road," the guidelines said.

The person would be

**Punjab extends lockdown by two weeks**

The containment and red zones will, however, continue to remain under total and strict lockdown, said an official statement.

Deputy Commissioners have been directed to work out the rotational schedule for the shops that are allowed to be opened in line with the Chief Minister's directives, which have come four days after the new Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) guidelines came into effect, said the statement.

**India reports 70 deaths, highest in a single day**

Dr. Vardhan said only 0.33% patients were on ventilators, 1.5% patients on oxygen support and 2.34% patients in ICU, which was a "reflection of the quality of care being provided across the country."

He said 288 government laboratories were working along with 97 private lab chains with around 16,000 sample collection centres and testing around 60,000 per day.

The World Health Organiza-

**Only 30 lakh found MGNREGA work in April**

"MGNREGA families should be given at least 10 days' wages as free cash for the loss in the month of April," said economist Reetika Khera, who teaches at the Indian Institute of Management-Ahmedabad. "The government asked the private sector to pay workers. Shouldn't they lead by example?"

On April 4, activists of the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan had filed a petition in the Supreme Court, asking for full wages to be paid through the lockdown to the scheme's 7.6 crore active job card-holders. On April 20, an intervention application was filed asking that as an interim measure, unem-

**India remains on U.S. Priority Watch List**

The same assessment was made in the 2019 report. These long-standing concerns were about innovators being able to receive, maintain and enforce patents particularly in the pharmaceutical sector; concerns over copyright laws not incentivising the creation and commercialisation of content; and an outdated trade secrets framework.

"India also further restricted the transparency of information provided on state-issued pharmaceutical manufacturing licenses, continues to apply restrictive patentability criteria to reject pharmaceutical patents, and still has not established an effective system for protecting against the unfair commercial use, as well as the unauthorized disclosure, of undisclosed

screened and those found asymptomatic would be allowed to proceed. "Buses shall be used for transport of groups of persons which will be sanitised and shall follow safe social distancing norms in seating." The States falling on the transit route would allow the movement of such persons. "On arrival at their destination, they would be assessed by health authorities, and kept in home quarantine unless the assessment requires keeping a person in institutional quarantine."

**Cong. counters Nirmala's attack**

Party slams Finance Minister's tweets on writing off loans worth ₹68,607 crore

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

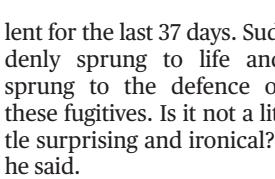
The Congress on Wednesday sparred with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman over allegations that the Centre had written off bank loans worth ₹68,607 crore taken by top 50 defaulters, including fugitives like Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi and Vijay Mallya.

Former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram, in an online press conference, said he was aware of the technical rule that a non-performing loan could be written off but why was this rule applied to fugitives.

"Yes, we understand the technical rules of RBI. Point is not that...Why does this rule apply to Nirav Modis, Vijaya Mallyas and Mehul Choksis? They have been declared fugitives. That's why, we questioned the bona fides of this government. The Finance Minister was si-

**Nirmala Sitharamanji, cleaning the banks of people's money by writing off loans of absconders and fraudsters is not called cleaning the system. It's called weakening the entire bank architecture fiscally and imprudently, if not maliciously**

RANDEEP SURJEWALA, CONGRESS LEADER



lent for the last 37 days. Suddenly sprung to life and sprung to the defence of these fugitives. Is it not a little surprising and ironical?" he said.

Mr. Chidambaram's remarks came after Ms. Sitharaman said willful defaulters were beneficiaries of "phone banking" under the United Progressive Alliance regime and the Modi government was chasing them to recover the dues.

The Minister's reaction came after the Congress, at a

press conference on Tuesday, alleged that loans worth ₹68,607 crore were written off, and cited a response by the RBI to an RTI query to back their charge.

The party also alleged that from 2014 to the end of the 2019-20 financial year, the government had written off loans worth nearly ₹6.66 lakh crores.

**Legacy of UPA era'**

Countering these allegations, in a series of tweets, Ms. Sitharaman asserted that

while the government was engaged in recovering loans, most of the bad loans were a legacy of the UPA era.

Mr. Chidambaram said, "Is the government seriously suggesting that no loans were given after 2014 or that all the loans given after 2014 are performing loans? I mean, what do they take the people of India for? We may be stupid, but, we are not so stupid."

**'Twisting facts'**

Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said the Minister was twisting facts instead of giving answers.

"Nirmala Sitharamanji, cleaning the banks of people's money by writing off loans of absconders and fraudsters is not called cleaning the system. It's called weakening the entire bank architecture fiscally and imprudently, if not maliciously," he said.

**Venkaiah hopes to hold monsoon session**

'But it depends on the ground reality'

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

Vice-President and Rajya Sabha Chairman Venkaiah Naidu on Wednesday said the next session of Parliament would be convened depending on the ground reality. He was interacting with Rajya Sabha members and party leaders.

The Budget session of Parliament ended abruptly on March 23 and the monsoon session is scheduled for July.

Mr. Naidu said that with the intensive efforts being made across the country to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus and the results from the ground, one might hope for a normal schedule.

According to a statement issued by Mr. Naidu's office, the Vice-President spoke to 241 of the 245 Rajya Sabha members. He also spoke to



the Governors, the Chief Ministers and the political leaders and enquired with them about their safety. He also spoke to former Presidents Pranab Mukherjee and Pratibha Patil and former Prime Ministers Manmohan Singh and H.D. Deve Gowda.

Some members flagged the plight of migrant workers and the efforts being made to reach them relief.

**Uddhav speaks to Modi on MLC nomination**

PM says he will collect details; Maharashtra Cabinet resolution is pending with Governor Koshyari

**ALOK DESHPANDE**  
NITI AYABAR  
MUMBAI/NEW DELHI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Wednesday spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi regarding his nomination as MLC which is pending with Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari.

Mr. Thackeray has to be nominated to the Upper House before May 28.

The Prime Minister's Office confirmed with *The Hindu* that Mr. Thackeray did call the PM. After hearing out Mr. Thackeray, the PM said he would collect the details.

sation organised a meeting of vaccine manufacturers and regulators from South-East Asia.

The manufacturing capacity that exists in our region [South-East Asia] is of the quality and scale required to produce and roll out a COVID-19 vaccine globally and will play a key role in overcoming the pandemic," Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia, said in a statement.

According to sources, Mr. Thackeray had dialled the PMO on Tuesday evening too from the Sahyadri guest house but Mr. Modi could not come on line.

The call comes a day after

the meeting of a delegation of senior Ministers from the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) with Mr. Koshyari where they handed him the resolution passed by the Cabinet recommending Mr. Thackeray's name for one of the two vacant posts in the Council, to be nominated from the Governor's quota.

Mr. Koshyari reportedly had hinted that the final decision stands with Mr. Modi

and the CM should directly talk to him.

Mr. Thackeray was sworn in on November 28 and as per the Constitution, a Minister has to become a mem-

ber of either House within six months.

Constituents of the MVA, namely the Shiv Sena, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Congress,

have been questioning the delay on the part of the Governor. "The State is fighting a pandemic. Mumbai is one of the worst-hit cities in the country. The State cannot afford political instability at such a time," NCP State president and Irrigation Minister Jayant Patil had said on Tuesday.

The Cabinet meeting on April 9, chaired by Deputy CM Ajit Pawar, had passed the resolution recommending Mr. Thackeray's name to the Council. With no movement from Mr. Koshyari, the Cabinet, again chaired by Mr. Pawar, reminded the Governor about the resolution.



Govt. appoints Tirumurti as envoy to UN

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The government has appointed T.S. Tirumurti as the next Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations. He will take over from Syed Akbaruddin, one of the country's most prominent diplomats, who is retiring. His appointment to the UN will come at an important time when India will be in the UN Security Council for a two-year term in 2021-22.

The announcement came amid a slew of other appointments announced for envoy to Austria, Qatar and Bahrain, while more Ambassadorial positions to the United Kingdom, Finland, Switzerland, Italy, Singapore, EU/Belgium and The Philippines are expected shortly.

**Nitish should bring back workers now'**

**SOBHANA K. NAIR**  
NEW DELHI

The leeway given by the Ministry of Home Affairs to the State governments to bring back students, pilgrims and migrant workers stuck in other States has given fresh ammunition to NDA ally Lok Jan Shakti Party to hit out at JD(U) president and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

"At least now, he should act. He has repeatedly been citing the excuse of lockdown to refrain from bringing our migrant workers, pilgrims and students. If other States like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh can bring back their people, how come these rules applied only to Bihar?" LJP president Chirag Paswan asked.

He said he had to knock at Home Minister Amit Shah's doors when the State government didn't respond to his pleas.

"I had a word with Home Minister Amit Shah last evening after not getting any response from the State government. He was very positive and concerned about it. I had written a letter to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar two days back requesting him to arrange transport to bring back our students stuck in Kota and other places, but I didn't get a response." Mr. Paswan thanked Mr. Shah for bringing in the order.

**Existing schemes providing support to farmers: Tomar**

'Govt.'s actions sufficient to cope with COVID-19 impact'

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The government's actions on behalf of farmers during the lockdown are sufficient to cope with the impact of COVID-19, according to Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar.

Flagship schemes for crop insurance and income support already provide enough support, Mr. Tomar told mediapersons on Wednesday, when asked about the need for a relief package for farmers. In fact, he insisted that the Centre's agenda of doubling farmers' income by 2022 still held true.

An unemployment allowance is the very least that should be paid to these workers," said Nikhil Dey, one of the activists who filed the petition.

Despite the shutdown of

large parts of the industrial and services sectors, agricultural growth will ensure that the Indian economy does not shrink this year, Dr. Chand said.

He predicted that at least 0.5% GDP growth would come from agriculture alone, refuting international predictions of a negative GDP growth rate.

Dr. Chand cited the forecast of a normal monsoon and reports of reservoirs

having water at levels 40-60% higher than usual among the reasons for his optimism. Fertilizer and seed sales have been 5% and 20% higher than usual in the first four months of this year, he claimed, adding that reports suggested that farmers are getting higher mandi prices for major commodities, including wheat, gram, rapeseed, mustard and staple vegetables.

"NEET is intended to check several maladies which crept into medical education, to prevent capitation fee by admitting students which are lower in merit and to prevent exploitation, profiteering, and commercialisation of educa-

tion. The institution has to be a capable vehicle of education," Justice Mishra observed.

The court said minority institutions were equally bound to comply with the conditions imposed under the law. The regulations, including admission through NEET, were neither divisive nor dis-integrative. They were necessary.

The judgment was based on a challenge by the colleges to several notifications issued by the Medical Council of India (MCI) and the Dental Council of India (DCI) under Sections 10D of the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956, and the Dentists Act, 1948, for uniform entrance examinations.

"Professional educational institutions constitute a class by themselves. Specific measures to make the administration of such institutions transparent can be imposed. The rights available under Article 30 [right of minorities to administer their institutions] are not violated by provisions carved out in Section 10D of the MCI Act and the Dentists Act and Regulations framed by MCI/DCI," the court held.

"NEET is intended to

**Protect MSME workers: Chidambaram**

He demands ₹1 lakh crore package so that wages and salaries can be paid to 11 crore workers

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

Former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram on Wednesday noted that "extraordinary times require extraordinary solutions" and suggested that the Centre announce a ₹1 lakh crore package for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to be able to pay wages to 11 crore workers and a "pay cheque protection programme" for lower income groups in other private sector businesses.

In an online press conference, Mr. Chidambaram also cautioned the Centre against entertaining any notion of imposing a financial emergency [under Article 360 of the Constitution] that would further limit the financial powers of the States.

**Financial emergency**  
The Union government should prepare an exit strategy for the lockdown, address the problems of migrant workers and provide financial assistance to the States, he stated.

"I think even to utter

those words at this point of time would be inappropriate. I don't want to use the phrase financial Emergency and I hope we are not pushed into that. If the government acts promptly, wisely and boldly by taking into account the advice of wise economists, we can avoid a financial emergency," he replied to a query.

"We should do everything to avoid a financial emergency because it would mean that whatever little powers are there with the State governments are taken away."

Making a strong case for

the government supporting the 6.3 crore MSMEs, he said: "We urge the Prime Minister to look at the Congress proposal and immediately announce the implementation of two specific recommendations: ₹1 lakh crore wage protection assistance to help the MSMEs pay wages and salaries for April and ₹1 lakh crore credit guarantee fund for the MSMEs that will help them to go to the banks and borrow money."

He added, "For the non-

MSMEs, we urge the government to announce a pay cheque protection programme, similar to the one announced in the United States."

CM YK

THE HINDU  
THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2020

# Bengal to be in lockdown till end of May

State to allow small shops, selective sectors to resume business from Monday in green zones

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

The West Bengal government will continue the lockdown till the end of May, but will allow small shops and selective sectors to resume business from Monday in the green zone. The government will shut down any of those establishments in case of a spike in COVID-19 cases, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Wednesday.

While 33 positive cases are reported in the past 24 hours, the testing numbers have gone up. A total of 1,397 persons have been tested in last 24 hours, while 119 patients are discharged, the State administration noted.

Without specifying any date, Ms. Banerjee said lockdown would continue in Bengal for another month, with limited relief to certain sectors. She listed the sectors in a press conference.

"Small neighbourhood shops for both essential and



No stone unturned: Municipal workers wearing protective gear while conducting a door-to-door health survey in Kolkata on Wednesday. • AFP

non-essential items, stand-alone electronic goods sellers but not big markets, stationery stores, paint shops, mobile and battery charging points, hardware, laundry and shops selling cigarettes or betel leaf... tea shops will sell tea [leaves] but no casual chatting sitting in tea shops is allowed," the Chief Minister said.

Industries such as construction will be allowed in the green zone "provided they follow lockdown protocol."

The activity of Public Health Engineering (PHE) will be encouraged, while self-help groups (SHGs) will be engaged to make masks. This was one of the many suggestions made by the

doctors' associations to the Chief Minister at Tuesday's meeting.

"Since unemployment will be on the rise, with a growing demand of masks, we requested the Chief Minister if SHGs can be engaged to make masks," said Rejaul Karim, a doctor who attended the meeting.

The doctors asked for

"more and sterilised PPEs," separate treatment facility for health workers, ensuring opening of private facilities in the green zone.

"Globally, epidemic identification and forecast research institutes work throughout the year to study viruses. The Indian Council of Medical Research [ICMR] has been doing it, perhaps we need one for the State and the Chief Minister was informed. She agreed to the idea on the face of it," said Dr Karim.

## Back to work

On Wednesday, Ms. Banerjee said that nearly half of 45 jute mills were allowed to operate and 25% of tea garden workers were back to work.

"In addition, 51 private hospitals are being asked to treat patients without fee. The State will bear the cost," she said. However, the list of such hospitals is yet to be made public.

Meanwhile, the number of cases in the State increased to 125, with the detection of seven new cases – three cases in Balasore district, one case each in Jharsuguda, Deogarh and Kendujhar districts, and one in Bhubaneswar.

The cases reported from Balasore, Jharsuguda, Deogarh and Kendujhar were all those who returned from West Bengal. The Bhubaneswar case was a family member of a COVID-19 patient.

Of the total cases, 39 pa-

# Two pharmacists test positive in Mumbai

Frontline workers demand inclusion in special medical insurance package

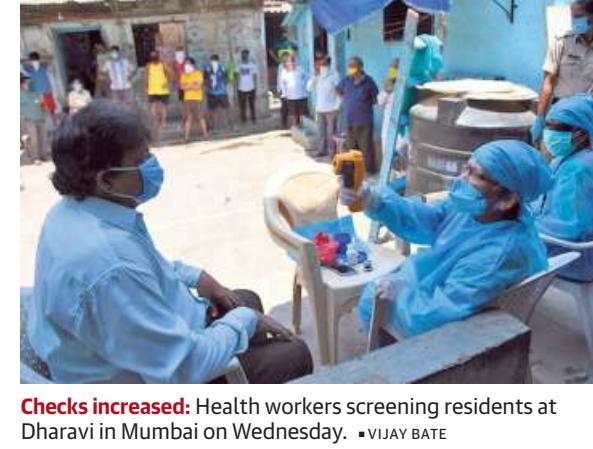
JYOTI SHELAR  
MUMBAI

The city recorded 234 cases and 9 deaths. Now, Ahmedabad's cumulative figures are 2,777 cases and 137 deaths. Till Wednesday evening, 263 patients have recovered.

Surat and Vadodara form the other large clusters. Surat has recorded 601 cases, 22 deaths and 40 cases of recovery and Vadodara has recorded 270 cases, 16 deaths and 87 cases of recovery.

The authorities have decided that asymptomatic patients remain quarantined at home.

In Ahmedabad and Surat, the civic bodies have introduced this step to concentrate the efforts of health workers on serious and symptomatic cases and to decrease the pressure on government quarantine centres.



Checks increased: Health workers screening residents at Dharavi in Mumbai on Wednesday. • VIJAY BATE

Modi urging him to include pharmacists in the special medical insurance package announced on March 26, which gives coverage to healthcare workers with risk of getting infected with SARS-CoV-2.

"After going through the scheme, it is not clear if retail pharmacists are included in it. But it appears that

pharmacists are not covered under it. Therefore, we request you to kindly take steps to include pharmacists working in retail and hospital sectors in this scheme," the IPA letter stated. It also requested Mr. Modi to mention pharmacists in his next address to the nation along with doctors, nurses and paramedics as healthcare war-

riors fighting COVID-19.

A pharmacist attached to the Brihamumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), who is in quarantine after coming in contact with positive patients, said they are constantly exposed to patients who may not know they have COVID-19. "People with fever are now first directed to the BMC's fever clinics and we are exposed to patients who may later test positive," he said. Two pharmacists have been quarantined in Kalyan and another one in Navi Mumbai.

While the supply of drugs has been an issue during the lockdown, pharmacies across the city have remained open.

"We try to maintain a distance. Customers often request us to speak to their doctors and relatives over the phone about their drugs, leading to contact with them," said a pharmacist.

# In Gujarat, cases cross 4,000 mark

The number of deaths mounts to 197

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
AHMEDABAD

The number of COVID-19 cases in Gujarat rose by 308 to 4,082 on Wednesday and the death toll increased by 16, including nine fatalities in the worst-hit Ahmedabad, to 197, a Health Department official said.

Moreover, 93 patients were discharged on recovery after two tests came in negative. The total number of patients who recovered stands at 527.

However, the State continues to see an increase in the number of cases by adding over 200 cases on an average every day. The death toll also remains in the double digit for the past several days.

Ahmedabad accounts for more than 65% of the cases and deaths. On Wednesday,

the IPA on Monday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra

# Eight die in M.P., death toll rises to 130 in State

79 new cases reported, 12 of 14 casualties in Bhopal were survivors of the 1984 gas tragedy

STAFF REPORTER  
BHOPAL

Eight persons died of COVID-19 in Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday, taking the death toll to 130, the Directorate of Health Services said.

Ujjain, where the death toll climbed to 23, reported the most number of deaths, at three. So far, 18% of all patients have died of the illness in the city, arguably the worst case fatality rate in the country, up by two percentage points over the previous day.



In addition, two deaths were reported in Khandwa, and one each in Khargone, Raisen and Bhopal, according to a bulletin issued by the Directorate. The case fatality rate in the State stands at 5%, higher than the national av-

erage. Meanwhile, 79 new COVID-19 cases were reported on the day, taking the count to 2,560. Bhopal alone recorded 31 of these. Forty-one patients were discharged from hospitals on recovery. So far, 461 persons have been discharged. The day's tally does not take into account the figures for Indore, which are released late at night.

"Teams of officials from different wings of the State administration are visiting the worst-affected districts

to assist officials there,"

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said. He added that the test positivity rate was going down, even in Bhopal and Indore, and the case fatality rate was falling too. "The number of those recovering is going up."

From April 16 to 28, the case fatality rate oscillated between 4% and 5%, indicating the mortalities were rising in proportion to the case tally. As for the recovery rate, it climbed from 6% to 16% in the period.

# AAI mulls limited flights with 30% capacity post lockdown

Airport officials told to ensure that passengers follow safety protocol

S. VIJAY KUMAR  
CHENNAI

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) is looking at commencing limited domestic/international flight operations with 30% capacity post COVID-19 lockdown. Airport officials have been told to ensure that the passengers followed the safety protocol, particularly physical distancing. Facilities for hand sanitising/washing would be created in as many places as possible.

In a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) circulated to all airports on Wednesday, the AAI said once the lockdown period is over, airports shall be facilitating limited domestic/international scheduled flights in a phased manner. "To start with, may be at 30% capacity to facilitate social distancing. The operations to its original level is likely to be scaled up in gradual manner."

Where there were more terminals, only one terminal would be

opened for use to minimise the cleaning area considering the limited availability of material resources. "Initially it is presumed that airline operations will be limited to Tier-I cities [Metros] and some other State capitals and major Tier-II cities... limited food and beverages and retail outlets to be made available to the passengers till operations of Airlines gradually increase. Initially they should serve tea/coffee etc. with take away snacks in boxes. As part of this limited restaurant facilities to be permitted inside security hold area," the guidelines said.

Airport authorities were told to coordinate with the State governments/local administration to ensure availability of public transport/private taxis for connectivity to the airport for passengers and staff.

Spa centres/massage chair facilities would remain suspended as a safety measure. While air-

lines would advise passengers to reach the airport well in advance, the officials would take effective steps to ensure safe distance among passengers and staff at entry points, frisking booths, boarding gates etc.

## Health screening

AAI said adequate number of doctors and paramedics should be available at airports to conduct screening of passengers both arriving and departing.

Among other instructions were to ensure cleanliness and sanitation of the entire terminal building and public areas, including washrooms, chairs, counters, trolleys, security trays, x-ray machines, hand-rails, doors etc on a regular basis.

Employees showing symptoms such as high fever, difficulty in breathing and cough should not be taken on duty. Such cases should be reported to appropriate health authorities.

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal of Govt. of Odisha [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in). Corrigendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can be seen in e-procurement portal as well as in IDCO website.

DGM/P&C, IDCO, IDCO Tower, Janpath, Bhubaneswar

OIPR-140003/11/0003/2021

CAD

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal of Govt. of Odisha [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in). Corrigendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can be seen in e-procurement portal as well as in IDCO website.

Sd/- Chief General Manager (P&C), IDCO, Bhubaneswar

OIPR-140003/11/0003/2021

CAD

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal of Govt. of Odisha [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in). Corrigendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can be seen in e-procurement portal as well as in IDCO website.

Sd/- Chief General Manager (P&C), IDCO, Bhubaneswar

OIPR-140003/11/0003/2021

CAD

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal of Govt. of Odisha [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in). Corrigendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can be seen in e-procurement portal as well as in IDCO website.

Sd/- Chief General Manager (P&C), IDCO, Bhubaneswar

OIPR-140003/11/0003/2021

CAD

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal of Govt. of Odisha [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in). Corrigendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can be seen in e-procurement portal as well as in IDCO website.

Sd/- Chief General Manager (P&C), IDCO, Bhubaneswar

OIPR-140003/11/0003/2021

CAD

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal of Govt. of Odisha [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in). Corrigendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can be seen in e-procurement portal as well as in IDCO website.

Sd/- Chief General Manager (P&C), IDCO, Bhubaneswar

OIPR-140003/11/0003/2021

CAD

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal of Govt. of Odisha [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in). Corrigendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can be seen in e-procurement portal as well as in IDCO website.

Sd/- Chief General Manager (P&C), IDCO, Bhubaneswar

OIPR-140003/11/0003/2021

CAD

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal of Govt. of Odisha [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in). Corrigendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can be seen in e-procurement portal as well as in IDCO website.

Sd/- Chief General Manager (P&C), IDCO, Bhubaneswar

OIPR-140003/11/0003/2021

CAD

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal of Govt. of Odisha [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in). Corrigendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can be seen in e-procurement portal as well as in IDCO website.

Sd/- Chief General Manager (P&C), IDCO, Bhubaneswar

OIPR-140003/11/0003/2021

CAD

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal of Govt. of Odisha [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in). Corrigendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can be seen in e-procurement portal as well as in IDCO website.

Sd/- Chief General Manager (P&C), IDCO, Bhubaneswar

OIPR-140003/11/0003/2021

CAD

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal of Govt. of Odisha [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in). Corrigendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can be seen in e-procurement portal as well as in IDCO website.

Sd/- Chief General Manager (P&C), IDCO, Bhubaneswar

OIPR-140003/11/0003/2021

CAD

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal of Govt. of Odisha [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in). Corrigendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can be seen in e-procurement portal as well as in IDCO website.

## INTERVIEW | SRINATH REDDY

# 'We cannot let down our guard till April or May next year'

As urban areas resume activities, travel to rural areas must be restricted to prevent ingress of the virus to those places, says ICMR's task force member

JAYANT SRIRAM

*With the possibility of a graded exit from the the 40-day lockdown approaching, Srinath Reddy, president of the Public Health Foundation of India and member of the ICMR's COVID-19 task force, takes stock of what has been achieved during this period in respect of the public health systems. With systemic weaknesses still remaining, he cautioned that we will have to be on guard against the virus for at least one year.*

Excerpts:

A key objective of the lockdown was to give us time to scale up our public health systems in case there is a surge of cases going forward. Has this been adequately achieved?

■ Our public health system has been quite weak for several decades, because of poor investments, not only in infrastructure, but also in the health workforce. And in a number of other areas like the non-availability of public health carriers, the non-availability of adequate regulatory structures, and of course very low levels of

care. Also, for ensuring that our testing capacity has improved with acquisition of more testing kits, pressing into service of a large number of healthcare workers for contact tracing and isolation, as well as bringing in more doctors and nurses, including from the retirees, for providing healthcare services if required. We have also seen that the manufacturing capacity of medical equipment as well as personal protection equipment has gone up quite substantially.

What's your advice on how to restart and what are the activities that can be avoided?

■ I believe that it is time for us to now start moving out of the lockdown for most of the country where we do not have clearly identified hot zones with high caseload. It is in those zones that we probably will have to conti-



We have to avoid mass meetings, we have to avoid malls and cinema halls, but smaller group meetings should be possible

nue, if not the full, rigorous form of the lockdown, at least the slightly loosened form of lockdown.

I believe we ought to look at urban and rural areas slightly differently. Rural areas are likely to be highly protected at the moment. As we restart our economic activities, rural areas should get up first and it's already

happening in terms of harvesting and other fieldwork. Even as urban areas resume activities, we must try and restrict the travel and transportation of goods between urban and rural areas to absolutely essential goods and essential travel needs, because we should prevent the ingress of the virus from urban areas into rural areas.

We have to avoid mass

meetings, we have to avoid malls and cinema halls, but smaller group meetings should be possible, and of course social distancing in public would still have to be maintained. And in education, I would give preference to school education over college education immediately, because school education is something that has to be done through personal contact. College education can come a little later because college education can also be done through distance education.

There is concern that over the winter we may see a second wave of the virus even if it slows down now. What do you think is the kind of time period we're talking about in which we are going to be seeing the effects of the virus not just in our health system, but in the way our economic activities are also affected?

■ There is anticipation that we will see a slowdown in summer as the temperatures rise and even when the humidity rises. But there is also an apprehension that it could actually raise its head again in winter. We have to see whether it behaves like other coronaviruses, which do have a seasonal pattern, or whether this is an atypical virus, which behaves with virulence unabated throughout the year.

If we anticipate that this actually is going to happen, that is the temperature ef-

fect, and we'll go into a bit of a slumber during the period between summer and onset of winter, then we still have to be prepared for a possible resurgence in winter and we cannot let down our guard till April or May next year. In the interest of safety, we have to plan as though this is going to be a phenomenon that we have to deal with for over a year.

What are the public health lessons that we can learn from other Asian countries that have been doing well?

■ Actually the champion in this region has been Vietnam. It is a sort of unreported, unsung hero. Of course, Singapore is now having some problems in terms of resurgence among the migrant workers, which has been a bit of a lapse, but it has been a good example, particularly in healthcare and fair amount in public

health.

What we have seen in Southeast Asian countries is that because they have had the experience of the H1N1, the H5N1, the so called Swine Flu, as well as the avian influenza, as well as the SARS, they have actually prepared public health as well as healthcare systems to respond very quickly to any such threat. They're ready to get into high gear very quickly.

We have had other things that have been favouring us but from the point of view of investments in public health, it is absolutely important that we build up a very strong surveillance system, a very strong primary health-care system.

We also ensure that investments in our entire health system, including the health workforce, as well as advanced care are there. So that we do not have weak chinks in our armour.

## 'Make testing centres PwD-friendly'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (SJ&E) has asked all States and Union Territories to make sure that testing, quarantine and treatment centres for COVID-19 are accessible for persons with disabilities (PwD).

A Ministry statement said on Wednesday that Department of SJ&E Secretary Shakuntala Gamlin had written to all Chief Secretaries, asking them to ensure that basic accessibility features are in place at testing and quarantine centres as well as hospitals.

"The current crisis poses even greater threats to the Divyangan not just due to their less/compromised immunity, ability to perceive or comprehend information but also due to non-availability of accessibility features... at such COVID-19 related facilities," the Ministry said.

Several States had suggested the cancellation of these exams and use of internal assessment performance to allow grades instead. These issues were raised in Tuesday's meeting of State Education Ministers with the Union Human Resource Development Minister.

However, the CBSE reiter-

ated that it will conduct the exams after the lockdown is lifted, giving a 10-day notice to students.

The pending examinations for Class 10 and 12 will be held after assessing the situation at the end of the lockdown, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) said on Wednesday. The board's assertion follows reports that Class 10 exams may be cancelled.

The pending exams include 12 core subject papers for Class 12 students. Class 10 students in most parts of the

country have no exams left.

However, in northeastern

Delhi, where exams were

postponed due to the vio-

lence in February, Class 10

students have six subjects

pending, while Class 12 stu-

dents have 11 papers left.

## Pending Class 10, 12 exams after curbs end

CBSE will assess the situation, give 10-day notice to students

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The pending examinations for Class 10 and 12 will be held after assessing the situation at the end of the lockdown, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) said on Wednesday. The board's assertion follows reports that Class 10 exams may be cancelled.

Several States had suggested the cancellation of these exams and use of internal assessment performance to allow grades instead. These issues were raised in Tuesday's meeting of State Education Ministers with the Union Human Resource Development Minister.

However, the CBSE reiter-



Future course: Students appearing for Class 10 exams waiting outside the Kerala School in New Delhi, in this file photo. • PTI

## UGC issues advisory for academic year

Universities, colleges can begin classes for second and third year students from Aug. 1

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Universities and colleges can begin classes for second and third year students from August 1, and for first year students from September 1, according to an advisory issued by the University Grants Commission on Wednesday regarding the 2020-21 academic calendar.

With regard to the current academic year, the UGC suggested that classes – currently being conducted through various modes of distance learning – can be completed by mid-June. Examinations

will then be held online or offline based on local conditions and availability of resources.

Final semester examinations can then be held in July and may be shortened from 3 hours to 2 hour duration.

Intermediate semester students can be graded based on internal assessment of the present and previous semester, UGC suggested.

The M.Phil and Ph.D students can be given a six-month extension to complete their degrees, with viva voce examinations being conducted via video-conferencing.

The UGC has emphasised that the guidelines are advisory, not mandatory in nature, and institutions are free to take decisions as required based on their own facilities and local restrictions due to COVID-19.

Going forward, the Commission encouraged colleges and universities to equip their faculty with online teaching tools, develop virtual classrooms and virtual laboratory facilities. About 25% of their syllabus can be completed through online teaching and 75% through face-to-face, said the UGC.

**Government of Karnataka  
Rural Development Commission  
Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department**

2nd Floor, 3rd Gate, M.S. Building, Bangalore-1. Ph :080-22342162 E-mail:karnregs@gmail.com

Tender No. RDP 99 EGS 2019 Date : 29-04-2020

**CORRIGENDUM -2**

**Sub:- Extension of Last date for the receipt of Tenders for the Supply of Tower Desktop (i5), 1KVA 30 Minutes Backup UPS and Mono Laser Multi function printer with Network and Duplex for the Use of Taluk Panchayaths of the State, Rural Development and Panchayath Raj Department, Karnataka under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA Scheme.**

**Ref: 1)Tender No. RDP/99/EGS/2019 Dated 04-03-2020 of Rural Development Commissionerate, RD&PR Department, Government of Karnataka. 2)This office CORRIGENDUM No RDP 99 EGS 2019 dated 09-04-2020.**

**Due to COVID-19 Lockdown situation, the Last date for the receipt of Tenders is further extended as detailed below.**

- Last date & Time for receipt of Tenders : 15-05-2020 upto 16.00 Hrs IST**
- Date and time for opening of Technical bids on e-Procurement Portal : 18-05-2020 at 11.00 HRS IST**
- Date and time for opening of Commercial bids on e-Procurement Portal : 27-05-2020 at 11.00 HRS IST**

**Sd/- Commissioner Rural Development  
Rural Development & Panchayath Raj Department**

DIPR/DDU/RO-2993/2019-20

### GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH FOREST DEPARTMENT ANDHRA PRADESH DISASTER RECOVERY PROJECT WORLD BANK FUNDED PROJECT-CREDIT NO : 5694-IN INVITATION FOR BID (IFB) NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING (NCB)

"IFB no.01 to 08/APDRP/Forest/Comp 4/Infra/2019-20, dt.25.04.2020"

Government of India have received a credit from the International Development Association towards the cost of Andhra Pradesh Disaster Recovery Project and intends to apply a part of the funds to cover eligible payments under the contracts for construction of works. The Project Manager, PIU(APFD), APDRP, Visakhapatnam invites 1<sup>st</sup> call (for Infrastructure to Nurseries and Road work) & 3<sup>rd</sup> call (for Casting of RCC fence poles and Chainlink mesh) through online item rate e-bids from the registered bidders of Government of Andhra Pradesh or other State Governments / Government of India or State / Central Government undertakings for the works of (i) Construction of Infrastructure to central nurseries and field nurseries (5) packages in Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam districts, (ii) (1) BT Road renewals in Indira Gandhi Zoological Park, Visakhapatnam and (iii) (2) works of Casting of RCC fence poles and Chain link fence and fixing of chainlink around Kambalakonda Eco-tourism Park, Visakhapatnam through website of Central Public Procurement Portal <https://eprocure.gov.in> of National Informatics Center from 07.05.2020 onwards. The details of IFB no.1 to 8 are available at UNDB website ([www.devbusiness.com](http://www.devbusiness.com)).

Sd/- Project Manager, PIU, APDRP, APFD &

DIPR 20PP/CL, Dt: 29-04-2020

Chief Conservator of Forests, Visakhapatnam

**Life Mission, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, PTC Towers, S.S. Kovil Road, Thampanoor, Thiruvananthapuram - 695 001**  
No. LM/EW/52/CNRWORKFILE/REGI/2020  
29.04.2020

**NOTICE INVITING RFP**

The CEO, Life Mission invites online tender from eligible bidders to design & construct (EPC Mode) Additional LIFE Towers using LGSF Technology (15 works).

Last date of on-line submission 13.05.2020  
For details login to [www.etenders.kerala.gov.in](http://www.etenders.kerala.gov.in)  
Ph: 0471 2335524

RC/00780/d3/2020/I&P/RD

### Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited

(A Joint Venture of Gol & Gok)  
e-Mail: [bmrc1@dataone.in](mailto:bmrc1@dataone.in) Website: [www.bmrc.co.in](http://www.bmrc.co.in)  
No: BMRC/CEE-US/AL/PH-2B/2019-20/DPO/269

Date: 30.04.2020

#### TENDER NOTIFICATION

Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRC) invites sealed Tenders (Single Stage - Two Envelope System) from eligible, qualified reputed and experienced Contractors having valid "Electrical Class-I License" issued by the Electrical Inspectorate, Government of Karnataka having previous experience in the works of similar nature, volume and complexity completed during the last Five (5) years as mentioned in the Tender documents for the work mentioned below under 'Local Competitive Bid' (LCB) on 'Turnkey' basis for "Shifting of BESCOM Electrical Utilities infringing the Proposed Elevated Airport Metro Alignment on both RHS & LHS between Bharathi Nagar and Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) on NH-44 in Phase-2B of BMRC Project (Package-4)".

**Key Details:** (1) Amount put to Tender: Rs. 3,49,62,000/- (2) Completion period of Work: 9 Months. (3) Cost of Tender Document (Non-refundable): Rs.11,200 (10,000+1200 (GST@12%)). (4) Online sale of Tender Documents: From 05.05.2020 until midnight of 04.06.2020 (5) Last date for seeking Clarification: 12.06.2020 up to 15.00 Hrs(IST). (6) Date and Time of submission of Tender: 19.06.2020 from 11.00 Hrs (IST) to 15.00 Hrs (IST)

(7) Date and Time of opening of Tender: On 19.06.2020 at 15.30 Hrs (IST). (8) Purchase of Tender Documents: Tender documents can be downloaded from BMRC's website by making payment through online Gateway or by depositing DD/ Pay Order in BMRC office. (9) Authority and Place for Seeking Clarifications, Pre-bid meeting, Submission of Tender The

Executive Director (Traction) Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited, 3rd Floor, BMTC Complex, KH Road, Shanthinagar, Bengaluru-560027, Karnataka, India. For further clarifications, contact the Executive Director (Traction), BMRC on +91 80 22969233. For details visit our website [www.bmrc.co.in](http://www.bmrc.co.in) Sd/- Executive Director (Traction)

**VISVESVARAYA JALA NIGAM LIMITED**  
(A Government of Karnataka undertaking)  
Office of the Executive Engineer,VJNL,  
UBP Division No. 3, Ajampura-577 547  
Phone No: 08261-245686 E-mail id-euibp3.1@gmail.com  
CIN No. U4100KA2016SGC097260  
NO: EE/VJNL/UBP/D-03/Ajampura/PB-1/TLI electrical/  
Tendernotificatin/2020-21/26 dt: 29.04.2020

#### SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION (TWO-COVER SYSTEM) (THROUGH "e-Procurement" ONLY)

**Sl. No. 1. Name of work :** Providing 11KV power supply to 14 no zonal pumping stations coming under Package 1 of Tarikere Lift Irrigation Scheme. (I No: VJNL/2019-20/PS/WORK\_INDENT 1442/2/CALL-2) **App. amount put to tender(Rs. In Lakhs) : 991.34 EMD (Rs. In Lakh) : 9.95**  
**Category of the Agency :** KPTCL super grade license contractors and KPWD Class I contractor **TimeLimit : 06 Months (Including monsoon)**

**Calender of Events**  
**Sl.No. 1.** The contractor can access to the e-tender document, i.e. the tender schedules, bid documents and other documents, in the web site <http://eproc.karnataka.gov.in> on payment of transaction fee (non-refundable) from : 29.04.2020, after 11.30 hours

**Sl.No. 1.** Last date & time for tender queries/ clarifications : 06.05.2020, upto 17.00 hours  
**Sl.No. 2.** Pre bid meeting will be held at/o the Chief Engineer, VJNL, UBP Zone, Chitradurga. : 08.05.2020, at 11.30 hours

**Sl.No. 4.** The last date for submission of completed tender documents (Cover-1 & cover-2) through e-portal. : 13.05.2020, upto 16.00 hours **Sl.No. 5.** Date & time of opening of Technical Bid (Cover-1) by Executive Engineer, V.J.N.L, UBP, Division No.3, Ajampura. 14.05.2020 at 16.30 hours

Further details and information about electronic tendering can be had from <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in/eprocurement>  
**Sd/- Executive Engineer, VJNL, UBP Division No.3, Ajampura.**

## INTERVIEW | SYED AKBARUDDIN

# 'By any calculus, India qualifies for UNSC permanent seat'

It is a country of a billion-plus people working together in a democratic framework, says the outgoing Permanent Representative of India to the UN

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

**Syed Akbaruddin**, India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, retires on Thursday. The diplomat discussed a range of topics related to India at the UN, including the country's bid for permanent membership at the Security Council. Edited excerpts:

India is due for election to the temporary membership of the UN Security Council later this year, for the 2021-22 period. What do you think will be the priorities for India to work on?

■ India in many ways is a *sui generis* country. It's a country of a billion-plus, it's a country which is a democracy, perhaps the only example in history of a billion-plus people working together in a democratic framework. We will bring to it those values and strengths of being able to work cohesively among disparate entities. That's our USP, we try and work out solutions.

One of the biggest issues that will confront all multilateral organisations and certainly the Security Council will be issues which are beyond borders. Issues of... the global commons, whether it is in cases of public health as we are now seeing in the current pandemic, but other issues, for example, cyber [issues]. There are no regulatory mechanisms or no rules on that, and that's another.

A third one is issues of high seas. Again, beyond your EEZ [exclusive economic zone], there is very limited

understanding of what states can do and what states can't do. Now, why should we focus on these broader thematic issues? It's because you'll see our experience has been: ungoverned spaces lead to opportunities for those who are inimical to global governance to breed, whether it is in states or it is beyond state boundaries, this has been the experience, and therefore, we as a country would like to focus on these things.

Has India got closer to permanent member status at the Security Council in the past four or five years?

■ One of those aspirational goals was, is and will remain permanent membership to the Security Council, because we feel by any present day calculus, we would qualify. Now, the issue of the expansion and reform of the Security Council is not an India-centric issue. It is an issue which entails a whole host of teams, because, as I told you, everybody acknowledges that India is *sui generis*. A billion-plus people not being permanently in an organisation which starts with, 'We the peoples of the United Nations'. You can't have that dichotomy between an

What is India's position on accepting permanent membership in case it doesn't carry veto power? And what, if anything, will actually change China's position on India becoming a permanent member?

■ If you look at the voting pattern at that stage when the reform or the expansion from 11 to 15 happened by increasing four non-permanent members, none of those present there as permanent members right now voted in favour. There were some who opposed, there were others who abstained. The only representative at that stage who voted in favour of change was the Republic of China. Now, even with that sort of vote, in two years, everybody accepted the vote and ratified it... in di-



■ We will bring to the Security Council the strengths of being able to work cohesively among disparate entities

plomacy, there is no finality in these things of what people say, people evolve, situations change, global pressures will mount.

The choice will have to be, do you want an organ which is moribund, which is not effective, which is not legitimate, which is not credible, or do you want, in the evolving situation, a body which is able to work – with its difficulties, but it's able to work. Therefore, we bet on optimism and we bet that change will happen and people who may have reluctance today will join.

On the veto...

■ Of course, there are many of us who feel that veto was the outcome of a situation in 1945 when the world was dif-

ferent. Our view is that we do not oppose any approach that is non-discriminatory in nature. You are aware that on the issue of discrimination, we have a very strong historical record, whether it was going back to the NPT [Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty]. At that stage, it was discriminating among those who had nuclear weapons before a certain date or later, similarly on the issue of veto. If there are restrictions, these need to be applicable to everyone. These are difficult calls and those discussions have not yet happened.

Would you agree that the issue of Jammu and Kashmir has been internationalised after the August 5 decision by the government, given how many times it's been raised including by the Secretary-General and the Security Council after so many decades [last taken up in 1971]?

■ [Mr. Akbaruddin said that the Secretary-General issues

a list of all items that are/ were discussed formally in the Security Council, including those that have not been discussed in decades but are listed at the behest of delegations. These include 'The Hyderabad Question' and 'The India-Pakistan Question' of 1948.

I'm not contesting that is

on the agenda because the agenda, the way it works is that one country can put in anything on the agenda to continue, even if not discussed for... in the case of Hyderabad now, 70 years. Being on the agenda is not an issue of concern to anybody.

But it [Jammu and Kashmir] was discussed informally...

■ Informal consultations by definition are not considered to be formal if in any nature.

Yes, any country can raise anything on the agenda or outside the agenda in an informal setting. Like you and I when we sit and have a cup of tea, discuss anything under the agenda. Sure. We have not contested that this was informally raised, but you also are aware of those outcomes. No country, not even the informal outcome was shared with anybody, so you can see what the inclination of most members is. I can repeat it, I've done it many a time before, that there is no interest in addressing that issue in the Council in any format. That's why those who had raised it raised it three times, but look at the

way each time they raised it, the returns have diminished.

So is it fair to say that you disagree that it's been "internationalised"?

■ In a globalised world, you can say anything is internationalised, but I don't think there is any fear that if something is... States are sovereign, they can do what they want, but if you don't have resonance, it's a loss.

How does plurilateralism – a concept India has backed – work during a pandemic? Wouldn't multilateralism – which is, in many senses, under attack right now – work better given the pandemic affects everyone?

■ I don't see a conflict between the two frameworks. There are multiple levels at which you can address the same issue and perhaps that's the way to go about it.

There is a national effort under way. That does not detract from a regional effort like we've tried in SAARC with our Health Ministers. The EU is trying in some way in the European Union countries, there are others trying elsewhere. However, at some stage, you will also have to address it multilaterally, beyond plurilaterally. A virus knows no borders, so there will always be a threat to us unless we address it across the board, and that's the role of multilateralism.

India has achieved quite a bit in having its position on a global response to terrorism acknowledged. However, we haven't been able to make headway on the proposal for a comprehensive convention on international terrorism, the CCIT. Which regions and countries have been the biggest hurdles?

■ We need to look at the global context in which we made that submission and what is the situation today? We made the submission when I was a young First Secretary here in 1996. At that stage, terrorism was not even looked on as anything beyond a law and order issue.

Today, we've come a long way on that. There are multiple elements... of what we put in there, which are now norms in the global discourse. They are now part of many Security Council resolutions, itself. The discourse has absorbed many elements from that.

There still remain areas where we need to address them. Terrorism financing – there are Security Council resolutions; terrorism nuclear issues – there is a separate convention. The norm that nothing justifies terrorism is now accepted globally. We've come a long way on that, of course.

(With inputs from Suhasini Haidar)

(For the full interview, log on to [bit.ly/Akbaruddin](http://bit.ly/Akbaruddin))

## 85-hour, 3,345-km drive to Aizawl with a body

23-year-old who died in Chennai makes final trip home



Raphael, left, with the two ambulance drivers.

the two ambulance drivers – Jeyanthiran, 41 and Chinnaiah, 51 – with traditional shawls, shirts and other gifts. The two, who took turns to drive, also became guests of Mr. Malchhanima.

The body of Vivian, who graduated from a Chennai-based hotel management institute in February, was found by the Adyar police.

P.C. Michael Lalrinkingma, general secretary of Mizoram Welfare Association in Chennai, said Vivian had died following a heart attack on April 23 and investigations had ruled out either COVID-19 or any kind of assault as the cause of death.

"We were able to find an ambulance willing to take the body to Mizoram amid the lockdown. The ambulance charged about ₹2 lakh for the trip and Vivian's friend Raphael agreed to accompany his body," Mr. Lalrinkingma said.

just shown what every Mizo heartbeat means when it comes to the term 'Tlawmngaihna,' the Chief Minister said in another tweet.

Tlawmngaihna is a Mizo code of conduct that urges everyone to be hospitable, kind and helpful.

Scores of people in Aizawl, maintaining social distancing norms, welcomed

## Use Aarogya Setu app: Centre to staff

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

All Central government officials, including the outsourced workforce, have been directed to immediately download the 'Aarogya Setu' app on their mobile phones.

The decision comes amid concerns raised by experts on the privacy of the application. The officials, through an office memo on Wednesday, were told by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) to review their status on the app before starting for office and commute only when it shows their status as 'safe' or 'low risk'.

In case the app shows a message that an official has a 'moderate' or 'high risk', calculated on the basis of Bluetooth proximity (recent contact with an infected person), he or she should stay away from office and go for self-isolation for 14 days till the status becomes 'safe' or 'low risk', the order says.

## COVID-19 fears shifting to livelihood worries, finds study

Anxiety over funds for daily needs in four States'

ANANTH KRISHNAN  
CHENNAI

Surveys on public attitudes to COVID-19 conducted in four States over the past month have found a shift from what were widespread anxieties about the uncertainty of the epidemic to more pressing concerns about livelihood issues, researchers said on Wednesday.

Two surveys were conducted in Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Punjab from March 23 to 31 and from April 1 to 13, involving 866 and 1,237 people, respectively.

If the first survey brought out the general anxieties about the uncertainty brought by COVID-19, what we found in responses in the second survey is growing specific anxieties about income, availability of funds for daily needs and the day-to-day impact on livelihood," said Shirley Yan, a re-



Awareness on using masks was high, the study said.

searcher at Noora Health, a healthcare non-profit which released the results. The surveys were conducted by YosAid Innovation Foundation, its non-profit associate partner in India.

The idea was to study how COVID-19 is being understood and responded to by the community, Ms. Yan said. One of the key findings was the very high degree of awareness about COVID-19 in all four States, with 99% of all participants having heard about it.

It also found that over the past month, risk perceptions have also changed. Respondents with low risk perceptions attributed it to their be-

ing vigilant and following government recommendations and rules. On prevention strategies, handwashing was most commonly cited – suggesting an overall increase in awareness of hygiene, post-COVID-19 – followed by wearing a mask and avoiding going outside.

Some respondents mentioned drinking hot water, avoiding cold food items and avoiding meat. One common misconception, the study said, involved meat-eating, with 55% believing they could get infected from consuming chicken, eggs or meat.

Researchers also interviewed healthcare workers in the four State who voiced concerns about continued availability of Personal Protective Equipment and suggested hospitals should make contractual staff, who are on the frontlines of the COVID-19 fight, permanent employees.

## A meal for ₹1 on Assam highway

RAHUL KARMAKAR  
GUWAHATI

A dhaba owner on a highway in Assam is offering a vegetarian meal for ₹1 till May 3 for truckers.

Debu Saha of Shankarnagar in Hojai district said, "At a normal rate, a meal comprising rice, dal and two vegetable curries would cost ₹50. Charging a token ₹1 from truckers, doctors and medical staff, policemen and the staff of the local administration is my way of contributing to the battle against this virus."

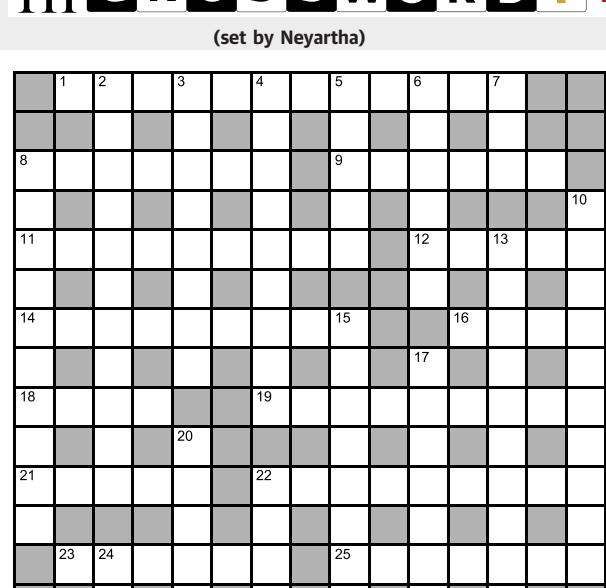
Assam's Transport Commissioner Adil Khan told *The Hindu*, "An entire ecosystem is linked to the trucking business. Since smooth transport of essential commodities through Assam is vital for the adjoining States too, we were one of the first in the country to identify repair shops and 45 highway dhabs across 33 districts where the truckers can have food and rest."

## TH CROSSWORD + 12923

(set by Neyartha)

There is no lockdown for your brain!  
Try solving a puzzle today!

@ <https://crossword.thehindu.com>



Following the nationwide lockdown, hotels have stepped forward offering much-needed, affordable shelter to stranded tourists

PRADEEP KUMAR

Picture the climax sequence of the Academy Award-winning film *Argo*. Except, unlike Ben Affleck's Tony Mendez in the film, luck runs out for the protagonist in this story – Michael Coyle, 33, a native of Missouri, USA.

As he looked up at the cabin crew relaying safety instructions in the aircraft he was seated in, barely hours after Prime Minister Narendra Modi went on air to declare that India was entering a 21-day lockdown in March, Coyle breathed a sigh of relief. An architect working for the U.S. government, he had come to India on an architectural exploration trip of the many cultural sites, only to end up being caught in the crossfire between an unforgiving virus and a Government on the backfoot. Yet, here he was, seated comfortably inside, perhaps, the last flight out of the country, and he made the mistake of believing his luck would last. The plane developed a snag; five hours of uncertainty later, the airline crew grounded the flight and the American national found himself out of options as he stood outside Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport. The next morning, on March 25, Indian airports slammed shut as the country entered a lockdown phase that continues till date.

#### Collateral damage

Coyle's is just one of the stories of foreign nationals stranded in India, although he still found a silver lining. A travel agent helped him secure accommodation as long as he continued to front the cash and provided proof that he had not contracted COVID-19. Coyle now awaits the day he can finally fly home. However, many others cannot consider themselves as lucky. Last week, police authorities in Dehradun, Uttarakhand, rescued six foreign nationals – all tourists from USA, France, Ukraine, Turkey and Nepal – from a cave in Rishikesh. The stranded tourists had retreated to the cave after they ran short of money and the private lodges they had been staying in booted them out.

"There were many stuck all over India. Some had no money, and could not even afford to pay for food. Others were looking for some cheap accommodation to help them get past the lockdown. I picked up two men, a 60-



**In limbo** Tourists were affected when India announced a nationwide lockdown in March; (below) guests at DatStop Hostel practise Yoga and eat food • GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



#### SAFE AT A DISTANCE

Hotels across the world have been offering 'quarantine packages' for stranded travellers and evacuees returning home. In cities like Hong Kong, which has a high population density and where most dwellings are no bigger than 500 square feet in area, room occupancy rates in even the four and five-star properties are over 60%. In Europe, where the peak of the virus' impact has started showing a declining trend, posh properties, like Le Bijou in Switzerland, have offered rooms complete with in-house COVID-19 testing facility and round-the-clock availability of medical care. In Southeast Asian countries like Thailand and Singapore, and also in Australia, hotels have slashed the rates of room rents by 20-40% in a bid to help people wanting to self-isolate, and such moves have resulted in an uptick in room occupancy in the month of April, especially in Singapore, which is currently experiencing another surge in the number of COVID-19 cases. In crisis-hit New York, the Four Seasons hotel in March opened its facility to provide accommodation to frontline medical staff, a trend which was replicated by other major star hotels elsewhere.



## Extended welcome

year-old and a 28-year-old, who were sleeping inside a park. They are from Spain. Their hostel had kicked them out after lockdown," says Nikhil Gupta, operations head at DatStop Hostel, a six-month-old entity in Vasant Kunj, Delhi.

#### Pitching in

DatStop was one of the few lodging properties in the capital that kept its doors open in the initial days after lockdown (it continues to do so). "We have around 23 people currently in our property. Around five or six of them are Indians, the rest are foreigners. There have been people from Germany, Mexico, USA, France, Argentina, the Philippines, Spain and the UK among others. Some of the embassies have also been arranging evacuation flights, so we have had at least 20 people fly back home. Yet there are more calls everyday," adds Nikhil.

Low-cost accommodation and guests staying in them invariably became the collateral damage in the crisis post-lockdown. Budget hotel chain OYO, which came under fire after reports of guests being thrown out of properties, put out a statement reaffirming their commitment to provide shelter to stranded tourists. "OYO is currently in touch with over 15 diplomatic missions in India and has already helped stranded foreign tourists from USA, Brazil, Belgium, Portugal, Australia, Chile, Argentina, Thai-

land and Indonesia," the company said in an email response to *The Hindu*'s queries attributed to an OYO spokesperson, adding that the firm "continues to identify hotels than can be of service in this hour of need".

#### Fighting the good fight

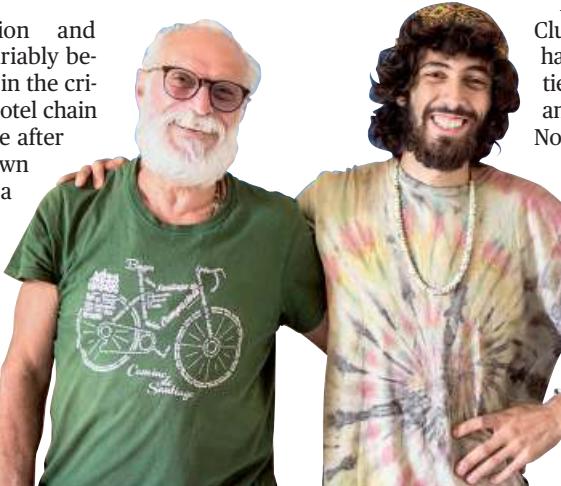
In the case of mid-market hotels, guests who were already being accommodated have been allowed to stay on, although this is not the case even in a few luxury hotels, where guests had been asked to leave prior to lock-

down with hotels choosing to manage properties with a skeletal staff. "Any guest who was staying with us prior to the lockdown has been given concessionary rates to stay in the same hotel or a similar/higher category of one of our hotels in the vicinity. This is keeping in mind those hotels wherein operations have not been temporarily suspended as per Government regulations," says Rattan Keswani, deputy managing director, Lemon Tree Hotels, a mid-market player in the Indian hospitality sector.

Properties like the Taj Group and Club Mahindra Holidays, on the other hand, did their bit by offering properties to be used as quarantine facilities and accommodate frontline workers. Notably, the iconic Taj Mahal Palace in Mumbai took in doctors and hospital staff working in places like Bandra, Kalyan and Marol as the frontline workers were facing restriction and opposition in the residential colonies they lived in. This was until six members of the hotel staff tested positive for the virus a couple of weeks ago. While established hotel chains

can afford to show generosity in this hour of crisis without unreasonable fear of crackdown by local authorities, it is the small-scale players who have taken up the bulk of the task of accommodating stranded tourists, even if it means facing resistance in the society they operate in.

"We have been appreciated by embassies but neighbours continue to report the presence of foreign nationals from time-to-time, especially when a new member joins us, and the police have to drop in to check if everything is in order. We understand the neighbours are worried, so we ensure social distancing inside the property and only admit people with medical certificates and a letter stating they are a guest of the embassy," says Nikhil. He adds: "These people have now become like a family to us."



## Santa wants socks for Christmas

The pandemic has forced Santa Claus Village in Finland to temporarily shut. But jolly old St Nicholas is not one to give up meeting his friends. The Features team live-chats with him and so can you

**Hello from the Arctic Circle**  
Elf Ferdie giving a tutorial on how the Internet works; (below) Santa with his reindeer  
• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



PRIYADARSHINI PAITANDY

Santa Claus has finally learnt to live-chat – his tech-savvy elves taught him how. And now every afternoon at 1, he sits at his office in Rovaniemi, Lapland in Finland, flanked by his two helpers, interacting with people from around the globe, across time zones.

"It is 6 degrees Celsius today, quite hot. Winter time is planning on going on a long summer holiday," says Santa, as he settles down in his comfy wooden chair and gets ready to chat on his official website.

Santa's office was opened in June 1992, and ever since, visitors have been able to meet the jolly old man every day of the year. But on March 23 this year, the doors to his office had to be temporarily shut as a precautionary measure for COVID-19. But he did not want to disappoint his many followers or put an end to a practice that has been on for

more than two decades. "We will be streaming these live chats every day until life goes back to normal and we are able to open our doors again for everyone here in Rovaniemi," says Santa, adding, "There is too much sorrow and anxiety in the world nowadays. I hope we could help all those in need. I wish we could create happiness and joy for everyone, especially children."

In the hour-long session, Santa and his helpers, reply to questions and warm messages that pour in from around the globe. No matter how old you are, it really is exciting when you see them read your name and message. The questions range from "Does Santa like to surf?" and "How to plant a sapling?" to "What is Santa's favourite drink?" (It is reindeer milk by the way and hot chocolate). Then there are compliments: "I calculated your age is around 1,744 but you don't look a day older than 100."

Santa enjoys reading letters that he receives from his friends of all ages and they also tell him about their lives, dreams and wishes. Santa Claus Village might be closed, but the elves led by the big man are already preparing for Christmas which, as of today, is just 238 days away. "So remember to be good," he reminds.

And what would Santa like for Christmas? He looks thrilled as this is not a question he often receives. "I'd love to receive lots of happiness and health. This year, especially, good health is what we can all wish for. And I would love to see children with happy faces," he says and after a pause asks, "May I add one more? It would be perfect if I receive a new pair of woollen socks. My foot size is 12 medium triple plus."

The live stream takes place daily at 3.30 p.m. IST. You can join the conversation on [Santaclausoffice.com](http://Santaclausoffice.com) or on Instagram



Santa wears a deep blue cap when he sleeps. It has the sun, moon and the northern lights on it.

Often, Santa has porridge and strawberries for breakfast.

He loves the sauna, snow sports and also surfing, though he admits he is not a very talented surfer.

Tonttu is the Finnish word for elf. Santa's oldest elf is around six centuries old. The older elves busy themselves with work in the archives department.

Santa loves reindeer milk with a dash of honey. This is the secret to him and his elves living on and on.

## A de-congested Milan

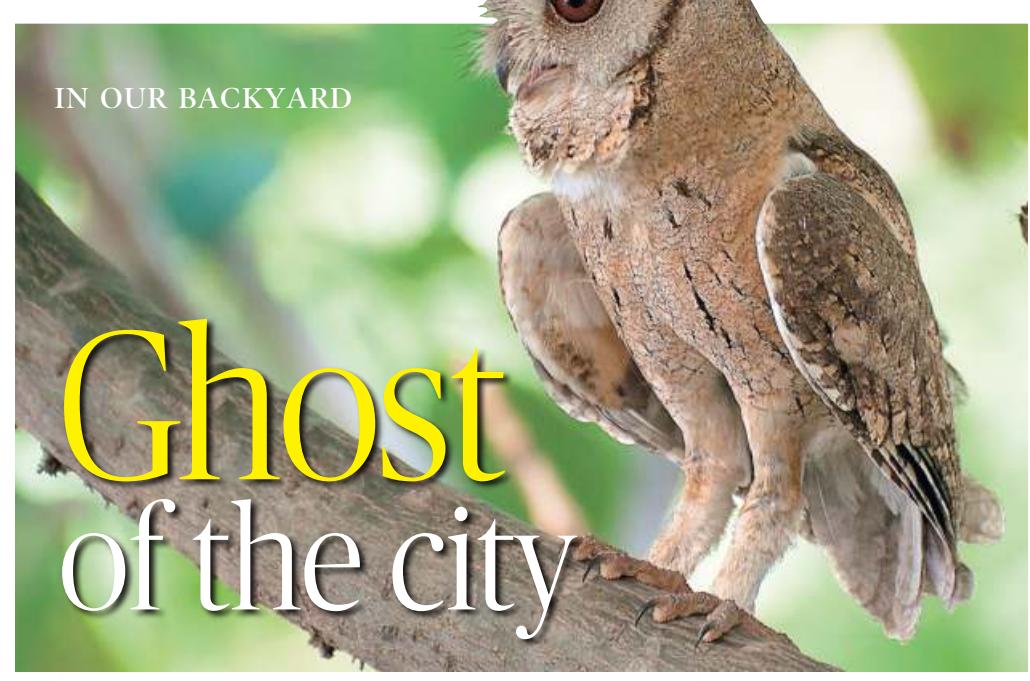


When Milan emerges from lockdown in the post COVID-19 phase, it plans to be more environment friendly. According to a report by *The Guardian*, the Italian city's authorities are working on an ambitious plan of re-allocating space on the streets to cyclists and pedestrians, as opposed to cars. Milan and Lombardy are among Europe's most polluted regions, and have also been severely hit by the pandemic. Reports state that the air quality in Milan has seen an improvement during lockdown, and the authorities hope to keep it that way. This summer, nearly 35 kilometres of streets will get temporary lanes for cycles and widened pavements; there will be priority streets for pedestrians and cyclists. The locations chosen include a low-traffic neighbourhood on the site of the former Lazzaretto, a refuge for victims of plague epidemics, in the 15th and 16th centuries.

## Virtual adventure



Mammoth Lakes in California, USA, is a hub for year-round adventure. The region has expansive mountains, valleys and clear mountain lakes that provide opportunities for outdoor adventure. In winter, visitors can ski and snowboard Mammoth Mountain or take off into the wilderness on cross-country skis. During summer, the snow melts and opens up the roads to Devil's Postpile National Monument, 101-foot Rainbow Falls and the gateway to Yosemite National Park. Fall season has fewer visitors and offers splendid sights. However, given the pandemic situation, a virtual experience is more accessible until it's safe to travel. Look for the '360 Degrees of Adventure in Mammoth Lakes' video on the YouTube channel of Mammoth Lakes, California. The videos provide a glimpse of adventure through the seasons, from snow-capped peaks to shimmering lakes. The videos can also be experienced through a VR headset.



IN OUR BACKYARD

# Ghost of the city

The Indian Scops Owl lives in dense foliage and is better heard than seen

ABHISHEK GULSHAN

For most birders, the question, 'Which is your favourite bird?' can often induce a sense of dread that makes them sweat profusely. For me, it doesn't. I know what my favourite bird is: the owl. But I love all owls, so to pick one is difficult.

If you've been following my articles from the very beginning (can't thank you enough!), you'll remember that I began this series with the Spotted Owlet, and soon followed it up with the Barn Owl. Today's spotlight is on the Indian Scops Owl.

My first encounter with this bird was way back in June, 2013 (my wee years of birdwatching), when one evening, a friend, Soma, told me about this family of five owls – two adults and three juveniles – in her backyard in Malibu Town, Gurugram. I rushed there the next morning and managed to find all five on a majestic Saptaparni tree. With butterflies in my stomach and a heartbeat that refused to slow down, I knew then that this was a special encounter.

The Indian Scops Owl is quite a common species (not as common as the Spotted Owlet though), in urban developments but has learnt to camouflage and hide from civilization for its safety. More than being seen, they

are heard with a feeble whuk of a frog-like call. Most birdwatchers tend to hear them first and see them later but it was the other way around for me. I did not hear this bird until later that year on a dark winter morning while on a run at Lodhi Gardens. Owls tend not to call after sunrise, unless troubled.

Unlike the Spotted Owlet and Barn Owl, they are generally found in the more dense trees, close to tree barks or inside dark tree hollows, which helps them camouflage, considering their brown body colour. It is a widespread resident across forests and well-wooded areas of the Indian Subcontinent south of the Himalayas. In Delhi, you'll see them in Vasant Kunj, Hauz Khas, the Ridge and other such biodiversity-rich areas.

In this small species (23-25 cm), individuals can be very variable in colour from pale grey-brown to warm rufous brown with finely streaked underparts, a thin black line around the facial disc, and dark brownish-orange eyes. Its scientific name, *Otus bakkamoena*, has been derived from the Latin word *otus*, meaning small-eared and *bakkamoena* from the Sinhala name Bakama for various owls.

Unlike the two other common species found in the city, Spotted Owlet and Barn Owl, this bird has two tufts of feathers on the top of its head, very much like cat-ears. They are in fact called ear-tufts but it's baffling that these have nothing to do with owl's actual ears.

The Indian Scops Owl is most

**Bird calling** Indian Scops Owl

■ ABHISHEK GULSHAN

ly nocturnal, usually sleeping during day and becoming active in the late hours of the evening, when it sits on trees near lamp-posts and hunts down small rodents and insects. A keen eyesight and incredible sense of hearing makes owls formidable hunters. Their sensitive, directional hearing often leads them to their prey even though the latter may be concealed.

The family of Indian Scops Owl that I came across at my friend's was my first proper sighting of an owl. I spent an entire day taking notes on this species. While the juveniles were curious, the adults were weary – yes, parenting is the same across species. There was never a time when an adult was not watching and correcting these young owls. The parents took turns sleeping and taking care of their young – not an easy task. One of the juveniles was as curious about us as I was about it, and it flew and perched on a door right next to my chair.

The day was special for two reasons: I never thought I'd see so many owls together at one place, and I was introduced to my friend's daughter Alisha, who sat next to me on a chair and was my owlng partner for the day.

*The writer is the founder of NINOX - Owl About Nature, a nature-awareness initiative. He is the Delhi-NCR reviewer for Ebird, a Cornell University initiative, monitoring rare sightings of birds. He formerly led a programme of WWF India.*

MADHUR TANKHA

"In India there are two big things: one is cinema, the other is Gandhi. Both started their journey simultaneously. My interest in Gandhi was roused after reading Bapu's autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* that was gifted to me at Gandhi Darshan in Delhi," says Narendra Kaushik.

A journalist-turned-professor, Kaushik did his Ph.D. on 'Gandhian values in Hindi cinema' and has now penned the book *Mahatma Gandhi in Cinema*. For Kaushik, Associate Professor, Journalism & Mass Communication, JECRC University, Jaipur, this book that has over 250 pages, has taken over three years to write.

Snippets of the text are now on the Cambridge Scholar Publishing website and after the lockdown, copies in hard cover will reach bookstores. Based on his research for his thesis, he reworked the structure and manner of communication to make the writing less scholarly in nature.

The book brings to light the transformation of Gandhi over the years. It's not all a rosy image though, as he has examined certain parts of his life, such as his role in Baghpat Singh's execution, differences with Subhas Chandra Bose, and his role in the Partition.

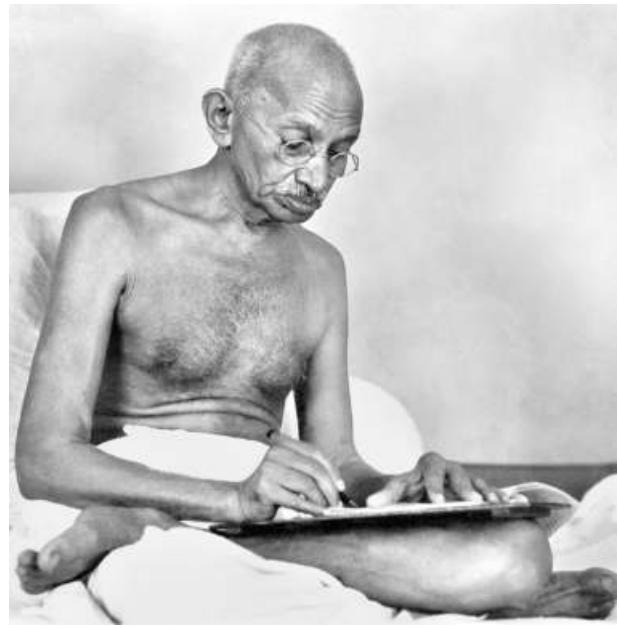
An ardent film watcher, Kaushik, who began his career with the Mid Day in Delhi, says he watches movies at home on OTT platforms, and hasn't been to a theatre in years. Excerpts from a conversation.

### Would you say that Bapu has, by and large, been projected correctly in Hindi cinema?

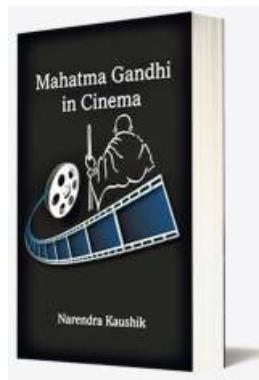
It's a mixed bag. Mahatma Gandhi's principles found more resonance in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. He exited the cinema screen after the arrival of superstar Rajesh Khanna and later Amitabh Bachchan. There was a revival of a sort after *Lage Raho Munnaabhai*. But it did not last very long.

Filmmakers have portrayed truth, untouchability, swadeshi, and equality of religions more honestly. There are films like *Raja Harishchandra*, *Phir Subah Hogi*, *Shriman Satyavadi*, *Satyakam*, *Do Aankhen Barah Haath*, *Sujata*, *Achhut Kanya*, *Ankur*, *Manthan*, *Dharti Ke Lal*, *Jaag Utha Insaan*, *Padosi*, *Train to Pakistan*, *Road to Sangam*, *Lagaan*, and *Swades* which conformed to one or more of his principles.

But when it comes to violence, Hindi filmmakers have taken the most liberties. It's understandable. The Bollywood of the 1970s, '80s and '90s sustained itself mainly on the lost-and-found narrative, and vendetta. Even *Lage Raho Munna Bhai* which resurrected him in 2006 takes liberties with non-violence. If you are talking about biopics on Gandhi, there are none. *Gandhi* only covers his political struggle completely disregarding his childhood and adolescence. Benegal's *Making of the Mahatma* focuses on his sojourn in South Africa while *Gandhi My Father* juxtaposes him with his eldest son Hari Lal.



**The making of movies**  
Gandhi, the book, author Narendra Kaushik  
■ GETTY IMAGES, SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



# Screen time with GANDHI

A new book analyses how Bapu's values have been portrayed in Hindi cinema over the last 100 years

### What were the challenges in writing this book?

There were quite a few. For one, reading about Gandhi is in itself a challenge. Almost every hour of Gandhi's life is well-documented. There is so much information available that it becomes difficult to understand what to pick and what to leave out. Moreover, there wasn't one Gandhi. There were multiple Gandhis.

For instance, on untouchability, the Gandhi before the 1920s was half-casteist, while in later years he became a crusader against untouchability. He did not allow his second son Mani Lal to marry Fatima, in South Africa, but in his later years he allowed his youngest son Devdas to marry Lakshmi, daughter of C. Rajagopalachari.



### Tell us how films like *Naya Daur* and *Lage Raho Munnaabhai* conveyed Gandhian thoughts?

Gandhi was against heavy machinery. He believed it would unemploy human beings. *Naya Daur* in fact, rolls out with a quote from the Mahatma on the subject. It juxtaposes bus (machine) against tonga (human labour) whereby the latter ultimately triumphs. Munnabhai goes by his conscience, tells truth to Janvi and exhorts others to speak the truth. A *tapori* (vagabond) resurrects Gandhigiri. The term may be an innovation of Raju Hirani but the concept is as old as Gandhi.

### What is the relevance of the book at a time when right wing fundamental forces are instilling fear in the minds of minorities?

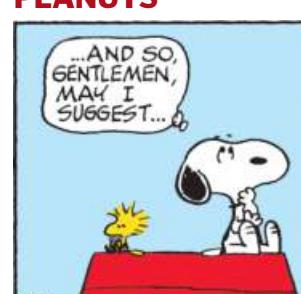
Gandhian ideology is much more relevant today than what it was in pre-independent India. The Father of the Nation made it incumbent upon the majority to look after the minority. It is high time that we go beyond these isms and wings and start looking at everything from a human angle. Gandhi did it. He belonged to neither of the camps. Though there is an attempt by both to appropriate him.

**Which is your favourite Gandhi film?**  
*Lage Raho Munnaabhai*. Agreed, it dumbstrucks down the message of the Mahatma. But in the process takes it to the hoi polloi. Moreover, it introduced the Mahatma to a younger generation. Shahrukh's *Swades* and Dharmendra's *Satyakam* are also class acts.

## POOCH CAFE



## PEANUTS



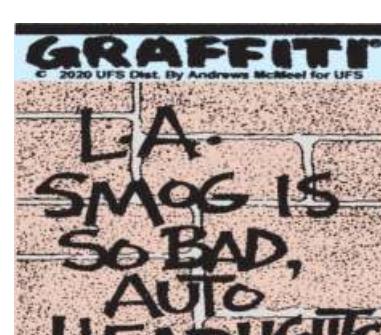
## HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



## CALVIN AND HOBBES



## TIGER



## THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13348



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

**14** Small savoury snacks (7)

**15** Representation of the Virgin Mary (7)

**16** Composed of more than one (6)

**17** Capsicum (6)

**19** Person in the saddle (5)

**21** Up to (5)

## WUMO



© GUARDIAN NEWS AND MEDIA LTD., 2016

**Across**

1 Please (anag) – pass away (6)

4 Prohibited (6)

9 Master of ceremonies (7)

10 Hulking (5)

11 French oil and gas company (5)

12 Time of full daylight (7)

13 Spell – delight (11)

18 Open-minded (7)

20 Plunge into water (5)

22 (Of writing paper) having printed lines (5)

23 Sleeveless pullover (4,3)

24 Result (anag) – gloss (6)

25 Unnatural lack of skin colour (6)

**Down**

1 Act as a stimulant (6)

2 Let in (5)

3 Furtiveness (7)

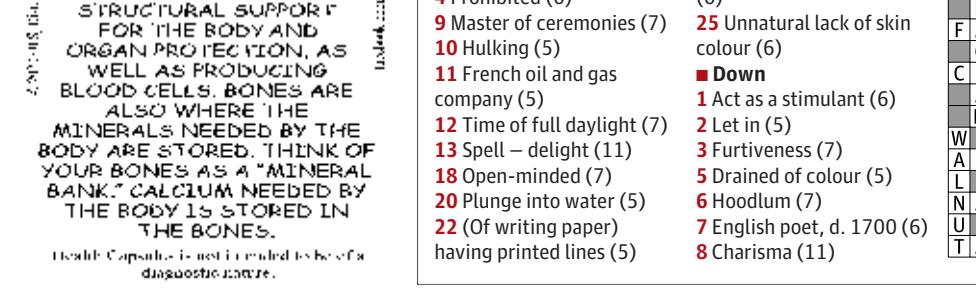
5 Drained of colour (5)

6 Hoodlum (7)

7 English poet, d. 1700 (6)

8 Charisma (11)

## PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



Solution will appear in MetroPlus dated May 2, 2020.

Solution No. 13347

APPEND GEEUP  
NEED RIMA  
FARROW DAPPER  
GISS PEA  
CRUD ANCHORED  
AOGU OUE  
MOTHBOARD  
WCNBRD  
ARTISTRY THUD  
LOIHLIB  
NAPALM OCCULT

# China to hold legislative session in May

The annual event was earlier scheduled for March; COVID-19 infections in the U.S. cross one million

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BERLIN

Countries tried to balance how far to ease coronavirus lockdowns on Wednesday, with Germany enforcing mandatory masks in shops, as the crushing global economic cost of the pandemic became clearer. Excitement over moves towards normality is being tempered by fear of fresh outbreaks of a disease that has already killed 2,14,000 people worldwide and infected more than three million.

China said its legislature would hold its annual session in May after being delayed by the coronavirus, signalling the communist leadership's growing confidence in taming the disease that emerged in the country late last year.

From Wednesday in Germany, masks were needed to enter shops, which began to open last week after the government declared its outbreak under control. Nose and mouth coverings are already compulsory on buses, trains and trams.

**Warning against travel**  
However, Germany extended a warning against travel worldwide to mid-June, spelling more bad news for a global aviation industry that has already been forced to cut tens of thousands of jobs.

Italy, Spain and France have been the worst affected European countries, with each reporting more than 23,000 deaths but daily tolls appear to be on a downward trend and they are all charting their way out of shutdown.

Spain reported a slight increase in its daily death toll from the disease on Wednesday but the government is moving towards a transition out of lockdown by the end of June, having already allowed children out at the weekend for the first time in six weeks. The pressure to ease lockdowns is immense as the world economy teeters on the brink of a huge depression, with demand for goods gutted, travel and tourism hammered and big banks reporting deep falls in quarterly profits.



**Justice, freedom, democracy:** Pro-democracy protesters observing social distancing measures at a shopping mall during a rally in Hong Kong on Wednesday. ■ AFP

## 1.6 billion at the risk of losing jobs, warns ILO

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
GENEVA

Nearly half of the entire global workforce is in immediate danger of having their livelihoods destroyed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the International Labour Organization (ILO) warned on Wednesday.

The ILO said the risk fell on those workers in the informal economy, and three-quarters of them, some 1.6 billion people were at risk in the second quarter of 2020. It said an expected further sharp decline in working hours meant that these workers were in "immediate danger of having their livelihoods destroyed". In its third report on the coronavirus crisis and the world of work, the ILO warned of the impact on the most vulnerable in the labour market, who are often in

the hardest-hit sectors. The 1.6 billion people stand in line to suffer "massive damage to their ability to earn a living," said ILO director-general Guy Ryder.

The ILO said the global workforce was 3.3 billion people, of which more than two billion worked in the informal economy – in jobs characterised by a lack of basic protections, no possibility to work from home and no income replacement during the lockdown. It said that almost 1.6 billion informal economy workers, accounting for 76% of informal employment, were significantly impacted by lockdown measures.

The ILO said the worst-affected sectors would be accommodation and food services, manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, and real estate and business activities.

## U.K. PM becomes father of baby boy

REUTERS  
LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's fiancee, Carrie Symonds, gave birth to a baby boy at a London hospital on Wednesday, slightly earlier than had been expected.

Ms. Symonds, 32, had said previously that their baby was due in the early summer. Mr. Johnson, 55, whose country is facing its worst health crisis since the 1918 influenza outbreak, will take a short period of paternity leave later in the year.

"The Prime Minister and Ms. Symonds are thrilled to announce the birth of a healthy baby boy... earlier this morning," the couple's spokeswoman said.

"Both mother and baby are doing very well," added the statement.

## No end in sight, says Rouhani

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
TEHRAN

Iran reopened for business despite its persistent COVID-19 outbreak as there was no end in sight to the crisis, President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday, as 80 new deaths were announced.

His remarks came as the Health Ministry announced that 80 new deaths from COVID-19 had taken the country's overall toll to 5,957. Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said another 1,073 people tested positive for the virus in the past 24 hours.

# Study on China dams brings the Brahmaputra into focus

'Structures built on Mekong river altered its natural flow'

ANANTH KRISHNAN  
CHENNAI

A new study highlighting the impact of China's dams on the Mekong river has raised fresh questions on whether dams being built on other rivers that originate in China, such as the Brahmaputra, may similarly impact countries downstream.

While China's southwestern Yunnan province had above-average rainfall from May to October 2019, there was "severe lack of water in the lower Mekong", the study found based on satellite data from 1992 to 2019.



**Harnessing the flow:** The Zangmu Hydropower Station in Gyaca county in Lhoka, Tibet. ■ AFP

from drought, while the Lancang only accounted for 13.5% of the Mekong's flows.

India has long expressed concerns over dam-building on the Brahmaputra. In 2015, China operationalised its first hydropower project at Zangmu, while three other dams at Dagu, Jixiu and Jiacha are being developed.

Indian officials have said the dams are not likely to impact the quantity of the Brahmaputra's flows because they are only storing water for power generation. Moreover, the Brahmaputra is not entirely dependent on upstream flows and an estimated 35% of its basin is in India.

India does not have a water-sharing agreement with China, but both sides share hydrological data. "We have got China to cooperate with us for warnings on how floods are moving down the Yarlung Tsangpo and into the Brahmaputra, so that we can warn our population living in low-lying areas and move them safely to higher ground," said Gautam Bamawale, who was India's Ambassador to China until December 2018.

"India will continue to raise the issue of river waters in all four countries, which the study did not account for."

China, as that appears to be the only methodology to ensure what happened on Mekong does not happen on Brahmaputra," he said.

### Management problem

"India, for the most part, doesn't have a quantity problem but a management one," added Ambika Vishwanath, who researches water security and is director of the Kubernein Initiative.

"We really need to worry more about activity in China affecting quality, ecological balance, and flood management."

The Mekong study, she added, was not conclusive on the question of how China's dams had affected quantity of flows.

"To state that the basin had less water because of activities in China alone is misleading, mainly because that only considers the water flowing into the lower basin at one station in Thailand," she said, adding that the study did not consider other dams and water-use along the course of the river. The lower basin isn't entirely dependent on flows from China, but also receives water from tributaries in all four countries, which the study did not account for.

## Detained Canadians are in good health: China

Beijing will protect their legal rights'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BEIJING

China said on Wednesday that two Canadians held for more than 500 days in a case that has roiled diplomatic relations were in "good health", after authorities suspended consular visits over the pandemic.

Businessman Michael Spavor and former diplomat Michael Kovrig have been in detention since December 2018, an apparent retaliation for the arrest of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou in Vancouver on a U.S. warrant. The United States wants Ms. Meng extradited to face trial on charges related to the Chinese telecom equipment maker's alleged violations of U.S. sanctions against Iran.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said last Thursday – on the 500th day of their detention – that

consular visits to the men had been blocked due to a lockdown of prisons.

Asked for updates on the detained pair, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said on Wednesday: "I understand these two people are in good health and the Chinese will always protect their legal rights and interests." Mr. Geng added that both men have received visits from the Canadian Embassy on multiple occasions, but such visits have been put on hold due to the pandemic.

Mr. Trudeau has noted that they "are in a facility in a region that is not particularly affected by COVID-19." He said that Canada's Foreign Minister has also protested to his Chinese counterpart over the continued detention of the pair, who are accused of gathering Chinese state secrets.

## Images show Kim's yachts near Wonsan

Movement of boats suggests that he or his entourage may be in the coastal city

REUTERS  
SEOUL



**Lighter moment:** North Korean leader Kim Jong-un with former NBA player Dennis Rodman in Pyongyang in 2014. ■ AP

Korea monitoring project, 38 North, which reported satellite images showed what was believed to be Mr. Kim's personal train was parked at a station reserved for his use at the villa in Wonsan.

Officials in South Korea and the United States say it is plausible that Mr. Kim may be staying there, possibly to avoid exposure to the new coronavirus, and have expressed scepticism of media reports he had some kind of serious illness.

The last time official media in North Korea reported on Mr. Kim's whereabouts was when he presided over a meeting on April 11, but there have been near-daily reports of him sending letters and diplomatic messages.

### Seaside compound

Mr. Kim's seaside compound in Wonsan, on the country's east coast, is dotted with guest villas and serviced by a private beach, basketball

court, and private train station, according to experts and satellite imagery. An air-strip was bulldozed last year to build a horse riding track, while a boathouse nearby shelters Mr. Kim's Princess 95 luxury yacht, valued at around \$7 million in 2013.

Wonsan is one of the larger and better appointed compounds, but it also has a useful location that allows Mr. Kim to easily travel to other areas along the coast, or return quickly to Pyongyang in his private train or along a special highway designated for use only by the Kim family or top officials, U.S.-based North Korea researcher Michael Madden said.

Wonsan also holds symbolic power for the Kim dynasty: It was there Kim Il-sung, who helped found North Korea at the end of Japanese colonial rule in 1945, first landed with Soviet troops to take over the country.

## 38 killed in S. Korea construction site fire

Workers were building a warehouse

REUTERS  
SEOUL

A fire at a construction site in South Korea killed at least 38 people and injured another 10 on Wednesday, fire authorities said.

The fire broke out when workers were building a warehouse in the city of Icheon, about 80 km southeast of Seoul, they said.

They said "rapid combustion" occurred while workers were working on an underground level of the warehouse, adding that they are investigating the cause of the blaze.

**410 people mobilised**  
A total of 410 people including 335 firefighters, were mobilised to respond to the accident.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in asked related Ministries to do their utmost

efforts for the search and rescue operation by mobilising all available resources, presidential blue house spokesman Kang Min-seok said.

The fire was extinguished five hours after it occurred at 1:32 pm, Yonhap News Agency said.

## Myanmar army guilty of rights abuse

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
YANGON

Myanmar's military must be investigated for possible "war crimes and crimes against humanity" as a conflict with rebels in the country's northwest rages up, a UN rights expert said on Wednesday. The military is locked in a civil war against the Arakan Army, an insurgent group fighting for more autonomy for ethnic Rakhine Buddhists.

Scores have been killed, hundreds wounded and some 1,50,000 people fled their homes since the fighting erupted in January last year. "...[T]he Myanmar military continues to escalate its assault in Rakhine State, targeting the civilian population," the UN official Yanghee Lee said on Wednesday.

### ELSEWHERE



#### Queen calls on Ardern over COVID-19 response

Wellington  
New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said on Wednesday that she spoke to Queen Elizabeth II after the country emerged out of a strict lockdown that helped contain the spread of the coronavirus. AFP

#### EU opens new legal case against Poland

Brussels  
The European Union (EU)'s executive on Wednesday started a new legal case against the nationalist Polish government led by the Law and Justice party over what it said was the muzzling of judges in the European bloc's largest ex-communist country. Reuters

## Epidemic shakes France's faith in a cornerstone: strong govt.

Local authorities are defying Paris; complaints have been lodged at the Court of Justice against regime's handling of crisis



**Strict vigil on:** Local police carrying out a check on people without masks in Sceaux, south of Paris, on April 8. ■ AFP

French society: the primal authority of the centralised state.

The city of Perpignan lodged contagious patients in a hotel after the central government told people to self-isolate at home.

Officials in the city of Marseille carried out widespread testing of both the sick and healthy even as the government

ment ordered that only the seriously ill be tested.

France has suffered the world's fourth-biggest death toll – now at 23,660 official deaths, behind the U.S., Italy and Spain – a consequence, critics say, of the central government's failure to anticipate the onslaught of the contagion.

That failure and a critical shortage of masks and testing kits led to the virus' rapid early spread, prompting France to impose one of the world's strictest nationwide lockdowns, now in its seventh week.

### Gradual reopening

Prime Minister Édouard Philippe announced a tentative plan Monday to gradually reopen the country starting May 11. And he promised that masks and testing would be made sufficiently available.

But it was not clear that those steps would halt what polls show is declining confidence in the government's handling of the pandemic.

"Trust in the state is eroding for some time,

since the state is no longer able to respond to the need for security," said Philippe Laurent, the Mayor of

Sceaux and the secretary-general of the Association of Mayors of France.

About a dozen complaints have been lodged by individuals and medical organisations with the French Court of Justice, a special court that hears accusations of government mismanagement. Several officials have been accused of willfully failing to take appropriate measures to combat the virus, endangering people's lives.

The government's failure to stem the initial outbreak undermined the important social contract between the state and the people, said Pierre Vermeren, a historian.

"We have some of the highest taxes and biggest public spending in the world,

and the French people accept that because, implicitly, their protection was guar-

anteed by the state," said Vermeren, who teaches at the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne.

Critics blame France's poor showing, at least in part, on the excessive centralisation of the French state, embodied by a president, Emmanuel Macron, who has spoken of his belief in the "top-down" exercise of power and has employed martial language in describing the fight against the virus.

Like many leaders, Macron initially derived a boost from the crisis, but that has begun to fade. Nearly 60% of respondents described him as a "bad president" in one recent poll, while another poll showed confidence in the government's management of the crisis declining steadily to 39% from 55% in the past month. NY TIMES

M ND-NDE

## MARKET WATCH

	29-04-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	32,720	1.89
US Dollar	75.66	0.68
Brent oil	23.31	14.94

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	287.65	+14.70
Asian Paints	1767.50	-56.90
Axis Bank	439.10	-16.35
Bajaj Auto	2499.15	35.45
Bajaj Finserv	4998.65	136.85
Bajaj Finance	2296.45	68.35
Bharti Airtel	496.00	10.35
BPCL	360.75	1.65
Britannia Ind	3156.80	-37.15
Cipla	596.25	-2.35
Coal India	139.85	4.45
Dr Reddys Lab	3880.70	-69.05
Eicher Motors	14315.75	-11.10
GAIL (India)	89.10	4.55
Grasim Ind	501.95	4.50
HCL Tech	491.75	20.65
HDFC	1836.75	120.95
HDFC Bank	977.10	45.70
Hero MotoCorp	1970.25	27.15
Hindalco	116.30	7.55
Hind Unilever	2231.75	-58.20
ICICI Bank	370.45	10.60
IndusInd Bank	471.10	3.05
Bharti Infratech	163.00	3.60
Infosys	676.55	15.85
Indian Oil Corp	80.50	0.85
ITC	182.15	2.70
JSW Steel	164.10	4.70
Kotak Bank	1327.85	1.20
L&T	875.35	18.20
M&M	348.00	12.05
Maruti Suzuki	5068.45	15.75
Nestle India Ltd.	17489.70	-79.95
NTPC	90.20	-0.15
ONGC	70.50	1.30
PowerGrid Corp	158.05	0.85
Reliance Ind	1426.95	-1.20
State Bank	190.10	5.80
Shree Cement	19171.45	305.55
Sun Pharma	477.65	3.70
Tata Motors	78.15	1.20
Tata Steel	282.65	9.10
TCS	1905.65	46.60
Tech Mahindra	528.70	8.30
Titan	925.40	-7.45
UltraTech Cement	3434.35	40.35
UPL	360.60	0.10
Vedanta	79.15	2.30
Wipro	180.65	0.95
Zee Entertainment	159.40	6.95

## EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	75.49	75.81
Euro	81.91	82.25
British Pound	93.68	94.08
Japanese Yen (100)	70.90	71.21
Chinese Yuan	10.67	10.72
Swiss Franc	77.48	77.81
Singapore Dollar	53.35	53.58
Canadian Dollar	54.10	54.35
Malaysian Ringgit	17.36	17.46
Australian Dollar	49.15	49.36

Source: Indian Bank

# Banks borrow ₹2,000 crore from RBI for mutual funds

Window of ₹50,000 cr. open till May 11; 'crisis of confidence affecting sentiment'

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Commercial banks have borrowed ₹2,000 crore from the liquidity window that was offered by the Reserve Bank of India for mutual funds (MFs), so far, latest data released by the central bank showed.

On Monday, the RBI had announced a special window of ₹50,000 crore for mutual funds in view of the redemption pressure that the fund houses are facing.

## Exclusive for MFs

Funds availed under this facility will be used by banks exclusively for meeting the liquidity requirements of MFs, RBI had said. The scheme was made available from April 27, 2020 till May 11, 2020 or up to utilisation



A signal needs to be given out that no MF or NBFC is going down, says Motilal Oswal's Aashish Somaiya. ■ PAUL NORONHA

of the allocated amount, whichever is earlier.

"There are two issues currently – liquidity and crisis of confidence. The move to provide liquidity is fabulous but one needs to address the root cause as well," Aashish Somaiya, managing director

and chief executive officer, Motilal Oswal Asset Management.

"Banks are risk averse and so will be selective on taking the papers on their books. There is stress that will lead to redemptions and hence a signal needs to be given out

by regulators, government) that no mutual fund or for that matter no NBFC is going down," Mr. Somaiya added.

The window was opened by RBI after Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund decided to wind up six debt funds that have combined assets under management of nearly ₹26,000 crore, on account of illiquid, low-rated instruments in their portfolio, last week.

The fund house had said that it decided to wind up the schemes to preserve the value at least at the current levels, as it was getting eroded due to a combination of redemption pressures and mark-to-market losses.

These stemmed from the lack of liquidity on account of the COVID-19 impact on the markets.

## Sensex up 2% as financial, technology stocks rise

HDFC, HDFC Bank lead the surge

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks rose for the third straight session on Wednesday as financial and technology stocks witnessed huge buying interest, pushing the indices up nearly 2%.

The 30-share Sensex gained 605.64 points, or 1.89%, to close at 32,720.16. The index has gained nearly 1,400 points in the last three trading sessions.

The gains on Wednesday were led by the HDFC twins – HDFC and HDFC Bank – followed by stocks like HCL Technologies, State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Fi-

nance, Infosys and TCS. The broader Nifty ended the day at 9,553.35, gaining 172.45 points, or 1.84%. The India VIX index dipped a little over 4% on Wednesday.

## Falling virus cases

"Falling rates of new COVID-19 cases, combined central bank and government actions and partial opening up of economy across the world has lifted the sentiments globally," said Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services. Overseas investors were net buyers at ₹722 crore on Wednesday, as per provisional numbers.

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON

The U.S. economy shrank at a 4.8% annual rate last quarter as the COVID-19 pandemic shut down much of the country and began triggering a recession that will end the longest expansion on record.

The Commerce Department said the gross domestic product (GDP), the total output of goods and services, posted a quarterly drop for the first time in six years.

And, it was the sharpest fall since the economy shrank at an 8.4% annual

rate in the fourth quarter of 2008 in the depths of the Great Recession.

Forecasters said the drop in the January-March quarter will be only a precursor of a far grimmer GDP report to come for the April-June period, with business shutdowns and layoffs striking with devastating force.

The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that GDP will plunge this quarter at a 40% annual rate.

That would be, by a breathtaking margin, the bleakest quarter since such records were first compiled

## Rupee rises on strong equities, weak dollar

Sees third straight session of gain

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

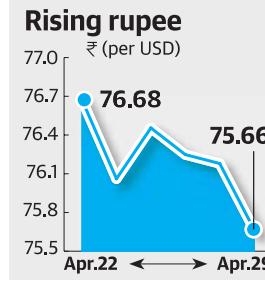
MUMBAI

The rupee gained 52 paise against the dollar to end the day at a four-week high level of 75.66 on the back of strong domestic equities and weakening dollar.

The rupee opened strong at 75.94 compared with the previous close of 76.18. It touched the day's high of 75.60, before closing at 75.66, up 52 paise from Tuesday's close.

This is the third straight session of gain for the domestic currency, which has appreciated around 1% against the dollar this week.

"Rupee extended gains during late Asian trades on Wednesday beyond 76 to likely overseas inflows into local stocks amid Facebook-Jio deal related flows, Fed policy due tonight and ECB on Thursday," said Jateen Trivedi, senior research



analyst (commodity & currency), LKP Securities.

"Investors are cautious before major policy announcements. Not much is expected from the Fed with regard to change in policy but the statement will be of utmost importance."

The dollar fell ahead of the Federal Reserve's policy announcement later on Wednesday and the European Central Bank's meeting on Thursday. The dollar index was trading 0.28% down at 99.58.

## Amazon offers credit service to shoppers

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Amazon on Wednesday announced 'Amazon Pay Later', a new credit service in India that will allow shoppers on its platform to get instant credit to buy products as well as pay bills.

"Customers can also use this credit to complete their bill payments on Amazon.in," the company said. Amazon Pay Later offers the option to repay in the subsequent month at no additional fees, or in EMIs up to 12 months at nominal interest rates.

"Amazon Pay Later is a unique service that will help customers expand their access to credit and experience most convenient options of making payments. It empowers them to manage their monthly spends better," Mahendra Nerurkar, CEO, Amazon Pay India.

## SC orders tax refund of ₹733 cr. to Vodafone Idea

Dept. must process past demands, too

## LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Income Tax department to refund ₹733 crore for the assessment years 2014-15 to telecom major Vodafone Idea.

A Bench led by Justice U.U. Lalit ordered the department to pay the amount to Vodafone within four weeks subject to any proceedings that the department may deem appropriate to initiate in accordance with law.

The Bench also directed the I-T Department to conclude as early as possible the proceedings relating to the demands for the AYs 2014-15 to 2017-18, along with interest.



THE HINDU GROUP

One English course to help you sail through the 3 stages of UPSC

STEP for Competitive Exams is a tailor-made course that trains you for all 3 stages of UPSC exam.

## Objective Test

- Practice sets on reading comprehension
- Video lessons on para jumbles and word reordering
- Lessons on idioms, phrases, antonyms/synonyms
- Fill in the blanks (Cloze Test) - Lessons focusing on all aspects of such questions
- Grammar lessons on active/passive voice, direct/reported speech, etc.
- Vocabulary - Words in the Indian Constitution, words relevant for exam preparation, etc.

## Written Exam

- Precis Writing
- Essay Writing
- Advanced Grammar

## Interview

- How to answer the most common interview questions?
- How to express opinions like advantages/disadvantages, negatives/positives, etc.
- How to speak clearly - highlighting significant points, emphasising on relevant supporting details, etc.

Scan the QR code



To know more  
Visit [BIT.LY/UPSCEXAM1](http://BIT.LY/UPSCEXAM1)

**STEP**  
FOR COMPETITIVE EXAMS

# Irrfan Khan: an actor who could do anything, become anyone

He bridged the gap between Indian and world cinema with his grace and nuanced performances

NAMRATA JOSHI

**I**t was this same cruel month of April back in 2002. Irrfan Khan, despite more than a decade of struggle, and the popular Tony and Deeya Singh serial *Banegi Apni Baat* behind him, had only just begun to make an impression on the Hindi cinema audience. But London-based director Asif Kapadia, who had directed him in his award-winning debut feature *The Warrior* in 2001, told me that Irrfan was "the Indian Benicio del Toro, Sean Penn, Gary Oldman or Vincent Gallo... He can do anything he wants...I look forward to seeing him fly." He said this for a piece I was doing back then for *Outlook* magazine.

As that flight got cruelly grounded on Wednesday, for one of India's finest actors and truly international talent, I look back with wonder at how prophetic Mr. Kapadia had been back then. In the more than 15 years that followed, one has witnessed some of the most trailblazing performances from Irrfan.

#### Alternate hero

Irrfan's appeal lay in precisely what he could not be: a textbook Hindi film idol. He was an alternate hero. One wondered if Bollywood would be able to accommodate the Jaipur boy's unusual persona. It did. He was an actor first who later went on to acquire the charm of a mainstream star without losing his rootedness. An actor who could transcend nationalities and appeal to a global audience. An actor who could do anything, become anyone. Most importantly, Irrfan was always there for young filmmakers despite being courted by international giants like Ang Lee, Michael Winterbottom and Danny Boyle.

It wasn't easy to arrive at

this point in life. His debut itself was jinxed: a cameo in Mira Nair's *Salaam Bombay* (1988) got chopped at the editing table. He struggled hard but the battle didn't leave him weary or bitter. "The recognition is making me feel pampered. It is as if all these years of acting were worth it," he told me in one of the interviews.

He would look back at his time in the National School of Drama in Delhi as one that provided him an atmosphere to "think and be involved in the craft of acting in a concentrated manner". He appreciated the TV years that got him to practise in front of the camera and got him work.

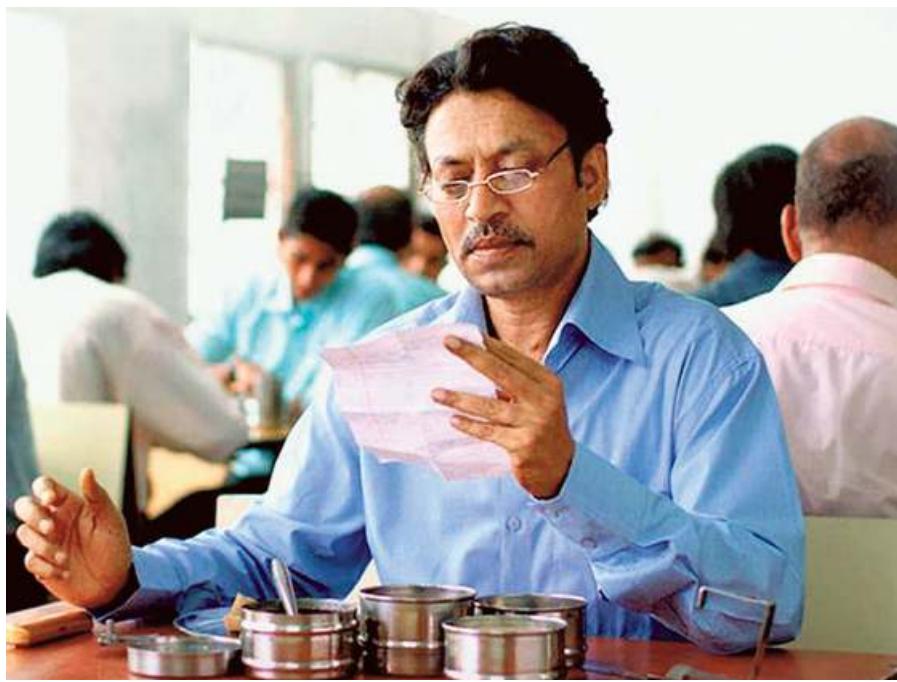
#### National Award

The films that got him acclaim were Tigmanshu Dhulia's *Haasil* (2003), Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* (2004) and Ms. Nair's *The Namesake* (2007). In *Haasil*, a love story set against the backdrop of small-town college politics, he played a student leader who betrays the young hero but walks away with the audience's heart.

In *Maqbool*, he was smouldering as the Indian Macbeth nursing forbidden love and longing for his boss's moll. And he was just as unforgettable as the gentle, introverted Bengali professor Ashoke, trying to strike roots and make a life in an alien land in *The Namesake*.

In *Paan Singh Tomar* (2012), he played the eponymous character of a steeple-chase champion-turned-dacoit with forcefulness, daring, simplicity as well as humour. It won him the National Award for Best Actor. He was bestowed with a Padma Shri in 2011.

With Irrfan less was always more. He could enter and live a character, depicting



**A character shines:** A scene from *The Lunchbox*.

ing the many nuances with just a few words and expressions. Irrfan let his eyes talk all the way as the eccentric widower Saajan in Ritesh Batra's *The Lunchbox* (2013).

He was terse and spot-on as the cop Ashwin Kumar, leading the double murder probe even as his own marriage is on the verge of a col-

#### TRIBUTE

lapse in *Talvar* (2015). In *The Warrior* (2001), the challenge for Irrfan was to depict the journey of a brutal warrior to redemption, with minimal tools at hand.

#### Understated, deadpan

Understatement extended to his comic and romantic roles as well, as seen in his fabulous chemistry with Konkona Sen Sharma as a mismatched couple in Anurag Basu's *Life in A Metro* (2007).

He was perfect with his timing, both comic and romantic as the straight-faced cab owner Rana with whom the father-daughter duo, Am-

itabh Bachchan and Deepika Padukone, travel all the way to Kolkata from Delhi in *Shoojit Sarker's Piku* (2015).

I haven't seen another actor use the deadpan to such a great effect.

#### Personal touch

Every interview with him was marked with his personal touch. Questions were posed even as mine were answered: "Why do you post so many food pictures on Facebook?" "How is *The Hindu* doing in Mumbai?" "What is the state of the nation like?" "Where is India heading?"

He and his wife Sutapa Sikdar – who gamely let us call him the thinking woman's sex symbol after his light romantic turn in *Piku* – defined the secular, liberal bedrock that India has always stood upon and will hopefully continue to do so in the future.

I remember Irrfan writing a piece for me once about fringe groups trying to curb freedom of expression. The exchange we had on it lies saved in my email inbox. I pulled out one para from it which still resonates. He wrote: "It's really sad to see that after so many years of civilisation, of evolution, religion is not helping us coexist. The basic philosophy of every religion is pure but it's getting abducted and misused by those who control the masses. My point is, why give so much importance to an individual's religion at all?"

#### Last time

The last time I met the couple was for an interview together before the release of his film *Qarib Qarib Singlle* (2017). It had been a busy day for him giving pre-release interviews, wolfing down a late

lunch and deciding on his wardrobe for a promotional trip to Delhi. There was the usual banter but he also looked pale. Who was to know then that the neuroendocrine tumour would be detected just a few months later, in March 2018, and it would be our last meeting.

In a curious way, I have associated my own journey in film journalism with that of Irrfan's in cinema. He has provided me some of the most treasured memories.

He was the one who made me go all the way to Madh Island for an interview to mark his golden 50s.

My first top league international film festival was the Toronto International Film Festival in 2013 in his good company. Irrfan was the toast of India there with *The Lunchbox* and his new film *Qissa*, that didn't just premiere there but also went on to bag the Netpac award. He was the one to have generously got me my most cherished interview ever – with the rebellious Iranian actor Golshifteh Farahani – with whom he was shooting in Jaisalmer for Anup Singh's *The Song of Scorpions*.

#### The final stretch

The last film I saw and reviewed before the lockdown was his – Homi Adajania's *Angrezi Medium*. On Friday, March 13, at PVR Juhu. He can't not be in my thoughts when I walk into a multiplex next to view a film.

In the midst of the helpless feeling engulfing the world at large, the unfairness of his death will be difficult to reconcile with. After all, this was just the first act of his long journey into cinema. Who will script the next two acts now?

## A loner with a great appetite for learning at NSD

While he managed to get admission into National School of Drama (NSD), Irrfan took a while to shed his shy, introverted personality. His NSD friends remember him as someone who did not mingle much with others. There was a quiet but focused side to him. It is also possible that since he was from a small town, he was perhaps a bit uncomfortable in the presence of others who came from big cities.

Mita remembers not noticing him in the beginning. "He was a lanky guy with a curly mop of hair, really skinny, with bags under his eyes. But he had an incredible grin. It was a very shy grin and completely wicked. And he had this voice. I am someone who likes textured voices. It wasn't a deep voice; it was a twangy voice like a banjo."

Mita recalls an anecdote from when they were still in the first year. One morning, Mita and Irrfan came to blows in class. She cannot recall what they fought over, but this much she remembers: "He said something and I said something. Next thing I knew, we were hitting each

#### BOOK EXTRACT

other and the class had to draw us apart."

Another person I spoke to about Irrfan Khan was his NSD teacher Ram Gopal Bajaj – affectionately called Bajjo Bhai – who was also a graduate of NSD (class of 1965). "Irrfan sabse sehma hua tha," Bajjo Bhai recalls. "I see a connection between him being lean, with bulging eyes, angry and yet sehma hua ke kuch kar nahi sakta. My feeling is that Irrfan didn't have a friend in class, except for Sutapa. He was basically a loner and that is why I noticed him."

"There was some kind of inner gentleness in that boy, which perhaps carries on."

However, Irrfan did stand out in one way. He thought hanging out, drinking chai at *addas*, having late night conversations and arguments with classmates was a waste of time. Since Sutapa was from Delhi, she had been exposed to theatre and the arts. She could see the hunger in Irrfan to learn fast, the desperate desire to catch up with the rest of his peers, and soak up as much as possible so he could be at par with them.

Irrfan's class had a total of 18 students, most with scholarships, and all coming from different parts of India. Two close friends Irrfan would go on to make were both from big cities – Mita Vashishtha from Chandigarh and Supata Sikdar from Delhi. The students would spend long, intense hours with each other – holding *addas* at the teashop at Mandi House, eating *parathas* at 2 a.m., arguing, competing, rehearsing plays and collaborating.

Speaking about Irrfan,

watching, observing, reading and discovering world cinema, he grew rather fast. I have many friends, but in Irrfan, that development is remarkable."

"He would always be reading books; there was always the latest script of a play in his hand," Sutapa added. "I don't remember any other classmate who would carry so many scripts and books in their hand."

Tishu and Irrfan first connected over their common interest in films. Tishu was seriously interested in directing films and wanted to use the NSD training as a stepping-stone to the Hindi film industry. And Irrfan wanted to act in films. They would spend a lot of time watching and talking about Hollywood films starring actors like Robert De Niro and Al Pacino, and the works of Martin Scorsese. Together they would discuss other international filmmakers, such as Rainer Werner Fassbinder.

One thing Irrfan's NSD classmates remember is his obsession with Naseeruddin Shah. In the 1980s, the young students at NSD had a few role models – actors with independent spirits who were pioneers in the new wave or parallel cinema movement, and Naseer was definitely one of them, along with Shabana Azmi, Smita Patil and Om Puri.

"We would all tease him about it," Mita Vashishtha says. "It was like, 'Arre yaar Irrfan, Naseer ko chhod do' ('Please, Irrfan, forget about Naseer'). But it was how he wanted to approach a role, the way he wanted to perform. We often saw Naseer in his performances." Irrfan was honest enough to confess to Naseeruddin Shah how much the senior actor had inspired him. "I am glad he didn't try to become another Naseeruddin Shah, and discovered his own identity," Naseer says.

(This is an excerpt used with permission from the book *Irrfan Khan: The Man, The Dreamer, The Star* by Aseem Chhabra, printed by Rupa Publications.)



**In fine company:** Irrfan with Omar Sy, director Ron Howard and Tom Hanks pose on the eve of the premiere of the movie *Inferno* at Florence. ■ FILE PHOTO: AFP

## Bhutia live!

Catch former India captain and AFC Hall of Fame winner Bhairichung Bhutia in a live chat on *Sportstar's* Instagram handle (@sportstarweb) on April 30 (Thursday) at 6 p.m. IST.

## Carlsen makes semifinals

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI  
Magnus Carlsen overcame a horrific start to beat Ian Nepomniachtchi 3-2 and became the first player to qualify for the \$250,000 Magnus Carlsen Invitation online chess semifinals on Tuesday.

Carlsen took over six minutes on Move 7 in the first game, committed a blunder, immediately lost a knight and eventually resigned on the 28th move. His victory in the third game helped him force the match-deciding Armageddon game, which he won with white.

Alireza Firouzja beat Anish Giri 2.5-1.5.

**Sixth-round results:** Magnus Carlsen (Nor) bt Ian Nepomniachtchi (Rus) 3-2; Alireza Firouzja (FIDE) bt Anish Giri (Ned) 2.5-1.5.

## Ageless Sharath looks beyond Tokyo

India's top-ranked men's paddler is keen on a 2022 finish, at the Birmingham Commonwealth Games

**AMOL KARHADKAR**  
MUMBAI

Even as the sports fraternity is still coming to terms with the deferment of the Tokyo Olympics by a year owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, Sharath Kamal, the torch-bearer of India's table tennis movement, has taken it in his stride and planning ahead. Sharath is now exuding confidence that he will be able to stretch his career till the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

"After Rio 2016, I had decided to take a call in two years. After the Commonwealth Games (in 2018), I thought I was in good shape to keep going till the 2020 Olympics. Now that Tokyo has been postponed at least till July-August 2021 and there's just nine months' gap between Tokyo and Birmingham, I am looking forward to Birmingham," said Sharath during a live chat with *Sportstar* on Instagram.

**Fruitful two years**  
Less than three months shy of turning 38, Sharath is in no mood to hang up his boots. In fact, he has been at his best in the last two years, having recorded various firsts. After registering his



peaking with age. "With sports science having evolved and experts like Ramji Srinivasan (strength and conditioning coach) being around, I am in a much better shape to look after my body, he said.

**Pick and play**  
"Besides, I have been careful in picking and choosing my tournaments ever since I returned to India from Germany (where he was based for almost a decade) in 2016. All of this has helped me spend much more time at home, have a calmer mind and actually live up to the adage of age being nothing but a number."

## Rijiju assures more support for UTT

Says Indian paddlers will do well at the Olympics

**K. KEERTHIVASAN**  
CHENNAI

The Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju lauded sportspersons for their contributions to the COVID-19 relief measures during a video-conference with table tennis coaches of the Sports Authority of India on Wednesday.

"They have made huge contributions. Not just financially, but also creating awareness among the youth about COVID-19 and putting up videos on fitness. All this shows how active sportspersons are. Hopefully, we don't have to wait long for sporting action [to get back]," said Rijiju.

**Clear target**  
"We have a clear target that might be called ambitious. We want India to be in the top 10 in the [overall] medals tally. We will do it. We have huge potential. Our paddlers will also contribute to some medals," he said with reference to the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

## IN BRIEF



#### Olympics 'difficult' if virus not contained: Abe

TOKYO  
Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said on Wednesday it would be "difficult" to hold the postponed Tokyo Olympics if the coronavirus is not contained. Abe told parliament: "We must hold the Olympics as a testament to humanity's victory over the coronavirus. If we're not in such situation, it's difficult to hold the Games," he said. AFP

#### ICC bans Deepak from all cricket for two years

DUBAI  
The ICC on Wednesday banned Deepak Agarwal, an Indian businessman who owned a franchise in the 2018 T10 League held in the UAE, after he admitted to obstructing an ongoing anti-corruption investigation. Six months of this two-year ban is a suspended sentence due to the cooperation he has offered since admitting his violation. Agarwal owned T10 team Sindhuls for a while. IANS

#### MotoGP races cancelled

PARIS  
The MotoGP races in Germany, the Netherlands and Finland in June and July have been cancelled, the International Motorcycling Federation (FIM) and promoter Dorna Sports announced on Wednesday. "The coronavirus outbreak has obliged the cancellation of all three events," they said in a joint statement. AFP

#### Thomas, Uber Cup Finals put off again

NEW DELHI  
The Thomas and Uber Cup Finals were, on Wednesday, pushed back for the second time due to the COVID-19 pandemic as the Badminton World Federation (BWF) decided to hold the global team championships from October 3 to 11 in Aarhus, Denmark. IANS

#### England tour unlikely, says Warner

Australia's limited-over tour of England and Scotland looks highly unlikely in the ongoing circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Australia is scheduled to face Scotland in a T20I on June 29 before playing three T20Is and as many ODIs against England from July 3. "At the moment it's highly unlikely we're going to go over there given what's happened in England," the opener told cricket.com.au. IANS