



Need to reset our mind to adjust to situation, says Venkaiah Naidu
page 7



Sonia writes to PM to extend free rations to vulnerable families
page 8



Retail inflation drops to 5.91% as coronavirus hits domestic demand
page 13



North Korean leader Kim Jong-un reshuffles top governing body
page 12

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NEARBY

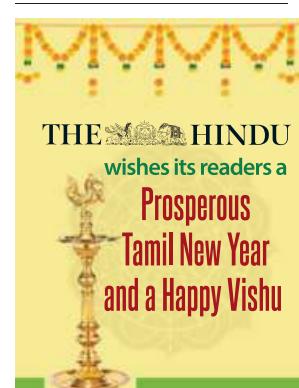


Delhi records 356 new COVID-19 cases, 4 deaths

NEW DELHI
The Capital recorded 356 new COVID-19-positive cases and four deaths on Monday, taking the toll to 28, said a health bulletin released by the Delhi government. This is the highest single-day increase in the number of COVID-positive cases. Of the new cases, 325 were classified as "under special operation", whereas 10 were people with a foreign travel history and their contacts.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Foundation course 2021
Notes + Video Lectures
+ Test Series
+ Weekly Time Table
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Actions giving results; no new cases in 25 districts, says govt.

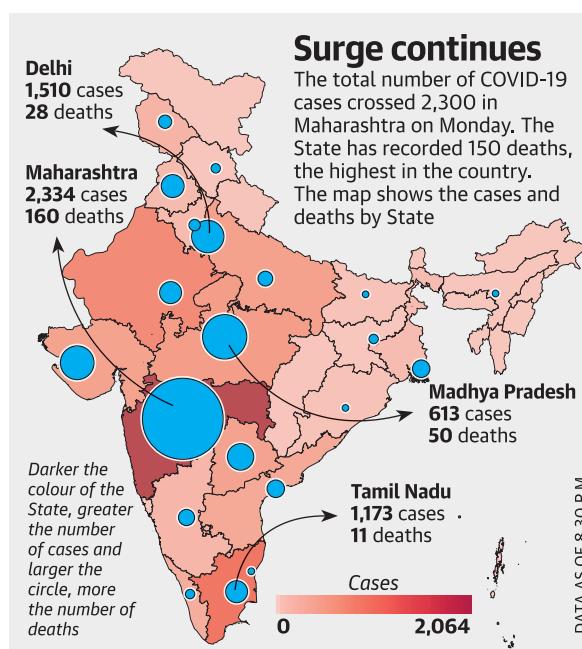
Spike of 905 new cases in past 24 hours pushes nationwide tally to 9,352

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India registered the largest spike in deaths due to COVID-19 on Monday, with 51 being reported in the past 24 hours, the highest since the first case was reported in January.

India's tally with 905 additional cases has gone up to 9,352 and 324 deaths so far. Over 857 patients have recovered. The 51 deaths reported since Sunday evening include 22 from Maharashtra, seven each from Madhya Pradesh and Telangana, five from Delhi and four from Gujarat.

The Union Health Ministry, however, on Monday said that implementation of



COVID-19

its action plan had started yielding results in 25 districts across 15 States, which had reported cases earlier.

"These districts have no case reported since the last 14 days and constant vigil is being maintained to ensure that no new cases may occur in future," Joint Secretary in the Health Ministry Lav Agarwal said at the daily press briefing.

The districts include Gondia in Maharashtra, Rajnand-

gaon, Durg and Bilaspur in Chhattisgarh, and Dangare, Kodagu, Tumakuru and Udupi in Karnataka. COVID-19 cases have been reported from 364 of the 736 districts across the country.

Figures from the State Health Departments put the total number of cases at 10,439, with 9,015 active ones. The death toll stood at 358. With 1,957 active cases and 160 deaths, Maharashtra continues to top the list.

Delhi and Tamil Nadu reported 1,455 and 1,104 active

cases respectively.

The Ministry added that Health Minister Harsh Vardhan had reviewed the research efforts for COVID-19 by the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) along with the DG, CSIR and 38 CSIR Lab Directors who are working in close partnership with the private sector, PSUs, MSMEs, departments and Ministries.

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

PM to address nation today

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the nation at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, the last day of the 21-day lockdown, amid indications that the shutdown could be extended. At least seven States – Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, West Bengal, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Telangana – have already announced extension of the lockdown till April 30.

Ministers back to work

As work from home ended for Ministers in the Union Council and senior bureaucrats on Monday, some activity slowly returned to the hitherto deserted corridors of power in New Delhi. Several Ministers were seen at work at their offices, donning masks and after going through the temperature checks at the entrance of the buildings. ▶ PAGE 8

Odisha govt. modifies second phase lockdown guidelines

Relaxation made to kick-start agriculture, horticulture

PRAFULLA DAS
BHUBANESWAR

Set to enter the second phase of the lockdown imposed to fight the COVID-19 outbreak from April 15 to 30, the Odisha government has made relaxations to kick-start activities relating to agriculture, horticulture, fisheries, forest, drinking water and e-commerce.

One more COVID-19 positive case was detected in Bhubaneswar on Monday, taking the State's total to 55. Active cases now stand at 41 as 13 have recovered and one has died.

Announcing modifications in the lockdown guidelines on Monday, State Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) Pradeep Jena said social distancing norms would be strictly followed while facilitating activities that were related to livelihood of people.

Home delivery
E-commerce activities would function during the extended lockdown period when companies engaged in home delivery of goods and services would be allowed to operate without any hindrance.

Restaurants could carry out home delivery but could not allow people to eat inside.



No transport: Women walking back home with firewood on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

banks and other such institutions would disburse loans to farmers during the lockdown period, said Mr. Jena.

Activities relating to MNREGA, Swachh Bharat and rural housing schemes would go on and the Panchayati Raj Department would also facilitate construction and repair of drinking water facilities.

People engaged in fishing, floriculture, tendu leaf plucking and collection of non-timber forest produce could carry out their work.

The Forest Department would be allowed to carry out plantation and take up construction and repair of waterbodies for wild animals, said Mr. Jena.

Hunger forced the woman, say activists

Mother drowns five children in the Ganga

the water]."

Social media users, including CPI(ML) leader Kavita Krishnan and lawyer Prashant Bhushan, however, alleged that the woman drowned her children as she was unable to feed them due to the lockdown.

Ms. Krishnan, who posted a video message alleging that Ms. Yadav drowned her children due to food shortage, said the woman was forced to issue a contradictory statement in police custody. "People can understand what the truth is and what hunger is," she tweeted.

The police, the administration and the village pradhan refuted this claim, stating that the woman pushed her children, the youngest aged three, into the river due to a domestic dispute.

"Dimag ulta hogaya [I lost my mind]," she said.

"Tension mein dimag ra-

ha, [pani mein] daal diya

[My mind was under stress... I threw them into

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Sharing is caring



Street dwellers and homeless children crowd around a car to get food packets being distributed by some people during the lockdown at Dwarka in New Delhi on Monday. ■ V. V. KRISHNAN

Centre may raise loan to pay GST dues to States

Rise in spending to tackle COVID-19

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

The Union government is exploring raising a loan to pay the shortfall of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) compensation amount to the States as the latter have had to ramp up spending to combat the outbreak of COVID-19.

According to senior officials in the Finance Ministry, the idea has been circulated and since the GST Act prohibits withdrawal of funds from the Consolidated Fund, raising loans is being seen as a way out.

States to be consulted
"We will either need to call a videoconference of the GST Council or ask the States in writing whether they are on board on this," said a senior government source.

According to Krishna Byre Gowda, former Minis-

ter for Agriculture in the Karnataka government and part of the GST Council when the Act was drafted under the aegis of then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, this route can be explored quite legitimately by the government of India.

A discussion was held earlier on how to address if there was a revenue shortfall. There were concerns over what if cess accruals were not adequate to pay the shortfall. The government of India was adamant in resisting suggestions to pay the shortfall from the Consolidated Fund of India and at that point the option of raising a loan on the cess account was discussed and agreed as an option, and the loan accrued would be paid from cess accruals in the future," he said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Grocery store owner 'insults' mother-daughter over religion

Complaint lodged at Hauz Khas police station, no FIR yet

SIDHARTH RAVI
NEW DELHI

A 50-year-old woman lodged a complaint alleging discrimination on the basis of religion against a shopkeeper and owner of a grocery store at Gautam Nagar in south Delhi.

Alya (name changed), in her complaint at the Hauz Khas police station, stated that she and her daughter Zainab, 23, (name changed) were "shouted at, insulted and blocked by the shopkeeper with his hand" and referred to as "Big M" when they went there to buy some supplies on Saturday. An FIR is yet to be registered in the case, said the family.

Zainab said they wanted to

buy only a few things from the store and her mother went alone as she waited in the car. She said Alya could be identified as a practising Muslim from her attire.

Abused and cursed'
The shopkeeper allegedly misbehaved with Alya and she returned to the car crying and told her daughter about it. Zainab said Alya was already disturbed as she had recently lost a relative to COVID-19 in Kerala.

When Zainab attempted to confront the store owners and admonish them for their behaviour, arguing that such statements especially during the present crisis were disappointing, she was "cursed".

MAN HELD FOR THRASHING VEGETABLE SELLER ▶ PAGE 3

Free tests only for the poor, clarifies SC

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday modified its April 8 order to clarify that free testing for COVID-19 shall continue to be made available to the poor eligible under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana.

Free testing would also be made available to any other category of economically weaker sections of society as notified by the government from time to time, the court said.

Private labs would continue to charge the Indian Council of Medical Research rates of up to ₹4,500 for tests from people who can afford to pay.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

MGNREGA jobs crash to 1% of normal

With worksites closed, activists urge SC to ensure wages for all those registered

PRISCILLA JEVARAJ

NEW DELHI

Employment under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has collapsed to just over 1% of the usual rate this month due to the COVID-19 lockdown.

Activists petitioned the Supreme Court demanding that the government pay full wages to all active job card holders during this time, following its own instructions issued to other employers.

1.9 lakh families

Data from the MGNREGA website show that less than 1.9 lakh families have been provided work under the scheme so far in April 2020, in comparison to almost 1.6 crore households which were provided work in March, and the 1.8 crore

Livelihoods collapse

The number of families engaged for work under MGNREGA has dropped from about 1.6 crore in March to only 1.9 lakh families in April. Tamil Nadu was hit the most, with the count dropping from around 22 lakh in March to just 179 families in April.



households employed under the scheme in February before the lockdown began.

Chhattisgarh was the highest employment generator under the scheme in April, providing work to more than 70,000 families, followed by Andhra Pradesh with more than 53,000 households given work. However, these figures are a fraction of the usual employment provided in

these States, and also raise concerns about COVID-19 infection being spread at worksites.

Key source

The scheme, which guarantees 100 days of work per year at an average daily wage of ₹209, is key to providing livelihoods to poor villagers and is a backbone of the rural economy in difficult times.

Overall, 7.6 crore families hold active job cards under the scheme, and almost 5.5 crore families found work under the scheme last year.

The crash in employment rates under the scheme is despite the fact that migrant workers returning to villages should have increased demand in rural areas.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Timings**DELHI**

| |
|----------------------|
| TUESDAY, APR. 14 |
| RISE 05:57 SET 18:47 |
| RISE 00:34 SET 11:05 |
| WEDNESDAY, APR. 15 |
| RISE 05:56 SET 18:47 |
| RISE 01:27 SET 12:01 |

| |
|----------------------|
| THURSDAY, APR. 16 |
| RISE 05:55 SET 18:48 |

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|----------------------|
| RISE 02:13 SET 12:58 |
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| Delhi Weather | max | min |
| Delhi City | 38 | 21 |
| Safdarjung | 38 | 21 |
| Palam | 40 | 21 |

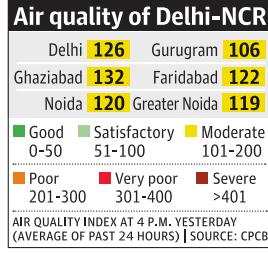
| |
|--|
| Delhi Pilm Today |
| 39°C A comfortable morning turns very warm day with partly cloudy sky. Night will be pleasant. |

| |
|----------------------------|
| Delhi Pilm Tomorrow |
|----------------------------|

| |
|---|
| 40°C A comfortable morning is likely. A mainly sunny sky and warm day would continue. |
|---|

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THE HINDU
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**SEARCH FOR MISSING**

Sachin
General public is hereby informed that a person namely **Sachin S/o Ramesh Chand Gupta** R/o H.No. 140, Old Syndicate Hall Wali Gali, Vijay Nagar Colony, Bawana, Delhi. Age: 30 years, Height-5'5" Face-Round, Built-Strong, Complexion-Wheatish, Wearing: Blue Colour Shirt, Grey Colour Pant & Black Colour Sport Shoes has been missing since dated 03.03.2020 from his house. In this regard a vde **DD No. 03A Dated 04.03.2020** has been lodged at P.S. Bawana, Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the person but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about this person please inform undersigned.

E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax : 011-24368639

SHO
P.S. Bawana, Delhi
Ph.: 011-27752534
7065036321

DP/121/ON/20

Govt. of Bihar

जल संसाधन विभाग

कार्यपालक अधिकारी का कार्यालय

बाढ़ नियंत्रण प्रमंडल, दरभंगा

अति अन्वयातीन निवेद्या आवंत्रण सूखा संकट - 01/SD/2020-21

(केवल ई-टेन्डर प्रदाता के अनुसार बोर्डर वेबसाइट www.eproc.bihar.gov.in)

1. कार्य का विवरण —

क्रमांक / शुल्क सं

कार्य का नाम

प्राप्तकर्ता संघीय (शुल्क र मौ)

प्रयोग की तिथि (शुल्क र मौ)

परियोग का विवर का मूल (अप्रत्येकीय) (केवल जल नाम व शुल्क में शुल्क)

संलग्न की दृश्य रूप (शुल्क र मौ)

संलग्न की दृश्य रूप (शुल

IN BRIEF



DMRC staff work through online mechanism

NEW DELHI Senior officials of the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), including Managing Director Mangal Singh, on Monday rejoined office even as the lockdown announced in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, continued. A team of DMRC architects and designers was coordinating with contractors, site personnel and design consultants through online mechanism for the construction of Phase 4.

Man impersonating IAS officer arrested

NEW DELHI A 29-year-old man was arrested for allegedly posing as an IAS officer when he was stopped by the police at a picket three days ago, the police said on Monday. The accused, Aditya Gupta, a resident of Keshavpuram, later released on bail, they said. The man was travelling in his car when he was stopped. When he raised objection, the police asked for his ID card and he failed to produce any. The police later found he was an impersonator.

JLN Stadium not yet a quarantine facility

Transfer process caught between SAI and Delhi govt.

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

The Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here has not been turned into a COVID-19 quarantine facility despite the Delhi government writing to the Sports Authority of India (SAI) to hand over the stadium to them in March.

Officials of SAI said that they had vacated officers staying on the premises, but the Delhi government said that they are not turning it into a quarantine facility right now.

On the other hand, Delhi government officials said that there has been no communication from SAI on the matter.

On March 30, District Magistrate (South-East) Harleen Kaur, had said in a letter to SAI to hand over the stadium "immediately".

"After receiving the letter, we asked for a day's time to vacate six new joiners of SAI who were living in accommodation provided at the stadium premises. We vacated them and then held discussions.



SAI officials said that they had moved out officers staying on the premises • FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

sion with the Delhi government on who will manage the security at the facility and they said that they would revert," an SAI official told *The Hindu*.

"The Delhi government then communicated that they were not using the facility right now," the official said.

When reached out for a comment, Delhi government sources, however, said, "Right now, we have adequate number of quarantine facilities. The Health Department has not received any communication from SAI on transferring the stadium to the Delhi government."

Both Ms. Kaur and Sandip Pradhan, Director General of SAI, did not respond to multiple calls and messages seeking comment.

the chairperson of District Disaster Management Authority (South-East) hereby requisite the above mentioned premises/buildings of Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium Complex, Lodi Road, New Delhi - 110003 with immediate effect. Accordingly, the said premises/building may please be handed over immediately to the District Administration, South East," District Magistrate (South-East) Harleen Kaur, had said in a letter to SAI on March 30.

"The undersigned being

name and address. When the vendor identifies himself as Mohammad Saleem, the man abuses him and beats him up with a stick. He also threatens him to not come to the locality without an ID card. While analysing the video, the police spotted a motorcycle bearing a Delhi registration number. They contacted the owner who in turn led them to the accused.

The incident took place at Tajpur Road on April 10.

In the video that went viral on social media, a man can be seen asking for the ID card of the vegetable seller. After the seller fails to produce any, the man asks his

Man held for thrashing vegetable seller

A video of him beating up victim went viral on social media

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

After a video of a man beating up a vegetable seller went viral on social media, the Delhi police registered a case and arrested him on Monday, the police said.

The accused was identified as Praveen Babbar, a resident of Badarpur Extension. He deals in the business of tour and travel, they said.

The matter came to light after the video of the incident went viral and the police received a message on Twitter from the cyber cell in this regard.

The incident took place at Tajpur Road on April 10.

In the video that went viral on social media, a man can be seen asking for the ID card of the vegetable seller. After the seller fails to produce any, the man asks his

name and address. When the vendor identifies himself as Mohammad Saleem, the man abuses him and beats him up with a stick. He also threatens him to not come to the locality without an ID card. While analysing the video, the police spotted a motorcycle bearing a Delhi registration number. They contacted the owner who in turn led them to the accused.

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ENTERPRISE CONNECT

Bhabra Beas Management Board

BBMB is pioneer organization in water and power sectors and committed to provide continuous water and power to the country's northern region.

Stepping up battle against COVID-19, BBMB employees contributed two days salary amounting to Rs. 2,70,50,000/- (Rupees Two Crores Seven Lacs Fifty Thousand only) towards Prime Minister's 'PM CARE' Fund. D.K. Sharma, Chairman, BBMB thanked all employees of BBMB for their kind gesture at this crucial juncture. He thanked officers and staff of BBMB and security staff from State Governments of Himachal Pradesh and Punjab for maintaining essential services of supply of water, electricity generation and transmission during the period of lockdown.

Punjab & Sind Bank manufactures masks with help of RSETIs



Punjab & Sind Bank took special initiative with the help of its three RSETIs located at MOGA, FARIDKOT and LUDHIANA (Punjab) by utilising the services of its locally trained participants in manufacturing of face Masks for PROTECTION FROM CORONA VIRUS. These masks will be handed over to District Administration for Distribution and also to Bank Staffs working in the branches. Bank and its staff remains dedicated to its motto "Where service is a way of life".

FCI, UP REGION: ENSURING FOOD SECURITY AMIDST CRISIS

Ever since lockdown has been imposed in the country, more than 2000 staff and over 8000 labour of FCI have been working round the clock in 207 depots to ensure uninterrupted supply of foodgrains to State Government of U.P. under NFSA and recently introduced PMGKAY. The staff and labours of FCI, U.P. are performing their duties on all days including holidays also.

Further, FCI is fully prepared to stand up to the challenges and fully equipped to provide food security to the State. In UP State FCI has 32 Lac Metric Tons of food grains in various depots which is sufficient for meeting the requirements of over three months under NFSA, so there is no need to panic.

Oil India Limited donates PPE materials to Guwahati Municipal Corporation



Shri Samir Kumar Das, Executive Director, Pipeline Sphere, Oil India Limited (OIL) along with his colleagues, Shri Arunijoti Baruah, General Manager-Administration, Smt. Krishna Hazarika Rao, DGM-PR and Dr. Apon Jyoti Das, Suptd. Medical officer, donated PPE suits and other materials of Rupees 5.00 Lakh to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation on behalf of Oil India Limited. The items were formally handed over to Shri D

Hazarika, Commissioner, Guwahati Municipal Corporation in his office.

IRCON contributes Rs 20.5 crore to PM CARES Fund

IRCON International Limited (IRCON) has come forward to provide an additional financial assistance of Rs. 15.5 crore to Prime Minister CARES Fund for fighting COVID-19. This amount is in addition to Rs 5 crore assistance announced earlier. Company's total contribution to PM-CARES Fund now amounts to Rs 20.5 crore, including contribution of Rs 51 lakh by the employees.

Shri S. K. Chaudhary, Chairman & Managing Director, IRCON said that the Covid-19 is one of the biggest challenges that our country is facing and it has been unprecedented in its severity. We as responsible company have been assessing the situation and have decided to enhance our contribution.

HUDCO contributes Rs.50.28 crore to PM CARES Fund

Housing & Urban Development Corporation Ltd. has contributed Rs.50 crore from CSR funds and Rs.0.28 crore from voluntary contribution of one day salary by employees to PM CARES Fund, for promoting healthcare and relief activities in the wake of COVID 19 pandemic. HUDCO has pledged to support Government's efforts in dealing with the challenges emerging from this unprecedented situation.

ASSOCIATION OF RAILWAY PERMANENT WAY ENGINEERS



Central Board member of Association of Railway Permanent Way Engineers (ARPWE), Sh. P.K. Sharma President, Sh. R.K.Uppal Convener & Sh Dushyant Kumar Finance Secretary met Sh.Vishwesh Chaube Member Engineering, Railway Board and handed over a cheque of Rs.11.00 lakhs in favour of PM CARE fund contributed by Permanent way Engineers of Indian Railway through their association's welfare fund besides their commitment to contribute at least one day salary in PM relief fund, amounting to about Rs.2.5 crores. They also handed over a letter appreciating the government efforts to fight against COVID-19 & extended full support to Railway regarding these.

NHDC Employees' One Day Salary Contribution to PM CARES Fund to fight COVID-19 Pandemic

Employees of NHDC Limited have donated One Day Salary to PM CARES Fund, amounting Rs. 14,35,093/- to fight COVID-19 pandemic.

NHDC Limited had already contributed Rs. 10 Crore in PM CARES Fund to fight COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to above, NHDC is also extending helping hand to the people of Project/Office surrounding areas.

ICAI Stands with Government to fight against COVID 19

ICAI endeavours to collect Rs 6 crores through voluntary contributions, out of which Rs 1.72 crores has been deposited in PMNRF on March 31, 2020 as first contribution by ICAI Membership, students and Officials. The balance Rs 4.28 crores will be deposited in the newly constituted PM CARES Fund by April 20, 2020. Further, responding to the clarion call made by the Hon'ble Prime Minister and also pursuant

to the appeal made by Ministry of Corporate Affairs, the Central Council of ICAI has decided to additionally contribute Rs. 15 crore from ICAI towards the PM CARES Fund.

Thus, the total direct financial contribution of ICAI will be Rs 21 crores in addition to the financial and community support extended by ICAI member and student community at individual level.

Exit plan to be prepared keeping in view health and economic variables

A staggered exit plan is required to bring back the normalcy in the State and to revive the economic activity simultaneously, taking care of monetary and food requirements of the vulnerable sections of the State. This was stated by the Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur while presiding over the meeting with the senior officers of the State.

Chief Minister said that consequent upon the enforcement of Nationwide lockdown for 21 days by the Government of India on 24th March, 2020, Himachal Pradesh has also followed the protocol laid down to fight spread of COVID-19 pandemic.

BORL Contributed Total of Rs. 25.19 crores to PM CARES FUND for COVID-19

India is witnessing unprecedented times following the spread of Novel Corona Virus (Covid-19). This had been declared as a public health emergency of International Concern by WHO. The current situation in India and across world is of grave concern and needs immediate attention. BORL had contributed Rs. 15 crores in addition to Rs.10 crore donated previously, in the PM CARES FUND. To join the fight BORL employees also contributed Rs.19 lacs from their salary in the PM CARES FUND. This all is for humanitarian aid and for beefing up healthcare support targeted at containment and treatment of the pandemic.

SJVN's Contribution in Fight Against COVID-19.

Sh. Nand Lal Sharma, Chairman & Managing Director informed that in fight against Covid-19, SJVN is vigorously carrying out various initiatives and assisting the efforts of Government in the States of Himachal Pradesh, Bihar and Uttarakhand. To aid in battle against COVID-19, SJVN is contributing Rs. 25.32 Crore towards PM CARES fund, which also includes employee contribution of Rs. 32 Lakh. All the employees of SJVN, as a gesture of solidarity with fellow Indians has contributed this amount from their salaries.

Ensuring Food Security to the Nation while containing spread of COVID-19

Immediately after the lockdown was announced, a Control Room of senior officers was established at the FCI Regional Office Haryana with a dedicated no: 0172 2566565. The officers and staff have been working tirelessly coordinating with the State Governments, Agencies, Railways, Local authorities, Police, Contractors, etc and among FCI Divisional offices/Depots to ensure maximum dispatch of foodgrains to the deficit regions as well as ensuring the availability of foodgrains to all the beneficiaries of various welfare schemes of Government and the flour mills.

+

RWA questions CM's claim of screening

'Not 15,000, only 50 were screened'

HEMAMI BHANDARI

NEW DELHI

A joint Resident Welfare Association in Dilshad Garden raised questions over the Chief Minister's claim of screening 15,000 people and retorted that residents in the area have not been screened for COVID-19.

Kapil Verma, president of Sanyukt Manch Resident Welfare Federation of Dilshad Garden, said that there was no screening in the areas under the jurisdiction of the federation. Mr. Verma said that under the aegis of the federation, 20 RWAs are connected, including sealed zones like Pocket J&K and Pocket L.

"I am also the president of Pocket F and no one has been screened in this area. I have been told the same about other areas as well except one," he said, adding that about 50 people were screened in Dilshad Colony on Sunday. "We are yet to ascertain where the tests have been conducted if they

have."

Pramod Mehta, general secretary of Dilshad Colony's C, F, G, and J Pocket, said that on Sunday, a team had come to the area and screened about 50 people till evening.

On denial mode

However, representatives of SG Pocket, LIC Colony and H Pocket among others denied screening in their areas. RWA member of Pocket L, where three persons were tested positive, also claimed that no person was screened in the area despite presence of positive cases.

Mr. Verma and other representatives said that as a measure against the spread of COVID-19, the areas have been sanitised and officials are trying to ensure enforcement of lockdown.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, on Friday, said that 123 medical teams had screened more than 15,000 people living in 4,032 houses.

Activist forum condemns 'witch-hunt' by police

It deplores targeting of students

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Several activists under the name 'We the people of India' have issued a statement condemning the alleged "witch-hunt" by the Delhi Police Special Cell against activists and students who were at the forefront of the democratic upsurge against CAA/NRC/NPR in the Capital.

"This is a time when the nation needs to be focused on the health and hunger crisis across our land, when our priorities need to stay united to fight COVID-19. At a time when citizens in lockdown are unable to fully ex-

ercise their domestic rights, it is the moral duty of governments to guard against any abuse of power by the state," the activists said. They added that instead, we have been seeing open communalisation of this pandemic and targeting of students and activists by agencies of the State.

The activists pointed out the arrests of students of Jamia Millia Islamia, who were called for questioning by the city police and arrested.

They also demanded that the activists and students incarcerated by the police in the middle of the pandemic be immediately released.

GOVT. OF PUNJAB

Punjab Government
led by
Chief Minister
Capt. Amarinder Singh
greets people on the



129th Birth Anniversary of
Bharat Ratna
Dr. B.R. AMBEDKAR
*Father of the Indian Constitution,
legendary statesman and a great social reformer*



14 अप्रैल 2020



बाबा साहेब डॉ. भीम राव अम्बेडकर जी के 129वें जन्म दिवस पर

शत् - शत् नमन व समस्त देशवासियों
को हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं



* कृपया घर पर रहें, स्वस्थ व सुरक्षित रहें *

कोविड 19 व्हाट्सएप हेल्पलाइन नंबर : 88000 07722

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अधिक जानकारी के लिए क्लिक करें : <https://dipdelhi.org/> | <https://delhifightscorona.in/>

अरविंद केजरीवाल
मुख्यमंत्री, दिल्ली

अ.जा/अ.ज.जा./अ.पि.व. कल्याण विभाग राष्ट्रीय राजधानी क्षेत्र दिल्ली सरकार

Safety first



Boxes have been drawn on a flyover-turned-weekly vegetable market in Hyderabad on Monday to suggest the space required to keep a safe physical distance. ■ G. RAMAKRISHNA

Tamil Nadu extends lockdown

With seven new cases, Andhra Pradesh tally rises to 439, Kerala has 378

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI/
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/
VIJAYAWADA/BENGALURU

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami announced the extension of the lockdown in the State till April 30. The announcement was made on a day when the total number of COVID-19 cases increased to 1,173, and 98 persons tested positive.

In Chennai, the COVID-19 tally stood at 205 on Monday.

Puducherry Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy also announced an extension of the lockdown till the month-end.

Mr. Palaniswami said that the decision followed his earlier consultation with the Prime Minister via video-conferencing, the advisory from the World Health Organization (WHO), recommendations from medical and public health experts, and the decision taken at the Cabinet meeting. Besides, COVID-19 could spread if the lockdown was relaxed, he added.

In the other southern States, Andhra Pradesh had seven new cases, Karnataka 15, and Kerala three.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the steady decline in new positive cases should not be taken as a licence to violate the current restrictions.

Even though there was no evidence of community

On the job

Police personnel are not just enforcing the lockdown, but also lending a hand to help citizens in need



In safe hands: A policeman carried a woman back to her home in Begumpet, Hyderabad, after she lost her way. ■ ANI

| State | Total number of cases | Active cases | Number of those cured | Deaths |
|----------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------|
| Andhra Pradesh | 439 | 420 | 12 | 7 |
| Karnataka | 247 | 179 | 60 | 8 |
| Kerala | 378 | 178 | 198 | 2 |
| Tamil Nadu | 1,173 | 1,104 | 58 | 11 |
| Telangana | 592 | 472 | 103 | 17 |

transmission, the disease might flare up once the safeguards are relaxed, he said, briefing the media on Monday.

The State also recorded 19 patients who tested negative following treatment. Two of the new cases, from Kannur, were contacts of imported

cases. The other was a person who had returned home to Palakkad from abroad. Of the 378 COVID-19 cases reported so far in the State, 178 were under treatment.

A.P., Karnataka tally

With seven new cases Andhra Pradesh had 439 cases in all, an official bulletin said. Of the new ones, four were from Nellore and three from Guntur district.

Karnataka reported two more COVID-19 deaths on Monday, taking the total toll

COVID-19

in Karnataka to eight.

The deceased were a 55-year-old man, who had self-reported at ESIC Hospital in Kalaburagi on April 7, and a 75-year-old woman, who was admitted to the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Chest Disease in Bengaluru.

Karnataka reported 15 new positives including four children, taking the total to 247. These include eight deaths and 60 persons discharged. Six were discharged on Monday.

Except for a 62-year-old man from Bengaluru Urban, 13 persons had contact history with those who travelled to Delhi and one travelled to Delhi.

The Bengaluru Urban patient had Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI).

Not feasible to evacuate all, says govt.

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The government told the Supreme Court on Monday that it is not feasible to evacuate Indian citizens from abroad considering the present situation of the coronavirus outbreak in India.

"Given the present situation of the coronavirus outbreak in India and the available limited resources, it is not feasible to selectively evacuate Indian citizens from abroad when a large number of them from a number of countries want to return back due to various reasons," the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement before the Supreme Court.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde is hearing separate petitions seeking the evacuation of stranded Indian citizens — students, migrant labourers, fishermen, tourists, etc — from countries like the U.K., United States, Iran and the Gulf.

The court, however, admitted the petitions, even asking the government to respond by April 20 to a petition filed by a Nagapattinam resident for the immediate evacuation of 860 fishermen from Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Gujarat who are stranded in Iran due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Karnataka to turn to real estate for funds

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

The Karnataka government, which is staring at a severe financial crunch due to the lockdown in the wake of COVID-19, on Monday decided to turn to real estate sector and monetise government properties, besides allowing real estate growth that would bring in additional financial resources to the treasury.

Major decisions taken by

the government include auctioning of more than 12,000 corner sites in Bengaluru to improve the financial position of the State. Similarly,

the State has given its nod to auction corner and stray sites in the jurisdiction of various urban development authorities. "We are expecting generation of about ₹15,000 crore from auctioning sites. We will sell sites only if we get the market value and we are hoping to get a

said.

While the State government decided to continue supply of milk for free to slums and poor for one more week, ₹1,000 crore available with the Rajiv Gandhi Health University will be used to upgrade medical college hospitals.

The Chief Minister directed sugar factory management to clear the pending payment of ₹2,834 crore to farmers in 11 districts.

The court also adjourned the hearing of a batch of peti-

tions pertaining to the case to April 20.

Chief Justice J.K. Maheswari and Justice M. Satyavarna Murthy directed Advocate General S. Sriram to file a counter stating the government's position in response to Mr. Kumar's contention that neither was there an urgency nor a justifiable ground to promulgate the ordinance through which his term was cut short from five to three years.

Mr. Kumar said the "impugned ordinance" sought to circumvent the constitutional prescription that the SEC could be removed only through certain established procedures, by merely reducing the tenure and a condonation of that approach would affect the independence of the constitutional body. As the Advocate General defended the merits of the ordinance, Justice Maheswari interdicted him, or-

dering that he needed to reply to the petitioner's argument that there were no circumstances which warranted its issuance in a hasty manner.

Mr. Kumar argued that the promulgation of the ordinance during a medical emergency, which formed the very basis of his decision to postpone the local body elections, seemed to be activated with an "oblique motive on extraneous grounds".

IN BRIEF



Veteran Congress leader M.V. Rajasekaran dead

BENGALURU

Veteran Congress leader and former Union Minister M.V. Rajasekaran died in Bengaluru on Monday. He was 91. The veteran leader, who was ailing for sometime, Rajasekaran, who had participated in freedom struggle, was the son in law of former Karnataka Chief Minister Nijalingappa. He had served as Union Minister of State for Planning in the Ministry of Dr. Manmohan Singh.

Tigress carcass found in Wayanad sanctuary

KALPETTA

A tigress, aged around five years, was found dead in the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary on Monday. The animal, suspected to have died two to three days ago, had deep wounds on its neck, said B.N. Anjan Kumar, Chief Conservator of Forest, Wildlife, Palakkad said. He said the animal could have sustained injury while trying to escape from a snare.

Two women, child found dead in Telangana

HYDERABAD

Two women, aged between 25 and 27, and a child from Karimnagar, who came to Hyderabad four days ago, were found dead under mysterious circumstances in a secluded area in Jawaharnagar on Monday. The bodies of the victims were found hanging from two different trees. The child's body was found a few feet away on the ground. A case has been registered. Suicide prevention helpline Roshni can be reached at 4066202000.

Migrant labourers attack A.P. police personnel

Circle inspector, 2 constables injured

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ANANTAPUR

Ninety migrant labourers hailing from Madhya Pradesh, who were lodged in a quarantine facility at the SKD College in Gooty in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh, allegedly attacked police personnel on Monday asking them to allow them to go to their native places.

Deputy Superintendent of Police Khasim Saheb arrived at the scene and pacified the migrant labourers, who initially refused to have lunch and only wanted to be released immediately.

The police personnel accompanied the contractor, who was serving food arranged by the district administration, but the migrant labourers tried to forcibly escape from the college premises. When Circle Inspector Rajasekhar and two constables from Gooty police station tried to block their

way, they allegedly hit them with slippers, stones and fists injuring all three of them. The police personnel have been sent to the hospital for treatment.

Deputy Superintendent of Police Khasim Saheb arrived at the scene and pacified the migrant labourers, who initially refused to have lunch and only wanted to be released immediately.

The police officer told them that they had to serve the quarantine period till District Collector asked them to and they would be released after the lockdown was lifted. They were also told that they would be forced to stay put in the same place till further orders.

Swimming pool photo lands Karnataka Minister in trouble

Opposition demands Sudhakar's resignation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

Karnataka Minister for Medical Education K. Sudhakar from Monday drew flak from the Opposition that sought his resignation after he posted a photo of himself in a swimming pool with his children on Twitter.

"After a long time joined my children for swimming hope maintaining social distance here also...haha," he tweeted with a photograph. He, however, did not mention where and when the photograph was taken. He deleted the tweet after facing flak.

Dr. Sudhakar represents Chikkaballapur constituency, and was taken into the

coalition government last year. After the COVID-19 crisis erupted, he was often accused of not having coordination with Health Minister B. Sriramulu as both differed on the floor of the House as well as outside.

The tweet was criticised by KPCC president D.K. Shiva Kumar, who tweeted: "When the whole world is going through a health crisis, the Corona in charge Minister Dr. Sudhakar is behaving irresponsibly by spending time in a swimming pool. It's a matter of moral and ethical standards. He must resign out of his own accord and chief minister should sack him from the cabinet."

Cabinet recently after he won the bypolls on the BJD ticket following his resignation from the Congress.

He, along with 16 others, who had resigned from the Congress and the JD(S), was responsible for the fall of the

coalition government last year. After the COVID-19 crisis erupted, he was often accused of not having coordination with Health Minister B. Sriramulu as both differed on the floor of the House as well as outside.

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Sacking by subterfuge

Removal of A.P.'s top election official through ordinance route is a case of abuse of power

The legality of the removal of the Andhra Pradesh State Election Commissioner (SEC) is seriously in doubt. That it was the culmination of an open conflict between the Election Commissioner, N. Ramesh Kumar, and Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy makes it a glaring instance of misuse of power. The State government got the Governor to issue an ordinance to cut the SEC's tenure from five to three years, and amend the criterion for holding that office from being an officer of the rank of Principal Secretary and above to one who had served as a High Court judge. This automatically rendered Mr. Kumar's continuance invalid. Last month, just days before the local body polls were to be held, the SEC postponed the elections, citing the COVID-19 outbreak. The State government approached the Supreme Court, but the court declined to interfere. Having exhausted its legal remedy, the government should have waited for the ongoing fight against the disease to be over. Mr. Reddy's allegation that the SEC, an appointee of his predecessor N. Chandrababu Naidu, postponed the polls to prevent a sweep by the YSR Congress may or may not be true. However, the Chief Minister has no legal right to terminate the SEC's tenure, as the Constitution makes the holder of that post removable only in the same manner as a High Court judge. If courts uphold this means of dislodging the head of an independent election body, it would mark the end of free and fair elections.

The State government seems to have gone by legal opinion that cited *Aparmita Prasad Singh vs. State of U.P.* (2007) in which the Allahabad High Court ruled that cessation of tenure does not amount to removal, and upheld the State Election Commissioner's term being cut short. The Supreme Court, while dismissing an appeal against the order, kept open the legal questions arising from the case. The judgment seems erroneous, as it gives a *carte blanche* to the State government to remove an inconvenient election authority by merely changing the tenure or retirement age. This was surely not what was envisioned by Parliament, which wrote into the Constitution provisions to safeguard the independence of the State Election Commission. It is a well-settled principle in law that what cannot be done directly cannot be done indirectly. Therefore, the removal of an incumbent SEC through the subterfuge of changing the eligibility norms for appointment may not survive judicial scrutiny. Further, the Constitution, under Article 243K, prohibits the variation of any condition of service to the detriment of any incumbent. Even if the State government argues that a change of tenure does not amount to varying the conditions of service, the new norm can only apply to the successor SEC, and not the one holding the office now.

Google, pay

The French template for the search engine paying for reuse of news holds promise

Last week's ruling by France's competition regulator that Google must pay news publishers and agencies for re-use of their content marks a significant turn in what has been a see-saw battle between European regulators and publishers on the one hand and the tech giant on the other. How this ends and what this leads to could set the template for not just the news industry in France and Europe but also the rest of the world. For the time being, the ruling gives the beleaguered news industry in France a rare edge in its dealings with the tech giant. Over the last two decades, even as publishers across the world struggled to make a commercially meaningful transition to the digital world, Google became the primary gateway for readers. While this worked well for the readers and for Google, which as a result could build a mammoth advertising business, it never worked well enough for news publishers, notwithstanding the increase in traffic they experienced. Many publishers are, hence, now in a position where they can neither let go of their dependence on the tech giant nor make monetary sense from this arrangement. Also, individually, they are too small to challenge Google's might. It is by recognising the skewed nature of this copyright marketplace that the European legislators amended rules in April last year – something which France then gave force to in July.

The genesis of the order by the French competition regulator was a complaint filed against Google by unions representing publishers. They charged Google with abusing its dominant position in response to the law, which seeks to create fairer grounds of negotiation. This it does by allowing for the possibility of publishers to be paid for article extracts picked up by aggregators. The complaint was that Google, on the grounds of complying with the new law, decided it would not display the extracts and other elements unless publishers authorise free usage. The regulator said it found that Google's practices "were likely to constitute an abuse of a dominant position, and caused serious and immediate harm to the press sector." It could be argued that the French case will do little to shake up the existing framework. Previous legislative attempts by other European Union constituents, such as Germany and Spain, to allow for such extracts to be monetised by publishers have proved counterproductive. For instance, Google ended up shutting down its news service in Spain. But the French attempt promises to end differently. That is because, built in the regulator's order is a requirement that negotiations "effectively result in a proposal for remuneration from Google." Where will this go from here? Publishers across the world will be watching.

Staying at home on planet earth

The pandemic tells us that the right to shelter and habitat is an urgent and essential one, for humans and other creatures



ANAND PANDIAN

Right now, more of humanity is likely at home than at any other time in history. From India and China to the United States, from Norway and Denmark to South Africa and Argentina, governments have told their people to stay at home, to slow the spread of the coronavirus. Billions held in place for an indefinite time: the implications of these radical measures will take time to unravel. What does home actually look like for different people? And what will come of our relationships with the wider world outside our doors?

Home means many different things, as does the command to remain there. Lately I've been talking often with a family of textile workers in the industrial town of Tirupur. The lockdown came so suddenly that they lost the chance to go back to their native place. Each family in their worker colony has one tiny room of their own. The children have been playing in the common courtyard. With police wielding batons on the streets, everyone is afraid to set foot outside. The factories are shuttered, wages suspended, and people are getting by as best as they can.

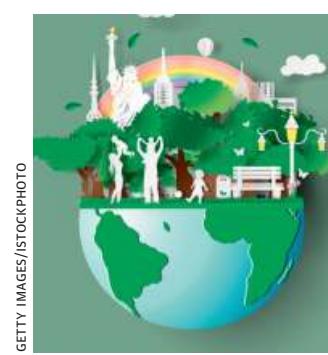
Staying at home brings into focus the question of whom we consider our own, whom we take shelter with. A community checkpost has gone up on the edge of a village I know well in the Cumbum Valley. Panchayat workers are taking turns at the wooden gate, asking everyone to wash with soap and water, turmeric and neem, before they enter the village. The post is near the Dalit quarter on

the outskirts of the village: isolated and disparaged in almost every matter, but included within this new collective boundary of cleanliness.

Migrants caught in impasse
Governments around the world assert home as a place of safety and shelter. This idea assumes that one has a viable home in which to stay put, that food and fresh water are accessible, that survival doesn't require one to leave or flee. In recent weeks, many countries have seen a surge in domestic violence. And lockdowns at national and regional borders have caught millions of migrants in an existential impasse. The coronavirus may ravage densely packed refugee camps around the world, but people have nowhere else to go. The United States is turning refugees away now at its own borders, without giving them the chance to appeal for asylum.

Within America, where I live with my family, many rely on online portals to the world beyond, juggling virtual meetings with lessons for kids, peering by video into the homes of others. Such distance is a privilege. Others, especially minorities and the poor, must still expose themselves: caring for the ill, harvesting food and delivering necessities, maintaining the infrastructure that lets the rest of us hunker down. The pandemic has also brought homelessness and eviction into focus, the simmering crisis of affordable housing in so many American cities.

"Shelter in place" orders now govern many American localities. The language recalls the nuclear terrors of the Cold War era; people are advised to 'shelter in place' when the environment itself is hazardous, when simply being outside risks exposure. This idea helps explain why some in America, including the President, have



blamed the pandemic on a "foreign virus." There is racism in such language, akin to the way that Muslims have been blamed on social media for the spread of the virus in India. There is also a certain way of thinking here about the world beyond: as a space of uncertainty and threat, home as refuge from a dangerous world.

Recent lockdowns come on the heels of an intense drive for security in everyday life. On a daily level, wealthy Americans and others elsewhere have already been arming up: retreating to fortress-like homes, moving about in tank-like SUVs, walling themselves off in many ways. "Americans are in fear," the security manager at an exclusive gated community in Florida told me a couple of years ago. The streets there were already strangely isolated and still. When the current pandemic passes, how many will remain afraid to go outside?

Kinship beyond family circle
In my urban neighbourhood in Baltimore, social life sputters on. Here, staying at home hasn't meant just staying indoors. People seek out parks and open space with kids and dogs, calling out to each other from a distance. It's springtime; with the cars and machinery idle, you can hear the songbirds more clearly, even the toads chirping from the flood con-

trol ponds that they've recently occupied. For the American toad, *Bufo americanus*, it's mating season. Just as social restrictions have ramped up for us, they've begun to congregate by the water.

It's hard not to feel wistful, seeing these knots of toads clamber over each other with such abandon. Our own instincts pull us now in contrary directions, together for solace at this harrowing time, apart with concern for our most vulnerable kin. This may prove one of the most serious social challenges of our lifetimes. But it is also a chance for us to reflect on kinship and connection, beyond the span of the family circle. For it isn't enough, we are learning, just to take care of our own, as if we were islands in the world.

Epidemic diseases like COVID-19, avian influenza, and Ebola are zoonotic, crossing to humans from other animals. They are often sparked by ecological instability, by the destruction of natural habitat and the cramming of animals into wildlife markets and scarcely inhabitable factory farms. They are symptoms, in other words, of a crisis of homelessness in the animal world, magnified by global networks of trade and resource exploitation.

As economic activity slows to a crawl, pollution has been clearing in the industrial centres of Asia, Europe, and North America. Gutting environmental regulations to kick-start the economy – as the United States and China have done now – will only make the world more dangerous to everyone's health.

Sense of a common fate
The COVID-19 pandemic is a boot camp in ecological awareness, a reminder that the well-being of any one person is tied up with ever so many others, both family and neighbours and those we'll never meet or know. This sense of a com-

mon fate, a truly planetary predicament, is a rare and crucial thing. It is manifest in the many mutual aid networks and progressive political measures that have taken shape to meet the needs of vulnerable populations. Such resources will matter for other serious problems like the climate crisis, which will provoke new waves of homelessness and displacement. So much will turn on our ability to dwell on the deep ties between our lives and others elsewhere, the forms of kinship that we may nurture.

In April 1970, the first Earth Day was inspired by a photograph from Apollo 8, an image of the Earth as a fragile blue ball in the vastness of space. Many hoped this vision of a vulnerable world would catalyse environmental consciousness and bring a planetary healing, dissipating the rancour of social and political antagonism.

As the 50th anniversary of this moment nears, in 2020, we seem to be edging even closer to ecological catastrophe. And yet the alternative remains, the chance to take the earth itself as a place of collective shelter.

In a world of stark inequality, this will have to be more than the idea of a common planetary home. We need to think carefully about what home has been for particular people, and how to build and maintain more generous structures of belonging. The pandemic tells us that the right to housing, to shelter and habitat, is an urgent and essential one, for human beings and the countless other creatures we share this planet with. Securing this right will help to avert the ecological crises to come, and we may find ourselves at home in the world once again.

Anand Pandian teaches anthropology at Johns Hopkins University

Re-imaging our economic choices

For decades, human beings have chosen profits over lives. The time has come to jettison this approach



KAUSHIK BARUA

The COVID-19 pandemic will reshape all our economic choices. Nations have made a crucial choice in recent weeks, choosing human life over economic growth. Governments including ours have mandated lockdowns to slow the pandemic, relieve the pressure on their hospitals and save lives. On the one hand, there will be massive economic costs. Fitch Ratings have halved their 2020 growth forecast. The volatility is unprecedented. A *Forbes* assessment started with the pithy disclaimer "Last week's economic forecast is out of date." On the other hand, updates land in our phones on a minute-by-minute basis, invoking both our empathy and our fear. Our choice is obvious – human life over economic growth. To choose otherwise would be inhuman. Surely, we have always made the same choice? Hardly.

For decades, we have chosen profits and growth over human lives. The World Health Organiza-

tion (WHO) estimates that 4.2 million lives are lost annually due to air pollution. These deaths occur in dispersed locations, through varying illnesses and outside our frenzied social media feeds. Therefore, the choice is not as clear to us. It is a choice between 4.2 million lives and the marginal returns from industries choosing polluting vs. non-polluting technologies. This is not a Luddite call to replace our cars with carriages. Cleaner technologies are available, and not only for Prius owners. For instance, through our IFAD programs, low-cost technologies are being developed even for smallholder farmers.

Saving lives

Surely, we are finally saving all lives now? The recommendations are clear. Practice social distancing? This is hardly viable for the 2% of the global population who are homeless or the 20% who lack adequate housing. Social distancing will also take a disproportionate economic toll on the informal sector, employing up to 60% of the working population globally and 90% in India. The cure could trigger deep poverty and a food security crisis, actually endangering more lives. In this context, the first ₹1.7 lakh crore relief package was encouraging in its focus on ensur-



ing food security and cash transfers for the vulnerable.

Wash your hands? What about the 35% who lack access to sanitation? According to UNICEF, even prior to COVID-19, diseases directly linked to lack of safe water killed 1,400 children under five every day, globally over half a million a year. There has been a renewed focus on sanitation in recent years. More is needed, but long-term measures might expand the fiscal deficit.

Economics is about choices, a study of 'human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means'. Trade-offs are central to these choices. On the one hand: 4.2 million, 0.5 million, 1,15,000 (and counting) lives. On the other: lower GDP rates, more expensive technologies, higher fiscal deficits. Such comparisons might not pass our usual aesthetic standards. But this pandemic will

test our imagination. Binaries between left and right are collapsing. A Republican Treasury Secretary in the United States is suggesting cash transfers for all workers. The Confederation of Indian Industry is advising pay cuts for senior management while ensuring workers do not lose jobs. Liberal democracies are competing to curtail individual rights and movement. Citizens are supporting (even demanding) these restrictions. We have embraced a suspension of laws, a near-global 'state of exception'.

Changing the metrics

These states of exception might be the new normal as black swans, highly improbable events with extreme impact, now spread rapidly. The pace and volumes with which we can move across territories and transport the virus have deepened our fragility. Perhaps it is time to shift from indices of economic growth and speed (such as rates of GDP growth) to those that build on lives and living conditions. Many organisations, including the one I work for, have already shifted their focus from mere incomes to resilience. Relevant indices already exist. The Human Development Index measures life expectancies as a proxy for long and healthy lives, education and national in-

comes per capita. The Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index builds on capabilities, captured through health, education and living standards. The difference between standard economic targets and these welfare-based indices is their clear focus on lives over profits.

In Netflix's new dystopian offering, *The Platform*, inmates are randomly assigned a level in a giant vertical tower. Food passes through a central chute from top to bottom. If the prisoners at every level took their reasonable share, there would be enough for everyone. That never happens, and those at the lower levels are forced to adopt brutal strategies to stay alive. This is a harsh representation of our economies. Maybe too harsh. But the undeniable fact is that we do not live in separate worlds. We inhabit a building with overlapping loops, where our rooms vary in size and comfort but are all linked. We face a common enemy, and there may be more in the future. One life undermined is a threat to everyone. What is the price we are now willing to pay for others' lives?

Kaushik Barua is the Cambodia Country Director at the UN International Fund for Agricultural Development. Views expressed are personal

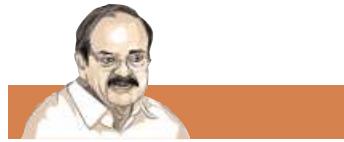
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

- Policeman attacked**
It is atrocious that the hand of an assistant sub inspector of police was severed by people in Patiala (Front page, "II held for chopping off policeman's hand," April 13), when they were asked for curfew passes. This unfortunate incident shows how ignorant some of us have been when it comes to observing the norms to prevent the transmission of the virus. It also speaks volumes about the risks being taken by the police and medical staff. Those who carry out such acts of brutality should be tried in fast-track courts and punished immediately.
J. EDEN ALEXANDER, Thanjavur
- Protests in Surat**
The two successive protests by migrant workers in
- Surat**, demanding wages, food and permission to return to their homes are only a genuine manifestation of their anger and frustration at being pushed to the edge of starvation. This is a wake-up call for governments to immediately address their genuine grievances. While the protesters must not resort to violence, such protests should also not be viewed through a narrow law and order prism. That one gets to hear of such a pathetic state of shelter homes in a State showcased as a model of governance is indeed shameful. It does not speak well of the local NGOs either. In this regard, shedding the ideological prejudices, Gujarat should do well to emulate the Kerala government's handling of such migrant workers. Those in shelter homes must be provided with the basic needs for a dignified living without being treated as social parasites. The enormity of this humongous humanitarian crisis would deserve the Prime Minister's personal intervention before such violent protests spread like another form of pandemic.
S.K. CHOWDHURY, Bengaluru
- Call for solidarity**
Pope Francis's call for global solidarity in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic fallout, urging the relaxation of international sanctions, debt relief for poor nations and ceasefire in all conflicts has not come a day too soon (World page, "Banish self-centredness, Pope tells the world," April 13). The Pope's Easter message, delivered from a hauntingly empty St. Peter's Basilica, was totally in tune with the times. The world ought to listen to his exhortation for banishing words like "indifference", "self-centredness", "division" and "forgetfulness". As the whole is affected by a deadly and invisible enemy called COVID-19, it is time for the leaders of nations to come together and take decisive and concerted action to help each other's population live through the testing times and eventually resume normal life, as urged by the pontiff.
C.G. KURIAKOSE, Kothamangalam
- The corona lexicon**
The scourge of coronavirus-centric words has added to or replenished our verbal repertoire. "Outbreak" and "pandemic" are terms that constantly catch our eyes and ring in our ears. "Quarantine", "self-isolation", "staying at home" and "staying indoors" have become part of the common parlance. One abbreviation that appears to be regal, but really simple and humble is PPE. Perhaps there is nobody who is not informed of "social distancing". The lexicon has organically updated itself by including terms like "corona warriors" to refer to health professionals. It is encouraging that people are getting more sensitised to facts on the disease.
G. DAVID MILTON, Maruthandam
- Playing with pandemic**
It is both funny and irritating to read about the likelihood of IPL 2020
- To read more letters online, scan the QR code 
- getting postponed instead of cancelled ("IPL set to be indefinitely postponed," April 13). What is the dire need to conduct IPL 2020 at any cost? Not conducting the event, it is alleged, would result in huge revenue loss. Of the two losses, lakhs of lives and revenue, which is more precious? Taking a threatening pandemic head on and quelling its resurgence are the paramount issues worldwide. Under these trying circumstances, no one is worried about a sporting event. Wimbledon has been cancelled. The Tokyo Olympics have been postponed by one year. Is IPL 2020 more important than these events?
V. LAKSHMANAN, Tirupur

How to cope with confinement

We need to reset our mind in order to adjust to this new situation



M. VENKAIAH NAIDU

People across the world are under confinement in varying degrees. India has been under a national lockdown for three weeks now. This may continue for some more time as we battle with the novel coronavirus, an invisible organism threatening to claim large numbers of precious human lives. While the virus is a challenge in itself, coping with such a long period of confinement has emerged as another challenge. How does one cope with it?

It is all in the mind. Any new situation with socio-economic consequences demands of us suitable adjustments or adaptation. In essence, we need to reset our mind. Adapting to confinement is not easy. It requires some resoluteness on our part, especially since human beings are social beings. We are used to racing against time, so surplus time is a challenge. But it's not too difficult, as I have seen in the last three weeks.

Adjusting to a new reality

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, soon after announcing the national lockdown, said in a lighter vein that I would be among those who would find it hard to move out of home. This is because Mr. Modi has been a witness to my hectic political life and journey over the years, including as Vice-President of India. Many of my friends too had similar concerns, as was evident in the fact that my landline and mobile phone ceaselessly rang after the lockdown came into force. They all enquired about me with some palpable concern. That is why I'm sharing my experiments with the confinement.

I was also initially worried, but soon things fell into place. It didn't require much effort and reordering of life, but a little retuning of the mind. The guiding principle is to make the most out of this new reality, seen by many as an adversity.

A friend and former member of the Rajya Sabha, C. Narayana Reddy, in his Jhanpith Award-winning work *Viswambhara*, aptly said that eve-



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

rything is in the mind. "For sainthood or for animal instincts; For good deeds and evil acts; For freedom or confinement; For compassion or cruelty, the first seed lies in the Mind. This is the core of universal philosophy and the eternal truth of life," he wrote. Mind is the set of cognitive faculties encompassing consciousness, imagination, perception, thought, judgment, language and memory. Many of these faculties come into play while we cope with the present confinement. We have to recognise a new reality, imagine the conditions of life that flow from it, and take decisions based on a rational consideration of this new scenario.

We also have to count the downsides and the takeaways from the situation. I have undergone this exercise, as have most of my fellow countrymen, and this has been evident in the successful implementation of the lockdown so far. I have reasons to believe that we will collectively stay put in this new equilibrium of mind as long as it is required. We are now in a situation of life Before Corona (BC) and After Corona (AC).

My daily life BC would start with a game of badminton. This would be followed by a cup of tea peppered with ginger, turmeric and cinnamon while spending over an hour browsing English, Hindi and Telugu dailies. Then I would have breakfast; keep several appointments; do official work, which included looking at files; have meetings with lunch in between; go on outstation tours, which were not too few in number; attend the Rajya Sabha during the sessions; walk in the garden in the evening; and spend some time with

family in person or over the phone.

After Corona

My life AC continues with most of these elements except visits to different parts of the country, which I love, and the morning game of badminton at the Constitution Club, which has been substituted by yoga. Office work has been re-prioritised, with most of the officials working from home as required.

The surplus time has resulted in some dividends for me as I have reset my mind. The foremost of these is that my wife and I are spending the longest time together since our marriage in 1970. This privilege was precluded by the demands of my political life all these years. This long togetherness has further strengthened our bond. Both of us are savouring the fragrance of this bonding and finding new virtues. My inquiries have revealed that this is the case with many of my friends and well-wishers. I have also been spending a good deal of this new-found time in reaching out to a large network of friends from school and my village days inquiring how they are coping with the situation and sharing my own experiences with them.

As a keen learner of our parliamentary democracy, I have been able to revisit some of the illuminating debates in the Constituent Assembly and by some luminaries in our Parliament post-Independence. This has been a delight.

My native district of Nellore in Andhra Pradesh is one of the worst affected by the spread of COVID-19, as some attended the Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Delhi. I have been

regularly in touch with people from the villages and urban centres of this district closely monitoring the situation and rendering necessary advice.

I have been interacting with several former veterans and colleagues in public life and those in the forefront of the current battle and sharing their feedback with the Prime Minister and others. I have also spoken to several Governors twice in the video conferences held by the President on preparedness in respective States, and flagged concerns, particularly those relating to the farm sector.

I have been relishing the kirtans of the renowned Annamacharya in praise of Lord Balaji and savouring old film songs pregnant with messages of life and love.

I have lent my bit to the ongoing efforts of reaching out to people about the causes and consequences of COVID-19 by publishing articles in Hindi, English and regional language dailies. I have urged them not to panic but also to not throw caution to the winds. I have urged all those concerned to draw the right lessons from the crisis both in terms of our present lifestyle and norms of international cooperation before another such challenge stares at us.

Closely following what is circulating on social media about the virus, I have put out several messages based on the findings of the World Health Organization and the Indian Council of Medical Research, and official announcements, advising people not to believe fake information and superstitions and not be prejudiced. I have also been inquiring about the way millions of our students are coping with the disturbance in their academic calendar. I hope that order will soon be restored in this regard.

I have regular exchanges with all those concerned in the Central and State governments on the spread of the virus and the direction of our admirable collective fight.

I find that time is inadequate for me in life AC as it was BC. As long as one finds shortage of time, it is a life well-lived. When it is the case with fellow countrymen resulting in a larger sub-conscious mind guiding our thoughts and actions for larger collective good, we are on course to emerge victorious against the virus.

M. Venkaiah Naidu is the Vice-President of India

Accessing justice online

There are many ways in which citizens can get greater access to justice while the burden on conventional courts is reduced



N.L. RAJAH

With Indian courts too under a lockdown for three weeks (and probably more), citizens have severely restricted access to justice for this period. However, the deeper malaise is the complete inability of the conventional court system to deliver timely justice. This shakes the very foundation of the polity on which we rest our constitutional promises. Collectively, the conventional court system appears to have heaved a frustrated sigh and dropped the challenge instead of picking up the gauntlet.

Technology, however, now provides us an opportunity to meet the challenge headlong. The Kerala High Court did exactly that on March 30, 2020. It created history by not only conducting proceedings through video conferencing but also live streaming the proceedings. The judges conducted the hearing from their homes. Nearly 30 urgent matters were taken up for hearing, including bail applications and writ petitions, and were disposed of. The advocates concerned and law officers also participated in the proceedings from their respective offices. This is truly epochal. This example must be institutionalised and eternalised.

A blueprint for e-courts

To achieve this, the government must establish an effective task force consisting of judges, technologists, court administrators, skill developers and system analysts to draw up a blueprint for institutionalising online access to justice. Such a task force must be charged with the responsibility of establishing hardware, software and IT systems for courts; examining application of artificial intelligence benefiting from the data base generated through e-courts projects; establishing appropriate e-filing systems and procedures; and creating skill training and recognition for paralegals to understand and to help advocates and others to access the system to file their cases and add to their pleadings and documents as the case moves along. Once the blueprint is ready, the High Courts across the country may refer the same to the Rule Committee of the High Court to frame appropriate rules to operationalise the e-court system.

The facility must not only enable access to courts but must provide access to justice through other processes as well. Let us take

an example. The government, both at the Centre and the States, has innumerable poverty alleviation and distress eradication schemes. If all these schemes were properly implemented, there would be very little poverty or distress in India. So, why does this not happen? There is scant awareness amongst the beneficiaries about these programmes. What is the scheme about? How does one apply? Where does one procure the application forms? What is the next step? Within what time is the authority expected to respond? What is one to do if he or she does not? The answers to these questions remain a mystery to the beneficiaries. They invariably come up against a wall which they are unable to surmount. Now, if all this information is provided comprehensively at the grassroots levels and made available online in as many Indian languages as possible, it could be a huge step in creating awareness. Once this happens, it follows that more and more applications will be generated.

Role of Legal Services Authorities

So, what does all this have to do with accessing justice? While these schemes look rosy on paper, without implementation and accountability there is no justice to the aggrieved citizens. It is in addressing this problem that the Legal Services Authorities Act of 1987 and the officers functioning under them all over the country can play a huge role. If there is difficulty in accessing these schemes, a system must be set in place for the applicant to lodge online complaints with the Legal Services Authorities who can then ensure accountability and effective implementation. The local panchayat, municipal or corporation office, or any well-intentioned NGO can assist the complainant to make these online complaints to the Legal Services Authority if the complainant is unable to do so directly. The officers under the Legal Services Authorities Act may then be authorised to hear the complaints online and to direct delivery of redress to the aggrieved complainant in accordance with the law in a time-bound manner.

This is just one of the myriad ways in which access to justice can be enhanced exponentially while simultaneously reducing the burden on conventional courts. The other facilities that would help access to justice are online mediation, arbitration, counselling in family court matters, quick settlement of disputed insurance claims, and many more. India is a land where skilled human resource is rarely lacking. If we can pick up the will power to do all of the above, justice will become an accessible concept to everyone.

N.L. Rajah is Senior Advocate, Madras High Court

Ambedkar and the Poona Pact

Without the Poona Pact, the Constitution would never have been

UDAY BALAKRISHNAN

In late September 1932, B.R. Ambedkar negotiated the Poona Pact with Mahatma Gandhi. The background to the Poona Pact was the Communal Award of August 1932, which, among other things, reserved 71 seats in the central legislature for the depressed classes. Gandhi, who was opposed to the Communal Award, saw it as a British attempt to split Hindus, and began a fast unto death to have it repealed.

Fair representation
In a settlement negotiated with Gandhi, Ambedkar agreed for depressed class candidates to be elected by a joint electorate. However, on his insistence, slightly over twice as many seats (147) were reserved for the depressed classes in the legislature than what had been allotted under the Communal Award. In addition, the Poona Pact assured a fair representation of the depressed classes in the public services while earmarking a portion of the educational grant for their uplift.



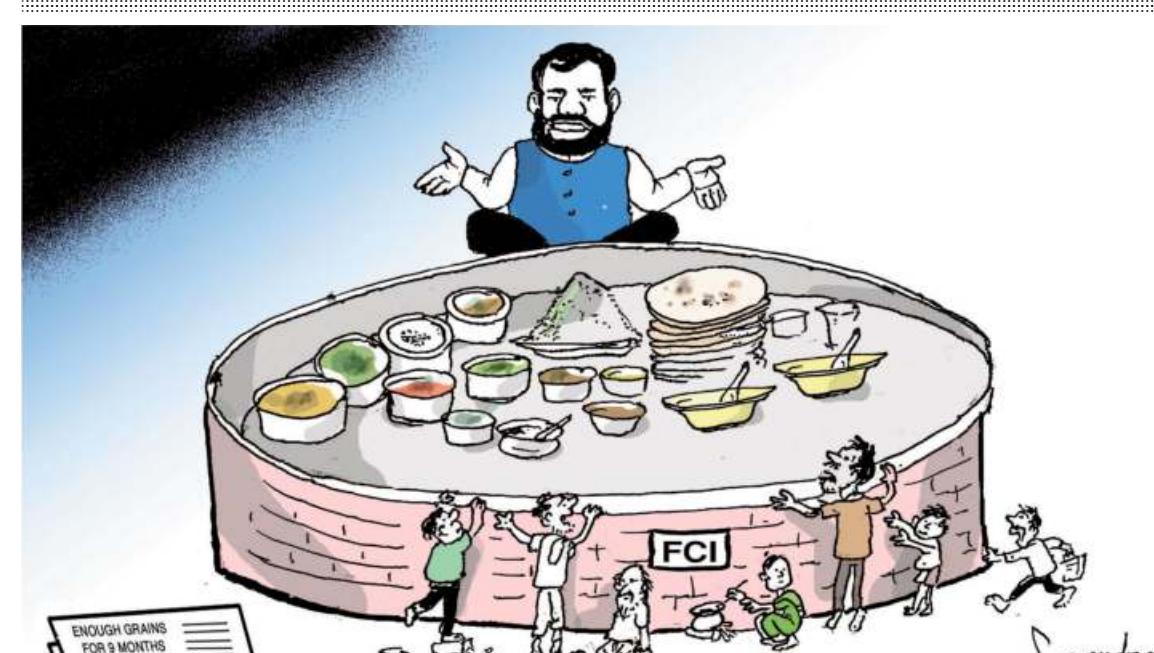
It is also highly unlikely that an erudite and sharp person like Ambedkar would not have weighed the consequences of not signing the Poona Pact. It would also not have been lost on him that Muhammad Ali Jinnah, with the Muslims of India strongly backing him, was watching and waiting to take advantage of the evolving situation.

Positive outcomes
The Poona Pact had several positive outcomes for Ambedkar. It emphatically sealed his leadership of the depressed classes across India. He made the entire country, and not just the Congress Party, morally responsible for the uplift of the depressed classes. Most of all he succeeded in making the depressed classes a formidable political force for the first time in history.

As a practical man Ambedkar was not looking for the perfect solution. As he remarked in a 1943 address to mark the 101st birthday celebrations of Mahadev Govind Ranade, all he wanted was "a settlement of some sort"; that he was not "prepared to wait for an ideal settlement". It is very much in this spirit that he affixed his signature to the Poona Pact saving Gandhi's life as well as that of the Congress Party's while giving a big voice to the depressed classes.

On the 129th year of his birth on April 14 this year, we would do well to remember Ambedkar as much for the Poona Pact as we do for the Constitution he helped conjure. Without the former, the latter would never have been.

Uday Balakrishnan teaches at the Indian Institute of Science Bengaluru

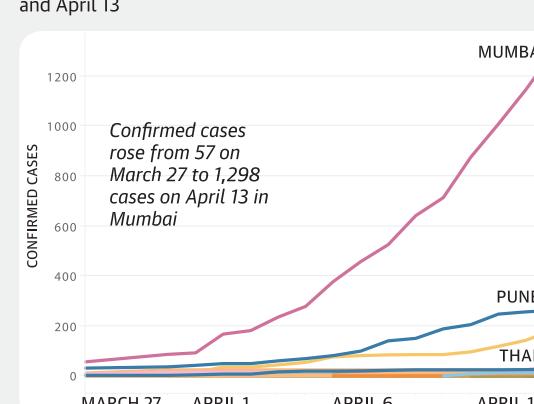


DATA POINT

Density & virality

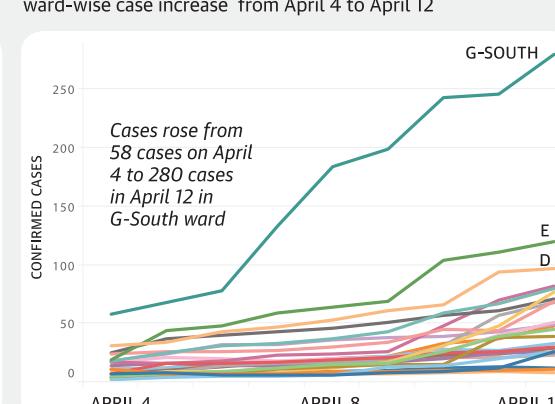
DISTRICT-WISE CASES

As on Sunday, over 65% of the State's cases were from Mumbai, followed by Pune (15%) & Thane (8%). The graph shows the district-wise progression of cases between March 27 and April 13.



WARD-WISE CASES

As of Sunday, over 20% of Mumbai's COVID-19 cases were from the G-South ward (includes Elphinstone, Worli, Lower Parel) followed by E ward (9%). The graph is on Mumbai's ward-wise case increase from April 4 to April 12.



DENSER WARDS, HIGHER CASES

THICKLY POPULATED STATE

State

No. in top 100 wards

Municipal Corporation

No. in top 100 wards

Population density (people per square km.)

% of COVID-19 cases

As many as 43 of the 100 most populated urban wards in India are located in Maharashtra

More than 40 of the top 100 urban wards are in the Greater Mumbai Municipal Corporation

*DATA AS OF 9:15 P.M. ON MONDAY

State

No. in top 100 wards

Municipal Corporation

No. in top 100 wards

DENSER WARDS, HIGHER CASES

THICKLY POPULATED STATE

State

No. in top 100 wards

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No. in top 100 wards

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 14, 1970

Malpractices in Elections
(From an Editorial)

Some 150 million Indians going to the polls to pick their representatives in the Federal and State legislatures is a majestic and unparalleled exercise of democracy which rightly evokes the admiration and respect of the rest of the world. But how far this exercise is carried out according to the prescribed rules is increasingly turning out to be quite a different story. The Representation of the People Act has laid down a strict code of electoral conduct to ensure that no extraneous influence is brought to bear on the voter in the free exercise of his franchise. Some of these rules, however, are so much more Utopian than realistic they have come to be more honoured in the breach. For instance, the rule about how much a candidate can spend on electioneering - Rs. 9,000 for a State legislature constituency (in Tamil Nadu) and Rs. 25,000 for a Parliamentary constituency - is so unrealistic considering the size of constituencies and the shortness of the distance that a rupee goes these days, it is

FROM PAGE ONE

No new cases from 25 districts, says govt.

"We have identified five verticals under which we will be working including digital and molecular surveillance, rapid and economical diagnostic, hospital assistive devices and PPEs; and supply chain and logistics support systems," Mr. Agarwal said.

The Indian Council of Medical Research's (ICMR) head of the Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases-I, R. Gangakhedkar added that over 2,06,212 tests

had been conducted so far. "Of these 14,855 tests took place at 156 government labs and 1,913 tests happened at 69 private labs on Sunday. There is no need to worry...we have enough stocks to conduct tests for six weeks," he said. Replying to a question of Remdesivir being used as a treatment, Dr. Gangakhedkar said as per some observational studies, the drug seems to have some effect on the reproduction of SARS-CoV-2.

Centre may raise loan to pay GST dues to States

"Given the extraordinary situation we are in, the government can invoke the provision made in law and raise a loan. They can either have a videoconference of the Council or get the opinion of the States in writing," he said.

In the last GST Council meeting, in fact, Deputy Chief Minister of Gujarat Nitin Patel had floated the idea of the Council itself raising loans but the Council as an entity cannot do that. "The option that was raised by States was to extend the compensation period from

2022 to five more years," said a source. Much mulling over this has led the government to the third option of raising loans.

For December 2019 and January 2020, the Central government owes around ₹30,000-35,000 crore as compensation and around ₹30,000 crore for February and March. The government had last week released ₹14,103 crore to States as the second tranche of compensation for October and November 2019. It paid ₹19,950 crore in February for these two months.

Woman drowns all 5 of her children in the Ganga

Bhadoli Superintendent of Police Ram Badan Singh said that during questioning Ms. Yadav said she committed the act due to mental stress and a quarrel with her husband. "There was nothing to state that she had scarcity of food. We went to her house. There was food prepared as well and there was no scarcity of any item."

The police said Ms. Yadav had been booked for murder, arrested and produced in a court. The police posted photographs purportedly of Ms. Yadav's house showing food prepared there. The portion of the Jahangirabad ghat where the alleged incident occurred is deep and

has a strong flow, the police said.

Village pradhan Shreecandra Yadav told *The Hindu* that they were still trying to understand what triggered the woman's actions as her family had no financial crisis or scarcity of grains. "Aisi koi samasya nahi hai. Jagah zameen bhi hai. Haal theek hai [They had no such problem. They even own land. Their financial situation is sound]," he said.

The woman had a ration card and just a week ago received several kg of grains, said Mr. Yadav, who claimed to be in regular touch with the family.

Free tests only for the poor, clarifies SC

A Bench led by Justice Ashok Bhushan recorded in its 10-page order that the court's intention was never to make testing free for all.

"We make it clear that the benefit of free testing by a person can be availed only when he or she is covered under any scheme like the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana. We are also of the view that looking into the plight of persons belonging to economically weaker sections of the society, the government may consider as to whether any other categories of persons belonging to economically weaker sections of society can be ex-

tended the benefit of free testing of COVID-19. We are conscious that framing of the scheme and its implementation are in the government domain, who are the best experts in such matter," the court said in its order.

The court further directed the Health Ministry to identify beneficiaries among the weaker sections of society, including workers belonging to low income groups in the informal sectors and beneficiaries of Direct Benefit Transfer who can be made eligible for free testing. It directed the Ministry to issue appropriate guidelines in this regard within a week.

MGNREGA jobs crash to 1% of normal

No exceptions from restrictions were provided for the MGNREGA under the lockdown, although States were asked to continue implementing the scheme while following social distancing guidelines.

While announcing the PM Garib Kalyan Yojana relief package last month, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said MGNREGA daily wages would be increased by ₹20, and would support the 13.6 crore families who hold job cards.

As *The Hindu* had reported then, this relief is meaningless at a time when

most States have closed down MGNREGA worksites to curb the spread of COVID-19.

"This is a collapse of the employment guarantee given to rural Indians at a time when it is most needed," said Nikhil Dey, an activist with the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, who has filed a Public Interest Litigation petition in the Supreme Court on the issue along with Magasaysay award winner and RTI activist Aruna Roy.

In an interim order after a hearing on April 8, the apex court directed that the matter be listed after two weeks.

Ministers, bureaucrats return to offices

Preventive measures point towards the Prime Minister's plan of staggered exit from national lockdown

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

As work from home ended for Ministers in the Union Council and senior bureaucrats on Monday, some activity slowly returned to hitherto deserted corridors of power in New Delhi.

Ministers were seen at work at their Ministries donning masks and after going through temperature checks at the entrance of their office buildings.

While the Ministry of Culture saw some heavy duty sanitisation and social distancing, standard protocols were applied at the Jal Shakti Ministry.

"We have very little staff coming into work today, basically the Minister, personal secretary, the Secretary, two Additional Secretaries and



No exception: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman being checked before she entered the Finance Ministry in New Delhi on Monday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Joint Secretaries came to office," said a source. Only two of the six attendants were asked to report for work and

sent vehicles as public transport was not available. "Sanitisers at the doors and appropriate distancing and

donning of masks have been made compulsory," added the source.

The Ministry of Minority

Affairs too had these SOPs in place but instead of providing vehicles to lower level staff, those who had their vehicles were encouraged to report for work. As for touching of files, an aide to the Minister said the Ministry had long shifted to an "e-office" set up. "Barely 30% of the staff made it to work today," said the source.

Meetings are being held as far as possible through video conferencing and the return to office for the government of India is being seen as part of Prime Minister Modi's evolving response to COVID-19, from "jaan hai to jaan hai" (the world for he who lives) to "jaan bhi, jaan bhi" (Life yes, but the World too), pointing towards a staggered exit from the lockdown post April 14.

CEC, ECs to take 30% basic salary cut

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Monday said that Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora and Election Commissioners Ashok Lavasa and Sushil Chandra had volunteered to take a 30% reduction in their basic salaries for one year in order to contribute to the efforts against COVID-19.

The announcement follows the government's recent decision to cut the MPs' salaries by 30% through an ordinance.

"The country is grappling with the pandemic and the efforts require huge resources. Reducing the burden on the state exchequer would help, the ECI said in a statement.

India protests ceasefire violations

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India on Monday lodged a strong protest through diplomatic channels after ceasefire violations from the Pakistani side killed three Indian citizens.

The diplomatic protest or demarche came after days of ceasefire violation on the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir. Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) also summoned India's Charge d'Affaires Gaurav Ahluwalia over alleged firing by the Indian side.

The MOFA spokesperson claimed an infant, Muhammad Haseeb, had died, and civilians were injured in the Indian firing in Dhudnial Sector.

The firing at the LoC continues even as both the countries are battling the pandemic. On the Indian side, Kashmir, Ladakh and the Kargil region were the first to be affected by the virus outbreak.

Extend rations to those unlisted'

Congress president Sonia Gandhi urges Prime Minister to offer grains till Sept.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Monday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi asking the government to offer increased rations to people who are identified as beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) as well as vulnerable sections who may not enlist under it.

The Congress president said that in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic, "we must ensure that no one faces hunger".

Addressing the media through video conferencing, former Commerce Minister Anand Sharma said 'Indian economy cannot sustain a prolonged lockdown; and therefore, Mr. Modi should announce a calibrated plan to open up specific sectors.'

In a tweet, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi asked for a "smart upgrade" of the lockdown, and said the one-size-fits-all lockdown brought misery to the poor

Mr. Sharma cited an ILO report to say that 40 crore workers would be pushed to below poverty line.

The Congress president also suggested providing free of cost 5 kg grain/person in addition to the entitlements under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) from April-June, 2020," Ms Gandhi said in her letter.

"However, given the adverse impact of the lockdown and its prolonged impact on people's livelihoods,

I write to you to consider a few suggestions. Firstly, the provision of 10 kg grains/person to NFSA beneficiaries

must be extended for an additional period of 3 months i.e. till September, 2020. Given the chronic economic distress faced by these beneficiaries, the food entitlements may be provided free of cost," she added.

The Congress leader also said that releasing additional food grains to the States will help create storage space with Food Corporation of India (FCI) to scale up the rabi procurement of wheat and rice.

"The current crisis has pushed many relatively food secure families into food insecurity and poverty. Population increases since 2011 have not been considered for determining each State's entitlement under NFSA. The above measures are critical to safeguard people

against food inflation, at a juncture where supply chain disruptions are causing price rise," Ms. Gandhi noted.

Groups excluded

Separately, in a series of tweets, former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram, too, pointed out that direct benefit transfers under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Scheme, that was tweeted by the Ministry of Finance, has left out several segments.

Listing these sections, Mr Chidambaram said: "Examples: Tenant farmers, Landless agri labour, Non-agri daily wagers, MNREGA workers without work, Migrant workers, Self-employed workers, Taxi, auto drivers, Delivery agents, Male Jan Dhan account holders, Petty shop keepers, Street vendors etc."

The Congress leader also said that releasing additional food grains to the States will help create storage space with Food Corporation of India (FCI) to scale up the rabi procurement of wheat and rice.

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'Floor test is Governor's discretion'

This is how the system of parliamentary governance operates, says SC judgment

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

A Governor can call for a floor test any time he objectively feels a government in power has lost the confidence of the House and is on shaky ground, the Supreme Court held on Monday.

In a judgment, a Bench of Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and Hemant Gupta concluded that a Governor can call for a trust vote if he has arrived at a *prima facie* opinion, based on objective material, that the incumbent State government has lost its majority in the Assembly.

"The idea underlying the trust vote is to uphold the

political accountability of the elected government to the State legislature... In directing a trust vote, the Governor does not favour a particular political party. It is inevitable that the specific timing of a trust vote may tilt

the balance towards the party possessing a majority at the time the trust vote is directed. All political parties are equally at risk of losing the support of their elected legislators, just as the legislators are at risk of losing the vote of the electorate. This is how the system of parliamentary governance operates," Justice Chandrachud observed.

The intention behind a trust vote was to enable the elected representatives to determine if the Council of Ministers commanded the confidence of the House. It was the MLAs, and not the Governor, who made the ultimatum call whether a government should stay in power or not, the court said.

It said that a Governor's power to call for a floor test is not restricted only before the inception of a State government immediately after elections, but continues throughout its term.

The court clarified that the Governor's requirement to have a trust vote does not "short-circuit" any disqualification proceedings pending before the Speaker.

It said a Governor need not wait for the Speaker's decision on the resignation of rebel MLAs before calling for a trust vote.

Justice D.Y. Chandrachud observed.

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Plans to construct new Parliament on track

Consultants working digitally: contractor

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

The Centre's plan to construct a new Parliament building by August 2022 is on track and the tender for the project would be floated after the lockdown is lifted, according to the architects of the project.

The design, which is proposed to be triangular and located near the Parliament House, as of now is sufficient for issuing tenders, while the process for the detailed design would run concurrent with the selection of a contractor, HCP Design, Planning and Management said in a written response to a query by *The Hindu*.

The initial deadline for completing the building would be met. The tendering process was underway, it said.

construction agency, the Central Public Works Department, in October 2019 to be its consultant for the revamp of the Central Vista and construction of the new Parliament and the Central Secretariat.

Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri had said the building would be ready before the Independence Day, 2022.

Asked if the project had been delayed due to the lockdown aimed to curb the pandemic, the HCP said the CPWD, the MoHUA and the consultants were able to work digitally and that there were no major disruptions.

Army to help out stranded personnel

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In view of the 21-day nationwide lockdown to contain COVID-19 ending on April 14 midnight and the possibility of it being lifted partially, the Army has issued instructions on the movement of personnel who were on leave or sick leave and retirees held back at regimental centres due to the lockdown.

"Personnel whose sanctioned leave expired during the lockdown period will report to the nearest station headquarters, ad hoc station headquarters or units on April 15. They will be housed in quarantine hubs created under arrangements of Command headquarters. Thereafter, they would be despatched under arrangements to OL directorate to their respective formations or units," the Army said in a letter.

Owing to multiple factors, including paucity of kits, the ICMR follows strict guidelines before samples are collected from a person showing symptoms.

At a meeting in March, Home Minister Amit Shah asked ICMR Director-General

VIJAYA SINGH
JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) expanded the number of laboratories that could conduct COVID-19 tests on an intervention by the Union Home Minister, *The Hindu* has learned.

After the first COVID-19 positive case was detected on January 30, all samples were sent only to the National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune. As cases surged and a need was felt to ramp up testing, the ICMR was asked to enable more laboratories to conduct the tests.

On March 17, the ICMR activated 72 more laborato-

ries to test for COVID-19 and revised the testing criteria for the same.

On March 23, it fast-tracked approval for Indian COVID-19 testing kits for commercial use in the ICMR approved government and

private laboratories.

The ICMR is the apex body for "formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research" and is one of the oldest medical research bodies in the world.

With India's confirmed cases approaching the five-digit mark and positives doubling every four or six days, there was criticism that the ICMR's strategy appeared to be focused on border control and applying a restrictive testing criteria.

The low testing is also due to a reliance on imported kits, which is influenced by global supply chains, inadequate lab facilities to analyse a sufficient number of samples simultaneously and fewer trained personnel to conduct these tests.

Until March 20, it had tested only around 1,000 samples of those hospitalised with severe acute respiratory illness (SARI). This was to check prevalence of the disease in the wider population.

This was in addition to those who displayed symptoms and had a travel history or had contact with someone who had. It expanded testing to non-hospitalised

nies for these tests.

On January 17, flights from China and Hong Kong were placed on surveillance at three airports and screening of passengers arriving from all international flights began on March 4 when the first time the number of positive cases jumped from six to 24. The first case was reported on January 30. As on March, there was only one district in Maharashtra, where more than 10 cases were reported and by April 4, the number of such districts spiked to 70. Till Sunday, the number of affected districts stood at 354.

On March 27, Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba wrote to all the States to monitor 15 lakh passengers who arrived at the international airports from January 18-March 23 and stressed that despite details of all passengers shared with the States, there was a gap in effective monitoring.

Envoy told to adhere to lockdown

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The limited number of curfew passes issued to foreign diplomats has created difficulties in carrying out the consular work during the lockdown. The issue came up in the capital's diplomatic circle repeatedly in recent weeks as India reminded foreign missions to adhere to the lockdown rules.

"We have issued a very limited number of curfew passes for essential work. We will continue to advise the diplomatic community to adhere to the lockdown guidelines as it is in their interest and well-being of each and everyone," said an official source.

The statement came a day after a diplomat from Uruguay was found to be flouting the rules. Valentine Obispo, a senior official of the Embassy of Uruguay, was intercepted by the police when she was found cycling in her neighbourhood.



Quick action: Medics collecting a swab sample of a boy at Sadar in Lucknow on Monday. ■ PTI

19 Indians stuck in Dubai hope for leniency

They are among the thousands of citizens stranded overseas after India went into lockdown

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

As the government prepares to announce plans for the next phase of the lockdown on Tuesday, 19 Indians stuck inside Dubai airport for three weeks have renewed their pleas to be allowed to return to India as a special case. The 19 Indians, some of whom were in transit from Europe, and others who had checked in for flights from Dubai, had been turned away at the boarding gates on March 20 and March 21 by airlines officials after India put a series of travel bans in place. After spending several days sleeping inside the departure terminal, the group



Nowhere people: A group of Indians stranded inside the Dubai airport since March 21. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

was taken for COVID-19 tests, and once they were cleared, allowed to check into the airport hotel, said officials.

"We have been in constant touch with some of them and

with local authorities and Emirates airlines, who have put them in the airport hotel. We had also given some financial assistance when they initially got stranded. If

there is any requirement of medicine, etc., we will provide that help as well," India's Consul General in Dubai Bipul said.

However, members of the group stuck inside the Dubai airport say the only thing that will bring comfort is knowing when they can return. "For 25 days, I haven't been out in the sun or felt fresh air. The airport is mostly shut down, and except for short trips to one restaurant for food, we are confined to our rooms," said Deepak Gupta, a professional with a multinational corporation in Gurgaon, who worries most for his wife back home as she is pregnant.

On April 9, the UAE government sent a note verbaile to all Embassies in Abu Dhabi, asking them to repatriate their citizens who needed to return, offering to help with flight arrangements, ensuring COVID-19 tests for them all, and hospital treatment for those found to be positive.

"This includes travellers, naturally, but also any nationals who seek to go back to their homes and families," UAE Ambassador Mohammad Al Banna told *The Hindu* on Saturday. India's Ambassador to the UAE Pavan Kapoor said that no Indian could be repatriated until after the lockdown had ended.

conference held in the Nizamuddin Markaz area.

The Jamiat writ, filed through advocate Ejaz Maqbool, sought a direction to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to identify and take strict action against sections of the media which are communalising the Nizamuddin Markaz issue.

A Bench led by Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde directed the Press Council of India to be impleaded and posted the case for hearing after two weeks. The petitions said certain sections of the print and electronic media are spreading bigotry and communal hatred in relation to the Tablighi Jamaat

Centre issues advisory for senior citizens

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry on Monday issued an advisory to senior citizens about how to remain safe.

Ministry secretary R. Subrahmanyam wrote to chief secretaries of all States, asking them to publicise the advisory.

The advisory said senior citizens should stay at home, avoid visitors, but maintain one metre distance if necessary and remain active.

+ INTERVIEW | MADHUKAR PAI

'No proof yet on BCG benefits'

Focus must now be on testing and contact tracing, says epidemiology expert

VARGHESE K. GEORGE

Madhukar Pai is Canada Research Chair in Epidemiology & Global Health and Director, McGill Global Health Programs and Professor at McGill University. In an e-mail interview, he explains the debate on BCG vaccine's purported effectiveness against COVID-19 and how global approaches to communicable diseases to change.

You have advised against over-optimism with regards to the link between BCG and COVID-19 immunity. What are your reasons?

■ As a TB researcher who was born in India, I would be thrilled if BCG worked against COVID-19. It is a cheap, readily available, safe vaccine. But we are not there yet. Currently, what we have are a few ecological studies (not peer-reviewed) which take country-level BCG and COVID-19 data, and report a correlation that countries that give BCG to children have a lower rates of COVID-19 cases and deaths. Based on this early signal and based on our prior knowledge that BCG does have non-specific immune-boosting properties, it is perfectly fine to conduct trials to confirm the hypothesis.

But the current ecological evidence is far from sufficient for any immediate public health or clinical use during this crisis. Ecological studies offer a very weak level of evidence because correlations that are true at the country level might not hold true at the individual level. For example, we know not everyone who lives in a low-income country is poor — some individuals are very rich. Same logic applies to ecological comparisons. In addition, ecological studies have been done at a time when the epidemic is ex-



I don't think any country in the world was adequately prepared for COVID-19

■ I don't think any country in the world was adequately prepared for COVID-19

■ This is my biggest worry — even without COVID-19, TB kills 1,000 Indians every day. No country has more TB patients than India. And now, with the lockdown, things are going to get much worse. Already, there are preliminary reports of a 80% decline in TB case notifications. People on TB treatment are struggling to get their medicines on time, and people with new TB symptoms are unable to access medical care. TB patients and survivors often have lung damage and if they got COVID-19, they could be at higher risk of complications. I worry about an increase in TB mortality in the coming months, and that will be so sad. There is also the risk of running out of anti-TB medicines, since India relies heavily on China for raw materials.

What can be done to avert this disaster? Right now, all known TB patients could be supported via remote or tele-consultations using call centres, or other digital tech-

ploding in many low/middle income countries. Repeating the studies in a month might produce different results. We also know many low/middle income countries, including India, are seriously under-testing for COVID-19. Lastly, there is also bias due to confounding — countries that give BCG are mostly in Asia, Africa and Latin America, with much younger populations than Europe or North America.

So, until trial results are out, countries like India must focus on interventions such as large-scale testing, isolation, contact-tracing, and physical distancing (where feasible).

TB continues to kill thousands of people in India. How might coronavirus affect TB services in India and what can be done about that?

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How can a country prepare for a pandemic?

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'Online child porn traffic rises by 95%'

Millions of paedophiles have migrated online, making Internet extremely unsafe for children: ICPF

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Online child pornography traffic after the lockdown in the country has gone up by 95% with online data monitoring websites showing an increase in demand for searches like "child porn," "sexy child" and "teen sex videos."

"Traffic from India increased by 95% between March 24 and 26, as compared to average traffic before the lockdown," the India Child Protection Fund (ICPF) said in a statement citing data from Pornhub, the world's largest pornography website.

The ICPF was set up in January 2020 and aims to sup-

Unhealthy trend

Consumption of child pornography online increased nearly two-fold after the lockdown was imposed

- Traffic to child pornographic websites from India increased 95% between March 24 and 26 compared to that before the lockdown

- Keyword searches for "child porn," "sexy child" and "teen sex videos" increased significantly

- In a survey conducted on demand for child

port NGOs with funding resources for curbing exploitation of children. The fund is managed by Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi's

have migrated online, making the Internet extremely unsafe for children. Without stringent action, this could result in a drastic rise in sexual crimes against children," says Nivedita Ahuja, spokesperson for ICPF.

Unseen threat

As children spend more time online during the lockdown, international agencies like Europol, the United Nations and ECPAT (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking) have reported that paedophiles and child pornography addicts have increased activity to target children online to 'groom' them – befriending them on social media, building an emotional connection

and luring them to perform sexual activities through photos and videos.

In a survey conducted in December on demand for child pornography in 100 cities, it was found that there were 5 million downloads on average per month.

It also pointed out there was an increase in demand for violent content involving children.

It demands an urgent crackdown on child pornography through a pan-India tracker through the use of artificial intelligence which can monitor hosting, sharing, viewing and downloading of child sexual abuse material and provide the information to the government agencies.

Water from Ganga, Yamuna being tested

JACOB KOSHY

NEW DELHI

Has the lockdown had a measurable impact on the water quality of the Ganga and Yamuna, rivers that have a history of battling pollution?

The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) – the arm of the Water Ministry tasked with directing the ₹20,000 crore clean-up of the Ganga – and the Central Pollution Control Board are expected to find out in 10 days, officials told *The Hindu*.

Water samples have been collected from Delhi (Yamuna) and all Ganga basin States, and are in the process of being analysed. While this was also part of the routine water quality monitoring in the river, there was a "special focus" on the impact of lockdown, said D.P. Mathuria, senior NMCG official in charge of water quality management.

Lockdown impact

Measuring the degree of chemical oxygen demand (COD) and ammonium nitrate would point to whether the lockdown has had an impact. Effluents from industries as well as sewage discharge would impact COD levels, Mr. Mathuria added. "There are some preliminary indications that the water looks cleaner but a proper analysis is awaited," he added.

The stoppage of industrial pollutants has definitely had a positive effect on water quality in the Yamun, Delhi Jal Board vice-chairman Raghav Chadha had said last week.

An official said tests were under way and results were likely later this week.

(Inputs from Nikhil Babu)

1.27 lakh volunteers offer services

Modi-led NDMA monitoring operations at the ground level to fight pandemic

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

More than 1.27 lakh individuals and 5,300 organisations have so far registered themselves as volunteers with the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) for the fight against COVID-19.

The NDMA has also received donation offers for more than 8.35 lakh items including digital infrared thermometers, digital thermal scanners (full body), masks, gloves, sanitisers and personal protective gear.

The donated articles, be-

sides the medical equipment and other goods being produced by the public and private sectors, are being supplied to the States as per requirement.

The Authority, through its subordinate and State bodies, is monitoring all the operations associated with the measures being taken at the ground level.

The NCC students have been helping the local administrations in extending help to the needy and spreading awareness about the preventive measures to be taken to arrest the spread.

Over 30,000 Civil Defence

volunteers have been carrying out relief works and maintaining order in the affected areas. About 11,500 NGOs have been organising food camps and 3,900 NGOs have set up temporary shelter homes for the stranded.

Online courses

The Department of Personnel and Training, in coordination with the Ministry of Human Resource Development, has already come up with online courses on the pandemic for the frontline workers. These courses are meant for doctors, nurses, paramedics, hygiene work-

ers, technicians, auxiliary nursing midwives, State government and civil defence officials. The Health Ministry has also been issuing specific guidelines on healthcare facilities and treatment.

The Integrated Government Online Training (iGOT) courses are available on the Diksha platform, both for the laptop/desktop and mobile phone users. The launch of iGOT platform was fast-forwarded as requested by the respective Empowered Group of Officers to prevent the spread of infection among, and through, the frontline workers.

Muslims conduct Hindu man's funeral rites

Communal harmony to the fore in Jaipur locality, which is under COVID-19 curfew

MOHAMMED IQBAL

JAIPUR

In a display of communal harmony, Muslim neighbours of a 37-year-old Hindu man, who died of throat cancer, carried his bier and performed the funeral rites here on Monday when his relatives could not come to the city because of the nationwide lockdown enforced to control the COVID-19 pandemic. The area where the man resided is under an indefinite curfew.

Rajendra Bagri, who died on Sunday night after suffering from cancer for a long time, is survived by his younger brother and an aunt, who ekes out a living by collecting scrap. While the family did not have enough money for funeral, there were no other relatives or family members living nearby who could come to help them.

The locality, Bajrang



Shoulders to rely on: Muslim neighbours carrying the bier of Rajendra Bagri in Jaipur on Monday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Qureshi and Abdul Waheed. They also bought food and grocery items for the bereaved family.

Pappu Qureshi, a neighbour who helped organise the funeral, told *The Hindu* that Muslims in the locality had come forward to help the Hindu family as a humanitarian gesture. "It was our duty as neighbours, as they had no relatives here... We have got immense satisfaction by helping them out."

Rajasthan Nagrik Manch general secretary Basant Hariyana said the gesture of Muslim neighbours was a befitting reply to those who were targeting the community after the spread of novel coronavirus among some Tablighi Jamaat members. "This is a perfect example of our composite culture, in which the bonds uniting us are so strong despite the attempts to create divisions and hatred."

Those who attended the funeral included Hamid Kayamkhani, Fahim Qureshi, Hanif Shah, Irfan

Nagar in Bhatta Basti, where the family resides, is dominated by Muslims, most of whom are drivers, factory workers and daily wage earners. Rajendra Bagri's Muslim neighbours collected contributions and made arrangements for taking the body to the crematorium on Monday.

The Muslim neighbours chanted 'Ram Naam Satya Hai' and carried the bier on their shoulders from Bagri's

house to the main road of Bhatta Basti from where a pickup truck took them to the Chandpole cremation ground. Only eight persons were allowed to go for the funeral because of the curfew. Bagri's brother lit the pyre and the cremation was done as per the Hindu rituals.

Those who attended the

funeral included Hamid

Kayamkhani, Fahim

Qureshi, Hanif Shah, Irfan

primitive desire to inhale a joint, wants a bit of weed (8)

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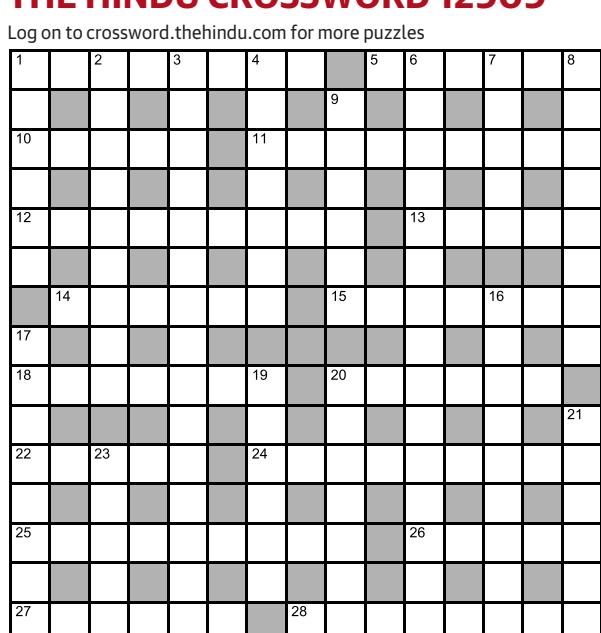
strong despite the at-

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THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12909

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ACROSS

- 1 Perverts rushed back to host orgy (8)
- 5 Protest at USA carries importance (6)
- 10 Decisive part of proof in a lawsuit (5)
- 11 Fine naval officer penning book on latest in warfare (9)
- 12 A bug concealed in parties reveals flings (9)

DOWN

- 1 Mistake to turn traitor (6)
- 2 Censure couple of amateurs consuming grass in cigar (9)
- 3 Women patch up wound (5)
- 4 Intends to smuggle ecstasy in jets (6)
- 5 Mafia boss holds gun angrily against head of enemy in cell (7)
- 18 Contacted doctor about tackling ultimately bothersome itch (7)
- 20 Had terrible trouble around plant (6)
- 22 Defraud small company (5)
- 24 Tricky to grip the item used by acrobat (9)
- 25 Lassitude in Indian state over new introduction of identities (9)
- 26 Wife irritates and complains (5)
- 27 Hate execution of soldiers in atrocity (6)
- 28 Violent act of trainee overwhelmed by low wages (4,4)
- 29 Worried about brouhaha over arrest (6)
- 30 Eat eagerly in party after consuming one drink at bar (3,4)
- 31 Vivacious one in gala beginning to yodel (6)
- 32 Raise money to equip with new weapons (5)



To play an interactive version of this crossword online, scan the QR code

SUDOKU

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

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Solution to puzzle 12908

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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| 5 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 2 |
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Spain eases lockdown as toll falls to 517

Some factory and construction staff are set to return to work under strict safety guidelines

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

MADRID

Spain reopened parts of its COVID-19-stricken economy on Monday as slowing death tolls in some of the worst-hit countries boosted hopes that the curve may be starting to flatten and lockdown restrictions could soon be eased.

Watched by a world that is keen to temper a brutal pandemic-induced recession, some Spanish factory and construction staff were set to return to work under strict safety guidelines.

However, China, where the virus emerged late last year, recorded its highest number of infections in weeks – most of them imported cases – as warnings echoed that lifting restrictions too early could unleash a second wave of COVID-19.

French President Emmanuel Macron was set to warn the nation that its lockdown would stay in place for sever-



Cheers of appreciation: People applauding healthcare workers and the police from their balconies in Ronda, southern Spain, on Sunday. ■REUTERS

Police remove 800 bodies in Ecuador

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

ECUADOR

Ecuador said police have removed almost 800 bodies in recent weeks from homes in Guayaquil, the epicenter of the country's COVID-19 outbreak, after the disease overwhelmed emergency services. Mortuary workers were unable to cope with a backlog, with residents sharing videos showing abandoned bodies in the streets.

Cautious optimism

Yet there is cautious optimism the virus may have reached its peak.

Spain's death toll fell again on Monday with 517 fatalities, the lowest daily figure of new confirmed infections since March 20.

France and the U.S. also saw a drop in daily COVID-19 deaths, along with Italy,

20 doctors test positive in Pak. province

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LAHORE

At least 20 more doctors were tested positive for COVID-19 on Monday in Punjab, bringing the number of the medical staff infected by the deadly virus in Pakistan's most populous province to 50. The Pakistan Medical Association has said that more than 100 doctors, nurses and para medical staff have been infected so far across the country.

which reported its lowest fatalities in three weeks.

But Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez warned his country was "far from victory", with the lockdown restrictions for the rest of the nation's 47 million people remaining in place.

"We are all keen to go back out on the streets... but

S. Korea to ship testing kits to U.S.

REUTERS

SEOUL

South Korea plans to send kits designed to run up to 6,00,000 COVID-19 tests to the U.S. on Tuesday after an appeal from U.S. President Donald Trump, a Seoul official said. Mr. Trump made the request in a telephone call with President Moon Jae-in on March 25, as the United States was grappling with fast-growing outbreaks in many States.

countries continued to warn citizens to stay indoors on public holidays for Easter Monday as they grapple with a virus that has even infected national leaders.

In Britain, Prime Minister Boris Johnson was resting at his official country residence Chequers a day after being discharged following "a

week in which the NHS has saved my life, no question", referring to the country's National Health Service.

The death toll in Britain has risen to 11,329, according to Health Ministry figures published on Monday – an increase of 717 on the previous day's figures.

Mr. Johnson, like President U.S. Donald Trump, had initially resisted stringent measures such as shutting down public places.

In France, Mr. Macron is set to address the nation just after 8:00 p.m. (1800 GMT), and sources said he would announce the lockdown in place since March 17 must be extended beyond its current April 15 expiration date until well into May.

Mr. Macron will be looking to strike a careful balance between warning France – where the death toll stands at 14,412 – that an early relaxation of the lockdown could be disastrous, while reassuring people that the government has a plan to get the country back to normality.

China infections rise

In China, where authorities appeared to have the virus under control last week, officials reported 108 new symptomatic cases on Monday, the highest number of confirmed infections in a single day in over a month.

Imported cases accounted for most of the total, the National Health Commission said, underscoring why the government has been so focused on preventing new outbreaks stemming from international arrivals.

China only recently lifted the lockdown on the city of Wuhan, where the virus first emerged in December.

The World Health Organization, however, has warned countries against lifting lockdown restrictions too early.

Trump lashes out at Fauci amid criticism of slow virus response

Early measures could have saved more lives: disease expert

PETER BAKER

WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump publicly signalled his frustration on Sunday with Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, the Federal government's top infectious disease expert, after the doctor said more lives could have been saved from the novel coronavirus if the country had been shut down earlier.

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"It is also important to investigate whether any organ-



Anthony Fauci

no threat to the U.S. at large. Time to #FireFauci."

In replying to the message, Mr. Trump added: "Sorry Fake News, it's all on tape. I banned China long before people spoke up." The tweet came amid a flurry of messages blasted out by the President on Sunday defending his handling of the outbreak, and pointing the finger instead at China, the WHO, President Barack Obama, the nation's Governors, Congress, Democrats generally and the news media.

Mr. Trump did not "ban China," but he did block foreign nationals who had been in China in the past 14 days starting February 2. Despite the policy, 40,000 Americans and other authorised travellers entered the country from China since then. ■NY TIMES

Muslim organisations in Sri Lanka concerned over 'hate mongering'

Letter calls for action against those spreading hatred

MEERA SRINIVASAN

COLOMBO

A group of Muslim organisations in Sri Lanka have sought immediate investigation and urgent action on "the continued hate-mongering against the Muslim community", in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a letter addressed to the acting Inspector General of Police, the organisations cited social media posts and audio recordings in circulation that, they said, violated laws on hate speech.

"It is also important to investigate whether any organ-

ised group is supporting, aiding and abetting the spread of racial and religious hatred to destabilise the country at a time when the government's fullest attention is on controlling and eliminating the deadly COVID-19 here in Sri Lanka," said the letter dated April 12, and signed by organisations, including the Muslim Council of Sri Lanka and the Colombo District Mosques' Federation.

Muslims have already raised concern over Sri Lanka making cremation compulsory for COVID-19 victims, as it goes against their beliefs.

from making purchases from Muslim-run businesses, while accusing the community of trying to spread the coronavirus. The "racist appeals", the organisations said, were similar to those circulated ahead of earlier instances of violence targeting the community in 2018 in the central Digana town, and soon after the Easter terrorist attacks last April.

Muslims have already raised concern over Sri Lanka making cremation compulsory for COVID-19 victims, as it goes against their beliefs.

Storms sweep U.S. south, killing at least 19 people

Hundreds of homes destroyed, power disrupted across States

ASSOCIATED PRESS

JACKSON

Severe weather has swept across the southern parts of the U.S., killing at least 19 people and damaging hundreds of homes from Louisiana into the Appalachian Mountains.

On March 23, an F-16 aircraft crashed near Shakarparian in Islamabad during rehearsals for the Pakistan Day Parade. Wing Commander Nauman Akram was killed in the crash.

In July 2019, 17 people lost their lives after a military aircraft crashed into a populated area in Rawalpindi. Five Army officials and 12 civilians were killed in the crash, the ISPR had said.

And in 2016 a Pakistan International Airlines plane burst into flames after one of its engines failed, killing more than 40 people.



A house ripped apart in the city of Monroe, Louisiana, on Sunday. ■AFP

mountainous areas, and knocking out electricity for about 7,50,000 customers in a 10-State swath ranging from Texas to Georgia up to West Virginia, according to poweroutages.us.

In Alabama, where Governor Kay Ivey suspended social distancing rules related

to the pandemic because of the weather threat, people wearing protective masks huddled closely together in a storm shelter.

A suspected twister lifted a house, mostly intact, and deposited it in the middle of a road in central Georgia.

The National Weather Service tallied hundreds of reports of trees down, including many that punctured roofs and downed power lines. Meteorologists warned the mid-Atlantic States to prepare for potential tornadoes on Monday.

In Arkansas, one person was killed when a tree fell on a home in White Hall. In South Carolina, a person was found dead in a collapsed building near Seneca.

North Korea's Kim Jong-un reshuffles top governing body

Over a third of State Affairs Commission's members replaced

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has carried out a major reshuffle of his State Affairs Commission, official media reported on Monday, replacing more than a third of its members.

Mr. Kim has established an iron grip on the levers of authority in his nuclear-armed country since inheriting power in his late 20s in 2011.

He is chairman of the SAC – the North's highest decision-making body – and five of its 13 other members were replaced at a meeting of the country's rubber-stamp Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) Parliament on Sunday,



Kim Jong-un

the state KCNA news agency reported.

"This is a rather large scale of SAC membership shuffle," said former U.S. government North Korea analyst Rachel Lee.

Pictures carried by the official Rodong Sinmun newspaper showed hundreds of

lawmakers sitting in close proximity to each other without wearing protective masks.

A Cabinet report reiterated the North's insistence that "not a single case" of the COVID-19 pandemic that has swept the world since emerging in neighbouring China has been reported in the country.

Pyongyang put thousands of its own people and hundreds of foreigners – including diplomats – into isolation and mounted disinfection drives as it sought to prevent an outbreak, which experts say could be devastating given its weak health sector and widespread malnutrition.

Pakistan Army aircraft crashes, two pilots killed

Routine training mission turns fatal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LAHORE/ISLAMABAD

Two Pakistan Army Aviation pilots were killed on Monday when their trainer aircraft crashed during a routine training mission in Punjab province, the military said.

The Mushshak aircraft crashed in Gujrat city, some 150 km from Lahore, the military's media wing Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

Both the pilots, Major Umer – who was the instructor pilot and Lieutenant Fiazan, a student pilot – were killed in the accident, the Army said in a statement.

Developed from Saab Saab, the Mushshak is a license-built fixed-gear basic trainer aircraft used by the

Pakistan Army and Pakistan Air Force.

Pakistan has a chequered military and civilian aviation safety record, with frequent plane and helicopter crashes over the years.

On March 23, an F-16 aircraft crashed near Shakarparian in Islamabad during rehearsals for the Pakistan Day Parade. Wing Commander Nauman Akram was killed in the crash.

In July 2019, 17 people lost their lives after a military aircraft crashed into a populated area in Rawalpindi. Five Army officials and 12 civilians were killed in the crash, the ISPR had said.

Eleven people were killed in Mississippi, and six more died in northwest Georgia. Two other bodies were pulled from damaged homes in a 10-State swath ranging from Texas to Georgia up to West Virginia, according to poweroutages.us.

The storms blew onward through the night, causing flooding and mudslides in

Can Joe Biden defeat Donald Trump in November?

The former Vice-President has a nationwide lead over Trump, but battleground States hold the key

NATE COHN

President Donald Trump and Joe Biden begin the general election campaign locked in a highly competitive contest that remains fought along the lines of the 2016 presidential election, according to national and battleground state polls.

If anyone holds the early edge, it is Mr. Biden. He leads by an average of 6 points in national live-interview polls of registered voters. But the election will be decided by voters in the battleground States, not registered voters nationwide, and there the story is not nearly so clear or rosy for Mr. Biden.

At the moment, a reasonable estimate is that Mr. Biden is performing four or five points worse among likely voters in the critical States than he is among registered voters nationwide. As a result, he holds only a narrow and tenuous edge in the race

for the Electoral College, if he holds one at all.

Even under ordinary circumstances, with seven months to go until the election, there would be plenty of time for the race to change. This cycle, the country also faces a pandemic and a severe economic downturn with the potential to upset the race.

Downside risks
Already, an initial uptick in the President's approval rating has dissipated, perhaps because a rallying effect has given way to more focus on the administration's coronavirus response. There will be many opportunities for the polls to shift again, and the President faces many downside risks without a return to normal life and to economic growth before the election.

But at least for now, the polls suggest that American voters are divided along fa-



Tough battle: Joe Biden, left, and Donald Trump.

miliar lines, despite countless events that seemed to have the potential to redraw them.

March 15, matching or perhaps even exceeding his margin over Hillary Clinton late in the 2016 campaign.

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MARKET WATCH

| | PRICE | CHANGE |
|-----------|--------|--------|
| Sensex | 30,690 | -1.51 |
| US Dollar | 76.27 | 0.00 |
| Brent oil | 31.77 | -3.87 |

NIFTY 50

| | PRICE | CHANGE |
|-------------------|----------|---------|
| Adani Ports | 262.85 | 10.95 |
| Asian Paints | 1680.85 | 29.50 |
| Axis Bank | 148.95 | -1.20 |
| Bajaj Auto | 2397.55 | -38.40 |
| Bajaj Finserv | 4491.40 | -328.85 |
| Bajaj Finance | 287.30 | -264.55 |
| Bharti Airtel | 512.20 | 23.50 |
| BPCL | 350.10 | 5.20 |
| Britannia Ind | 2706.15 | -95.55 |
| Cipla | 592.85 | 13.25 |
| Coal India | 145.90 | 5.10 |
| Dr Reddys Lab | 3746.60 | 125.05 |
| Eicher Motors | 13400.55 | -341.75 |
| GAIL (India) | 86.05 | -1.70 |
| Grasim Ind | 544.50 | 13.95 |
| HCL Tech | 458.25 | -10.80 |
| HDFC | 1655.20 | -47.90 |
| HDFC Bank | 895.35 | -29.70 |
| Hero MotoCorp | 1919.05 | -71.85 |
| Hindalco | 113.80 | 6.25 |
| Hind Unilever | 2346.45 | -25.80 |
| ICICI Bank | 330.65 | -12.05 |
| IndusInd Bank | 410.40 | 15.00 |
| Bharti Infralet | 177.50 | 3.60 |
| Infosys | 637.40 | 1.15 |
| Indian Oil Corp | 83.15 | -0.25 |
| ITC | 181.60 | -3.65 |
| JSW Steel | 167.65 | 1.35 |
| Kotak Bank | 1250.90 | -22.00 |
| L&T | 865.45 | 52.65 |
| M&M | 362.85 | -18.55 |
| Maruti Suzuki | 5283.15 | -43.50 |
| Nestle India Ltd. | 16599.95 | -239.75 |
| NTPC | 88.65 | 1.55 |
| ONGC | 75.05 | -2.25 |
| PowerGrid Corp | 159.95 | -4.50 |
| Reliance Ind | 1189.15 | -30.80 |
| State Bank | 183.50 | -4.25 |
| Shree Cement | 17301.10 | 365.80 |
| Sun Pharma | 462.35 | 7.90 |
| Tata Motors | 74.25 | -0.35 |
| Tata Steel | 282.55 | -2.30 |
| TCS | 1759.25 | -6.90 |
| Tech Mahindra | 526.85 | -18.40 |
| Titan | 966.85 | -47.00 |
| UltraTech Cement | 3466.10 | 100.05 |
| UPL | 324.95 | 5.95 |
| Vedanta | 78.30 | 1.50 |
| Wipro | 189.20 | -7.50 |
| Zee Entertainment | 137.10 | -12.75 |

EXCHANGE RATES

| CURRENCY | TT BUY | TT SELL |
|--------------------|--------|---------|
| US Dollar | 76.07 | 76.39 |
| Euro | 83.05 | 83.41 |
| British Pound | 94.96 | 95.37 |
| Japanese Yen (100) | 70.44 | 70.74 |
| Chinese Yuan | 10.78 | 10.83 |
| Swiss Franc | 78.65 | 79.00 |
| Singapore Dollar | 53.74 | 53.98 |
| Canadian Dollar | 54.44 | 54.67 |
| Malaysian Ringgit | 17.57 | 17.66 |

Source: Indian Bank

+ About \$250 billion lost so far, post economic shutdown'

Non-essentials to see deep compression

MINI TEJASWI

BENGALURU
Most businesses in non-essential products and services will have to resort to scaling down of operations in the range of 25-75% in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant lockdown.

Automobile, high-end consumer goods, consumer durables, fancy FMCG items, expensive clothing, gems and jewellery, leisure holidays, restaurants and star hospitality will be some of the sectors that will witness deep down compression, while essential services such as food companies, pharmaceuticals and healthcare providers will continue to do business as usual, industry experts and trade body representatives said.

The compression will lead to the loss of millions of jobs across segments in the country by the end of May, although data as of now is 'the most fragile factor'.

Businesses will embark on stringent austerity measures as reducing people and minimising the use of real estate will be critical in this regard.

Pradeep Bhargava, president, Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Agriculture (MCCIA) said the COVID-19-driven uncertainty had resulted in erosion of income at all levels.

All non-essential, luxury, high-end, lifestyle products and devices will be impacted at least for a year. These include luxury cars, super bikes, lifestyle accessories, leisure holidays, premium clothing and high-end mobile phones.

Vinnie Mehta, director general at Automotive Component Manufacturers' Association of India (ACMA) termed the current situation

Retail inflation eases to 5.91%

Drop in food prices keeps CPI rise under check; data collection hit by COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

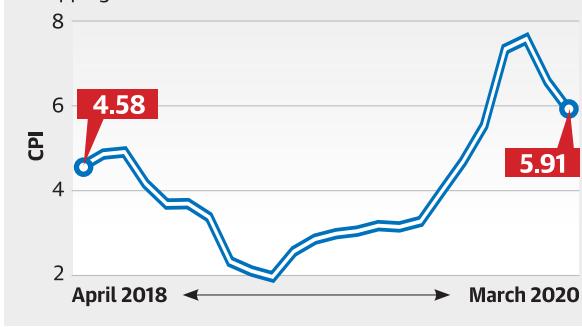
Retail inflation dropped to 5.91% in March from the 6.58% in February, mostly on a drop in food prices, according to the Consumer Price Index data released by the National Statistical Office on Monday.

Food inflation fell to 8.76% in March, in comparison with the 10.81% in February. Vegetable price inflation saw the sharpest fall, dropping from 32% to 19% over the course of a month. Spices and prepared food, snacks and sweets were the only food categories that saw a slight increase in prices.

Retail inflation has been easing off since hitting an almost six-year high of 7.59% in January, and analysts ex-

Some good news

Within CPI, vegetable prices saw the sharpest deceleration, dropping from 32% to 19% over the course of a month



pect the trend to continue over the next few months.

"With low crude oil prices and sharp slowdown in the economy, CPI inflation is expected to fall further," said Rajani Sinha, chief economist and head, research, at

Knight Frank India. "Weak demand side pressure on inflation would outweigh any supply side bottlenecks in the near-term," she added.

The COVID-19 crisis has also affected field data collection used to calculate infla-

tion, although the NSO said the overall impact of missing price data on CPI estimates was within acceptable limits.

"Keeping in view the preventive measures taken by NSO and announcement of a nationwide lockdown..., field work for price collection of CPI was suspended... from 19th March, 2020 and about 66% of price quotations were received," said an official statement.

For assessing the price behavior of remaining price quotations, NSO follows well established and internationally accepted methodology and practices."

Price data is usually collected from selected 1,114 urban markets and selected 1,181 villages by the Field Operations Division of NSO in a uniform weekly roster.

Oil prices edge higher after output cut pact

Demand worries still weigh

REUTERS
LONDON

Oil prices edged higher on Monday in a muted response to a global deal on record output cuts amid concerns over whether the pact will head off an oil glut as the COVID-19 pandemic hammers demand.

The OPEC+ group of oil producers, comprising the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, Russia and other countries, agreed over the weekend to cut output by 9.7 million barrels per day (bpd) in May and June, representing about 10% of global supply.

Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said nations in the G20 group had pledged to cut



about 3.7 million bpd and that strategic reserves purchases would reach roughly 200 million barrels over the next couple of months, bringing the total reduction to about 19.5 million bpd.

Brent crude futures were up 53 cents, or 1.7%, at \$32.01 a barrel at about 8 p.m. IST, having opened at a session high of \$33.99.

Gold futures surge on local demand

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Gold prices on Monday rose ₹771 to ₹46,065 per 10 gm in futures trade as speculators indulged in creating fresh positions on firm spot demand. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, gold contracts for June traded higher by ₹771, or 1.7%, to ₹46,065 per 10 gm on a business turnover of 17,577 lots.

The yellow metal for August delivery edged up by ₹737, or 1.62%, to ₹46,223 on a business turnover of 1,986 lots. Fresh positions built up by participants on spot demand mainly led to rise in gold prices, analysts said. Globally, gold prices fell 0.61% to \$1,742.10 an ounce in New York.

Indices in red as virus spooks markets

FPIs net sell ₹1,244 crore worth shares

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

A negative trend in Asian markets coupled with concerns related to lockdown being extended in India pulled the benchmark indices down on Monday.

The 30-share Sensex lost 469.60 points, or 1.51%, to close at 30,690.02. The Nifty ended the day at 8,993.85, down 118.05 points, or 1.30%.

Incidentally, the India VIX index, after cooling off in the last few sessions, again surged, this time by more than 3% on Monday.

Elsewhere in Asia, Nikkei lost over 2% while Kospi was down by 1.88%. The benchmarks of China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore also ended in the red after coun-

tries such as U.S., the U.K., Russia and Spain, among others, reported a significant rise in new COVID-19 cases.

"Indian equity markets plunged today, tracking weak global markets, rising number of cases in India and the fears of lockdown getting extended in the country till the end of the month," said Siddhartha Khemka, head, retail research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

"The market will continue to remain volatile with swings on either side," he added.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) were net sellers at ₹1,244 crore on Monday while their domestic counterparts also sold shares worth almost ₹1,100 crore.

COVID-19 travel curbs hit forex players

They now rely on transactions for those living abroad, or with kin overseas

LALATENDU MISHRA
MUMBAI

The sealing of international borders, the resultant travel restrictions imposed by most countries and the fear of catching the COVID-19 infection have severely impacted the foreign exchange industry, which is deeply integrated and works like an ancillary to foreign travel.

Sudarshan Motwani, founder & CEO, BookMyForex.com said, "The April to July summer holiday season is when a large number of people travel abroad, especially to Europe and U.S., to avoid the hot weather in India. This season could witness a near-complete washout."

"It is hard to see business as usual or imagine people going out and enjoying themselves on a beach or in restaurants abroad," he said.

FRAI urges PM to allow petty shops to open

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Federation of Retailers' Association of India (FRAI), a representative body of about four crore micro, small and medium retailers selling soft drinks, mineral water, biscuits, cigarettes, pan and bidis across India, has appealed to the Prime Minister to allow their members to open their shops on Monday.

Ram Asre Mishra, president, FRAI, said "We appeal to the Prime Minister to empathise with the hardships faced by our poor and helpless individual members and allow them to open their shops immediately."

"We also appeal to the PM to immediately announce an economic package to compensate for the losses of petty retailers in daily income," he said.

The Reserve Bank will continue to remain vigilant and will not hesitate to use any instrument – conventional and unconventional – to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, revive growth and preserve financial stability," Mr. Das said.

Commenting that there was a rising probability of a global recession, which may be deeper than the one experienced during the global fi-

A March of doom for the auto industry

Production, sales at near-standstill; SIAM says in talks with Centre to help rev up sector

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Total wholesale dispatches of vehicles slumped 45% to just over 10.5 lakh units in March 2020 as manufacturers halted production and sale in the last week amid the lockdown due to the outbreak of COVID-19.

The automobile industry had dispatched over 19.08 lakh units to dealers in March 2019, as per data released by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM). Production of vehicles across segments also fell by 33.6% to about 14.47 lakh units, compared with over 21.8 lakh units in March 2019.

"The month of March 2020 was one of the most challenging months for the auto sector as the 21-day

lockdown [brought] the production and sales of vehicles to a standstill in the

'Beast' ready to strike again

Adhiban happy with his all-win record at simultaneous display

CHESS

P.K. AJITH KUMAR
KOZHIKODE
Viswanathan Anand once called him the 'beast'.

B. Adhiban played like one at the simultaneous chess display on Saturday night to generate funds for India's fight against the coronavirus.

He won all his 18 games in the event conceived by Anand and organised by chess.com. The only player to finish with a cent per cent record, Adhiban completed his games sooner than the others (Anand, Koneru Humpy, Vidit Gujrathi, P. Harikrishna and D. Harika).

It may have only been an exhibition event, and his rivals may not have been Grandmasters, but his performance has made him happy.

Not in good form

Adhiban hasn't been having a great time since becoming only the fifth Indian to cross the magical 2700-mark in FIDE rating in 2019.

Last April, he had reached a career-high world-ranking of 38, with 2701 Elo points. A year on, his rating is down to 2659.

He is still India No. 4 and is ranked 82nd in the world. "It



Quiet determination: B. Adhiban, struggling for form of late, is confident of regaining his Elo points.

■ FILE PHOTO: BISWARANJAN ROUT

felt nice to do so well in the online simultaneous event. I thoroughly enjoyed it," Adhiban told *The Hindu*.

"When Anand told me about this, I agreed to be a part of it straightaway. I thought it was great that India's strongest players were coming together for a noble cause."

The 27-year-old from Chennai lived up to his reputation as an attacking and entertaining player, as he gambled in his openings, with King's, Morra and Danish gambits.

"It was Vidit who suggested that I try those openings," revealed Adhiban. "I am happy that I listened to him. I

have great respect for him and admire his consistency."

Adhiban said that [consistency] was something he wanted in his game. He added he could not retain his 2700 rating because of some poor tournaments during the last one year. "Two of those were in China; you see, the coronavirus caught hold of me before anybody else!" he joked.

The 'beast' was confident of regaining his Elo points. "I know where I went wrong. I was concentrating too much on the rating," he said. "I was also making avoidable mistakes against lower-rated opponents."

BCCI defers IPL decision

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has decided to wait for the Central Government to spell out the extension of lockdown before announcing the fate of Indian Premier League (IPL).

The IPL's 13th edition has been suspended till April 15. On Monday, the BCCI top brass was scheduled to discuss an indefinite postponement of the T20 league.

However, with the Prime Minister set to address the nation on Tuesday and expected to formalise the lockdown extension, the BCCI office-bearers decided to wait for the details before proceeding. As a result, IPL's fate should be sealed by Wednesday.

PTI reports from New Delhi

The BCCI treasurer Arun Dhumal said it would be "too premature" to comment on whether the IPL can be slotted in place of the ICC World T20 in October-November.

"Right now, the picture is very hazy. We don't even know when the lockdown will end. How can we have a meaningful discussion," he said.

We need to motivate the boxers: Kuttappa

Self-styled detective monitors their training closely

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

Apart from being a trainer and a motivator, men's head coach C.A. Kuttappa has become a self-styled detective to track the training of elite boxers during the lockdown.

This follows the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) facilitating a system through which coaches have been training boxers through video conferencing and other means.

Even as he is enjoying a long break with his family at Mysuru, Kuttappa is closely monitoring the boxers' progress.

"Five (male) boxers have qualified for the Olympics and we have 10 others who have the potential to qualify. Three coaches have been assigned to monitor a group of



That's how you do it: A file photo of C.A. Kuttappa during a training session with one of his wards. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

five boxers. The boxers are given training programmes, videos and guidance to carry on with their training at home.

High performance director Santiago (Nieve) and I oversee everything," Kuttappa told *The Hindu*.

"Since there is so much of

uncertainty, we need to motivate the boxers as well. I also call up their parents and family members to cross-check whether they are training sincerely and not bluffing.

"The target is to keep them at their peak fitness level so that when the camp resumes they rejoin with 50 to 60 per cent of their game and not start from zero."

Kuttappa, however, said the Olympic qualified boxers were not short of motivation. "The confidence of guys like Amit Panghal, Manish Kaushik and Vikas Krishan is high and they are eager to perform. One has to make them understand that it's a long wait for everybody and there is a need to sustain the motivation.

"Since some of the Olympic qualifying events have finished, we send our boxers their own videos and that of their prospective opponents. This helps them watch, compare and analyse how to tackle their rivals. We have to prepare for the Olympics from now," said Kuttappa.

Indian students' mixed bag abroad

While some have made it back in time, the others have been left stranded

TENNIS

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

A tennis scholarship to the United States is almost always a ticket to an exciting career. In the global crisis triggered by COVID-19, a few Indian players were lucky to beat the lockdown and return home. However, some like former National junior champion Sacchitt Sharma had to remain in the US.

"I badly injured my ankle two months ago and had to stay back. The situation is getting worse here, but it is better near my University," said Sacchitt, who studies in the University of San Diego, California.

"I step out of my apartment to get groceries every week so that I am able to cook.

"My ankle is better now and I have started running. If



No shortcuts: Siddhant Banthia, who made it back home before the lockdown, keeps his hand-eye coordination sharp with wall practice. ■ KAMESH SRINIVASAN

you are playing for a top University, the competition is very tough," said Sacchitt.

Y. Sahaja, the Southland Conference Player-of-the-Year in 2019 and a third-year student at the Sam Houston State University, returned home on March 19.

"We anticipated the situation in the US and made a quick plan for her travel. She reached safely and is working on her fitness routine at home," said Bhawani Kumar, Sahaja's father.

Siddhant Banthia, who has progressed remarkably after showing the initial spark by winning the singles and doubles titles in the UK under-14 championship in

Wimbledon, is also back home.

"I am spending time with family and building new hobbies like reading and painting. We have online classes from 7.30-10.30 p.m.. I try and work out for an hour daily, and follow the programme given to us by the fitness coach at the Wake Forest University," said Siddhant, who does wall practice to keep his hand-eye coordination sharp.

For Akansha Bhan, mother of Vasudha Bhan, it is a mixed bag. While Akansha, who studies in Columbia University, came back on March 14, her elder sister Divya continues with her education in Wales. "Akanksha was supposed to come in May after her semester. But due to the crisis, her college was closed and classes are going online," said Vasudha.

Top players for Magnus Carlsen Invitational

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

The top five in the world, headed by Magnus Carlsen, are part of an elite eight-man field in the \$250,000 Magnus Carlsen Invitational online chess, that begins on April 18.

Carlsen, Fabiano Caruana, Ding Liren, Ian Nepomniachtchi, Maxime Vachier-Lagrange, Anish Giri, Hikaru Nakamura and 16-year-old sensation Alireza Firouzja will battle it out for the \$70,000 winner's share.

BFI to host Asian meet

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Amid uncertainty over resumption of sporting activities, the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) on Monday said the country would host the 2020 Asian boxing championships for men and women towards the end of the year.

BFI president Ajay Singh made the announcement during E-Pathshala, the online review meeting of boxers and support staff over a video conference.

"Our focus is to bring in more and more tournaments to India and being able to host this prestigious championship will be a huge honour. Our boxers can look to excel here," a BFI release quoted Ajay as saying.

The final decision on dates and venue will be taken after discussion with the government and other important stakeholders once the lockdown is over.

Dice binds Team India, says Smriti Mandhana

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI



Smriti Mandhana.

■ FILE PHOTO: R. RAGU

ly. I keep helping mom with cooking. I guess washing utensils has become part of my daily routine and I love troubling my brother as well. It's my favourite pastime," she said.

"The third thing I love is watching movies. I am a big movie buff. So, I make sure I watch two-three movies a week, not many because I don't want to get addicted. I want to spend time with my family."

AFI targets Sept. action

UTHRA GANESAN
NEW DELHI

The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) is targeting a return to action by September this year, hopeful that the situation would improve enough by then to conduct domestic competitions.

"We will try to resume our domestic competitions from September-October 2020 and for next year from March-April 2021. With the postponement of the Olympics, we hope many young athletes stand a chance to qualify while seniors need to focus on fitness.

"At this stage we cannot say anything about foreign competitions-cum-exposure camps in 2020. Athletes would also be allowed to train outside (SAI Centres) after consultations once the situation improves," AFI president Adile Sumarwala said after an online interaction with athletes, coaches and support staff on Monday.

East Bengal, Mohun Bagan to join hands

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA
KOLKATA

Traditional rivals Mohun Bagan and East Bengal have sought to quarantine their almost century-old rivalry to jointly "overcome" the COVID-19 pandemic.

The clubs were made a part of the #BeActive campaign launched on the UN International Day of Sport for Development and Peace to encourage people to be #HealthyAtHome.

FIFA chose the Kolkata giants as the representatives from India. The two join the likes of Barcelona, Real Madrid, Liverpool and Manchester United, who are also asking their fans to set aside their rivalries and come together.



Angad Ji Rocks.

inspiration from. Pair hilana mushkil hi nahi, namumkin hai. #Angad Ji Rocks. IANS

IN BRIEF



Portugal football team's boost to amateur clubs

LISBON

Cristiano Ronaldo and his Portugal teammates have donated half of their bonus for qualifying for the Euro 2020 finals to help amateur football in the country that has been hit by the coronavirus shutdown. The Portuguese football federation said on Monday the money would go towards a fund that it hopes will reach €4.7 million to help amateur clubs survive the crisis. AFP



Sport a moustache or not? Akram asks fans

LAHORE

Pakistan great Wasim Akram, rarely seen with a

CMK

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