



Congress panel led by
Manmohan Singh seeks
₹7,500 for the poor
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17 killed as gunman
in Canada goes on
the rampage
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U.S. crude futures
plunge more than
40% to 1986 low
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No communal angle to
Palghar incident, says
Uddhav Thackeray
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NEARBY



Two deaths, 78 new
COVID-19 cases in Delhi

NEW DELHI
Two deaths and 78 new COVID-19 cases were reported in Delhi on Monday, taking the toll of dead to 47 and the total cases to 2,081. Five more areas have been declared containment zones, taking the total to 84.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Arrests in Jamia, Delhi
riots impartial: police

NEW DELHI
The Delhi police on Monday said the arrests made in connection with Jamia violence and north-east Delhi riots were impartial and based on evidence. "...Delhi Police has done its job sincerely and impartially. All the arrests made have been based on scientific and forensic evidence," stated a tweet by Delhi Police.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Probe ordered into travel
pass issued to BJP MLA

PATNA
The Bihar government on Monday ordered a probe into how a pass was issued to a BJP MLA to bring his ward back from Kota in Rajasthan to Nawada during lockdown. The local administration of Nawada had issued a travel pass from April 16 to 25 to His MLA Anil Kumar Singh.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

Speed of virus infections slows, doubling time rises in 18 States

Kerala leads with 72 days; five States with lower rates have 60% of all cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Eighteen States and Union Territories have "shown improvement" in containing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, with Odisha and Kerala leading the pile, the Union Health Ministry said on Monday.

These were States with a 'doubling time' (an indicator of how quickly cases increase) of more than 8.5 days which is higher than the national average of 7.5 days. This was due to effective measures taken to contain the spread of the virus. Joint Secretary in the Ministry Lav Agarwal said at the daily briefing. Kerala leads the list with a doubling rate of 72 days, followed at a consider-

COVID-19

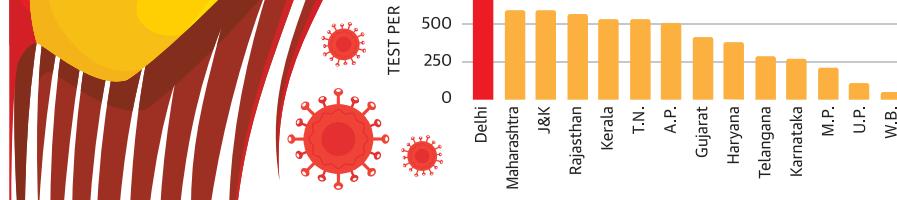
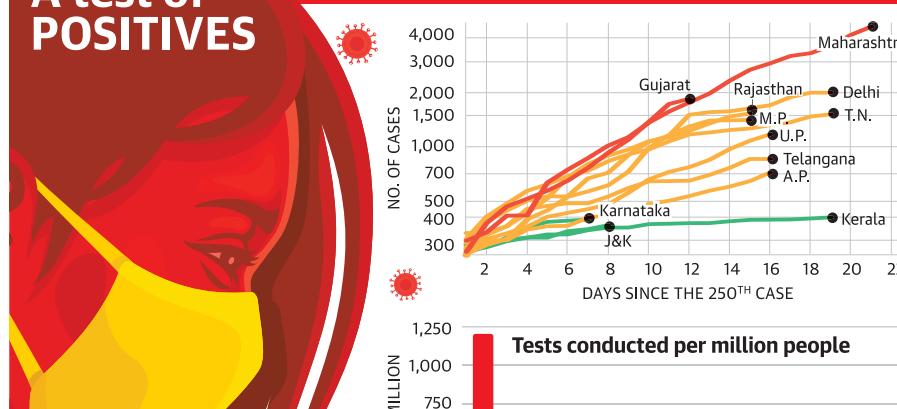
able distance by Odisha at 39.8 days.

The Ministry confirmed 17,655 cases, with 14,255 active infections and 559 deaths on Monday. Reports from States show a jump of 1,214 new cases and 33 deaths in the past 24 hours. The nationwide death toll was 592, with 14,913 active cases out of 18,509 confirmed COVID-19 infections.

Maharashtra recorded



Maharashtra and Gujarat have seen an exponential rise in COVID-19 cases while Kerala, J&K and Karnataka have managed to slow down the spread. Delhi has conducted the most tests per million among States/U.T.s. The chart shows the day-wise progression of cases since the 250th case in each State



466 new positive cases, including 155 in Mumbai, taking the number of the infected people to 4,666, health officials said. With nine more patients succumbing to COVID-19, the death toll in the State rose to 232.

Fewer cases
However, the Ministry's figures on doubling eclipse the fact that these States ac-

count for only about 7,000 of India's overall COVID-19 count. On the other hand, just five States with a lower and hence faster doubling rate than the national average account for about 10,000 or about 60% of the case-load.

As of Monday, Maharashtra had the highest number of cases at 4,666 and it reported a doubling of cases in

six days. Gujarat's 1,800 cases had doubled in 4.5 days and Madhya Pradesh with 1,407 cases had doubled in 5.5 days. These numbers are dynamic and liable to change everyday. The epidemic has affected 32 out of 36 States and U.T.s.

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

Police detain 59 for violence over quarantine round-up

Health officials in Bengaluru had gone to quarantine contacts of a patient



Line of duty: Health workers entering Padarayanapura, a containment zone in Bengaluru, on Monday to quarantine some people who are the secondary contacts of a COVID-19 patient. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The J.J. Nagar police have registered five FIRs and arrested 59 people for allegedly instigating residents and attacking the police when they arrived on Sunday night along with BBMP officials to take secondary contacts of a deceased COVID-19 patient into quarantine. BBMP commissioner B. H. Anil Kumar said the violence had erupted almost an hour after civic officials had left the ward, adding that none of the BBMP personnel had been injured.

As many as 500 police personnel have been deployed in the ward, which had been sealed and barricaded on April 10 along with a neighbouring ward after a spurt in the number of positive cases.

On Sunday night, a BBMP team went to the neighbour-

hood to take secondary contacts of the deceased patient into institutional quarantine. However, a group of residents in the area started protesting claiming that they had not been informed of the move, and demanded to speak to their MLA. "They stopped the BBMP team claiming that they were not getting enough food and essentials as the area had been sealed," said a senior police officer. The situation became increasingly tense as residents started protesting.

The police said that a group of people used the confusion to damage police checkposts and the barricades used to seal the area. They stopped officials, allegedly assaulted them, pelted stones and ransacked the area.

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Timings

DELHI		
TUESDAY, APR. 21	RISE 05:05	SET 18:51
RISE 05:05	SET 17:24	
WEDNESDAY, APR. 22		
RISE 05:49	SET 18:51	
RISE 05:35	SET 18:15	
THURSDAY, APR. 23		
RISE 05:48	SET 18:52	
RISE 06:05	SET 19:08	

Delhi Weather		
max	min	
Delhi City	33	20
Safdarjung	33	20
Palam	33	21

Delhi Palam Today
34°C The dry and very warm weather with partly cloudy sky to prevail during the day. Night will be pleasant.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
35°C The dry and very warm weather with partly cloudy sky to prevail during the day. Night will be pleasant.

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THE HINDU
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Air quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi	119	Gurugram	103
Ghaziabad	144	Faridabad	102
Noida	88	Greater Noida	124
Good 0-50	Satisfactory 51-100	Moderate 101-200	
Poor 201-300	Very poor 301-400	Severe >401	
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) [SOURCE: CPCB]			

IN BRIEF

Varsity to develop model to study COVID-19 spread
NEW DELHI
Ashoka University on Monday announced a research collaboration to develop an "agent-based" simulation model for the spread of COVID-19 in India, 'BharatSim', in collaboration with ThoughtWorks, a software consultancy.

Sanitation workers' woes: no gear, no transport
NEW DELHI
Lakhs of sanitation workers across the country neither have protective gear nor any means to report for work as public transportation remains suspended during the ongoing lockdown, BJP MP Hans Raj Hans pointed out to Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Thawar Chand Gehlot.

Yamuna water quality improves during lockdown: govt. report

The river, however, has still not met the 'water quality criteria', reveals study

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The quality of water in the Yamuna has improved along the Delhi stretch during the nationwide lockdown, compared to April last year, according to a report by the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC).

An increased flow of water in the river has also contributed to less pollution, the report said. But the report noted that the Yamuna has still not met the "water quality criteria".

Reduced pollution

According to the report, the pollution has reduced by 21% at ITO Bridge, 20% at Nizamuddin Bridge, and 18% at Okhla Barrage.

Also, pollution has reduced in five out of the six major drains, which flow into the Yamuna, that the DPCC measured.

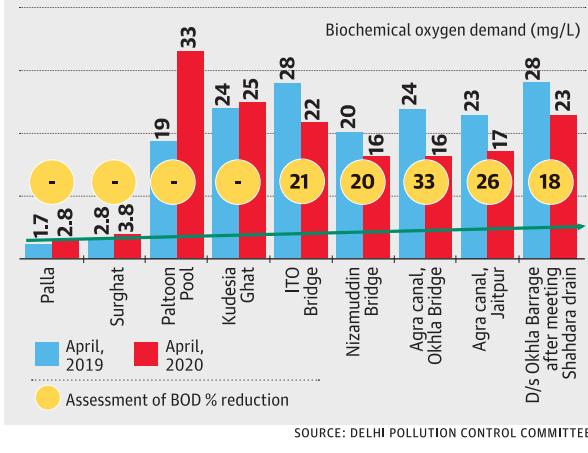
A National Green Tribunal (NGT)-appointed monitoring committee had earlier this month asked the DPCC and the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to measure the quality of water in the Yamuna.

Water from Haryana

Last week, a report by the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) had also shown the quality of water has improved during the lockdown and DJB officials had said that it was also due to increased discharge of wa-



Comparative study of pollution level in Yamuna, Delhi



ter from Haryana.

On April 6, the DPCC had collected water samples from nine locations along the Yamuna and 20 locations of drains and compared the different parameters with values from April 2019.

Of the nine locations of the river, an increase in pol-

lution was observed only in Khajuri Paltoon Pool, according to the report.

"In April 2019, the average flow was 1,000 cusecs compared to the average flow of 3,900 cusecs in April 2020. Therefore, the dilution is also contributing to the improvement of water quality,"

Hold meeting on steps to curb domestic violence: HC

Centre, State told to implement fresh steps for protection of victims immediately

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has directed the Centre and the city government to hold top-level meeting to deliberate on measures to curb domestic violence and protect the victims during the ongoing lockdown.

A Bench of Justice J.R. Midha and Justice Jyoti Singh directed that a decision be taken in three days and "the fresh steps required for pro-

tection of the victims of domestic abuse/violence be implemented immediately".

COVID-19

The High Court order came on a plea by an NGO – All India Council of Human Rights, Liberties and Social Justice (AICHLIS) – seeking effective measures to be put in place as the cases of domestic violence are on a rise on account of women being con-

fined to their homes.

The Bench which heard the case through videoconferencing on April 18, also issued notice to the Centre, the Delhi government and the National and Delhi women commissions seeking their stand on the petition by April 24.

The NGO, represented by advocates Arjun Sayal and Mithu Jain, sought strict enforcement of the provisions of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act,

2005. During the hearing, the Delhi government and Delhi Commission for Women said that there are sufficient measures in place to safeguard victims of domestic violence and child abuse amidst the lockdown.

ASG Maninder Acharya submitted that the Ministry of Women and Child Development has also noticed that a quick response mechanism is required for special circumstances that are prevailing.

Exempt municipal staff from surveillance'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

North Delhi Mayor Avtar Singh on Monday wrote to the Lieutenant-Governor, requesting the exemption of municipal staff from "addi-

tional duties", such as the 'Corona Foot Warriors' team recently formed by the Delhi government.

With a shortage of staff, especially as a consequence of exempting people above

the age of 55 from work and with several staff commuting from neighbouring States, the Mayor said that if additional duties were assigned to available staff, it would hamper other work.

DCW notice to police, AIIMS

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) on Monday issued notice to Delhi Police and AIIMS over reports of a doctor's alleged attempt of taking her own life due to "sexual harassment and caste discrimination".

Taking suo motu cognisance of the issue, the DCW in its letter to AIIMS, said, "She [doctor] has stated to have raised the matter before the administration on several occasions in the past as well. This is a very serious matter. It is critical that exemplary action is taken against the perpetrators of caste and gender-based violence."

The women's panel asked authorities to provide details pertaining to whether the matter was dealt with by the Internal Complaints Committee and also sought details on the steps taken to assist the complainant in seeking legal remedies.

It also asked the Delhi Police to provide a status report on the investigation.

The authorities have been asked to furnish a report by April 25.

CENTRAL ORGANISATION FOR RAILWAY ELECTRIFICATION

1, Nawab Yusuf Road, Civil Lines, Prayagraj-211001

E-TENDER NOTICE

On behalf of the President of India, Principal Chief Materials Manager, Central Organization Railway Electrification, Nawab Yusuf Road, Civil Lines Prayagraj-211001 invites following E-TENDER:-

E-Tender No. CORE/S/2105/5597

Dated : 20.03.2020

On behalf of the President of India, Principal Chief Materials Manager, Central Organization Railway Electrification, Nawab Yusuf Road, Civil Lines Prayagraj-211001 invites following E-TENDER:-

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Dated : 20.03.2020

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IN BRIEF

SDMC carries out sanitisation drives

NEW DELHI

Intensive mass sanitisation drives were carried out at containment zones under the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) on Monday to curb the spread of COVID-19, the civic body said. Special focus was put on sanitisation of shelter homes, food distribution centers, quarantine centers and community toilets, it added. Over 600 sanitation workers, 24 sprinkling tankers, eight fire tenders and 16 jetting machines were deployed for the purpose.

Delhi Police receives 969 calls on helpline in 24 hrs

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police received over 900 calls on its 24x7 helpline number from 2 p.m. on Sunday and the same time on Monday, seeking assistance on issues faced during the lockdown, officials said. A total of 25,680 calls were received by the police on its helpline (011-23469526) till Monday, they said. Police received 969 calls from Sunday 2 p.m. to Monday 2 p.m. Out of the 969 calls, 53 were related to areas outside Delhi.

10-month-old baby who tested positive now stable

Nine Kalawati hospital staff infected

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The condition of a 10-month-old infant, who was admitted at Kalawati Saran Children Hospital (KSCH) and tested positive for COVID-19, is now stable, said officials at the hospital on Monday.

On Saturday, a 45-day-old infant died from COVID-19. The infant was the youngest victim to the virus in the city so far, said officials.

At the hospital, a total of nine healthcare officials, including a doctor, tested positive for the virus.

On Monday, officials said the ICU, where both the infants were admitted, has been sanitised. However, the ICU was still functioning from a different location at the hospital, they added.

"Both the infants were admitted with SARI [Severe Acute Respiratory Infection] and could have been COVID-19 positive at the time of admission itself. The IDSP [Integrated Disease Surveillance]

Programme] is inquiring into the matter," the official told *The Hindu*.

Some services shut

"This is for the information of all concerned that all lab services in KSCH, including 24X7 Emergency Laboratory, will not be functional from April 21 at 8 a.m. to April 27 at 8 a.m. due to COVID-19 positivity among technical Staff and quarantining of first contacts, as per guidelines," an order issued by the hospital on Monday read.

Two deaths, 78 new COVID-19 cases; govt. begins rapid testing

Five more areas have been declared containment zones, taking the total to 84

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Two deaths and 78 new COVID-19 cases were reported in Delhi on Monday, taking the toll 47 and number of cases to 2,081.

Of the 2,081 cases, 431 people have recovered and there are 1,603 active cases. "A death audit committee has been constituted for the daily audit of each and every death in which the COVID-19 test is positive," an official statement read.

It added that an advisory has been issued to incorporate the services of AYUSH doctors as well as modalities of AYUSH system for the "prevention and health promotion" during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Meanwhile, five more areas have been declared containment zones, taking the total to 84.

The Delhi government on



Virus spread	
Total number of COVID-19 cases	2,081
Total deaths	47
New cases in the past 24 hours	78
New deaths in the past 24 hours	2

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

Monday also started testing people in containment zones using rapid antibody test kits.

The test uses blood samples of a person and gives results faster compared to RT-PCR (real-time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction) tests, which uses nasal or throat swabs.

The rapid antibody tests, however, will not replace RT-PCR tests as the latter is more accurate. Rapid antibody tests will be used for surveillance and monitor-

risk contacts" have tested negative for the deadly virus, said B.M. Mishra, District Magistrate (south Delhi) on Monday.

"All high risk contacts (16 people) of the pizza delivery boy, including the owner of the eatery where he worked and other workers, have tested negative," the DM added.

No person in the 72 houses within a five-kilometre radius of Malviya Nagar, where he had delivered food, has developed any symptoms, Mr. Mishra said.

Staff accommodation

The Delhi government has also issued an order stating that doctors on COVID-19 duty will be given accommodation in "four or five-star hotels", supporting staff will be put up in "dharamshalas", while nurses and paramedics will be provided "hotel accommodation".

Delivery boy

After a 19-year-old pizza delivery man in south Delhi tested positive for COVID-19, 16 people who were "high

Seven more policemen test positive

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Seven more policemen from two police stations in Central District have tested positive for COVID-19, an officer said on Monday.

A total of 11 personnel posted at the Chandni Mahal and Nabi Karim police stations are confirmed to have been infected till now.

Sanjay Bhatia, DCP (Central), said that after Chandni Mahal and Nabi Karim police stations are confirmed to have been infected till now.

On Saturday, three personnel in Chandni Mahal police station and one in Nabi Karim had tested positive for the virus.

Following the results, the entire staff was quarantined and the police station was sealed. The personnel who tested negative have been ordered to work from Jama Masjid police station.

"Out of the total 80 police staff in Chandni Mahal, eight have tested positive. Three policemen in Nabi Karim have tested positive but reports of many personnel there is still awaited," said Mr. Bhatia.

Kin of infected man seek help, govt. responds

Video about lack of care at govt.-run hospital had gone viral on social media

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Hours after the daughter and wife of a person infected with COVID-19, admitted at Delhi government-run hospital, sought help in a video posted on social media stating that he was suffering from high fever and the hospital was not taking care of him, the government stepped in to provide help.

In a video posted on Monday, the family appealed to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Prime Minister Narendra Modi to help them.

"After admission at Lok Nayak Hospital on April 18,

he was not given food till next afternoon. He is a patient of diabetes and hypertension," the patient's daughter said in the video posted on Twitter. She said that they got a call from her father at 5 a.m. where he complained that he had high fever and could not even stand, and that the hospital was not taking care of him.

"What is shown on the news and the ground reality is very different. We are ready to take him to a private hospital, but they are saying that there are no guidelines for it," the patient's daughter and wife said in the video as

they broke down in tears. After the video went viral, the Delhi government swung into action. "If you can share ward details of the patient, I will ensure that he gets proper care," AAP MLA Dilip Panayad replied to the video.

"He got food and medicines. Treatment has started," said the daughter in a video posted in the evening. "He has been shifted to a separate room. The doctors said that he will be kept under supervision," she added.

A Delhi Health Department official said that an infected patient can choose to be admitted in a government

or private hospital.

"We have different facilities. At every COVID Testing Centre we have two wards: confirmed and suspected. Once a case is confirmed, then he is sent to a COVID Care Centre, COVID Health Centre or to a hospital, in increasing order of severity of the case," the official said. "If we are referring him to a hospital, then the person can pick a government or private hospital. If the person picks a government hospital, then he cannot pick a specific one. We will assign according to availability of beds," the official added.

Protecting the future



A rickshaw-puller helps his son wear a mask near one of the hotspots in Dilshad Garden in New Delhi on Monday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

No relaxation in lockdown restrictions in Ghaziabad

Same rules in Gautam Buddha Nagar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GAZIABAD

Ghaziabad and Gautam Buddha Nagar on Monday reported four and three COVID-19 cases respectively on Monday. The District Magistrates of both areas, which have been marked unsatisfactory in an internal assessment report of the State government on the implementation of the lockdown, said the lockdown would continue as before.

Traffic restricted
Late on Monday evening, District Magistrate Ajay Shankar Pandey issued an order whereby the traffic between Ghaziabad and Delhi was further restricted.

Ghaziabad saw a spurt in cases on Sunday with 12 persons testing positive. The

'Allow policemen to return to city for duty'

Delhi Police writes to State counterparts

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Delhi Police on Monday wrote to its counterparts in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan to allow its personnel living in these States to travel to the Capital for duty.

The letter was written on Monday by Special Commissioner of Police (Operations) Mukesh Chander to the DGPs of the three States. A number of Delhi Police personnel, residing in adjoining districts of Delhi-NCR, commute daily for duty, the letter read. It has been observed that at some places in NCR, they are not allowed to come to Delhi, it added.

Whenever a positive case is found, we try to reach the primary contacts in two hours and the secondary contacts in the next few hours," he said.

He added that relaxation would be provided in rural areas, which are out of containment zones, for those in agriculture, husbandry and fisheries.

these Delhi Police personnel should be permitted to come to the city for duty," it stated.

A place to stay

Last week, Delhi Police identified 57 locations to accommodate its personnel who are deputed in sensitive areas.

A letter had been written in this regard by Special Commissioner (Armed Police) Robin Hibu to all the Deputy Commissioners, Special Commissioners and Joint Commissioners. Police personnel whose houses are in COVID-19 hotspots in Delhi can also stay at the identified locations.

The details of these locations are available with the Deputy Commissioners in all the districts of Delhi.

ENTERPRISE CONNECT

NHPC observes 129th birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar



NHPC India's premier hydropower company organized a special programme on the occasion of 129th birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar at NHPC Corporate Office, Faridabad on 14th April, 2020. The celebrations were held following the norms of social distancing in view of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

On this occasion, the Chief Guest, Shri A.K. Singh, Chairman and Managing Director, NHPC along with Shri N.K. Jain, Director (Personnel) and office-bearers of NHPC Scheduled Caste / Scheduled Tribe Employees Welfare Association and NHPC OBC Employees Welfare Association along with members of both these associations and other officers / employees of NHPC paid floral tributes to the statue of Dr. Ambedkar.

ICSI – RVO Online Educational Course

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought in a paradigm shift in the process of learning and education. Virtual classrooms have become today's reality and to stay ahead of the curve, Institute of Company Secretaries of India - Registered Valuers Organization (ICSI-RVO) is introducing 50 hours Online Educational Course on "Valuation of Securities or Financial Assets" from 18th - 20th April 2020 and 23rd - 26th April 2020.

CS (Dr) Shyam Agarwal, Chairman ICSI RVO, added that this would help members in not just clearing the examination conducted by IIBI, but also in becoming knowledgeable professionals.

SCOPE – Public Sector Day 2020 celebrations.

Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE) for the first time organized Series of Webinars as part of Public Sector Day celebrations. In light of the pressing situation due to COVID-19 pandemic, SCOPE has planned modified programmes, part of which are the series of live webinars on issues relevant to Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs).

Mr. Rakesh Kumar, Chairman, SCOPE and CMD NLC India Ltd while greeting everyone on Public Sector Day encouraged them to take these webinars as a learning opportunity and commended them for participating in large numbers.

DG, SCOPE said that this was the very first time SCOPE has conducted such virtual conferences and symposiums as every Crisis can also be seen as an opportunity. He added that SCOPE will continue to bring the best learning experience to its members by merging technology and capacity building process.

NHPC conducted the e-reverse Auction

NHPC conducted the e-reverse Auction on 16.04.2020 for the 2000 MW Grid Connected Solar PV Project to be set up anywhere in India in presence of Shri A.K. Singh, CMD, NHPC and Shri Y.K. Chaubey, Director (Technical). The E-RA was conducted amongst 7 bidders with aggregate capacity of 3140 MW. Against the total allocated capacity of 2000 MW, lowest e-RA tariff of Rs. 2.55/unit to Rs. 2.56/unit was achieved against the initial quoted tariff of Rs. 2.71/unit to Rs. 2.78/unit. Inspite of complete lockdown in India due to Covid-19, NHPC successfully completed the E-Reverse Auction.

Balco steps in to help fight Covid-19 in Korba



Balco's healthcare providers and security officials are leaving no stone unturned to fight the deadly COVID-19. Several measures are in place to keep the community safe.

A 100-bed isolation ward has been prepared and the best sanitisation practices are being followed. Sprinklers have been installed at the hospital to sanitise patients and medicines are being delivered at doorsteps to minimise movement. A special 24x7 help desk has been set up to disseminate information about the Novel Corona Virus.

Mr. Abhijit Pati, CEO and Director, has reached out to all stakeholders asking about their well-being. Balco has provided support to police officers by distributing masks and sanitizers. In a letter Mr. Pati praised their selflessness and thorough work.

UP Model gains currency elsewhere in the country

As a pat on the back, 'UP Model' of the state government received an all-round appreciation as an effective mechanism to deal with the situation arising out of COVID-19 scare, taking care of prevention, treatment and financial issues of people at large. The Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at a national-level review meeting on Saturday, not only complimented the efforts of Uttar Pradesh government led by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Ji in dealing with the situation but expected other states to follow the same strategy to contain the deadly menace.

In a holistic approach, the UP Model comprised of the identification of Hotspots, a novel initiative in its own right, nursing the needs of the persons in the lockdown and looking after the financial needs of the deprived, poor and helpless who are embroiled in such precarious situation. Uttar Pradesh was the first among all the states of the country to have identified hotspots

even as the lockdown continued in the entire state.

NAFED

National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED), the nodal agency of Government of India to distribute the 1 Kg pulses to the eligible household under Prime Minister Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY) has issued or despatched over 1.07 lakh MT of Pulses to the States for its distribution.

Series of video conference meetings have been taken by Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs with the Senior State Government officials, Warehouse corporations, Millers and other Stakeholders to smoothen the supply of pulses to the State Governments. The release of raw pulses to the millers is also being monitored at top level to maintain the flow of processed pulses for the months of June and July, 2020.

Government of India has constituted a committee to monitor the progress of the program at Joint secretary level on all India basis.

Haryana govt. failed farmers, says Congress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

The Congress on Monday alleged that the ruling BJP-JJP government is Haryana had failed the farmers on account of mismanagement at wheat procurement centres all across the State.

'Strike by traders'

"The farmers of the State are suffering due to the mismanagement and carelessness of the government, while the traders remained on strike in many places like Kaithal, Guhla Cheeka, Uchana, Narwana, Jind, Safidon, Narnaud, Mahendragarh, Ballabgarh," Congress leader Randeep Singh Surjewala said.

The State government meanwhile, which started wheat purchase on April 20, said in a statement that 9,729 wheat farmers reported at the procurement centres on the first day.

Rajasthan government releases 630 inmates to decongest jails

District Legal Services Authority staff filed bail pleas on behalf of prisoners

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

Over 630 inmates of various jails in Rajasthan have been released in compliance with the Supreme Court's recent direction to decongest prisons for preventing the spread of COVID-19. The District Legal Services Authorities filed applications for bail and parole on behalf of prisoners in the courts.

The Prisons Department has also shifted over 2,200 inmates from overcrowded jails and sub-jails to less crowded prisons. Besides, there is no inmate diagnosed with COVID-19 or showing symptoms of virus infection in any of the jails in the State.

State Legal Services Authority member-secretary Ashok Kumar Jain told *The Hindu* here on Monday that the bail and parole had been



People stand in a queue to purchase vegetables at a locality in Jaipur on Monday. ■ PTI

granted to the first-time offenders and those booked in connection with the crimes punishable with the sentence of imprisonment up to seven years.

Petty offences

The Undertrial Review Committees, headed by District & Sessions Judges, have also released the jail inmates booked for petty offences.

Mr. Jain said the committees were holding weekly meetings to identify the accused who could be released during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The State government amended the Rajasthan Prisoners (Release on Parole) Rules, 1958, through a Gazette notification earlier this month by inserting a provision for special parole of four weeks for certain categories of prisoners and "deemed extension" till May 3 for the prisoners already on parole.

A high power committee headed by State Legal Services Authority's executive chairman Justice Sangeet Lodha has issued directions for taking measures, such as creation of isolation wards in the jail, quarantine of new prisoners, including the foreign nationals, for 14 days, and inclusion of nutritious food in the dietary chart of prisoners.

98 new cases

Meanwhile, with 98 new COVID-19 positive cases detected in the State on Monday, the tally has increased to 1,576. Fifty of Monday's cases were found in Jaipur alone. Twenty-five patients have died so far, while 205 have recovered.

Inquiry ordered into travel pass issued to Bihar BJP MLA

He had brought his ward back from Kota during lockdown

AMARNATH TEWARY
PATNA

The Bihar government on Monday ordered a probe into how a pass was issued to a BJP MLA to bring his ward back from Kota in Rajasthan to Nawada during lockdown. The local administration of Nawada had issued a travel pass from April 16 to 25 to Hisua MLA Anil Kumar Singh.

Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejaswi Yadav and poll strategist Prashant Kishor slammed Chief Minister Nitish Kumar over his "double policy" on the issue. State Congress leaders demanded that the government make arrangements to bring back other students who are stuck in Kota.

Sources told *The Hindu* that nearly 6,500 students from Bihar are currently stranded in Kota. The Nitish Kumar-government had ear-

lier said that no one would be brought back due to the lockdown.

Meanwhile, Mr. Singh told journalists that he had gone to Kota after taking due permission and pass from the district administration. "My daughter who is preparing for medical entrance examinations there was not well ... so I fulfilled all formalities to get a vehicle pass from the Nawada district administration and went there and came back in three days ... what's wrong in it?" asked the MLA.

State Additional Chief Sec-

retary (Home) Amir Subhani said that an inquiry has been ordered by the General Administration Department to "look into aspects whether the pass was issued by a competent authority or in accordance with the norms laid down for the purpose". He added said that "action may be taken against officials concerned, if any anomaly was found in issuing the pass".

The State Assembly is said to be probing how the driver took the MLA to Kota without the Assembly secretariat permission.

State Congress in-charge Shaktisingh Ghohil alleged that the vehicle in which Mr. Singh travelled to Kota is registered in the name of an "Under Secretary". The MLA, however, claims he had gone in his own SUV with all the papers "in order".

Business goes on



Farmers carry vegetables to sell at a local market amid lockdown in Patna on Monday. ■ RANJEET KUMAR

Assam government caps funeral attendance at 20

All officers to attend office from today, travel ban continues

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Assam government on Monday capped the number of people attending funeral or burial services to 20 for the rest of the COVID-19 lockdown period and beyond.

Slew of decisions

This was among a slew of decisions, including conditional inter-district and interstate travel, to be applicable from Tuesday.

"All officers will be attending office while only 33% grade 3 and grade 4 staff will join duty on a rotation basis from Tuesday toward gra-

dually normalising the situation," State Chief Secretary Kumar Sanjay Krishna told newsmen.

All educational institutes, commercial passenger services, shopping complexes, cinema halls, gyms, entertainment parks and other centres where people tend to gather would remain closed until further orders, he added.

"There will be no inter-district and inter-State passenger travel by rail or road except for medical services and government-approved movement for emergencies," Mr. Krishna said.

"All religious gatherings and social functions have been prohibited while last rites must be performed by 20 people at most after maintaining social distancing," he added.

Farming allowed

The Chief Secretary said there will be no restrictions on farming and farm-related activities, fishing, dairy and food-processing units. Brick kilns, electronic and mobile phone technicians, masons, plumbers and automobile mechanics have also been allowed to provide their services.

One of the many mysteries that surround COVID-19 is its impact on pregnant women and vertical transfer to the newly born. Recently, a woman in Ghaziabad was found positive after giving birth to a baby boy.

As pregnant women grope in the dark, the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, Aligarh Muslim University, has made periodic evaluation of their respiratory status compulsory. For their safety and for lessening their pent-up anxiety, it has established a new labour room and operation theatre for the purpose.

The Department of Ob-

stetrics and Gynaecology, headed by Professor Tamkin Khan, has released the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and guidelines on the recommendations of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the World Health Organisation Obstetricians and Gynaecologists to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 infection from mother to baby.

"These SOPs and guidelines have been duly adopted at JNMC keeping in mind the infrastructure and resources available supported by evidence-based medicine," said Prof. Tamkin.

She said that AMU Vice-Chancellor Professor Tariq Mansoor has also allowed the use of the Regional Re-

In line with the SOPs, the interns and counsellors at the COVID-19 desk will screen the patients to get the information about travel history, and whether they belong to hot spots areas

PROFESSOR TAMKIN KHAN
Head, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology

source Training Centre (RTC) as a COVID-19 isolation unit and a new fully functional labour room and an OT complex has been established in less than a week.

"In line with the SOPs, the interns and counsellors

at the COVID-19 screening desk will screen the patients to get information about their travel history, and whether they belong to the hotspot areas," said Prof. Tamkin, adding that the testing procedures for pregnant women are same as for others.

She further said that both suspected COVID-19 positive pregnant women and COVID-19 positive women would be made to deliver the babies in the cubicles they are admitted in order to avoid cross infections.

For Caesarean sections, these women will be shifted to separate maternity OTs.

Prof. Tamkin added that there would be periodic evaluations of the respirato-

ry status of pregnant women to search for symptoms of breathing difficulties and regional anaesthesia instead of general anaesthesia will be given to COVID-19 positive and COVID-19 possible pregnant women.

Risk factor

She pointed out that the evidence so far, limited to a small number of cases, seems to suggest that pregnant women are not at a higher risk of developing complications from the virus.

"However, we do not yet know what long-term impact, if any, COVID-19 could have on their babies, if they catch the virus during pregnancy," said Prof. Tamkin.

Mathura folk artistes curse virus in Braj Bhasha, spread awareness through music

Songs, poems on COVID-19 have gone viral on social media, bringing more popularity to the sweet dialect

ANUJ KUMAR
GAZIABAD

Known for capturing bucolic settings and spiritual meanings in sweet Braj Bhasha, folk singers, composers and poets in Mathura have found a new theme to express their creativity: COVID-19.

In one such song, "corona tero nash jayego, toku koi thor milago na", which has gone viral on social media, poet Bharti Sharma curses

the virus that it will not find any place to hide. What makes the song so special is the way Ms. Sharma brings out the problems being faced by the people in the region, which is popular for its food and pilgrim centres.

"Instead of being preachy like government advertisements, I have tried to humanise the problem. We are missing our *jalebi* and *kachori* breakfast and, of course, our *peda* and *pan masala*. So, I have tried to bring this out in the folk song which is like giving an *ulhava* (a curse) to coronavirus for making us miss the little joys of life," says Ms. Sharma who writes on social themes like dowry and gender equality.

"My daughter suggested that I should write something

on the problems of the lockdown. People of Mathura are avid foodies. I can't finish my meal without a sweet. Now, I have to prepare it myself," chuckles Ms. Sharma, who teaches in a private school. Instead of creating fear about the disease, she says, the song tries to ease its pressure by talking about the vicissitudes of life during the lockdown. "I have also tried to convey that the devotees are missing their Krishna and Yamuna ghats," she says.

Lokesh Sharma, who has composed and rendered the song, says he has been flooded with calls from different parts of the country since the song has gone viral. "Somebody forwarded the poem of Bhartiji on my WhatsApp. I found the lines compelling

and as I had no work during the lockdown, I composed it on a traditional track that is sung during weddings. With no singer available, I decided to give it my voice as well. In a couple of days, it went viral and requests for interviews from local channels started coming."

At a time when urban India is trying to fight the COVID-19 fear through online violin and piano classes, Mr. Sharma, who runs an audio studio in Mathura, says it is a kind of social charity. "I have heard some playback singers are singing their popular songs to entertain viewers on television. We have created something fresh for the rural and small-town audience in our language. We might not gain anything monetarily, but it has given us fame outside Mathura," he says.

Mr. Sharma has already composed three more songs in different *rasas* and is looking forward to creating an album on the contagion. Meanwhile, Pramod Kumar, who works in the local court in Mathura and is a graded artist at All India Radio, has come up with a 'Languriya lok geet' to convey the dangers of COVID-19 to the local people. "Languriya songs are usually sung during navratri in Braj region, where the male devotees of Hanuman and Durga are addressed as languriyas. Taking

Dr. Goswami says in Mathura every girl is a gopi and every boy is Krishna – to keep her beloved indoors.

'Not just a dialect'

"The region has given us great poets like Surdas, Ghananand, Raskhan, Amir Khusrau and Kaka Hathras. Most of the Bhakti poetry is in Braj Bhasha and is spoken by around 1.5 crore people. With its well-established grammar and syntax, it is no longer just a dialect and should be considered a language. In the last few decades, Awadhi has received more attention. This unforeseen situation has given poets of Braj Bhasha a chance to revive interest in the sweet language of the common man," she said.



Lokesh Sharma and Bharti Sharma ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Bharti Sharma ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the tune of one of the popular songs, I wrote, composed and sang 'ghar ke bhar phire corona, ghar mein hi rahiyo Languriya'. It was noticed by Ashok Chakradhar. He shared it on his Facebook page and soon it became viral. Inspired, Mr. Kumar has now composed songs taking tunes from the traditional dhola and rasiya genres of Braj folk music. "The idea is to entertain and inform people in rural areas," he says.

Neetu Goswami, a professor of Hindi at RCA College in Mathura, has composed a folk song in *raas* style to address the problems arising out of the disease. In the song, "sun le bhor gwalin pyari, phali karun corona bimari", she urges a gopi –

Andhra Pradesh sees spike with 75 fresh cases

Guntur cases double in 24 hours; 18 fresh cases in North Karnataka

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA/HYDERABAD/
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/
BENGALURU

Andhra Pradesh reported highest number of fresh cases in a day with 75 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours on Monday. Tamil Nadu reported 43 new cases, Karnataka 18, Telangana 14

COVID-19

and Kerala six.

The overall case count in Andhra Pradesh rose to 722 and the death toll touched 20 with Anantapur, Krishna and Kurnool districts each reporting one death. With 25 new cases, Chittoor district reported a doubling of cases in just one day. Guntur district reported 20 cases and Kurnool district reported 16.

Meanwhile, 27 persons, including 15 in Guntur, 10 in

Krishna and two in Visakhapatnam were discharged after recovery. The government has tested 3,775 samples in the past 24 hours, and the total number of samples tested so far has reached 30,733.

The number of cases in Tamil Nadu touched 1,520 with 1406 active cases. The total number of deaths stands at 17. With no declining trend in the number of new cases, the State government announced that the lockdown would continue till May 3 without any further relaxation.

Two deaths in Telangana

Telangana saw two more deaths taking the total number of casualties to 23. The total number of positive cases touched 872 with 12 active cases added from GHMC area and one each from Med-

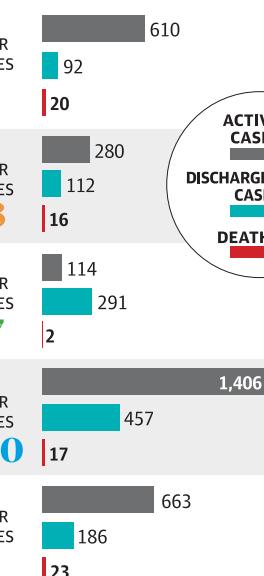


Ready for action: Police deployed around a COVID-19 containment zone in Bengaluru on Monday. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

chal and Nizamabad during the day. The total number of active cases, according to the bulletin issued by the Public Health and Family Welfare department, stood at 663 and the number of people discharged after being treated remained at 186.

With 18 new cases, the number of cases in Karnataka stood at 408. All the new cases were from North Karnataka – 11 from Vijayapura, five from Kalaburagi, and one each from Gadag and Bidar.

In Nanjangud, which has



now become a cluster concern, 2,098 persons have been quarantined. Of these, 1,960 were tested and 69 were positive while 1,891 were negative. The results of 138 samples are still awaited. Of the total 84 cases in Mysuru, 69 have emanated from a

pharma company.

The Minister pointed out that some districts have continued to remain COVID free. While Kodagu, for the last 32 days has not seen even a single positive case, Chitradurga has not seen a positive case for the last 26 days. Similarly, Davangere and Udupi have not seen cases in the last 25 days and 22 days, respectively. As on today, there are 10 COVID-19 free districts in Karnataka.

Kerala reported six new positive cases while 21 patients were discharged after recovery. All six cases were reported from Kannur, five of whom had returned from abroad while one had developed the disease through contact with an imported case. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said despite the exemplary manner in which Kerala's health system has managed the outbreak, the State was very vulnerable to a resurgence of the disease once lockdown ends.



No entry: Pushcarts being used to block a road at Kalasipalyam in Bengaluru on Monday. ■ V. SREENIVASA MURTHY

Karnataka extends lockdown till May 3

Cabinet withdraws partial relaxations

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The Karnataka Cabinet has decided to continue observing a strict lockdown in the State till May 3 without any relaxations in movement of people or the functioning of industries in either rural or urban areas.

Following unruly incidents in Padarayanaapura in Bengaluru, where Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagar Palike workers were allegedly attacked when trying to take people to a quarantine facility, the government has decided to promulgate an ordinance giving special powers to enforcement authorities and providing protection to frontline health workers.

Relaxations withdrawn

The Cabinet on Monday withdrew all partial lockdown relaxations announced by Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Saturday. It shelved some relaxation measures, including allowing a maximum of one-third of the workforce in the IT/BT sectors and government offices to resume work.

With this, all types of industries and services will remain closed till May 3. However, relaxations will continue for agriculture and horticulture-related activities and agricultural marketing.

Briefing reporters on the

Cabinet decisions, Law and Parliamentary Minister J.C. Madhuswamy said, "Today's situation will continue till May 3. We are awaiting fresh guidelines from the Centre, and if any relaxation can be given, the Chief Minister and the task force will discuss in three or four days. But in principle, the lockdown will continue till May 3 and there will not be any relaxation for now," he said.

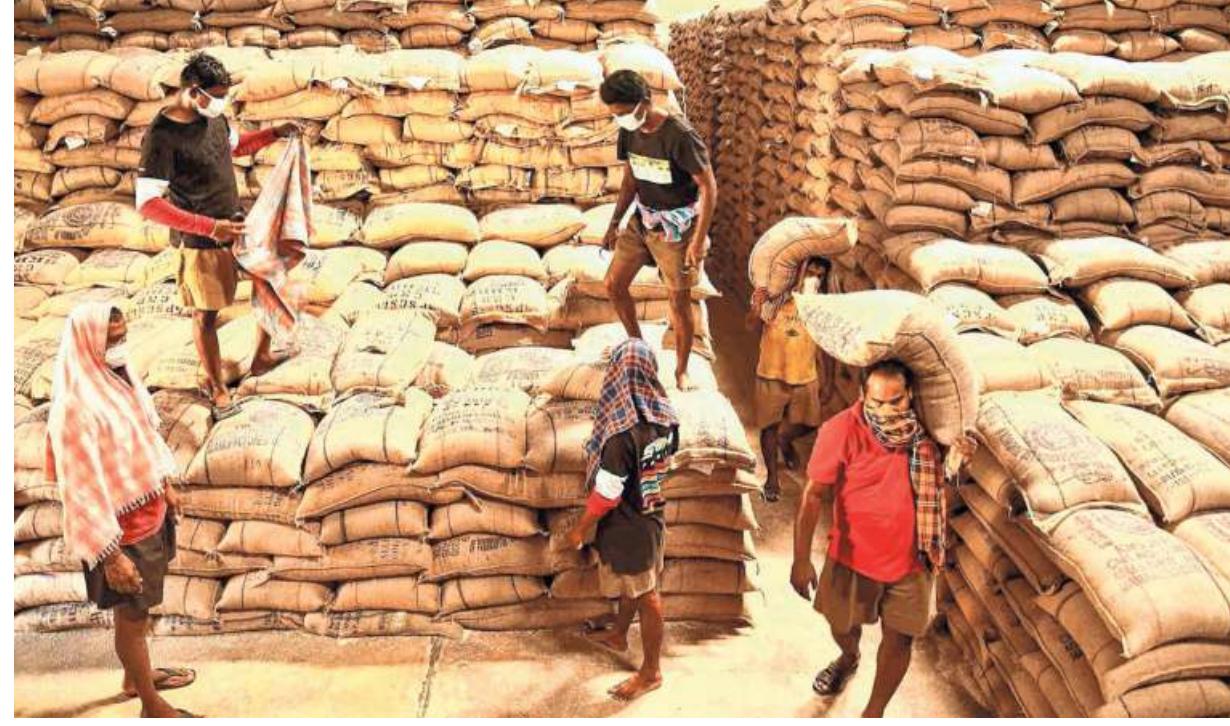
Several States, including Delhi and Telangana, have decided to implement lockdown norms strictly till May 3.

Mr. Madhuswamy said the Karnataka Epidemic Diseases Ordinance would unify and consolidate the laws related to the regulation and prevention of epidemic diseases.

U.P., Kerala model

The Minister said the ordinance would be drafted based on the Uttar Pradesh and Kerala models. The Kerala Ordinance, 2020, empowers the government to prohibit any act it considers sufficient to spread or transmit epidemic diseases from person-to-person in the form of gatherings, celebrations or other such activities. It also allows the inspection of persons arriving in the State by air, rail, road, sea or any other means, or in quarantine or in isolation.

Food chain



Heavy load: Labourers unloading the paddy stock that arrived at a mandal-level supply point at Gollapudi in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh on Monday. ■ K.V.S. GIRI

Kerala residents refused entry into State at border

12 had tested negative after quarantine

AFSHAN YASMEEN
BENGALURU

A group of 12 Kerala residents, who tested negative after 28-day quarantine at two facilities in Bengaluru, were recently denied entry into their home State.

The Karnataka government had arranged a mini-bus to take them to their home towns of Palakkad and Ernakulam on April 14. However, the bus was stopped at the Walayar checkpost on the outskirts of Palakkad on April 14 evening. They have since returned to Haj Bhavan in Bengaluru, one of the quarantine facilities.

Haj Bhavan Nodal Officer Syed Ajiaz Ahmed said that several rounds of communication between officials of the Bengaluru Urban dis-

trict and authorities at Palakkad till late in the night did not help. The bus driver was forced to bring back the group to Bengaluru.

Public announcement

What has irked officials of Karnataka is the manner in which they were sent back till the Karnataka border. The bus was escorted by two patrolling vehicles – one leading the bus and another following it. "The escort vehicles travelled with the mini-bus from Palakkad to Hosur. All along the way, announcement was made through a loudspeaker that a Karnataka quarantine vehicle was passing through the stretch and people should stay away," said Zabiullah Khaleel, driver of the mini-bus.

India must focus on health over defence'

True patriotism is ensuring good health for the people, says Kamal Haasan

STAFF REPORTER
CHENNAI

After holding Prime Minister Narendra Modi responsible for the plight of migrant workers across the country in the face of the COVID-19 lockdown, Makkal Needhi Maiam founder Kamal Haasan on Monday said that a post-COVID-19 India should focus more on the public health and sanitation sectors rather than the defence sector.

In a video released by the party, Mr. Haasan said that he wanted to find workable solutions to water-sharing issues, ethnic hate, difficulties faced by migrants, women's safety, public health issues and the treatment of waste.

'Health for all'

"The defence budget is increasing year-on-year compared to the health budget," said Mr. Haasan.



Kamal Haasan

We have spent 2% of our GDP – ₹4,71,378 crore – on the defence budget while India's health budget is just 1%. United States allocates 8% of its GDP towards public health and 3.1% towards the defence budget. True patriotism is ensuring good health for the people of India," said Mr. Haasan.

Ensuring adequate funding for public health and medical services is essential to rehabilitate the country, he emphasised.

With "economic migrants" returning to their native homes due to the economic issues surrounding COVID-19, the State governments should create jobs within the respective States, he said.

"After the green revolution, we need a green revolution-plus. We need a revolution in agriculture and all industries allied to agriculture. In India, we need to use science and technology to revitalise agricultural lands that have not been used for agriculture and increase production on war footing. We also need to bring youngsters back into agriculture," said Mr. Haasan.

Mr. Haasan pointed out

that 80% of the Indian workforce belonged to the unorganised sector.

'Streamline unorganised'

"We have ignored the strength of unorganised workers who have built the fifth largest economy in the world. We need to streamline them. This will also increase the income tax revenues," he said.

He further said that "vast income inequality should be addressed as 77% of the India's wealth is owned by 10% of the people".

"The inequality must be addressed, not by taking wealth away from the rich, but by implementing economic policies in favour of the poor. Our leaders should address the issues of the poor. Relief measures are only to address the mistakes," said Mr. Haasan.

Protests rock A.P. town after man's death

STAFF REPORTER

GUNTUR

A 35-year-old man died under suspicious circumstances at Sattenapalli in Andhra Pradesh on Monday, but his relatives claimed that he died after the police assaulted him at a checkpost.

The man, identified as Sk. Ghose, went out of his home at Venkatapathy Nagar Colony in Sattenapalli when he was stopped by the police at a checkpost around 8 a.m.

He was going to a medical shop on Narsaraopet Road when he was stopped and asked to go back. His relatives alleged that he was beaten by Ramesh, the Sattenapalli SI, but the police were quick to deny the claim. Later, protests rocked the town.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Tuesday: Thunderstorm accompanied by lightning, hail and squall very likely at isolated places over Jharkhand and Odisha and with lightning and squall at isolated places over Gangetic West Bengal, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura.

CITY **RAIN** **MAX** **MIN** **CITY** **RAIN** **MAX** **MIN**

Agartala 29.4 31.7 20.6 Kozhikode 37.4 27.4

Ahmedabad — 39.6 26.9 Kurnool 40.1 27.3

Aizawl 7.0 29.2 16.4 Lucknow 36.1 22.5

Aligarh — 40.3 25.9 Madurai 38.6 27.2

Bengaluru — 34.6 20.8 Mangalore 0.4 36.2 27.4

Bhopal — 37.4 22.6 Mumbai 0.5 35.2 27.2

Bhubaneswar — 37.5 21.8 Mysuru 34.9 24.0

Chandigarh — 34.0 18.7 New Delhi 33.1 20.0

Chennai — 34.6 28.4 Patna 0.1 34.0 23.2

Coimbatore — 36.4 26.0 Port Blair 33.2 28.1

Dehradun — 31.0 17.1 Puducherry 34.6 26.8

Gangtok 15.2 20.4 13.1 Pune 39.3 21.6

Goa — 34.7 27.7 Raipur 39.8 25.2

Guwahati 14.6 29.4 19.2 Ranchi 36.6 22.5

Hubballi — 37.0 23.0 Shillong 23.8 —

Hyderabad — 37.9 25.6 Shimla 23.0 13.4

Imphal 0.6 26.2 16.3 Srinagar 13.0 6.8

Jaipur — 32.0 22.0 Thiruvananthapuram 33.6 27.1

Kochi — 33.6 26.8 Tiruchi 39.5 27.2

Kohima 6.8 22.4 10.2 Vijayawada — —

Kolkata — 34.5 27.2 Visakhapatnam 33.5 27.6

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing Yesterday

CITIES **SO₂** **NO_x** **CO** **PM_{2.5}** **PM₁₀** **CODE**

Ahmedabad 37 20 16 46 77 ■ In operation made at 6.00

Bengaluru 05 07 52 61 — ■ p.m., Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh recorded overall air quality index (AQI) score of

Chennai 06 02 38 13 174 indicating an unhealthy

Delhi 24 35 08 186 ■ AQI score of 100 in contrast Amaravati, Andhra

Hyderabad 11 44 27 53 70 ■ Pradesh recorded a healthy



Takeover fears

A nuanced approach on Chinese investments using automatic route may have been better

The government's decision to ban foreign direct investments (FDI) through the automatic route from neighbouring countries that share a land border with India has raised eyebrows. This is mainly because the move is seen as aimed at Chinese investors who could exploit cheap valuations in the depressed economic conditions post-lockdown to pick up equity interest in select companies. India is not alone in this fear of "opportunistic takeovers", as Press Note 3(2020 Series) of the Commerce Ministry described it. Italy, Spain, France and Australia have already taken similar action to protect their businesses from foreign (read Chinese) investors fishing for distressed entities in need of cash in the post-COVID-19 scenario. China's investment in India has been on a sharp upcurve in the last five years. According to a Brookings India study, the total current and planned investment by Chinese entities is over \$26 billion. Chinese capital is invested not just in brick-and-mortar industries but in technology and fintech start-ups where Alibaba and Tencent have funded a host of Indian names such as Paytm, Swiggy, Ola, Zomato and BigBasket. It is quite possible that a move to curb or control Chinese investment in Indian companies was always on the cards and that COVID-19 was a good excuse to pull the trigger. There has always been unease over the fact that there is a thin line that divides the state sector from private enterprise in China and several companies there trace linkages back to the security apparatus of that country.

So, while the decision to introduce a layer of government approval is probably valid in the current circumstances, the government could have adopted a more nuanced approach. Greenfield investments should have been kept out of the purview as they do not pose a threat of takeover of existing business; to the contrary, they create new capacities and businesses in the country. A distinction should also have been made based on the class of investors: venture capital funds are financial investors who may not necessarily be interested in taking over and running a business. While the FDI route has been plugged, it is not clear what happens to investments that come through the market route. SEBI has already sent out missives to custodians asking for details of Chinese holdings in listed entities. How will this be regulated? And again, what happens to FDI that comes in through entities registered in countries that do not share a land border with India but which may trace their beneficial ownership to China? And, now that the wall has been raised, approvals should be quick for investment proposals in the technology start-up space, where cash burn is high and existing investors are often tapped for a top-up investment.

Moon rising

South Korean ruling party's win is a chance for President Moon to expedite peace efforts

South Korea's President Moon Jae-in, whose government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic won acclaim, scored a political victory last week as his Democratic Party (DP) swept the parliamentary elections. Despite the health-care crisis, he decided to go ahead with the poll, with stringent precautionary measures in place. While the DP won 163 seats, up 43, the progressive coalition it leads commanded 180 seats in the 300-strong National Assembly. The Opposition United Future coalition got 103 seats. The results marked a substantial turnaround in public sentiments from last year when protests broke out amid a slowing economy and corruption allegations. With more parliamentary seats, the President, who is into the third year of his five-year presidency, can follow his reform agenda and North Korean rapprochement without legislative bottlenecks. But tackling these challenges arguably poses an even greater test of his leadership and political will than his government's effective handling of the disease. The desire for normalcy with the North is evident among other things from growing impatience to end the disruption of business activity across the border. Since the thaw in ties between the neighbours began in 2018, Mr. Moon and Pyongyang's leader Kim Jong-un have also met on the Demilitarised Zone before a global media blitz. But the endeavour for peace is fraught with challenges, not all of which seem entirely amenable to Mr. Moon's control. Foremost, he would have to consider the implications of his initiatives towards Pyongyang for Seoul's military alliance with Washington.

Besides the suspension of their annual military exercises in South Korea, Seoul and Washington have been unable to agree on more substantial measures to ease tensions with the North. Moreover, the formal declaration of an end to the Korean war of the 1950s, where the U.S. was involved, is hostage to the more recent international demand for the Korean Peninsula's denuclearisation. But progress on the North's nuclear stand-off has been stalled ever since the Trump-Kim Hanoi summit, in February 2019, broke down. Their meeting, in Singapore in June 2018, resulted in no more than vague promises to end the long deadlock. Pyongyang insists on crippling economic sanctions ending as a precondition for any meaningful reduction of nuclear testing in the future. Washington has, meanwhile, harped on access to the North's nuclear sites in exchange for a relaxation of sanctions. Mr. Trump, himself facing re-election in November and focused on combating the pandemic, is unlikely to renew attention to the dispute with North Korea. Paradoxically though, the collective desire among nations to confront the unfolding health emergency could open avenues of cooperation, even defying the ordinary operation of realpolitik. Therein lies a ray of hope. Mr. Moon must make the most of the situation.

The occasion to revisit the sovereign's role

There has to be a discourse on redefining the state's involvement in India's political, economic and social life



PARAKALA PRABHAKAR

Let us make no mistake. COVID-19 is forcing a paradigm shift. We are unlikely to return to a pre-coronavirus homeostasis after the war against it is won. No section or sector is going to remain untouched and unaltered by the devastation the novel coronavirus is now unleashing. The virus is going to stay around for a while. Its annihilation in the near future is not on the cards. Vaccines are going to be slow in coming; therefore, its taming is not immediate. A second wave of outbreak is a realistic probability.

Unlike other threats to humanity such as global warming and a nuclear armageddon, this threat is now, not in the future; it is here simultaneously for everyone, not for someone else and somewhere else; its casualties are around us, not in far away battlefields or polar regions and coastal areas. No country can rescue another; it is each one fending for itself.

Defining moment

COVID-19 threatens to push the world into a deep recession. If the lockdown continues, the world economy will contract by as much as 6% according to the International Monetary Fund. If it is not extended, the loss of human lives could be of unacceptable proportions. The global community will be fortunate if it does not spiral into depression. Both demand and supply contractions are likely to be severe. They are not going to be short-lived. Political systems, economic architectures and cultural mores are on trial. Work patterns, production and distribution practices are up for redefinition. Denial

and wishing away unpleasant, yet probable, realities by governments, global organisations and public intellectuals will only compound economic, social, political and human costs. We must now be quick in seizing lessons from the present crisis and get ready to embark on measures to build a new paradigm of life, work and governance.

The enlarged economic role of the state in the aftermath of the Second World War came under major assault since the 1980s. Leaders who asked 'where is society?' rode to power on 'cut the damn government down' ticket. Systems that were putative alternatives to capitalism fell into disgrace. Entrepreneurs heading unicorns and 'unicorns' have become the new demigods. Minimum governance became the mantra. India too willy-nilly signed up to this creed. But COVID-19 is beginning to challenge the political economy of this creed. Very soon the full scores of the performance of state and non-state actors in the COVID-19 stress test will be available across the globe. The Indian state will also have to give answers as far as its report card is concerned.

The retreat of the state

India embarked on the path of trimming the role of the state, initially, with such caveats as 'safety net' and 'reform with a human face'. Gradually, those caveats fell by the wayside. The lurch became sharp, unapologetic and full-throated. The Indian state's role in health care, education, creation and maintenance of infrastructure and delivery of welfare has shrunk or become nominal, half-hearted, inefficient, and dysfunctional. Of course, it is true that it did not give a great account of itself in these sectors even before the 1991 departure. Disappointment with the dismal performance in its economic and administrative functions is the backdrop of a changing global



ideological ecosystem encouraged a sharp de facto downsizing of the Indian state's role. Its retreat from vital functions and abdication of its social responsibility have gained acceptance and legitimacy among the articulate upwardly mobile. While retreat and abdication found influential and forceful evangelists, selective retreat had few advocates.

This departure, however, was not vigorously interrogated. When it was, it was limited to the broad ideological opposition from the left which defended the discredited position of the Indian state occupying the commanding heights of the economy. Supporters of the departure, on the other hand, had little engagement in giving shape to the new policy. Nor did they worry about calibrating the architecture of the emerging role for the state. As a result, 'private sector' became the new holy cow in place of the 'state sector'. What made matters worse is the culture of a simplistic and shallow discourse of public policy that took hold in civil society. It mindlessly privileges the agenda of corporates. It transacts in the idiom of stock exchanges and international rating agencies.

Lost voices

Therefore, those with no social media handles, who cannot organise annual 'thought' conclaves, who are incapable of highlighting their problems with impressive presentations are rendered voiceless. Today, those who bear the brunt of the consequences of

shrunk and unresponsive state are the farmer and farm labour, the migrant worker, the unemployed, those in the unorganised sector, the rural poor, and the small entrepreneur. They are paying the highest price for the necessary but unbearable lockdown. They are either stranded far away from home, or confined to their homes with no work and incomes, unsupported by the state. Underfunded public health systems are unable to serve them. Tips on how to beat lockdown blues, how to work from home, use Zoom, spend quality time with family that fill our pullouts are irrelevant for them. But the dominant strand of public discourse is out of its depth. It has no time for these concerns. Worse, this discourse can be gamed from time to time. And the alternative discourse is too feeble to draw the attention of the government to the grave implications of COVID-19 for the weak in our society.

Time for tough questions

But the state's first responsibility is the marginalised. They are also the crucial part of our economy. They lubricate its wheels and generate demand. Announcing stimulus packages that address the supply side alone without beefing up the demand side will be self-defeating to corporates. Prioritising the needs of corporate entities will lead to convulsions in our body politic in the wake of COVID-19. The state is in danger of forfeiting legitimacy if it does not ensure the survival and revival of the marginalised sections.

This is the appropriate context to revisit the political economy of the Indian state and its role. The country should begin a vigorous discourse on redefining every aspect of its involvement in our collective political, economic and social life.

The relation between the state and economy, its role in allocating resources and addressing

questions of inequality, its duty to provide basic human needs, the extent of the market's role in providing services such as health, education, civic amenities, and the responsibility of the state and private enterprise towards deprived sections, need urgent attention.

We should re-examine the efficacy of our political structures too: the equation between citizens and government and what its implications are for individual freedom, privacy and national security; the equation between legislature and executive; the balance of administrative and financial power between provinces and the union on the one hand and provinces and local bodies on the other. The way we elect our representatives to legislatures must also come under the lens. The issue of atrophied local authorities and enfeebled legislatures needs attention. For, they are at the coalface, delivering the state to the citizen. The way legislatures are elected and governments are made and unmade must be scrutinised. Our outrage at the power of big money in our electoral system has not arrested its growth. The role of serving and retired members of higher judiciary ought to be a part of the debate.

We had an opportunity for intensive debate when the Justice Venkatachaliah Commission submitted its report in 2002 (to review the working of the Constitution). We missed it. The opportunity that COVID-19 provides should not be squandered. The Indian state should be strong so that the weak in our society can lean on it. Our rishis told us: *durbalasya balam Raja*. The strength of the weak is the Sovereign. Not the market.

Parakala Prabhakar is former Communications Adviser to the Government of Andhra Pradesh and is Managing Director of RightFOLIO, a knowledge enterprise based in Hyderabad

The invisible face of the fallout

The traditional gender role that women play distinctly affects them in global crises as seen in numerous examples



BINDU SIVASANKARAN NAIR

The world has suddenly woken up to the reality of a virus ravaging it.

While catastrophes affect people at large, the economical, sociological and psychological impact that each catastrophe has on women is profound. Data indicate the need to address this during and after these catastrophic episodes.

Crises and gender

In the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the coastlines of countries in the region, including India, were affected and more than 2,00,000 people were killed or listed missing; a fourth of them were women. The traditional 'care giver' role that women play has much to do in explaining this. Women stay around looking for their loved ones in order to see them safe. Besides this, women lack many life skills such as swimming and climbing.

During tsunami recovery phases, aid organisations and governments house the homeless in camps where women face many difficulties including abuse by men. Gender-skewed tsunami

deaths resulted in a disproportionate gender ratio where men largely outnumbered women. Women also faced hygiene challenges in these camps due to inadequate sanitation facilities.

In the United States, which has a high incidence of tornadoes, families headed by women are affected the most. Women often are engaged in sector-specific employment which when impacted result in unemployment. Women are also engaged in post-disaster care, missing job opportunities. An economic slowdown also leaves women with additional wage cuts, on a paradigm where pay disparity between genders is a norm.

In Kerala, after the floods in 2018-19, thousands were housed in relief camps. Experts observe that relief measures focus on livelihood and assets, compelling aid agencies to focus on restoring livelihoods. Flood-destroyed kitchens forced women to cook in the open air with whatever they were left with. There was considerable added domestic work by women, which went unnoticed.

Issues faced in the pandemic

Coming to the current COVID-19 pandemic, its impact on both genders is beyond the mere death statistics. According to World Health Organization data, around 70% of the world's health workers are women, 79% of nurses are women. Health workers in general are



highly vulnerable and not ensuring their safety is a high risk that can severely impact the health system. India has a million-plus accredited social health activist (ASHA) workers who are an integral part of its health system. ASHAs, who work at the ground level, are reporting incidents of attacks while on COVID-19 duty. Stringent action against their tormentors is needed to ensure their professional safety.

In many households where both partners work, the work from home (WFH) concept is now common. The entire family is now together within the limited space of their dwellings. As traditional roleplay is still prevalent in most sections of Indian society, the equal division of household responsibilities among couples is still distant. Women from all strata face substantial additional household work. Alongside this is the fear of job loss and reduced income which can create mental pressure on women, in turn affecting their physical well-being.

The lower income groups are already facing job losses and anxiety

is leading to domestic tensions and violence against women. A large number of daily wage workers resort to alcohol consumption. The ban on alcohol sales, as a part of the national lockdown, is contributing to domestic tensions, leading to women abuse.

Hormone-induced depression among women is another key point that needs to be understood and acknowledged. Women are twice as likely to face depression when compared to men. Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) among reproductive age groups, pregnancy-related depressive conditions, postpartum depression (PPD) among new mothers as well as premenopausal and menopausal symptoms are common, interfering in every day life and relationships. The lockdown is adding more intensity to these conditions. These are not discussed as women are trained to follow the 'culture of silence'. Awareness among men about these conditions women experience is low.

Even in these disruptive times, women's safety should become a priority. Be it domestic violence, women's depression and anxiety-related matters, or their safety while at work, all these issues need to be addressed and responded to. According to 2015-16 National Family Health Survey, around 30% of women in the age group 15 to 49 years face domestic violence. A recent report high-

lighted how the National Commission for Women has received 587 complaints relating to crimes against women from March 23 to April 16, out of which 239 were related to domestic violence.

Assigning ASHA workers to specifically address women's welfare during this pandemic, setting up exclusive cells to quickly address domestic violence and women's health-related issues, including men in conversations, and even online counselling for alcoholism in men are not difficult to implement. Steps such as roping in non-governmental organisations, psychology students, teachers and volunteers and also using technology platforms would help speed action. What is important is to develop a culture of including women's safety in the planning phase itself irrespective of whatever the nature of the crisis is.

On helplines

Gender parity needs to be a conscious act and this observation is related to those who answer helplines. When only women attend these calls, we are reinforcing the stereotypical 'care-giver' role of women. Instead, we need to have a well-trained and gender-inclusive team which can handle such calls well.

Bindu Sivasankaran Nair is a diversity and inclusion expert. She is the founder of BEYOND Pink App

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.

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- Not adding up**
At a time when steps are being taken in relaxing the national lockdown curbs, it is amusing to note that the actual numbers of COVID-19 cases in the country, registered on Saturday, and submitted by the Indian Council of Medical Research differed from the ones put out by the Health Ministry (Page 1, "Confusion over mismatch in Health Ministry, ICMR figures", April 20). The funniest part was that there was no correlation in the numbers of positive cases given by States, the ICMR and the Health Ministry. When there is no accuracy even in furnishing the correct numbers of COVID-19 cases by the top agencies, how can people be expected to be confident
- about other data such as symptom cases, cases testing positive, cases under treatment, cases in quarantine, and those discharged?** It is based on such data that the Centre and States can take further steps concerning welfare. D. SETHURAMAN, Chennai
- Notes from the field**
It was disturbing to come across the snippet, "Spraying of disinfectants harmful: Health Ministry" ("COVID-19" pages, April 20), as there are many areas in cities, towns and even villages in India that are using tunnels to spray disinfectants on people. The advisory against spraying, citing its physically and psychologically harmful
- effects, should reach administrative bodies at all levels immediately and people must be made aware of the dangers of such a procedure.** Also, the Central government should have classified areas in States as red, orange I and II and green zones only to assess the situation and not for the purpose of any lockdown relaxation. C.R. ANANTHARAYAN, Bangalore
- It is distressing to read reports about people objecting to the burial or even cremation of persons in their locality who pass away after coronavirus infection.** This is happening across India. The case of a medical doctor in Chennai, who was treating coronavirus patients, who then got infected and passed away, is one such instance. A civilised society would treat him with respect. However, when his body was taken for burial, local people took objection to this and the police had to step in amid an unpleasant situation. Death is inevitable for all, yet ignorant protesters seem to think they are created differently and behave in a disrespectful and hostile manner. In most such cases of protests, it is not one or two persons but scores who join in. Have we become an insensitive society? N.S. VENKATARAMAN, Chennai
- There is a lot of confusion over the easing of restrictions during the national lockdown period.** This state of uncertainty must be removed with the
- roll-out of clear guidelines categorically stating what is allowed and what is not for everyone to understand and follow easily without getting into unnecessary trouble with the law enforcement authorities.** The government must understand and appreciate the laying down of a cohesive and comprehensive list of dos and don'ts in this period. V. PADMANABHAN, Bengaluru
- Stifled**
The citing of a verse from Sangam period Tamil anthology (OpEd page, "From the Readers' Editor", April 20) prompted me to think of a very popular Thirukkural, 'Idippai illatha..'. It states that 'a king who is without the guard of men who can rebuke him, will perish, even though there be no one to destroy him'. The core issues around the action against Dr. Kafeel Khan, the surrender of Anand Teltumbde and Gautam Navlakha or the FIR registered against Siddharth Varadarajan have been lost in the avalanche of COVID-19 coverage. It is disturbing that nowadays, there is no discussion, debate or interview that reflects the voices of dissent and which draws media attention.
- Speaking truth to power is the essence of democracy. Overt directions to present purely positive views of the government's handling of the situation is what prevails in much of the fourth estate. S.V. VENUGOPALAN, Chennai

Nurturing air power to meet rising demand

Indian airlift capability will be increasingly called upon for humanitarian aid and disaster relief



MANMOHAN BAHADUR

In early April, Pakistan Air Traffic Controller sent a laudatory message to Air India for operating special flights to Frankfurt with relief material and evacuated European nationals. This is indicative of the important role of Indian air power, which has been particularly visible in the last two months. Air power is the total aviation capability of a nation, military and civilian put together.

Soon after the novel coronavirus began spreading, Air India evacuated Indian nationals from Wuhan, China. India's flag carrier has since continued its yeoman service by evacuating Indians from other countries as well as foreign nationals from India on the request of their embassies. C-17 Globemasters and IL-76 aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) have been on the job too. While going where national interests require them to, they are also showcasing Indian air power subtly. This was seen recently when India's Consulate staff from Herat in Afghanistan were evacuated by a C-130 Super Hercules aircraft in secrecy. Incidentally, 58 IAF aerial assets (transport aircraft and helicopters) are carrying out internal COVID-19-related tasks like transporting medicines, equipment and medical samples for evaluation from inaccessible areas. While the civilian fleet is an important adjunct, it's the IAF's aerial assets that constitute the potency in national airlift capability. This piece is about the importance of nurturing India's air power assets.

Rescue efforts

Recent history is witness to their untiring work in building brand India. In 1957, and then in 1978, the IAF was sent to Sri Lanka for flood relief efforts, as it was to Bangladesh in 1991 after the cyclone. Following the Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004, 30 transport aircraft and 16 helicopters flew round the clock in India's island territories; two IL-78 aerial refuelling tankers were stripped of their fuselage fuel tanks overnight and the aircraft pressed in-



"While the civilian fleet is an important adjunct, it's the IAF's aerial assets that constitute the potency in national airlift capability." People evacuated from Yemen by the IAF wait in Djibouti before take off to Mumbai in 2015. ■ IAF

to relief. In addition, six Mi 8 helicopters were sent to help Sri Lanka.

In the international academic circuit, however, the Berlin airlift is quoted as the gold standard for an air logistics campaign. True, it was staggering – 2.3 million tonnes of load were transported into West Berlin between June 1948 and September 1949. However, a modern-day airlift of greater proportions has not been heralded as much. Following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Indian nationals were flown out via Amman. Air India, along with IL-76s of the IAF, flew home 1,11,000 Indians (some documents say 1,76,000) in 488 flights from Amman to Mumbai in just two months. Translated to tonnage, that is almost 10 million tonnes! It's true that the circumstances were different, but this brought to fore the airlift capability of India's air power. And only Air India was used. The civil airline fleet has grown manifold, and when required, more, literally all, aircraft can be requisitioned.

The IAF transport fleet was in the forefront to retrieve casualties from Kabul following the 2008 bombing of the Indian embassy. The only delay then was the clearance from Islamabad to overfly Pakistan. The Uttarakhand flash floods in 2013 saw what was perhaps the biggest helicopter evacuation in history, with 23,892 pilgrims evacuated in only a week. At any given time during that calamity, there were 54 helicopters of all types, of which 45 were from the IAF. The trajectory of the COVID-19 infes-

tation in India is still unknown, so the IAF will surely be called into action many more times.

The IL-76 fleet of 10-odd aircraft has been around for almost four decades now. The same is true for the short haul An-32s, which number 100. While these will soldier on for a few more years, it is the fleet of the eleven C-17s that will shoulder the responsibility of national tasks. In some humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) tasks, the C-130J Super Hercules have also been pressed into service. While there is no doubt that emergency situations demand all hands on deck, the temptation of using these aircraft with their superb short-field operations capability, but whose primary role is covert special operations, needs to be really thought through. Utilising their flying hours for sub-optimal tasks would be operationally and financially unviable. The helicopter fleet is well placed with around 250 Mi-17 series helicopters, about 80 ALH Dhruv, and 15 new Chinook heavy-lift machines. The Chetak/Cheetah fleet will be around for a few more years and will be indispensable for narrow valleys and high-altitude operations. With the capability of a C-17 to carry a Chinook in its hold, Indian air power can, quickly, come to the aid of friends in the neighbourhood, and at some distance too. The foresight exhibited by the civilian and military leadership in the past to equip the IAF with these assets, as a result of which India can confidently claim to be a regional HADR provid-

er, is now bearing fruit. The same far-sightedness is required to meet the challenges of the coming decades.

Challenges

The biggest challenge is that all of India's medium- and heavy-lift assets are foreign sourced, except the Dhruv and Chetak/Cheetah helicopters. The IL-76 and An-32, which have been the IAF's workhorses, will be phased out soon and so will the short haul Avros. Finances will have to be found for their replacements. Planning for this must happen now. Despite the fact that the latest parliamentary committee report has adversely commented on the funding for capital acquisitions in FY-2019-20 being just 65% of projections, the government has to take a call. As India takes on a greater regional leadership role and as climate change results in an increase in the frequency and number of natural calamities, the demands on Indian air power for HADR will mount, including from countries in the neighbourhood. The requirements for internal law and order and air maintenance airlift for the Army for forward areas, both of which are substantial, will also continue. Increased utilisation of airlift assets would mean higher maintenance requirements, and since most are foreign sourced, they will have to be sent abroad for major servicing. This will result in reduced aircraft availability for long durations.

If we look at India's forward planning, the scene isn't very rosy. The COVID-19 crisis will demand massive financial resources to be transferred to the social sector for the next few years – and rightly so. The GDP's downward trend may only get steeper as manufacturing, agriculture and employment take a hit. The Ministry of Defence will need all its persuasive powers to generate the required monies from the scarce resources with the Finance Ministry, if Indian air power's HADR capability is to be in the forefront of its military diplomacy. There is no other alternative considering the intense ongoing geopolitical power play in the region. We also need to spare a thought for Air India: where would Indian air power be without it in times of calamities?

Air Vice Marshal Manmohan Bahadur (Retd) is Additional Director General, Centre for Air Power Studies, New Delhi. Views are personal

To Kerala, from Singapore

In its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Kerala could draw some lessons from Singapore

VINOD THOMAS

Over the past three years, Kerala has suffered the Nipah virus outbreak, two floods, and the COVID-19 pandemic. The State has won worldwide acclaim for its deft handling of these catastrophes by mostly deploying domestic resources. But its troubles are not over, and Kerala needs to continue harnessing its capabilities to withstand recurring disasters.

The response of Kerala's political leadership, its healthcare professionals, and the public to the COVID-19 crisis has been breathtaking. The State has an impressive tracking and surveillance system. It has set up testing kiosks; it has institutes that are ready for plasma trials; and it has also enacted a law on epidemic control. The Kerala government has been distributing food through community kitchens and is running the highest number of relief camps for migrant workers in the country.

It is not only these immediate steps that explain why the State has a low death rate and a high recovery rate in India during the pandemic. The credit also goes to decades of past investments in health and education by both the public and private sector. This has produced a robust health system. This is why Kerala was able to implement the 'break the chain' campaign so swiftly and effectively.

In view of the high uncertainty associated with this new virus, Kerala's leadership knows well that it is crucial to stay vigilant, as Singapore's experience illustrates. Singapore did very well in putting a firm lid on new infections, but it has subsequently seen an explosive uptick in cases and even deaths.

Two major challenges

Two eventualities from Singapore's experience are pertinent for Kerala. The first challenge is the plight of returning students and workers as foreign countries become inhospitable for non-nationals. Singapore saw returning travellers bring back the infection, even as it employed a sound and well-tested screening and quarantine system. Kerala handled the returning population well, starting with the first cases from Wuhan. But

the stakes will be high going forward. The International Monetary Fund projects that in West Asia output will decline 3% in 2020; nearly one million Keralites work in the United Arab Emirates alone. Lakhs of people from West Asia are scheduled to return home to Kerala.

The second challenge for Singapore is the explosive spread among foreign workers, most of whom are from South Asia. A society can be only as strong as its weakest link, as illustrated by the thousands of workers in dormitories testing positive for the virus. A good measure of income equality and inclusion are vital for the resilience of a society to calamities. Low income groups and marginalised groups deserve attention, not least in withstanding extreme events.

Drawing parallels

On income and distribution, there is a parallel between Singapore and Kerala. Singapore is a high-income economy. Despite recent progress, it has among the highest income disparities in Asia. Kerala too has a high per capita income compared to other States. But while it scores high on education and health, Kerala also ranks high in income inequality among the States.

To respond to COVID-19, Kerala will need to go full scale in testing, and implement isolation and better hygiene practices. When the pandemic ends, it would be a mistake for activities to return to business as usual. This is a great opportunity for Kerala to redouble its focus on health, education and the environment, which will decide its trajectory of health and climate calamities.

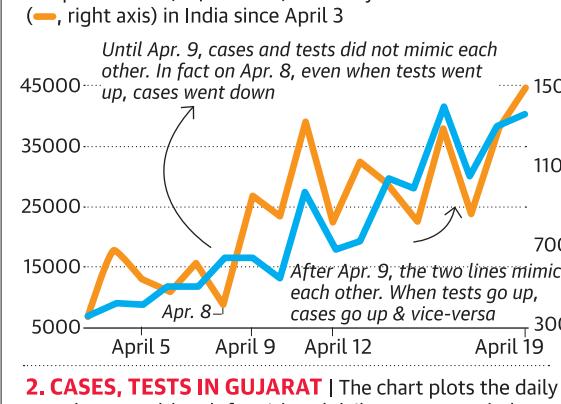
Given its topography, fragile ecology, and high population density, Kerala is highly exposed to health and climate disasters. If the State can revive economic growth in more environmentally and socially sustainable ways, it would not only be more resilient to extreme events but also have a greater chance of using the rich human and natural endowments for the betterment of its people.

Vinod Thomas is a Visiting Professor, National University of Singapore and formerly a Senior Vice President at the World Bank

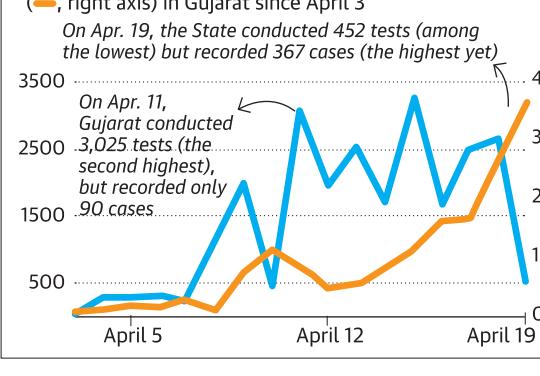
DATA POINT

Tests vs positives

1. CASES, TESTS IN INDIA | The chart plots the daily samples tested (blue, left axis) and daily cases recorded (orange, right axis) in India since April 3

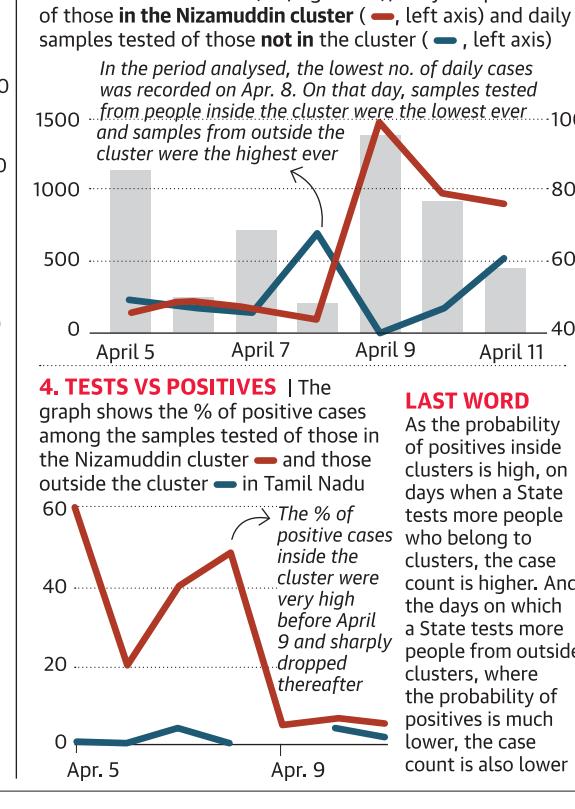


2. CASES, TESTS IN GUJARAT | The chart plots the daily samples tested (blue, left axis) and daily cases recorded (orange, right axis) in Gujarat since April 3



3. TESTING CLUSTERS | The graph shows daily cases recorded in Tamil Nadu (grey bars, right axis), daily samples tested of those in the Nizamuddin cluster (red line, left axis) and daily samples tested of those not in the cluster (blue line, left axis) in Tamil Nadu since April 5

4. TESTS VS POSITIVES | The graph shows the % of positive cases among the samples tested of those in the Nizamuddin cluster (red line) and those outside the cluster (blue line) in Tamil Nadu since April 5



Implement Aarogya Setu, but only through law

Doing so will avoid the dangers of unrestricted use leading to disproportionate violation of fundamental rights



KASHISH ANEJA & NIKHIL PRATAP

It is only a matter of time before the lockdown starts to ease. The threat of COVID-19, however, will continue. Studies say that there will be multiple waves of infection following the first wave. This will lead to a fundamental transformation in the role of the state in regulating society. Heightened epidemic surveillance by the government could lead to an increased risk of institutionalised surveillance of individuals. To protect large swathes of the population from possible exposure to the infection, the movement of individuals will also be heavily regulated.

Purpose limitation

At present, the movement of individuals is subject to permits in various parts of the world, including India. In China, it's alarming to note that a phone app was started as a voluntary service for informing users of their potential exposure to infected persons, but soon began to be used as an e-pass for allowing access to public transport. The situation in China raises similar concerns in India. The Aarogya Setu app launched by the government is designed to enable users who have come in contact with COVID-19 positive patients to be notified, traced and suitably supported. It has been criticised for not complying with data protection principles of data minimisation, purpose limitation, transparency and accountability, all of which are crucial to protecting the privacy of its users.

According to the app's privacy policy, Aarogya Setu collects the personal data of its users and allows the disclosure of such data to the government to provide it with necessary details for "carrying out medical and administrative interventions necessary in relation to COVID-19." Such vague articulation weakens the app's purpose limitation. The government is also at liberty to revise the terms of the privacy policy at its discretion (and has done so) without notifying its users.

Given the design of the app, it is not difficult to conceive of the wide dangers of its misuse to carry out surveillance of users. Concomitantly, the app also equips the government with an instrument for restricting and regulating the right of freedom of movement of citizens, especially due to its fluid

terms of service. Some reports suggest that the government is considering using the app as a criterion for restricting users' movement. The potential restriction on freedom of movement will have considerable impact on an individual's access to basic government benefits and services, thus endangering citizens' right to life. For example, entry into banks and access to PDS may become subject to the colour coding of the person on the Aarogya Setu app. There is no limitation on the gamut of restrictions that may be imposed using the app. The resultant impact will be disproportionately higher on the most vulnerable sections of the society.

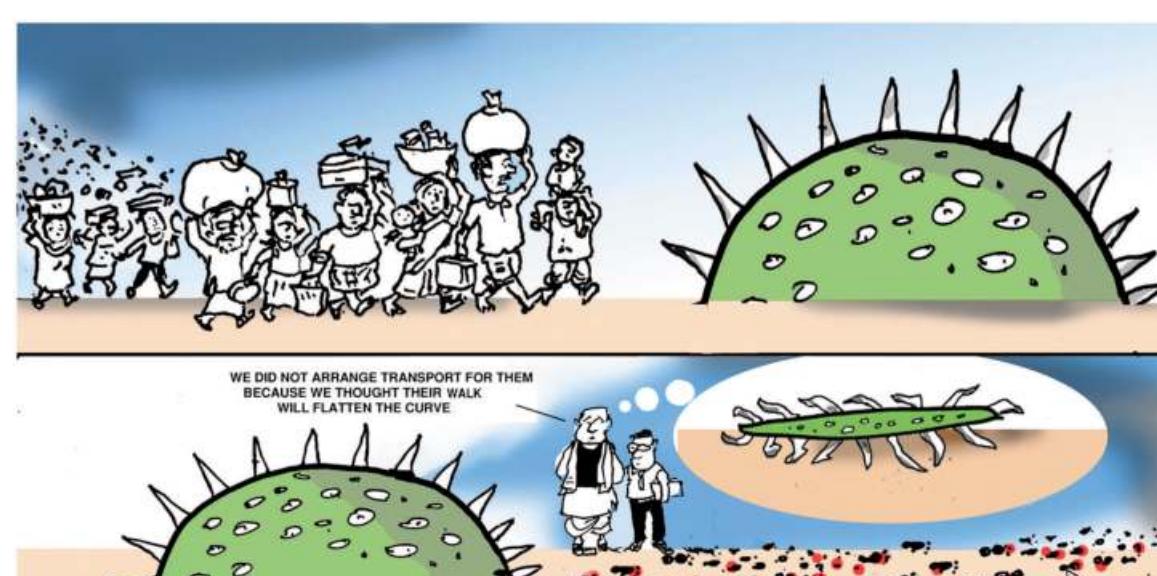
The unconstitutional bargain

A seemingly benign app based on voluntary consent is thus loaded with potential to be used as a tool to violate fundamental rights. Individuals may be forced to download the app to be able to access basic amenities and services. This situation could pose the problem of an unconstitutional condition or barter – a situation where citizens are forced to give up their rights (right to autonomy and privacy in this case) in exchange for government benefits. Further, the existing users of the app could be subject to arbitrary restrictions in their fundamental rights without their informed consent as they would not have foreseen such restrictions at the time of giving their consent to downloading the app.

The situation bears resemblance to Aadhaar. Originally designed as an optional programme to provide government benefits to citizens based on their voluntary consent, Aadhaar was later made compulsory, even for private services such as banking and mobile phone registrations. The Supreme Court then disallowed private parties from using Aadhaar for authentication on grounds that it exceeded its intended purpose.

To avoid unforeseeable dangers of mass surveillance and disproportionate restrictions of fundamental rights, it is therefore imperative that the Aarogya Setu app is implemented only through law, especially since India lacks a comprehensive data protection or surveillance law. It is already a settled legal principle that any limitation of fundamental rights must be implemented only through a law pursuing legitimate state interest. Enacting such a law will not only subject government actions to limitations but will also facilitate its constitutional scrutiny.

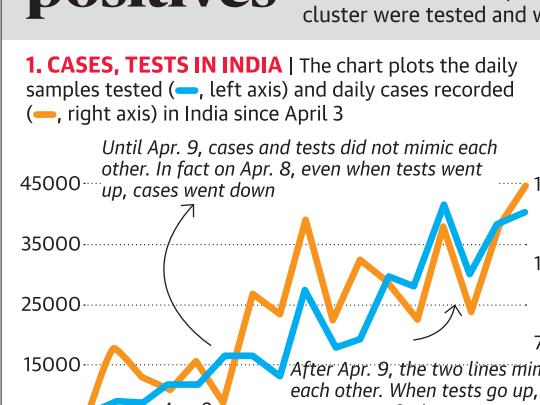
Kashish Aneja, a practising lawyer in New Delhi, specialises in global health and privacy law; Nikhil Pratap is a practising lawyer in New Delhi



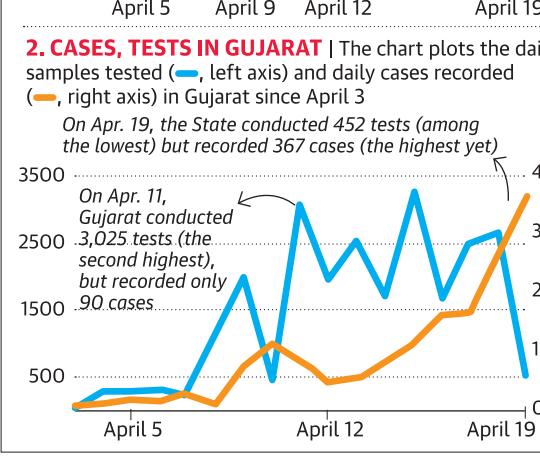
DATA POINT

Tests vs positives

1. CASES, TESTS IN INDIA | The chart plots the daily samples tested (blue, left axis) and daily cases recorded (orange, right axis) in India since April 3



2. CASES, TESTS IN GUJARAT | The chart plots the daily samples tested (blue, left axis) and daily cases recorded (orange, right axis) in Gujarat since April 3



FROM PAGE ONE

Doubling time of virus goes up in 18 States

Delhi (8.5) and Tamil Nadu (14) were also included in the Health Ministry's list of regions that had doubling times under 20 days but these were also among the leading contributors to India's case load. After Maharashtra, Delhi follows with 2,000 cases and Tamil Nadu is the fifth largest contributor with 1,477 cases.

Ladakh, Uttarakhand, Assam, Chandigarh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Andaman and Nicobar islands recorded doubling times of 20-30 days.

All COVID-19 patients in Goa were discharged after recovery, and the State now had no active cases.

Central teams

The Centre said it had constituted six Inter-Ministerial Central Teams (IMCTs), two each for West Bengal and Maharashtra and one each for Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan to combat the outbreak.

"Situation is specially se-

rious in Indore (MP), Mumbai and Pune (Maharashtra), Jaipur (Rajasthan) and Kolkata, Howrah, Medinipur East, 24 Parganas North, Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Jalpaiguri in West Bengal," a press release said and added that the teams would focus on complaints of implementation of lockdown measures as per guidelines, supply of essential commodities, social distancing, preparedness of health infrastructure, safety of health professionals and conditions of the relief camps for labour and poor people.

Several states – notably Delhi, Maharashtra and Karnataka – have said that a sizeable number of those testing positive appeared to be asymptomatic.

However, Raman Ganguly, spokesperson for the Indian Council for Medical Research said there were no plans to change the testing criteria, which has been expanded.

Police detain 59 for violence over round-up

"Four police personnel, who are part of enforcement teams, sustained injuries and have filed complaints," said the officer, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

"They targeted CCTVs and street lights, which shows that the attack was premeditated," the officer added.

According to police sources, the phones recovered from the accused showed that messages had been shared among them

days before the attack. "The accused formed four teams and carried out attacks separately," said a police officer.

They carried knives, wooden logs and pelted stones at the enforcement teams, the police alleged.

Special police teams have been formed to probe the violence and the search for the remaining accused has intensified after both Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa and Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai condemned the attack.

"Amithi knows there is no communal angle here. I told him we must search for all those fanning hatred on social media," Mr. Thackeray said, adding that Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath too had called him.

He warned those trying to inflame passions to desist.

"There is no Hindu-Muslim angle or communalism

denied the booking of a freelance photojournalist, Masrat Zahra, under the draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. Ms. Zahra was also interrogated by the police.

An "appeal" was also issued by the Inspector-General of Police, Kashmir, Vijay Kumar that any information, which has bearing on national security and can cause "social instability" be clarified/confirmed before publication.

Vijay Mallya loses U.K. High Court appeal

"Now, Mr. Mallya has 14 days to file an application in the High Court for permission to appeal in the Supreme Court, which takes up constitutional matters and issues of larger public interest. We believe that it will be turned down in all likelihood. Once he exhausts all legal avenues, we will have 28 days to bring him back," said a senior Enforcement Directorate official.

As flight operations are hit globally due to COVID-19, in case his extradition is cleared by the final authority during the lockdown period, he may be brought back on board any special aircraft, including Air India, the official said.

The agencies have alleged that Mr. Mallya, between September 1, 2009, and January 24, 2017, conspired with A. Ragunathan, S. Borkar, A. Nadkarni, A. Shah, Y. Agarwal, B. Batra, O. Bunderlu, S. Srinivasan, R. Sridhar and others to cheat those who might deposit funds with the IDBI Bank. This was done "by dishonestly causing and permitting the bank to sanction and disburse loans" to Kingfisher Airlines (KFA) in the order of (a) ₹1,500 million on October 7, 2009, (b) ₹2,000 million on November 4, 2009, and (c) ₹7,500 million on November 27, 2009, with the intention not to repay them.

False information
The alleged conspiracy was executed by supplying to the bank false information on Kingfisher's profitability and the value and/or availability of securities to be relied upon. The funds so raised were diverted and laundered. The High Court, which had heard the case in February, also turned down the appellant's contention that the lower court had erred in law in its approach to the *prima facie* case test and the admissibility of the respondent's evidence.

Adityanath to stay away from father's funeral

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LUCKNOW/NEW DELHI

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's father Anand Bishit died on Monday and will be cremated in Haridwar at a funeral which will not be attended by the Chief Minister, who said he is duty-bound to stay in his State.

Mr. Bishit, 89, was admitted to the gastroenterology department of the AIIMS.

In a statement, the Chief Minister said, "I had the ardent wish to get a glimpse of him at the final moment. However, following a sense of duty towards the State's 23 crore people during the COVID-19 pandemic, I could not do so. For the success of the lockdown and the strategy to defeat the novel coronavirus pandemic, I will be unable to attend the last rites on April 21."

China says Indian trade curbs are against WTO principles

'Additional barriers violate principle of non-discrimination'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India's recent policy to curb opportunistic takeovers of domestic companies goes against the World Trade Organisation (WTO) principles, the spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy here said on Monday.

This is the first response from the Chinese side after the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in an April 17 decision imposed restrictions saying companies from countries that share borders with India can invest "only under the government route".

The additional barriers set by Indian side for investors from specific countries violate the WTO's principle of non-discrimination, and go against the general trend

of liberalisation and facilitation of trade and investment. More importantly, they do not conform to the consensus of the G20 leaders and Trade Ministers to realise a free, fair, non-discriminatory, transparent, predictable and stable trade and investment environment, and to keep our markets open," said Counsellor Ji Tong, spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy.

The official pointed at the Chinese investments in various sectors of the Indian economy. He said China's overall investment as of December 2019 was above \$ 8 billion and it had driven key sectors like telecom, infrastructure, automobile and household goods in India. The revision was meant for sectors and enterprises other than defence, space, atomic energy and sectors and activities "prohibited for foreign investment".

It was understood that the Indian decision was a response to the news of an incremental purchase of shares in HDFC by the People's Bank of China.

The Chinese spokesperson invoked the principle of free market economy and said, "Companies make choices based on market principles. We hope India would revise relevant discriminatory practices, treat investments from different countries equally, and foster an open, fair and equitable business environment".

The statement said the new policy was clearly going to impact future investment from China.

IT panel to meet via video conference

Tharoor welcomes approval by Speaker; no such order for other committees

SOBHANA K NAIR
NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has allowed the holding of a meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on Information and Technology via video conference, committee chairman Shashi Tharoor said.

There is, however, no formal orders for all the committees to use this means.

The Budget session of Parliament had ended abruptly on March 23 and since then no meeting of these parliamentary committees had

been held. Mr. Tharoor announced on Twitter that his committee would meet soon.

"Delighted to announce that Lok Sabha Speaker @ombirlakota has approved the holding of meetings of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology by video conference. What could be more appropriate than for our Committee to set this welcome precedent?" the Congress leader said.

He had written a letter to Mr. Birla on April 17 request-

ing him to reconsider the curtailing of activities of parliamentary committees since the ministries continue to function with officials working remotely. "It is imperative that our committees also continue to meet periodically so that they can execute their constitutional mandates of scrutinising the activities of the Executive," he wrote.

Mr. Tharoor said a number of pressing issues had developed even in this short duration for each of these committees to consider ur-

gently and, therefore, it was imperative that they were allowed to convene and discuss such time-sensitive concerns.

Rule 267 concerning the functioning of committees says that "The sittings of a committee shall be held within the precincts of the Parliament House, and if it becomes necessary to change the place of sitting outside the Parliament House, the matter shall be referred to the Speaker whose decision shall be final".

An estimated 3.3 million Indians live and work in the UAE.

On April 18, Sharjah businessman and filmmaker Sohan Roy was forced to apologise publicly after a complaint against him for a video which depicted Islamists leading blindfolded

CMK

Pay ₹7,500 to the poor: Cong.

Party seeks immediate transfer of money to every Jan Dhan account among others

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Right now, the most urgent thing in the country is cash transfer, as people have to survive. People's livelihoods have been destroyed, lakhs and lakhs of families need immediate assistance. We are not talking about assistance for the next three months, but today, tomorrow, the next few weeks

JAI RAM RAMESH, Former Union Minister



ing the procurement process of crops such as wheat, mustard and gram.

Addressing the media through video conferencing, former Union Minister P. Chidambaram are members, will submit a detailed report to the government on the revival of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) as well as streamlin-

ing transfer, as people have to survive. People's livelihoods have been destroyed, lakhs and lakhs of families need immediate assistance.

We are not talking about assistance for the next three months, but today, tomorrow, the next few weeks," he said.

"I think a compassionate government, a sensitive government or a responsive go-

vernment must and can find the resources for ₹7,500 direct transfer to the three accounts that I have just mentioned. It's not a question of whether we can find the funds, we must find the funds," Mr. Ramesh added.

Apart from the Jan Dhan accounts, he said that by directly transferring cash to beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Samman Nidhi (PM Kisan) and old age, widow and handicapped persons' pension schemes, all the needy rural households would be covered.

The Congress Working Committee (CWC) will be meeting on Thursday to discuss the pandemic and lockdown situation. This will be the second CWC through video conferencing.

Another killer in Rahman case picked up

SUVIJIT BAGCHI
KOLKATA

Risaldar Moslehuddin Khan, one of the five absconding assassins of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, has been picked up by security agencies in the North 24 Parganas district, a senior intelligence official claimed. Mujibur Rahman is Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's father.

"Likely that he has been handed over already. But his identity confirmation from Bangladesh is awaited," the officer said amid confusion about his photos doing the rounds in closed messaging groups.

Moslehuddin is the second of the absconding assassins arrested in quick succession.

BJP doing politics over Palghar lynching: Cong.

'No place for violence in a civil society'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The investigation into the Palghar mob lynching, in which three Mumbai residents were lynched to death last week, was on Monday transferred to the Maharashtra Criminal Investigation Department (CID). Meanwhile, two officers with the Palghar Police were suspended on Monday and a departmental enquiry initiated.

In a statement, Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said the lynching at Gadchinchli village on the border of Dadar Nagar Haveli was "extremely unfortunate and the Congress party unequivocally condemns it".

He said, "There is no communal or Hindu-Muslim angle to the attack as is being sought to be projected by those, who see an opportunity in every such incident to inflame communal passion. We urge all such persons and groups, including political parties and a section of the media, to desist from doing so." All those who have been arrested are "local adivasis".

On April 16, three Mumbai residents while on their way to Surat were lynched, allegedly by locals, on the suspicion of them being "thieves".

Mr. Surjewala said there was no place for violence in a civilized society. "We have urged the Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray to ensure an expeditious trial and punishment of the guilty".

Earlier, senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh also accused the BJP of playing politics over the incident. "I think the BJP is playing politics at a very disturbing moment in our society's history," he said through an online press conference.

Avoid hate speech, expat Indians told

Envoy responds to tensions in UAE

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Cautioning Indians in the United Arab Emirates against a spate of religiously derogatory posts, India's Ambassador to the UAE said any discrimination would not be tolerated.

"India and UAE share the value of non-discrimination on any grounds. Discrimination is against our moral fabric and the Rule of law. Indian nationals in the UAE should always remember this," Ambassador Pavan Kapoor said in a tweet on Monday, indicating how strongly the government has taken many such cases that have come into prominence recently. The tweet also referred to PM Modi's earlier statement that said the Coronavirus "does not see race or religion".

In the past month, at least six Indians have lost jobs or face charges over social media posts linking the coronavirus pandemic to the Muslim community in India.

The issue, according to at least two sources aware of the discussions, is creating a greater diplomatic strain for New Delhi, even as it negotiates with UAE officials who have been pushing for India to repatriate thousands of citizens who have lost jobs with companies in the UAE.

Former Ambassador to the UAE Navdeep Suri says the Emirates has cracked down on hate speech against all religions, especially after it enacted the 2015 Anti-Discrimination Law, punishing "any form of discrimination against people and religion". "The UAE has been working actively to promote an image of tolerance and have targeted religious extremists," he said.

Pavan Kapoor

ed men in skull caps in an adaptation of his poem on religious bigotry. Earlier in April, Dubai resident Rakesh B. Kitturmath, who worked at a services company, an accountant Bala Krishna Nakka, and Abu Dhabi resident Mitesh Udeshi were terminated for similarly derogatory posts on social media that contravened UAE law.

In March, a Dubai-based Chef Trilok Singh was sacked for an online rape threat against a student for opposing the Citizenship Amendment Act. A complaint was also filed against the CEO of an events management company Sameer Bhandari, who, in a written response to an Indian Muslim job applicant, told him to "Go to Pakistan".

Former Ambassador to the UAE Navdeep Suri says the Emirates has cracked down on hate speech against all religions, especially after it enacted the 2015 Anti-Discrimination Law, punishing "any form of discrimination against people and religion". "The UAE has been working actively to promote an image of tolerance and have targeted religious extremists," he said.

AN-ND-E

Maharashtra reports 466 new cases, 9 deaths

53 mediapersons from Mumbai test positive for coronavirus

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

The upward surge in the numbers of new COVID-19 positive cases in Maharashtra continued with the State reporting 466 cases and nine deaths on Monday. The cumulative tally rose to 4,666 cases, and the death toll stands at 232.

Seven of these deaths were reported from Mumbai city, while two more were reported from Malegaon in Nashik. Malegaon had reported four fatalities on Sunday.

With these deaths, Nashik's toll stands at eight.

308 in Mumbai

Meanwhile, 308 of the 466 new cases were reported from Mumbai city alone, as the city's tally crossed the 3,000 mark to reach 3,032 with 139 deaths.

The State has reported more than 1,600 new cases over a five-day period.



A full house: Residents of Mukund Nagar in Dharavi at a private doctor's chamber on Monday. Private practitioners are now allowed to attend to patients. ■ ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY

Pune district witnessed another spurt in fresh cases, reporting as many as 52 positive cases to take the district's tally to 663, with 51 of these being reported from Pimpri-Chinchwad.

The cases in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR),

excluding Mumbai city, continued to mount steadily as well, with Vasai-Virar recording a jump in 21 new cases to take its tally to 107, while Thane district reported 24 fresh cases to take its tally to 154 and Kalyan-Dombivli reported a further 15 cases to

reach 84. A further 11 cases were reported from Navi Mumbai, taking the area's tally to 83 positive cases.

At least 53 mediapersons from Mumbai have tested positive for coronavirus, a city civic official said on Monday.

30 more cases in Dharavi

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Dharavi in Mumbai reported another 30 cases on Monday, bringing the total to 168. The area has reported 11 deaths so far.

The Asia's largest slum has also become a COVID-19 hotspot, with cases being reported from containment zones. The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has screened more than 40,000 people in Dharavi. Despite this, cases continue to be reported from newer parts of Dharavi.

On Monday, of the 30 new cases reported, three are from Kalyanwadi, one of the largest clusters in Dharavi. A few cases were reported from areas that had

previously reported cases, including Mukund Nagar, PMGP Colony, Kunchi Kurve Nagar. Cases were reported from newer parts of Dharavi such as Dhorwada, Padmagopal Chawl, Naik Nagar, Kala Killa. A two-year-old boy from Kalyanwadi tested positive.

Dadar, which falls in the same administrative ward as Dharavi, also reported three new cases.

A 29-year-old man living on Ranade Road near Shushrusha Hospital has tested positive. The hospital has seen eight positive cases so far. This brings Dadar's total to 25.

Mumbai now has 721 containment zones across the city.

journalists, photographers and cameramen.

"Out of the 171 mediapersons, 53 tested positive for coronavirus," BMC spokesperson Vijay Khabale said, adding that most of those who tested positive were asymptomatic at present.

West Bengal begins rapid antibody testing

State records its single-day high of 54

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

West Bengal on Monday recorded 54 new cases of the SARS-CoV-2 infection, prompting the authorities to urge people to maintain self-discipline and follow lockdown norms.

With 54 new cases of the viral infection, the highest in the State so far, the number of active cases in West Bengal climbed to 245. During the day, the State also started conducting rapid antibody tests in "Red Zone" areas where containment activities are going on".

State Chief Secretary Rajiva Sinha said that the tests will be conducted first in Kolkata and Howrah and then in districts of north Bengal with the approval of State's Health Department. "Rapid antibody testing will also be done in low incidence areas so that large populations do not remain out of the ambit of testing," he said.

The number of deaths due to COVID-19 infections in the State remains at 12.

The total number of samples tested in the State as on April 20 stands at 5,469. In the past 24 hours, 424 samples were tested in the State, Mr. Sinha added.

Curbs on sweets shops

The Chief Secretary said that sweet shops and shops selling flowers will be open till Noon. Earlier, these shops were allowed to remain open till 4 p.m. He added that attempts will be made to barricade the markets so that a large number of people do not gather there at the same time.

"Lockdown cannot be enforced only by force or by the police. People will have to maintain self-discipline and behave responsibly," he said. Mr. Sinha said that people were coming out of homes on certain pretences, thinking that the police would not intercept them.

As far as exemptions for industries goes, Mr. Sinha said that no exemptions had been given to industries that were located in the containment zones.

IN BRIEF



Punjab CM tells industrial units to adhere to norms

CHANDIGARH
Punjab on Monday reported one COVID-19 case from Jalandhar district, taking the tally to 24. Till April 20, Punjab has seen 16 pandemic-related deaths and 38 recoveries. Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said that industrial units being permitted to function in non-containment zones would be required to align with State government orders as also the guidelines of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Odisha reports 13 new cases, ramps up testing

Bhubaneswar
The number of COVID-19 positive cases increased to 74 in Odisha with the detection of 13 new cases on Monday. While 49 patients are under treatment in different COVID-19 hospitals, 24 persons have been discharged after recovery and one has died. The State government has ramped up testing samples with 10,641 being tested by midnight on Sunday, the government said. The Health department is taking measures for contact tracing and steps to create containment zones.

₹2,000 aid to Assamese stranded outside State

GUWAHATI
The Assam government on Monday transferred ₹2,000 each to the accounts of 86,000 people from the State stranded across India due to the COVID-19 lockdown. These 86,000 people are among the 99,758 people found eligible for cash relief after the government processed 4,29,851 calls for help and 2,28,126 applicants, who had filled up an e-form. The remaining 13,758 people would get the first instalment within the next few days, Assam's Finance and Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

Doctor posted at health centre dies in Moradabad

GAZIABAD
A doctor in Moradabad succumbed to COVID-19 infection on Monday. With this, the tally of deaths in Moradabad touched three and in Uttar Pradesh the number went up to 18, official sources said. The doctor was posted at Tajganj community health centre which was part of the survey team that visited the area where the attendees of the religious congregation in Delhi were found, said a health department official. Chief Medical Officer M.C. Garg said the doctor was admitted to Tirthankar Medical University on April 10 when he tested positive. Moradabad has 57 positive cases.

Bandipora emerges as J&K's hotspot after cases rise to 91

People in vulnerable age group are being sensitised: officials

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Bandipora district in J&K has emerged as the Valley's hotspot for the novel coronavirus cases, with the count touching 91 on Monday, forcing the authorities to carry out rapid antigen tests (RAT).

A government spokesman said 18 cases tested positive in the Kashmir division taking the number to 368.

"Bandipora has 91 positive cases, the highest in the UT, followed by Srinagar with 79," the official said.

Bandipora's Hajin tehsil is the worst affected after the mysterious death of Ghulam Nabi Mir, 54, was reported on April 7. With no travel history or contact with a positive case, the fruit dealer died just within a day of his admission at the Shri Maharaja Hari Singh (SMHS) hospital here.

A large population – official figures suggest over 16% – of the hamlet Gund Jahangir and its surrounding areas have been put under quarantine, after there was no let up in cases.

"We have imposed complete restrictions on the movement of people. Door-to-door survey is being con-



Ensuring safety: Security personnel at a traffic check point in Srinagar on Monday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

ducted. The people who belong to the vulnerable age group are being sensitised and educated to take precautions," an official said.

The seven positive cases from Bandipora include six members of a family, three of them brothers, from the Gund Jahangir area.

Deputy Commissioner, Bandipora, Shahbaz Ahmad Mirza said samples of 870 persons were taken for testing of which 683 reported negative while 91 reported positive. "The result of 96 tests is awaited."

Of the 27,114 persons screened in 12 Red Zones (population of 48,969), Mr. Mirza said 543 persons were put under administrative quarantine while 3,776 persons are under home qua-

rantine and are being regularly monitored.

He said: "So far 31 dedicated screening teams of health experts in 12 Red Zones of Hajin, Naidkhai, Gund Jahangir, SK Bala, Bagtagund, Chandangeer, Madwan, Hakbara, Kunan, Gund Qaiser, Gund Dachina, Nowgam and Bonakoot, have screened 27,114 persons in a continuing process."

Mr. Mirza said after receiving the Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) kits, the medical staff have also started conducting the tests at the doorstep of the people in the Red Zones. "41 RAT tests were conducted in the district on Monday, including 25 in Gund Jahangir and Hajin while 16 were conducted in Bandipora town," he said.

Earlier, a case of a two-and-a-half month old girl getting infected with the virus was reported from Jhunjhunu district. The girl, who had returned along with her parents from Italy on March 8, has since recovered.

A 62-year-old COVID-19 positive man from Nagaur district died on Sunday. With another death reported from Kota, the toll in the State increased to 25.

Gujarat records 8 deaths, 196 cases on single day

Ahmedabad remains top in the number of virus cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD

Gujarat on Monday recorded 196 COVID-19 cases and eight deaths, pushing the numbers of cases to 1,939 and death toll to 71.

Monday also saw 26 patients getting discharged after recovery, making it the largest single-day recovery. So far, 131 people have recovered and been discharged.

However, 19 patients are critical and on ventilator support while the rest 1,718 are stable and under treatment. The critical patients include a senior Congress leader from Ahmedabad and municipal councillor Badruddin Sheikh, who is on ventilator.

Ahmedabad remains top on the curve in infections and deaths. So far, 1,248 people have been found infected. Of them, 38 have succumbed to the disease while 49 have been discharged after recovery.

Surat turns a cluster
Surat has emerged as another cluster with rapid surge in cases – 269 until now. Of them, 10 have died and 11 discharged.

According to the Health



Stringent steps: Rapid Action Force personnel patrolling the streets in Ahmedabad on Monday. ■ AFP

department, the deceased are mostly those with comorbidities such as diabetes, hypertension or other disease.

The State has so far tested 33,316 samples. Of them, 1,939 have tested positive for COVID-19.

The government has given permission to three private hospitals in Ahmedabad to admit and treat the infected after a surge in number of cases, requiring additional beds and medical infrastructure, including doctors. The three hospitals are Narayani Hrudayalay, Sterling Hospital and HCG Hospital.

In another decision aimed at smooth operations in hospitals and to oversee measures for lockdown and containment, the government has deputed eight senior IAS officials from the Secretariat to the fields in Ahmedabad and Surat.

Odisha to check people from sneaking into State

10 people test positive after moving in

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
Bhubaneswar

village roads to enter the State.

Movement of people with little checking had been going on till March 29 when the Orissa High Court ordered all bordering districts to stop inbound migrant workers at the border and provide them shelters.

"Till March 29, there had been unhindered movement of goods vehicles from across the border. Thereafter, we have tightened checking and not spared goods vehicles. Balasore's border with West Bengal during the lockdown period, focus has now shifted to curb illegal movement along the long, porous borders of the State.

These infected people had managed to travel hundreds of kilometres either by van, ambulance or goods vehicles dodging border guards during the lockdown period.

A worried Odisha government had to request all those with travel history to West Bengal during the last 28 days to inform the local sarpanch, the Block Development Officer and the Tahsildar and quarantine themselves at home.

Odisha shares borders with West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh.

Village roads

People stranded in other States have reportedly taken

U.P. police stop truck with 94 migrants from Haryana

The labourers, including women, were heading to Bihar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

A truck carrying 94 migrant labourers to Bihar, including women, was intercepted by the Uttar Pradesh police on the Jharkhand border in Sonbhadra.

The migrants, natives of Munger and Vaishali districts of Bihar, were coming from Faridabad in Haryana, said a police officer.

A case was registered against the owner of the truck, its driver and the deckhand under the Epidemic Diseases Act, said Ashish Srivastava, Superintendent of Police, Sonbhadra.

The migrants worked in factories in Haryana's Balaghat, which is around 1,000 km from the location where the truck was seized.

The truck had set off for Haryana from Tata Nagar in Jharkhand with a supply of pipes a few days ago. On April 17, after the lockdown was extended, the labourers asked the driver to drop them home, said the police.



Unending flow: Migrants heading back to their homes on the back of a truck in Allahabad, in this file photo. ■ AFP

"Medical inspection of all 94 persons was done. They are kept in a school in Sonbhadra under quarantine and are being provided food," Mr. Srivastava said.

Mr. Rajak claimed that the labourers contacted many politicians in Bihar, including Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and RJD leader Tejaswi Yadav, but did not receive any help. "Someone said money would be deposited in our account, others said ration would be sent. With the second lockdown, we had exhausted all our stuff and money."

"We would have died of hunger there. So we decided to take the road."

"There was no work, no



Date: 20.04.2020

Reference indicative Advt.No.01-R/IMSC/2020 Dated 20.03.2020 inviting applications for the post of DIRECTOR, IMSC, Chennai (Level - 15 under 7th CPC) which appeared on all leading Newspapers.

Due to COVID-19 Lock Down the last date for receipt of applications, is extended up to **May 31, 2020**.

Other terms and conditions as explained in the detailed advertisement appearing on the following websites remain same.

i) www.dae.gov.in under "Vacancy Notices"

Central teams to monitor situation in 4 States

Rajasthan, Maharashtra, M.P. and Bengal in list; Mamata demands to know criteria used to put select districts under watch

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
The Union Home Ministry rushed six teams led by senior bureaucrats to West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra to ensure that the lockdown measures are implemented strictly by their governments. The country is under lockdown till May 3 in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A Ministry spokesperson said violation of the lockdown measures posed a serious health hazard to the public and risked a spread of the infection.

He said the situation was serious in Indore, Jaipur, Mumbai and Pune. In West Bengal, Kolkata, Howrah, Medinipur East, 24 Parganas North, Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Jalpaiguri districts



Push and pull: Plainclothes policemen thrash a man for defying the lockdown at Howrah on Sunday. ■REUTERS

had troubling situations, he noted.

A Ministry order listed the violations by the States: incidents of violence on front line healthcare professionals; complete violation of social distancing norms outside banks, PDS shops,

market places; and movement of private and commercial vehicles with passengers in urban areas.

The Centre has constituted six Inter-Ministerial Central Teams (IMCT) – led by an official of Additional Secretary rank and including pu-

blic health specialists – under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 to make on-the-spot assessment of the situation, issue necessary directions to the State authorities and submit reports.

Mamata's objection

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Twitter that the Centre's decision was not consistent with the spirit of federalism. "We welcome all constructive support and suggestions, especially from the Central Govt in negating the #Covid19 crisis. However, the basis on which the Centre is proposing to deploy IMCTs in select districts across India including a few in WB under Disaster Mgmt Act 2005 is unclear.. I urge both Hon'ble Prime Minister @Naren-

draModi Ji & Home Minister @AmitShah Ji to share the criterion used for this. Until then I am afraid, we would not be able to move ahead on this as without valid reasons this might not be consistent with the spirit of federalism," she tweeted.

She has also written a letter to the Prime Minister on the issue.

When asked about her objection, an MHA representative at Monday's media briefing, said, "The purpose is to provide support and assistance to the States in their endeavour to combat COVID-19. The teams have been carefully constituted so that support can be provided from the health, administrative and disaster management aspects. The States will benefit."

The Ministry order said

the logistic support, accommodation, local transportation and personal protective equipment (PPE) and access to documents and records should be provided by the State governments.

Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla has also written to all States and Union Territories (UTs) asking them to strictly comply with the MHA guidelines and ensure their implementation without any dilution.

On April 15, the Ministry revised its guidelines issued under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, to allow the States to decide on the additional public activities to be allowed from April 20 in non-hotspot zones. It said the additional facilities should be based on strict compliance with the existing guidelines..

NICED says testing kits faulty in West Bengal

Large number of inconclusive results

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Amid claims by the West Bengal Department of Health and Family Welfare that testing kits supplied by the ICMR-NICED about two weeks ago had started to "throw up a large number of inconclusive results", representatives of NICED (National Institute of Cholera and Enteric Disease) on Monday admitted of glitches in them.

"This has been noted by the ICMR as well.... It is unfortunate that the kits are not standardised by the manufacturer to give exact results... It is difficult for each of the medical college to standardise the kits... hence they are showing different and inconclusive results. The matter is being seriously

ly addressed by the ICMR," NICED Director Shanta Dutta told *The Hindu*.

On Sunday, the Health Department tweeted, "The apparently defective test kits supplied by ICMR-NICED, Kolkata are resulting in a high number of repeat/confirmatory tests and causing delays and other attendant problems at a time when we are battling a pandemic. This is an issue that ICMR needs to look into immediately". It said inconclusive results were "necessitating a repeat confirmatory test run". There was no problem when testing kits were received directly from the National Institute of Virology, Pune, but supplies to the government labs have been routed through ICMR-NICED, Kolkata, it added.

IMA seeks law to check violence against doctors

'Hindering cremation is the last straw'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
The Indian Medical Association (IMA) on Monday asked the Centre to enact a law to check violence against doctors and hospitals across the nation.

"Our legitimate need for safe workplaces have to be met. Abuse and violence should stop immediately. Doctors and medical professionals across the country will light a candle at 9 p.m. on April 22 as protest and vigil against the violence and abuse. The next day, doctors across the country will work with black badges and declare it a 'Black Day' if the government fails to enact a Central

law on violence against doctors and hospitals," it said in a release issued by the group.

Utmost restraint

"The IMA has maintained utmost restraint and patience despite extreme provocation. Doctors have been abused, beaten up, denied entry and residence. Obstruction to cremation is the last straw that the IMA can bear," the statement said. Last week, residents of a Chennai locality protested against the cremation of a doctor from Andhra Pradesh who died of COVID-19 in the city, saying it might lead to the spread of coronavirus in their area.

Central government organisations involved in construction, including various metro rail corporations, were instructed by the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) to ensure that "all labour personnel/staff" returning to work from Monday have downloaded the government's COVID-19 tracking app – Aarogya Setu.

The advisory comes as the Union Home Ministry has relaxed some restrictions from Monday, including for construction activity under certain conditions. On Sunday, the Ministry issued an order allowing stranded migrant workers to return to their workplaces within the State

they are located in, provided they are asymptomatic.

Ahead of the resumption of construction work, a video-conference was held on April 17 by the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry with the CPWD, metro rail corporations, and the National Capital Region Transport Corporation and NBCC (India), formerly the National Buildings Construction Corporation.

Pre-conditions

According to the minutes of the meeting circulated on April 19, one of the "action points" that organisations were asked to implement was: "Every organisation should ensure that all labour personnel/staff get Aarogya



Long walk: Farm workers carrying vegetables for sale to a wholesale market in Patna on Monday. ■RANJEET KUMAR

Setu app downloaded on their mobile, when he/she resumes work."

The organisations were also asked to make sure there is no resumption of work in

coronavirus containment zones and only workers still present at the camps should be asked to return to work at a particular site.

Standard operating proce-

dures, such as those issued by the National Real Estate Development Council (NAREDCO) for private developers, taking into account the advice of the Health and Family Welfare and Home Ministries should be prepared and followed, the organisations were told.

Nod from States

Niranjan Hiranandani, the president of NAREDCO, told *The Hindu* that while the real estate developers and the

Home Ministry had agreed on activity resuming where workers are living on sites, State governments, like Maharashtra, were yet to give their approval.

He added that some government projects, like the



Blood banks running on low reserves, seek urgent help

Health Ministry warns hospitals not to turn away the needy

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN

NEW DELHI

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) on Monday said exempted PF trusts, which manage the PF and pension funds themselves, have disbursed ₹481.63 crore in advance to over 40,000 PF members during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The EPFO had started its special withdrawal scheme for EPF subscribers on March 28 as a part of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana. As of April 16, EPFO had disbursed ₹946 crore through 3.31 lakh claims under the special pandemic withdrawal scheme.

"As on April 17, ₹481.63 crore has been disbursed to 40,826 PF members as advance," the EPFO said.

Inspector enters temple, suspended

STAFF REPORTER

BHUBANESWAR

A police inspector has been placed under suspension for allegedly entering Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri in violation of the lockdown.

Deepak Kumar Jena, inspector in charge of the Badachana police station in Jajpur district, allegedly entered the 12th century temple with his family members on Sunday evening.

"A case has also been registered against him," the Odisha State police said in a statement on Monday.

Although the district boundaries were sealed, Mr. Jena managed to pass through three districts – Cuttack, Khordha and Puri – by putting a yellow beacon on his vehicle. The temple has been out of bounds since March 25.

CYK



Sticky situation: Shortage in blood supply affect patients requiring dialysis and those with blood disorders. ■FILE PHOTO

were not delivered country-wide by her organisation due to the lockdown, which meant that patients with low immunity could be at risk.

Transport for donors

The organisation has suggested that the States should try and arrange transportation for donors, and even patients, if possible, to come to medical centres. The group has noted that the worst hit are patients from small towns and villages.

But the problem is not restricted to the supply of blood alone, with the Union Health Ministry having to intervene and ask hospitals to not turn away patients suffering from respiratory or heart diseases, those who require blood transfusions and pregnant mothers, who have reportedly been facing harassment.

While hospitals are citing the rising numbers of COVID-19 cases as the reason they are advising other patients to stay away from hospitals, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan noted that the denial of treatment to patients who have been visiting hospitals in case of emergencies, and are being forced to visit a number of hospitals one after another, resulting in the denial of immediate medical attention, which may result in the loss of

lives, is being taken very seriously.

"Hospitals have to remember that patients who are really ill and require urgent medical attention are venturing out with great difficulty to reach the hospital for treatment in this situation. We should not turn them away on any kind of flimsy pretexts as certain procedures like blood transfusion, dialysis etc. can't wait," said Dr. Vardhan.

The Ministry has now directed hospitals to use tele-consultation, digital prescription and home delivery of medicines.

Stock blood: Minister

The Minister, speaking about the shortage of blood, said that hospitals should now start working on ensuring sufficient stock of blood for transfusion by encouraging voluntary blood donors and utilising various services like mobile blood collection vans with the help of the Indian Red Cross Society.

The Ministry has asked the Indian Red Cross Society to send mobile blood collection vans to the premises of regular blood donors.

According to the National Blood Transfusion Council, there are 2,023 blood banks in India, which receive 78% of their blood supply from voluntary donors.

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STEP TRAIN

THE SIMS turns



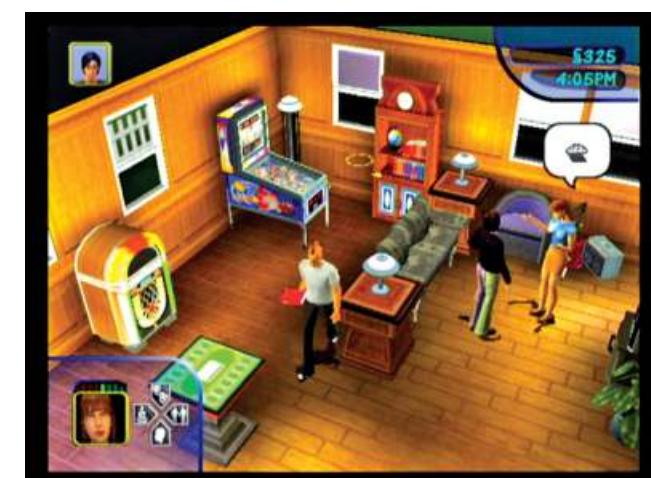
DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

Who knew that The Sims, often deemed a 'toilet game' – yes, a game you play while passing time on the throne – would become a global sensation? It is somewhat ironic that the biggest social simulation game out there is observing a 20-year milestone in times of mandated isolation owing to COVID-19. But this works out in the gaming community's favour. If people cannot and should not go out, then why can't their Sims? Why not hang out at the club built a couple of hours ago? How about working as a mailman or a pilot while everyone is really working from home? The Sims has opened up avenues for people who have also not played the game in a long time to live vicariously, even for just a moment, through the nonsensical lives of their Sims.

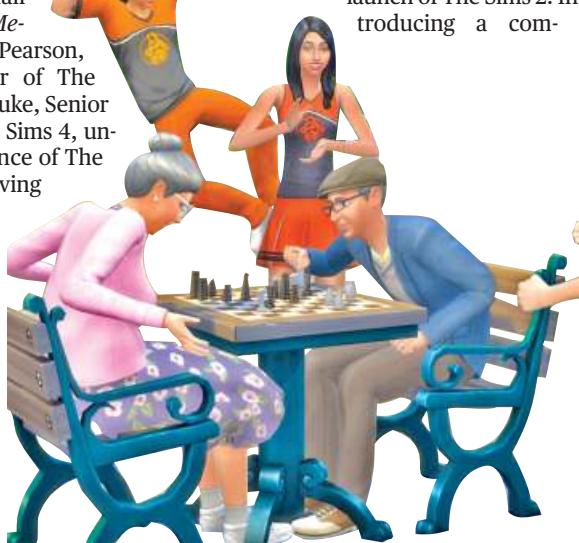
According to the Electronic Arts piece 'Behind Closed Doors: A Brief History of The Sims', "In 1991, Will Wright, creator of open-ended world-building game SimCity, suffered an unfortunate turn of events during the Oakland-Berkeley Firestorm. Losing his home to the firestorm left him assessing both his losses and material needs. Having always been passionate about architecture, Wright began to develop an idea for a game where players could simulate daily activities and building homes from scratch." This idea germinated to become The Sims, which was launched on PC in February 2000. The Sims soon became a pioneer for sandbox gameplay, in which gamers are given minimal limitations, placing emphasis on the roaming potential of the game.

Since then, The Sims franchise, having sold over 200 million copies globally, has generated more than US\$5 billion in revenue with The Sims 4 alone generating more than \$1 billion. Over the past 20 years, a total population of 1.6 billion Sims has been generated through the game. In an email interview with *MetroPlus*, Lyndsay Pearson, General Manager of The Sims, and Mike Duke, Senior Producer for The Sims 4, unravel the prevalence of The Sims as an evolving entertainer.

The Sims have soul
Lyndsay admits that picking just a few key turning points from the storied history of the video game is difficult. She still shares some major



A second life
Screenshots of Sims from various The Sims games launched over the years
• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



moments: the first being a kiss between two same-gender Sims before the launch of The Sims at the 1999 Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles, California. Lyndsay explains, "The team believed from the beginning that The Sims should be a game in which the players drove the story and our role as developers is to provide creativity tools. Our second moment was the launch of The Sims 2. Introducing a com-

pletely 3D world and lifetimes changed the game significantly, opening up new stories, play styles and look at the Sims' world. The last major moment I will list is the update for Create A Sim in The Sims 4 to provide even more powerful tools to customise Sims including their gender expression. This was a moment that unlocked a new level of play and power for Sims fans around the globe, and further emphasised The Sims' commitment to creativity and self-expression."

Expression was always a big part of Sims' lifestyles, their garbed language Simlish becoming a trademark of the games' collective design. In this case, Simlish was created by accident during a voice recording session while developing The Sims. It eventually developed with thought-out lexicon for base vocabulary as a starting point. Across the world, gamers now endeavour to learn Simlish in real life.

Though social simulation games date back to the '80s, The Sims garnered a traction like no other game of this subculture. Despite

a surge of well-loved games such as Singles or Facade, The Sims frontlined this genre without looking like they were trying too hard. Mike, who agrees that one of the most important things is to keep The Sims relevant, says, "As the world changes, we want The Sims world to evolve too. The vision was to create a simulator where you could experiment with life (style, build, and tell stories) and observe how Sims responded to your choices. We have never left that path, but we will continue to evolve the game."

So, the secret formula is 'stay on par and listen to the community'. When designing a game like The Sims, it seems there would be a knack for designers to go overboard but how does EA know when to draw a line and leave the rest to the players? Mike points to Maxis, a game developer studio founded in 1987 by Will Wright. The

studio brought The Sims to life and was later acquired by Electronic Arts in 1997. "We do not have some documented line or rule we apply," Mike elaborates, adding, "We rely on the team of people at Maxis who have been bringing The Sims to life for over two decades to know when it is right. I think it is fair to say it is instinctive."

Dual creativity

The Sims gamers out there would be well familiar with the excitement of the release of a bundle pack, which adds a layer of experience to the existing foundation of gameplay. Some of the most popular bundle packs for The Sims 4 are

Discover University, Island Living, Cats and Dogs and Get Famous.

Ask Mike about what it takes for a bundle pack to be brainstormed, conceptualised, approved and brought to life and he responds, "Ideas come from everywhere. Team members send pack ideas to the design team whenever

In the '90s, having always been passionate about architecture, The Sims creator Will Wright began to develop an idea for a game where players could simulate daily activities and building homes from scratch

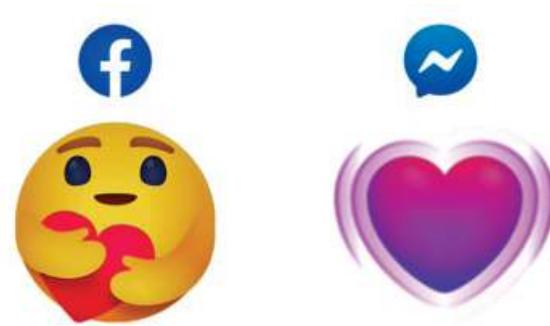
er the idea hits them. As we get ready to kick off a new pack, we typically hold a brainstorming session where many pack ideas get suggested (50+ ideas). We also brainstorm about locales we want to create and we discuss systems that we are excited about building. We then start looking for combinations that go well together and have us excited."

Then there is the creativity of the gamers. The Sims team is well aware of the collective imagination of the massive modding community. Modding usually sees tech-savvy players accessing the back-end of games to modify or 'flip' respective softwares. This is unique and also integral to PC games. Some modders add benefit to the game, often improving graphics, fixing console ports or even just adding new features, which is quite common in The Sims' universe.

Looking forward

One can only wonder about the future of The Sims; when it has got this vast, what is left to do? Lyndsay affirms that there is still a long journey ahead, but does not divulge details. "One area we have embraced in the past few years is integrating a wider variety of cultures into The Sims 4. It has been so exciting to work with our partners and co-workers around the globe on bringing Diwali or Day of The Dead into The Sims. Just as we want to create a canvas that allows players to create anything they can imagine, we want to include content and details relevant to their lives. Rather than being intimidating or overwhelming, we relish the challenge and chance to delight our players with experiences they could never have expected."

TECH-A-BYTE



Plenty of care

This week, Facebook is globally rolling out a 'Care' reaction in addition to its existing range comprising the like button and a few reaction emojis. The expected reaction is an animated emoji hugging a heart, meant to help you virtually 'show your support' to friends and family during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. However, most people used the 'Love' reaction for similar purposes, but the hug reaction shows a bit more directly that you care about the person rather than the post. Alexandru Voica, EMEA Communications Manager at Facebook, tweeted on April 17, "We're launching new Care reactions on @facebookapp and @Messenger as a way for people to share their support with one another during this unprecedented time. We hope these reactions give people additional ways to show their support during the #COVID19 crisis."

A virtual unboxing

On April 14, OnePlus unveiled the OnePlus 8. But not everyone can get up close to the device due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown and quarantines. That said, OnePlus India has introduced an Augmented Reality effect on Instagram to let people unbox the device in their own homes. The AR filter or effect can be found using the search function in the effects section of an Instagram user's story creation facility. A series of taps on the screen has the box first dropping on the logo spot, then opening and finally raising animated versions of each component in the box including the OnePlus 8 smartphone. There is the option to share the resulting video on your Instagram Story, but you obviously cannot turn the 'device' on or use it, as it is simply an animation, rendered.

Now, binge on education

Netflix has released 10 of its educational documentaries for free on its official YouTube channel. Documentary films and series available include *13th*, *Babies*, *Chasing Coral*, *Knock Down the House* and *Our Planet*. A few episodes from the series *Abstract*, *Explained*, *Period. End of Sentence*, *The White Helmets* and *Zion* are also available for free viewing. "For many years, Netflix has allowed teachers to screen documentaries in their classrooms. However, this isn't possible with schools closed," the company said in an April 17 blog post titled 'Responding to teachers' requests for access to documentaries'. "So at their request, we have made a selection of our documentary features and series available on the Netflix US YouTube channel." Netflix is also making educational resources, including study guides and Q&As, available for each documentary.

Fitbit makes a move

Those wearing fitness trackers and other such wearables may find themselves less inclined to stay situated in one position while working from home. Fitbit is one of the companies offering their consumers a swathe of new features by unlocking Fitbit Premium for 90 days globally. This plan includes 40-plus at-home workouts, meditations and sleep tracks for free. One can also connect with other Fitbit users around the globe through the app, offering the chance to have a workout buddy. On April 10, Fitbit added a new tab called COVID-19 Resource Hub on users' Fitbit dashboards. This feature allows users instant access to tools to help them stay active, healthy and up-to-date from home. This includes real-time updates from organisations such as the World Health Organization to stay safe, informed, and healthy.

Roll, step, repeat

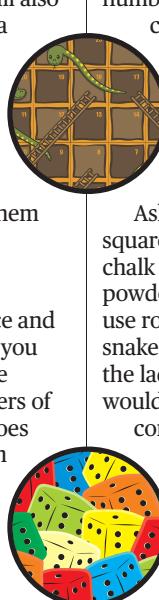


Ways to take board games off the table and into action, so you get movement, imagination, and one more way to spend your time during the COVID-19 lockdown

Get, set, go These games with a twist can help keep you active • GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

SUNALINI MATHEW

Exhausted playing and replaying the board games you have during this lockdown? Here is how you can use your hands, heart, and head to construct games on ground using the same principles. The main difference – you will also get in movement. Kanaka Anant, co-founder and chief designer at Manians, Coimbatore, picked a few board games most of us are familiar with, and tweaked them to make them more kinaesthetic.



as a square too – this will also get you to climb up and down. Roll the dice and halve the number on it. This way, when a person gets a half, she moves say two squares and stands on one leg for the half. If she gets a whole number the next time, she continues to hop. You can also play the game using rooms as 'home'.

Snakes and Ladders

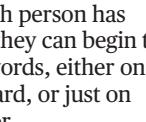
Ask your kids to draw 50 squares on the terrace, with chalk or *kolam*/rice powder/maida. You can use ropes for the snakes and rulers for the ladders. If you would like to introduce a contextual element, use sanitisers and masks at the tops of ladders and pictures of the Coronavirus that kids can draw and cut out at the mouths of 'snakes'.



Now play the game in person, moving from square to square, with a dice made from a box. A variation on this is to just have short ladders and ask people to do a yoga pose each time they go up one.

Scrabble

Place regular Scrabble letters across steps. Roll a dice to determine how many steps a person needs to climb up or down. Let the person pick a letter.



Once each person has seven, they can begin to form words, either on the board, or just on the floor.



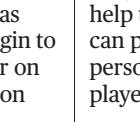
the end. Ask them to come up with other ways.

Jenga

Ask kids to take any objects from the house that is not breakable to construct an on-ground 'building'. They can go as high as they want. Once they've done that, they can pull out pieces and put them back in the actual place in the house they had taken it from.

Chinese Checkers

Take a print of the game, and have kids map it on the terrace, like a *kolam* – get grandparents involved to help them plot the points. Kids can paint paper cups for each person, and the game can be played on ground.



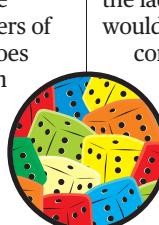
Play it across an area with your foot instead, using coins made out of bottle caps and other flat objects. It doesn't matter if they are of different sizes.

Carrom

Play it across an area with your foot instead, using coins made out of bottle caps and other flat objects. It doesn't matter if they are of different sizes.

Ludo

Use a square box as a dice and draw on the numbers. If you have floor tiles, designate 'homes' in the four corners of the room; if your floor does not have tiles, draw them out with chalk or simply trace a path of paper 'tiles' leading to the opposite corner. You can count the furniture



Ask your kids to draw 50 squares on the terrace, with chalk or *kolam*/rice powder/maida. You can use ropes for the snakes and rulers for the ladders. If you would like to introduce a contextual element, use sanitisers and masks at the tops of ladders and pictures of the Coronavirus that kids can draw and cut out at the mouths of 'snakes'.

Hungry Hippos

Place all the balls you have in a large plate. Now have kids figure out how to 'fish' the balls out. One way is using a stick with a net at



the mouth of the 'snakes'.

THE HINDU

TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 2020

SHOWCASE

13

HOMING IN

Staying indoors for a while? We have you covered. For your **Weekly Podcasts**, we have a list that might help you counteract feelings of dissatisfaction and cope in these uncertain times. Here are a few podcasts that talk about positive psychology

PRAVEEN SUDEVAN



Invisibilia

Well, National Public Radio's *Invisibilia* is not a happiness podcast, per se. It does not share hacks on improving your mindfulness or what to do when you feel dissatisfied. It, instead, explores the topics that shape

human behaviour: the interaction between humans and computers, a blind man using echo-location to see

the world among others. "Invisibilia has explored whether our thoughts are related to our inner wishes, our fears and how they shape our actions, and our need for belonging and how it shapes our identity and fuels our emotions over a lifetime. We investigate ways everyday objects

can shape our worldviews, the effects we have on each other's well-being, and the various lenses we don,"

hosts, Alix Spiegel and Hanna Rosin say about their show.

Episode length: 15-plus minutes (on average). Available on Google

Podcasts, Apple Podcasts, greatergood.berkeley.edu and more.



The Science of Happiness

The title of this show hosted by Dacher Keltner might suggest a theory-based approach to the subject of happiness in the episodes. Partly true. Along with the fascinating studies, we also get to hear from people who have put the research-based theories into practice. Guests include *Inside Out* director Pete Docter, musician Tommy Guerrero, and actor Daniel Wu. The show is doing a special series for the COVID-19 lockdown. One of the recent episodes was on staying close to your loved ones while physical-distancing.

Episode length: 15-plus minutes (on average). Available on Google Podcasts, Apple Podcasts, greatergood.berkeley.edu and more.



Happier With Gretchen Rubin

New York-based Gretchen Rubin hosts *The Happier* podcast, with her sister Elizabeth Craft. They share thoughts on happiness and habits that can help us increase positivity. Rubin's popular book *The Happiness Project* drew ideas on happiness from philosophy to pop-culture as well as from her personal experiences. The

podcast's similar to the book in this regard. Rubin believes that the key to happiness is reforming our habits and focusses on our everyday activities.

Episode length: Over one hour (on average). Available on Google

Podcasts, Apple Podcasts, tenpercent.com and more.



10% Happier

Guests in news correspondent Dan Harris' show include renowned personalities like the Dalai Lama. Harris has covered wars in Afghanistan, Israel, Palestine and Iraq, and produced investigative reports in Haiti, Cambodia, and the Congo. After an on-air panic attack in 2004, he turned towards meditation, on which the show is centred. In one of his recent episodes ('How to Go Easy on Yourself in a Pandemic'), Harris interviews Kristin Neff, an associate professor at the University of Texas at Austin on self-compassion.

Episode length: Over one hour (on average). Available on Google Podcasts, Apple Podcasts, tenpercent.com and more.

We would love to know how you are keeping busy at home. Tell us what you are listening to at metro@thehindu.co.in

Lucha: Playing the Impossible | Netflix

Considered one of the all time best hockey players, Luciana Ayman put the Argentinian women's hockey team known as the Lionesses on the world map. Over the course of a nearly two-decade career, Lucha, who is called 'The Magician', became a serial winner, and is still only one of two Argentinian athletes to have won four Olympic medals in their career. But behind it all, we also get to see a soft personality, who holds the team together and is loved by team mates across all age groups. When her dream of going out on a high with the World Cup is hampered as she injures herself at an unfortunate juncture, we see the whole country coming together to bring her back and give their champion a deserving send-off. Watch to fall in love with Lucha and the game of hockey.



Make Us Dream | Amazon Prime Video

One of the most gifted footballers ever, Steven Gerrard spent most of his career at Liverpool FC searching for that elusive league title, something that has evaded the club over the last three decades. His career was not without its highs. The 2005 Champions League glory over AC Milan, the 2006 FA Cup triumph are but just a few. But the vacant space in his heart remains. This documentary, centred around the infamous slip against Jose Mourinho's Chelsea in April 2014 as Liverpool chased Manchester City for the title, documents the pressure the former Liverpool captain took on; of having to live with the burden of millions of hopefuls, of having to become their symbol of hope and also bearing their ire when ambition gets the better of him. Steven Gerrard was a man who lived a melange of emotions every day, and who fought, often singularly, to keep the spirit and flame of the Liverpool pride up amid chaos. In other words, a must-watch film.

Facing Federer: Tennis Masters Cup Uncovered | YouTube

This nearly hour-long documentary from 2004 is a surreal throwback to the times that were. Roger Federer was on the cusp of greatness, occupying the World Number 1 rank after having won four of his 20 Grand Slam titles at that point. The burning topic, as the world's eight top-ranked players descend on Houston, Texas in the US to play the 2004 Masters Cup, is: Can Federer be beaten? Is it possible. Over the course of the documentary we find that it is not possible. Keep in mind, this documentary is from before the emergence of Federer's great rivals Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic. Watch it for its throwback value to a time when fly-on-the-wall documentaries of major sports and athletes was yet to go mainstream.

WHEN THE PLAYFIELD IS A THEATRE

From decoding a Formula One legend to uncovering the women's revolution in wrestling, here are some documentaries that offer incredible insight into the real-life drama behind the sporting icons' journey to the top

PRADEEP KUMAR

The adage goes: When life gives you lemons, make lemonade. The problem is that the COVID-19 pandemic is no mere lemon, and we appear to be stuck forever in the middle of a nationwide lockdown that is now down three weeks and still has a couple more weeks left to run. If, at this point, you are starting to wonder things like "What day is it?" or "Does it even matter any more?", trust us, you are not alone!

Watching these sports documentaries currently streaming on Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and YouTube could be a saving grace. What makes these docu-dramas a compelling watch is not just the subject or distinctive filmmaking styles, it is the stories that these tell: the common thread tying all of them together being, perseverance.



A Life of Speed: The Juan Manuel Fangio Story | Netflix

The question of 'Who is the greatest?' is tricky. It happens in cricket and football. Is it Pele/Maradona or Messi/Cristiano Ronaldo? Is it Bradman/Richards or Sachin/Kohli? Nico Rosberg, the 2016 F1 champion, says it does not make sense to compare different eras. This documentary centres on the research by University of Sheffield, which concluded that Juan Manuel Fangio was the best racing car pilot of all time ahead of the likes of Ayrton Senna, Michael Schumacher and Alain Prost. *A Life of Speed* chronicles the life of Fangio, a man who started racing in the newly-introduced pinnacle of motor racing – Formula One – in the 1950s at the grand old age of 37, when most drivers retire. He would race in F1 until he was 47, by which time he had won five world titles racing in some of the toughest tracks for car makers who deemed safety or precision engineering as alien concepts and in cars that were built only for straight line speed.



Bobby Robson: More Than a Manager | Netflix

Pep Guardiola and Jose Mourinho only have one thing in common: their love for the late Sir Bobby Robson – the British coach who managed the Spaniard Guardiola for a single season at FC Barcelona, and without whom there can be no Jose Mourinho! This 2018 documentary film on Robson features exclusive footage from his time starting out in management, guiding Ipswich Town out of obscurity and to the heights of European success; it also features commentary from respected names like Sir Alex Ferguson, Gary Lineker and players whose careers he helped shape like Terry Butcher and Paul Gascoigne. Robson was one of a kind. A nice guy in a sport that had no space for one. That is what made him more than just a manager. It is a compelling watch for all football fans.



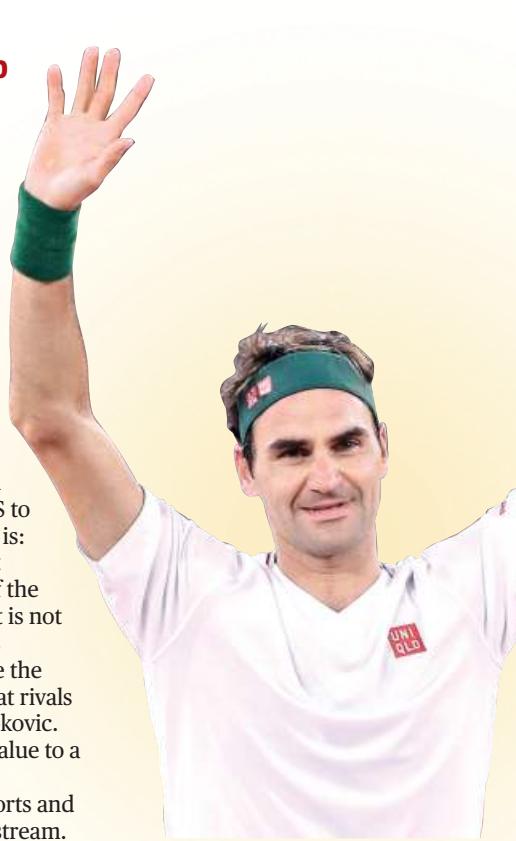
The Test: A New Era for Australia's Team | Amazon Prime Video

This Amazon Prime Video eight-episode series follows the Australian men's cricket team for 18 months after the Cape Town scandal (also known as Sandpapergate) in 2018 that led to the suspension of Australian batting trio Steven Smith, David Warner and Cameron Bancroft. Stripped off two of the world's best batsmen all of a sudden, the Australian team are tottering in its performance amid criticism at home and abroad. *The Test* goes behind the scenes and captures exclusive footage of the Australian dressing room after Cricket Australia appoints Justin Langer as head coach. Langer's evolution as a coach and his varied states of mind as he undergoes turmoil after turmoil, and his many attempts to crack the code of success make this docu-series a compelling watch.



GLOW: The Story of the Gorgeous Ladies of Wrestling | Netflix

Before WWE started producing content high on drama and telling stories of good versus evil, there was a women's revolution unfolding on the Las Vegas strip in the late 1980s. It was GLOW (short for Gorgeous Ladies of Wrestling), a television wrestling programme conceptualised by American wrestling promoter Daniel McLane, and directed by Matt Cimber who was known for his exploitation genre films. Women's wrestling was not a prominent fixture in the grappler's world, which was largely considered a man's domain. When GLOW debuted, it broke all notions, turning out-of-work models into overnight superstars and bringing about a change in thought process of how women's wrestling ought to be. GLOW ended abruptly in the early 1990s, and with it the careers and fame of many of these women crashed to the ground as well. This 2012 documentary revisits these superwomen to find out what they are up to. This documentary itself served as an inspiration for the creation of Netflix's original series GLOW starring Alison Brie (which has already aired two seasons). It is a must watch for fans of wrestling.



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Europe begins easing lockdown steps

Shops reopen in Germany, Denmark; nurseries begin in Norway; death rates drop in France and Spain

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LEIPZIG

Germany and other parts of Europe took tentative steps to ease lockdown measures on Monday but officials warned the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic was far from over.

Some shops reopened in Germany and Denmark and parents dropped their children off at nurseries in Norway as tight restrictions were lifted in parts of the continent. But Chancellor Angela Merkel urged Germans to stay disciplined, warning: "We stand at the beginning of the pandemic and are still a long way from being out of the woods."

COVID-19

After being hit hard by the virus that emerged in China late last year, Europe has seen encouraging signs in recent days, with death rates dropping in Italy, Spain, France and Britain.

Fears of a 'new wave'

The hope is tempered by fears of new waves of infections, warnings that life will not be back to normal for many months and deep concern over the devastating impact the virus is having on the global economy. But even the smallest return to normalcy was welcome.

Governments around the world are mulling how and when to ease lockdowns that have kept more than half of humanity confined to their homes. The virus has so far infected more than 2.4 million people globally and killed more than 165,000, with nearly two thirds of the victims in Europe, according to an AFP tally.

Germany, which has been hailed for keeping fatalities



Cautious steps: People walking in a street in Gelsenkirchen, Germany, on Monday. ■ AP

low despite a significant number of cases, was allowing smaller shops to reopen in some regions from Monday. Larger shops and those in major German cities will open later as part of an attempted phased return to a more normal existence that will also see some students go back to school from May 4. Denmark also reopened some small businesses, including hair salons, massage and tattoo parlours and dentists, while Italy allowed bookshops to open doors.

Hard-hit Spain, where a nationwide lockdown has been extended, also said it would ease some restrictions to allow children time outside. Spain on Monday recorded 399 deaths in the last 24 hours, its lowest daily count in weeks, and authorities are starting to shut some makeshift facilities set up to relieve the overburdened health system, including a morgue at a Madrid ice rink.

"Today for the first time we've fallen under 400 deaths... these figures give us hope," said Fernando Simon, the Spanish Health Ministry's Emergencies Coordinator. France, which on Sunday recorded its lowest number of hospital deaths since March 23, also said a nationwide lockdown in force for a month was beginning to bear fruit. "We are scoring points against the epidemic," French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said.

Australia opens beaches

In Australia, the authorities in Sydney reopened three beaches for walking, running, swimming or surfing, while New Zealand announced it will ease a lockdown next week, with Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern saying: "We have stopped a wave of devastation."

And in the U.S. – the country with the highest number of deaths and infections – the Governor of New York, Andrew Cuomo, said the outbreak was "on the descent".

South Korea extended its social distancing policy for

another 16 days on Sunday but offered some relief for religious and sports facilities previously subjected to strict restrictions.

The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) reported 13 new cases on Monday, a day after posting just eight – the first single digit daily rise since the Feb. 28 peak of 909. The death toll stands at 236.

South Korea relaxes social distancing rules

REUTERS

SEOUL

South Koreans are returning to work and crowding shopping malls, parks, golf courses and some restaurants as South Korea relaxes social distancing rules amid a continued downward trend in coronavirus cases.

A growing list of companies, including SK Innovation and Naver, has ended or eased their work from home policy in recent weeks, though many continue to apply flexible working hours and limit travel and face-to-face meetings. Parks, mountains and golf courses brimmed with visitors over the weekend, while shopping malls and restaurants were slowly returning to normal.

South Korea extended its social distancing policy for

Map powered by FB unveiled

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

Researchers on Monday unveiled a "heat map" powered by Facebook data which is aimed at helping track the spread of the disease. The Carnegie Mellon University project offers "real-time indications of COVID-19 activity not previously available from any other source," according to a university statement. The map was developed with millions of responses to surveys of Facebook and Google users as part of an effort to monitor the spread of the virus.

17 killed in 12-hour rampage by gunman in Nova Scotia

This is Canada's worst mass shooting incident

REUTERS

PORTAPIQUE

A gunman who at one point masqueraded as a policeman killed at least 16 people in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia during a 12-hour rampage, authorities said on Sunday, in what was the country's worst modern-era mass shooting.

Among the victims of the shooting spree that spread across part of the Atlantic Canadian province was RCMP officer Heidi Stevenson, a 23-year veteran of the force with two children. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police said the gunman, 51-year-old Gabriel Wortman, who worked as a dentist, appeared at one stage to have been wearing part of a police uniform. He had also painstakingly disguised his car to look like a police cruiser.

Motive unclear

Police added they had ended the threat posed by Wortman, who was dead, but would not confirm a report by the CTV network that the RCMP had shot him. Wortman shot people in several locations in Nova Scotia, the RCMP told a briefing. RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki told the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. the police knew of at least 16 victims, besides the shooter. She added there was no indication at this time that the killings were terrorism-related. Police said there was no apparent link between Wortman and at least some of his victims. They said they had no idea what his motivation might have been.

"Today is a devastating day for Nova Scotia, and it will remain etched in the



In tribute: Flags of Nova Scotia and Canada flying at half-staff outside police headquarters in Dartmouth on Monday. ■ AFP

minds for many years to come," said Lee Bergerman, commanding officer of the RCMP in Nova Scotia.

The death toll exceeded that of a Montreal massacre in 1989 when a gunman killed 15 women.

Mass shootings are relatively rare in Canada, which has tighter gun control laws than the United States. Nova Scotia, like the rest of Canada, is under a stay-at-home order because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Exchange of gunfire

Police discovered the killings late on Saturday after multiple reports of shots at a house in the small coastal town of Portapique, about 130 km north of the provincial capital, Halifax.

"When police arrived on the scene, members located several casualties inside and outside of the home," said Chris Leather, the Nova Scotia RCMP's criminal operations officer. Several buildings in the town were ablaze and police exchanged gunfire at one point with Wortman. Probes subsequently disclosed he had also killed

people in several other locations. "We're not fully aware of what (the) total might be," said Mr. Leather.

Gunman in uniform

At one point on Saturday evening, Wortman "appears to have been wearing – if not all – then a portion of a police uniform," Mr. Leather said. "The fact that this individual had a uniform and a police car at his disposal certainly speaks to it not being a random act," Mr. Leather said. According to the websites of the Denturist Society of Nova Scotia and the province's Better Business Bureau, Wortman operated a denture clinic in Dartmouth, close to Halifax.

In response to a question, Mr. Leather said police would look at a possible link to the COVID-19 outbreak, which has forced the closure of non-essential businesses.

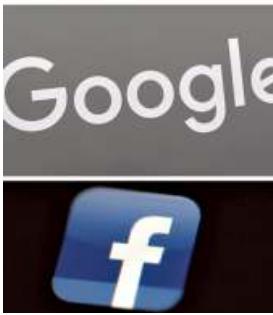
Nova Scotia Premier Stephen McNeil decried what he called senseless act of violence. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said his government would help Nova Scotians "as they heal from this tragedy."

Australia to force tech giants to share revenue

Move comes after talks on code failed

REUTERS

SYDNEY



Australia will force Facebook Inc and Alphabet Inc's Google to share advertising revenue with local media firms, the country's treasurer said on Monday, becoming one of the first countries to require digital platforms to pay for content they use.

Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said the move comes after talks with Facebook and Alphabet failed to yield a voluntary code to address complaints by domestic media players that the tech giants have too tight a grip on advertising, their main source of income. "We understand the challenge that we face, this is a big mountain to climb," Mr. Frydenberg said.

The government has asked the country's competition watchdog, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to frame a mandatory code of conduct between media outlets and digital platforms.

Mr. Frydenberg said the mandatory code will include sharing of data, ranking and display of news content and the sharing of revenue generated from news, adding that it would also establish penalty and binding dispute resolution mechanisms.

23 Afghans killed in Taliban attacks

16 soldiers, 5 policemen among those targeted by militants

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KUNDUZ

The Taliban have killed at least 23 Afghan troops and nine civilians, officials said on Monday, as a fresh wave of violence grips Afghanistan despite a deal with the U.S. and a worsening coronavirus crisis.

Under the terms of the U.S.-Taliban deal, the Afghan government and the insurgents were by now supposed to have concluded a prisoner exchange and started talks aimed at bringing about a comprehensive ceasefire. But the stalled prisoner swap has been beset with problems – with Kabul claiming the Taliban are demanding the release of some of the group's most notorious warriors – and peace talks seem as elusive ever amid ongoing attacks.

Late on Sunday night in Takhar province in northeast Afghanistan, the Taliban

ban struck an Afghan army base, killing 16 soldiers and two policemen, said provincial police spokesman Khalil Asir. The Governor's spokesman, Mohammad Jawad Hejri, confirmed the attack and also blamed the Taliban, putting the death toll at 19.

Violence in rural areas

In the south, the Taliban attacked a police checkpoint near Tarin Kot, the capital of Uruzgan province. "Five Afghan policemen were killed and three others were wounded," said Zilgai Ebadi, the provincial Governor's spokesman. The toll was confirmed by the head of Uruzgan provincial council, Amir Mohammad.

In the northern province of Balkh, the Taliban killed nine civilians after they resisted when insurgents tried to extort money from them, said district Governor Sayed Arif Iqbali. The Taliban did

not immediately comment, but it has previously complained that its fighters are still being targeted by U.S. and Afghan forces.

The violence has mostly been limited to rural areas and small towns. Under the framework of the U.S.-Taliban deal, the insurgents have agreed not to attack cities.

Under the U.S.-Taliban deal, American and other foreign forces are meant to quit Afghanistan by July 2021, provided the Taliban stick to several security guarantees and hold talks with the Afghan government.

Fighting has continued even as COVID-19 spreads through Afghanistan.

Official details of the power-sharing deal were not immediately disclosed, but a source in Blue and White said the two had agreed Mr. Netanyahu would remain Prime Minister for a set period until Mr. Gantz takes

Israel PM, Gantz sign unity government deal

Netanyahu to retain post for sometime

REUTERS

JERUSALEM

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his centrist election rival Benny Gantz signed an agreement on Monday to form an emergency coalition government that would end a year of political deadlock.

over in October 2021. Until then, Mr. Gantz, a former Armed Forces chief, will serve as Defence Minister and several of his allies, including two members of Israel's Labour Party, will receive ministerial portfolios.

Sticking points

During the negotiations the parties cited a number of sticking points, including the planned annexation of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank where Palestinians seek a state, and setting a nomination process for judges.

Palestinian officials did not immediately comment.

Mr. Netanyahu, in power consecutively for the past 11 years, is under criminal indictment on corruption charges which he denies. They include bribery, fraud and breach of trust.

Reconciling with loss and pain, one year since a tragic Easter

As Sri Lanka marks the first anniversary of last year's bombings, scars remain for many in the affected neighbourhoods of Colombo & Batticaloa

MEERA SRINIVASAN

COLOMBO

Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa has called on all citizens to remember the victims of the Easter terror blasts that shook Sri Lanka on April 21 last year, claiming over 270 lives and injuring more than 500 persons.

The serial blasts, which was carried out by an apparently IS-inspired squad of suicide bombers, targeted three churches in and near Colombo, and in the eastern Batticaloa district, and three luxury hotels in the capital. Coming exactly a decade after Sri Lanka's brutal civil war the ghastly Easter Sunday attacks delivered a major blow to the island's hard-won, relative peace.

Intelligence lapse

"The intelligence service of a friendly country had provided



Grief and prayer: A church worker on April 12 preparing for an Easter service at the St. Anthony's church, Colombo, one of the sites attacked last year. ■ AP

former President Maithripala Sirisena and President Gotabaya Rajapaksa who succeeded him in November – have been tasked to probe the terror attacks.

Based on testimonies it collected from 55 persons over 24 mostly public hearings, the parliamentary panel accused Mr. Sirisena of "actively undermining" government and security systems, leading to serious lapses ahead of the Easter terror attacks. It also blamed Sri Lanka's intelligence chief for "failing to act on multiple terror warnings" received in advance.

Police action

While the Rajapaksas have squarely blamed Mr. Sirisena's government for negligence leading to the terror attacks – President Gotabaya Rajapaksa contested the November presidential election

mainly on the plank of national security – Mr. Sirisena and his Sri Lanka Freedom Party have since politically re-aligned, joining the Rajapaksa brothers in power. The former chief of the State Intelligence Chief has been transferred to the Eastern Province as senior DIG.

Following regime change, a new team in the police Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has been assigned the probe. The team that worked under the previous administration arrested 200 persons linked to Easter attacks mastermind Zahran Hashim's jihadist network.

Twenty-six of them were identified as "highly involved" in the plot, a source familiar with the investigation told *The Hindu*.

The current CID team has made "key arrests" recently, including that of a prominent lawyer Hajaz Hisbullah. His

family has denied he was involved in any terrorist activity, and the Bar Association of Sri Lanka has expressed concern at his arrest whose reason, it said, was unknown. Police on Sunday said ongoing investigations have revealed "a second attack" had been planned by perpetrators, but it is unclear what specific evidence prompted the inference.

Healing with time

Even as investigations take their course, those affected by the deadly attacks are still struggling to cope. "When I think of that morning, I am terrified even now. It is only prayer that is helping us survive," said Fr. Jude Fernando, pastor who narrowly escaped the bombing at the St. Anthony's shrine in Colombo.

Michelle Mahesan went even closer to danger. As she

spotted a young man on the church premises on Easter Sunday, she went up to him and invited him for the service, barely minutes before he blew himself up. "I went to our house a few feet away and heard this deafening noise. Even our home's ceiling came crashing," said Ms. Mahesan, wife of the church's pastor Roshan Mahesan, who was abroad then. Dozens, including at least 14 children at Sunday school, died at the Zion Church in Batticaloa.

"It has been a year, but neither our church nor our home has been rebuilt," she said. The church has been providing counselling services to the affected families for a year now. "It is not easy reconciling with this sort of pain. We believe that the victims are in the hands of God.

Michelle Mahesan went even closer to danger. As she

Hindu groups in U.S. launch helpline

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON

A group of Hindu organisations in the U.S. has launched an exclusive helpline to address the issues faced by Indian students amidst the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis that has left a large number of them stranded and without accommodation.

MARKET WATCH

	20-04-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	31,648	-0.19
US Dollar	76.53	-0.18
Brent oil	26.54	-6.35

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	1730.45	+2.35
Asian Paints	455.95	-22.85
Axisc Bank	2378.30	-0.85
Bajaj Auto	4882.25	-117.45
Bajaj Finance	2308.25	0.10
Bharti Airtel	490.30	-12.15
BPCL	368.40	+8.30
Britannia Ind	2833.00	-0.85
Cipla	585.40	-12.60
Coal India	144.20	-4.55
Dr Reddys Lab	3844.75	-84.80
Eicher Motors	14214.45	-555.90
GAIL (India)	87.40	-2.30
Grasim Ind	521.65	-23.90
HCL Tech	470.00	14.75
HDPC	1727.70	47.10
HDFC Bank	944.85	34.55
Hero MotoCorp	1805.85	-30.05
Hindalco	116.45	-7.70
Hind Unilever	2336.55	-48.45
ICICI Bank	361.30	-14.25
IndusInd Bank	456.70	-17.75
Bharti InfraNet	159.30	-9.00
Infosys	653.30	24.55
Indian Oil Corp	87.55	1.55
ITC	180.70	-7.40
JSW Steel	167.50	-9.80
Kotak Bank	1177.75	-8.50
L&T	915.60	-17.30
M&M	355.85	-7.35
Maruti Suzuki	5331.35	-173.65
Nestle India Ltd.	16976.40	-347.90
NTPC	98.90	3.40
ONGC	74.00	-2.30
PowerGrid Corp	165.50	-2.25
Reliance Ind	1243.80	19.80
State Bank	192.50	-0.75
Shree Cement	18996.90	50.15
Sun Pharma	473.40	16.30
Tata Motors	80.45	3.60
Tata Steel	286.40	-6.95
TCS	1818.65	12.45
Tech Mahindra	524.85	15.00
Titan	975.50	0.00
UltraTech Cement	3516.55	-17.50
UPL	354.75	-8.55
Vedanta	81.45	-2.65
Wipro	181.10	-5.90
Zee Entertainment	140.65	0.50

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	76.34	76.66
Euro	82.89	83.27
British Pound	95.08	95.51
Japanese Yen (100)	70.85	71.15
Chinese Yuan	10.79	10.84
Swiss Franc	78.77	79.14
Singapore Dollar	53.65	53.88
Canadian Dollar	54.15	54.38
Malaysian Ringgit	17.45	17.54
Australian Dollar	48.60	48.81

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



RBI announces MPC meeting dates for FY21

The first meeting of the monetary policy committee for the current financial year will be held between June 3-5, 2020, the Reserve Bank of India said on Monday while announcing the meeting schedule for 2020-21. There will be five such meetings this year. By law, RBI should hold at least 4 meetings a year.

Make laptops, routers essentials: Nasscom

Industry body Nasscom has urged the government to expand the list of essential items to include products like laptops and routers to facilitate work from home amid the lockdown. Four days after allowing e-commerce firms to also deliver non-essential items such as electronic goods and readymade garments, the government on Sunday said non-essential items will continue to be prohibited during the lockdown till May 3. PTI

Finance Ministry sets time frame for banks to disburse loans

Government steps in to revive credit flow as economic activities resume after nationwide lockdown

MANOJIT SAHA
MUMBAI

As business activities resumed on Monday after a nationwide lockdown, the Finance Ministry swung into action to ensure credit flow to companies and set a specific time frame for banks within which a loan needs to be disbursed.

In a communication to State-run banks, the government said the move is aimed at ensuring credit flow for economic activities and the guidelines come into effect from Monday when the business activities resume.

"In the context of resumption of business activities w.e.f. 20.4.2020, timely

origination, sanction and disbursement of fund-based and non-fund based credit is critical for revival of economic activity," the communication from the Finance Ministry said.

Risk aversion

The move comes as banks have turned risk averse to extend loans amid an uncertain economic outlook caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As per the indicative time frames, from processing to disbursement of COVID-19 emergency credit lines, the Ministry said banks have to complete the disbursement within six to nine working



Spreading the word: The Ministry has also asked banks to ensure wide publicity of the details of the COVID-19-related credit schemes. ■ MAHINSHA

days of working capital loans to existing micro, medium and small enterprises;

corporate and agriculture borrowers as well as financial assistance to self-help

group borrowers.

Working capital reassessment of up to ₹5 crore for

Details of COVID-19 credit schemes must be tweeted by banks and tagged to Twitter handle of DoFS

existing borrowers have to be processed within six to nine days, while facilities of ₹5 crore and above need to be processed within 12 to 15 working days.

"Banks are advised to draw a detailed activity-wise time frame to achieve the turnaround time sought," the Ministry said in the communication which has been reviewed by *The Hindu*.

The Ministry has also asked banks to ensure wide

publicity of the details of the COVID-19-related credit schemes, checklist of documents required for each scheme and time frames for communicating decisions regarding sanctions. This information needs to be tweeted by banks and tagged to the Twitter handle of the Department of Financial Services (DoFS).

"Banks should ensure that relevant internal communication of the above mentioned schemes along with clear responsibilities and defined time frames are conveyed to the field-level functionaries and monitored on an ongoing basis," the Ministry said.

Infosys Q4 net rises 6%, revenue up 8%

IT services major to offer guidance after visibility improves; declares final dividend of ₹9.50 a share

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Following in the footsteps of Wipro, India's second-largest IT services firm Infosys, too, on Monday did not give any guidance for fiscal 2021 while announcing its fourth quarter results for FY2020

"Considering the business uncertainty emanating from COVID-19, the company is unable to provide guidance on revenue and margins for FY21 at this stage. The company will provide guidance after visibility improves," said Infosys.

Infosys CEO and MD Salil Parekh, while speaking about the mitigatory steps taken due to the pandemic, said, the Infosys team has achieved 93% remote working to ensure consistent service delivery for clients in this rapidly-changing environment.

"While the immediate short-term will be challenging, looking ahead, we can see that there is a strong in-

Future tense



Given the uncertain environment, we don't feel it is appropriate to provide guidance for revenue and operating margins in FY2021

SALIL PAREKH,
CEO and MD, Infosys

Metrics	Q4FY20	Q4FY19	Growth %
Revenue (₹ cr.)	23,267	21,539	8
Profit (₹ cr.)	4,335	4,078	6
Basic EPS (₹)	10.19	9.37	-
Final dividend (per share, ₹)	9.5	-	-

terest to consolidate with partners with high-quality and agile service delivery and strong financial resilience. I am confident we will emerge from this stronger," he added.

Displacement in model'

Infosys COO Pravin Rao, too, while speaking on the results, said the impact caused by the COVID-19 over the last weeks of March has led to a

"significant displacement" in the operating model while severely testing the business continuity plans of companies.

Meanwhile, Infosys reported a 6% rise in its consolidated net profit to ₹4,335 crore for the fourth quarter of fiscal 2020.

Infosys' revenue grew 8% to ₹23,267 crore for the quarter under review from the ₹21,539 crore of the corres-

Pandemic is severely testing the companies' business continuity models

PRAVIN RAO
Infosys COO

ponding period of the last fiscal, the company's state-

ment added.

Infosys' FY20 net profit was up 8% to ₹16,639 crore,

while revenue rose 9.8% to ₹90,791 crore from the previous fiscal. The company declared a final dividend of ₹9.50 per share.

Commenting on the future of business, Mr. Parekh said, "Clients want to consolidate with stronger players like us. We feel well-positioned in terms of staying relevant to clients globally in helping them in their digital play, cloud virtualisation, automation and cost-cutting initiatives."

"Clearly, there is a concern across industries and around the globe. Some dis-

cretionary work has come under pressure which is visible in Q1, Mr. Parekh added.

Responding to a query on the impact of COVID-19 on business, Mr. Rao said, "Several sectors are under pressure. There is a struggle in the cards and the payment space."

Supply chain broken'

"Manufacturing is under huge challenge in terms of both demand and supply. The industrial supply chain has completely broken down. Aviation, media and entertainment sectors are going through tough times. Communication is doing reasonably well; however, 5G roll-out will be delayed," he added.

All sectors are under pressure currently from the crisis emanating from the pandemic; the IT sector another

and export sectors more so because of their exposure to the markets most impacted by the virus.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Further, commenting on the success of work-from-home environment, Mr. Rao said, both employees and clients have gotten used to it and the remote working arrangement has been a success.

The company, however, said it won't opt for any fresh hiring this year. It also has suspended all increments and promotions this year. This year's hires comprise freshers, including from campuses and laterals, the company said on Monday.

"We are not in a hurry to come back to office. We will do it gradually, maybe 5% of our workers in two to three weeks, another 10 to 15% of workers in three to four weeks. We will have a high standard of sanitation, hygiene and social distancing for employees while working and while on the commute."

Responding to a query on a recent ransomware attack, the IT services firm said it had taken all precautions, invested in protection software in advance and also engaged threat detection advisors and agents who would look for any possible cyber danger.

The tightened surveillance measures for stock markets, introduced on March 23 for a period of one month, have been extended until May 28.

In a statement on Monday, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) said the stock markets are expected to remain volatile in the near future on account of COVID-19 pandemic and hence, the measures had to be extended.

Global wholesales of all Tata Motors' commercial vehicles and Tata Daewoo range in Q4 FY20 were at 72,608 units, lower by 49% over Q4 FY19.

Global wholesales of all passenger vehicles in Q4 FY20 stood at 159,321 units, lower by 26%.

Global wholesales for Jaguar Land Rover stood at 1,26,979 vehicles (number for Q4 FY2

QUICK SINGLES



Rahul donates WC bat for auction

Indian batsman K.L. Rahul, along with his brand Gully, has donated a lot of his cricket memorabilia, including his 2019 World Cup bat, for auction. All the proceeds from the auction will go to the 'Aware Foundation'. Rahul, who recently celebrated his 28th birthday, said: "Since it's a special day for me, me and Gully have decided to donate my cricket pads, my gloves, helmets and some of my jerseys to our collaboration partner Bharat Army."

Spain reaches deal to return to soccer practice

MADRID The Spanish government says it has reached a deal with the country's soccer league and federation for teams to return to practice. The government has not provided a timetable or given any other detail about when practice would resume. The government says strict protocols will have to be followed.



Leclerc wins virtual Shanghai GP

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc claimed a second victory in the Formula One Esports Virtual Grand Prix championship, winning the Shanghai GP. Leclerc started on pole on Sunday and finished ahead of Red Bull's Alex Albon and Guanyu Zhou, who races in Formula 2. "I'm actually enjoying very much playing and streaming. And I enjoy it even more when I win," tweeted Leclerc. AFP

We conquered the world: Bhupathi

Former doubles star opens up on relationship with Paes in interaction with Raja

TENNIS

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

It was high voltage entertainment as former National champion and doubles star Purav Raja engaged with multiple Grand Slam champion Mahesh Bhupathi in his 30-minute 'Chai with Raja' show on Instagram.

"I am honoured to be your first guest," said Bhupathi even as he teased Raja by asking him not to interfere during his two-minute monologue.

Ever the professional, Raja played the Davis Cup tie against Canada with Rohan Bopanna as partner under Bhupathi's captaincy and was equally comfortable playing the professional Tour with Leander Paes.

Bhupathi praised Raja for his "ability to get along with everybody."



Chai with Raja: Purav Raja got Mahesh Bhupathi to answer a host of questions via Instagram. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

When queried about his relationship with Paes, Bhupathi was candid.

The peak

"At the peak of our partnership, we conquered the world – won two Grand Slams in 1999, and made the finals of all four Grand Slams. We were No. 1. This year has been the second most exciting year, with our frying pan challenge that

was watched by about 70,000 people. A few abuse us, for not playing together and winning more Grand Slams. [But] We won three Grand Slams, were No. 1," said Bhupathi.

Terming that partnership as the high point of Indian tennis, Bhupathi touched on the influence of their combination saying, "We conquered the white man's game. Sania [Mirza], Rohan

frying pan challenge that

and all of you guys go there now, believing you can win."

Bhupathi was quite thrilled while recalling the country's first Grand Slam title, the 1997 French Open mixed doubles title with Japan's Rika Hiraki. "I was ranked No. 52, and we were the last team to get into the draw, because Rika Hiraki was No. 30."

Better backhand volley

He also said that Novak Djokovic could end up with the most Grand Slams, and that Nick Kyrgios had it in him to win one. He acknowledged that Paes had the better backhand volley and ducked a question as to whom he would not like to meet ever again, stating it was not the right thing "to say on an open platform".

Winding up the lively show, Bhupathi said that his mantra was to "keep working".

ICC CEC to meet on Thursday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The ICC's Chief Executives Committee (CEC) will discuss the financial implications of COVID-19 over a conference call on Thursday in which the World Test Championship and ODI league schedule will also be debated upon.

Called off

The ODI league was to start in June but the first series under it – South Africa's away three-match rubber against Sri Lanka in the first week of June – was cancelled on Monday due to the pandemic.

It is clear that no concrete decision can be taken unless the ICC is able to figure out how many events it is going to lose due to the global lockdown.

India will be represented at the CEC meet by secretary Jay Shah.

Keeping masters of the 64 squares busy

G. PRASAD
TRIUCHI

Chess activities have been buzzing online ever since the COVID-19 lockdown began. The tournaments that are being conducted through online platforms chess.com and lichess.org by the academies have kept the players busy.

Significantly, these tournaments have been attracting a good number of Grandmasters. "Online tournaments during lockdown is a wonderful initiative. Players do not have to worry about lack of practice," said GM R.R. Lakman, who takes part in the online events regularly.

He felt that the tournaments provide up-and-coming players a good chance to compete with Grandmasters and higher-rated players. "You get to learn more only when you play. In these times, the online competitions are a boon," he said.



academy has so far conducted around 50 tournaments during the lockdown period.

"Rarely do budding players get the opportunity to compete with GMs. This is one main reason they expect us to conduct more online events," said S. Ganesh Babu, secretary, Golden Knights Chess Academy (GKCA).

He said GKCA has also been organising intra-academy tournaments. "We have students here and abroad. Apart from attending classes online, they also compete among themselves with interest," added Ganesh Babu, an international arbiter.

Lakman said that he comes across a lot of promising talent during the online competitions and believes that the exposure they gain now will stand them in good stead once regular tournaments resume.

And the arbiters could not agree more.

Different timings

"The duration, which is for a minimum of one hour, varies between tournaments," explained international arbiter V.L. Anand Babu of the Lesuanthan Chess Academy.

"In most cases, players are allotted three minutes each for a game. The person with maximum points emerges victorious. In the event of players finishing on equal points, tie-breaker methods decide the winner," added Anand, whose



Archer Talukdar happy to resume outdoor training

Says he should stay prepared to attend selection trials anytime



Jayanta Talukdar training indoors. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

After battling past a brief spell of loneliness, seasoned archer Jayanta Talukdar has begun anew. Talukdar, who is employed with Tata, was asked to go on self-isolation on reaching Jamshedpur on March 24 following the break in National camp in Pune.

He was happy to resume outdoor training on Monday following a partial relaxation in the lockdown.

"I don't know how and when the Archery Association of India (AAI) will conduct the selection trials for the Olympics. I should stay prepared so that I can attend the trial any time," Talukdar told *The Hindu*.

Talukdar, who competed

in the 2012 London Olympics, said the break disturbed his rhythm. "I was doing well in the camp and had a close competition with Tarundeep Rai for the third spot (in the men's team event) after Atanu Das and Pravin Jadhav. After the lockdown, there was no scope to step out.

"Inside the house, I did some exercises, yoga and bow control. If you don't practice bow control, then it will take you one month to regain control. Since I was practising in indoors, I will get back my touch in 10 to 15 days."

For 34-year-old Talukdar, the biggest challenge was his mental agony. "It was frustrating, I had several sleep-

Djokovic against forced vaccination

Djokovic against forced vaccination

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BELGRADE

Novak Djokovic said he was against a compulsory coronavirus vaccination if it became a requirement for tennis players to travel to tournaments.

"Personally, I'm against vaccination. I wouldn't like that someone forces me to get a vaccine in order to be able to travel," he said. "I think it will be the number one challenge."

Contrasting wins for Caruana, Vachier-Lagrave

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Top-ranked American Fabiano Caruana proved a lucky winner against Russia No. 1 Ian Nepomniachtchi in the fourth for a 2.5-1.5 result. Against Giri, Vachier-Lagrave raced away to victories in the first two games and drew the next two.

The results (first round): Fabiano Caruana (USA) bt Ian Nepomniachtchi (Rus) 2.5-1.5; Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra) bt Arish Giri (Ned) 3-1; Magnus Carlsen (Nor) bt Hikaru Nakamura (USA) 3-2; Ding Liren (Chn) bt Alireza Firouzja (FIDE) 2.5-1.5.

Caruana, in serious danger in the first two games, was lucky to draw both

games. After drawing the third, Caruana nailed a frustrated Nepomniachtchi in the fourth for a 2.5-1.5 result. Against Giri, Vachier-Lagrave raced away to victories in the first two games and drew the next two.

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Mona, a doctor, is attending to coronavirus cases in NYC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Legendary athlete sprinter Milkha Singh's daughter and ace golfer Jeev Milkha Singh's elder sister has been running a "marathon" in New York – not on a track but at a hospital, battling the COVID-19 pandemic that has ravaged the world.

Mona Milkha Singh is a doctor at the Metropolitan Hospital Center in New York, attending to emergency patients of coronavirus, which has so far claimed more than 40,000 lives in the US alone.

"She is basically an ER (Emergency Room) doctor in Metropolitan Hospital Center in New York city.

"So, when someone comes with the coronavirus symptoms, she has to treat them," Jeev told PTI.

"She checks the patients, stabilises them, performs intubation (insertion of artificial ventilation tube into a patient) before they are sent to special wards to quarantine the COVID-19 patients," he added.

The 54-year-old Mona



At the forefront: Dr. Mona Milkha Singh, centre, is doing marathon sessions at a New York hospital. ■ JEEMILKHASINGH/TWITTER

passed out of Patiala Medical College before moving to the USA in the '90s. She has been working there for more than 20 years.

"I am so proud of her. She says it is like running a marathon every day."

"We keep asking how she is feeling and if there are any symptoms."

"I tell her to stay positive and boost her immune system," said Jeev.

"I am so proud of her. She says it is like running a marath-

on everyday."

"She has been working five days a week, sometimes day shifts, sometimes night shifts, 12-hour shifts and it is tough but she has to do the

Visualisation an effective tool, says Soumyadeep Roy

TABLE TENNIS

K. KEERTHIVASAN
CHENNAI

Soumyadeep Roy, former National table tennis champion and one of the National coaches of the senior teams, said it was important to maintain a positive outlook to life during lockdown.

Mental strength
He urged the paddlers to employ visualisation techniques to improve their mental strength.

"Visualisation is an effec-

tive tool in modern-day sport. Players could do visualisation where they can think of going to the academy and playing their shots, or playing in top tournaments.

"To begin with, it can be once a day for 10 minutes and twice a day for around 30 minutes for the seniors," said the 36-year-old on Monday while interacting online with the Sports Authority of India coaches and players on the topic of 'mental health during the present time and the importance of change

and adaptability'.

Soumyadeep said it took him nearly a year to change a few things in National champion Sutirtha Mukherjee's game.

Giant leap

"It won't happen overnight. We worked on a lot on her game."

"We were thrilled when she reached the [women's] top-100 in the World rankings this month for the first time in her career after being in the 500s last year," said Soumyadeep about his ward.



Proud master: Soumyadeep, right, with Sutirtha after she clinched the National crown. ■ FILE PHOTO: G. RAMAKRISHNA

Home gardening blooms around the world

It's a soothing, family friendly hobby that eases concerns over food security

REUTERS
CHICAGO

Jaime Calder all but gave up on gardening after moving from the fertile soils of Illinois to dusty Texas, but the novel coronavirus has changed her mind.

The magazine editor and her family of five planted collard greens, chard, onions, blackberries, watermelons and peppers expanding their garden while buckling down at home during the pandemic.

People around the world are turning to gardening as a soothing, family friendly hobby that also eases concerns over food security as lockdowns slow the harvesting and distribution of some crops. Fruit and vegetable seed sales are jumping worldwide.

Its supplementary gardening, said Ms. Calder. "There's no way this would sustain a family of five. But we're amping it up, so we can try and avoid the store a little more in the coming months."

Russians are isolating in out-of-town cottages with plots, a traditional source of vegetables during tough times since the Soviet era and rooftop farms are



Back to the roots: Jaime Calder with daughter Billie in their vegetable garden at Texas. ■ REUTERS

which has seen a five-fold rise in queries for advice on its website during the lockdown. Gardeners without yards are even planting potatoes in trash bags, he said.

Gardening could trim retail demand for produce but trips to the grocery store will still be necessary. Bert Hambleton, retail consultant for Hambleton Resources, said supermarkets will continue to see an overall increase in produce demand as would-be restaurant-goers eat at home instead of dining out.

The U.S. seed company W. Atlee Burpee & Co sold more than any time in its 144-

year history in March as the contagious respiratory virus spread, Chairman George Ball said.

When they cannot find seeds in stores, would-be gardeners in Britain are seeking advice on how to extract them from tomatoes and squash purchased in supermarkets, he said.

In Russia, demand for seeds rose by 20%-30% year-on-year in March, according to online retailer Ozon.

Seed demand typically goes up in tough economic times, said Tom Johns, owner of Territorial Seed Company in Cottage Grove, Oregon. The company temporarily stopped taking orders over the phone due to a surge in demand and reassigned some phone workers to physically fill online orders, he said.

"It doesn't take long for people to become very concerned about the food supply – either the cost or getting it," Mr. Johns said.

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