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THE HINDU

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Ramayan to make a comeback on Doordarshan
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NEARBY

Curfew in Jaipur's Walled City as man tests positive

JAIPUR

An indefinite curfew was clamped in the Walled City of Jaipur on Saturday to contain the spread of COVID-19 after a 45-year-old man, who returned from Oman on March 12, tested positive.

NORTH & EAST ▸ PAGE 4

One new COVID-19 case reported in Delhi

NEW DELHI

One new case of COVID-19 was reported in Delhi on Thursday, taking the total number of cases to 40. The new case is of a 33-year-old man, who is admitted at AIIMS Jhajjar, according to the Delhi government. He has a travel history to Philippines.

CITY ▸ PAGE 3

Provide shelterless riot victims places to stay: HC

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday ordered the Delhi government to ensure that all the riot victims, who may be shelterless, are provided with accommodation either at the community centres or at the night shelters, operated by the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board in the North East district.

CITY ▸ PAGE 3

RBI cuts rates, allows loan moratorium

To ease impact of lockdown, repo and reverse repo rates reduced; EMIs deferred for three months

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has opened up the liquidity floodgates for banks even as it reduced the key interest rate sharply by 75 bps and allowed equated monthly instalments (EMIs) to be deferred by three months in a move to fight the economic impact of the countrywide lockdown to check the spread of novel coronavirus.

The repo rate was reduced to by 75 bps 4.4% while the reverse repo rate was cut by 90 bps point to 4%. The higher reduction in the reverse repo rate was aimed at prompting banks to lend more rather than keeping their excess liquidity with the RBI.

Unprecedented crisis

"We are living through an extraordinary and unprecedented situation. Everything hinges on the depth of the COVID-19 outbreak, its spread and its duration," RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said.

"Clearly, a war effort has to be mounted to combat the virus, involving both conventional and unconventional measures," Mr. Das said.

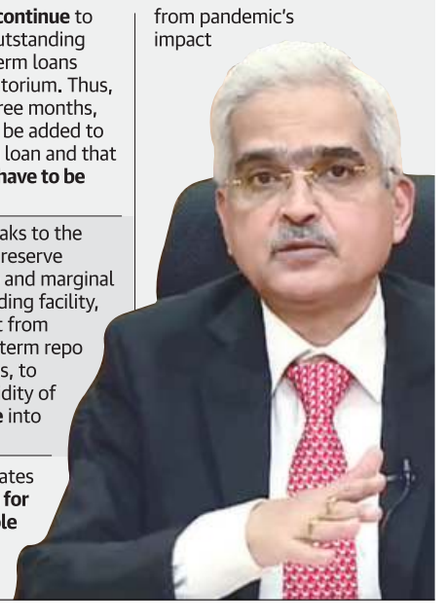
The meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) which was scheduled for March 31 and April 1,3, was advanced to March 27 due to the unprecedented crisis.

Easing the burden

The Reserve Bank of India has permitted a three-month deferral on all term loan repayments, even as it moved to inject more liquidity in the system. A look at RBI's moves and observations:

- Repo rate cut by **0.75 percentage points** to 4.4%
- For **all term loans** (home, auto, personal, agricultural, retail and crop loans) outstanding as of March 1, lenders can grant a moratorium, i.e., **a temporary halt**, of three months on payment of instalments
- Instalments include equated monthly instalments, credit card dues, principal or interest payments and bullet payments
- Tenure for such loans will be extended by three months after the moratorium period. This means that the instalments are **deferred** but **not waived**
- Interest **shall continue** to accrue on the outstanding portion of the term loans during the moratorium. Thus, at the end of three months, the interest will be added to the outstanding loan and that amount **will have to be repaid**
- Tweaks to the cash reserve ratio and marginal standing facility, apart from long-term repo auctions, to inject liquidity of **₹3.74 lakh crore** into the system
- Centre's estimates for **GDP growth for Q4 and the whole year** are now at risk from pandemic's impact

All lending institutions shall frame policies for providing the relief to eligible borrowers



While cutting benchmark rates, the RBI has continued with its accommodative stance. Four of the six members of the monetary policy committee voted in favour of a 75 bps rate cut.

Apart from cutting the repo rate, RBI has also reduced the cash reserve ratio of banks which released ₹1.37 lakh crore liquidity. This, along with other measures, will see an infusion of ₹3.74 lakh crore into the banking system.

RBI has also allowed banks to defer payment of EMIs on home, car, personal loans as well as credit card dues for three months till May 31. Since non-payment will not lead to non-performing asset classification by banks, there will be no impact on credit score of the borrowers.

State Bank of India, the country's largest lender, promptly responded to the RBI's action and reduced the lending rates linked to a external benchmark and the repo rate by 75 bps. Interest rate on external benchmark linked loans was cut from 7.8% to 7.05% and those are linked to repo rate were cut to 6.65%. "Consequently, EMIs on Home Loan accounts get cheaper by around ₹52 per 1 lakh on a 30-year loan," SBI said.

RBI'S GUNS BOOM ▸ EDITORIAL
CHIDAMBARAM HAILS INTEREST RATE CUT ▸ PAGE 9
MORE REPORTS ▸ PAGE 11

FinMin pulls up banks on shut branches

MANOJIT SAHA
MUMBAI

The Union Finance Ministry has asked banks to explain why several branches are closed.

"In view of the novel coronavirus lockdown, the government is monitoring the functioning of bank branches across the country. Accordingly, the daily data on the number of bank branches (of all scheduled commercial banks in the country), which are open and functioning is being collected by Indian Banks Association (IBA), and monitored by Department of Financial Services," the Ministry said in the communication to banks.

The Ministry cited the data and asked public sector banks to submit reasons on "why large number of branches are not functioning across the country". On private banks, it has asked the IBA to compile reasons.

The bank unions, however, cited the problems the staff faced in reaching the branches.

CONTINUED ON ▸ PAGE 8

Centre flags gap in screening travellers

States told to track 15 lakh passengers

Need for monitoring: Evacuees from Iran being examined at the Jodhpur airport recently. ▪ PTI/ @SPOKESPERSONMOD

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba has asked the States to effectively monitor 15 lakh international air passengers who came from January 18 to March 23 as there appeared to be a "gap" between the actual monitoring that "may seriously jeopardise the efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19."

Mr. Gauba wrote a letter to the Chief Secretaries that the list of such passengers as compiled by the Bureau of Immigration had been shared with all the States and Union Territories.

"We initiated screening of international incoming passengers at the airports with effect from January 18, 2020. I have been informed that up to March 23, 2020, cumulatively, the Bureau of Immigration has shared details of more than 15 lakh incoming international passengers with the States/UTs for monitoring for COVID-19. However, there appears to be a gap between the number of international passengers who need to be monitored by the States/UTs and the actual number of passengers being monitored," Mr. Gauba said.

"It is important that all international passengers are put under close surveillance to prevent the spread of the epidemic," the letter said. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) had repeatedly emphasised the importance of monitoring, Mr. Gauba noted.

CONTINUED ON ▸ PAGE 8
DETAILS OF AIR PASSENGERS LEAKED ONLINE ▸ PAGE 9

Kollam sub-collector jumps quarantine

State govt. suspends him for violation

STAFF REPORTER
KOLLAM

Kollam sub-collector Anupam Mishra, a 2016-batch IAS officer, has been suspended by the Kerala government for violating the COVID-19 quarantine norms.

Mr. Mishra had recently visited Singapore and was asked to remain in home isolation for 14 days on his return on March 19.

Anupam Mishra

However, he reportedly left for his home in Uttar Pradesh the same day without informing Health Department officials and the District Collector.

Mr. Mishra initially misled health officials by creating an impression that he was still at Kollam whenever they contacted him. His neighbours, however, noted his absence and informed the authorities. "When health officials went to his place as part of their routine visits to those under quarantine, they found him missing," Kollam Collector B. Abdul Nasar told mediapersons on Friday.

When contacted over the phone, Mr. Mishra said he was staying at Bengaluru with his brother, who is a doctor. But the police traced him to Sultanpur in U.P. He reportedly told officials who demanded an explanation that he went to his hometown for his safety.

The police have filed a case against the officer for violating government instructions.

Members of his staff, including the driver and gunman, are currently under home isolation.

Govt. to add 40,000 ventilators by June to battle virus

Death toll rises to 17 even as 75 fresh cases are added in the last 24 hours, including a 10-month-old infant from Karnataka

No-go zone: A view of a deserted street in Jaipur on Friday. ▪ ROHIT JAIN PARAS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

As the ICMR on Friday confirmed 75 fresh cases and 17 deaths in the COVID-19 outbreak, the Union Health Ministry announced that it was scaling up measures to combat the virus by bringing in 40,000 more ventilators in the next three months.

According to data released by the Ministry, a total of 724 individuals have tested positive; 27,688 samples from 26,798 individuals have been tested for the SARS-CoV2 virus as on March 27, an ICMR release said.

According to reports from States, the toll from the outbreak has touched 21, with 159 fresh cases in the last 24 hours. Karnataka reported its third death of a 60-year-old man, along with nine new cases, including a 10-month-old infant from Dakshina Kannada. Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh reported one fatality each. Kerala reported the maximum number of cases at 179 with 39 new cases, while Maharashtra had 153 cases.

Joint Secretary in the Health Ministry Luv Agarwal said India is working on the guidelines prescribed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to isolate, test, track and treat.

CONTINUED ON ▸ PAGE 8
MORE REPORTS ▸ PAGES 5, 8, 9 & 11

India to join WHO drug trial

India is all set to join World Health Organisation (WHO)'s "Solidarity Trial" aimed at rapid global search for drugs to treat COVID-19 infection. It will test four different drugs or combinations and compare their effectiveness. ▸ PAGE 9

Migrant workers continue to exit Capital on foot

ANUJ KUMAR
GHAZIABAD

Even two days after the lockdown, hundreds of migrant workers could be seen walking through Ghaziabad to reach home. Ramautar, a daily labourer in Delhi's Burari, had started at 4 in the morning with his wife and 12-year-old son for their home in Sambhal, Uttar Pradesh.

"Before I lose my meagre savings and my father, who is ill, I should reach my village," he said at the Link Road in Ghaziabad. On the U.P. government promising help for people like him, Ramautar said: "*Sarkar ki madad aane main time lagta hai* (Govt. help takes time to reach)."

DETAILS ON ▸ PAGE 2

After ossification test, court grants minor bail

He was arrested during Feb. riots in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Over a month after a boy was charged with rioting and arrested by police during the communal violence in north-east Delhi and subsequently sent to Mandoli jail, a Delhi court granted him bail on Friday following results of the bone ossification test confirming he is a minor.

Age contested

The minor's age was contested at the time of arrest, with his family, residents of Chand Bagh, claiming he was 13 years old. The police, which picked him up on February 25 even as riots convulsed the area, had claimed that the boy said he was 22. Police asked for an ossification test in the court.

The family said the boy, a Class 5 dropout, had gone to look for his 10-year-old brother who they thought was out on the streets when riots broke out. The police charged him with rioting, unlawful assembly, assault on public servant, mischief by fire and damage to public property, among others.

Advocate Abdul Gaffar, appearing for the boy, said that the report stated that he was 15 years old.

Metropolitan Magistrate Rakesh Kumar Rampuri granted bail to the juvenile. "In view of the tender age of the accused and suspension of work of regular courts and in view of the epidemic situation of coronavirus, accused is granted bail on furnishing a bail bond of ₹10,000 with one surety of like amount," the court said.

Kerala man was among Kabul gurdwara attackers

Mohsin had left for UAE two years ago

VIJAITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

A man from Kasaragod in Kerala is said to be one of the three terrorists who stormed a gurdwara in Kabul on March 25 and killed around 25 worshippers, a senior government official told *The Hindu*.

The official said at least three terrorists of the Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) had attacked the gurdwara. All were killed by Afghan security forces. "We know that at least one of them is an Indian, and the identity of the other two is being ascertained," the official said.

The attacker was identified as Abu Khalid Al-Hindi by *Al Naba*, the ISKP's propaganda wing. The magazine published a photograph of the Indian attacker. The other aliases used for him were Abdul Khayoom and Abdul Khalid.

Abdul Khayoom

The official said the person was identified as Mohsin from Thrikaripur in Kasaragod. He was 29 years old and a school dropout. His family has moved to Kannur. He left for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) more than two years ago.

POLICE NOT INFORMED ▸ PAGE 8

Indian seafarers stranded in Iran due to global shutdown

Trainee seamen are stuck on boats without money

M. KALYANARAMAN
CHENNAI

Among the over 250 Indians stranded in coronavirus-hit Iran are fishermen and seafarers. Many of these seafarers are trainee ratings, who have been marooned in boats abandoned by the owners in ports such as Khorramshahr, Bandar Mahshahr and Bushehr. The Iranian crew in the boats have left for their homes.

The abandoned vessels are practically dead ships with no power or fuel. The trainees who can't leave the port are making do with whatever supplies they can muster and keeping their spirits alive. Many say they have received no medical attention though none of them has shown any visible symptoms of COVID-19.

At sea: Some of the fishermen and seafarers stuck on a vessel at a port in Iran ▪ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

For many of these trainees, the 12-months they serve on the small Iranian ships – practically boats that ferry loose cargo from Dubai and back – will enable them to become certified seamen in India. Many have foregone salaries and some have put up money to agents in India to serve as trainees and become full-fledged seafarers so they can make a career in the merchant navy.

Some of them have completed 12 months but have been unable to leave.

SEAMEN IN IRAN ADVISED TO STAY WITH VESSELS ▸ PAGE 8

Timings
DELHI

SATURDAY, MAR. 28		
RISE	06:16	SET 18:37
RISE	08:36	SET 22:06
SUNDAY, MAR. 29		
RISE	06:15	SET 18:38
RISE	09:12	SET 23:02
MONDAY, MAR. 30		
RISE	06:14	SET 18:38
RISE	09:52	SET 23:58

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

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

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

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IN BRIEF

Delhi Police issues new order on online delivery

NEW DELHI

The Delhi police on Friday issued a fresh order on online delivery services, a day after it withdrew the first order issued on Thursday morning. The latest order issued by Commissioner of Police that complies with guidelines by the MHA, reads: "...while maintaining strict lockdown, supply of essential goods, including health infrastructure and home delivery of food be ensured".

SDMC distributes 20,000 food packets

NEW DELHI

The SDMC, with the help of restraunts and eateries here, distributed nearly 20,000 food packets on Friday. The effort is being undertaken with the help of other entities, such as mid-day meal kitchens, NGOs as well as district magistrates.

Air Quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi	69	Gurugram	42
Ghaziabad	72	Faridabad	75
Noida	60	Greater Noida	93

Good 0-50 | Satisfactory 51-100 | Moderate 101-200
Poor 201-300 | Very Poor 301-400 | Severe >400

Air Quality Index at 4 p.m. yesterday (Average of past 24 hours) | Source: CPCB

Migrant workers continue march home

Imminent danger to their livelihood overshadows COVID-19 scare; authorities arrange buses, food

ANUJ KUMAR
GHAZIABAD

As soon as it stopped raining, Ramautar started his march to his village in Sambhal with his wife and 12-year-old son from the Link Road in Ghaziabad. A daily labourer in Delhi's Burari, they started at 4 in the morning.

"Before I lose my meagre savings and my father, who is ill, I should reach my village," said Ramautar. He is not alone, even two days after the lockdown, hundreds of migrant workers could be seen walking through Ghaziabad to reach home.

On the U.P. government promising help for people like him, Ramautar said: "*Sarkarki madad aane main time lagta hai* (government help takes time to reach)."

On a day when two more COVID-19 positive cases were found in Ghaziabad, there were many like him on the road for whom the imminent danger to their livelihood overshadowed the virus scare. They had no clue of helpline numbers being published in local newspapers. They only see the police, with whom they maintain a distance.

A few hundred metres ahead Hashim, a fruit juice seller in Loni, and his three colleagues were keen to reach Kaushambi Bus depot to take a bus to Lucknow.

Food being served to migrant workers stuck at the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border near Ghazipur on Friday. ▪ SANDEEP SAXENA

"We have been told one U.P. Roadways bus will go today [Friday] but when one of my friends reached there, he was turned back by the police."

When *The Hindu* asked the policemen posted at the bus depot, they did not give a clear answer on the bus schedule. "It could be answered by the assistant regional manager (ARM)," said Station House Officer, Link Road. However, the labourers alleged that they were not allowed to enter the bus depot.

R.K. Tripathi, ARM, Kaushambi bus depot said: "Even I don't know the schedule. It comes straight from the district administration. On Thursday night, we sent some buses from Kaushambi and Lal Kuan."

With no Civil Defence around, many labourers were scared to approach the police. "There is no point, we have been told that a vegetable truck would go from Mohan Nagar in an hour. It will take us closer to Budaun. Then we will see," said Girish Chandra, who works as a mason in Delhi's Tughlaqabad, dressed in a safari suit. Asked about his sartorial sense in the face of a calamity, he said: "When we go to our native village, we have to go well-dressed. They don't know what we do in Delhi."

There were some like Mukesh who was anxious to reach home to contribute to the impending wheat harvest. "I work in a factory in Shahdara. With no work here, I better earn some money by working in the fields in my village near Dibai in Bulandshahr district."

Then there were some who were simply homesick. "I know [Delhi Chief Minister] Arvind Kejriwal is offering food to people like us, but we want to go home," said Asif, who makes bags in a factory in Paharganj. "When there is a problem, people want to be home with the family. Why is it so difficult to understand?" he wondered.

Later, Shailendra Kumar Singh, Additional District Magistrate (City), said most of the labourers were from other States.

COVID-19

"The idea of a lockdown is to ensure that people do not move. But now that they have come out because of various reasons, we are making sure that they reach their destinations," he said, adding: "On Thursday evening, 50 UP Roadways buses plied from Lal Kuan and Kaushambi."

"Today [Friday], we have decided to put 250 on the road. We have asked the conductors to screen the passengers for symptoms of COVID-19, particularly temperature. Those who are found symptomatic will not be allowed to board. The addresses of the rest would be passed on to the district administration of the destination," said the senior official, adding that the policemen were being directed to pass on the information to workers.

Later in the evening, like the Gautam Buddh Nagar administration, Ghaziabad administration also decided to establish shelter homes for workers where food will be served, confirmed Rajesh Mishra, Deputy Labour Commissioner, Ghaziabad.

Workers in Masoodpur survive without food

They hail from neighbouring States

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Hundreds of people, who have been providing various services to south Delhi's gated colonies, have been living without food and water as non-essential services have been restricted in the national capital to contain the COVID-19 epidemic. The affected community comprises workers from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Jharkhand.

"We are a group of around 200 men aged 40 to 45 and we worked as daily-wage workers, plumbers and carpenters in Vasant Kunj, Masudpur and other nearby areas. But for the last several days we have not earned any money and are surviving without food at present," said Shailender Ram who belongs to Bhagalpur in Bihar.

Mr. Ram said that the men from Bhagalpur form one group in the locality and are eager to return home as their previous employers have stopped calling them for work, adding: "We want to go home and expect the governments of Bihar and Delhi to help us with food and transportation."

Earlier, Rashtriya Janata Dal, in a social media message, had urged AAP leader Atishi and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to help the stranded group of workers.

> **We are a group of around 200 men aged 40 to 45 and we worked as daily-wage workers, plumbers and carpenters... We want to go home and expect the governments of Bihar and Delhi to help us with food and transportation**
>
> SHAILENDER RAM
> Daily-wage worker

The men are, however, only a part of a large working-class population, which had a steady demand in nearby middle-class neighbourhoods.

"The group from Bhagalpur has families back home and does not have any women among them. But the groups from M.P., Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh have several women and children who are also suffering as we have not been able to work," said Prakash Shah who used to work as a plumber in Vasant Kunj and hails from Bihar.

Inns at several gurdwaras opened for doctors, nurses, medical staff

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) on Friday said that inns at several of the gurdwaras in the city had been opened for doctors, nurses and medical staff who were treating COVID-19 patients at various hospitals here.

DSGMC president Manjinder Singh Sirsa said, "In Gurudwara Rakabganj, 40 rooms have been made available for doctors and nurses who are currently treating patients at Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital. Similarly, the sarai at Gurdwara Moti Bagh Sahib has been opened for doctors and nurses working at AIIMS and Safdarjung hospitals." For medical staff at Lady Hardinge Hospital, inns at Gurdwara Bangla Sahib were made available, he said.

A school and college in east and west Delhi will also start serving langar to the needy, the DSGMC said. "We are ready to provide food to three-four lakh people and accordingly, langar will be arranged," Mr. Sirsa said.

Ragpickers lack protective gear, awareness

Most know little about COVID-19, say they need to work to make ends meet

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

Subhash Kumar (25), who was standing atop a tricycle filled with garbage and emptying it at Gulmohar Park in south Delhi on Friday morning, did not have gloves, masks, or boots on.

"I don't know anything about COVID-19," the youth hailing from U.P.'s Mathura said, as he transferred wastes from the tricycle to a metal box with bare hands. Kumar works for the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC), under a contractor.

His friend standing next to him also did the same without any gear on. "They [government] gave us gloves, but it was very thin and got torn," he said.

Even after the Capital reporting 39 COVID-19 cases and one death so far, children to adults, who work as ragpickers were not found wearing proper gloves, boots, masks, or using sanitisers, a spot check by *The Hindu* in central, south, and east Delhi has revealed.

Also, many garbage collectors and sanitation workers working for different civic bodies here said there were not enough masks and gloves and they were not given hand sanitisers. Experts said this is "dangerous" for the workers and could lead to infections. They said the government should provide them gears.

Garbage collectors working without safety gear at Gulmohar Park on Friday. ▪ NIKHIL M BABU

At Mayur Vihar extension in east Delhi, 12-year-old Vikas was digging into a waste dump, with bare hands. He did not have a mask or footwear on. "My father also works as a ragpicker and I earn about ₹50-100 a day," the 12-year-old, who hails from Bihar, said. "I had bought a mask, but it's torn now," he added.

The boy said he knew about the disease, but shook his head when asked if he knew how it spread. He said there was no aid from the government.

"When there is an outbreak of such a highly contagious disease, ragpickers should be given PPE [personal protective equipment], but they have not been not provided any equipment," said Delhi-based waste management expert, Swati Singh Sambyal. "These people live in densely populated areas and if even one of them gets infected from some waste from a quarantined house, image the blast of infections that will follow," she said.

She said that even safai karmacharis working for government agencies, mainly under contractors, have not been provided enough equipment.

"The government is doing nothing for the ragpickers. They are not even spreading awareness," said Chitra Mukherjee of Chintan, an NGO which works for ragpickers.

Multiple other workers who work for the SDMC and the East Delhi Municipal Corporation, under contractors, said they were not given enough protective equipment or sanitisers. In New Delhi Municipal Council limits, people working for the government were, however, largely found using masks and rubber gloves.

Phool Chand (35), was sporting a single-use mask at BK Dutt Colony in central Delhi. "You have to change gloves every two to four days. How can I afford it? The government should provide us gloves," he said.

The ragpickers *The Hindu* spoke to had little idea about COVID-19, but said they need to keep on working to make ends meet.

Savings running out, soaring grocery prices worry Harijan Colony families

'Paying rent will be tough as monthly bills have doubled'

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

With a family of four to support, Ajit (28), staying at Harijan Colony in Sector 43 here, is worried over the sudden spurt in prices of groceries, milk and vegetables in the wake of a nationwide shutdown of non-essential services to contain the spread of COVID-19, and his fast-exhausting savings.

Hundreds of families, mostly domestic workers, housekeeping staff and security guards, in the colony echoed the same concerns.

"Five kg wheat flour that cost ₹180 earlier is priced at ₹250 now. The price of mustard oil used for cooking has gone up from ₹100 to ₹150. Even a milk packet, that cost ₹10 earlier, now costs ₹15. The prices of vegetables, such as potatoes, have also increased substantially. At this rate, our monthly bill would be double," said Ajit, who worked at a salon in DLF Phase-IV before it was shut due to the shutdown.

People in the colony said a salary cut will add to their woes. ▪ ASHOK KUMAR

Aakash, 21, who worked with food delivery app Zomato, said he even called up the helpline number to inform about the rise in prices and though they assured him to pass on the information to the authority concerned, they "did nothing much".

Shahbuddin, who worked as an office boy, was worried about the payment of the rent for his single-room accommodation, ₹3,500.

"I am not sure whether the company will pay me the entire salary or only for the number of days I worked before the shutdown was announced. I have two children and my wife. I cannot survive for more than a week with my current savings. Only if I could go back to my home in West Bengal, I could manage. But that too is not possible now," said Shahbuddin dejectedly.

Gautam Hazra, who worked as a housekeeping staff, has similar concerns. He said his landlord was unlikely to waive-off the rent or accept a delayed payment.

Arun, another resident, said most of the families had savings to survive for 7-10 days.

Sukhdev, a vegetable vendor, said the wholesale prices of vegetables had gone up in the *mandi*.

उत्तराखण्ड पावर कारपोरेशन लिमिटेड
कार्यालय विद्युत वितरण मण्डल, बिजली भवन बाजपुर रोड काशीपुर।

इस कार्यालय से प्रकाशित निविदा संख्या 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57/2019–20 जिसको क्रय करने की तिथि 26/03/2020 एवं खोले जाने की तिथि 27/03/2020 थी अपरिहार्य कारणों से विस्तारित किया जाता है। निविदा संख्या 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57/2019–20 के क्रय किये जाने की तिथि 07/05/2020 खोले जाने की तिथि 08/05/2020 की जाती है। उक्त निविदाओं की अन्य शर्त यथावत रहेंगी।

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पत्रांक- डैम्प विशिष्टम० (क्रय)/निविदा सूचना
दिनांक- 26.03.2020

अधीक्षण अभियन्ता
विद्युत वितरण मण्डल, काशीपुर

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
Information & Cultural Affairs Department
Nabanna, 325, Sarat Chatterjee Road, Howrah-711102

Corrigendum Notice

Memo no:- 1020_ICA(N) **Date:-** 27/03/2020

On behalf of Information and Cultural Affairs Department, Govt. of West Bengal, the e-tender related to **engagement of an agency for operation, control and management of light system, sound system and stage shifting, ushering of Madhusudan Mancha, Kolkata** vide Tender Memo No. 898_ICA(N) dt. 13/03/2020 and Tender ID 2020_ICAD_279161_1, the last date of submission of bid has been scheduled on 24/04/2020 instead of 30/03/2020 and the bids will open on 27/04/2020 instead of 01/04/2020.

Sd/-
Director of Culture
Government of West Bengal
Information & Cultural Affairs Deptt.

ICA-T1754(3)/2020

एचएलएल लाइफकेयर लिमिटेड
(भारत सरकार का उद्यम)
HLL Lifecare Limited
(A Government of India Enterprise)
CIN: U25193 KL 1966 GOI 002621
HLL Bhavan, Poojappura, Thiruvananthapuram- 695 012, Kerala, India. Tel: +91 471 2354949

EMERGENCY PROCUREMENT OF VENTILATORS (COVID - 19)

Tender No. HLL/SD/RBD/2019-20/TENDER/15 DTD 05.03.2020
Amendment No 5

HLL Lifecare Ltd., a Mini Rata PSU under Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India invites bids from the interested manufactures / distributors for the supply of VENTILATORS as part of COVID – 19 Emergency Procurement.
The tender is already published in our website **www.lifecarehll.com** for emergency procurement of various items. The details for ventilators along with specifications can be seen as per Amendment No. 5. You may kindly refer the above website and may participate in the tender. You may also provide your offer to below email ids;
sdcovidep.hll@lifecarehll.com, **sdcovidep.hll@gmail.com**
(Kindly continue to visit the above website for any updates / additional products as part of COVID–19 Emergency Procurement)
In case of any clarification with respect to this tender you may contact the following officers:
Mr. Aswin AS, Manager (Sourcing), Mob, 9400027975
Mr. Vinod G Pillai (Vice President-Sourcing), Mob: 7824001017
Vice President (Sourcing)

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GUJARAT STATE
NARMADA, WATER RESOURCES, WATER SUPPLY AND KALPSAR DEPARTMENT

E-TENDER NOTICE No. 20 of 2019-20 (Corrigendum-I)

The Tenders are invited on behalf of governor of Govt. of Gujarat by the office of the Executive Engineer, Ambica Division, Navsari for "Construction of "Residential Quarters" at Navsari Irrigation Colony, Ta., Dist. Navsari" in B-2 form through online system.

1. Estimated Cost	Rs. 3,80,84,650.49
2. Date of uploading	Up to Dt 07/03/2020
3. Last Date & Time for receipt of online tender	Up to Dt 20/04/2020 @ 18.00 Hours instead of Up to Dt 07/04/2020 @ 18.00 Hours
4. Physical Documents Submission of EMD Tender fee & other Documents during office hours.	Dt. 21-04-2020 to Dt. 27-04-2020 instead of Dt. 08-04-2020 to Dt. 15-04-2020 at 18.00 Hrs. In the office of the Executive Engineer, Ambica Division, opp. Tata bag, Near Parsi Hospital, Lunsikui, Navsari-396445, Phone No:- 02637-258054 **(Due to Corona Virus)**
5. Tender Opening date for online tender received	Date: 28-04-2020 instead of Date: 16-04/2020 @ 12.00 P.M. The Superintending Engineer, Surat Irrigation Circle, Surat-395001 Ta- & Di- Surat
6. Name & Address of Division Office	Executive Engineer, Ambica Division, Navsari Opp. Tata bag, Lunsikui, Navsari-396445, Phone No:- 02637-258054

The tender documents for the works will be available on the web site www.nprocure.com & further details notice can be seen at www.statetender.com
MAHITI/NAV/664/2020

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified female **Namely** : Kanti, **W/o** Unknown, **R/o** Unknown, **Age :** about 72 years, **Height :** 5'1", **Complexion :** Shallow, **Face** : Round, **Built** : Medium, **Wearing** : Multi colour suit-salwar has been died during the treatment in G.T.B Hospital, Delhi on 16.03.2020. She was admitted in IBHAS Hospital, Delhi since 22.11.1997. In this regard a case vide DD No. 65-B dated 16.03.2020 has been lodged at P.S. Gokal Puri, Delhi. The dead body has been preserved in the mortuary of GTB Hospital, Delhi.
Any person having any information or clue about this dead female may kindly inform to the following:-

SHO
P.S. Gokal Puri, Delhi
North-East Distt., Delhi
Ph. No. 011-22810485, 22810486

DP/70/NE/2020

JHARKHAND INDUSTRIAL AREA DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
(A GOVERNMENT OF JHARKHAND UNDERTAKING)
OFFICE OF THE MANAGING DIRECTOR
JIADA, 5TH FLOORNEW JIADA BUILDING, INDUSTRIAL AREA, NAMKUM, RANCHI – 834010

Latter No:-132 Date: - 27/03/2020

CORRIGENDUM NOTICE
Extension of Date

Due to unavoidable circumstances the PR No. 226773 dated 12/03/2020 and NIT No. JIADA/08/2019-20 and Tender Reference No. JIADA/08/Dugni/2019-20 is extended as here under.

Name of Work	Construction of PCC Road ,1m x 1m size Drain, Cross Drain at Dugni Industrial Area JIADA.
Last date and Time of submission of online tender	22/04/2020 up to 5.00 P.M
Last date and Time for Physical submission of original demand draft towards cost of BOQ and Earnest Money	24/04/2020 up to 1.00 P.M
Date and Time for Opening of Tender	24/04/2020 at 3.30 P.M

Other terms and conditions will remain same.

Secretary
Sd/-
JIADA

PR 227567 (RIADA) 19-20 (D)

THE HINDU
DISCLAIMER: Readers are requested to verify and make appropriate enquiries to satisfy themselves about the veracity of an advertisement before responding to any published in this newspaper. THG PUBLISHING PVT LTD., the Publisher & Owner of this newspaper, does not vouch for the authenticity of any advertisement or advertiser or for any of the advertiser's products and/or services. In no event can the Owner, Publisher, Printer, Editor, Director/s, Employees of this newspaper/ company be held responsible/liable in any manner whatsoever for any claims and/or damages for advertisements in this newspaper.

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY

E-Tender Notice

e-tender Notice No. 91 of 2019-20 (Open) - Engg/DDU Division

On line (through e-tendering) for the following work is invited by DRM/Engg/DDU for and on behalf of the President of India from experienced and financially as well as technically sound contractors including those enlisted with the Railway. CPWD, BSNL, MES, PWD and other public sector undertakings.

Sl. No. 1. Tender No. 82-DDU-SRDEN-II-19-20, Name of work with its location : Repairs & replacement of tube well at Gaya Under ADEN/GAYA. **Approx. cost of the work:** ₹ 20270924.63, **Earnest Money :** ₹ 251400.00

Sl. No. 2. Tender No. 83-DDU-SRDEN-II-19-20, Name of work with its location : Extension of RPF Barrack and Provision of boundary wall around RPF barrack at RFJ station under ADEN/Gaya. **Approx. cost of the work:** ₹ 6646278.65, **Earnest Money :** ₹ 132900.00

Sl. No. 3. Tender No. 84-DDU-SRDEN-II-19-20, Name of work with its location : Hiring of vehicle for official use for ADEN/Gaya for 24 months. **Approx. cost of the work:** ₹ 1545114.22, **Earnest Money :** ₹ 30900.00

Date & time for submission of e-tender : 13.04.2020, Up-to 12:00 hrs., **(v) Website particulars of e-tendering : www.ireps.gov.in**

Divisional Railway Manager, Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhayay Division

PR/2487/DDU/Eng./T/19-20/44

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IN BRIEF

IIT-D extends date for PhD, PG admissions

NEW DELHI

IIT-Delhi has announced that it has extended the last day for submission of online applications for PhD and PG admissions upto April 20 in view of the COVID 19 outbreak. The institute said that submission of application is only through online and candidates are not required to send hard copy of the application and fee receipt.

Quarantined woman travels to Punjab

FARIDABAD

A woman resident of Sector 21 here has violated the directions for month-long home quarantine to go to her parents in Punjab's Jalandhar. According to the police, the woman, had returned from Germany with her three-year-old son on March 17.

One new case in city; total cases stand at 40

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

One new case of COVID-19 was reported in the city on Thursday, taking the total number of cases to 40 with 33 active cases and one death.

The new case is a 33-year-old man, a resident of West Delhi, and he is admitted at AIIMS Jhajjar, according to the Delhi government. He has a travel history to Philippines.

Of the 40 cases, five have been discharged from the hospital. Also, of the total number of cases, 30 have travelled abroad and 10 are contacts of infected people.

"Total contacts traced till date - 4,599, out of which 1,639 contacts of first 6 cases have completed their 14 days of quarantine," an official statement said.

Shiv Vihar hit twice, first by riots and then by COVID-19 curbs

Renovation work at damaged houses stuck due to unavailability of labourers

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

It has been over a month since Mohammed Qutubuddin went to work. He sews for a living and said that he has been dependent on his neighbours and relatives for basic groceries. First, it was communal riots and now it is COVID-19 outbreak which hit the residents of Shiv Vihar, both monetarily and mentally.

"Aakhri baar kaam par 23 tareek ko gaya tha. Uske baad se kuch nahi kiya. Kamaane ka koi aur zariya bhi nahi hai (The last time I went to work was February 23. Haven't been able to work after that. There's no other way of earning also)," said Qutubuddin, who has a family of five to feed and ₹ 2,200 rent to pay.

In the narrow lanes of Shiv Vihar, many houses were found locked. Those still residing said that most of the locked houses were on rent and were either vandalised, looted or burnt. Those living there didn't return and went on rent at other places.

"One thing that is good now is that there are less people which reduces the chances of Coronavirus," said Nazar Mohammed, a government school teacher whose house was burnt during the riots.

On Thursday, people were found holed up in their houses or at most, sitting on their doorsteps and that's how they spend their days.

"Television sets in most houses were looted and hardly one or two houses have been able to buy again. Taking precautions, people mostly stay indoors or come just till the doorstep or sometimes the street. We also maintain distance while talking," said Ikram Hasan (56) wearing a mask.

People are found holed up in their houses or at the most sitting on their doorsteps in riot-hit Shiv Vihar on Thursday.
▪ HEMANI BHANDARI

COVID-19

Work hit

A few streets ahead resides Mr. Mohammed in a double storey house. His immediate concern is to fix his electricity board and paint the remaining house.

"When BSES workers came, the electricity was temporarily fixed. Only a bulb is working as of now. I had started renovating the house about 10 days ago and brought some material that was required. Painting of half the house is left. Flooring is also left. Because of the curbs, labourers are not coming. I am living here while my wife and kids are living in a rented accommodation on the next street," he said, adding that so far, he has received ₹50,000 as relief compensation while the rest is yet to arrive.

Mr. Mohammed said that earlier, people with burnt houses in the area didn't renovate the houses believing that they won't get compensation if they do so. Now, when these rumours have dispelled, they can't because of unavailability of resources, he added.

Talking about relief compensation and material, the residents said that they are in dire straits.

"There are two grocery stores nearby for basic necessities. Sometimes, goods are available at the shops. Vegetable prices have gone up to unimaginable levels. The last time we received ration as relief material was on March 20 before the curbs. We can't hoard supplies because we can't afford that. We don't know how to deal with this situation," said wife of an autorickshaw driver Aslam (45), who did not wish to be named. Aslam has been out of work since riots.

Suman (40) and her husband Satyapal (47) also shared their bit of problems. Their house was also looted during the riots and in the absence of TV, they sat at their doorstep and while away time. Bigger problem for the couple and their family is that their water connection hadn't been restored because of which they had to move on rent in Johripur.

"We had a combined connection with five other houses. One of those houses was burnt and their connection hasn't been restored because of which ours also wasn't. Now it cannot happen because of the curbs. Therefore, we spend the day here and go back late evening," said Suman.

Fear of attack

CRPF men were seen guarding the streets and when asked about it, Mr. Mohammed said, "Hindus and Muslims are scared of each other and talk only when required". Explaining further, he said "Hindus think that we'll harm them because we have been attacked in the riots and Muslims think that Hindus can attack us again". However, Afsar Khan (56) is of a different opinion and said that he is sure his Hindu neighbour will help him if and when required.

At the far end of the street sat Munni Devi (70) observing Navratri fast. Her double storey house was burnt during the riots too. Her husband Naresh Chand who used to run a vegetable shop has been out of work since riots and the son and daughter-in-law haven't returned home because "they don't feel safe". Living in a house with no gate because they haven't been able to get it fixed owing to the curbs, Devi said, "I am fasting and praying to God that this ends and everyone stays safe and everything becomes normal again".

Ensure shelterless riot victims are given accommodation: HC

Govt. told to provide food, water and medical aid to them

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday ordered the Delhi government to ensure that all the riot victims, who may be shelterless at the moment, are provided with accommodation, either at the community centres or at the night shelters, operated by the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) in the north-east district.

A Bench of Justice Siddharth Mridul and Justice Talwant Singh, in a hearing conducted through video-conferencing, also directed the government to ensure the provision of food, water and medical aid to such individuals.

"The GNCTD and EDMC [East Delhi Municipal Corporation] shall furthermore, individually and jointly, ensure that sanitation, cleanliness and hygiene is properly and regularly maintained at the locations/centres/shelters, where the riot victims are to be housed," the Bench said.

Idgah camp

The High Court also issued notice to the government on the petition which sought direction to authorities to reopen the relief camp at Idgah, Mustafabad and to provide proper food supplies, sanitation, cleaning of toilets, adequate water and security.

The plea filed by one Shaikh Mujtaba Farooq sought for a "large contingent of cleaning staff from the EDMC to go immediately to the area to carry out the cleaning on a war footing and continue cleaning the area and the drains twice a day".

The plea also asked to provide the affected with doctors and medical care immediately. It also sought the authorities from preventing or interfering with the work of genuine NGOs and media persons providing assistance, apart from upgrading the security.

Over 270 mohalla clinics shut in city

Staff unable to reach facilities; will be issued special passes

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

Despite Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's assurances, over 270 of about 480 Aam Aadmi Mohalla Clinics (AAMCs) in the city were shut on Friday, mainly because employees were unable to reach the government-run facilities where treatment is provided for free, according to officials.

"There is a rumour that every mohalla clinic will be closed. This is wrong as we will ensure every clinic is fully functional during this tough time," the Chief Minister had said on Thursday.

Lakhs of people, mainly from lower-middle income groups, rely on the clinics for medical care.

The government had earlier this week directed heads of hospitals and institutions under the health department to hire private vehicles for officials to reach their workplace as many were "unable to do so due to the lockdown". But this facility is not available to staff of AAMCs as they are "empanelled" and not permanent staff, according to officials.

A view of a mohalla clinic in Tilak Nagar on Friday.
▪ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

"They are essential services, so they should get passes and come for work," a senior government official said.

"We have started issuing special ID cards to the staff so that they can reach the clinics," a health department official told *The Hindu*.

"The staff gets paid according to the number of patients that visit the clinic and are not government employees. They do not have any government ID cards. Because of this, police are not allowing many of them to commute to the clinics," the official added.

"About 230 of the 480 clinics were open on Wednesday, but it fell to 200 on Thursday. Today also more than 200 clinics were closed," the official added.

CM appeals to migrant labourers to return

Kejriwal says arrangements have been made to serve food to four lakh people

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Friday appealed to migrant workers scrambling to leave the city in the wake of COVID-19 restrictions to return as arrangements related to their sustenance, especially food, were being made.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal asked the workers, from U.P., Bihar, Jharkhand, and Bengal to return from the Delhi border even as he announced that a panel of senior doctors tasked with creating an SOP in this regard had put plans in place to handle a daily surge of 100 to 1,000 new COVID-19 patients.

He added that a pension of ₹5,000 each had been transferred to the bank accounts of eight lakh beneficiaries and ₹5,000 would further be transferred in the first week of April.

"We had our regular meeting of the apex committee dealing with COVID-19. We have discussed various issues, we first saw whether the systems to ensure the supply of essential services to the people are working at the ground level or not, and how to solve the problems and obstacles, if any," Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal said at a joint digital press conference which he addressed with Mr. Kejriwal.

"We have also discussed going forward on dealing with the surge in the virus and protecting the people... on whatever is needed to improve and upgrade the healthcare services," Mr. Baijal said.

Things were, Mr. Kejriwal said, "functioning smoothly" as of now. There were currently 40 COVID-19 positive cases in Delhi of which 29 had a travel history and 10 were via local transmission.

The situation was under control since there was no community transmission, but, he said the government had to be prepared and learn from other nations for the possibility of the epidemic reaching Stage 3.

"We have to think about whether we are ready to handle the outbreak in Delhi...I had formed a team of five doctors under Dr. Sareen, the head of ILBS hospital. The team submitted its report yesterday [Thursday] including a comprehensive plan of action on the preparations done in the wake of the surge in COVID-19 cases in Delhi," he said.

"We have everything prepared if we get 100, 500 or 1,000 new cases every day... We have a detailed action plan for arranging isolation beds, ventilators, ICU beds, PPE, testing mechanisms ambulances, medical staff... it is not like we expect this surge... but we are just avoiding taking a chance and preparing everything ahead," he said.

Mr. Kejriwal stated that the Delhi government had arranged for food to be provided to 2,00,000 people from Friday and that they sought to double this number to four lakh by Saturday even as he appealed to migrant workers to return from Delhi's borders.

HELPLINE NUMBERS
COMMON HELPLINE — +91-11-23978046
DELHI — 011-22307145
GHAZIABAD — 0120 4186453
NOIDA — 8076623612/6396776904
GURUGRAM — 108/ 0124-2322412/ 9911519296/ 7015523417/ 9654231756

Assist those in transit, demands Sonia

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday asked the government to arrange for a one-time transport for migrant workers who have been forced to walk on highways.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi said: "It is my earnest appeal to assist those who are trapped in transit." She suggested that State transport buses should be arranged for the workers and that District Collectors should take care of people who can't afford to stay in lodges or guest houses.

In a tweet, Congress leader Ahmed Patel expressed over migrant workers walking on empty highways and demanded that the Centre issue a directive to enable one-time train/bus service so these people can reach home.

Police helping out elderly

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police, with the help of volunteers, is reaching out to senior citizens living alone in the city, said a police officer on Friday.

The police said that they are getting numerous calls from senior citizens who had registered themselves with the Senior Citizen Cell of Delhi Police. More than 10,000 people have registered with the cell so far.

As per the rule, a beat constable of the police station concerned has to visit the homes of registered senior citizens once a week and also keep in touch with them over phone.

"In the last four days, we have received over 4,000 calls on the helpline number, where people have made request for groceries and medicines," said a police officer.

Worried about their 'trapped' children, parents call up police

Helpline flooded by calls requesting movement passes

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

"My daughter is trapped in a PG hostel in Mukherjee Nagar. Please evacuate her," requested a man on a phone call to Delhi Police helpline on Friday.

"We are flooded with calls requesting transport facility as people mostly from Bihar and U.P. want to get out of the city. We try to make them comfortable by assuring them that they will get food and other facilities but they just want to go back," said a police officer.

Delhi police have received over 4,000 calls till Friday on their 24-hour helpline dedicated to addressing queries related to the 21-day lockdown. They are getting calls from people who have run out of essential commodities like food and medicines. They are getting maximum calls from people who want passes to commute from Delhi to U.P. and Bihar.

Buses and food

The helpline: 011-23469526, was set up to answer queries related to circulars, instructions and prohibitory orders issued by the police. On Friday, Delhi police provided buses to the people who were walking towards the U.P. border.

"We saw scores of people walking on the highway. They had no food and water with them. We provide them food and arranged buses to ferry them till the U.P. borders," said a police officer.

Delhi police said they are requesting people to stay at home and that there is no need to panic. They are in touch with NGOs and the Delhi government to provide food to the people in need.

"We are not providing any passes for travel purposes other than a vehicle involved in essential services. We are in touch with U.P. and Haryana police to provide hassle-free passage to essential goods," added the officer.

The police said they are getting numerous calls from parents, who are requesting help for their children trapped in PGs and hostels. "We assure parents that there is no need to panic," added the officer.

AAP govt. to distribute 50% extra ration

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has issued an order increasing the entitled quantity of ration (wheat and rice) by 50% for April under the Public Distribution System (PDS) to its beneficiaries. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had made this announcement on March 21 and had said that it would help 72 lakh beneficiaries.

The beneficiaries will now get 7.5 kg of foodgrains that include 6 kg of wheat and 1.5 kg of rice free of cost. The order states that ration for April will be distributed through Fair Price Shops starting March 30. The shops have been asked to distribute the foodgrains to the beneficiaries on all seven days of the week.

TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT
Mr. N SELVA KUMAR
PH: 9820350726
selvakumar.n@thehindu.co.in
Mr. MANOJ KUMAR KUSHWAHA
PH: 9999490055
manoj.kushwaha@thehindu.co.in
THE HINDU
India's National Newspaper

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भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान पालक्काड
Under Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India
मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय के अधीन, भारत सरकार
IIT PALAKKAD
Advt. No. IITPKD/AR/01/2020 Dated: 28th March 2020
IIT PALAKKAD INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR ADMISSION TO
1) Ph.D. programs in the areas of (i) Chemistry (ii) Civil Engineering (iii) Computer Science and Engineering (iv) Electrical Engineering (v) Humanities and Social Sciences (vi) Mechanical Engineering and (vii) Physics and
2) M.S. by research in the areas of (i) Civil Engineering (ii) Computer Science and Engineering (iii) Electrical Engineering and (iv) Mechanical Engineering.
Details of the categories of admission, areas of research and other details are available at the website https://iitpkd.ac.in.
Last date for submission of online application: April 30, 2020
Dean (Academic Research)

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Five more test positive in West Bengal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Five more persons, including three children aged between nine months and 11 years, tested positive for COVID-19 in West Bengal on Friday.

The number of people infected with the virus stands at 15 in the State

"They (the five tested positive) have a history of contact with a positive case from Delhi who came from the U.K. on March 16," the official bulletin of State the health department said.

It also added that all those who tested positive belonged to "a closed group of siblings and relatives". The others who tested positive were 45 and 27 years old. Till Friday 330 people have been tested for the viral infection. One person had died in the State on Monday.

Curfew in Jaipur's Walled City after man tests positive for virus

With detection of 7 new cases, number of patients goes up to 50 in Rajasthan

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

An indefinite curfew was clamped in the Walled City of Jaipur on Saturday to contain the spread of COVID-19 after a 45-year-old man residing in Ramganj locality, who returned from Oman on March 12, tested positive. The number of confirmed virus-infected patients in Rajasthan increased to 50 with the detection of seven fresh cases – two each in Bhilwara and Dungarpur, and one each in Jodhpur, Churu and Jaipur.

The man in Ramganj had returned from Oman to India via Dubai and reportedly came in contact with a large number of people during the last fortnight. He was admitted to Sawai Man Singh Government Hospital here on March 25 with influenza and was shifted to the isolation ward on Friday after diagnosis of COVID-19 infection.

Policemen on duty at Badi Chaupar in the Walled City of Jaipur after impostion of curfew on Friday. ▪ ROHIT JAIN PARAS

His wife and two children were also sent to a separate isolation facility, while about 25 persons residing in the same building in the densely populated Ramganj locality were sent for observation to the Rajasthan University of Health Sciences' Hospital.

An intense contact tracing has been launched in the area.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Jaipur North) Rajeev Pachar said the curfew, imposed in seven police station areas of the Walled City, will remain in force till further orders. All establishments, except medical facilities, will remain closed in the area, while people have been asked to stay indoors.

Hospitals help sought

With the possibility of an increase in the number of positive cases across the State, Medical and Health Minister Raghu Sharma appealed to private hospitals to offer their facilities partially or fully for the treatment of COVID-19 patients. He also asked the doctors and nursing in the private sector to render their services during the crisis.

Man dies of COVID-19 in Indore

Count of active cases jumps to 27 in Madhya Pradesh

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

A 65-year-old man from Indore died of COVID-19 on Thursday, taking the toll due to the illness to two in Madhya Pradesh, according to Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Medical College, Indore.

Whereas on Friday, a man from Bhopal and two persons from Jabalpur tested positive for the illness. A day before, four persons from Indore and one each from Ujjain and Shivpuri tested positive for the virus.

The count of active cases stands at 27 in the State, said the college and the State Health Department.

Among the new cases, the 42-year-old man from Ujjain who contracted the virus had come in contact with the woman, aged 65, who was the first in the State to succumb to it. Two males aged 41 and 53 and two females aged 14 and 18 tested positive in Indore.

Residents carry essential items as policemen keep a watch during lockdown in Bhopal on Friday. ▪ PTI

With this Indore, the State's largest and the most populous city, at present has 12 cases alone, while Bhopal has three cases. Whereas, there are eight cases in Jabalpur district and one each in Gwalior and Khandwa districts and two in Shivpuri district, according to the State Health Bulletin on Friday.

Grappling with spiralling cases, Indore District Collector Lokesh Kumar Jatav declared houses of the cases as 'epicentres' and the areas within their 3-km radius as 'containment areas', imposing quarantine on every resident there, prohibiting vehicular traffic and screening persons at entry points.

Curfew has been imposed in seven districts, including Chhatarpur, from where the positive case in Gwalior had returned.

With 5 new cases, Punjab count touches 38

State's first COVID-19 casualty infected at least 25 others, says Health Minister

VIKAS VASUDEVA
CHANDIGARH

The number of COVID-19 positive cases spiked to 38 in Punjab on Friday and of these at least 25 cases are directly or indirectly related to a 70-year-old man, who succumbed to the virus last week.

The deceased, a resident of Pathlawa village in Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar district, had arrived from Germany via Italy at Delhi airport on March 7 and proceeded to Punjab on the same day along with two fellow travellers. He had a history of diabetes and hypertension and was confirmed positive for COVID-19 on March 18. The trio defied the self-quarantine advisory of the government and went ahead with "socialising".

'Victim met many'

The deceased, a Granthi (priest) at a gurdwara in his village Pathlawa, attended Hola Mohalla festival in Anandpur Sahib between March 8 and 10 and returned to his village. Before being tested positive, the deceased and his two travel companions reportedly met scores of people and could have widely transmitted the disease.

"Five fresh cases have been reported today (March 27). Of the total 38 positive COVID-19 cases, 25 people are family members of the deceased or had come in contact with him. We are making all efforts to trace all those who came in contact with the trio from the time they returned to India. Close to 30 villages have been quarantined in those districts we believe that these people had travelled," Punjab Health Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu told *The Hindu*.

State health department medical bulletin said that of the five new cases reported in Punjab on March 27, three patients, who are from Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar, were in close contact with a positive patient. The other two patients are from Jalandhar and Ludhiana, it added.

First patient cured

Also, the first reported COVID-19 patient in Punjab has been cured.

The patient, who had returned to Amritsar from Italy, came out to be COVID-19 negative in the latest report after treatment. The male patient was tested positive for the disease earlier this month and was admitted to the Government Medical College and Hospital in Amritsar.

Curb relaxation nixes social distancing

Assam govt.'s experiment backfires as hundreds throng markets to buy items

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Assam government's experiment with temporary relaxation of lockdown restrictions backfired on Friday as hundreds of people thronged the markets across the State to buy essential items.

The government lost no time in issuing a statement banning the operations of most shops after people threw caution to the wind and made a mockery of social distancing sought because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, presently in eastern Assam's Jorhat, and Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma took note of the huge gatherings aired by news channels.

A crowded market in Tezpur on Friday. ▪ PTI

"I never thought people will behave like this during the relaxation on humanitarian grounds. We had insisted on following the guidelines on social distancing while buying essential items. People violated them. I am really sad," Mr Sonowal said.

Chief Secretary Kumar Sanjay Krishna soon issued the statement.

"All markets will remain closed until further order except grocery and pharmacies. Grocery shops will also provide vegetables, fruits, eggs, ginger, garlic and water. DCs (Deputy Commissioners) will organise distribution of vegetables, etc., through mobile vans in all areas on alternate days. All meat and fish shops will remain closed till March 31. It will be reviewed on April 1. DCs will fix appropriate time for opening of grocery stores as per local convenience," the statement said.

The government directed people to follow the advisories on social distancing until further orders and warned that violations would attract penal provisions under Section 188 of the IPC..

Pay cut option

Mr. Sarma said the government was weighing the option of deducting a percentage of pay of its employees and reimbursing later with interest. "These are ideas we are discussing in case such a situation arises," he said.

Farmers in a spot over delay in wheat procurement

'A big challenge will be to store the crop at home and the additional cost incurred in transporting them'

VIKAS VASUDEVA
CHANDIGARH

With Haryana announcing start of procurement of wheat by mid-April, farmers on Friday said the 'delay' in government purchase would pose a big challenge to the farming community to store their produce and burden them with additional costs.

The government purchase of wheat – the main rabi (winter) crop – usually starts in the first week of April in Punjab and Haryana. This year, in Haryana, the government has announced that procurement will commence from April 20. Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar had advised farmers that "till then they should stock the grain in their homes."

A farmer drains water from his flooded wheat field after heavy rain near Amritsar on Friday. ▪ PTI

Several farmers and farmers' bodies believe that it is easier said than done. "A farmer usually brings a combine harvester machine to the field, harvests the crop and then takes it directly to the mandi (yard) for selling. This practice is adopted for a simple reason because most farmers don't have space to store their produce at their homes. How and where will one store the produce now?," said Rattan Mann, president of the Haryana Bharatiya Kisan Union (Tikait).

Yamunanagar-based farmer Sanju Gudiyana told *The Hindu* that after harvesting the crop, storing the produce at home would mean burdening farmers with additional costs.

"I don't have any space to store the crop in my house. It will be an additional financial burden if grain has to be stored in houses. First, I'll have to take the produce to my house and then later again to the mandi - it involves loading-unloading and transportation costs," said Mr. Sanju, who has sown wheat in nearly 12 acre at Gudiyana village in Raduar.

The Chief Minister had, however, assured that in case any farmer is having trouble doing the same, the Marketing Board has been directed to look into the matter. "To make up for the loss that the farmers will face due to delay in procurement and the lockdown, a new scheme will be announced by the government soon," he had stated.

Punjab CM's order

Meanwhile, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh has directed the departments concerned to allow harvesting and marketing of horticulture produce by farmers, with necessary restrictions relating to COVID-19 precautions.

Package for the poor in Odisha

₹2,200-crore plan will provide financial aid, free food to them

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BHUBANESWAR

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Friday announced a ₹2,200-crore package for the weaker sections whose livelihoods have been hit amid the lockdown in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Patnaik announced that financial assistance of ₹1,000 each will be provided to 94 lakh beneficiary families under the food security programme. A sum of ₹940 crore will be spent for this purpose. Advance ration for three months is being provided to these families under the food security programme, he said.

The Chief Minister announced that a total of 48 lakh beneficiaries were being paid pension for four months in advance under social security schemes. A sum of ₹932 crore will be spent on this account.

Mr. Patnaik further announced that ₹1,500 each will be paid to a total of 22 lakh construction workers in the State.

A sum of ₹330 crore will be spent for the purpose.

CM's appeal

In a video message, Mr. Patnaik reiterated his appeal to the people to stay home to protect themselves from COVID-19.

On the other hand, the State government has been making efforts to trace all those who had come in contact with a person in the State who was diagnosed to be a COVID-19 patient on Thursday night.

The family members and driver of the patient, who is under treatment, have been kept in isolation. Since the patient had contacted one of the staff members of the Odisha Assembly, all the staff of the House have also been advised home quarantine. The Assembly building is also being disinfected.

In the case of the two youths who tested positive for COVID-19 and are undergoing treatment, the authorities have traced 55 persons who had come in contact with them earlier.

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DEATH

SAD DEMISE

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Mourned by
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DOB: 15/04/1932 DOD: 28/03/2015
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Kolkata civic body earns actor's praise

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

The Kolkata Muncipal Corporation's use of sprinkler machines for spraying disinfectants to sanitise different places in the city due to the lockdown in view of COVID-19 has earned the praise of Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan. Not only did Mr. Bachchan laud this initiative but he also urged the officials in Mumbai to do the same.

"wow...this is fantastic...Mumbai, hello ... can the authorities please do this for us too," the actor tweeted on Thursday.

Debasish Kumar, Member Mayor in Council, Parks and Squares, KMC, said that the applause by the superstar comes as a "huge encouragement for the KMC as well as the workers who are engaging in sanitising activities in such distressing times". "We have about 20 such vehicles... since Monday, we are using chemicals like chlorine, sodium hypochlorite to sanitise the areas where crowds are assembling."

Migrants' homecoming seen with suspicion

Workers made to stay outside, undergo tests before allowed to enter villages

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

Tapan Kumar Nayak, Inspector at the Rajnagar police station under Odisha's Kendrapara district, has been receiving frantic calls of late. Callers often complain about their neighbours either roaming outside their homes or sneezing and coughing.

The calls, however, do not surprise Mr. Nayak. He looks after the law and order situation in Rajnagar, where the concentration of migrant labourers is perhaps one of the densest in the country.

Ever since the COVID-19 pandemic made headlines, the migrant labourers' homecomings have been seen with suspicion and the police officer's primary role has been not to let the skepticism assume the shape of ostracisation. The tiny block has so far received 52 migrant labourers from abroad and 566 from other States.

Pattamundai, the adjacent block which sends plumbers to almost all corners of India and several foreign countries, has been witnessing an identical situation. The administration is now on its toes to make home isolation smoother for migrant workers.

Migrant labourers forced to live in plastic tents before being allowed to enter villages in Odisha. ▪ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

'Restraint advised'

"Police personnel in four vehicles do regular patrolling to ensure that those who are under home quarantine are not threatened. At the same time, we also advise migrant workers to adopt restraint and not put others lives in danger by coming out of their homes," said Mr. Nayak.

Hundreds of kilometres away in the western Odisha district of Kalahandi, 12 migrant workers who returned from Kerala had to stay under polythene sheet for several days before being allowed in their village.

In Sinapali block of Nuapada district, the migrant labourers were made to undergo medical tests and only after that they could enter their villages.

As 82,000 migrant workers have already landed in their respective villages and fellow villagers are insisting on their self-quarantine, the situation in remote villages may become chaotic in the coming days.

"Everybody is scared. Villagers are aware of the threat COVID-19 poses. In the absence of proper education about what self-quarantine means, migrant labourers have to bear the brunt and are often subjected to humiliation," said Umi Daniel, a prominent expert on migration issues.

Mr. Daniel said a unique initiative called telephone-based virtual community volunteers has been initiated to reach out to people in the migration-prone areas.

"We have started enrolling volunteers to clear confusion on the ground. Many educated people are now at home. We will rope them in so that they could pass on the right kind of message to their own community members," he said.

Purpose defeated

In villagers, many thatched houses are either one-room or two-room without functional individual latrines. The home quarantine insisted by government loses its significance when family members have to be crammed in a small house. To address some practical issues, virtual volunteers are targeting 50 panchayats in Balangir, Bargarh, Kalahandi, Nuapada and Subarnapur districts for spreading awareness on COVID-19 threat and managing their lives.

Shutdown in the south: (from left to right) Residents spraying water, in which turmeric and neem leaves have been mixed, in Bengaluru on Friday in a bid to prevent the spread of COVID-19; a vendor feeding leftover tomatoes to a cow in Vijayawada; homeless people keeping themselves busy at a temporary goverment shelter in Tripunithura, Kochi; and personnel from the Ramagundam Commissionerate educating people on the importance of self-isolation. ▪ K. MURALI KUMAR, K.V.S. GIRI, THULASI KAKKAT & SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

39 more test positive in Kerala

Authorities worried as some of them had travelled extensively before quarantine

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

COVID-19 cases rose again in Kerala with the reporting of 39 new positive cases on Friday.

Kasaragod district accounted for 34 of these cases while two are from Kannur. One case each was reported from Kollam, Thrissur and Kozhikode.

Of the 39 cases, 25 are people who returned from Dubai and 13 cases are all contacts of imported cases in Kasaragod. The source details of one case is still being ascertained. Though it might seem like COVID-19 transmission is surging in the State, it should be remembered that all 39 positive cases have been reported in people who are already under quarantine.

However, it is indeed worrisome that some of these patients seemed to have travelled extensively, before they were quarantined.

Current figures

As on Friday, the State has reported 176 cases, of whom, 164 are currently under treatment. A total of 1,10,229 persons are under surveillance, of whom 616 are isolated in hospitals.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, briefing the media, said that the State should be prepared to face any possible health emergency in the coming days.

He reiterated the importance of physical distancing, reduced social interactions and the universal safety precautions. He said that the government was pushing the idea of rapid test for COVID-19 with the ICMR. It was exploring all treatment options, including the "wonder drug" used by Cuba (Interferon Alpha-2B Recombinant), for which permission of the Central Drugs Control authorities had to be sought.

709 tourists stranded

Meanwhile, 709 foreign tourists from 83 nations, who came for holidaying and Ayurveda treatment in Kerala, continue to remain stranded following a ban on international flights as part of the COVID-19 containment measures.

With the Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) announcing that international flight operations would resume only after the 21-day nationwide lockdown, their option to return home before April 15 was limited to evacuation by the respective countries by chartered flights. The holidayers include those from the U.S., the U.K., China, Russia, France, Germany, Italy, Egypt, Spain, Canada, Japan, Australia, South Africa, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Maldives, and Sri Lanka.

Kerala Tourism has compiled the list through the office of the Foreigners Regional Registration Officer (FRRO) and from the 'Form C' submitted to the registration authorities by hotels, guest houses, and other dwelling units.

The visas that had expired has been extended, sources in the FRRO said.

Noble deed: Volunteers preparing dinner at a community kitchen set up in Thiruvananthapuram on Friday. ▪ S. MAHINSHA

Border closed, woman gives birth in ambulance

STAFF REPORTER
KASARAGOD

The Karnataka police, who have imposed heavy restrictions on vehicles from Kerala in the border villages, are proving a nightmare for people from Kasaragod.

On Friday, a pregnant woman gave birth to a child inside an ambulance after the vehicle was stopped by the Karnataka police. She was sent back from Talapady on the Kerala-Karnataka border. Gowri Devi, a native of Patna in Bihar, residing in Kasaragod, delivered the baby when the ambulance reached Manjeswaram on its way back.

Both the mother and the child were shifted to the Kasaragod General Hospital and are reported to be safe.

Sabarimala temple festival deferred

PATHANAMTHITTA

For the first time in its history, the 10-day annual festival at the Sabarimala Ayyappa temple, scheduled to begin on March 29, has been deferred. The Travancore Devaswom Board has postponed the festival following the nationwide lockdown. The history of the festival traces back to the installation of the holy mast on the temple premises in 1965, say Tantris (chief priests) Kandararu Rajeevararu and Kandararu Maheswararu Mohanararu.

Temples in Tirupati perform homam

TIRUPATI

Even as an increasing number of suspect cases are getting declared positive for COVID-19 infection, temples in Tirupati and Srikalahasti in Andhra Pradesh have started specific rituals to ward off its evil effects. On Friday, priests conducted Maha Mrutyunjaya Homam at Srikalahastheeswara Devasthanam, though in the absence of common devotees.

Tippler ends life over closure of liquor shops

THRISSUR

A 38-year-old daily wage labourer here committed 'suicide' on Friday, allegedly frustrated over not getting liquor following the coronavirus lockdown and after struggling with withdrawal symptoms, police said. Sanoj, a painting worker, was fund hanging from a tree next to his house, they said. All liquor outlets have been closed in Kerala as part of the nationwide lockdown. PTI

Karnataka records third death; 9 new cases detected

Among the new ones is a 10-month-old

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Karnataka recorded the third COVID-19 death on Friday, with a 65-year-old resident of Tumkuru, who did not have any foreign travel history, succumbing to the infection.

The other two were a 70-year-old in Kalaburagi and a 70-year-old woman from Gauribidnur, both with a travel history to Saudi Arabia.

The Tumkuru patient had travelled to Delhi and had stayed there for five days along with 13 others. The Health Department is in the process of contact-tracing to figure out how he was infected. Denying that there is community transmission in the State, Jawaid Akhtar, Additional Chief Secretary (Health and Family Welfare and Medical Education) told presspersons on Friday that "although three cases have no foreign travel history, their relatives may be having contact history".

In all, Friday saw nine new cases, including a 10-month-old baby who had travelled to Kerala along with parents, being detected in the State, taking the total number to 64. These include three deaths and five persons who were discharged after recovery. A techie and his daughter from Bengaluru, who had tested positive, were discharged on Friday.

The 65-year-old who died on Friday had travelled to Delhi from Tumakuru by train on March 5 along with 13 persons.

Posing a risk: Ignoring the warnings on physical distance, people crowding at a market in Hubballi. ▪ KIRAN BAKALE

Cabinet decides on stricter lockdown

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

After Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed concern over people moving around freely in Karnataka during the nationwide lockdown, Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Friday convened a Cabinet meeting and decided on stricter implementation of restrictions.

Addressing the media, he said, "Prime Minister Modi spoke to me and observed that several people were still moving around in Karnataka, in spite of the lockdown. He asked to ensure effective implementation of the lockdown restrictions."

"The district in-charge Ministers have been asked to take complete responsibility in ensuring that all the measures are in place to curb the pandemic," the Chief Minister said.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY

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

Forecast for Saturday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning and gust likely over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Maharashtra, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Sikkim.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	-	37.4	21.4	Kozhikode	-	36.0	27.2
Ahmedabad	9.5	30.6	19.5	Kurnool	-	39.0	23.5
Aizawl	-	27.3	-	Lucknow	-	24.9	21.2
Allahabad	-	33.5	19.9	Madurai	-	37.2	23.6
Bengaluru	-	34.0	19.6	Mangaluru	-	35.4	25.4
Bhopal	6.6	22.4	19.4	Mumbai	-	35.9	25.1
Bhubaneswar	-	37.7	24.5	Mysuru	-	-	-
Chandigarh	0.3	24.7	18.8	New Delhi	1	27.6	19.6
Chennai	-	33.3	25.0	Patna	-	36.0	20.4
Coimbatore	-	35.6	23.4	Port Blair	-	32.2	22.8
Dehradun	4	24.2	17.7	Puducherry	-	33.2	24.4
Gangtok	-	17.8	13.1	Pune	-	34.6	21.9
Goa	-	34.0	26.1	Raipur	-	37.0	24.5
Guwahati	-	35.1	18.9	Ranchi	-	34.1	19.0
Hubballi	-	36.0	32.0	Shillong	-	23.2	17.2
Hyderabad	-	37.0	22.9	Shimla	2.1	13.0	7.1
Imphal	-	27.6	14.3	Srinagar	13.6	9.1	6.8
Jaipur	6.8	26.2	18.0	Thiruvananthapuram	-	35.1	24.3
Kochi	-	33.6	26.2	Tiruchi	-	37.4	23.8
Kohima	-	22.2	-	Vijayawada	-	37.5	24.4
Kolkata	-	35.2	25.5	Visakhapatnam	-	32.6	26.4

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing — **Yesterday**

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	25	.21	22	33	50	Good
Bengaluru	.5	.20	19	–	57	Good
Chennai	10	3	33	71	3	Good
Delhi	–	.21	21	102	76	Moderate
Hyderabad	.2	.28	19	72	77	Good
Kolkata	.8	.26	17	123	81	Moderate
Lucknow	.5	.17	55	107	17	Moderate
Mumbai	.4	.13	11	36	83	Good
Pune	25	.24	59	51	30	Good
Visakhapatnam	–	–	.6	–	–	Good

In observation made at 7.00 p.m., Singrauli, Madhya Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 263 indicating a hazardous level of pollution. In contrast, Narnaul, Haryanarecorded a healthy AQI score of 19

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

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

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

10 new COVID-19 cases in Telangana

Total cases rise to 58; 20,000 under surveillance and quarantine in State

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Ten new coronavirus positive cases were detected on Friday, taking the total tally in Telangana to 58. All of them are under treatment.

About 20,000 persons were under surveillance and quarantine either at home or government facilities, Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao said at a press conference after a review meeting with officials.

Foolproof mechanism

In tune with the Centre's decision on nationwide lockdown, Mr. Rao said it would apply to the State also and announced postponement of all government activities, including exams and payment of taxes, beyond that date. Expressing the State government's preparedness to treat 60,000 virus cases at a time, Mr. Rao said a foolproof mechanism was being put in place for the purpose. A bed strength of 11,000 was created in isolation wards which included 1,400 beds for critical care. The government had placed order for supply of 500 ventilators to treat critical care patients. The facility at Gachibowli stadium to treat them will be ready in three to four days. It will be in addition to the existing facilities at Gandhi Hospital and King Kothi Hospital.

A pool of doctors and nurses was getting readied within government machinery to meet the situation without depending on other sources. The in-service doctors numbered about 8,000 but another 14,000 doctors, including pensioners below 60 years of age, MBBS passouts and post-graduate students, would also be drafted. The government would take care of their health, food and transportation beside payment of honorarium, he said.

K. Chandrasekhar Rao

Explaining the worldwide scenario of COVID-19, Mr. Rao said it was observed that 80.9% patients had mild infection, 13.8% severe and 4.7% critical. It was the critical stage which required intensive care units, ventilators and oxygen. The 80.9% patients were given treatment at home while 13.8% patients were put in isolation wards to treat stages 1 to 3 of infection and 4.7% given critical care.

It was for the 80.9% mild cases that the government had made arrangements to treat 60,000 patients.

Mr. Rao said the State government would not accept permission given to private labs by the Indian Council for Medical Research to test COVID-19 samples.

A.P. Cabinet nod for ordinance to clear Budget

STAFF REPORTER
VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Cabinet chaired by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Friday gave its nod for an ordinance to clear the Budget for first quarter of the 2020-21 financial year.

Initially the State government had plans to present vote-on-account Budget for the first quarter of the fiscal. The scenario changed with Prime Minister Narendra Modi announcing the countrywide lockdown till April 14 in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic.

Announcing the details, Information and Public Relations (I &PR) Minister Perni Venkataramaiah said the Cabinet had opted for the ordinance route to clear the Budget. "Now, it is not possible to convene the budget session in the wake of the pandemic, hence the government is going for the ordinance route. The details of the ordinance will be disclosed once Governor Biswa Bhusan Harichandan gives his nod," he said.

Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy

Experts plug gas leak in ONGC pipeline

STAFF REPORTER
KAKINADA

A team of experts on Friday plugged the gas leak reported from the underground pipeline of the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) at Kesavadasupalem village of Sakhinetipalli mandal in East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. The leak was sighted in a coconut orchid by the revenue officials who were inspecting the land for distribution among the poor around 9 a.m. The leak was plugged by noon.

ONGC Corporate Communication Officer A. Bhatia said, "The gas leakage from the underground pipeline at the Antarvedi site is minor. A team of experts has plugged it."

New video gives twist to Bengaluru assault case

Rights activists want confrontation between police and 2 youths investigated

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

Human rights activists have demanded a probe into an incident in Bhoopasandra where a youth, along with his brother and other family members, assaulted two constables on Wednesday and was shot in the leg a day later when he allegedly attacked the police and tried to flee during a spot inspection.

A video of the accused, Tajuddin, attacking the constables on Wednesday as they tried to enforce the lockdown, had gone viral.

However, a new video clip has emerged showing the police beating and kicking Tajuddin and his friend Khutbuddin.

It was purportedly shot a few minutes before the police were attacked.

N. Shashi Kumar, DCP (North), said the video clips should not be viewed in isolation and that the series of events should be viewed holistically.

Three FIRs

The Sanjay Nagar Police have registered three FIRs in connection with the series of incidents.

The first FIR is against two unidentified youths who were doing wheelies on a scooter in Bhoopasandra on Wednesday afternoon. According to the FIR, the accused tried to hit the constables Basavaraja and Manjunatha. They then kicked the barricades and fled.

An hour later, the two constables reported finding the youths on a street in the area and approached them to arrest them. According to the second FIR, they abused the constables verbally, called other people in the neighbourhood and attacked them physically. The youth, identified in the second FIR as brothers Tajuddin and Khutbuddin, were joined by their parents Shabuddin and Yasmeen Sultana among others who also attacked the constables.

Family arrested

Tajuddin allegedly threw a stone at one of the constables, but the group fled when a Hoysala arrived at the spot. The police arrested the entire family of two sons and their parents and booked them for attempt to murder among other offences.

The new video that has now emerged shows the two constables beating up two youth, purportedly Tajuddin and Khutbuddin. "As the constables approached the duo to arrest them for trying to run them over with their scooter earlier, the youths became defensive and resisted arrest. Force was used to arraign them. But by the time they could be taken into custody, others joined and the duo again attacked the cops," Mr. Shashi Kumar said.

The Hindu could not verify the exact sequence of events among the contradictory versions.

On Thursday, Tajuddin was taken for a spot inspection, when he allegedly tried to flee and attacked the cops yet again. In retaliation, the police shot him in the leg. A third FIR was filed in this connection.

Man admitted to ward flees with case sheet

STAFF REPORTER
GUNTUR

A 35-year-old man, K. Veeranjaneyulu, who was admitted at the GGH, Guntur in Andhra Pradesh on suspicion that he might have contracted COVID-19, escaped from the hospital with his case sheet on Thursday, creating a mild scare.

Superintendent Babulal.S said that the man had come to COVID OP with complaints of fever, and cough, and he was sent for X-Ray. A chest physician saw him and advised him admission. "There is no need for panic as the patient has not tested positive for the virus. This man had no foreign travel history," said the GGH Superintendent.

RBI's guns boom

India's financial system will need more support as the virus crisis evolves

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) finally rolled out its big guns on Friday to fight the effects of the coronavirus on the financial system. Businesses were clamouring for relief and Governor Shaktikanta Das's measures address the crucial factor of sustaining system liquidity while offering palliatives to individuals and businesses. The measures seem to have been designed assuming the best case scenario that the country will be able to fight off the maleficent effects of the virus in the next few weeks. But there is no certainty over how long this uncertainty will prolong which means that Mr. Das's announcements, as indeed that of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday, can only be the initial steps needed to protect the economy. There will be more to do as the crisis evolves; governments and regulators are reacting to events, as opposed to being proactive, simply because this is a kind of crisis that they have not dealt with before. Viewed from this perspective, the RBI's steps are exactly what is needed at this point in time. They reflect the central bank's willingness to listen to impulses from the ground and its effort to stay ahead of the curve, which is laudable.

The sizeable rate cut will obviously make the headlines though its impact will be largely on sentiment. Existing borrowers will benefit assuming that banks pass on the cut quickly – it is hoped that they really do so – but there is going to be nothing like the cut spurring fresh investment, which will be the last thing on the minds of businessmen. To that extent the size of the cut appears a trifle too large. But where the RBI scores is in the liquidity enhancement measures that it has unveiled. The sum total of new long-term repo operations of ₹1-lakh crore, and ₹1.37-lakh crore each from the cut in cash reserve ratio and increase in marginal standing facility (overnight borrowings by banks from the RBI) adds up to a very significant ₹3.74-lakh crore. Together with the ₹2.8-lakh crore pumped in through various market interventions since February, the RBI's liquidity injection amounts to a whopping 3.4% of GDP. To be sure, there will be consequences of heightened liquidity but that is a problem for another day. The priority is to keep the system lubricated. The moratorium on term loans and deferment of interest on working capital loans will reduce anxiety among businesses and individuals who will see a fall in income/cash flows. The central bank has also done the right thing by widening the policy rate corridor – the reverse repo rate cut is 15 basis points more than that in the repo rate. This will hopefully push banks away from their 'lazy banking' practices and force them to lend more. In sum, it is a good start by the RBI but it needs to keep thinking on its feet and react quickly as the situation evolves.

Trial and turmoil

Netanyahu has earned another reprieve, but it might not last long

Thursday's election of Benny Gantz, leader of the opposition Blue and White party, as Speaker of the Knesset, signals the path to a unity government in Israel after three inconclusive general elections in 12 months. In a U-turn, the former military general who was invited by Israel's President to form a government after the indecisive polls, nominated himself as leader of the legislature and won backing from members. The full implications of this latest twist in Israeli politics remain unclear. But Mr. Gantz had until now repeatedly rebuffed calls from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to collaborate on a unity government with a view to breaking the year-long political deadlock. He had even contemplated legislation to limit the Prime Minister's tenure to two-terms, as well as to block persons indicted for corruption from occupying the office. The target was Mr. Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving leader who also faces trial in three cases of graft. While Mr. Gantz's latest move is possibly a response triggered by the pandemic, the sudden about-turn has caused outrage among supporters of Blue and White and its allies as a complete betrayal and could split the party.

But despite the awkward compromises involved, the political reconfiguration bodes well for democracy in Israel. Parliament was suspended after the March polls on the pretext of restrictions arising from the pandemic by Yuli Edelstein, the former Knesset Speaker and Netanyahu ally. That decision was subsequently overruled by the Supreme Court, which ordered Mr. Edelstein's successor to be chosen on Wednesday, forcing the latter's resignation. Mr. Gantz's elevation has averted the risk of a constitutional void. Politically, the step could be the first in a complicated process leading to a power-sharing arrangement with his arch-rival, Mr. Netanyahu and his Likud party. The new government would be confronted with the ticklish issue of Mr. Netanyahu's trial, which has already been postponed until May. While the Prime Minister has consistently denied any wrongdoing, a conducive climate for an independent investigation would infuse much confidence into the administration. Moreover, stitching together a viable coalition would be no mean challenge, given that Mr. Netanyahu, 70, remains a highly polarising figure. For instance, any support from the Joint List, the third largest bloc in the Knesset, comprising factions within Israel's Arab community, would depend on the extent of influence parties of the extreme right exert in any new government. With the 15 seats it controls, the bloc will manoeuvre hard for influence. With its strong anti-Arab stance, Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu party – it has seven seats – would be another important factor. Mr. Netanyahu may have earned another reprieve. But after more than a decade in office, he cannot afford to underestimate the strength of sentiment against him.

Shift to upscaling food rationing now

Expanded rations will not only bring relief in this pandemic but also help sustain a nourished and healthy population

MADHURA SWAMINATHAN

Two days ago, the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a ₹1.7-lakh crore package of social security measures to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic in the period of the 21-day lockdown. In respect of food security, the package falls far short of what is needed. I argue that we need to immediately ensure universal rationing with an expanded food basket, and special measures for cooked food in urban areas for the vulnerable population.

The burden of the current lockdown is borne disproportionately by the large unorganised workforce, comprising hundreds of millions of casual daily wage-workers and self-employed workers. India already holds the record for the largest number of malnourished persons in the world. As their ability to purchase food diminishes, a growing population of working people and their families will soon enter a phase of hunger and undernourishment. The answer to this looming and very real scenario of food insecurity lies in a massive programme of food rationing, far greater than what the Finance Minister has promised.

Lessons from history

To ensure that all people have access to adequate food in the midst of this unprecedented health and economic crisis with potentially high levels of mortality, we must immediately expand our food security system. Before I come to the components of such an expanded programme, let us briefly look at the lessons provided by the experience of other countries in using rationing in times of scarcity.

In the United Kingdom in the 1940s, rationing or a policy of "fair shares" was introduced in a period of war and scarcity. Starting in 1939, each and every person was issued a ration book, with a weekly entitlement that could be collected at a local grocery store. Rationing encompassed many commodities, starting with butter, bacon and sugar, and later augmented by eggs, biscuits, tinned food, meat, cereals, etc. A remarkable outcome of the war years was, as Amartya Sen has demonstrated, a significant improvement in vital statistics including a rise in life expectancy and a decline in the mortality rate. Despite heavy war casualties and a decline in consumer expenditure per capita, life expectancy actually improved. In the first six decades of the 20th century, the decade from 1941 to 1950 saw the largest increase in life expectancy in England and Wales.

India's timeline

In India, the British introduced rationing in six cities in 1942, mainly to supply industrial workers with adequate food. Following demands from a strong political movement, Malabar became the first rural area to implement rationing in 1943. In the mid-1960s, the system of rationing or the Public Distribution System (PDS) was made a national universal programme, which steadily expanded till 1991. In the 1990s, the policies of liberalisation led to the withdrawal of universal rationing and its replacement by a policy of narrow targeting. Differential entitlements were provided for BPL (Below Poverty Line) and APL (Above Poverty Line) households. In 2013, the landmark National Food Security Act (NFSA), ensured legal entitlement to rations and other food-based schemes (such as mid-day meals in schools). Around 75% of rural households, and 50% of urban households, that is, a total of two-thirds of all households, were eligible for inclusion (now termed priority households) in the NFSA.

The implementation of the NFSA – notably the PDS, the Mid-day Meal Scheme, and the Integrated Child Development Services scheme – varies significantly across States; nevertheless, the infrastructure for distribution of food is in place in all parts of the country.

FILE PHOTO/SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

China's strategy

In China, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), a planning body, was the key coordinator along with the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) in ensuring supplies of basic foods and price stability to the poor, especially in Wuhan province, the epicentre of the current pandemic, which was under lockdown since January 23, 2020.

The Chinese strategy had multiple components, which included public corporations and ministries, 300 large private companies, 200,000 private stores, and local government institutions. To illustrate, State-owned companies such as COFCO or the China National Cereals, Oils and Foodstuffs Corporation, and Sinograin (China Grain Reserves Corporation) supplied key commodities to Wuhan. This included 200 tonnes of rice, 50 tonnes of flour and noodles, and 300 tonnes of edible oils each day during the peak of the pandemic in February 2020. The National Grain Trade Centre has to date supplied 155,000 tonnes of corn and 154,000 tonnes of soyabean to Wuhan. Special delivery trucks for transport of vegetables were arranged, and the local government organised open-air markets.

Kerala was the first State in India to announce a package with income support measures and in-kind measures including free rations of 15 kg (grain) and provision of cheap meals. The government of Tamil Nadu announced free rations of rice, sugar, cooking oil and dal to all ration card holders. The supply of rations for unorganised workers is to be through Amma canteens. The Delhi government will give 1.5 times existing entitlements at no cost to all ration card holders.

Key points of a plan

In India a system of expanded rations must have the following components. First, for all rural households, free rations of rice and wheat at double the normal entitlement must be distributed. The current entitlement is about half the quantity of daily cereal intake recommended by the Indian Council of Medical Research: the new quantities should be the actual minimum requirement per person per day. The government of India has now doubled rations (rice or wheat) to all priority households, from 5 kg to 10 kg per person per month. However, this falls short, as the rations are not to all households but only priority households; the rations are not free (only the additional 5 kg is free).

The provision of rations must be universal: this is not the time to demarcate households by type of ration card or whether they have a ration card or by any form of biometrics. The system of identification of priority households is not error-proof, and no household wrongly excluded should be outside the ambit of rationing today. This upscaling is feasible as the country has stocks of 58 million tonnes of rice and wheat; and the wheat harvest is currently underway in north India.

Second, for all rural households, additional rations of cooking oil, sugar, salt and lentils should be provided on a regular basis. Soap must also be included in this list. As supplies have to be arranged, the distribution could be weekly or fortnightly in order to ensure smooth availability. It is good to see that the government of India has announced one kg of dal per household, but it needs to provide more commodities quickly.

Third, if milk, eggs and vegetables (or one or more of them) can be supplied, we can not only ensure basic food security at the time of a major health crisis, but actually address our burden of malnutrition.

For urban areas, we need a combination of provision of dry goods and of cooked food. All households with ration cards can be given the same entitlements as proposed for rural households.

For the vast numbers of workers and migrants in towns and cities, however, we must set up arrangements for preparation and delivery of cooked food. The large numbers of closed community kitchens (schools and colleges, company and office canteens, for example) and restaurant workers now sitting idle or laid off can be brought together to undertake a massive programme of provision of cooked meals at subsidised rates. Kerala has taken the lead here. This will require careful planning and technology to distribute food while ensuring physical distancing. The answer is not to simply close the Indira Canteens (serving low-cost meals) as Karnataka has done.

All the measures proposed must continue for at least three months, and be reviewed afterwards.

An imaginative massive exercise of expanded rations could not only provide succour in this pandemic but also bring in a policy shift that will help sustain a nourished and healthy population.

Madhura Swaminathan is Professor at the Economic Analysis Unit, Indian Statistical Institute

It's also a fight against punitive measures

The requirement of massive resources following the pandemic may be an occasion to lift global economic sanctions

T.P. SREENIVASAN

A global pandemic demands game-changing actions by all nations in order to halt its global spread, provide relief in terms of medical supplies and to rebuild shattered lives. The global community has the responsibility to rise to the occasion. Any global cataclysm affects poor countries more than the rich ones as the former do not have the resources to meet the unexpected economic challenge. While the developed countries and their groups provide economic packages to themselves and their partners, developing countries stare into the distance with hope of handouts from the international financial institutions or some generous rich allies.

One way of dealing with the emergency in an emergency mode is to consider lifting of economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations and individual countries on developing countries. Many international sanctions imposed on the basis of political and economic decisions and taken as a part of diplomatic efforts by countries, multilateral or regional organisations against states or organisations exist around the world. These were meant either to 'protect national security interests, or to protect international law, and defend against threats to international peace and security. These measures include the temporary imposition on a target of economic, trade, diplomatic, cultural or other restrictions' and can be lifted only through a long process of ascertaining whether their objectives were met.

The UN Security Council has a 'mandate by the international community to apply sanctions that are binding on all UN member states. They serve as the international community's most powerful peaceful means to prevent threats to international peace and security or to settle them'. Peace enforcement is possible if the sanctions fail, but that is only in the rarest of rare cases. The sanctions often lie dormant for technical reasons even if their original intent and purpose have lost their relevance. The victims of these sanctions suffer in silence or engage in negotiations to get relief.

When America struck

Apart from UN sanctions, there are 'unilateral sanctions that are imposed by individual countries in furtherance of their strategic objectives. Typically intended as strong economic coercion, measures applied under unilateral sanctions can range between coercive diplomatic efforts, economic warfare, or a threat of war'. These take the form of economic, diplomatic, military and sport sanctions.

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

The unilateral sanctions are naturally not mandatory to any other state, but the United States has often stipulated, like in the case of Iran, that those countries which do not apply sanctions to Iran would be debarred from doing business with the U.S., a Hobson's choice in many cases.

After the initial invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, the UN 'placed an embargo on the nation in an attempt to prevent an armed conflict. A naval and air blockade was added. The purpose of the initial sanctions was to coerce Iraq into following international law, which included the recognised sovereignty of Kuwait'. But even after the liberation of Kuwait, a series of sanctions were created to weaken the country. A UN plan to purchase food and medicines by selling Iraqi oil to the world became one of the most serious scandals to hit the UN and its Secretary General. U.S. sanctions against Iran over the years broke the back of the country and forced it to reach an agreement to limit its nuclear activities. The U.S.'s withdrawal from the Iran deal has now resulted in Iran facing crippling sanctions. Perhaps, the impact of COVID-19 was severe in Iran on account of the sanctions and the resultant economic crisis in the country. There are many more cases of sanctions against many countries still in existence. Temporary sanctions in protest against the policies of countries often result in expulsion or withdrawal of diplomatic personnel.

The politics of sanctions entered a new era when U.S. President Donald Trump signed into law the "Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act" (CAATSA) that grouped together sanctions against Russia, Iran and North Korea. Currently, the U.S. alone, or together with other countries has sanctions against Belarus, Myanmar, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iran, Iraq, Liberia, North Korea, Sudan, Syria, and Zimbabwe and several other countries.

The wide network of sanctions is comprehensively monitored by the Office of Foreign Assets Control of the US Department of the Treasury which enforces economic and trade sanctions based on U.S. foreign policy and national security goals against targeted foreign countries and regimes and related entities and individuals.

No calculation

There is no estimate of the losses sustained by these countries on account of these sanctions. But these countries will be much relieved if these restrictions are removed. The present global pandemic and the requirement of massive resources may be an occasion to lift these sanctions. The countries which have imposed these sanctions will not have to make any financial outlay to assist these countries at this time of a humanitarian emergency.

The G20 Chairman, the King of Saudi Arabia, on a suggestion by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, had convened a video conference of G20 leaders. As a follow up of that meeting, the G20 could consider proposing the lifting of multilateral and bilateral sanctions. As Winston Churchill said, " Never let a good crisis go to waste."

T.P. Sreenivasan, a former diplomat, is Chairman, Academic Council and Director, NSS Academy of Civil Services, and also Director General, Kerala International Centre, Thiruvananthapuram

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Heading back

The picture accompanying the report, "Lockdown forces migrant workers to leg it home from Manesar" (Page, 1, March 27), is the real news. It is shocking that no arrangements were made to help people working outside their home States get back safely. That some of them are walking back 400 km without money and support is distressing. It is the duty of the Central and State governments to reach out to them. The companies they work for should have helped them.

M. QASMI NADWI,
Ganeshpur, Basti, Uttar Pradesh

■ The pictures evoke deep empathy. These citizens are on the periphery of the economy and it is deplorable that governments have not ensured their well-being. Their sheer helplessness speaks volumes about our tall claims of economic growth.

ANUJ SHARMA,
Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh

■ The plight of the worker in India is always one that is depressing. It is unfortunate that migrant labour is being subject to more hardship. That many have to walk back, literally starving, is disheartening. Those who are privileged must help.

ZACHARIA VERGHESE,
Kozhikode

■ It is sad that a country which is professed to be a developed and advanced haven is unable to ensure that the downtrodden have their basic rights met. The report, "15 to a room, without a morsel" (Inside pages, March 27) brought tears to my eyes. The lockdown has garnered praise from different quarters, but what about denizens who have not even tasted a morsel?

FUZAIL AHMED,
Tirurangadi, Malappuram, Kerala

■ While physical distancing is indispensable in preventing the spread of the novel coronavirus, self-quarantine and early detection are of immense importance. It is important for people to be checked especially after inter-State travel. Many are skipping this out of fear of isolation or sheer irresponsibility. Migrants from affected States such as Maharashtra, Kerala, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh may be carriers of the virus and still asymptomatic. This could lead to massive local transmission.

SHAYAN DAS,
Gobardanga, West Bengal

■ It is one thing to empathise with the workers and quite another to ignore the possibility of them being infected or infecting others on their way back. The loss of work may have precipitated this, but remaining where they were would have been a better option. A physically fit person can cover only 30 to 35 km a day which means that they will have to walk for at least a fortnight continuously. It is doubtful whether they would be welcome in their hometowns. When the government's order is to stay indoors, walking back should have been the last option.

V. LAKSHMANAN,
Tirupur, Tamil Nadu

Prohibitory orders

In Tamil Nadu, the police should constantly review their actions and permit people to move about for genuine reasons (Tamil Nadu, "Stringent action against violators: DGP", March 27). There are instances of cattle and poultry feed shops not opening for fear of a police crackdown. It is the same case with poultry shops. There are cases where one cannot make purchases without intense questioning or extreme police action. All this is leading to big losses for small-scale home entrepreneurs.

SASIDHARAN KUNNATH,
Madukkarai, Tamil Nadu

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

Late correction: In the last paragraph of the report headlined "As Gogoi takes oath, Opposition walks out" (March 20, 2020) it was erroneously mentioned that during Justice Ranjan Gogoi's tenure, the Supreme Court delivered its verdict on the decriminalisation of homosexuality. The verdict was actually delivered when *Justice Dipak Misra* was the Chief Justice of India.

The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300; E-mail:readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

Named, shamed, and living in fear

In early March, the U.P. police put up several hoardings in Lucknow identifying those accused of violence during anti-CAA protests in December 2019. **Omar Rashid** reports on the accused who are struggling to fight the stigma of being featured on the hoardings though they have not been convicted

On March 16, the Lucknow administration served a 'demand notice' against 20-year-old Osama Siddiqui and 12 others stipulating that they deposit ₹21.76 lakh, plus a 10% collection charge, within a week. If they did not, they faced confiscation of their property or even arrest under the U.P. Revenue Code of 2006. As the family wasn't home, officials pasted the bill on the door of their house in Khadra locality in old Lucknow.

Yasmin Siddiqui, Osama's mother, was agitated. Osama was accused of vandalism and arson during the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2019 on December 19 in Lucknow. He is out on bail after spending three weeks behind bars. "Without any query, you have made him guilty. Our boy was not involved," she said. The notice was issued after an Additional District Magistrate Court fixed liability against 13 persons for damaging public and private property in the Hasanganj police station area during the protest. This particular demand notice was in continuation of the series of notices and orders served by the administration on 57 people, including the 13 persons accused of vandalism with a "common object" in the city since late December.

Those listed have been asked to cumulatively pay ₹1.56 crore as fine to the government or risk confiscation of their property. The sum was divided under four police station areas which witnessed violence: Qaiserbagh (₹1.75 lakh), Hasanganj (₹21.76 lakh), Hazratganj (₹64.37 lakh) and Thakurganj (₹67.73 lakh). Even as the accused were trying to recover from the shock of receiving the notice, the administration escalated matters in a dramatic fashion on March 5, when, under the cover of the night, it erected around 100 large roadside hoardings at key parts of the city, showcasing the names, photos and residential addresses of the accused. The hoardings did not mention that they were yet to be convicted of the charge by any court and almost all of them were out on bail. The intention of the U.P. government was clear: Cabinet Minister and government spokesperson Sidharth Nath Singh tweeted, "Name and Shame of rioters will put a deterrent under Yogi rule".

Scarred by the episode, Osama, a third-year B.Com student, declined to be interviewed. Yasmin narrated Osama's experience on December 19. Till 2 p.m., she said, he was spending time with his friends in the lane outside his house, after which he ventured out towards a stationery shop, the family unaware of the violence going on some distance away. He took shelter in a house in the neighbourhood to escape the violence but was caught by the police as they came looking for other members of the mob.

However, the Additional District Magistrate found no merit in Osama's claim that he had ventured out 2 km from his house when all the shops were shut. On that day, the police were asking the protesters through the public address system to go back to their homes, as prohibitory orders had been enforced. "It's not possible that a peace-loving person will venture out to purchase stationery near the protest site," said the recovery order against Osama, one among the many accessed by *The Hindu*. However, there was no mention in the order of any direct evidence, be it a photograph or a video, of Osama's involvement in the violence other than his circumstantial presence.

Yasmin was distraught. Not only did Osama miss an examination due to his detention, but after stepping out on bail, he has had to battle the stigma brought by the name-and-shame hoardings. Osama is reluctant to attend college functions these days as he is flooded with curious phone calls and haunted by taunting videos shared by his peers on Tik Tok of the hoardings, Yasmin said.

As the family braces for a legal battle, their immediate concern is the hefty sum demanded. When the case is in court, and Osama is yet to be declared guilty, why should he be asked to pay, Yasmin asked. Her husband doesn't have a job or business any more. Their main source of income is from the rent they earn from a portion of a refurbished building they once ran as a school. "We won't be able to pay the fine," said Yasmin.

The charred remains of a motorbike and the damaged railing of the park housing the tomb of Sadaat Ali Khan and his wife at Parivartan Chowk in Lucknow. (Below): Police try to get a car that was vandalised in the violence back on its wheels near the Madehganj police outpost in the Khadra area of Lucknow. • OMAR RASHID

Violence in Parivartan Chowk

The Siddiqui family's ordeal offers a snapshot of the overall situation of the 57 accused. The unusual orders for recovery of damages and name-and-shame hoardings were an extension of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's call for "revenge" against those who vandalised public and private property on December 19.

That day, parts of central Lucknow were engulfed in violence, as the call for protest against the CAA took a nasty turn. Police forces, including the Rapid Action Force personnel, charged at the protesters and fired several rounds of tear gas to push them back into the bylanes from where they threw stones and bricks at the police at intervals. An auto driver died due to a firearm injury. While the protest was scheduled at the centrally located Parivartan Chowk, which was cut off by police through barricades, the riot-control forces appeared to be stretched and struggled to contain the swelling numbers of protesters in other locations.

At the end of it all, the worst-affected site was Parivartan Chowk, where several motorbikes, three OB vans and a State bus were gutted, as miscreants, many of them with their faces covered with handkerchiefs, threw stones and allegedly set fire to the vehicles parked at the location. The Lucknow administration estimated the overall damages at ₹1.56 crore, of which ₹1.02 crore was for damage to vehicles alone, most of them belonging to the police and other government bodies. All liability was fixed under the principle of joint and several liabilities, meaning the accused would be individually as well as collectively liable for the entire fine amount. The recovery amounts were issued by the concerned Additional District Magistrate after verifying damage claims made by those who suffered the loss.

The extent of damage claimed

In actual terms, the list of vehicles damaged was given as: 25 bikes, four cars, 3 OBV vans, one State bus and the window shields of three buses. The police outpost of Madehganj was targeted and one police vehicle and bikes parked outside the outpost were engulfed in flames. Another car nearby was also damaged.

The list prepared by the administration included items used and owned by the police such as four pairs of fire boots (₹24,000), four helmets (₹10,000), body protector (10 units) worth ₹50,000, four plastic sticks (₹4,000), four fire extinguishers (₹10,000), a dragon torch (₹5,000) and a red blanket (₹4,000). Around 145 metres of street railing worth ₹3.30 lakh was also damaged.

In Qaiserbagh, the police calculated damages worth ₹1.75 lakh: three police barriers (₹24,000), 15 chairs (₹6,000), and two police motorbikes. Most of the damage was done in the Thakurganj area. The Sathkhanda police outpost was torched and vandalised and vehicles outside it set on fire. The cost of the outpost building and three MCRs was ₹24 lakh out of a total of ₹67.73 lakh in Thakurganj. Once again, most of the damage was suffered by the police: a chair worth ₹7,000, a table worth ₹5,000, a camera DVR and camera monitor (51 inch) worth ₹4 lakh, a TV worth ₹3,000, a tubelight worth ₹1,800, three CFL bulbs worth ₹600, a water pump motor worth ₹6,000, a cooler worth ₹5,000, a plastic chair worth ₹4,800, and a bench worth ₹15,000. The police also included a toilet door (₹5,000), two water cooler jars (₹600) and three jars of Bisleri water (₹600) in their claim. Apart from the three OB vans, the media also suffered damage: a photographer's camera lens worth ₹1.45 lakh along with his Royal Enfield bike, a photographer's lens and another's bike were also gutted. The railing, footpath plaster, stone and welding at Parivartan Chowk accounted for ₹10 lakh.

Lack of evidence

As an overwhelming number of the accused (52 out of 57) are Muslims, there is a strong feeling in the community that the U.P. government's action is disproportionate and discriminatory, and that it is indulging in excesses out of vendetta. The list also has two Ambedkarite Dalit activists, including a retired IPS officer. Many of those arrested in the case reported they faced communal slurs while in custody.

The protests leading up to the December 19 incident were largely taking place without any leaders or banners. But after the violence, the police tried to project certain outfits, most of them linked to Leftists and Muslims, as the alleged brains behind the protests. In Lucknow, the police identified the Popular Front of India, an Islamic outfit, as the "mastermind" of the arson and vandalism and also held culpable the Rihai Manch, a rights groups headed by Mohammad Shoaib, a senior lawyer who helps terror accused fight legal battles and is known for helping a dozen of them get acquitted.

Shoaib, president of the Manch, was arrested despite being under house arrest during the violence. The exposure on the hoardings has brought a sense of insecurity to those named and shamed, who now fear attacks by vigilante right-wing mobs. Shoaib is used to such threats. In 2008, a mob of lawyers attacked him brutally within the compound of Lucknow court for taking up cases of terror accused.

Over the years, Shoaib has facilitated the acquittal of more than a dozen men implicated in terror cases. Many cases encountered by him involved dealing with dubious FIRs with suspect timings and places of arrests. Little did he know that he would find himself a victim of a similar situation. Shoaib had been placed under house arrest by the police since 5.30 p.m. on December 18 to prevent him from attending the protest at Parivartan Chowk the following day. It was around midnight on November 19 when four cops summoned him, apparently at the call of a local circle officer. Shoaib went along with them, leaving his spectacles, mobile phone and medicine behind, hoping to return home soon. After his wife Malka Bi called the district police chief, two constables came and took the medicine for Shoaib, who was eventually arrested.

The police claimed in the Allahabad High Court that he was arrested at 8:45 a.m. on December 20, from the Clarks Avadh hotel intersection, a charge contradicted by prima facie details.

The police alleged Shoaib indulged in arson, stone pelting and vandalism at Parivartan Chowk and the recovery order against him implicates him for not providing evidence to counter the police charge. Shoaib pointed out that the police has no proof against him – no footage, no photo. "It's wrong if a recovery is done until someone is proven guilty," he said.

Ironically, the police submission before the Additional District Magistrate lays bare the lack of clear evidence against Shoaib. The videos and photos of the protester could not be made available because the protesters razed three OB vans that stood between them and the police, said the police. Moreover, whatever photos were clicked were of their assembly prior to the violence and were not clear.

The government's decision to put up the banners caught the attention of the Allahabad High Court, which, after a rare Sunday sitting, directed the Lucknow administration to forthwith remove them, judging them to be an "unwarranted interference in privacy of people" and in violation of Article 21 of the Constitution. The action reflected the "colourable exercise of power" by the government, the Bench ruled. The Bench directed the Lucknow administration to submit a compliance report by March 16. However, the Yogi Adityanath government failed to comply and instead approached the Supreme Court which, while not granting a stay against the High Court order, sent the matter to a larger bench.

> **Without any query, you have made him guilty. Our boy was not involved.**
>
> YASMIN SIDDIQUI
> Mother of Osama Siddiqui, who was served a 'demand notice'

Activists, clerics, labourers

A look at the profiles of the 57 persons named and shamed indicates they are not as privileged as the government argued in court while opposing the suo motu notice. Barring a handful of social activists and clerics, most of those implicated are those struggling to make ends meet. Many are daily wage earners and labourers, with little political or social influence.

Ashma Izzat, a lawyer, who has been fighting legal battles for 25 of the accused, including two minors, said almost all of them are not in a position to pay the fine. Some are unemployed or live in shanties. Waseem Sayyad, a waiter, lives in the premises of the Imambada as he can't afford rent.

Izzat also argued that the administration did not follow proper procedure in issuing the orders. "They didn't serve the orders to the accused but put up big hoardings. We applied for certified copies of the order so that we could challenge it and get a stay. So far we have got copies of only three people," she said.

One of them, Kaleem, is a rickshaw-puller. The other is a Bengali waiter who works in a Mughlai restaurant. Izzat said her clients were scared to come out or open up. "I can't disclose their location. They are in fear. They feel they could be arrested again," she said.

The fear and insecurity are palpable even among the rest. Robin Verma, who teaches management at the Shia PG College, was picked up by the police on December 20 from a restaurant outside the BJP headquarters along with this reporter, and added to the list of accused. Ever since the hoardings came up, many of them along his route to work, Robin, who belongs to the OBC Kurmi caste and is the son of a retired Provincial Armed Constabulary personnel, said he stopped using public transport for security reasons. The police had initially issued notices to 95 persons in Lucknow. But 38 were exonerated from the charge of damaging property as police could not produce satisfactory evidence, following which the administration served recovery orders on 57.

Among those implicated was Mohammad Anas, a B. Com student, who claimed he had gone for coaching when police stopped him and challaned him without any proof. Mohammad Tariq, a student, claimed he had gone to fetch medicine for his father when he was nabbed by the police, allegedly at 11:30 a.m., before the protest even began.

> **They didn't serve the orders to the accused but put up big hoardings. We applied for certified copies of the order so that we could challenge it and get a stay. So far we have got copies of only three people.**
>
> ASHMA IZZAT
> Lawyer fighting legal battles for 25 of the accused

The Additional District Magistrate, however, relies on the police claim that they were arrested from the spot and did not produce any evidence to prove their innocence. A similar pattern of fixing culpability follows in several other cases. The case of Kalbe Sibtain Noori, son of prominent Shia cleric Kalbe Sadiq and Maulana Saif Abbas, is peculiar. Noori had submitted that he had visited the Imambada area on the day of the protest to restore calm. But his own admission went against him and he was issued a recovery order for being present on the spot as "a conspirator". Abbas had claimed that he led a peace march in Muslim areas to calm the situation and appealed for calm on social media. That too didn't hold in the Additional District Magistrate's court.

While much outrage was created over the notices for over ₹1.56 crore to 57 persons, in the recovery orders, the magistrates hold that the police made "insufficient efforts" due to which liability of several guilty persons could not be determined. While 10,000 attended the protest, how were only 57 issued damage notices, they asked.

Among the well-known people to feature on the hoardings was S.R. Darapuri, a 76-year-old retired Dalit IPS officer and now social activist who identifies as an Ambedkarite. His arrest caused much furore among civil society as he was under house arrest on the day of the protest. The police claimed he served as a "catalyst" and enabler to the violent protest through his social media appeal to gather against the CAA and for attending a dharna, curiously described as a meeting by the police, on December 16 at the Ambedkar statue.

Darapuri responded to the notice by stating that he did not ever favour violence, nor did he make a call for it. While the Additional District Magistrate ruled that Darapuri did not provide any evidence to rebuff police allegations, Darapuri said the police have no evidence against him. Darapuri is unhappy that the Additional District Magistrate did not consider his explanation or hear his plea, and that the order was passed solely on the basis of the police report.

Moreover, the recovery order was not served on him and others like him till date, he said. "In the writ petition we filed in the High Court we submitted that we came to know about the illegal recovery order through these hoardings," he said.

Authority to issue notices

While many questions arise on the individual cases and the contention over fixing culpability of the accused without any conviction, a larger question has been the legality of the competent authority to issue notices for damages, for the losses suffered during the public demonstration.

In February, the High Court had directed a stay on a recovery notice served on a Kanpur resident, Mohammad Faizan, by the administration, offering him "ad-interim protection" and said the matter relating to issuing notices to alleged vandals was already being heard in the Supreme Court, through a writ petition by Parwaiz Arif Titu challenging the state decision on competent authority. In a separate case, the High Court granted same relief to four others in Bijnor, citing the same argument.

Additional District Magistrate Trans-Gomti Vishwa Bhushan Mishra, who drafted the notices and orders in Lucknow, was confident they hold legal ground, and stated that "there is not a single stay against my notice or any other notice issued under my format." Mishra, who has a degree in law, said: "If there was any question of legality, it could have been raised before the High Court and my order could have been stayed." He also said he has been liberal with the orders and acquitted most of those who responded to the notices. He said the Kanpur order was quashed only due to techno-legal reasons.

On March 18, the Allahabad High Court asked the U.P. government to file a reply in the recovery of damages ordinances brought by it after PILs challenged them. Darapuri and others are waiting for the High Court to reopen so that their writ petition against the recovery order can be heard. Once the Supreme Court reopens, all eyes will be on how it takes up, first the question of the banners, which still stand in Lucknow, and then the larger issue of extracting punitive compensation from individuals who are yet to be convicted of crime by a court, but are subjected to public shame, insecurity and uncertainty.

FROM PAGE ONE

Centre flags gap in screening travellers

"I would, therefore, like to request you to ensure that concerted and sustained action is taken urgently to put such passengers under surveillance immediately as per MoHFW guidelines," he said, adding that the district authorities should be actively involved in this effort.

The government has claimed that the screening of international incoming passengers at airports was done from January 18 in a phased manner.

Later Lav Agarwal, joint secretary, MoHFW, said, "The Cabinet Secretary wrote to State governments as part of our routine communication to ensure that no passenger is left untraced. He has requested that all international passengers be monitored and cleared for COVID-19 and that they adhere the 14 or 21 day-quarantine to ensure their and the community's safety. This is vital to break transmission and contain the spread of the virus."

Advisory to States

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) also sent an advisory to all States to take immediate steps to provide adequate support, including food and shelter to migrant labourers as lakhs marched on foot to reach their homes as the country is on a 21-day lockdown.

The States have also been advised to take steps to ensure that students, working women from other States, etc. are also allowed to continue in their existing accommodation.

The advisory asked the States to explore measures by involving various agencies, including NGOs, to provide food and shelter with basic amenities like clean drinking water, sanitation etc and make these vulnerable groups aware of the measures taken by the government, including provision of free food grains and other essential items through the PDS, and streamline the distribution system.

This would help prevent avoidable movement of such people, according to the advisory.

Punya Salila Srivastava, joint secretary, MHA, said there were no plans to allow domestic flights to ferry migrants returning home.

When asked if the government was going to arrange buses for the migrants, she said, "lockdown purpose is to keep people in situ, safe and secure. States talking to employers and started making arrangements for the facilities."

Arduous trek for 30,000 tribal workers of M.P.

Many others from Jhabua are stranded in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

Trudging tens of miles, switching transport four times and halting for nights at three cities, Lakhan Adivasi made it home in Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh on Thursday morning.

"It was the longest ride back. We didn't have much to eat, but we had to return to the safety of our home somehow," says Mr. Lakhan, a construction worker who travelled 450 km from Rajkot in Gujarat, along with his wife and two teenage daughters.

Left without work after the lockdown was imposed nationwide to contain COVID-19, 30,000 tribal labourers from Jhabua have returned from Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra. Another 30,000 from the district are left stranded in these States.

With transport suspended, shops shuttered and food supply halted, some families hired pick-up trucks, while others hailed jeeps. But scores lumbered their way back to western Madhya Pradesh, carrying luggage, water cans and infants.

As he reached the Pitol entry point, health officials screened him and gave him food. They huddled families, including his, into a bus for a journey back to his village. On a microphone, an official advised each of them to stay indoors and maintain distance from one another.

"The spell of labourers returning is going to continue for two-three more days. Until now, labourers thought the movement was restricted," says Abhay Singh Kharari, Sub Divisional Magistrate.

Another 5,000-7,000 labourers bound for Vidisha and Ujjain, and as far as Morena and Gwalior districts, 630 km away, crossed Jhabua through the Lambela and Kanjawani entry points from Gujarat, he adds.

Handy list

Mr. Kharari says that during the Assembly byelection and Lok Sabha election last year, the administration appealed to migrant labourers to return to vote. "That list is coming in handy now. We have requested the Collectors in Gujarat to make them stay there and provide food and medical aid, yet they are returning."

Over 5,000 labourers from Rajasthan and Gujarat had returned to the neighbouring Alirajpur district, mostly in hired pick-up trucks, while another 200 had crossed it, says S.C. Verma, Upper Collector, Alirajpur. "Luckily, many had returned in February for Bhagoria haat, a tribal festival. Otherwise, many others would have been left stranded."

Obstacle course: Migrant labourers waiting to get screened at a check post in Jhabua. ▪SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Ruchika Chouhan, Collector of Ratlam district, says that for those travelling to other districts, a barrier-free movement has been ensured. So far, 250 of the labourers from the district have returned. "Panchayat officials inform us whenever a new member enters villages. Accredited Social Health Activists and Auxiliary Nurse Midwives screen them for symptoms," she explains.

Earlier, they migrated intra-State for agricultural labour, but mechanisation forced them to take up construction work in other States. "Labour from Madhya Pradesh is comparatively cheap. After they return, they may find work locally with the ongoing harvest season. But the little subsistence farming they did is hit by the untimely rain," she says.

Labourers are returning despite assurances by the local administrations of food and shelter, she says, because there is a sense of security back home. "Neighbours can support with food and finances. And women and children usually stay back, while men and teenagers go out for work. The family being together can help them tide over times like this."

Yogi asks migrants to not return to hometown

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

As panic-stricken migrant labourers continued to flee from north Indian cities to their native places Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday asked such people to remain where they where. The State government would take care of their needs and would ensure they did not face any problems, the Chief Minister said. "Don't come out like that. You could also transport a disease," said Mr. Adityanath. Daily wage workers and labourers stationed in cities within Uttar Pradesh were also spotted returning to their native districts due to the uncertain period and lack of supplies. The Chief Minister spoke to his counterparts in other States and assured them that his government would bear the expenses of maintaining its citizens living there.

Sonia pledges MPLAD funds for COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress president Sonia Gandhi pledged funds allotted to her under the Members of Parliament Local Area Development (MPLAD) Scheme to the Rae Bareli district administration for combating the novel coronavirus. The former party president, Rahul Gandhi, flagged the problems faced by the poor because of the nationwide lockdown. "The lockdown will devastate our poor & weak. It will deliver a heavy blow to the country. Our decisions have to be carefully thought through," he wrote on Twitter, tagging a news report about a boy going without food and the police beating up his father. "A more nuanced & compassionate approach is required. It's still not too late," he added.

Govt. to add 40,000 ventilators by June

"This has been our strategy from day one and it has also been a pre-emptive, preventive and comprehensive approach. Today 1.4 lakh companies have allowed employees to work from home and 22 lakh health workers will benefit from the ₹50 lakh insurance," he told reporter.

Mr Agarwal said the Ministry has asked a "PSU to make 10,000 ventilators and another 30,000 will come from Bharat Electricals, a PSU under the Defence Ministry. Also our field frontline workers are been educated through online mode to contribute in our effort to contain the virus.''

Need of the hour

"We want to stress that the need of the hours is to continue 100% adherence to social distancing and lock down norms. We can break transmission only by contributing fully to this. Even a single case of non-compliance can set us back," the official said.

"President Kovind also had video conferencing with Governor, Lt. Governors, NGO heads to ensure that we provide a joint front to contain the virus and that all efforts are made to ensure that the common man stays protected,'' he added.

Cargo movement

Requesting everyone to stay where they are during the lock-down period joint secretary, Home Ministry, Punya Salila Srivastava, said that Centre has asked States ensure cargo movement and directed them to pay attention to the unauthorized movement of migrant labourers.

"We have requested that all migrant workers be allowed to stay safe where they are and provided with food, water, shelter and standard hygiene facilities. This is vital to help break the COVID-19 chain of transmission," she said.

Chidambaram hails interest rate reduction

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram on Friday welcomed the Reserve Bank of India's decision to infuse liquidity into the markets. But he termed "half-hearted" the three-month moratorium on EMI repayments, recommended by the RBI.

"I welcome the RBI's decision to cut the repo rate and measures to provide more liquidity," he wrote on Twitter, soon after RBI Governor Shakti Kanta Das announced the decisions of the Monetary Policy Committee.

Besides the steps to increase liquidity, including by cutting the cash reserve ratio, the RBI said banks could allow a three-month moratorium on EMI repayments of all term loans standing out on March 1.

Mr. Chidambaram called this decision "half- hearted" as the RBI left it to the discretion of the commercial banks to extend this benefit to their customers. "The demand is that all EMI due dates be automatically deferred. I had suggested that all due dates falling before 30 June be deferred to 30 June. Borrowers have been made to depend on the banks concerned, and will be disappointed," he said.

Help pilgrims stuck in Iran, says SC

Petitioner says many of them are sick and short of money for sustenance

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday said hundreds of Shia pilgrims stranded in Qom city of Iran on account of the COVID-2019 pandemic were in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. The government should intervene immediately to alleviate their suffering.

Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and Surya Kant issued notice to the Centre after hearing senior advocate Sanjay Hegde, for petitioner Mustafa M.H., through videoconferencing.

Mr. Mustafa, whose relatives are among the pilgrims, sought urgent directions to the government to immediately evacuate them. Many of them were ill and had run short of money for basic sustenance, he said.

The court demanded a status report on the steps taken by the MEA.

The court acknowledged that the petition shows "there is an urgent need for humanitarian assistance to be provided to Indian citizens who are stranded in Qom. In order to obviate concern over their well- being, we issue notice to the Union of India, returnable on March 30, 2020".

Plan of action

The court asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta to assist the court. Mr. Mehta was asked to place a status report of the steps taken and which the Union of India, through the Ministry of External Affairs, proposes to undertake to alleviate the hardship which has been faced by these persons".

"We hope and trust that in the meantime all necessary steps that are required to protect the welfare of these citizens will be adopted and a suitable plan of action will be chalked out in consultation with all the concerned authorities, including the Indian Embassy in Iran," the order said. The case was listed again on March 30.

The petition claims there are over 800-odd Indian citizens stuck in Qom. Mr. Hegde said there was a possibility that several of the existing batch of 500 in Qom have tested positive for COVID-19.

"In case, urgent help is not provided to these pilgrims, there are bound to be serious health hazards, which have started to become fatal and has resulted in the death of two pilgrims already," the petition said.

IN BRIEF

Gangwar to donate one month's salary

NEW DELHI

Union Minister of State for Labour and Employment Santosh Kumar Gangwar on Friday said he would donate one month's salary to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund in the wake of the growing coronavirus crisis. "We are contributing to fight the epidemic caused by COVID-19. I have decided to make a contribution of one month's salary to the PM's Relief Fund towards combating the pandemic."

Deepak Talwar's interim bail plea rejected

NEW DELHI

A special court has rejected an application of businessman Deepak Talwar seeking interim bail for two months on medical grounds in view of the COVID-19 outbreak. The proceedings, in a money laundering case, were held via videoconferencing. The court observed that Mr. Talwar, on May 21, complained of sore throat and fever and he was provided proper medical treatment in jail and his condition was being reviewed periodically.

India ready to assist Nepal with COVID-19

NEW DELHI

As part of efforts to assist the neighbourhood in dealing with the COVID-19 situation, India is ready to dispatch a Rapid Response Team (RRT) to Nepal, said Lt. Gen. Anup Banerji, Director-General, Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS), on Friday. " Other assistance will be provided as and when required for building up the infrastructural capability and expert manpower to friendly foreign countries," he said.

FinMin questions banks on shut branches

According to data submitted by banks to the Ministry, 1775 of the State Bank of India's 22,029 branches are closed, 666 of Bank of Baroda's 9,479 branches are shuttered as are 989 of Punjab National Bank's 6,618 branches, 289 of Canara Bank's 6,325 branches and 424 of 5,024 Bank of India branches.

In a communication to the banks earlier this week after the lockdown was announced, the IBA had said they could selectively keep their branches open after consultation with local State governments.

Bank branches are now offering only essential services including deposits and withdrawals, and their working hours have also been shortened.

Unions concerned

The communication from the Finance Ministry has, however, not gone down well with bank unions as they cited the problems employees face in reaching to branches due to the lockdown and obstruction by police.

"Now ensuing week branches will have to face rush at the counter due to salary disbursement & pension payment," said Devidas Tuljapurkar General Secretary Maharashtra State Bank Employees Federation.

Nirmala Sitharaman

Alternatives needed

"Yesterday's announcement of disbursement of subsidies through Jan Dhan accounts is also likely to result in a huge rush at the counters when maintaining required distance amongst customers & employees is not possible which will result in frustrating the very purpose of the lockdown. This is likely to put customers as also staff to a great risk. Government should find out the alternatives." Mr Tuljapurkar added.

Ex-Minister Beni Prasad Verma dies

SP founding member had been unwell

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LUCKNOW

Beni Prasad Verma, a founding member of the Samajwadi Party and former Union minister who was considered close to party patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav, died on Friday. He was 79.

The Rajya Sabha MP was not well for past few days. He was admitted to a private hospital in Lucknow, where he died around 7 p.m., his son Rakesh Verma told PTI.

Beni Prasad Verma was the telecom minister between 1996-1998 in the then Prime Minister H. D. Deve Gowda's cabinet and was the steel minister in the Congress-led UPA government.

Beni Prasad Verma

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav reached the hospital and condoled his death. Mr. Verma is survived by three sons and two daughters.

Mohsin's family did not file police complaint

He was not in touch with us, say kin

VIJAITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

The family of Mohsin from Thrikaripur in Kerala's Kasaragod district, said to be one of the three terrorists who attacked a gurdwara in Kabul on March 25, left for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) more than two years ago. And his family had never reported this to the police, a senior government official told *The Hindu*.

"His family never reported to the police or filed any complaint... They claim he was not in touch with them all these years... We are ascertaining the entire chain of events," the official said.

The official said the attacker's movement to Afghanistan was not clear yet. "We know that he left home more than two years ago under the pretext that he was going to the UAE. After that, when and how he reached Afghanistan to join the ISKP [Islamic State in Khorasan Province] is not known. The investigation is on," the official said. There is no police case registered against Mohsin yet.

At least two officials confirmed that he was not part of the group of 21 men and women from Kerala that had left India in 2016 in batches to join the ISKP. Mainly comprising defectors from the Tehrik-i-Taliban (TTP), the ISKP came into existence in 2015.

Indian seamen stranded in Iran advised to stay with vessels

They have been locked on their boats as their owners have told them to stay put till the situation improves

M. KALYANARAMAN
CHENNAI

The International Maritime Federation has estimated that several hundred Indian seafarers are stranded in Iran after the stringent lockdown due the COVID-19 pandemic sweeping the country. Many of these seamen opt to work on Iranian vessels to complete the required 12-month training to become certified seamen in India.

While the exact number of such stranded seafarers is not known, a list created by Sanjay Parashar, Chairman of the Federation, has the details of some 70 such seafarers.

The Indian Embassy in Tehran has so far counted some 150 stranded Indian seafarers. "We have advised them to not sign off and stay with their owners/vessels. We have been able to help in sending back eight who signed off. We do not have information of them being abandoned by owners," says an official at the Embassy. He cites strict lockdown rules that include heavy fines of up to 5,000,000 rials as constricting any effort to reach out to them.

Stuck on board

The seafarers are locked into their boats as their owners have told them to stay in abandoned boats until the situation improves.

Snehit Barathe from Pune completed his 12-month training on March 5 on the ship *Yekta* that was transporting tyres, car parts and so on between Dubai and Abadan in Iran.

But his owner has told him to stay on in an abandoned boat in Khorramshahr. "We are six here on this ship. There is gas in the boat that we are using to cook. Until a week back the market was functioning but everything is under lockdown now," he says.

Many have been stranded longer. Hemchandra Pokhariyal from Nainital in Uttarakhand finished his training in January 15. He continued to serve in a ship until his salary was settled. "I had a ticket for March 4 to come back to India but the lockdown started here. Since then I have been living in an abandoned boat," he says. "We are managing with *qaboos* (Iranian bread) and rice," says another stranded trainee Ajay Pawar.

Anurag Chand says some 50 Indian seafarers have taken shelter in the abandoned boats at the Khorramshahr port. "We help each other out with food," he adds.

Recently, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami had taken up the issue of stranded fishermen with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "The fishermen have been confined to small spaces and are living under poor conditions without proper food or medical care," says Mario Johnson, advocate at the Madras High Court and co-ordinator of Tamil Fishermen Confederation.

The Embassy official said despite large distances and poor connectivity, they have provided essential food items at great cost to all the 1,029 Indian fishermen in Bushehr and Hormozgan provinces within a span of 24 hours on March 20-21, 2020.

Viral fight: A CRPF jawan assisting a policeman in wearing a protective gear amidst the lockdown in Srinagar; fire brigade officials sanitising an area using mobile equipment in Mumbai; residents offering tea and snacks to police personnel deployed in Bhubaneswar; and a scene outside a nationalised bank in New Delhi on Friday. ▪NISSAR AHMAD, EMMANUAL YOGINI, BISWARANJAN ROUT & SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Concerns over privacy as details of air travellers are leaked online

List contains data regarding people who arrived in Delhi from March 9 to 20

SUHASINI HAIDAR
YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
NEW DELHI

The government's efforts to monitor people advised quarantine for the COVID-19 ran into privacy issues on Friday, after the database of hundreds of passengers who returned from "coronavirus affected countries" was leaked online and shared by social media groups.

In addition, the government defended its newly launched pilot or beta version of a mobile phone application called "Corona Kavach" which uses the data of confirmed COVID-19 patients to alert subscribers when they are in close proximity.

On Thursday, a forward of a list containing details of 722 passengers who arrived in Delhi between March 9, and March 20 (which was the last day of commercial flights), was received on a number of "WhatsApp" and "Facebook" groups, who forwarded it further.

The list included names, passport numbers, flight details, mobile phone numbers and addresses of all travellers.

"I find it worrying that our information has leaked," said one of the passengers who lives in a South Delhi colony. "This includes personal information that could be used for identity theft, and there is the concern that anyone on the list will be vilified. I hope there is an inquiry into how such information leaked."

The Hindu contacted several government agencies that passed on the blame to other agencies for the leak. The Ministry of External Affairs said this information comes under the Bureau of Immigration, which comes under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The MHA declined comment but an official said the information had been collated for the Ministry of Health.

RWAs responsible

Subsequently, after enquiries were made, it emerged that the Ministry of Health had released the data to the Delhi government, which also declined to respond to queries.

However, a senior government source said they had narrowed the leak down to specific Resident Welfare Associations who had access to the lists of their areas.

"We are now making a special appeal within departments not to forward these lists unnecessarily," said the government source, while adding that it must be recognised that "there are multiple stakeholders in the system that need the list in order to monitor each case."

The source said more than 15 lakh people have been screened at Indian airports, of whom 70% had been routed through Delhi, and that the leaking of a few hundred names should be seen in that context.

But privacy activists and lawyers say the issue remains serious.

"It doesn't matter whether 700 names are in the list leaked or 7,000," said Research Director at the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy Arghya Sengupta. "Apart from the threat of violence, these details make each person on the list vulnerable to a number of crimes," he said.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Electronic and Information Technology's test-release on March 23 of an app designed to track the location of COVID-19 infected people and alert subscribers when they come near their location has also raised some red flags.

The "Corona Kavach", whose beta app has already been downloaded by more than 100,000 people, will require all COVID-19 patients to download the app to track their whereabouts.

(with inputs from Vijaita Singh and Nikhil M. Babu)

Under watch: COVID-19 patients have to download Corona Kavach app to track their whereabouts.

Army can mobilise medical teams in six hours: Naravane

Contingency plans have been put in place, says Army chief

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

The Army has responsive and agile Quick Reaction Medical Teams (QRMTs) on standby to mobilise at six hours notice to meet the requirements of hospitals and the civil administration if needed, Chief of the Army Staff Gen. Manoj Naravane said on Friday.

Outlining the plans to meet any escalation in Coronavirus infections across the country, he stated that contingency plans were in place and spread of COVID-19 would not affect the Army's core efficiency.

Gen. Naravane said, "All field hospitals have been instructed to be ready to set up a 45-bed isolation facility and create a 10-bed Intensive Care Unit (ICU) facility exclusively for COVID-19 at six hours notice. Vacant Key Location Point [KLP] and existing infrastructure are earmarked for the same." In addition, 30% field hospitals have been kept on standby for constructing COVID-19 hospitals in virus hotspots.

"At present COVID-19 is in the 'preparatory stage of impact in India' and we are making concerted efforts to prevent it from establishing a firm base. Next few weeks will be crucial to prevent its negative effects," he pointed out.

On the possible contingency options that may arise as cases continue to increase, he said that at this juncture it was difficult to say how the situation would develop. "However, after having analysed the impact of COVID-19 over last two-three months in other countries, one can start planning and preparing for difficult times."

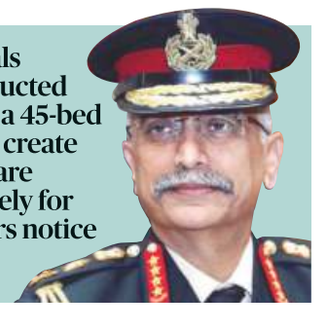
On the Army's operational preparedness, he asserted that it had certain "inherent capability" to rise up to various emergency situations by virtue of organisational structure and training and in keeping with that, the "Indian Army is planning and preparing to fight COVID-19."

Gen. Naravane observed that he was reviewing the situation on a daily basis: "Command-wise COVID-19 helpline numbers have also been given. Overall, I am satisfied with the planning and preparations undertaken by the Indian Army so far."

The Army currently had wellness centres for evacuees at Manesar, Jaisalmer and Jodhpur and medical facilities at Jhansi, Binnaguri and Gaya have been kept on standby with an additional collective capacity of 1600 beds.

Till now, 372 evacuees have been treated at Manesar and 82 were under quarantine. In Jaisalmer, 484 citizens, who were evacuated from Iran, were under quarantine and another 277 in Jodhpur, he added.

> **All field hospitals have been instructed to be ready to set up a 45-bed isolation facility and create a 10-bed Intensive Care Unit facility, exclusively for COVID-19, at six hours notice**
>
> **GEN. MANOJ NARAVANE,** Chief of the Army Staff



'Exempt caregivers from lockdown curbs'

NEW DELHI

The Union government has asked all the States and Union Territories (UTs) to ensure that caregivers of persons with disabilities (PwD) are able to reach them during the three-week lockdown imposed by the government to control the spread of COVID-19. The Department of Empowerment of PwD of the Social Justice Ministry issued an advisory to the States and UTs on Thursday night on the "protection and safety" of PwD during the COVID-19 pandemic. In a letter, issued after the advisory, to the Chief Secretaries, secretary of the department Shakuntala Gamlin wrote: "While COVID-19 is impacting the entire population, PwD are more vulnerable to the disease due to their physical, sensory and cognitive limitations."

India to set up electronic platform to fight virus

NEW DELHI

India will set up an electronic platform to help member-countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) fight the COVID-19 pandemic. The decision was conveyed to health professionals of the SAARC countries during a video conference on Thursday, which was conducted as decided during the March 15 virtual summit of SAARC leaders. "India proposed a shared electronic platform for all SAARC nations to share and exchange information, knowledge, expertise and best practices for jointly combating the coronavirus epidemic," a Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) release said. The video conference lasted two hours, in which all the member-countries of the SAARC participated.

Railway moves 1.6 lakh freight wagons

NEW DELHI

Indian Railways on Friday said that it has moved more than 1.6 lakh freight wagons in the last four days, of which over one lakh wagons were carrying essential commodities, including food grains, milk, fruits & vegetables and petroleum products. "Close coordination is being maintained with the State Governments so that rakes of essential commodities are handled smoothly without any delay, amidst various restrictions imposed in the wake of COVID-19," an official statement said, adding that freight movement is being closely monitored. The All India Station Masters Association on Friday also said that its members will contribute one day's wage for the next three months, raising about ₹21 crore, to help tide over the impact of COVID-19.

India set to participate in WHO's medicine trial

4 drugs or combinations to be tested

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

India is all set to join World Health Organisation's "solidarity trial" aimed at rapid global search for drugs to treat COVID-19. The country has stayed away so far from this multi-country trial "due to its small sample size and because our contribution would have looked minuscule," said Head of Epidemiology and Communicable diseases at Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) R. Gangakhedkar on Friday.

The Solidarity Trial will test four different drugs or combinations – remdesivir, a combination of two drugs, lopinavir and ritonavir, the two drugs plus interferon beta, and chloroquine – and will compare their effectiveness to what is called standard of care, the regular support hospitals treating COVID-19 patients use now.

Speaking of where India stands in terms of developing a drug or vaccine against COVID-19, Dr. Gangakhedkar said: "We have to prioritise what we need right now to deal with the situation. ICMR is currently looking at re-purposed drug molecules to find treatment for COVID-19. We don't have the luxury of time right now."

COVID-19

He added that vaccine development wasn't a priority for ICMR currently. "There are 30 vaccine groups that are operational worldwide right now looking at COVID-19, with five having gone into animal-toxicity study. India will express its interest to participate in the trial for the Indian population when we feel the time is right," he said.

Bhilwara remains a hotbed of COVID-19 infection

The district administration has launched steps on a war footing to control virus spread

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

With two deaths and 21 COVID-19 positive cases being detected so far, Rajasthan's Bhilwara town, situated 250 km from Jaipur, continues to remain a hotbed of coronavirus infection. The district administration has launched steps on a war-footing to control the community spread of the virus, which threatens to destroy the local textile industry.

Of the two patients who died, a 73-year-old man was in coma due to kidney failure and had later tested positive for coronavirus. He was admitted from March 3 to 11 in the private hospital where three doctors were later found COVID-19 positive. His samples were obtained when he was in the state of coma.

The administration claimed that his death had occurred because of kidney failure and brain stroke, and not due to COVID-19. Since he was being treated at his home after being discharged from the hospital, his son and granddaughter tested positive on Thursday.

The other deceased – a 60-year-old man – was admitted to the private hospital's intensive care unit from March 7 to 9 after a heart attack. He visited the hospital again twice and was later shifted to Mahatma Gandhi Government Hospital. He tested COVID-19 positive on March 25 and died the next day.

While the MG Hospital's doctors attributed his death to dysfunctional kidney and other complications, two of his close relatives tested positive on Friday. They are among the 21 patients who have been confirmed with coronavirus infection after the testing of 439 samples conducted in the town after an intense contact tracing.

Bhilwara Collector Rajendra Bhatt said on Friday that while curfew was clamped in the town's municipal limits on March 20, a one-km radius area around the private hospital, where the infection cases were initially reported, had been declared a zero mobility area as part of the containment zone.

In the biggest screening exercise undertaken in the district, 1,948 teams of health workers have surveyed 4.22 lakh families in both the urban and rural areas and examined 21.64 lakh persons. Hotels, resorts, hostels and dharamshalas have been acquired in the town to arrange 1,500 quarantine beds and 14,400 normal beds to meet an emergency situation.

In his latest action, the District Collector has taken over five private hospitals to ramp up isolation facilities for the coronavirus patients. The State government will provide electricity, water and other necessities during the treatment. At present, 6,445 persons have been home quarantined and 50 persons are in isolation at the government and private medical facilities.

Rajesh Jain, who runs an ear, nose and throat speciality hospital in Bhilwara, said the people in the town wanted to know the source of contagion. "Was the origin in hospital or some other place? The spread has been reasonably controlled because the initial set of patients were all medicos and hospital staff," he said.

24-hour screening

A 24-hour screening centre had been established in Bhilwara to cover the people with symptoms as well as those who came in contact with the hospital's staff. Medical and Health Minister Raghu Sharma said the situation was under control.

Policemen wear masks as they patrol the streets in virus-hit Bhilwara. ▪FILE PHOTO: PTI

14 airlines operated 34 rescue flights

They helped evacuate foreign nationals and bring back Indians

JAGRITI CHANDRA
NEW DELHI

Fourteen international airlines operated a total of 34 flights in the past three weeks to evacuate foreign nationals from India as well as to bring back Indians stranded in different parts of the world following travel restrictions to contain the spread of COVID-19, according to DGCA data.

Malaysian carrier AirAsia Berhad has so far operated the maximum number of flights, i.e. seven, to evacuate Indians from Kuala Lumpur as well as to evacuate Malaysians from Tiruchi, Vishakhapatnam and Chennai between March 18 and 24.

Japan Airlines will be operating a flight each on Friday and Saturday in addition to three it has already flown into India to evacuate Japanese nationals from New Delhi.

Since the surge in COVID-19 cases in Iran in early March, two of its airlines, Mahan Air and Iran Air, have operated five rescue flights to allow Indians to return from Tehran as well as to evacuate their citizens and cargo from New Delhi.

European carriers, Lufthansa, Aeroflot, Austrian Airline, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, LOT Polish, among others have operated a total of seven flights to India after India cancelled foreign tourist visas.

Lufthansa sent its A380 aircraft from Frankfurt to Delhi to evacuate German nationals earlier this week. The flight was among the total 220 special flights operated by Lufthansa Group airlines (comprising Swiss, Austrian Airlines, Lufthansa and Eurowings) across the globe, a press statement said.

Ground crew of the Emirates airline. ▪SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

NEET put off, may be held in last week of May

It was scheduled to be held on May 3

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET), for admission to undergraduate medical degree programmes that was scheduled to be held on May 3, has been postponed.

It is now likely to be held in the last week of May, though no date has been decided as yet, the National Testing Agency (NTA) said on Friday. The decision has been taken in view of the hardships faced by parents and students due to the COVID-19 epidemic, said the NTA, an autonomous body under the Human Resource Development Ministry which conducts the examination.

HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank said he has directed the NTA to postpone the already delayed Joint Engineering Examination's main paper (JEE-Main) also until the last week of May.

"We are hopeful that we will get back to normal situation relatively soon; but for now, various concerned Ministries and Examination Boards are examining the scenario to evaluate the situation that may necessitate any change in the schedule," said an NTA notice.

SRI JAYADEVA INSTITUTE OF CARDIOVASCULAR SCIENCES & RESEARCH
(Govt. of Karnataka - Reg. Autonomous Institute)
9th Block, Jayanagar, Bannerghatta Road, Bengaluru-560 069
Ph:080-22977666 / 276 / 216 / 217 / 433, Fax: +91-080-26534477 / 22977278
E-mail. director@jayadevacardiology.com, sjicrprojectengineer@gmail.com
Website : www.jayadevacardiology.com

CORRIGENDUM TO e-TENDER NOTIFICATION NO. SJIC&R/TS/54/2020-21 DT. 07.02.2020

Construction of New 300+ Bedded Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences & Research Hospital Complex including required Engineering & Hospital Services at Humnabad Road, Kalaburagi, Karnataka.

Sl. No.	As already notified	To be read as
1	Date of pre-bid meeting : **30.03.2020 at 11.30 AM** at SJICR, Bengaluru.	Date of pre-bid meeting : **30.04.2020 at 11.30 AM** at SJICR, Bengaluru.
2	The last date for submission of tenders through e-portal is **28.04.2020 at 4.00 PM**	The last date for submission of tenders through e-portal is **15.05.2020 at 4.00 PM**
3	Date of Technical Bid Opening : **29.04.2020 at 4.00 PM**	Date of Technical Bid Opening : **16.05.2020 at 4.00 PM**

If bidders have any queries/clarifications, please mail your letters to E-mail ID : director@jayadevacardiology.com and sjicrprojectengineer@gmail.com
For further details, please log on to https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in

Sd/-
Chief Administrative Officer.

British PM tests positive for coronavirus

U.S. overtakes China with the most number of infections; Spain toll hits 4,858 as 769 die in 24 hours

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Friday he has tested positive for the coronavirus, while the number of infections in the U.S. surged to the most in the world and Spain announced a record number of virus deaths overnight.

Mr. Johnson's office said the Prime Minister was tested after showing mild symptoms for the new coronavirus and is self-isolating and continuing to lead Britain's response to the pandemic.

"Be in no doubt that I can continue, thanks to the wizardry of modern technology, to communicate with all my top team, to lead the national fightback against coronavirus," Mr. Johnson said in a video message, adding that he had a temperature and persistent cough.

Several weeks ago, Mr. Johnson had pledged he would "go on shaking hands with everybody".

Mr. Johnson, 55, was the first leader of a major nation known to have contracted COVID-19; German Chancellor Angela Merkel has been in isolation since her doctor tested positive for the virus, but her first two tests have been negative.

Cause for concern: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson with Health Secretary Matt Hancock, in this file photo. Both of them have tested positive for COVID-19. ▪AFP

Earlier this week Britain's Prince Charles said he had tested positive.

British Health Secretary Matt Hancock, who has been at the forefront of nation's response to the outbreak, also was confirmed to have tested positive for the virus. Britain has 11,658 confirmed cases of the virus, and 578 people have died.

Spain's Health Ministry reported another 7,800 infections overnight for a total of 64,059. Deaths climbed by 769 to 4,858 – the world's second highest total after Italy's 8,214 fatalities.

COVID-19

9,000 health workers

Spain says 9,444 health workers have contracted the coronavirus. That's nearly 15% of the total number of cases. "It's true that we have more deaths than what we saw yesterday, but it's also true that the percentage increase today is similar to that of he past three days and it appears there is a stabilization," said Fernando Simūn, the head of Spain's health emergency coordination centre.

In Washington, the House kicked off debate on a $2.2 trillion package to ease the pandemic's devastating toll on the U.S. economy and health care system.

The chamber had appeared set to pass the measure after an extraordinary 96-0 Senate passage, but the vote ran into complications. A Republican lawmaker threatened to delay passage until most lawmakers return to Washington, which could make a Friday vote impossible.

The situation in countries with more fragile health care systems worsened, with Russia, Indonesia and South Africa all passing the 1,000-infection mark. South Africa also announced its first two deaths as it began a three-week lockdown.

The U.S. now has 86,012 confirmed cases, and Italy was set to pass China's 81,897 infections later on Friday, according to a count kept by Johns Hopkins University. The three countries account nearly half the world's nearly 558,905 infections and more than half of the 25,336 reported virus deaths.

New York state, the epicentre of the U.S. outbreak, reported 100 more deaths in one day, accounting for almost 30% of the 1,300 fatalities nationwide.

China and U.S. must 'unite to fight virus', Xi tells Trump

'Cooperation is mutually beneficial & the only right choice'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

China and the U.S. should "unite to fight" the deadly coronavirus pandemic, President Xi Jinping said in a call with Donald Trump on Friday, as he called for the U.S. to improve relations.

The two countries have clashed in recent weeks over the virus, and Chinese state media said Mr. Xi told Mr. Trump he hoped the "U.S. will take substantive actions to improve Sino-U.S. relations".

He also called for the two countries to work together to tackle the virus and said Beijing "wishes to continue sharing all information and experience with the U.S.", according to state broadcaster CCTV.

Mr. Trump sounded a positive tone, tweeting that he had a "very good conversation" with Mr. Xi, and that both leaders discussed the pandemic "in great detail".

Xi Jinping

"China has been through much & has developed a strong understanding of the virus. We are working closely together. Much respect," he wrote.

War of words

Mr. Trump and his Secretary of State Mike Pompeo angered Beijing this month by repeatedly referring to "the Chinese virus" when discussing the COVID-19 outbreak first detected in the Chinese city of Wuhan.

Mr. Trump has since dropped the term amid accusations of racism, in another small sign of easing tensions between the two world powers.

Earlier this month, a Foreign Ministry spokesman in Beijing also suggested in a tweet that the U.S. military brought the virus to Wuhan.

This prompted Mr. Trump to accuse China of spreading misinformation, and the US President repeatedly attacked China's lack of transparency and the slowness of its initial response to the outbreak.

Mr. Xi said Sino-U.S. relations were at a "critical juncture", CCTV reported, adding that cooperation was mutually beneficial and "the only right choice".

During the call, Mr. Xi said China had shared information about the epidemic with the World Health Organization and other countries, including the U.S., in a "timely" manner throughout.

German researchers plan mass immunity study to track virus

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
FRANKFURT AM MAIN

German researchers plan to regularly test over 100,000 people to see if they have overcome infection with COVID-19 to track its spread, an institute behind the plan confirmed on Friday.

A spokeswoman for Brunswick's Helmholtz Institute for Infectious Disease Research confirmed a report in news weekly *Der Spiegel* that large-scale testing for antibodies could start in April if researchers are given the green light.

"You could give immune people something similar to a vaccination certificate that could allow them exceptions from limits on their activities," Helmholtz Institute epidemiologist Gerard Krause told *Der Spiegel*.

But even if the study is approved, initial readings might not be completely reliable. Tests currently available can show false positives for coronavirus antibodies, as 90% of adults already have immunity against common, harmless viruses from the same family.

Toll rises to 2,378 in Iran, infections cross 32,000

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ASSOCIATED PRESS
TEHRAN

Iran on Friday announced 144 new deaths from the novel coronavirus, bringing the official number of fatalities to 2,378 in one of the world's worst-hit countries.

"In the past 24 hours, we've had 2,926 new confirmed cases across the country," Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said. More than 32,000 people have been infected in the country.

Meanwhile, nearly 300 people have been killed and more than 1,000 sickened so far by ingesting methanol over fears about the new coronavirus. Drinking alcohol is banned in the country and those who do rely on bootleggers.

16-year-old among dead in France's highest daily toll

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

The mother of France's youngest coronavirus victim has spoken of the "unbearable" loss of her 16-year-old daughter, as the country reported its highest daily toll from the pandemic.

French authorities said on Thursday that 365 people had been killed by COVID-19 over the previous 24 hours, taking the national total of those who have died in hospital to 1,696. At least 29,155 people have tested positive for the virus so far.

The teenage girl named Julie A. died in Paris, becoming the youngest French victim of the disease that more often afflicts the elderly or people with underlying health conditions.

"It's unbearable," the girl's mother Sabine told AFP by phone from her home in the Parisian suburbs. "We were meant to have an ordinary life."

A week ago, Julie developed a mild cough but on Saturday she began to feel short of breath, her mother said. She underwent scans in hospital and several tests for COVID-19.

Her condition deteriorated and her death was announced on Thursday, with health officials emphasising that severe cases are very rare in young people.

"From the start, we were told that the virus doesn't affect young people. We believed it, like everyone else," Ms. Sabine said. Her daughter had no known underlying health problems.

ELSEWHERE

Prince Harry and Meghan set up base in California

LONDON

Prince Harry and wife Meghan have permanently relocated to California, media reports said. The couple flew by private jet from Canada to Los Angeles last week before the border between the two countries closed because of the deadly virus outbreak, *The Sun* reported. AFP

Israel heads for unity government

TEL AVIV

Israel appeared headed for a unity government on Friday after Opposition leader Benny Gantz moved towards an agreement with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, disappointing voters who had hoped to bring down the right-wing premier. Mr. Gantz was elected parliamentary speaker on Thursday with support from Mr. Netanyahu's Likud and allied parties. REUTERS

U.S. officials push to evict 'Chinese spies'

Administration officials suspect several employees at media outlets in the U.S. are agents

EDWARD WONG
JULIAN E. BARNES
WASHINGTON

As China moves forward with expelling almost all American journalists from three major U.S. newspapers, Trump administration officials have intensified discussions over whether to evict employees of Chinese media outlets who they say mainly act as spies.

The action is under consideration because some U.S. officials want to retaliate against China in a new conflict that has revolved around news organisations and is being fuelled by hostility over the coronavirus pandemic.

Since the virus began spreading across the U.S., Washington and Beijing have waged a global information war over the outbreak. President Donald Trump and his aides are trying to pin responsibility on China, where Communist Party officials initially covered up the dangers of the virus as it was first discovered. Mr. Trump, though, has been criticised for vast failures in the U.S. response.

A file photo of a Foreign Ministry briefing in Beijing. China recently said it would expel U.S. journalists. ▪AP

Strong case

Some U.S. intelligence officials have pushed for years to expel employees of Chinese media organisations who they say mainly file intelligence reports. The officials now see an opening to make a strong case after Beijing abruptly announced this month that it would expel almost all U.S. citizens who report from mainland China for *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal*.

China also demanded those organisations, as well as Voice of America and *Time* magazine, turn over information on employees, budgets, assets and other operational details.

U.S. officials view the state-run outlets in China as a potent threat in the growing strategic rivalry between the two superpowers, both because the outlets disseminate propaganda around the world and because of their ability to provide cover for intelligence operatives.

"Propaganda outlets that report to the Chinese Communist Party are foreign agents, not 'journalists,' " the State Department spokeswoman, Morgan Ortagus, said on Twitter on Thursday.

Information duel

"Even General Secretary Xi says they 'must speak for the Party,' " she added, referring to remarks that President Xi Jinping of China made in 2016 as he toured the headquarters of state-run media organisations. In recent days, Ms. Ortagus and Hua Chunying, a spokeswoman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, have engaged in an information duel on Twitter.

Any expulsion of Chinese employees at media outlets accused of conducting intelligence work could include ones based at the United Nations, where China has a permanent seat on the Security Council, according to an intelligence official familiar with the plans.

Most Chinese employees of state-run organisations work in Washington for large organisations.

Some Chinese intelligence operatives pose as journalists at those agencies and at smaller state-run outlets, using "nonofficial cover," in the parlance of spies, experts on Chinese espionage say.

Some U.S. officials have spoken of entirely shutting down those small outfits as well as any Chinese organisation or company accused of being a front for intelligence work.

Officials declined to estimate the number of Chinese intelligence operatives in the U.S. they say use journalism employment as a cover or the number they would like to expel. NY TIMES

Virus cases spike on U.S. aircraft carrier: media

'23 patients on *USS Theodore Roosevelt*'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

The number of coronavirus cases on the *USS Theodore Roosevelt* aircraft carrier in the Pacific Ocean has spiked to at least 23, with authorities moving to isolate the entire crew in port, U.S. media reported.

Earlier this week, three sailors were evacuated after testing positive, the first cases reported on a U.S. Navy ship on deployment.

"Additional positive cases of COVID-19 have been discovered", Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Mike Gilday said in a statement on Thursday, without specifying how many.

He added he expected further positive tests among the more than 5,000 personnel on board the warship, which is in Guam on a "pre-scheduled port visit".

None was seriously ill and none had been hospitalised, Admiral Gilday said.

The USS Theodore Roosevelt ▪REUTERS

The *Wall Street Journal* said there were now "at least 23" cases and quoted Acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly as saying authorities were "in the process now of testing 100% of the crew".

"During the port visit, base access will be limited to the pier for *Roosevelt's* sailors. No base or regional personnel will access the pier," Mr. Modly said.

The *USS Theodore Roosevelt* was last in port in Vietnam, but Admiral Gilday said it was difficult to connect the cases to a particular port visit.

Afghan government names team for talks with Taliban

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KABUL

The Afghan government has finalised a 21-member team – including five women – who will negotiate with the Taliban in upcoming talks aimed at ending Afghanistan's 18-year-old conflict, officials said on Friday.

Under a deal signed by the U.S. and the Taliban last month, the insurgents agreed to commit to starting talks with the Afghan government and discuss a possible ceasefire. Up until now, the Taliban has refused to meet with the administration of President Ashraf Ghani, calling him an American stooge. In return for starting talks and other commitments, the U.S. and foreign partner forces will withdraw from Afghanistan over the next 14 months.

Political crisis

The negotiating team was supposed to be unveiled weeks ago, with the "intra-Afghan" talks with the Taliban meant to get under way on March 10 in Oslo. But Kabul has been gripped by a political crisis, with Mr. Ghani's legitimacy being challenged by his rival Abdullah Abdullah, who has also proclaimed himself President.

The team will be led by former Afghan intelligence chief Masoom Stanekzai, who as a Pashtun shares a tribal identity with the Taliban. While there was no immediate indication of whether Mr. Abdullah supports the team's composition, it includes Batur Dostum whose father Abdul Rashid Dostum – a notorious former warlord – is a staunch Abdullah ally.

In a statement, Afghanistan"s Peace Ministry said Mr. Ghani "wishes the delegation success".

Among the five women delegates is Habiba Sarabi, deputy leader of the government's High Peace Council. Sarabi is a Hazara, the predominantly Shi'ite ethnic group that the Taliban have repeatedly targeted.

Another woman delegate is Fawzia Koofi, an ethnic Tajik and a woman's rights activist who has been a vocal Taliban critic.

Sanders sees a moment that matches his ideas

Allies say he believes that he can meld the COVID-19 crisis with his progressive policy agenda

SYDNEY EMBER

Both hands were waving – over here, over there, a full wingspan on display – as Bernie Sanders directed his most biting sarcasm at his "Republican friends".

Excuse him, forgive him, for wanting working people to get a few more bucks for a few more months as part of the sweeping stimulus bill that was being debated on the Senate floor. Excuse him, forgive him, for not wanting "to punish the poor and working people" struggling to weather the economic meltdown caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

"My Republican colleagues are very distressed," he said on Wednesday. "Oh my God, the universe is collapsing!" he said so passionately that he nearly spat.

With the virus bringing the nation to a virtual stop, there is no real presidential campaign for Mr. Sanders to engage in, and even if there were, he is almost hopelessly behind Joe Biden in the delegate count. But Sanders is still running, in large part, allies and aides say, because he believes he can meld this moment of national crisis with the progressive policy agenda that has been his life's work.

"For someone who has built a career out of campaigning against the inequality of our health care system, this is prime time," said Nick Carter, who served as political outreach director for the 2016 Sanders campaign.

Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders

So Mr. Sanders will take the stage when he can get it – including on the Senate floor on Wednesday night, but also in news releases, radio and television interviews and live streams where he studiously repeats his mantra to loyalists.

It is unclear who exactly is listening or whether he can make a difference. Even Mr. Biden, as the likely Democratic nominee to face President Donald Trump, has struggled to get visibility. Both candidates are being overshadowed by daily briefings from Mr. Trump and Gov. Andrew Cuomo of New York.

Not going anywhere

In an interview on Thursday with the public radio programme "1A", Mr. Sanders did not say how long he intended to stay in the race but suggested he was not going anywhere soon.

And he rebuffed a comparison to his 2016 campaign, when he fought Hillary Clinton to the bitter end, arguing that the coronavirus made the two situations different because many states this year had postponed their primaries.

"You're talking about an election without elections," he said. "What does that mean? It's kind of unprecedented."

Some close to him suggested that his virus outreach was a way to keep his supporters motivated and engaged during this strange time of suspended animation, so that the campaign can jump-start them into action if he decides to rev his candidacy back up. NYTIMES

MARKET WATCH

	27-03-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	29816	-0.44
US Dollar	74.89	0.36
Brent oil	24.81	-9.85

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	251.30	3.10
Asian Paints	1604.15	-12.80
Axis Bank	359.75	18.35
Bajaj Auto	2053.45	-53.40
Bajaj Finserv	4890.60	-256.65
Bajaj Finance	2542.30	-251.40
Bharti Airtel	448.95	-21.75
BPCL	278.75	-3.55
Britannia Ind	2529.25	-59.20
Cipla	407.65	21.50
Coal India	131.70	8.45
Dr Reddys Lab	2916.50	-32.05
Eicher Motors	14319.80	-438.15
GAIL (India)	69.50	-3.60
Grasim Ind	460.90	-10.50
HCL Tech	430.65	-17.05
HDFC	1754.00	20.75
HDFC Bank	904.45	3.35
Hero MotoCorp	1661.20	-140.70
Hindalco	91.55	-3.00
Hind Unilever	2140.55	-54.35
ICICI Bank	339.85	9.60
IndusInd Bank	411.10	-24.80
Bharti Infratel	156.80	0.30
Infosys	652.70	9.70
Indian OilCorp	76.90	-1.10
ITC	163.20	6.80
JSW Steel	151.45	1.65
Kotak Bank	1399.10	26.15
L&T	837.05	-0.95
M&M	294.50	9.00
Maruti Suzuki	4646.10	-231.90
Nestle India Ltd.	15108.60	188.95
NTPC	83.00	3.35
ONGC	64.45	-0.30
PowerGrid Corp	160.00	1.65
Reliance Ind	1065.60	-0.60
State Bank	195.95	3.20
Shree Cement	17666.25	112.20
Sun Pharma	338.25	-0.05
Tata Motors	70.70	-0.10
Tata Steel	277.25	-7.20
TCS	1824.50	33.55
Tech Mahindra	504.10	-11.10
Titan	937.05	8.75
UltraTech Cement	3143.60	-85.55
UPL	322.20	9.65
Vedanta	63.75	-2.05
Wipro	183.50	0.90
Zee Entertainment	128.05	-0.70

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on March 27

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	74.66	74.98
Euro	82.16	82.52
British Pound	91.27	91.67
Japanese Yen (100)	68.61	68.91
Chinese Yuan	10.53	10.57
Swiss Franc	77.56	77.90
Singapore Dollar	52.06	52.29
Canadian Dollar	53.03	53.26
Malaysian Ringitt	17.20	17.32

Source:Indian Bank

Reserve Bank of India unleashes its fire power

Home and auto EMIs, credit card dues deferred by three months

Regulator announces moratorium on term loan repayments

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

In a move to protect borrowers financially amid the nationwide lockdown, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has allowed all banks and financial institutions, including non-banking finance companies, to extend a three-month moratorium period on the instalments due between March 1, 2020 and May 31, 2020 for all term loans.

The relaxation is also applicable on consumer loans such as auto loans, home loans and personal loans, as well as credit card outstanding dues. A consumer may now choose not to pay the monthly equated instalments on their loans for the next three months.

"The repayment schedule for such loans, as also the residual tenor, will be shifted across the board by three months after the moratorium period," the RBI said.

The banking regulator clarified that interest would continue to accrue on the outstanding portion of the term loans during the moratorium period.

The credit score of the borrower will not change due to the non-payment since the loan will not be classified as 'non-performing' by the lender.

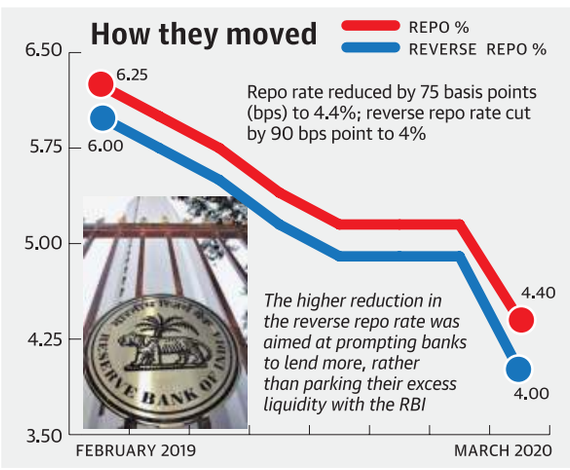
State Bank of India (SBI) chairman Rajnish Kumar clarified that the moratorium is applicable for all borrowers of term loans and banks would have no discretion.

He also said that a customer who wanted to continue with the EMIs for the next three months could do so.

However, it is not clear yet as to whether the customer has to apply for the moratorium on instalments or it would happen automatically. EMIs paid through the electronic clearing service are automatically debited to the customer's account.

The RBI has also permitted the lenders to allow borrowers of working capital facilities sanctioned in the form of cash credit or overdraft, payment of interest by three months outstanding as on March 1, 2020. "The accumulated interest for the period will be paid after the expiry of the deferment period," the RBI said.

"The three-month moratorium on all term loan instalments, along with deferment of interest on working capital, will help mitigate debt servicing burden due to COVID-19 disruption, and prevent transmission of financial stress [to] various sectors of the economy," Punjab National Bank MD and CEO S.S. Mallikarjuna Rao said.



> A customer who wishes to continue paying the instalments for the 3 months could choose to do so

Liquidity floodgates opened

Central bank to infuse ₹3.74 lakh cr. into banking system

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

In a move to infuse sufficient liquidity into the banking system, the Reserve Bank of India has reduced the cash reserve ratio (CRR) requirement by 100 bps, increased the cap for liquidity available under the marginal standing facility, and will auction long-term repo of ₹1 lakh crore. These three measures will infuse ₹3.74 lakh crore into the banking system.

The cash reserve ratio – the proportion of liabilities which a bank has to set aside as cash – has been reduced from 4% to 3%. The 100 bps reduction in CRR will free up ₹1.37 lakh crore liquidity for the banks. For State Bank of India, lowering of CRR will release ₹31,000 crore.

The minimum daily requirement of maintaining CRR balance has also been reduced to 80% from 90%, effective from the first day of the reporting fortnight beginning March 28, 2020. "This is a one-time dispensation available up to June 26, 2020," the RBI said.

Banks do not earn any interest for maintaining CRR balance. With this reduction, they can deploy the liquidity in interest-earning assets.

RBI also increased liquidity available to banks under the marginal standing facility from 2% of the statutory liquidity ratio (SLR) to 3% with immediate effect. This measure will be applicable up to June 30, 2020.

"This measure should provide comfort to the banking system by allowing it to avail [itself of] an additional ₹1,37,000 crore of liquidity under the LAF window in times of stress at the reduced MSF rate announced in the MPC's resolution," the RBI said.

The monetary policy committee reduced the repo rate by 75 bps to 4.4% and consequently the MSF rate was reduced to 4.65%.

Observing that large sell-offs in the domestic equity, bond and forex markets had intensified redemption pressures, the central bank decided to infuse ₹1 lakh crore through targeted long-term repo operations (TLTRO).

The RBI will conduct auctions of targeted term repos of up to three years' tenor for a total of up to ₹1 lakh crore at a floating rate, linked to the policy repo rate. "Liquidity availed under the scheme by banks has to be deployed in investment grade corporate bonds, commercial paper and non-convertible debentures over and above the outstanding level of their investments in these bonds as on March 25, 2020," the RBI said.

RBI also said investments by banks under this facility would be classified as held-to-maturity (HTM) even in excess of 25% of the total investment permitted to be included in the HTM portfolio.

'RBI policy action to help financial markets stabilise'

Rupee gains after action by the central bank

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Indian financial markets which are facing heightened volatility due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic could stabilise with the Reserve Bank of India unveiling measures to infuse liquidity and reducing the repo rate by 75 bps to 4.4%.

"The large rate cut, the adjustment in capital conservation buffer, the moratorium on repayments and the bazooka of conventional CRR cut and unconventional liquidity measure of incentivising banks to support the CP market will all help financial markets stabilise, lead to immediate rate transmission and address the credit needs of the real economy," SBI chairman Rajnish Kumar said. Zarin Daruwala, CEO, India, Standard Chartered Bank, also said that steps taken should help financial markets tide over the current situation.

Rajnish Kumar

"The three-year targeted long term repo operations will decongest credit channels and lower cost of credit, providing much needed relief to corporates," she said.

Mr. Kumar also said that the decision of allowing Indian banks to participate in non-deliverable forwards (NDF) market was a positive step in broadening market participants and better rate discovery. The action could help the rupee find support, given that it had come under pressure recently as foreign investors are exiting emerging economies, he said.

Padmaja Chunduru, MD & CEO, Indian Bank said, "It [the RBI move] is a welcome and a commendable step. It will revive growth and preserve financial stability and ensure normal functioning of financial markets."

The rupee strengthened by 30 paisa on Friday to close at 74.85 per dollar.

India Inc. welcomes repo rate cut

'Current economy requires massive dose of monetary stimulus, RBI has done it'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank's rate cut of 75bps will bring down the cost of borrowing and the CRR cut of 100bps will help in infusing the desired liquidity requirement in the system, corporates and industry associations have said.

The three-month moratorium on EMIs will reduce the repayment pressure on the borrower during this crisis period, they felt.

"All in all, it is a very welcoming policy. The government has announced corrective measures to combat the current pandemic situation which would help in bringing financial stability into the system." Umesh Revankar, MD & CEO, Shriram Transport Finance.

Welcoming the slew of measures announced by the RBI, Sangita Reddy, president, FICCI, said, "This has been a very comprehensive set of announcements and highlights action in all the key areas that were expected."

Sangita Reddy

Extremely fragile

"The current situation in the economy and financial markets is extremely fragile. It required a massive dose of monetary stimulus to be injected at the earliest and the RBI has done just that."

Commenting on the rate cut Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII, said the substantial reduction in the CRR will help banks to reduce their lending rates and aid monetary transmission.

He said given that the current lockdown is expected to have a negative impact on the cash flows of firms, the moratorium on repayments of term loans for a period of 3 months will help companies tide over this period.

Murthy Nagarajan, head, Fixed Income, Tata Asset Management, said: "This is the RBI response to the adverse macro economic situation due to coronavirus. The RBI Governor has promised more conventional and unconventional measures, in the coming days. This may see RBI cutting rates further by 50 to 75 basis points in the current financial year,"

Gautam Hari Singhania, CMD, Raymond Ltd., said, "The moves announced by the RBI are decisive and a comprehensive package to ensure stability of financial markets."

D.K. Aggarwal, president, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said, "These measures will provide adequate liquidity in the system, bring down the cost of capital and mitigate the impact of pandemic COVID-19."

Rajiv Agarwal, MD & CEO, Essar Ports, said, "RBI's move to reduce interest rates and infuse liquidity is a welcome move. More steps might be needed once the government comes out with the much-needed stimulus package to overcome the economic crisis arising from COVID 19."

RBI Deputy Governor gets extension

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

B.P. Kanungo, Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), was given a one-year extension of service by the Central Government on Friday. His extension will be effective from April 2, 2020. A notification was issued by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) after the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the proposal for granting extension of service.

SC relaxes BS-IV deadline

Delhi-NCR dealers denied relief owing to pollution

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In a relief to automobile dealers, the Supreme Court on Friday extended the March 31, 2020 deadline for the sale and registration of BS-IV vehicles because of the "extraordinary" situation arising out of the 21-day COVID-19 lockdown.

A Bench of Justices Arun Mishra and Deepak Gupta divided the inventory of the vehicles into two categories – vehicles sold before March 31 and not registered; and those that remain unsold with the dealers.

The court said the first category of vehicles could be registered after the lockdown was withdrawn. As for the unsold vehicles, dealers could sell 10% of the stock after the lockdown was lifted. However, dealers in Delhi-NCR have been denied the relief owing to the high levels of the pollution in the national capital.

Short sale window

The court has indicated that dealers, other than those in Delhi-NCR, would be given a short window to sell 10% of their unsold vehicles. The Bench would finalise the time frame of the window in its order, which is yet to be published. However, lawyers involved in the case said it may be 10-14 days after the lockdown was lifted. The case was heard through videoconferencing.

The FADA had filed the application for an extension of the deadline.

The FADA argued that though March 31 was the deadline, some States had started implementing the bar on the sale and registration of BS-IV vehicles as early as the last week of February. The application said invocation of Section 144 of the Cr.PC. (to prohibit the assembly of four or more people in an area) had caused the footfalls to drop.

Markets give thumbs down to RBI rate cut

Sensex yo-yoes to settle in the red

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

After three successive sessions of gains, the benchmark Sensex ended in the red on Friday even as the Reserve Bank of India announced a slew of measures to boost the economy, including significant cuts in key rates.

The Sensex, that surged by more than 1,100 points during the morning session, pared all its gains and closed at 29,815.59, down 131.18 points or 0.44%.

The broader Nifty settled at 8,660.25, up by a marginal 18.80 points or 0.22%.

Market participants were of the view that investors were disappointed since the central bank refrained from making any projections related to growth or inflation thereby raising more concerns on the potential hit to the economy due to COVID-19.

Interestingly, foreign portfolio investors were net buyers, but at a paltry ₹356 crore, on Friday.

The fall in the benchmark came even as most of the leading Asian equity indices rose.

Tata Motors to turn passenger vehicles unit into a subsidiary

Assets to be transferred; central functions to remain at TML

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The board of Tata Motors Ltd. (TML) has given in-principle approval to turn the company's Passenger Vehicle (PV) business (including electric vehicles) into a subsidiary by transferring relevant assets, intellectual property rights and employees directly related to the PV business, for it to be fully functional on a standalone basis through a slump sale.

However, certain shared services and central functions will be retained at TML to deliver cost efficiencies for the entire group.

The proposed transfer shall be implemented through a scheme of arrangement, which will be tabled for approval to the TML Board over the next few weeks.

One-year timeline

Implementation of the scheme will be subject to regulatory and statutory approvals as applicable, including approval of shareholders and creditors. "We expect the transfer process to be completed in the next one year," TML said in a statement.

"The PV business landscape is seeing rapid transformation in the form of tightening emission norms, push towards electrification, enhanced disruptions from autonomous and connected technologies," it said.

The move is aimed at securing strategic alliances for access to products, architectures and capital, TML says. • REUTERS

"Additionally, India continues to remain an attractive market for global OEMs, while the aspiration levels of the Indian consumer continue to rise requiring stepped up investments in contemporary products in a competitive market," it added.

Over the last few years, the PV business has implemented a turnaround and launched a slew of products like Tiago, Tigor, Nexon, Hexa, Harrier, Altroz and Nexon EV.

The company said the move towards subsidiarisation of the PV business is the first step in securing mutually beneficial strategic alliances that provide access to products, architectures, powertrains, new-age technologies and capital.

Along with this move, TML has announced the appointment of Shailesh Chandra, president, EV and Corporate Strategy, as president, PV business, including EVs, with effect from April 1, 2020.

He will be assuming responsibility for the PV business from Mayank Pareek who will be superannuating from Tata Motors at the end of February 2021.

"Mr. Chandra's appointment at the start of the new financial year gives him the opportunity to shape the organisation as we ready to operate as a subsidiary once the necessary approvals are in place," the statement added. TML shares closed with a loss of 0.21% at ₹70.65 on the BSE.

Moody's cuts India GDP growth forecast to 2.5%

Global economy may contract by 0.5%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Moody's Investors Service has slashed its GDP growth forecast for India to 2.5% in 2020 – a sharp drop from the earlier projection of 5.3% – due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant lockdown.

The ratings agency expects the country's economy to recover in 2021, estimating a growth rate of 5.8%, but warned that uncertainty regarding the virus' spread and containment made it difficult to fully assess the economic toll of the crisis. India grew at 5% in 2019.

Globally, the world economy was facing an 'unprecedented shock' and the G20 countries were likely to see an overall contraction of GDP by 0.5%, according to Moody's Global Macro Outlook 2020-21, released on Friday.

World is now in recession: IMF

Virus-hit developing nations need dollops of funding

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

The COVID-19 pandemic has driven the global economy into a downturn that will require massive funding to help developing nations, IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva said Friday.

"It is clear that we have entered a recession" that will be worse than the one in 2009, following the global financial crisis, she said.

With the worldwide economic "sudden stop," Ms. Georgieva said the fund's estimate "for the overall financial needs of emerging markets is $2.5 trillion."

But she warned the estimate "is on the lower end."

Governments in emerging markets, which have suffered an exodus of capital of more than $83 billion in recent weeks, can cover much of that, but "clearly the domestic resources are insufficient" and many already have high debt loads.

Over 80 countries, mostly with low incomes, have already requested emergency aid from the International Monetary Fund, she said.

"We do know that their own reserves and domestic resources will not be sufficient," she said, adding the fund is aiming to beef up its response "to do more, do it better, do it faster than ever before." She also welcomed the $2.2 trillion economic package approved by the U.S. Senate, saying "it is absolutely necessary to cushion the world's largest economy against an abrupt drop in economic activities."

Meet three American artists who create art inspired from virus structures and cellular reactions to allay fear and increase awareness about microbial science

Art in a petri dish

NAVEENA VIJAYAN

Klari Reis

Action and reaction

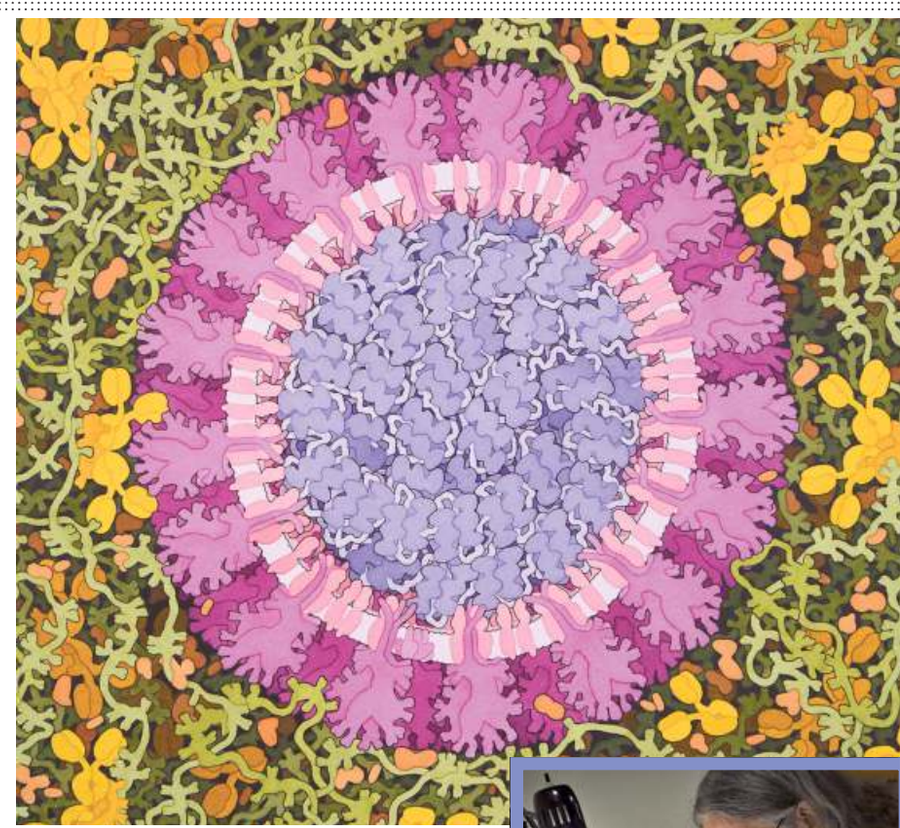
Reis was in her 20s, when she was diagnosed with Crohn's, an inflammatory bowel disease. She had just moved to the U.K. to study art, after ending her career as an architect in San Francisco. When she realised that one of the medicines that she was allergic to in the U.S. was being sold under a different name in the U.K., she decided to pause and study how her cells reacted to pharmaceuticals.

"Under the microscope, looking at my own cells, I remember being blown away by the colours," she says. She recalls seeing the cell structures highlighted by Hoechst stains (blue fluorescent dyes) against a black background. Inspired by the cellular movements and reactions, she began depicting them in her paintings.

She mixes coloured powder and dyes with epoxy resin, usually used for flooring, to create a gooey paint that she applies on petri dishes. "It takes me a couple of weeks to complete a painting, I work on about a dozen at a time," says Reis, whose works are housed in Microsoft Research Ltd in London, Royal Caribbean Cruise lines, Morgan Stanley building in NYC, among others. Klari has been posting one petri dish painting a day on her blog The Daily Dish, since 2013.

A deadly virus is making its way around the world, spreading sickness and death. But not everyone is fearful; some artists are looking at COVID-19 and other viruses (and bacteria) with childlike curiosity. "Fear is never a great place to start a conversation," says Brooklyn-based Laura Splan, whose works include a series of lace doilies depicting the structures of deadly viruses, including those responsible for past global epidemics such as SARS (2003) and MERS (2012). "I hope my work compels people to unpack their complex relationships with the biological world," she adds.

San Francisco artist Klari Reis' paintings on petri dishes are inspired by the imagery of how cells react to drugs, while California artist-scientist David Goodsell's watercolours of molecular structures are a result of hours of research in his lab. His recent rendering of the coronavirus – released on Twitter for his 7,000+ followers – is both wall decor and study material. Though it looks like a spring flower, it includes in great detail the proteins, membrane and mucus in the respiratory tract that the virus interacts with, showing that it is "just little collections of molecules that can be understood and... fought".

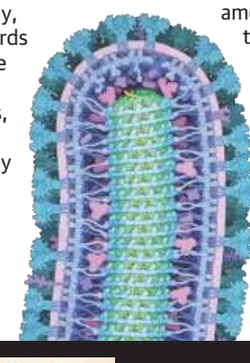


David Goodsell

Putting a face on foes

"My goal with this painting, and with previous portraits of life-threatening viruses, is to demystify and put a face on these submicroscopic foes," says Goodsell. His illustrations are so aesthetically pleasing that, despite depicting deadly viruses, they are used in fabric designs and are part of private collections and exhibitions. Recently, a colouring book version of his coronavirus painting was made available for free to download, on RCSB PDB (a member of World Wide Protein Data Bank) website.

A scientist who does research on structural molecular biology, Goodsell's inclination towards applying artwork to science began when he was in graduate school in the 80s, developing computer graphics methods to display and analyse the results of his experiments. He began the paintings because the cellular scenes were "too complex to be done with computer graphics [back then]".



He has illustrated structures of HIV, Ebola and E.Coli among other viruses. Each painting, done on a 300 lb watercolour paper, takes 10 to 20 hours to complete. "I spend a comparable amount of time researching the subject so that it is as scientifically accurate as possible," says Goodsell, who is also a professor of Computational Biology at Scripps Research Institute, California.

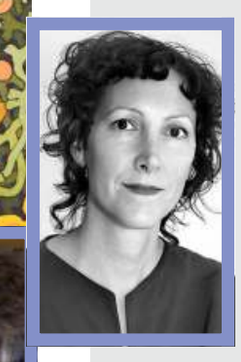
For painting the coronavirus, he used the available structural data of SARS virus from scientific publications. The COVID-19 virus belongs to the family of coronaviruses that include SARS and MERS, and is structurally similar to them.

Laura Splan

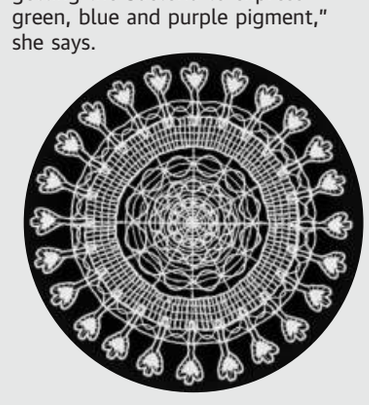
Turning fear to wonder

In 2004, soon after the SARS epidemic, Splan brought out a series of works called *Doilies.* Traditionally used to protect surfaces of furniture or flatware, their designs are inspired from nature. Splan's doilies were inspired from the structure of viruses such as SARS, HIV, Influenza, Herpes and Hepadna.

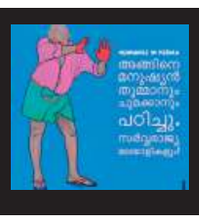
The situation back then was similar to what it is now; though the number of people infected by COVID-19 today has far surpassed that by SARS. Photos of people wearing protective masks and microbial imagery consumed the media, bringing with them a sense of fear, she recalls. "Conflating the traditional radial doily form with a deadly virus was an attempt to create a situation in which the viewer could transpose a state of wonder on to the very structure of the virus which they feared," she says.



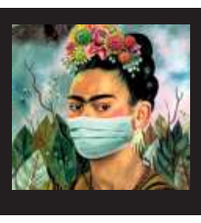
At present, Splan, who has a Bachelors in Biological Sciences, is working on a project that involves dyeing the wool of laboratory llamas (which are used to produce antibodies for human drugs) with genetically manipulated E. coli bacteria. "I am experimenting with getting the bacteria to express green, blue and purple pigment," she says.



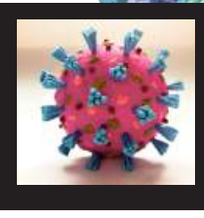
@unnikrishna
This visual artist from Kerala is sharing a series of tongue-in-cheek illustrations about daily life in the state, working from home and social distancing



@ebrahim_haghighi
The graphic designer and artist based in Iran is posting a series of images featuring famous portraits (like this one of Frida Kahlo) sporting masks



@kathleendustin
Although we are not sure who the intended audience is for this polymer clay brooch, the attention to detail given by this UK designer is impressive



@medha.vi
This concept artist and illustrator is urging people to stay indoors and be responsible citizens, if only to respect the doctors holding the virus at bay

@mooz.one
The Mumbai-based graffiti artist has used the ongoing crisis to also highlight the plastic pollution levels and other issues that are suffocating the planet

21 days later

The next few weeks will see you making great memories with your child, and learning that you don't have to be a super parent all the time

▪ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

CHRYSELLE D'SILVA DIAS

"Mama, let us chat about trains."

On a normal day, this would have been a perfect way to spend a few quiet moments bonding with my 10-year-old. But it is 7 am, when I am in the bathroom trying to start another day of curfew with some me-time.

With the nation-wide lockdown firmly in place, families are struggling with having their children at home all day. Happily, for many, school exams are cancelled and the pressure to study has been taken away for now. Yet summer looms. The minute lockdown orders were issued, parents panicked. What would our kids do all day, especially if they could not go out to play? No playdates, no summer camp, no office to escape to. All that time stuck at home – that is something to worry about, in addition to spying on elderly parents determined to go out to chat with the neighbours.

Ignore those forwards

Parenting in the time of coronavirus has taken on a whole new meaning with 24x7 access to social media and well-meaning, equally panicky friends. We have all received a dozen or more WhatsApp messages listing colourful DIY timetables, websites and apps that will not only keep your child busy but will also energise his/her brain on holiday. For parents already struggling to keep children busy, are these forwards helping or causing them more pressure?

Business analyst Sayantika Adak Ghosh ignores the WhatsApp messages, when it comes to her six-year-old son. "I have a more instinctive approach," she says. "Some things are non-negotiable: food, schedule, discipline, behaviour. I let him figure out the rest."

But Ramya Coushik, a software marketer, natural farmer and parent to two boys, 14 and 11, says they do not have a structure in place "as my boys and I believe that a rigid format would be a killjoy during summer vacations. Not everything gets done every day – they decide the schedule and get to each of the activities a couple of times a week based on their preference. We fit in TV and gaming [a rarity in our household] around the mandatory activities."

Online lessons

Children in IB and some other schools still have assignments, e-lessons and homework to do. "I am making sure my daughter completes projects even though they may no longer be required to be submitted," says Mumbai-based Pearl D'Silva, parent to a 10-year-old. She, however, does not feel the need to keep up with what her daughter's classmates are up to. "We do homework but also practise maths, French, essay writing, painting and guitar."

Celebrities are not exempt from the curfew studying either. On her Twitter feed, Twinkle Khanna echoes parents everywhere when she says, "Three hours into day one of virtual learning with my first grader and I want to stab my eye with a fork."

Office-going parents who are now working from home have to be creative in getting things done. "I work for a telecom MNC," says Sindhu Murthy. During routine meetings and calls, she makes her eight-year-old son sit beside her because he finds them interesting. "I do not mind the WhatsApp forwards. If it looks interesting, I do not think it is a nuisance. Doing these things with my child is more of an escape from this dystopian reality. I would choose making a paper cup ninja over looking through Covid-19 statistics any day."

What's your style?

In the first few days as countries began locking down their cities, social media went to town with memes on supervising kids during #WFH. Homeschooling parents are having the last laugh, though. They can teach us a thing or two about having children at home all day and educating them.

This stressful time will also help us explore what kind of parent we are becoming. Helicopter parents might crash. Try being a hovercraft instead, or a gentler parent gliding over all the bumps in your day. You are still hovering, but there is a lot less noise and potential for hair-tearing scenes.

As for us, we are trying *PE with Joe*, learning how to be a sous chef and struggling not to finish our stash of tea-time snacks. The discussions about trains, planes and robots can wait until I am out of the bathroom. Which might take a while – these new handwashing guidelines are a sanity-saver.

Ishani Vellodi Reddy, @ishanivellodiwellness

I have been very aggressive about planning each day, to make sure that I am spending quality time with Vishnu. I structure our schedules in such a way that when I'm busy with work, he has an independent activity. Then there are the things we do together for fun, like cooking or having a dance party — the kind of silly games we grown-ups never have time for otherwise. We have also taken the opportunity to teach him social responsibility, by telling him that we are staying home for the good of the country, and not just our loved ones.

Komal Narang, @myhappinesz

Earlier, my three-year-old was an outdoor kid and never had screen time. Now that I allow him to watch YouTube (mainly our family vlogs), he is taking some time to adjust to the change. Apart from his sleeping and eating schedule, which remain the same, we take each day as it comes. We've even started our own book club! It is restricted to six picture books or so a day. We used to read page after page, but now that we have the time, we have slowed down. We take time to look at the illustrations, I ask him what he sees... It is a more mindful way of reading.

Harpreet Suri, @momwearsprada

As a mother of two, a boy and a girl, I have been allowing them to use this time to explore as they please. While Arhann (9) has school work (they have started online classes now), Aayat (3) is enjoying time in our garden. Earlier, I used to stop her from playing in the mud and getting dirty. But I have realised that this is a golden period that they might never get again. So there are hardly any rules about what they should do through the day.

Inputs from Susanna Myrtle Lazarus

Starting from home (Clockwise from extreme left) Anita Dongre with artisans from SEWA; Rahul Mishra in his atelier; Sabyasachi Mukherjee; from Mukherjee's and Mishra's collections ▪ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Fashion's first responders

How India's designer fraternity is helping their workforce make it through the coronavirus pandemic

VARUN RANA

As the country settles uneasily into lockdown, one of the worst hit are retail-led businesses whose workers and wage-earners rely upon the ability to work to make ends meet, sometimes even on a daily basis. The fashion industry – a small yet significant part of the textiles and apparel sector – is now looking at severe economic repercussions that would cascade down to their *kaarigars*, artisans, and tailors.

Yet, in the face of this dilemma, it is heartening to know that designers from across the country are committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of their workers, both in terms of their health as well as their financial security. On Saturday, March 21, Kolkata-based couturier Sabyasachi Mukherjee put out a statement on his official Instagram handle, announcing that he had sent all his employees on indefinite leave, and that as long as possible, they would continue receiving their salaries "regardless of their ability to work from home".

The WFH option

"It's the least we can do," says Delhi-based designer Rahul Mishra, who had paid an advance on this month's salary to all his factory workers. He plans to transfer the next month's pay by the first week of April. "My main concern is not that we won't be able to pay, but that the people who need monetary assistance should have it without delay." He is also trying to ensure that his embroiderers who work from their homes have enough raw materials to continue working. "This is to everyone's advantage. The *karigars* who can will stay and work at their homes, and when we come out of this situation, we will have the most beautiful collections to reinvigorate the market." Mishra had his tailors stitch masks for his entire workforce to take home, ten to each person.

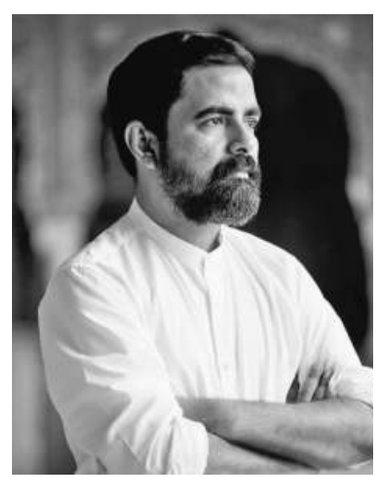
In Bengaluru, textile brand Angadi has also thought of making masks, and on a larger scale. The company's director, K Radharaman, reached out to Karnataka MPs last week and offered to stitch as many as are required in the coming days at no cost. "While these aren't surgical or N95 masks," says Radharaman, "documented research shows that regular fabric masks have a 79% efficacy, and are meant for non-medial personnel. This will allow the right masks to reach the right people." Angadi has also pledged to donate to the World Health Organization's COVOD-19 Solidarity Response Fund, and will continue to provide full wage support to all their employees, whether they are able to work from home or not. "It is only logical; our people make us who we are," he says.

On the phone from Mumbai, Anita Dongre echoes this sentiment. On Sunday, March 22, she announced the creation of a company fund of ₹1.5 crores to help smaller vendors, self-employed artisans, and partners who do not have medical insurance or coverage. "It was the only decision we could take, because the people at the lowest rung will be the most affected." Her brother and business partner Mukesh Sawlani has instituted an internal committee to oversee the proper disbursal of this fund. "The business will survive; we may be badly hit but we won't be out on the streets. We simply have to take care of our people," she adds. Hers is the only brand in India that has ascribed a concrete amount to their relief effort.

> *When we come out of this situation, we will have the most beautiful collections to reinvigorate the market.*
> RAHUL MISHRA
> Designer

No time to be judgmental

It must be kept in mind that all brands are not equal, and Palak Shah of Benaras-based textiles label Ekaya highlights this. "This is not a competition," she says. "Nor is it a time to feel bad about what you cannot sustainably do. Every designer and company is unique, and needs to look within to decide what best they can manage." On March 21, Ekaya too put up a post on Instagram, detailing that paid leave was announced and advances extended, in addition to a contingency fund created to support the brand's weavers. "It is an uncertain time, and we know we will be badly hit," adds Shah, "so each designer or brand has to find their own way."



In Delhi, on-the-rise fashion designer Karan Torani concurs. On Friday, March 20, his label's official Instagram handle put out a heartfelt message giving his followers an insight into the struggles of a young brand, bravely asking for monetary contributions – not charity, as the money would be counted as paid against any future purchases – so that the they could continue paying their artisans, tailors and staff. "I am aware of the dichotomy of a luxury fashion label having to ask for money from followers and clients," says Torani. "However, I am willing to take the risk of hurting the brand image temporarily if it allows me to support the *karigars* that have made my brand what it is in just a year and a half." He reports that clients, friends, and even fashion students have made contributions ranging from₹500 to close to a lakh.

Behind the scenes

It must be remembered that the textiles and apparel industry is the second largest employer in India after agriculture. It supports around 45 million people directly, and 65 million indirectly. While Minister of Textiles Smriti Irani has made an earnest appeal to garment and textile buyers to not cancel orders, a collective of over 60 fashion designers – brought together by Kolkata-based label Dev r Nil – has sent a letter (via West Bengal MP Mahua Moitra) to Irani asking for concrete solutions like a moratorium on upcoming statutory dues, delay in utility bill payments, temporary stoppage on EMI payments and interests, unemployment pay cover, and a freeze on rent dues.

The same letter has been sent to West Bengal's Finance, Commerce & Industries Minister Amit Moitra, as well as Union Minister for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Nitin Gadkari. At the time of writing, the designers were awaiting a response from any of the three recipients, while more designers were signing up to join in the petition.

Till the government announces concrete initiatives or the allocation of actual budgets specifically towards safeguarding this sector, it seems that India's fashion industry will have to rely on its greatest strength: creativity.

The author is a fashion commentator and Communications Director at the House of Angadi, mentioned in this article

FILM REVIEW

Saccharine sweet and cloyingly safe

Maska opts for the convenience and comfort of the conventional than the uncertainty, trials, and tribulations of the radical

NAMRATA JOSHI

There's a scene in *Maska* where the lead Rumi (Prit Kamani) is ticked off by a judge, Boman Irani (playing himself) in an acting competition. All for trying too hard to act – *zyada hi mehnat*, as he puts it. The film – about Rumi wanting to let go of his family legacy in order to become an actor – is also something like that. The well-meaning tribute to Mumbai's iconic Irani cafés, is sweet but cloyingly so. The homage to the Parsi community is more contrived than spontaneous, and prefers to remain on the surface instead of taking a deep dive.

No wonder for a long stretch at the start there is a sense of disconnect, whether it is with individuals or their relationships with each other. Manisha Koirala plays Diana, Rumi's mother, with daintily over-the-top eccentricity (can any Parsi not be done that way?). Or, for that matter Javed Jaffrey as the late father Rustom. When will portraying Parsis go beyond accents and catch phrases? The Punjabiyat of Rumi's girlfriend Mallika Chopra (Nikita Dutta) feels just as practiced. Kamani comes up with a sincere turn but its Abhishek Banerjee in a walk-on role as a casting director who livens things up.

Things take a heartwarming turn somewhere in the middle as Rumi battles between café and career but soon keels over to far-out sentimentality. Eventually, my big grouse with the film is that it opts for the convenience and comfort of the conventional than the uncertainty, trials, and tribulations of the radical. Be it home, family and legacy, dreams and calling or even when it comes to matters of heart. It opts for the straight and the narrow and plays too safe. Why does preserving history have to be a burden for the future? Why can't your heritage and individual identity co-exist? Why can't dreams be aligned with reality?

In these home-bound times, the film does leave you feeling nostalgic for old Mumbai houses you used to encounter on walks. Most of all, it ignites a craving for those soft buns slathered with mounds of butter and the extra sweet tea at Irani cafés. And also those small cups of Bournvita, tea and coffee sold on cycle-carts late into the night and the wee hours of the morning in a city that never sleeps. Rather never used to sleep. Hope it soon wakes up again.

Maska is currently streaming on Netflix

Maska

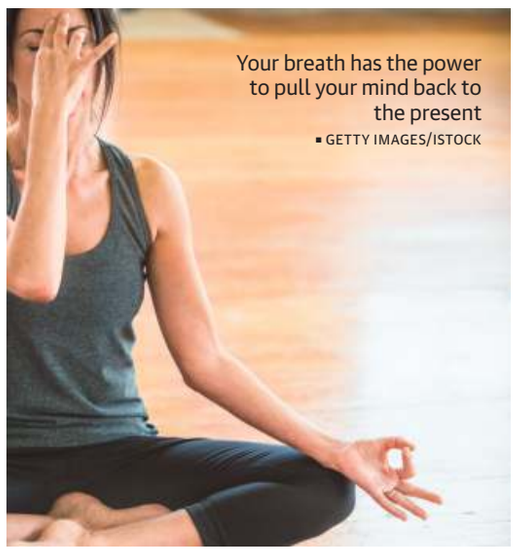
DIRECTOR: Neeraj Udhwani
CAST: Manisha Koirala, Prit Kamani, Javed Jaffrey, Nikita Dutta, Shirley Setia
STORYLINE: Young Rumi wants to let go of his family legacy to pursue his dream of becoming an actor
RUN TIME: 1 hour 51 minutes

Safe and narrow *Maska* falls into the trap of stereotyping ▪ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Breathe for peace

If you make a habit over the next 21 days, let it be *pranayama*, to promote mental and physical health

VASUDHA RAI



Your breath has the power to pull your mind back to the present ▪ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

I'm writing this piece an hour after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced India's 21-day lockdown. The last time I was under lockdown was during *vipassana*, and that was only 10 days. I remember standing, peeking over the boundary wall of the small women's compound in Dhamma Salila, Dehradun, watching a couple of trucks go by at a distance. How lucky they were to be free. I pledged I would never commit a crime because I didn't want to be in jail. Not that I would. Obviously.

But it was also on that sixth night of *vipassana* that I felt bliss for no reason. We usually feel happy because of a promotion, a baby, new love, something from the outside. But here I was, lying in bed, eyes closed, a big smile on my face for no reason whatsoever. That day I understood why people chose to take *sanyasa* – if I could feel blissful in this way from within, I didn't need anything external.

It is a roundabout way of saying that we have more than 10 days. A full three weeks or the required 21 days to form a new habit. During *vipassana*, we were meditating for about 10 hours a day. We were also not talking or looking at each other (or trying our best). We went through boredom, pain, anguish, trauma, sadness, glee, and peace all in a day's work. Our last proper meal was at 11 a.m. Full disclosure: I did smuggle in a small bowl of muesli and a couple of paracetamols, which came in handy when I had migraines.

This time, however, it is different. We have 21 days with full connectivity, with food and at least some time to spare. Some of those things you wanted to do but never had the time can happen now. While most experts would suggest meditation, I disagree. If you're already in a state of anxiety and depression, then, without the guidance of a meditation guru, you might multiply the negativity.

The journey within begins with the breath. Whether your mind is in another continent, on another person, or several months ahead in the future, your breath has the power to pull it back to the present. I recently recorded a series of podcasts called *Holistic Healing* with RedFM. For one episode, I was interviewing Mala Baruah, a meditation teacher based in Delhi. She advised that the moment you open your eyes in the morning, take 25 deep breaths, tracing its movement down your spine and back up. Instant peace.

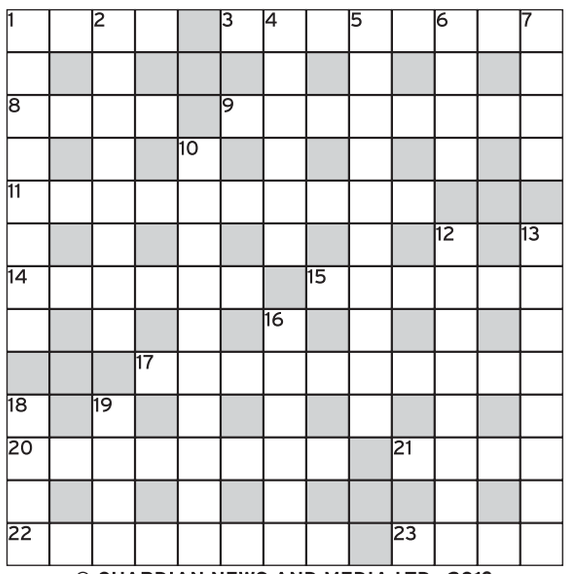
When you're stressed, the first thing you do is stop breathing. In this time of anxiety and uncertainty, nothing is more healing than breath work. The *yogic* practice of *nadi-shodhana* or alternate nostril breathing must be an essential daily habit. If after 21 days you emerge with the habit of practising only *that*, you will be transformed. Author, *vaidya* and alternative medicine expert, Dr. Robert Svoboda, says that alternate nostril breathing for 20 minutes every day is enough in itself. It clears your nasal passages, increases energy, enhances immunity, calms your nervous system, and bestows clear, glowing skin.

In yoga, the correct sequence is *asana*, *pranayama*, then *dhyana*. We practise *asana* and attempt *dhyana*, but most of us lack the patience for *pranayama*. After you practise this for 20 minutes (change hands if one arm gets tired), sit for two minutes in silence. You won't even need to make an attempt because meditation will happen naturally.

During this time, we need to form habits that can be sustained when life gets back to normal. If we aren't transformed by this experience, our time is wasted. Positivity is a habit, as is drinking enough water and applying castor oil on lids and lashes. Use these days to heal and nourish. Oil your hair, try oil pulling, give yourself a face massage. The benefit of the home office is that work can happen simultaneously. Use your connectivity to educate yourselves and set personal goals. You will face your demons and feel the burn. But we need this to elevate our consciousness. Remember that even gold is made with fire. This is your time – make it golden.

Vasudha Rai was beauty director of Harper's Bazaar. She is a certified yoga teacher and teaches at The Yoga Studio in Delhi. Join her on our Instagram @thehinduweekend today (March 28) at 8 a.m., for a live session on breathing techniques. Always seek the advice of your physician before starting or changing any exercise programme.

THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13337



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

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Across
1 Club used as a weapon (4)
3 Made an effort – put out (8)
8 Archaic exclamation of surprise (4)
9 Rubbish (8)
11 Choosy lads (anag) – life's learning time? (6,4)
14 Felt hat (6)
15 Dignified (6)
17 Social event for card players (5,5)
20 Flimsy carrier for one's purchases (5,3)
21 West African country (4)
22 Chatted (8)
23 Engrave (4)

Down
1 Oily liquid preservative – eco-store (anag) (8)
2 Blockbuster (5,3)
4 Exaggerate (6)
5 Stringed instrument played by turning a handle (5-5)
6 Portnoy's Complaint author, d. 2018 (4)
7 Spondulicks (4)
10 Toy – preoccupation (5,5)
12 Delighted (8)
13 Quite expensive (8)
16 Everything one owns – tea set (anag) (6)
18 Release (4)
19 Position (4)

The solution will appear on March 30, 2020.

Solution No. 13336

P	I	N	K	C	H	A	M	P	A	G	N	E
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India has responded well to the situation, says Anand

The chess maestro, stranded in Germany, speaks about the pandemic's impact and foray into commentary

EXCLUSIVE

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

Viswanathan Anand should have been at home in Chennai now. Instead, he is in an apartment in Frankfurt.

The five-time World champion's travel plans went haywire following the outbreak of the coronavirus. He had travelled to Germany to play in the Bundesliga chess.

Though he wasn't playing, Anand had been kept busy by chess. He made his debut as a commentator during the Candidates chess tournament, the only high-profile sporting event taking place anywhere in the world till it was stopped on Thursday at the halfway mark at Yekaterinburg, as Russia decided to ground international flights.

In this exclusive interview, Anand tells *The Hindu* whether FIDE was right in going ahead with the Candidates (the tournament that will determine Magnus Carlsen's challenger for the next World championship). He also speaks about life in Europe in the time of coronavirus, India's response to the pandemic and the quality of chess on display at Yekaterinburg. *Excerpts:*

Stay safe: Viswanathan Anand feels that though the Indians like to socialise, the need of the hour is to avoid it completely. ▪FILE PHOTO: K. PICHUMANI

How is life in Germany and the rest of Europe in these hard times?

Here, everyone more or less maintains a certain social distance. You know, when you walk on the street, if somebody comes across, you step aside so that you are at least a metre away. I feel they are dealing with the worst of infections now, at least statistics suggest that. They are holding up well. I have not seen anyone complain.

It is tough, but statistics are quite promising for Germany, with the caveat, of course, that nobody really knows how the disease evolves. This is a situation unlike anything we have faced before.

How do you spend your time at Frankfurt?

I block some time during the day for exercise. Before it gets too late in India, I check up on my wife Aruna and son Akhil through phone or video calls.

Do you think FIDE did the right thing by going ahead with the Candidates as per schedule?

Yes. With hindsight, it looks questionable. But when they decided to go ahead with it, everything wasn't as clear as it is now. I feel globally the consensus on stopping everything and focusing on virus became evident only a week before the Candidates started. By the time many of the participants were in Yekaterinburg.

How did you find the experience of being a commentator?

I enjoyed it. I tried to approach like a chess fan and not as a former participant myself. I wanted to try and enjoy watching the experience of the strong players competing for the right to play in the World championship.

What do you think about the quality of chess at Yekaterinburg?

I feel it has been consistently high. There have been very few games that were decided by crass blunders. There have been lots of interesting, original ideas. And it was gripping stuff to watch. I think, in a way, it is curious that the participant who came late, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, is actually leading the tournament (along with Ian Nepomniachtchi).

Your thoughts on the impact of the virus on chess and other sports...

It looks like chess and the rest of the sports world would have to deal with a lot of cancellations.

I am really curious not only about sports but how the global economy is going to recover. We are so used to operating all the time that this year is going to be drastically different.

On how India has tackled the situation...

I think India has responded well. Clearly social distancing and lockdowns are the norm everywhere. Most countries are doing it. But we should understand that given the size of our country, this is necessary even though at the moment we don't really know how bad the situation is or might be.

I feel the Indians have taken this generally well.

I am sure the government is working to procure all the equipment necessary.

Most of us like to socialise and be with friends.

That's exactly the behaviour which can spread this.

So, we will have to practise isolation till the danger passes.

Connecting Chennai and Frankfurt

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

Anand and his wife Aruna have found an interesting way to stay in touch. Anand, from Frankfurt, and Aruna, from Chennai, log into an OTT service at the same time and watch their favourite movie or television show.

"Our son Akhil also joins us from our home here," says Aruna, who also doubles up as Anand's manager.

Bonding: Aruna and Akhil have found an interesting way to stay in touch with Anand. ▪FILE PHOTO: R. RAGU

Can still do it

"We usually watch movies and shows together every evening at home.

"So I thought we could still do it though Anand is stationed in Frankfurt."

She said they had been watching a lot of movies and shows together after Anand went to Germany to play in the Bundesliga chess. "We have enjoyed watching films like *The Coldest Game*, *Murder Mystery* and *Snoopy and The Peanuts Movie*," said Aruna. "We also like shows such as *Ugly Delicious* and *The Spy*."

COVID-19 AID

Tendulkar donates 50 lakh to fight pandemic

NEW DELHI

Sachin Tendulkar on Friday donated ₹Rs 50 lakh to battle COVID-19 which has wreaked havoc globally. "Sachin Tendulkar has decided to contribute ₹25 lakh each to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund and Chief Minister's Relief Fund in his bid to join the fight against COVID-19. He wanted to contribute to both funds," said a source privy to the development on condition of anonymity.

Djokovic donates €1 million to help Serbia

BELGRADE

Tennis World No. 1 Novak Djokovic said on Friday he was donating €1 million to help his native Serbia buy respirators and other gear to combat the coronavirus. The player was speaking in a video conference from the southern Spanish city of Marbella, where he and his family are currently hunkering down under nationwide lockdown orders. AFP

Arteta looks ahead after recovering from virus

IANS
LONDON

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta, who has "completely recovered" from COVID-19, believes people should be "emotionally more open" about the pandemic.

Arteta, 38, tested positive for the virus on March 12 but has since recovered after self-isolating.

"We are in a world where everything is social media, everything is a WhatsApp text," said Arteta. "But how important is touching each other, feeling each other and hugging each other? I miss that with a lot of the people I love. We have to be emotionally more open. We have to tell each other what we are feeling.

"We cannot just in two or three months' time – if we are able to get over this quickly – forget about this, because it's so important."

Arteta said his main concern was his three children after his wife and their nanny contracted the virus.

"In terms of symptoms, it was a normal virus for me. I had three or four days which were a little bit difficult, with a bit of a temperature and a dry cough, and some discomfort in my chest. That was it.

"The difficulty is that I have people at home, three kids as well and I was worried. My wife has been through it and our nanny's been through it.

"I am feeling completely recovered (now)...," he told the club website.

The Spaniard urged people across the world to stay indoors.

Speak out! Arteta says that people should be emotionally more open about the coronavirus pandemic. ▪FILE PHOTO

Qualification intact for Tokyo-bound athletes

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

Athletes who had already qualified for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics before it was postponed will keep their places when the showpiece takes place in 2021, sources said.

Around 57% of the 11,000 scheduled participants for Tokyo had already made sure of taking part when the IOC pushed the Games back.

The IOC and 32 international sports federations held a teleconference on Thursday where it was decided to respect the qualification process.

"Thomas Bach (the IOC President) first explained the reasons for the postponement of the Games, then said that the athletes qualified for Tokyo 2020 would automatically be qualified for 2021," one of the participants in the conference told AFP.

"One of the main subjects was to know when and how to organise the qualifications.

"In some federations, many sportsmen and sportswomen are not qualified and it takes at least three months for the Olympic Games to organise them."

Sporting heroes doing their bit

Cricketer Joginder, boxer Akhil and kabaddi player Ajay doing police duty in the battle against COVID-19

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

They were at the forefront of pursuing glory for the nation as athletes and now some Indian sporting heroes are playing a key role in the raging battle against the COVID-19 pandemic -- manning the streets as police officers persuading people to stay home amid a national lockdown.

T20 World Cup-winning cricketer Joginder Sharma, Commonwealth Games gold medal-winning boxer Akhil Kumar and Asian Games champion kabaddi player Ajay Thakur have one thing in common. They are all full-time police officers, jobs which they got thanks to their sporting accomplishments.

Joginder and Akhil, both Haryana police officers and good friends, listed the challenges that come with "doing duty" during an unprecedented crisis.

Akhil Kumar. ▪FILE PHOTO

Joginder Sharma. ▪FILE PHOTO: AKHILESH KUMAR

"I have been a DSP since 2007. This is one of a kind challenge for me because of the general fear and I can tell you that I have seen quite a few challenges in my years of service," said Joginder, the all-rounder who bowled the final over in the triumph against Pakistan in the 2007 T20 World Cup in South Africa.

The 36-year-old is currently posted in Hisar as the nation observes a 21-day lockdown.

Helping those in need

"Our duty time starts around 6 a.m. and we help those in need of essentials or medical aid and take action against those who try to defy without any good reason," Joginder said.

Serving with the Gurugram Police as ACP since September last year is Akhil, the flamboyant bantamweight boxer, whose perilously low guard at the peak of his career became the style statement that many in Indian boxing continue to try and emulate.

"People are generally cooperative and in any case, essential services are being kept open so there is not much panic," said Akhil, who turned 38 on Friday, a working birthday for him.

Ajay, an Arjuna awardee and Padma Shri winner, is a DSP in Himachal Pradesh and has been in service since 2017.

The 2014 Asian Games gold-medallist was recently seen patrolling the streets of Bilaspur and has been raising awareness about the health crisis through video messages on his Instagram page.

Ajay Thakur. ▪FILE PHOTO

COVID-19 IMPACT

Still hungry to play for England, says Anderson

LONDON

England fast bowler James Anderson is determined that the break due to COVID-19 will not end his illustrious career as he focuses on keeping fit by taking part in "virtual" training sessions with teammates. The 37-year-old said: "I've not actually thought about never playing cricket again. I feel like we will play again and I will play again at some stage. I'm still hungry to play, I've still got ambitions to play for England." AFP

Three more Diamond League meets postponed

WASHINGTON

The Diamond League has postponed the Stockholm (May 24), Naples and Rome (May 28(, and Rabat May 31) track meets because of the coronavirus outbreak. The first six events of the year have been called off and only the Shanghai meet has been given a new date. The Prefontaine Classic in Eugene, Oregon, on June 7 is now the first scheduled event on the calendar. AP

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12895

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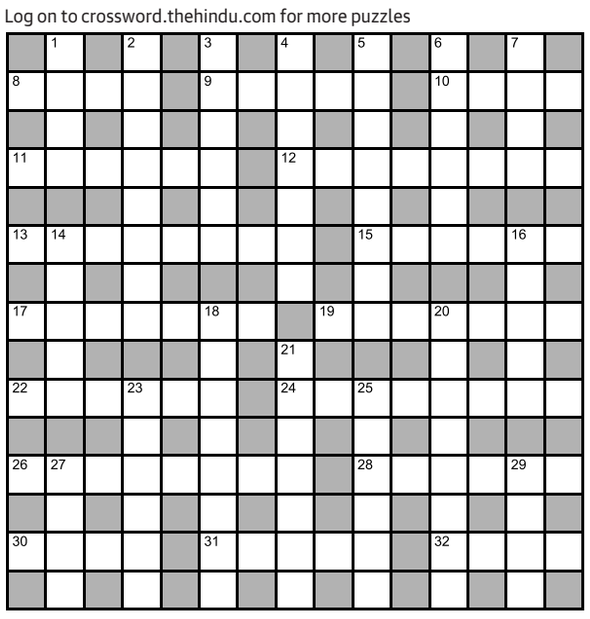

To play an interactive version of this crossword online, scan the QR code

ACROSS

8 Disreputable bar's urgent order for subs (4)

9 Money put into container with one pancake (5)

10 Brewer's vessel (4)

11 Shut near start of day (6)

12 Damaged van behind automobile carries international student to gala event (8)

13 The French pass English at game (8)

15 Follow right in and make safe (6)

17 Most merciful king in Germany shows tenderness at first (7)

19 Tearing comment on death by priest in grief initially (7)

22 Tear in damaged part of eye (6)

24 Light fin is folded when flying (2,6)

26 Idly utters soft sounds (8)

28 Bug Indian religious group (6)

30 God's authority? To some extent... (4)

31 Enchanting lady and woman with urge (5)

32 Retrieve implement and plunder (4)

DOWN

1 Jack's friend Juliet gets sick (4)

2 Dear me! US could be considered (8)

3 Sailors pen song for quarters (6)

4 Baseball player's 10 (7)

5 Dizzy PM of the UK? (8)

6 Wrong about young lady (6)

7 Deva's composition? (4)

14 Spry soldier surrounded by beer (5)

16 Managed church farm (5)

18 Gulps birds (8)

20 Shoe treating limps? LOL! (8)

21 Hairy US heir dances around model (7)

23 Bury new trainee (6)

25 Scare Roundhead during battle (6)

27 Swimming hour for South Asian fish (4)

29 Rookie in bed is an idiot (4)

(set by Incognito)

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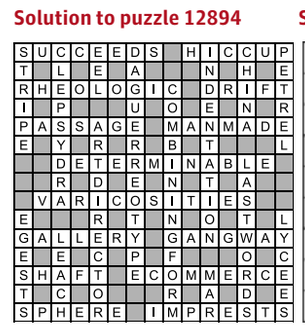
Solution to puzzle 12894



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

9	5	3	8	1	7	6	4	2
1	4	8	9	2	6	5	3	7
2	7	6	4	3	5	1	8	9
3	1	7	5	8	4	9	2	6
6	8	2	7	9	1	4	5	3
4	9	5	2	6	3	8	7	1
7	2	9	1	5	8	3	6	4
8	3	1	6	4	2	7	9	5
5	6	4	3	7	9	2	1	8

FAITH

Many splendoured One

The deity Murugan has many names, each of them for a reason, said R. Narayanan in a discourse. One of them is Baahuleyan, a name that is His because He has strong shoulders. He is the One who destroyed Soorapadman, who could not be destroyed by anyone else. He is known as Deva Senapati, for He is the commander of the army of the celestials. He is Shanmukha, because He has six faces. He is Velayudhan, because His weapon of choice is the spear (vel).

When Murugan had to wage war against Soorapadman, Goddess Parvati gave Him a vel in a place known as Sikkal. Using this vel, Murugan killed Soorapadman, who had been tormenting the devas. In Sikkal, He is known as Singaravelan – the beautiful One with a spear. Skanda Sashti is one of the most important festivals in Sikkal. During this festival, Singaravelan receives the spear from His mother. This handing over of the spear takes place the day before Soorasamhara (killing of Soorapadman) is observed.

The story of Soorapadman says that when he was killed by Murugan, he reappeared as a mango tree. Murugan split this tree into two. One part became a rooster, and this rooster became Murugan's flag. Hence Murugan is also called kukkutadhvaja – the One who has a rooster (kukkuta) as His flag (dhvaja). The other half of the mango tree became a peacock, and this became Murugan's vahana. Hence, He is called Sikhivahana (sikhi - peacock). He is Gangeya, because He was of river Ganga. He is Saravana, because He was in a thicket of reeds (Sara). He is Kartikeya, because He was looked after by the Kartika maidens. His star is also Krittika. He is Kumara, the eternally youthful One. He is Skanda, the war God. He is Guha, because He resides in the hearts of His devotees. This is the cave (guha) where He dwells joyfully.

How Azharuddin opened up a new chapter for Tendulkar

Former India skipper recalls the tour which saw the 'Little Master' don a new role

CRICKET

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM
HYDERABAD

Mohammad Azharuddin and Sachin Tendulkar shared a special bond when it came to scripting some of the most memorable moments in Indian cricket history.

On March 27, 1994, at Auckland in New Zealand, skipper Azhar, in consultation with the manager Ajit Wadekar, promoted Tendulkar to open the innings for the first time, and the rest is history. The gifted cricketer responded with a stunning onslaught on the Kiwi bowling, scoring a 49-ball 82 (15x4, 2x6).

How exactly did that materialise? "I had been noticing that nothing big was happening with Sachin even though he was batting well at No. 5 and 6. We (Wadekar sir and I) talked on this issue and decided to let Sachin open after regular opener Sidhu (Navjot Singh) was unwell," recalled Azhar, in an exclusive chat with *The Hindu* on Friday.

Mohammad Azharuddin. ▪FILE PHOTO: K.V.S. GIRI

Sachin's desire

"And, importantly, Sachin also wanted to open and we are glad that he went on to become one of the greatest batsmen of all-time," he added.

"I won't say I was surprised by his response, I knew Sachin had the talent. He just needed that opportunity to showcase his abundance of talent," Azhar said.

But, what was it about Sachin's batting that made you take the call? "He is an attacking batsman and with the field restrictions on, we thought once he gets going half the job is done for the team," the 57-year-old, former India captain said.

Even Sachin acknowledged it in his autobiography *Playing It My Way*. "I went up to Azhar and our manager Ajit Wadekar, a former India captain and a leading batsman of his time, and pleaded with them to give me an opportunity at the top of the order," he wrote.

"I can't take credit for his achievements. In fact, nobody can. He had the talent to go places," Azhar felt.

Smashing start: Sachin Tendulkar's 82 off 49 balls — after he volunteered to open — made a mockery of New Zealand's total of 142 at Eden Park, Auckland, on March 27, 1994. ▪FILE PHOTO: V.V. KRISHNAN

Dhoni will get one last chance: Banerjee

Childhood coach says the icon is using the facilities at home to stay fit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA

M.S. Dhoni's much-anticipated comeback with the IPL may not happen any time soon, but his childhood coach Keshav Ranjan Banerjee remains hopeful that the wicketkeeper-batsman will find a place in India's T20 World Cup squad.

"In the current scenario, the IPL looks unlikely and we will have to wait for BCCI's call. His (Dhoni's) position will become tough obviously. But my sixth sense says he will get a chance in the T20 World Cup, which will be his last," Banerjee told PTI from Ranchi.

The Chennai Super Kings captain trained in Ranchi in the lead up to IPL 2020 and also led the camp in Chennai.

"I spoke to him last after he returned from Chennai and I'm in constant touch with his parents. He's doing his fitness training and is fully fit.

Experience counts

"True that he has not played a tournament (since July 2019) but for someone with 538 International matches, I don't think it would take much time to adjust."

"He trained in Chennai for a week or so. Now he's making use of the facilities at home. He has a gym, a badminton court, and a running corridor."

M.S. Dhoni. ▪FILE PHOTO: K. PICHUMANI

"Let's wait for the BCCI's decision. There are no tournament. ICC tournaments are off till June. So we will have to wait and see."

Head coach Ravi Shastri had earlier said the IPL would decide the fate of Dhoni, who turns 39 in July.

India greats including Sunil Gavaskar and Virender Sehwag had raised a question mark on the return of the 2011 World Cup-winning skipper.

"I'm sure BCCI (president, selectors, captain) are aware of the scenario. They will make the announcement when it's the right time," Banerjee added.

ICC Board discusses contingency plan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The International Cricket Council (ICC) Board discussed, via teleconference, on Friday various contingency plans for its flagship tournaments, including the World T20 and World Test Championship, in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic. Sourav Ganguly was welcomed as the BCCI representative on the Board.

ICC Chief Executive Manu Sawhney said, "We continue to undertake a comprehensive business continuity and contingency planning exercise which will allow us to adapt to the rapidly evolving world in which we find ourselves. The ICC management will continue our contingency planning around ICC events and will also work with Members to explore all options available to us based on a range of scenarios connected to the pandemic."

When a Board member was asked what happens if England, which is due to host Pakistan and West Indies at home is unable to do so, he said the matter of points allocation will be referred to the technical committee.

A couple of Board members felt that World T20 in Australia is not under threat as it is still some time away.

Disappointing to see our sincerity questioned: BWF secretary-general

BADMINTON

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Badminton World Federation said it is "disappointing" that some top players questioned its "sincerity and motives" when it continued with the All England Championships despite the rapidly-growing threat of COVID-19 pandemic. The decision to conduct the event came for sharp criticism from the top shuttlers of the world, including Saina Nehwal, who had accused the administrators of placing money above players' safety.

In an open letter, BWF secretary general Thomas Lund said the decision to go ahead with the All England Championships was made based on the best advice at that time.

"It has been very disappointing to see some members of the badminton community speculate on the sincerity and motives of the BWF in this time of crisis," Lund wrote. "Our number one concern has always been the health and safety of all of our participants."

We will talk about IPL later: Rohit

Let life get back to normal first, says the opening batsman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Sport is of least priority in these troubled times, feels India batsman Rohit Sharma, who wants to talk about IPL only after normalcy returns.

Rohit, who has been out of action for last two months due to calf muscle injury was due for a comeback in the Indian Premier League, which has been postponed till April 15 but stands a good chance of getting cancelled if the prevailing situation continues.

"We should first think about the country. The situation needs to get better first then we can talk about the IPL. Let life get back to normal first," Rohit said.

The opener was responding to questions during an Instagram chat with teammate Yuzvendra Chahal.

Rohit. ▪FILE PHOTO: VIJAY SONEJI

Thanks to the lockdown, all the Indian metropolis are wearing a deserted look.

"I haven't seen Bombay like this before. As cricketers, we don't get time with family. So much of tours and cricket is there.

"This is a time to spend with them and loads of it," said Rohit.

Adhere to lockdown rules, pleads Kartik

The experience of isolation when injured has helped the former India cricketer

VIJAY LOKAPALLY
NEW DELHI

For a man used to "living out of a suitcase", former India spinner Kartik Murali has "adapted" to a life indoors. The cricketer has lost little time in accepting the situation and also strictly adhering to lockdown rules.

"This is something that has never happened in our life. Can we fret or fume about it? Do we have control over it? From day one I never panicked. It was acceptance of the extraordinary circumstances.

"Focus was on ways to curb it now that the outbreak has happened. I have always been an outdoors person – golf, cricket, travelling – but not anymore.

"For the sake of the world, I have to stay indoors. I may miss my golf, but that is the smallest thing in the larger scheme of my responsibilities to the planet," he says.

"It is a luxury to be at home, remember the homeless stranded all over the country. There will be issues to sort out in future, but now the challenge is to protect yourself and others. It pains all of us to see so many people struggling.

Forced break: Kartik Murali had a back injury during the 2001 series against Australia in which V.V.S. Laxman and Harbhajan Singh were India's stars. ▪FILE PHOTO: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

"I am shocked to see people venturing out for walks as if these are normal times. If you want to walk, walk inside your house. There is a compelling reason why the authorities want us to say at home. You can read, connect with friends, family and yourself. You can do what you could not for so many years," Kartik said in a chat with *The Hindu*.

He spoke of his "respect" for people working to keep others safe. "My heart goes out to the health workers. To the doctors. To all the people providing essential things risking their own safety. I pray for them daily.

"I firmly believe that prayers and faith can move mountains," said Kartik, who has made arrangements for the families of the domestic helps employed by him.

Time spent in isolation while attending to injuries in the past now helps him cope with the lockdown.

"I have had several injuries that kept me in isolation. When I had my knee and shoulder operated on I could not move out. I once got hit in Pakistan and I have had jawbone surgery.

"Once I was in bed for two months. The back injury kept me out of the 2001 'V.V.S. Laxman-Harbhajan Singh' series (against Australia). All those occasions were spent at home," he said.

Things to do

A voracious reader – like Sunil Gavaskar, W.V. Raman and Deep Dasgupta – Kartik has a few books to finish.

"I am currently reading The Lone Empress on the life of Jayalalithaa [former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister]. Next will be Half-Lion on P.V. Narasimha Rao [former Prime Minister]. I also have a list of movies to watch. We can all find ways to be busy. Stay at home, please."

Shukla contributes MLA salary, BCCI pension

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NW DELHI

Former India cricketer Laxmi Ratan Shukla, currently the sports minister of West Bengal, has donated his three months' MLA salary, along with his BCCI pension for the same period, to fight COVID-19.

"It is the need of the hour that we all contribute to the best of our abilities. I have already donated three months of my MLA salary to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

"I also get pension from the BCCI and I have donated three months of that too," said Shukla, who played three ODIs for India in 1999 and was part of IPL-winning KKR team.

Laxmi Ratan Shukla ▪FILE PHOTO: P.K. AJITH KUMAR

Hima's gesture

Meanwhile, India sprinter Hima Das has donated a month's salary to the Assam government to help it combat COVID-19. Hima is employed with Indian Oil as an HR officer in Guwahati.

She joins a growing list of sports personalities who have come forward to provide financial aid to fight the pandemic.

The Assam Cricket Association offered to convert the Barsapara Stadium into a quarantine centre as the state government braced up for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key questions that Wimbledon faces

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

The All England Club will hold an emergency meeting next week to discuss the possible postponement or even cancellation of Wimbledon in the light of the coronavirus pandemic.

AFP Sport looks at the key questions facing the organisers of the world's most prestigious tennis tournament.

Much to mull over: The organisers of The Championships will have lots to ponder about before deciding the fate of this year's event. ▪GETTY IMAGES

What are the options for Wimbledon this year?

Wimbledon, scheduled to take place from June 29 until July 12, has been staged every year in peace time since 1877, shelved only during the two world wars.

The grass court season is relatively short, five weeks for the leading events, so Wimbledon would appear to have time on its side.

However, building and preparation work at the All England Club site in leafy south-west London takes two months to complete and is set to start at the end of April.

There is also the issue of when the coronavirus will peak and the United Kingdom has been badly hit.

Health is the top issue for an event which attracts not only the superstars of the sport, but also close to 500,000 spectators each year as well as 6,000 staff and around 3,200 accredited media.

Why can't the tournament be played later in the year?

A slot has opened up in the calendar after the postponement of the Tokyo Olympics until next year.

However, Wimbledon organisers know that a postponement by a just fortnight to take advantage of that opening would solve little.

"At this time, based on the advice we have received from the public health authorities, the very short window available to us to stage The Championships due to the nature of our surface suggests that postponement is not without significant risk and difficulty. Playing behind closed doors has been formally ruled out," said a spokesman.

What would be the financial implications of a cancelled Wimbledon?

The tournament is an annual money-spinner. For example, in the 2017-2018 fiscal year, it was reported that Wimbledon generated $336 million with a pre-tax profit of $52 million. Over 90%of that was ploughed into British tennis.

The BBC, which broadcasts Wimbledon, will have a two-week black hole if the event is called off. It reportedly shells out around $72 million a year for the rights.

Who would be the losers of a cancelled Wimbledon?

As well as the purely sporting implications of a binned Wimbledon, Britain's well-heeled would suffer a jolt to their busy summer social season.

The Henley Royal Regatta on the River Thames, a feature since 1839, has already been cancelled. Wary eyes will now be cast towards June's Royal Ascot, which has drawn British royalty and the cream of society since 1911.

The British tabloids would also be stripped of their two-week Wimbledon headline bonanza and celebrity fix.

Age factor worries Tarundeep Rai

But says, 'the good thing is that we have already qualified'

ARCHERY

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

Following the postponement of the Tokyo Games, 36-year-old archer Tarundeep Rai has only one concern - he is getting older.

Waiting to compete in his third Olympics in his 17-year international career, two-time World championships team silver medallist Tarundeep is assessing the challenges the new scenario may pose for him.

Loss for athletes

"The postponement is a loss for every athlete. In my case, I am 36 years old. Next year, I will be 37. I am not getting younger, but if I train harder, then I will not lag behind. But, I have to start afresh," Tarundeep told *The Hindu*.

Tarundeep, who competed in 2004 Athens and 2012 London Olympics, bagged recurve men's team silver medals in 2005 Madrid and 2019 Den Bosch World championships.

The Armyman looked at the brighter side. "We have to take it positively. The archery community may suffer, if we look at the negatives. The good thing is that we have already qualified. The younger generation of the country can also get a chance (as the quota place belongs to the country), and should grab it as they will not get another such opportunity."

Sharing his ideas about training during the lockdown, Tarundeep said, "Whatever archery-specific exercises are there, one should do that. In this age of internet, everything is available on the phone. One should take advantage of that. When the lockdown ends, then one should be ready to resume shooting."

Stuck away from home

Tarundeep, who has not been to his home in Sikkim for about a year now, was part of the national camp at the Army Sports Institute, Pune. Even after the camp was shut down on March 22, he could not go home owing to the lockdown.

In the time of social distancing, Tarundeep, nevertheless, is happy to have stayed connected with his family from a distance. "At least, I am safe here and my family is safe in Sikkim. I am getting a lot of time to speak to my family," he said.

Starting afresh: While he is not getting younger, Tarundeep Rai feels that if he trains harder, he will not lag behind. ▪FILE PHOTO: M. MOORTHY

IN BRIEF

Hanoi chef introduces the novel 'coronaburger'

HANOI

You've got to eat it, to beat it: That's the philosophy of one Hanoi chef who is attempting to boost morale in the Vietnamese capital by selling green, coronavirus-themed burgers. Chef Hoang Tung and his team now spend their days moulding dozens of green-tea stained burger buns complete with little "crowns" made of dough to resemble the virus. REUTERS

Russia's satellite launch programme interrupted

MOSCOW

Russia's space agency Roscosmos said on Friday it would have to adjust its 2020 launch programme because of a halt in satellite production in Europe, amid the coronavirus outbreak. The head of Roscosmos, Dmitry Rogozin, will hold video conferences to discuss the new arrangements. REUTERS

Arunachal Pradesh tribes revive indigenous lockdown rituals

A priest said it was the first time in four decades that the ceremony was done

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

A tribal lockdown ritual has staged a comeback in Arunachal Pradesh, the State geographically closest to China's Hubei province where the COVID-19 outbreak began.

The border State's West Siang district ceremonially entered the *Arr-Rinam* phase at the stroke of 5 p.m. on Thursday. *Arr-Rinam* is the Galo equivalent of lockdown imposed by consensus for 48 hours whenever an epidemic strikes. The Galos, one of the 26 major tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, dominate West Siang district.

Getting prepared: Galo community elders performing *Ali-Ternam* ritual before the *Arr-Rinam* or lockdown ceremony in West Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. ▪SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"Coronavirus has not yet attacked us, but we cannot be complacent," said Kirba Sora, the president of Galo Welfare Society, an apex tribal body. "*Arr-Rinam*, which follows the *Ali-Ternam* ritual to ward off an epidemic, has been a part of our culture," he added.

Ali-Ternam – *Ali* means epidemic and *Ternam* forestall – and *Arr-Rinam* were last performed almost four decades ago when a waterborne disease had affected many members of the community.

"We have been performing these rituals periodically for livestock, primarily the semi-wild mithun, that are prone to contagious diseases," Mr. Sora said in a telephone interview from the district headquarters Aalo. "This is for the first time in 30-40 years that we performed the rituals for the safety of humans," he added.

An executive engineer in the State's Public Health Engineering and Water Supply Department, Mr. Sora was one of the two *Bos* or deputy priests, who performed the *Ali-Ternam* under the guidance of a *Nyibo* (shaman) from Wednesday morning.

The ritual ended with the community leaders sealing five major entry points of the district.

"As in the past, all of us locked ourselves in and banned the entry of anyone from outside. We did make a departure from tradition by adhering to the government's social distancing guidelines, ensuring only a few people participated," Mr. Sora said. The Adi community inhabiting East Siang and Lower Dibang Valley districts too performed a similar ritual called *Motor* that they believe lets shamans with legendary powers to locate wild herbs to combat an epidemic.

Indian scientists join the battle against COVID-19

One effort seeks to explain concepts in regional languages

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN
CHENNAI

Several Indian scientists have come together to form a Google group to address some of the concerns that the COVID-19 outbreak has thrown up.

Indian Scientists' Response to CoViD-19 (ISRC) is a voluntary group of scientists who regularly discuss the rapidly evolving situation with its dire need for science communication.

"The scientific community has a social and democratic responsibility in the current situation, both in terms of analysing the situation and reaching out to the public. While governmental bodies make their decisions and professional scientific academies take principled stands, there is a need for individuals in the scientific community to also help individually and collectively," says R. Ramanujam, the spokesperson of the group and a computer scientist with The Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Chennai.

With nearly 200 members, the group has scientists from institutions such as the NCBS, the IISc, the TIFR, the IITs, the IISERs and many others.

The group aims to study existing and available data to bring out analyses that will support the Central, State and local governments in carrying out their tasks. Several working groups have been formed by the scientists. They include one on hoax busting to address disinformation spreading with respect to the coronavirus and one on science popularisation to develop material that explains concepts such as home quarantine. Other groups work on resources in Indian languages, mathematical models and apps.

Scientists in India are working on analyses and apps in response to the coronavirus pandemic. ▪GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

"The group is not a forum for medical advice, and definitely no unverified claims. All analysis should be evidence-based," the group says. It is active on Twitter with the handle @IndSciCOVID, which is managed by Reeteka Sud, who works in genomics and stem cells at NIMHANS, Bengaluru.

Sutirth Dey, an evolutionary biologist based in Pune and editor of Confluence, an online forum provided by the Indian Academy of Sciences, has made available translations in 15 languages of the e-book, *The Pandemic Notebook*, which was originally published by *The Hindu* in English.

Mapping spaces

One of the ideas discussed by the group is to develop an app that can map spaces that can be used as shelters and share the data with the State government.

"We have got in touch with the Tamil Nadu State Health Systems Reforms Office and told them that we are willing to develop any app that they feel the need for,"says K.V. Subrahmanyam, a computer scientist with The Chennai Mathematical Institute.

Kameswari Chebrolu, a faculty member from the department of computer science at IIT Bombay, has helped adapt a platform she developed along with graduate students over the past two years to help in the present crisis.

This platform works through two channels – phone and WhatsApp to connect people in need with those who can provide help. In the context of the COVID-19 outbreak, it can connect patients or people with symptoms to doctors. It may also connect elderly people with volunteers from NGOs to assist in chores such as grocery shopping. Currently, the group is in talks with King Edward Memorial Hospital in Mumbai towards developing this service for them. "We expect that the platform and apps will be functional by early next week," says Prof. Chebrolu.

Major news publishers unite to tackle misinformation

The BBC's Trusted News Initiative has global partners

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The BBC's global Trusted News Initiative, in which *The Hindu* is a partner, will be extending its efforts to identifying false and potentially harmful information on the coronavirus pandemic.

The initiative will have in place a system in which partners will be able to alert each other to disinformation about COVID-19. This will enable partner platforms such as Facebook and Google to review promptly and the publishers in the network can ensure that the information is not republished.

The Trusted News Initiative, in which the BBC partners with other leading global news and technology organisations, was announced in June last year.

COVID-19

Partners in the initiative will also flag content that undermines trust in partner news providers by identifying imposter content claiming to come from trusted brands. The partners within the initiative are: the BBC, Facebook, Google/YouTube, Twitter, Microsoft, AFP, Reuters, European Broadcasting Union (EBU), *Financial Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Hindu*, CBC/Radio-Canada, First Draft and the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

"The BBC and all our partners feel an urgent sense of responsibility to give everybody the very best, most accurate information, we can during this time of crisis. It's vital that we all have access to the facts so we know how to protect ourselves, our friends and families," said Tony Hall, Director-General of the BBC. "These are challenging times for each and every one of us. We'll do everything we can, working together, to stop disinformation about coronavirus in its tracks," Mr. Hall added.

Satish Gujral, master sculptor and veteran artist, dies at 94

His creativity spanned painting, murals and architecture

UMA NAIR

In the passing away of artist, architect, designer and sculptor Satish Gujral, India has lost a giant who had vision and energy and always remained relevant to his times.

Gujral died Thursday night at his home in New Delhi. He was 94.

Gujral's works traversed multiple modes and moorings and, over the decades, he drew inspiration from deities, the edifice of tribal forms, the gravitas of geometrical projections, animals as well as humans, to create a repertoire that entwined multiple references for his paintings as well as his sculptures. He beat all odds of hearing impairment to garner international recognition for his creativity that spanned painting, graphics, murals, sculpture and architecture.

Born in Jhelum in pre-Partition West Punjab in 1923, and trained at the Mayo School of Art and later (1944 - 47) at Sir J.J. School of Art in Bombay, Gujral overcame the turbulent early years, battling an illness that affected his hearing and the trauma of Partition, which left a deep impact on his artistic expression.

Rams, horses, bulls

One of his finest shows was *Metamorphosis* at the Lalit Kala Akademi in 2008. Other than his dulcet drawings done on a straw-coloured archival paper, his sculptures were an odyssey of their own making. Of particular grace and expressionist zeal were his rams, horses and bull sculptures. The horses and bulls were created with riding gear, meticulously moored. When asked to explain the symbolism, he said: "The animals are a symbol of energy, whereas the riding gear, the way it is created to lie loose, is about energy in motion, something I need to reflect since I have been trapped into stillness."

Fine lines: Satish Gujral in 2017. ▪SHANKER CHAKRAVARTY

Gujral's burnt wooden sculptures stand apart for their solidity of substance and the echoes of literature and folk accents and spirituality.

When asked about his burnt wood series that has references to Indian mythology even as it reflects an interplay of contemporary sensibility, Gujral had said: "One day, during Lohri, I saw sparks emerging from a burning log. The texture and colour attracted me, and immediately I knew that I wanted to work with burnt wood."

He was obsessed with the sooty blackness of burnt wood and, from it, created serpents and deities and forms, sprinkling a hint of crimson and coral beads and gold like glowing embers.

In his paintings, we could see subtleties of colour begin to play across through the surface like a mirage seen in the reaches of a dry desert. He gained international recognition for the "elusive quality that retreated into profundity as the viewer attempts to grasp it."

One of his best paintings is *Mourning En Masse* (1952) (casein on cardboard). His brilliance lay not just in the textural facets but in the underlying solidity which seemed to melt into sliding planes of colour dispersing into an infinite horizon.

Belgian embassy design

One of his greatest design ventures was the Belgian Embassy in Delhi. It was picked out by the International Union of Architects as one of the 1,000 best buildings made in the 20th Century.

Gujral was also known for his generosity of spirit. In 2017, he donated a sculpture to Bikaner House because it supported his idea of public art. The idea of public art was experienced by him in its birthplace in Mexico. His tenure in Mexico brought him close to Frida Kahlo and Octavio Paz. Meeting Paz paved the way for his selection for a scholarship to study art in Mexico, and this changed his life.

The Mexican government conferred Gujral with "The Order of the Aztec Eagle", an honour given to foreigners rendering services to Mexico and humanity. The Belgian government honoured Gujral with the Order of the Crown for designing the Belgian Embassy in New Delhi in 1983.

(The writer is a noted art critic)

Doordarshan to re-telecast *Ramayan*

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

The *Ramayan* would be re-telecast by Doordarshan starting this Saturday, Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar said on Friday.

Sources said *Ramayan* was just one of the first in the series of old Doordarshan hits to make a reappearance.

The other programmes include B.R. Chopra's *Mahabharat*, *Chanakya*, *Upanishad Ganga*, Shahrukh Khan's iconic *Circus* and *Byomkesh Bakshi*. These will play on DD Bharati. The timings will be announced in the next few days.

"Happy to announce that on public demand, we are starting re-telecast of *Ramayan* from tomorrow, Saturday March 28 on DD National, One episode from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m., another from 9 p.m. to 10 p.m.," Mr. Javadekar tweeted.

The announcement comes at a time when the country is going through a 21-day lockdown to contain the spread of COVID 19.

Original screening

The 74-episode *Ramayan* was telecast from January 25, 1987 to July 31, 1988 and the 90-episode *Mahabharat* from October 2, 1988 to June 24, 1990.

"DD was already in talks for reacquisition of iconic serials several weeks prior to this situation. That process will continue. Right now, the lockdown being the priority, the content has been shared in national interest," a senior Prasar Bharati official said. The rights to all these programmes continue to be held with the producers and it is only a one-time rerun. The re-telecast was made possible by the new content acquisition policy adopted by Doordarshan last November.

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