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More time for renewal of health, motor insurance  
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BCCI officially suspends IPL 2020 until further notice  
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## NEARBY



Six more deaths, 62 new COVID-19 cases in Delhi

NEW DELHI  
Six deaths and 62 new COVID-19 cases were reported in Delhi on Thursday, taking the toll to 38 and the total number to 1,640. The Delhi government declared three more areas as "containment zones". The number of such zones in the city has gone up to 60.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

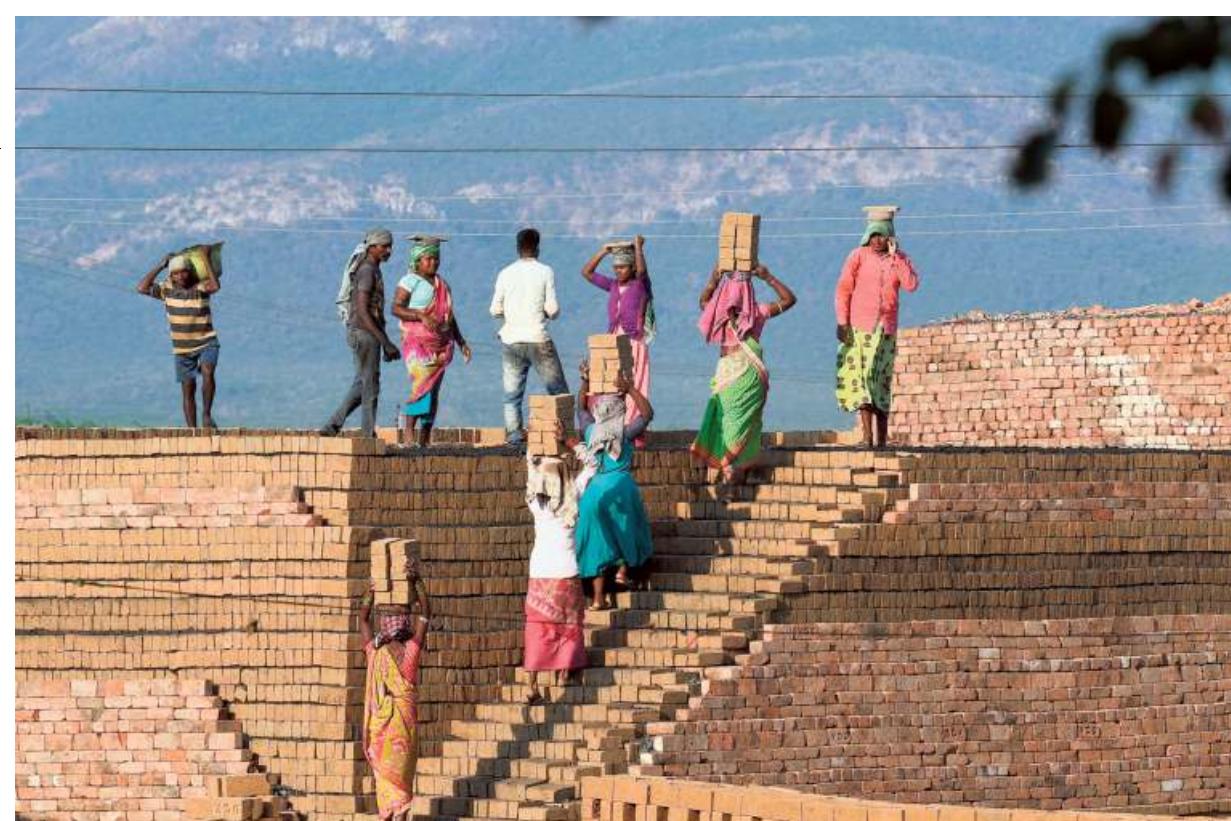
Golden Temple sees big dip in offerings

CHANDIGARH  
Amid the ongoing lockdown in the wake of COVID-19, the offerings at Golden Temple have fallen drastically. SGPC president Gobind Singh Longowal has urged people to donate in whatever possible way so that 'langar' at the temple and other gurdwaras can continue.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 11

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Life as usual



Daily grind: Migrant labourers working at a brick kiln in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh despite the COVID-19 lockdown.

Workers in this remote village are yet to get any government aid. ■ B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

Seafarers may return in three phases

JAGRITI CHANDRA  
NEW DELHI

The government is working on a plan to allow seafarers to return to India in three phases.

This includes allowing mariners on ships that are already at Indian ports to disembark when the lockdown is partially eased on April 20.

The standard operating procedure to facilitate return of seafarers is likely to be finalised by Friday, a top source at the Shipping Ministry told *The Hindu*.

"In the first phase, we will allow seafarers on ships docked at the Indian ports to disembark and sign off. In the second phase, those on ships in deep sea will be allowed to return by sea. And in the final stage, we will permit those who have disembarked from their ships and signed off in a foreign country," the source said.

## Fresh cases rise by over 800; govt. pegs fatality rate at 3.3%

420 deaths recorded; 1,541 patients recover; active cases estimated at 10,824

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

India registered over 800 COVID-19 positive cases on Thursday, with the tally touching 12,759 cases and 420 deaths. These include over 10,824 active cases. A total of 1,541 people have been cured and discharged and one had migrated. The total number of cases include 76 foreign nationals.

The Health Ministry noted that India's case fatality rate is 3.3% and percentage of people recovered is 12.02.

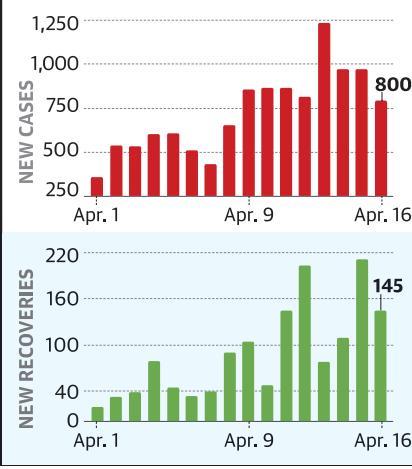
### COVID-19

According to reports from the State Health Departments, the total number of COVID-19 cases in India are 13,339, of which 11,289 are active ones. A total of 452 people have died of the disease.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has said the rapid testing kit is not for diagnosis but for surveillance, especially in hotspots. Refuting allegation that India is not conducting enough coronavirus tests,

### Status check

The Indian Council of Medical Research said over 3 lakh samples from over 2.8 lakh individuals were tested as of Thursday. The graph depicts India's new cases and recoveries from April 1



the ICMR said, "India tests 24 people for one positive case, while Japan tests 11.7, Italy 6.7 and the U.S. tests 5.3. So, one cannot say that India is testing less."

The spokesperson confirmed that India has on Thursday received 5 lakh rapid test kits for COVID-19 from China. "These have a sensitivity of over 80% and are serology kits which is not to be used for early diagnosis but for surveillance purpose, especially in hotspots," said Dr. Gangakhedkar.

Refuting allegation that India is not conducting enough coronavirus tests,

**Peeking out:** A family looks on during police patrol in Khammam in Telangana on Thursday. ■ G.N. RAO

He added that there was no need to be concerned over the efficacy of the rapid antibody testing kits. "If an antibody test of a person turns out to be positive, one cannot necessarily be sure the person would not get infected ever again. This means, even if antibody is present, that doesn't mean it will necessarily be effectively able to fight the virus."

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

Zoom not a safe platform, says MHA

VIJAITA SINGH  
YUTHIKA BHARGAVA  
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has issued an advisory that Zoom video conference is not a safe platform. It was issued on April 12 and the MHA shared it with journalists on Thursday.

U.S. based Zoom video communication has seen an exponential rise in usage in India as office-goers remain at home owing to the present lockdown. The software used in the online platform is said to be made in China and some calls were being routed through servers in China. The Cyber Coordination Centre of the MHA issued a set of guidelines for its safe usage. It was not for use by government offices and officials, the MHA noted.

NOTE OF CAUTION ▶ PAGE 8

## Mumbai runs out of beds in ICUs, patients suffer

200 beds for intensive treatment under COVID-19 pressure

JYOTI SHELAR  
MUMBAI

A 42-year-old Unani practitioner from Mumbai's Govandi area with severe breathlessness, diarrhoea and failing kidney function had to wait nearly 30 hours to get an Intensive Care Unit bed with dialysis facility. By the time he got it on Thursday morning at the SL Raheja Hospital in Mahim, his condition was critical.

The family's ordeal continued even after getting a bed as no ambulance was ready to ferry a patient who had potentially been exposed to SARS-CoV-2 exposure. "One driver eventually agreed but he said that we cannot use the bi-level positive airway pressure (BiPAP) machine [for intensive breathing assistance] from his ambulance. So, we took the risk and shifted him merely on oxygen support," said the patient's brother.



Mounting vigil: A doctor taking a swab of a resident at Kalyan Wadi in Dharavi on Thursday. ■ VIJAY BATE

Nearly 40 days after the SARS-CoV-2 hit Mumbai, the city's health infrastructure is crumbling with persons suffering from other diseases scurrying for beds. The city has 1,900 isolation beds and nearly 200 ICU beds.

The city reported its first positive case on March 11. On Thursday, the total number of cases had gone up to 2,073, and the death toll in the city to 117.

IN another case, a 49-year-old man from Agripada who was admitted to the Kasturba Hospital died on Wednesday night waiting for a better facility. "We tried at least five hospitals, including Seven Hills and Saifee, but none had any vacant ICU beds.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## All residents of Indore set to be screened for COVID-19

Fatality rate shot up to 12%, the highest in the country

SIDHARTH YADAV  
Bhopal

As Indore grapples with a high fatality rate from COVID-19, the city administration is surveying all residents for Influenza-Like Illness and Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI)s to check the spread of the novel coronavirus. The rate had shot up to 12% recently, the highest in the country.

Of the 28 lakh residents of the largest and most populous city of Madhya Pradesh, health workers have already screened seven lakh. The rest will be surveyed in five days.

With 707 COVID-19 cases as of Thursday, Indore has the third highest number of cases in the country, after Mumbai and New Delhi. With most patients having no contact or travel history, health workers are yet to locate the source of the outbreak.

In the past four days, the number of cases grew by



Making amends: Residents of Tatpatti Bakhal in Indore apologising for the attack on health workers recently. ■ PTI

Most of the 39 people who died in the city suffered from bilateral pneumonia, which worsened to Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome that caused the death. The novel coronavirus hastened the process. "Most of those who died had not revealed their illnesses before. They reached us very late carrying a heavy viral load, their lungs severely affected," Chief Medical and Health Officer Pravin Jadia said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## 17 arrested for attacking officials in Moradabad

Damages to be recovered from accused

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
LUCKNOW/ GHAZIABAD

persons under various clauses, including attempt to murder and rioting.

Additional Chief Secretary, Home, Awanish Awasthi said the stringent National Security Act would also be slapped against the accused, as per Mr. Adityanath's instructions, to prevent similar incidents in future.

The area around Nek Wali mosque in Moradabad where the officials were attacked remained under complete lockdown on Thursday.

Sandeep Badola, State President, Diploma Pharmacists Association, said health department officials would not go door-to-door for sample collection. "The health department team will sit in the local police station and the policemen should bring the possible COVID-19-infected persons to us for sample collection or institutional quarantine. We have conveyed this to the Chief Medical Officer and the district administration," he said.

"If they don't [pay up for the damage], their property should be seized," a government spokesperson said, quoting the Chief Minister.

Three persons, including a doctor, were injured when a crowd attacked a health department team that went to take samples for checking COVID-19 infection in the Nawabpura area of Moradabad, the police said. The area had been declared a hotspot after one resident died on April 13 of suspected COVID-19 infection. So far, 17 persons, including seven women, have been arrested, they said. An FIR was registered against 21 persons and another 200 unidentified

## 'Paani is all that he managed to say'

Sunil Aledia, whose photo of a destitute man went viral, says help arrived in 5 hours

SHINJINI GHOSH  
NEW DELHI

"When I first saw him, I thought he was dead. It was only after I went closer that I realised that the person was breathing very lightly," said Sunil Kumar Aledia, the convenor of National Forum for Homeless Housing Rights, whose photo of a destitute man lying on a pavement at Kashmere Gate has gone viral on social media.

"Paani (Water) is all that he managed to say. I bought a bottle of water and gave it to him," said Mr. Aledia, who waited for over five hours for help to arrive.

He said he made the first call around 2 p.m. on Wednesday. "I kept calling the helpline numbers, including 112 and 102. While most of the calls went unanswered, on two occasions the calls were disconnected. It was only after I spoke to the Joint CP, Deputy Commissioner of Police (North) and officials from the Delhi government's revenue department that the person was finally rescued at 7.20



The destitute man found near Kashmere Gate ISBT.  
■ SUNIL KUMAR ALEDIA (SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT)

p.m.," said Mr. Aledia, adding that the man was taken to Rajan Babu TB Hospital at Kingsway Camp.

**Moved to hospital**  
DCP (North) Monika Bhardwaj said, "We received a call after which we called an ambulance and shifted the man to hospital. He has been identified as Manoj and is undergoing treatment."

Manoj was found at a spot known as Faridabad Bus Stand, Kashmere Gate ISBT, close to the Kudesia Ghat

where hundreds of migrant workers have been stationed since the lockdown.

"Close to 5,000-6,000 homeless people lived there even earlier, but the count almost doubled since the lockdown was announced. We have made several representations to the government and even submitted action plans, urging it to take necessary steps," Mr. Aledia said.

He insisted that all those shifted out of the Yamuna floodplains to different locations across the city should undergo proper medical check-ups. "The people who have been living here for the last 10-15 days have had no access to proper sanitation and could not even take a bath. There is a high possibility that they are suffering from other communicable diseases as well. Proper medical check-ups should be done before they are made to stay with hundreds of others in shelters," said Mr. Aledia.

He said there are several grounds and stadiums which can be used to house homeless people. "The government should take appropriate steps," he said.

Reached for a comment, a Delhi government spokesperson said they were not aware of the particular case, but most of the people living on the floodplains had been "immediately shifted out" on Wednesday evening after their situation was brought to their notice. "Many people there used to stay in the shelters which were set ablaze [recently at Kashmere Gate]," the spokesperson said.

## Refund fares to passengers, airlines told

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

There is some relief for air travellers as the government on Thursday asked airlines to refund air fares instead of blocking passengers' money in credit shells. But this will benefit only those who booked flight after the lockdown came into force three weeks ago for travel post April 14.

If a passenger has booked a ticket during the first lockdown period and the airline has received the payment for booking of air ticket during the first lockdown period (March 25 to April 14) for travel during the second lockdown period (April 15-May 3) for both domestic and international air travel, the airline shall refund the full amount with levy of cancellation charges," said an order issued by the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

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CMYK

AN-NDNE

**Timings**

DELHI		
FRIDAY, APR. 17	RISE 05:54	SET 18:49
RISE 02:55	SET 13:53	
SATURDAY, APR. 18		
RISE 05:53	SET 18:49	
RISE 03:31	SET 14:47	
SUNDAY, APR. 19		
RISE 05:52	SET 18:50	
RISE 04:04	SET 15:40	

**Delhi Weather**

max min

Delhi City 40 22

Safdarjung 40 22

Palam 40 23

Delhi Palam Today

37°C The morning will be

comfortable. Day will be very

warm with cloudy sky. Spell of

duststorm and shower is likely.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow

39°C The morning will be

comfortable. Day will be very

warm with cloudy sky. Spell of

duststorm and shower is likely.

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**THE HINDU**

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**Air quality of Delhi-NCR**

Delhi	180	Gurugram	135
Ghaziabad	250	Faridabad	236
Noida	205	Greater Noida	249
Good	■ Satisfactory	■ Moderate	
0-50	51-100	101-200	
Poor	■ Very poor	■ Severe	
201-300	301-400	>401	
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS)   SOURCE: CPCB			

**IN BRIEF****GMDA portal to join all in fight against COVID-19**

The Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority has developed a head portal – a joint initiative of GMDA, MCG and Gurugram District Administration – which aims to connect all stakeholders like government, hospitals, doctors, testing labs and patients to strengthen the workforce fighting to save lives affected by COVID-19.

RK Puram police staff shifted to hotel

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Police personnel were accommodated at Hotel Hyatt Regency in order to decongest barracks at RK Puram police station, on Thursday

RK Puram police station SHO Rajesh Sharma said that police personnel have been restricted to go out of Delhi as borders are sealed due to

lockdown. Around 20 police personnel who live in NCR have been accommodated in the hotel.

"We requested the hotel with the proposal and they agreed. Arrangements have been made for around 20 police personnel. It is a kind of reserve force in case of any COVID-19 infection in barracks at the police station

where the movement of visitors is frequent," said the SHO.

He added that the hotel has provided 13 rooms and are maintaining hygiene and social distancing.

It is the first police station in the city to felicitate their staff by providing them with accommodation in a five-star hotel.

A doctor died in the incident on April 13

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Three people were arrested on Thursday in connection with a hit-and-run case in which a doctor was killed in Saket, the police said.

The accused – Sandeep, Ajay and Vijay – were on their way to Vasant Kunj to donate blood to an acquaintance when their car allegedly hit Dr. J.P. Yadav's bicycle, they said. Yadav, who was posted at a civic body dispensary in Mehrauli, was returning home after work when the accident took place on April 13.

"On the basis CCTV foot-

age analysis, the offending vehicle was identified," said DCP (South) Atul Kumar Thakur. The vehicle was registered in the name of Sonu from Haryana. A team was sent to his house on Wednesday when he told the police that he had given his car to his friend Vicky. On enquiry, Vicky said the car was being used by his friend Sandeep Pal Singh, Mr. Thakur said. Sandeep told police that he and his friends – Ajay and Vijay – were in the car at the time of the accident. Vijay was driving the car, the DCP said, adding that the car has been seized.

**SEARCH FOR MISSING****KODULAL**

Age: 68 Years, Height: 5'6", Complexion: Fair, Face: Long, Built: Medium, Identification: Mentally Weak, Wearing: Black colour coat, Black colour pant and Black colour Topi.

Any person having any information/Clue about this Missing person, may inform SHO, Narela Industrial Area, Delhi at E-mail Id – [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) or Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>

Phone: 011-24368638, 24368641 Fax No. 011-24368639

SHO P.S. Narela Industrial Area, Delhi Outer North Distt., Delhi Ph. No. 27787593, 27787594 DP1830N2020

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CIN: U45200JH2013SGC001752

CORIGENDUM # 1

NIT No.: JUIDCO/NIT/HWS/JURLP/OCB/2/339

Tender ID: - 2020 JUADB\_44633\_1

Ref PR No.: - 226422

All the bidders are hereby informed that Corrigendum #1 for the tender "Construction and 5 years of Operation and Maintenance of Water Supply System in Hussainabad (Intake works, Rising main, 9.5 MLD Water treatment plant, Clear water main, Overhead reservoirs, Distribution network and House service connections)" has been published on the e-procurement website of Government of Jharkhand.

It is requested to please refer the same before submission of bids.

e-procurement website: <http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in>

Sd/-

Project Director (Tech.)

JUIDCO Ltd., Ranchi

PR 227826(Urban Development and Housing)20-21'D

# Delhi riots: '25-30 arrests from north-east since lockdown'

Family members allege that policemen not letting them meet accused in jails

**HEMANI BHANDARI**

NEW DELHI

Firoz Khan, who works as a driver in Delhi, was arrested during the lockdown on April 2 in connection to the riots that broke out in north-east Delhi in February this year. His wife Afsana (38) has visited the Mandoli jail twice since then but has not been able to meet him so far.

The police said the arrests were being made regularly despite the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A senior officer said over 800 arrests have been made so far. Advocates dealing with the riot cases said around 25 to 30 arrests have been made from the area since March 22.

Ms. Afsana from Mustafabad said she and her husband had gone to her mother's residence in Noor-e-Ilahi while her sons – 16 and 14 – were at home. "The police entered our house and took one of my sons to Dayalpur police station, which I found out from my neighbours. I went to the police station with a few other women and the policemen said they would release my son only if



The police said the arrests in the north-east Delhi violence cases are being made regularly despite the lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic. ■ FILE PHOTO: SANDEEP SAXENA

my husband reached the police station," she said. Firoz eventually arrived and that was the last time Ms. Afsana saw him.

**'No clothes to change'**

She said: "He doesn't even have clothes to change and in times like these, hygiene is of utmost importance. He is the only earning member of the family. I don't even know what to do and who to ask for help. I can't even go out. I have visited the Mandoli jail twice but they didn't let me meet him. I haven't even received a call from him."

In a similar incident, Anas (20), a resident of Mustafabad, was arrested on April 7. His brother Israr said: "The policemen from Dayalpur called and said they just want to a few questions but when we went, there were other boys too. They took him into a room and that was the last we heard from him. The next day, he was produced before the court and my father saw him but we could not talk to him." He added that the family is clueless in which jail he is lodged because of the lockdown. A senior officer said the

lockdown has not hampered the investigation. "The investigation in the cases is ongoing. There is a Standard Operating Procedure, which is being adhered to by officers during the lockdown," he said.

Advocate Abdul Gaffar, along with his associates, who is representing many of those arrested in connection to the riots, said: "According to the information we have, around 25-30 arrests have been made from north-east Delhi ever since the lockdown started."

Mr. Gaffar also said advocates who are dealing with the riot cases are facing issues because of lack of information. He said, "...an official enters the house, makes an arrest, and sometimes takes the accused straight to jail where a duty magistrate is already operating from nowadays. Advocates don't even get to know if a person has been arrested and on what charges." He added that often, they don't get to know whether the person has only been detained for interrogation or has been formally arrested.

# City hospital sacks doctor

He was allegedly redirecting medical kits donated by NGO

**SIDHARTH RAVI**

NEW DELHI

A doctor, identified as Piyush Pushkar Singh, at Hindu Rao Hospital was terminated from duty on Wednesday for "bringing disrepute to the institution". Calling it baseless, the doctor said to challenge the decision in court.

North Delhi Municipal Commissioner Varsha Joshi, under whose jurisdiction the hospital falls, alleged that Dr. Singh had intercepted stocks of protective gear meant for the hospital store room, donated by an NGO to distribute to hospital staff.

"Dr. Piyush Pushkar Singh, DNB student in Orthopaedics Department is terminated from his services with immediate effect for bringing disrepute to the institution," an order issued on Wednesday said.

The medical superintendent of the hospital was in touch with the NGO regarding equipment which included face masks.



The medical superintendent of the hospital was in touch with the NGO regarding equipment which included face masks.

**COVID-19**

rial, but also gave it away to people who didn't need it,

taking decisions which were nowhere in his purview," she said.

While the commissioner said that the protective gear should have been sent to the hospital store to be distributed according to protocol, Dr. Singh said that resident doctors here had asked him not to do so. Donated gear being deposited to the hospital store was not being appropriately distributed to staff and was lying in waste, he said.

their voice. Singh, however, rejected the allegation, stating that the NGO got in touch with him on its own accord, desiring to distribute protective gear to the RDA instead of the hospital administration, he said. He also said that the NGO had informed the hospital authorities regarding Show-cause notice Dr. Singh was also issued a show-cause notice last month for putting up a video on Facebook highlighting issues at the hospital.

Be it an anniversary, a birthday, an academic accomplishment or even a promotion. Now you can surprise your loved ones by wishing them on

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## IN BRIEF

**Shahdara DM calls for meeting with RWA**

NEW DELHI  
The District Magistrate (Shahdara) on Thursday called for a meeting with several Resident Welfare Associations to address their concern after they raised questions over screening of 15,000 persons in the area. *The Hindu* had reported that members of the joint Resident Welfare Association in Dilshad Garden raised doubts over screening in their respective areas.

**BJP launches helpline number for the needy**

NEW DELHI  
The Delhi unit of the Bhartiya Janta Party on Thursday launched a helpline number, 9625799844, to help needy people in need get food through call or message. Meanwhile, the party claimed that it had distributed food and ration to over 30 lakh people so far. In this effort, collective kitchens had been organised at nearly 100 places in Delhi from which food was being served to nearly two lakh people every day, the party claimed.

# Capital reports 6 deaths, 62 fresh COVID-19 cases

Total number of containment zones in the city stands at 60

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Six deaths and 62 new cases of COVID-19 were reported in Delhi on Thursday, taking the total number of deaths to 38 and cases to 1,640, according to the Delhi government.

## COVID-19

Also, the Delhi government on Thursday declared three more areas as "containment zones", taking the total number of such zones in the city to 60. A containment zone has a stricter form of lockdown and entry and exit of people are not allowed in such zones.

Out of the total COVID-19 cases reported in the city, 1,080 are connected to a religious gathering held in March in Nizamuddin, which was evacuated by the authori-

## Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases	1,640
Total deaths	38
New cases in the past 24 hours	62
New deaths in the past 24 hours	6

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN



People buying mask at Ghazipur Mandi in New Delhi on Thursday.

• SANDEEP SAXENA

ties, the Delhi government said.

Though a large number of people who attended the religious gathering have already tested positive for COVID-19, the ones reported in the Capital on Wednesday and Thursday include no such cases.

Out of the total 1,640 cases reported so far, 51 people have been discharged and 1,550 are still under treatment at various hospitals.

A total of 18,784 samples

have been tested for the virus so far in the city.

Also, 2,571 people are at different quarantine facilities and 12,261 people are under home quarantine.

"House-to-house surveillance activities are being carried out in identified cluster containment zones. A total of 1,825 samples have been collected from different clusters and sent for testing," an official statement said.

# Dilemma after delivery boy tests positive

Some said they will take precautions, others concede there are no alternatives

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Reports of a food delivery boy contracting COVID-19 here have drawn mixed reactions from Delhites. Some said they would take additional precautions while others admitted they would continue to order due to a lack of alternatives.

A 19-year-old pizza-delivery boy, who operated in south Delhi, tested positive for COVID-19 earlier this week, prompting the authorities to quarantine a total of 72 houses in the areas he had delivered food. All these houses are within a five-kilometre radius of Malviya Nagar, said B.M. Mishra, District Magistrate (south Delhi).

"A total of 17 people, including the owner of the shop, the delivery boy and other delivery boys, have been put under institutional quarantine. The shop has been shut," he added.

Mr. Mishra said the delivery man, a migrant worker



A pizza delivery boy near Red Fort on Thursday.

• SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

portedly operating.

Ms. Manolika and her roommates have, however, decided to stop getting things delivered home. "We have just ordered from BigBasket twice till now, but we won't do that anymore," she said.

Sam Solomon, who lives in Gadipur, said he had been avoiding food delivery though he had been tempted. Now it is best to cook. "I had been concerned about this, and the current case only validates that," he said, informing that he would not be ordering from outside anymore.

## Added precautions

Akshath Dharmadeeran, who stays in Indirapuram, said that some groceries were being delivered home almost every other day. While Mr. Dharmadeeran expressed shock at the news of 72 houses being quarantined after coming in contact with the delivery person, he said he would continue availing the service with added precautions.

"There are options for contact-less delivery. I never meet the delivery person. And I go with a mask and wash my hands immediately," he said.

For Arunita Tara, a resident of Saket, the development was unlikely to change her ordering patterns. While she only cooks food at home and orders groceries online, she said that whether she went to the store or ordered them online, the risk of catching the virus was the

## Gautam Buddha Nagar reports 12 fresh cases of COVID-19

The total number of cases in the district goes up to 92

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GHAZIABAD

Twelve fresh cases of COVID-19 have been reported in Gautam Buddha Nagar on Thursday, an official release said. The 12 people include a doctor, it said.

The total number of cases in the district has gone up to 92. Of these, 26 people have recovered. Among those found positive on Thursday, there is a gastroenterologist from Sector 20 of Noida. "He is admitted to a hospital in Delhi and his sample was tested at a private lab," said a health department official. The new cases also include a three-year-old whose pa-

rents are undergoing treatment for COVID-19. "The others are contacts of people who have been tested positive earlier," the official said.

After a doctor tested positive for COVID-19 on Wednesday night, Gyan Khand I of Ghaziabad's Indirapuram was sealed and declared a hotspot, officials said.

The district now has 16 hotspots and 32 positive cases out of which 17 have recovered. This is the second doctor from Ghaziabad to be infected by COVID-19. A Health Ministry official said that the postgraduation student worked in the oncology department of the super spe-

cility hospital in Ghaziabad's Vaishali and had been admitted to its branch in Delhi's Saket. Later, he was shifted to Lok Nayak Hospital in Delhi. Denying reports that the hospital has been sealed, Chief Medical Officer N.K. Gupta told *The Hindu* said no such action had been taken as of now. "It has been deferred. We are tracing his contact history. He might have received the infection from patient. His wife, also a doctor, has also been quarantined," said Dr. Gupta.

A senior official of the hospital said that all necessary guidelines were being followed at the hospital.

## Second cancer patient dies after testing positive

68 staff of Bhagwan Mahavir Hospital quarantined after patient hides history

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 49-year-old cancer patient, who was admitted to the Delhi State Cancer Institute (DSCI) and later tested positive for novel coronavirus, has died, intimated DSCI officials on Thursday. This is the second cancer patient from DSCI, who has died after being tested positive for COVID-19.

A total of 31 people connected to the hospital has tested positive for the virus so far, including staff, patients, and a two-year-old child of a nurse.

The patient from Deoria in Uttar Pradesh suffering from brain tumour died on Wednesday at Rajiv Gandhi

travel history to the U.K., Health Minister Satyendar Jain had said.

Later, a total of four patients from the hospital had tested positive for the virus and they were eventually moved to Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality hospital.

**Pregnant woman dies**  
Meanwhile, 68 staff of Bhagwan Mahavir Hospital (BMH), including doctors, nurses and paramedical staff, have been quarantined as a precautionary measure, after a pregnant woman admitted at the hospital allegedly did not disclose that she was under home quarantine, said hospital officials on Thursday.

The woman died at the Delhi government-run hospital on Wednesday night.

"The woman's samples have been sent for testing and we will get the results only on Friday. If she tests negative then the staff will join duty. This is just a precautionary measure

## Delhi govt. gets Centre's nod to start plasma enrichment technique trial

It can be used to save lives of ones who are at higher risk: CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday announced that the Delhi government has been given permission by the Centre to start clinical trial of plasma enrichment technique on COVID-19 patients who are critically ill.

Mr. Kejriwal said that the results of these trials would be out in three-four days from now and hoped that the technique would work and that live of critical patients would be saved.

"The condition of several COVID-19 patients, who were admitted to hospitals in the last week of March and the first week of April, is improving now and many of them will be discharged in the next three-four days. It is those who are already suffering from heart or respiratory diseases who continue to be at a higher risk of losing their lives. If plasma technology is used in such cases, it can save lives," the CM said.

The plasma transfusion technology involves taking

the blood of a person who has recovered from COVID-19 that has anti-bodies that helped the person recover in the first place. Plasma is then extracted from the blood, is enriched, and is then injected into an infected person. The antibodies from the recovered person then enter the body of the infected patient and help them recover.

The CM said that the government has marked around 57 areas as containment zones under operation SHIELD to stop the spread of the virus and was ensuring that all essential services were being provided to the residents as people within the containment area cannot leave the area.

"No residents, excluding

essential workers, are allowed to enter or exit these areas. Healthcare workers will conduct door-to-door screening of the area's residents for COVID-19 and only those residents who say that they are suffering from some of the symptoms of the virus during the door-to-door screening will be tested," the CM said. He added that operation SHIELD has been successful in not letting the virus spread in areas like Dilshad Garden and Vasant Kunj.

The CM asked for the help of the media and others to highlight issues being faced by people in the city, especially those who are hungry so that the government could reach out and direct them to shelters or centres.

## Stop targeting community over religious meet: DMC

Panel chief writes to Home Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Delhi Minorities Commission chairman Zafar Islam in a letter to Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said that due to insensitive briefing by government officials and sensational media coverage every "Tablighi person" in the country became a suspect.

They were being hunted down and placed under quarantine amid propaganda that they were "hiding" and "evading", it said.

"Mere past relationship of someone with the religious congregation in New Delhi does not make him a suspect. Instead, only those who were inside the centre or visited it or came in contact with such persons outside the centre after the epidemic was discovered should be searched and quarantined," the DMC said.

"In many places in the country, members of the group are being hunted on

## HC declines urgent hearing of petition on school fees

'Schools can't be given preference'

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court has declined to give an urgent hearing to a petition seeking direction to all schools in the Capital not to charge school fees from children from April 2020 till the institutions become operational, in the wake of novel coronavirus.

The petition filed by advocate and social activist Amit Sahni also urged the court to provide sufficient funds to the schools to bear its liabilities such as salary to staff or other expenses in order to strike a balance in the larger public interest.

"Therefore, parents are facing difficulties as they are also paying salaries for persons whose services they were awaiting before [the] lockdown," he argued.

Mr. Sahni also pointed out that unlike other State

governments, the Delhi government has not issued any circular to schools under its jurisdiction "so as to prohibit all private/unaided schools to pressurise its students or their parents to deposit fees immediately".

The petition said that the schools cannot be given preferential treatment above industry/business houses etc., that are also paying its employees even as their operations are shut due to COVID-19.

"Therefore, to say that school fees must be paid as school has to fulfil its obligations in terms of salary to its staff is not justified," it said.

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"Therefore, to say that school fees must be paid as school has to fulfil its obligations in terms of salary to its staff is not justified," it said.

## Activists write to CM over foodgrain distribution

STAFF REPORTER

Activists from the Delhi Rozi Roti Adhikar Abhiyan on Thursday wrote to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal pointing out that despite the Union Finance Minister announcing that as part of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, the Centre would provide an additional 5 kg foodgrains per person for free under the PDS from April to June, the distribution of additional food

grains and pulses had not taken place here.

The letter read, "1.09 lakh MT grains has been allocated for Delhi but according to a press release dated April 9 issued by the Government of India, the Delhi government had not even lifted the additional earmarked stock in Delhi. Therefore, each person with a ration card has to be provided 12.5 kg foodgrains for April and each family has to be given 1 kg pulses for free."

## TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT

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**THE HINDU**  
India's National Newspaper

In view of the present public health situation due to outbreak of COVID-19, the Department desires to engage professionals in the following posts purely on temporary basis for a period of one year (from the date of joining) and to be posted in different Districts/Health Districts of West Bengal.

SL NO	NAME OF POSITION	NUMBER OF VACANCY	PLACE OF POSTING
1	District Epidemiologist	11	Bankura, Nadia, Nandigram HD, Purba Medinipur, Paschim Bardhaman, Rampurhat HD, Dakshin Dinajpur, Alipurduar, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Kalimpong
2	District Data Manager	2	Jhargram and Kalimpong
3	District Microbiologist	6	Birbhum, Nadia, North 24 Parganas, Jalpaiguri, Maldia and Murshidabad

Applicants are requested to send application through email at mail id [covid19rhealth@gmail.com](mailto:covid19rhealth@gmail.com) in the attached proforma as given in the Department's website ([www.wbhealth.gov.in](http://www.wbhealth.gov.in)) for the mentioned positions along with self attested photocopies and scanned copies of all original testimonials and submit within 21/04/2020 midnight. Applications received beyond due date and time will not be accepted.

## Policemen quarantined in J&K

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR

Scores of policemen were quarantined in Kashmir on Thursday, after a policeman and the son of a Sub-Inspector tested positive for COVID-19 in central and north Kashmir. Meanwhile, 14 new positive cases of the virus spiked the total number of cases in J&K to 314.

An official said the policeman, posted at the India Reserve Police (IRP) 3rd Battalion at Bemina, Srinagar, has tested positive. Preliminary reports suggest that the policeman, who is from Budgam's Rathsona, may have contracted the virus after him coming in contact with Tabligh-i-Jamiat in a Srinagar mosque.

### Contact tracing

"The contact tracing has been started. Many policemen will be quarantined," an officer said, on the condition of anonymity.

# Punjab records one more COVID-19 death, 11 new cases

Four districts have been declared as hotspots based on number of cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Punjab on Thursday reported one more COVID-19 related death, taking the total tally to 14 so far in the State, according to an official statement.

The State health department said the patient who died was from Gurdaspur and was under treatment at a hospital in Amritsar. The State also reported 11 fresh cases of COVID-19, taking the total number of positive cases to 197 in the State. Twenty-nine COVID-19 patients have so far recovered in Punjab, it added.

Meanwhile, Health Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu said that four districts in the State have been declared as hotspots by the Centre based on number of cases. These districts are SAS Nagar, SBS Nagar, Jalandhar and Pathankot. These are districts where more than 15 cases of CO-



Policemen patrol a deserted street in Amritsar. ■ FILE PHOTO: AFP

VID-19 have been reported so far.

"Now, Punjab is in second stage and to deal with unprecedented circumstances, the front-line teams of the health department is constantly working on a war footing to trace all the contacts of the affected patient, which is the single way to curb the spread of this highly contagious disease," he said.

Mr. Sidhu added, "We have

one of the foremost examples of SBS Nagar where the State government has successfully broken the chain of coronavirus and the number of patients freezed at 19 since March 26. Of the 19 patients, 17 patients have recovered."

Separately, an official government statement said that with the State staring at revenue losses to the tune of ₹22,000 crore for the financial year 2020-21, in view of

the COVID-19 crisis, all Punjab Ministers have decided not to take their salaries for the next three months.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Finance Sub-Committee, constituted recently under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Amarinder Singh to take stock of the fiscal implications of the pandemic and the lockdown-curfew triggered by it, and find ways of generating review to compensate for the losses and meet the costs resulting from the current crisis, said the statement.

Finance Minister Manpreet Badal informed the meeting that of the ₹88,000 crore revenue receipts estimated to be raised by the State for the financial year 2020-21, only ₹66,000 crore would now be generated in the light of the curfew-lockdown, which had brought all business and tax receipts to a standstill.

## Farmer outfits seek financial incentive

Give ₹200 bonus to farmers on wheat purchase in the wake of COVID-19: KMSC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

As wheat harvesting is gradually picking up in Punjab, farmer outfits have urged the BJP-led government at the Centre to immediately announce financial incentive for farmers in the wake of staggered procurement.

Punjab Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee spokesperson Baljit Singh Tawandi said the KMSC in a recently held meeting had passed a resolution demanding ₹200 bonus to farmers on the wheat purchased in the wake of the coronavirus threat. Also, governments should pay ₹10,000 per month to the unemployed youth.

"We have also demanded regular and timely payments to farmers. Also, farmers should be allowed



Wheat harvesting is gradually picking up in Punjab. ■ FILE PHOTO:

to bring more than 50 quintals of wheat for sale to the market yards," he said.

Sarvan Singh, general secretary of KMSC, said farmers were also facing problems with the ongoing mechanism established for issuing coupon to a farmer for transporting his pro-

duce to the market.

"We want that the e-passes and coupons should be valid for at least 48 hours, besides a minimum of two persons should be allowed to travel on the trolley ferrying the grain," said Mr. Sarvan.

"We have submitted a

memorandum to the government. If our demands are not considered then we will stage a protest on April 28 till April 30 across villages in the State," he said.

Punjab Food Minister Bharat Bhushan Ashu, meanwhile, said that the farmers should not panic as he was personally monitoring the entire procurement process himself.

Mr. Ashu said a token system has been introduced in the mandis of State so as to enable the farmers to systematically bring their wheat.

He added that labourers have been provided with masks by the contractor of transportation in order to protect them from COVID-19.

He assured that payments to all farmers would be made within 48 hours.

## Total number of virus cases stays at 60 in Odisha

Highest number of 1,197 samples were tested on Wednesday and no new case was found: govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BHUBANESWAR

With one more COVID-19 patient recovering from the disease in Odisha, the number of persons discharged from hospital increased to 19 even as the total number of cases continued to remain at 60 in the State on Thursday.

A total of 40 COVID-19 patients, including 15 women, are undergoing treatment at different hospitals while one person had died earlier, the government said.

Briefing the media

through videoconferencing, State government's chief spokesperson for COVID-19 Subrat Bagchi informed that the highest number of 1,197 samples was tested on a single day on Wednesday and no new case was found. A total of 6,734 samples had been tested till midnight on Wednesday.

He also appealed to the people not to take medicines like hydroxychloroquine without the doctor's advice.

Mr. Bagchi informed that in order to keep a watch on

cases of domestic violence during the lockdown period, the Women & Child Development Department has started a WhatsApp No. 7205006039 to help women in distress.

### Department helpline

Stating that the department's helpline 181 was also operational, Mr. Bagchi urged the victims of domestic violence to take the help of WhatsApp and the helpline. Similarly, the State Women Commission has introduced a WhatsApp

No. 8763543013 in this respect, he added.

When testing is being ramped up, the State government is emphasising on development of health infrastructure and special training of doctors and other medical staff to fight COVID-19 strongly, said Mr. Bagchi.

Training is being given to doctors of various districts at the SCB Medical College Hospital in Cuttack on how to treat suspected COVID-19 patients those require ICU, he added.

State Development Commissioner Suresh Chandra Mahapatra informed that as many as 24 COVID-19 hospitals have become operational in 21 districts within a short span of time. These hospitals have 3951 beds and 293 ICU beds, he said.

### More hospitals

More than 10 such hospitals with adequate facilities are being set up covering all the 30 districts of the State to treat COVID-19 patients in their respective districts, Mr. Mahapatra said.

## 7-day deadline for Assam police

High Court wants 'declared foreigners' released on bail

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

The Gauhati High Court has given the Border wing of the Assam police seven days to comply with its April 15 order to release on bail 'declared foreigners' (DFs) who have completed two years in detention camps.

The court, hearing a petition on Wednesday with reference to the Supreme Court's April 13 order for releasing the DFs in view of the global coronavirus outbreak, also asked the Special Director-General of Police (Border) to

submit the number of people released when the matter is taken up after 10 days.

The Border wing is tasked with detection of suspected "illegal immigrants" and refer them to any of the 100 existing quasi-judicial Foreigners' Tribunals that decide on the status of the person detected to be sent to a detention centre.

The duo of Justice Ajit Barakur and Justice Manojit Bhuyan observed that the apex court had modified its May 10, 2019 order to reduce the detention period of DFs from three to two years and release them with two sureties of ₹ 5,000 each instead of ₹ 1 lakh each.

The apex court's order was for decongesting prisons towards preventing the virus from spreading. "...we now make a general direction for compliance by the respective Superintendents of Police (Border) of all the present 33 districts..." the Justice duo said in the order, asking them to first take stock of the names and period of detention of the detainees and ensuring their release on bail.

### INTERVIEW | PROFESSOR SHYAM SUNDAR

## Unorganised labourers need union and legal cover: labour expert

Lockdown means loss of income for 400 million informal workers which will push them into deeper poverty, he says

### labour?

- One, in each State a multi-party special task force or a board should be constituted to take stock of stranded migrant workers, constitute more relief/settlement centres, ensure compliance of basic needs, provide psychological counselling, etc. Two, establish helplines through social media, FM and other radio channels, etc. to connect with the unidentified migrant workers. Three, empower the tehsildars to issue temporary ration cards valid for 2-3 months. Four, information regarding the origin States of migrant workers could be built. Five, most importantly, they should be tested if they have travelled and/or living in congested places. Six, welfare of construction workers can be taken care of from the Construction Cess Fund. Seven, strictly implement the orders of the Supreme Court and High



Courts.

**Employers are worried about the absent labour. What is the way out once the lockdown ends?**

- If long-distance migration is weakened, then there could be changes in the geographical composition of migrant workers in the sense that "neighbourhood migration" might replace "long distance and indiscriminate migration" as a solution which, if it succeeds, could change long-term migration effects.

Post-lockdown, the market wage is likely to be revised

downwards till recovery and then revival phases which are going to take some time and hence the naturally migrant workers who are used to under-bidding will be even more needed. But what will surely happen is the strengthening of legal and institutional frameworks concerning them, including portable ration cards and EPF accounts, etc.

**How can one use this as an opportunity to organise the hitherto unorganised labour?**

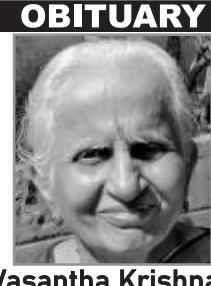
- If there is any powerful lesson from this entire dreadful COVID-19 context, it is that unorganised labourers need two kinds of cover, viz. union organisation cover and legal cover.

In a sense the "market" for unionism is quite high in India as 85-90% of the 470 million workers are not organised by any trade union.

### OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

#### DEATH

##### OBITUARY



**Vasantha Krishnan**  
W/o late A Krishnan  
D/o late Sembodai Narayana Iyerang,  
Attained Acharyan Tiruvadi on  
15 April at 5:25 pm in Srirangam.  
She will be mourned by her family Gita, Radha, Madan, Jagann, Akhil, Akshar, Anisha and Richa and the many people who received her love.

**K.A.SUNDARAJAN (RAJU)**, one of the kindest most generous and selfless souls, attained the lotus feet of his Gomati Ambal on Wednesday, 15.4.2020. Deepak, Nithya, Ravi, Deepa, and Pishi.

**DEATH ANNIVERSARIES**

50TH ANNIVERSARY J.S. Hudson Samuel (CPWD), DOB: 29/10/1921 - DOD: 17/04/1970, remembered by son's Samuel P. Hudson, J. Jeewaj Hudson grand son L.B. Hudson, Da-inlaw Lydia Lamuel CT: 9884050799

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## 'Pharma staff caught virus from Chinese'

Minister clarifies on Mysuru infection

**LAIQH A. KHAN**  
**TANU KULKARNI**  
**BENGALURU/MYSURU**

A day after the police disclosed that samples of raw material drawn from the pharmaceutical company in Nanjangud, near Mysuru, had tested negative for the novel coronavirus, Medical Education Minister K. Sudhakar claimed that investigations into the source of infection were pointing to an employee's contacts with a Chinese citizen.

The police authorities in Mysuru, however, maintained that the source of infection was yet to be established.

### Contact tracing

Dr. Sudhakar told *The Hindu* that patient-52 was the first employee of the company to test positive. "The Home Department's investigation reveals that he was in contact with a Chinese person. We are relieved to know the source and will intensify our contact tracing efforts," he said.

The number of persons from the company testing positive for COVID-19 has now touched 49, including three on Thursday, leading to Mysuru emerging as one of the hotspots.

Superintendent of Police

### COVID-19

C.B. Ryshyant said investigations were yet to identify the source of infection among the employees of the company. While denying that P-52 had travelled to either China or outside India, he said the company had shared the travel history of employees. "We don't see this person having travelled to any place outside India," he said.

P-52, who recovered earlier this month and was quarantined at home, had given his statement to the police.

Meanwhile, the company sought to clarify that none of its employees, who had tested positive, had travelled overseas recently.

## Karnataka reports spurt in COVID-19 cases

One more death in Bengaluru, Kerala prepares to open two districts for restricted activity, 9 test positive in A.P.

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

A total of 36 new COVID-19 cases – the biggest jump in a day in Karnataka so far – were reported on Thursday. North Karnataka accounted for 28 of them, and the day's numbers pushed up the State tally to 315.

One more patient succumbed to COVID-19 taking the toll to 13. The Department of Health and Family Welfare said the 66-year-old man from Bengaluru died on Wednesday. The patient was admitted to Victoria hospital and was on ventilator support since April 10, after being referred from a private hospital.

A total of 82 patients had been discharged as on Thursday. The most number of active cases were in Mysuru at 49, followed by 38 in Bengaluru Urban and 35 in Belagavi.

Education Minister S. Suresh Kumar said that the number of positive cases in Belagavi and Vijayapura was on the rise.

Of Thursday's 36 positives, five of the cases were less than 16 years old and six were senior citizens. While the majority had come into contact with positive patients, some patients with a history of domestic travel also tested positive.

A total of 82 patients had been discharged as on Thursday. The most number of active cases were in Mysuru at 49, followed by 38 in Bengaluru Urban and 35 in Belagavi.

### Normalcy in Kottayam

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday said Kottayam and Idukki districts would take their first steps towards restoring normalcy on April 20.

These districts reported no new COVID-19 positive cases. Other epidemiological indicators also qualified the regions for a calibrated return to regular life, he said.

The government would

### Gearing up

The government is taking all measures to meet the challenges thrown by the COVID-19 virus. One of the steps is to set up more centres for testing the samples



**Swift act:** A laboratory has been readied at the Govt Medical College Hospital in Ernakulam, Kerala, on Thursday. The lab can test 180 samples everyday. ■ THULASI KAKKAT

State	Total number of cases	Active cases	Discharged cases	Deaths
Andhra Pradesh	534	500	20	14
Karnataka	315	220	82	13
Kerala	394	147	245	2
Tamil Nadu	1,267	1,072	180	15
Telangana	700	496	186	18

In contrast, curfew would continue in Kasargode, Malappuram, Kannur, and Kozhikode till May 3.

The government reckoned the areas to be high-risk given the relatively higher

number of COVID-19 cases.

The government would barricade epidemic "hot-spot" localities and allow only a single entry and exit points for essential supplies, health workers, ambulances, and medicines.

### Telangana and A.P.

In Telangana, the total of COVID-19 positive cases stood at 700, and among them, 496 were active. The number of patients discharged was 186 and the death toll was 18. There was no death on Thursday.

Andhra Pradesh reported nine new positive COVID-19 cases as of Thursday morning and the tally went up to 534 cases in 11 districts. Three cases each were reported in Krishna, Kurnool and West Godavari districts.

Although the Department of Health had claimed that it would be testing over 3,000 samples in a day for the first time on Thursday, there was no evening bulletin.

Reports said at least 15 persons including 13 from Kurnool and two from Anantapur had recovered and

were discharged.

**25 test positive in T.N**  
In Tamil Nadu, 62 persons who had tested positive for COVID-19 and underwent treatment in various hospitals, were discharged. This took the total number of patients discharged to 180.

Five persons - four residents of Chennai and one from Kancheepuram - were discharged from Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital.

Of the 25 persons who tested positive on Thursday, five (all contacts of COVID-19 patients) were from Namakkal. Three persons each were from Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Vellore and Chennai, two from Salem and one person each from Villupuram, Coimbatore, Tiruppur, Tirunelveli, Tiruvallur and Thanjavur, a bulletin from the Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine said.

Chennai accounted for a total of 217 positive cases, while Coimbatore had 127 cases. Tiruppur had 80 patients, while Erode had 70.

## Migrants' tales



**In contrast:** Police distributing identity cards to workers who are stranded at the Beypore harbour in Kozhikode due to the nationwide lockdown and, right, children of migrant workers playing under a bridge in Visakhapatnam on Thursday. ■ PTI & K.R. DEEPAK



### IN BRIEF



#### Involve SHGs in making of masks, says Jagan

**VIJAYAWADA**  
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy ordered that self-help groups be involved in the making of masks and priority given to distribution of three masks per head in hotspots. Mr. Jagan also instructed the officials to extend a financial assistance of ₹2,000 each to people from weaker sections being sent home from quarantine centres, to enable them to buy nutritious food thereby develop immunity.

#### Fatwa issued; no Iftar party, Taraweeh at home

**HYDERABAD**  
Islamic seminary Jamia Nizamia on Thursday issued a fatwa stating that *Taraweeh*, the Ramzan special night prayers, be offered at home and not in congregation in mosques. The fatwa stated that the suspension of congregations due to the lockdown to control the spread of coronavirus is valid. Not being a part of a congregation is not a sin, it stated. Later in the day, the Jamia Nizamia appealed to Muslims to not host any iftar during Ramzan.

#### TTD to refund darshan ticket amount

**TIRUMALA**  
Devotees who have booked their darshan tickets in advance for the period between March 13 and May 31 will be paid back their ticket amount, the TTD in a note said. The TTD on Thursday appealed to pilgrims to mail the details of their darshan tickets along with bank account number, IFSC code to helpdesk@tirumala.org to facilitate the payment. Refunds will also be made to those who booked tickets online or at post offices.

## Karnataka's testing rates are lowest among southern States

Govt. attributes it to delay in arrival of kits from China

**TANU KULKARNI**  
**BENGALURU**  
Karnataka is yet to obtain the much-awaited rapid testing kits for COVID-19 from China. This has led to a delay in randomised tests, which were supposed to have commenced on April 12.

Although Karnataka has reported fewer cases as compared to other States, an analysis by *The Hindu* shows that it has the lowest testing per million population among the southern States (barring Telangana). While data for Telangana is not available in the public domain, Karnataka's rate is lower than that of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh.

According to data compiled by *The Hindu*, which is yet to obtain the much-awaited rapid testing kits for COVID-19 from China. This has led to a delay in randomised tests, which were supposed to have commenced on April 12.

Kerala, with 483.1 tests per million people, ranks the highest, followed by Tamil Nadu, which has done 285 tests per million people. Andhra Pradesh has done 217.5 tests per million population.

**On the increase**  
During the press conference on Thursday, Primary and Secondary Education Minister S. Suresh Kumar said the

number of tests conducted in Karnataka was increasing by the day. "We conducted 415 tests on April 6 and 1,241 tests on April 16," Mr. Kumar said.

According to the statistics provided by the Department of Health and Family Welfare, 13,724 tests have been conducted as of Thursday.

Medical Education Minister K. Sudhakar acknowledged that the testing kits were yet to arrive from China. "I have been told that around 1 lakh testing kits will come by Sunday. All States are seeing a delay in receiving the kits," he said. Deputy Chief Minister C.N. Ashwath Narayan said that orders were placed for 3 lakh kits.

## 'Pinarayi helping firm in exploiting health data'

Corruption alleged in Sprinklr deal

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM**

Leader of the Opposition in Kerala Ramesh Chennithala on Thursday accused Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan of opening the door for U.S.-based firm Sprinklr to exploit the personal health data of Keralites for profit.

Mr. Vijayan refused to take any questions on the controversy at his daily COVID-19 briefing, saying he had clarified the issue on Wednesday. He said he was ending his regular press conferences and would inform the media when he wanted to meet them again.

Mr. Chennithala alleged that Mr. Vijayan had misused his office to mandate that field workers funnel the

health data of COVID-19 vulnerable persons to the digital repositories of Sprinklr by using the "free" mobile phone app supplied by it.

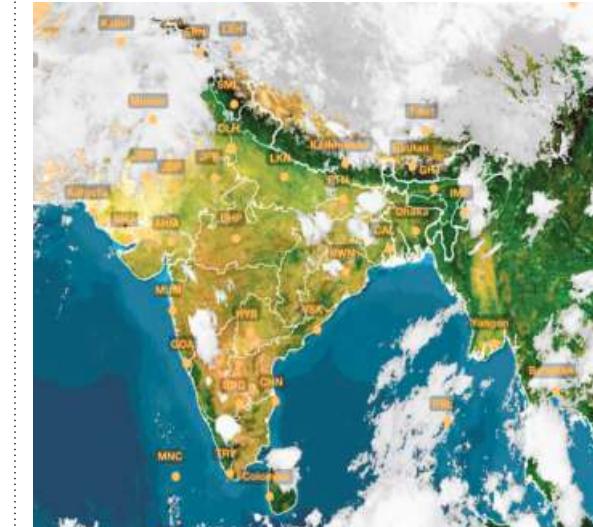
### Data trade chances

He said Sprinklr possessed the data of nearly 1.75 lakh Keralites. Ernst and Young had pegged the value of the private medical information of an individual at ₹10,000. Forbes valued it at ₹75,000.

By a conservative estimate, Sprinklr held medical information worth ₹700 crore. It could easily palm off the data to private players in the pharmaceutical and health sector without the consent of the government or the knowledge of citizens, he claimed.

### WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

**Forecast for Friday:** Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning, hail and gusty winds very likely at isolated places over Uttarakhand; with lightning and gusty winds at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Delhi, West Bengal and Arunachal Pradesh.

**CITY** **RAIN** **MAX** **MIN** **CITY** **RAIN** **MAX** **MIN**  
Agartala ..... 20.1... 34.3... 20.0 Kozhikode ..... 37.0... 27.2  
Ahmedabad ..... 40.0... 44.0... 27.8 Kurnool ..... 41.1... 27.8  
Aizawl ..... 29.6... 16.9 Lucknow ..... 37.9... 24.1  
Aligarh ..... 43.7... 24.6 Madurai ..... 39.4... 26.7  
Bengaluru ..... 34.5... 23.0 Mangalore ..... 34.8... 21.4  
Bhopal ..... 39.8... 23.0 Mumbai ..... 34.9... 21.8  
Bhubaneswar ..... 39.7... 25.7 Mysuru ..... 35.5... 23.0  
Chandigarh ..... 37.9... 00.0 New Delhi ..... 40.3... 23.6  
Chennai ..... 33.8... 26.8 Patna ..... 35.5... 23.0  
Coimbatore ..... 37.0... 25.0 Port Blair... 1.4... 32.6... 25.2  
Dehradun ..... 0.1 ... 20.6 Puducherry ..... 35.8... 25.6  
Gangtok ..... 18.2... 13.7 Pune ..... 1.5... 40.2... 23.1  
Goa ..... 34.2... 28.0 Raipur ..... 39.2... 26.8  
Guwahati ..... 17.6... 33.1... 19.4 Ranchi ..... 37.1... 21.7  
Hubballi ..... 36.0... 23.0 Shillong ..... 42.8... 21.2...  
Hyderabad ..... 27.0... 22.5 Shimla ..... 27.4... 17.4  
Imphal ..... 0.6... 27.0... 15.5 Srinagar ..... 1.8... 16.3... 7.9  
Jaipur ..... 40.2... 22.3 Thiruvananthapuram ..... 33.8... 26.9  
Kochi ..... 33.4... 25.8 Tiruchi ..... 39.6... 26.6  
Kohima ..... 24.2... 12.8 Vijayawada ..... 32.8... 26.8  
Kolkata ..... 0.6... 34.1... 23.5 Visakhapatnam ..... 32.8... 26.8

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

**CITIES** **SO<sub>2</sub>** **NO<sub>x</sub>** **CO** **PM<sub>2.5</sub>** **PM<sub>10</sub>** **CODE**

Ahmedabad ..... 34.14 ..... 56 ..... 79 ..... In observation made at 6.00 p.m., Bulandshahr, Uttar

Bengaluru ..... 10.21 ..... 85 ..... 17 ..... Pradesh recorded an overall

air quality index (AQI) score of 317, indicating a

dangerous level of pollution.

In contrast, Thane,

Maharashtra recorded a healthy AQI score of 27.

**AIR QUALITY CODE:** ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

**SO<sub>2</sub>:** Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

**NO<sub>x</sub>:** Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

**CO:** Carbon monoxide. High concentration in



## Across the gulf

India must do all it can to help the migrant workers stranded in West Asia

Around eight million people in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries constitute a unique cohort among Indian diaspora communities around the world. Around 50% of them are unskilled and another 30% are semi-skilled. Only a small minority of 20% of them are skilled and lucratively employed, but all these migrant workers together form the backbone of India's ties with the region. Their contribution of nearly 40% of the total foreign exchange remittances to India is critical to its economy. Their labour is vital for the GCC economy. With no option of assimilation into their host countries, their link to the home country remains intact, unlike Indian immigrants to the West. The vast majority of them who are on subsistence wages are facing a tough situation in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. From the little information available, it appears that Indians are badly hit by the disease. Living and working conditions make it extremely difficult for them to practise social distancing or get treatment if infected. Many of them suffer from preexisting medical conditions and are used to procuring medicines from India, which is now impossible. Vast sectors of the economy are shut, rendering many of them jobless. Thousands are without documentation. Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Doha being important transits for international travel, thousands of Indian travellers are also stuck in the region.

India cannot abandon them to their helpless fate. It must work closely with governments of the region to bring them succour. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has nurtured good relations with all rulers of the region but the ongoing crisis is testing the endurance of India's ties with some of the GCC countries. The UAE government has said it might revise current partnerships concerning labour relations with nations refusing to cooperate with measures to repatriate private sector expatriates who wish to return home. The country's ambassador to India Ahmed Al Banna has promised only those who are tested negative for the virus would be repatriated. Some of these migrants want to be evacuated, while many might want to remain where they are. Pinarayi Vijayan, the Chief Minister of Kerala which is home to more than two million Indian immigrants in the Gulf, has said the State is prepared to receive returnees and provide them care. Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Punjab have a significant number of people in the Gulf. The Centre must take the initiative to bring together State governments, and work out arrangements with national governments in the region in a manner acceptable to all. It will certainly take some effort to arrive at what is doable and desirable at this juncture, but there is no excuse for not doing that. That is the least India can do for these people whose search for a livelihood has done the country so much good.

## Virtual reality

Telemedicine can help reach patients where access to medical care is difficult

The world has very few devices left to fight COVID-19 with, but technology remains one of them. Whether it is the employ of state-of-the-art technology in the discovery of cures or vaccines, or traditional technology services to enhance health care and consultations, or even tools that keep people at home occupied/productive, it is clear that technology will serve humanity at one of its darkest moments. The pandemic has contributed, in no small measure, to the understanding of the myriad ways in which available technologies have not been put to better use, and presented people with multiple opportunities to harness these devices, techniques and methods to get on with life in the time of lockdown. Among the primary uses is telemedicine, rendered inexorable now, by the temporary paralysis brought on by a freeze on movement.

The Centre's recent guidelines allowing for widespread use of telemedicine services came as a shot in the arm for telehealth crusaders in the country, among them the Telemedicine Society of India that has long been battling to use the technology in its complete arc to reach remote areas in India. This move finds consonance with the rest of the world where several nations, also deeply impacted by the pandemic, have deployed telemedicine to reach people who have been unable to come to hospital, to reduce footfalls in hospitals, and to even provide medical and mental health counselling to countless people. It was way back in 2000 that telemedicine was first employed in India, but the progress has been excruciatingly slow, until the pandemic. However, it does seem as if the medical community was only held back by the lack of legislation to enable tele consultations. For no sooner was the policy announced, than hospitals and clinicians hurried to jump onto the bandwagon, advertising contact information for patients. The advantages are peculiar in the current context, when putting distance between people is paramount, as tele consultations are not barred even when health care professionals and patients may have to be quarantined. The advancement of telecommunication capabilities over the years has made the transmission of images and sound files (heart and lung sounds, coughs) faster and simpler. Pilot telemedicine experiments in ophthalmology and psychiatry have proven to be of immense benefit to the communities. Telemedicine's time is here, finally. While unleashing the full potential of telemedicine to help people, experts and government agencies must be mindful of the possible inadequacies of the medium, and securing sensitive medical information; such cognisance should guide the use of the technology.

# A blueprint to revive the economy

A carefully crafted economic proposal for consideration of the Indian government to help our fellow citizens



P. CHIDAMBARAM & PRAVEEN CHAKRAVARTY

"We have no food, no home, no income. My children are starving," cried Prachi to a TV anchor on April 14. Prachi, a migrant worker from Bihar, is one of the roughly 400 million workers in India who are dependent on daily wages for their survival. She has lost her source of livelihood because we are under a lockdown and economic activity has stopped. A lockdown is necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19. But we need not make a choice between saving lives and protecting livelihoods. We can achieve both through a 'smart' lockdown and careful economic management.

The phrase 'Greater Depression', which has entered the vocabulary of economists, highlights the gravity of the humanitarian and economic crisis confronting us today. Every sector of the economy in every nation has come to a screeching halt. We extend our sympathies and wishes to all the leaders of the world, including our Prime Minister, for the enormous responsibility of steering their respective nations through this pandemic. In the spirit of non-partisanship, here is a carefully crafted economic proposal for consideration of the Indian government to help our fellow citizens.

**Demand, supply challenges**  
First, it is important to diagnose the scale of the economic crisis accurately. Prachi has lost her job because her employer has been forced to stop commercial activity. It is important for the government to feed Prachi and help her employer to restart activities so that he can re-employ her soon. The economic crisis needs a demand side and a supply side response. It

is morally imperative that we immediately address the miseries of the poor and vulnerable by providing money as well as food. The bottom half of all households (13 crore out of 26 crore families) must be given ₹5,000 per family in their bank account within a week. The list of households and the bank details (largely Aadhaar-seeded) are available in the government's various schemes such as PMJAY and MGNREGA. Besides, the States have their 'below poverty line' lists. This will cost a maximum of ₹65,000 crore. Further, depending on the need, for the month of May, these families can be given ₹3,000 each. This will cost an additional ₹39,000 crore.

More than cash, scholars like Jean Dreze have observed that it is food that people need most urgently. India has far in excess of the buffer stock requirement. The Central government has already announced distribution of free food, but reports suggest that there is either lack of food supplies at the local ration shop or identity requirements of ration cards are proving to be a roadblock. The government must universalise food distribution immediately, to remove identity requirements, and work with State governments to rush supplies to every ration shop so that every family gets free grain.

Next, the April 15 guidelines allow MGNREGA work, which was stopped due to the lockdown, to be restarted while observing social distancing norms. District collectors should be given the freedom to start and expand works under MGNREGA. If work cannot be given for some reason, 10 days' wages every month should be paid to the registered MGNREGA workers in the panchayat/block until the scheme is resumed. This will ensure some livelihood support. Economists Amartya Sen, Raghuram Rajan and Abhijit Banerjee have also called for urgent implementation of these measures.

The next step is to help Prachi's employer to resume commercial activities, which can be done by



re-opening the economy gradually. The key to reopening is our ability to identify sensitive COVID-19 hotspot areas and containment zones. The Central and State governments must work in tandem to identify hotspots, preferably at the level of the block/mandal and not just at the district level. This can be done with the help of public health experts and epidemiologists through strategic testing.

**Planning ahead**  
Starting May 4, the new guidelines must be expanded to permit all economic activity (with a few exceptions) in non-hotspot areas. Economic activity requires labour and capital, which are significantly diminished due to the lockdown. Continuous testing and monitoring will be needed as new areas may turn into hotspots and hotspots may become non-hotspots.

Let small shops, service establishments and the self-employed start commercial activity in their areas. Three-quarters of the 80 million enterprises are establishments that operate in local areas. As long as they observe the usual precautions, they will not add to the risks. This will boost local economic activity.

The new guidelines permit agricultural activity during the rabi harvest season. This is a step in the right direction. However, the constraint for all these commercial and agricultural activities will be the availability of labour for which re-opening of travel and transport is crucial. But it is also the riskiest. Mass rapid transit as well as private transport must be gradually opened in non-hotspot areas. It is necessary to open up rail and bus

transport with adequate precautions such as temperature checks and social distancing norms inside buses and trains. One strategy could be to reduce the number of passengers in each bus and train by increasing the frequency of the vehicles or by running them at half-capacity. There will be trade-offs, but each local transport authority can choose the right policy and tweak it from time to time.

### Funding the revival

The other essential ingredient for resumption of economic activity is access to capital, especially working capital. A majority of the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) would have run out of cash and lost significant revenues. No bank is likely to lend to them. The government must step in to provide credit guarantees that can incentivise banks to SMEs. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has already instructed banks to issue a moratorium on loan obligations for three months. If needed, this can be extended by another three months.

For the formal sector, we can take a leaf out of the U.S.'s Paycheque Protection Program. The idea is for the government to help formal sector businesses to keep workers on their payroll without resorting to retrenchment or layoffs. The 2017-18 Economic Survey estimated, using the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) data set, that there are 40 million employees earning less than ₹15,000 per month who are employed in firms registered under the Goods and Services Tax (GST). It is likely that they are vulnerable to retrenchment. The government could 'protect their pay cheques' by funding their employers to pay them for one or two months. This can be implemented using data from the EPFO and GST databases.

The RBI, and through it the banks, should be encouraged to make capital available liberally to sectors such as tourism and manufacturing, which need specific interventions. External trade will continue to be tepid. India must

do whatever it takes through export incentives and strategic use of foreign exchange reserves to capitalise on the export opportunity arising out of this crisis and stimulate exports dramatically over the next few years. Exports can be the key to jobs for hundreds of millions of skilled and unskilled workers, as it was during the boom years 2004-2010.

Fiscal stimulus measures on the demand and supply side must be supplemented by monetary stimulus from the RBI with re-designed measures such as moratorium, loan forgiveness, regulatory forbearance, revised NPA regulations and easing the cycle of credit flow.

### Money versus myth

Do we have the money to indulge in such a revival and recovery package? It is our estimate that the total fiscal package will cost ₹5-6 lakh crore. That amount is available. The Centre and the States have a total expenditure budget of over ₹70 lakh crore for 2020-21. The Centre alone has budgeted to spend ₹4 lakh crore on capital expenditure this fiscal year. In a crisis, much of the capital expenditure may not be possible at all, and even if it is, must be deferred to the next fiscal year. Besides, more savings can be identified by axing wasteful expenditure. Further, the Centre can borrow money during times like this without crowding out private investment or pushing up interest rates. As a final resort, the government can monetise part of additional deficit, otherwise known as 'printing money'.

A microorganism has brought humankind to its knees. As health scientists have said, we must learn to live with the virus. We need to act now to ensure that Prachi and millions like her can live through this and experience the new normal.

P. Chidambaram is former Finance Minister of India and a sitting Member of Parliament; Praveen Chakravarty is a political economist and a senior office bearer of the Congress party

## A case to use JEE-Main instead of JEE-Advanced this year

It would not only reduce stress for applicants, but also enable college admissions to the IITs to take place earlier



P.J. NARAYANAN

The pandemic has thrown the world, including academic institutions, into turmoil. College admissions, a stressful process even in normal circumstances, will be affected everywhere. Unfortunately, the virus struck India before many Class 12 board examinations were completed. National entrance examinations like the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE)-Main, JEE-Advanced and National Eligibility cum Entrance Test have not yet been held. While all college admissions are affected, I focus on admissions to engineering institutions. The JEE-Advanced exam is the sole prerequisite for admission into the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs). Students spend two years or more being coached for entrance examinations.

### Two advantages

My suggestion to the IITs for admitting B.Tech students this year is that they use the JEE-Main to admit students and cancel the JEE-Advanced in the light of the pandemic. This would not only reduce stress for a large number of appli-

cants as they would not be required to write one more high-pressure exam, but would also enable college admissions to the IITs and other institutions to take place 6-7 weeks earlier. Since the IITs are among the most sought-after institutions in the country, admissions to the next level of institutions – the National Institutes of Technology (NITs), Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs) and others – effectively happen only after the IIT list is published. The chain of dependency extends to other institutions, naturally.

Let us look at the history of admissions to the national-level engineering institutions, starting with the IITs. The IITs admitted undergraduate students through the IIT-JEE for decades. From 2002, other national institutions selected students based on their performance in the All India Engineering Entrance Examination (AIEEE). The JEE and AIEEE were conducted in parallel, independent of each other. In 2013, the AIEEE was effectively renamed as the JEE-Main. All national-level institutions, except the IITs, and some State institutions, admit students to the B.Tech course based on their rank in the JEE-Main. Another new examination called JEE-Advanced, a modified version of the old IIT-JEE, was created for the IITs and a few other institutions. However, a



high rank in the JEE-Main became the criterion to even register for the JEE-Advanced. Thus, under the current scheme, a student has to perform well in the JEE-Main and the JEE-Advanced to secure a seat in an IIT.

### Impacting schedules

What was most inconvenient was that this scheme impacted the schedules of admissions into all the engineering institutions. In 2012, the IIT-JEE was held early in April and the AIEEE was held towards the end of April, independent of each other. The rank lists of both were available by mid-May. Seat allotments began in early June and were completed by end-June. But in the present scheme, which started in 2013, the JEE-Main is held in early April and the JEE-Advanced, now available to those with high JEE-Main ranks, in late May. The JEE-Advanced results are published in the third week of June and seat allocations start only in early July. By design,

the JEE-Advanced can be held only 6-7 weeks after the JEE-Main. Consequently, classes in the IITs and other institutions can start only 14-16 weeks after the JEE-Main is held.

Everything has turned topsy-turvy this year. Some of the Class 12 board exams are yet to be completed. The JEE-Main has been delayed at least till early June. Classes cannot start earlier than end-September. Further delays are possible based on the spread of the virus. We can't conduct national entrance exams until all regions of the country are reasonably safe.

Let us come back to my proposal of using JEE-Main ranks instead of JEE-Advanced ranks to admit students this year. The JEE-Advanced need not be held. Imagine facing the uncertainties imposed by the pandemic, then writing the remaining board exams, then the JEE-Main and then the JEE-Advanced! Without the JEE-Advanced, classes in all institutions can also start 6-7 weeks earlier than usual, as seat allocations can start 4-5 weeks after the JEE-Main.

The JEE-Main and JEE-Advanced test different skills, we are told. I contend that the performance of students in JEE-M and JEE-A are very similar statistically. The IITs have the data from at least 2013 to analyse this. For instance, one can study the difference in the

ranks of individual students in the JEE-Main and JEE-Advanced. Some will get better JEE-Main ranks and others, better JEE-Advanced ranks. Statistics on the fraction of students with a big rank difference will help us understand the impact of writing the JEE-Main in the place of the JEE-Advanced. My estimate is that over 90% of the students have a rank difference of less than 100 places.

If we announce now that JEE-Main ranks will be used for IIT admissions, students awaiting the JEE-Main and JEE-Advanced will get 6-7 weeks to prepare for it. We would also be able to answer their doubts and questions better.

I request those in charge of the JEE-Advanced and IIT admissions to consider this proposal. To be clear, IIT-Hyderabad admits about 50% of its undergraduates through the JEE-Main and the rest through other means. Our admissions calendar is very closely aligned to the IITs/The Joint Seat Allocation Authority by necessity. The proposed change will enable an early start of classes in the IITs, NITs, IIITs, etc. Let us reduce the pain of those aspiring to go to these colleges by reducing one entrance exam they have to write and by enabling admissions much earlier.

P.J. Narayanan is Director, IIIT Hyderabad

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

### Kept out of PDS

It is unfortunate that as many as 10 crore people have been kept out of the PDS ("Outdated census data keep 10 cr. out of PDS: economists", April 16). With the 2021 Census postponed, revision of the existing data will not be possible given the circumstances. However, there is still a sliver of hope. Governments could implement the Rajasthan model, for instance, where the government is supplying ration to those not covered by social security schemes.

ABHISHEK SURESH,  
Kozhikode

### State without a Cabinet

It is very frustrating to see that at a time when coordination is required between various Ministries in a State to fight the virus, Madhya Pradesh still finds itself without a Cabinet, and especially a Health Minister. To make matters worse, several health officials have tested positive for the virus in the State. It is disheartening that innocent lives are bearing the brunt of political manipulations.

G. SIVA CHAITANYA,  
East Godavari District

of argument that the World Health Organization (WHO) belatedly informed the world about the severity of the novel coronavirus, it is puzzling how a country such as the U.S. failed to prepare to tackle it ("Disastrous decision", April 16). In this technologically advanced world, where information-gathering is so easy, it is not necessary for a superpower to wait for instructions from a world health agency to prepare itself for a pandemic. It is obvious that the U.S. was caught napping. Mr. Trump is refusing to take responsibility for his

inaction and is instead shifting the blame. If at all he had genuine grievances with the WHO, he should have taken up those issues at a later stage and not at a point when the world is at its wits' end to contain the spread of the virus.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,  
Chennai

Trump was praising the WHO and China for containment efforts. He changed his tune only when the virus reached the U.S. When the rest of the world is lambasting Mr. Trump for his decision, it is inexplicable why New Delhi is refraining from joining the fray.

NALINI VIJAYARAGHAVAN,  
Thiruvananthapuram

### Public health hazard

It is heartening that spitting in public spaces is now a punishable offence ("Industries operating in rural areas to reopen on April 20", April 16).

However, another public

health hazard is the ubiquitous practice of urinating in public places. In the context of Swachh Bharat, it is imperative to put a stop to this practice. Since people urinate everywhere – on roads, in street corners and near garbage dumps – people, especially health and sanitary workers, are at a higher risk of contracting all kinds of diseases. The Tamil Nadu government should consider taking action against those urinating in public places.

R. KANNAN,  
Chennai

ND-NDE



CM YK

# Will the aviation industry recover from the pandemic?

PARLEY

In a time like this, you need professionals, not bureaucrats who lack knowledge of the sector

*The aviation industry, like several other sectors, is facing a crisis in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. With travel restrictions, grounded fleets, benched staff, schedule uncertainties, ticket liabilities and cash burn, questions are being raised on whether the civil aviation sector can survive the epidemic. Aviation experts Mohan Ranganathan and Jitender Bhargava weigh in on the steps needed for a recovery, in a conversation moderated by Murali N. Krishnaswamy. Edited excerpts:*



**Mohan Ranganathan**  
is a retired airline instructor pilot and an aviation safety expert



**Jitender Bhargava**  
is a former airline executive director and an aviation expert



Scan the QR code to listen to the full interview online

## Optimism was a duty for him

Former Attorney General Ashok Desai was at the forefront of the fight for civil liberties

SRIRAM PANCHU

the proposition but sometimes also treating it as his own.

Mr. Desai was a genius in the art of living. With his deep and abiding faith in Buddhism, he had cultivated the quality of equanimity and a perfectly drawn line of detachment. There was an inner core which would not be ruffled at all. For sage advice, you could do no better than to go to him. He would give you clear and unclouded advice, tell you where you went wrong, and then would come the remedy and balm. I think in all things he managed to hold the balance even.

He was the ever-welcoming host. "Come along in the evening but don't make it late," was the standard invitation and injunction. The day's work would be done and the next hour and a half was for friends, conversation and a meal. Sitting in his low sofa he, and all else present, enjoyed evenings of eclectic conversation. He never put his erudition on display but you couldn't miss it. He was amazingly well read in literature, history and politics among other fields; he enjoyed music, both Hindustani and Western classical, and the opera. Yoga he would

er regularly, and in his later years saw to it that he never missed the daily swim. One must be religious about it, he would say. He was perhaps overpitching the point, but achieved the desired result.

He could hold strong opinions, but avoided harshness in language. "I think he is an undesirable element," was sufficient to indicate disapproval. The man's nature and spiritualism made him forgiving of human frailty, instead looking to see where it could be mended and improved. He was deeply concerned about the grim realities in the country's politics, economic and social fabric; he yet never gave up hope of change and improvement. I once asked him if his optimism was misplaced. His answer stunned me. "Sriram, optimism is not an option; it is a duty."

**Convincing the Lordship**  
Each great lawyer has a distinctive style. Mr. Desai was sweet reasonableness, having a mellifluous voice and low-pitched presentation, never taking or giving offence. He had this knack of turning the judge around. His Lordship would express strong disagreement with the proposition, and Mr. Desai would bring on his special skills, and sure enough the judge would be lulled not just in accepting

do regularly, and in his later years saw to it that he never missed the daily swim. One must be religious about it, he would say. He was perhaps overpitching the point, but achieved the desired result.

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**Sriram Panchu is a senior advocate at the Madras High Court**



and airlines facilitate this process to be smooth?

C As long as the airlines are driven by promoters and by their personal egos, you will not have a good chapter for the industry

JITENDER BHARGAVA

Aviation expert

Rail travel is what is going to gain. The second thing is that there are a lot of other areas which are connected with aviation. Most of them are going to become bankrupt. Can the government pump in money to push up an elite industry at the cost of others? It will result in a political boomerang. And the first thing that Indian aviation has to give up is ego. In a time like this, you need professionals with a clear mind, not bureaucrats who know nothing about aviation.

**The U.S.'s \$2-trillion package has provision for a few billions for airlines and staff. Australia, China and Singapore have undertaken specific relief measures. Aviation research agency CAPA predicts that airlines will need three stages of relief. How would you relate this to an Indian context?**

**JB:** The question that begs an answer is: can the government of India with its limited finances only concentrate on the revival of the aviation industry at the expense of other sectors? It cannot do so. They may come forward and give some kind of financial aid. But to expect large-scale aid to put the airline industry back on track is an impossibility. Certain countries may do it

FROM PAGE ONE

## Fresh cases rise by over 800; fatality rate at 3.3%

"Rapid antibody tests are for monitoring surveillance, not for diagnosis. Hence there is no concern with respect to the testing kits being faulty, that concern was with respect to immune response alone," ICMR spokesperson R.R. Gangakhedkar said.

The ICMR added that there is currently no evidence to suggest that hot weather can have a slowdown effect of the virus.

The Health Ministry has said that 325 districts have not reported any coronavirus case so far because of the actions initiated at field level.

The implementation of containment strategies in

some districts which earlier had reported COVID-19 cases has yielded positive results. One of such place is Puducherry's Mahe district, where no case of the infection has been reported in the last 28 days. There are 27 other districts also where no positive case has been reported in a fortnight.

The Ministry added that the Central government has amended the Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2006, to ramp up availability and production of bulk drugs.

All projects or activities in respect of bulk drugs and intermediates have been re-categorised, to fast-track their appraisal.

## Mumbai runs out of beds in ICUs, patients suffer

The State government has identified—Nanavati, St. George, Saifee, Wockhardt, HBT Trauma Care and Seven Hills Hospitals—as critical care hospitals for COVID-19.

Nanavati has 20 ICU beds for COVID-19, running at full occupancy.

Three beds were vacant on Thursday evening after the patients were discharged. Saifee activated 63 beds for COVID-19 patients of which 26 are ICU beds.

All were occupied on Thursday.

Seven Hills has eight ICU beds managed by HN Reliance Foundation Hospital, and all have been full since

the past several days. The HBT Trauma Care and St. George hospitals have five and 10 ICU beds respectively.

However, St. George Hospital is yet to start admitting COVID-19 patients. The Wockhardt Hospital was shut after 52 healthcare workers tested positive and it was declared a containment zone.

"Those who require critical care spend about 8-10 days in the ICU. Some patients get worse in the second week which prolongs their ICU stay," said an infectious disease expert, adding that the city has always been short of ICU beds.

## All Indore residents to be screened for virus

Under the treatment protocol, the illness of a patient is first classified into one of the four categories – uncomplicated illnesses such as fever or sore throat, mild pneumonia, severe pneumonia and ARDS. Then, the treatment begins.

The survey, said Jyoti Bindal, Dean of the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Medical College, is to ensure that the patient doesn't reach a critical stage. "Spot it early so that mortality reduces," she said.

Early spotting of respiratory illnesses, whose symptoms are identical to those of COVID-19 in the initial stages, may help to pre-

empt the disease load in patients. As part of the door-to-door surveys, teams of health workers and teachers identify symptoms with an application-based questionnaire. Ten teams report to a doctor, who checks suspects and takes samples. For backup, a medical mobile unit is stationed in each area. "Only when we identify patients can we focus on certain areas and contain the spread there," Indore Divisional Commissioner Akash Tripathi said.

The survey initially focused on 10 hotspots, but is being widened to areas where at least one case has been found.

## Seafarers may return in three phases

"Those in deep sea have already been quarantined in the vessel and they can be allowed to return earlier," the official explained.

He said seafarers on foreign land would be allowed to return to India only when the government lifted its ban on flights and allowed other Indians stranded abroad to return.

According to estimates, there are nearly 3,000 seafarers on ships at Indian ports, while 20,000 are on

various cruise liners around the world.

The government's decision on allowing those at Indian ports to disembark at the earliest will benefit coastal shipping companies and offshore vessels with Indian seafarers heading for foreign countries. It will also be an opportunity for cruise liners to halt at Indian ports for crew disembarkation," said Sanjay Parashar, chairman, International Maritime Federation.

## Refund fares to passengers, airlines told

Airlines will have to issue refunds within three weeks of receiving a request.

The order comes two days after the government extended the lockdown till May 3 and follows demands to protect interests of passengers.

The Ministry had earlier held a meeting with airline CEOs on the matter. Importantly, passengers who had booked their tickets before the lockdown period kicked in will not benefit from the decision. Their money will

be parked with the airlines and can be redeemed when they make a fresh booking.

### Credit shell

Following the ban on international travel from March 22 and domestic travel from March 25, Indian airlines offered passengers a credit shell where their fare amount would remain parked up to a period of one year.

Passengers could then re-book a flight with that credit amount on any route.

## Lockdown only a pause button: Rahul

The former Congress president cautions govt. on potential 'social unrest' over migrant workers' issue

SANDEEP PHUKAN  
NEW DELHI



**A virtual address:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi at a press conference on COVID-19 via a video link in New Delhi. ■ PTI

act quickly or there would be "social unrest".

Mr. Gandhi offered suggestions such as creating a safety net for the poor by offering free rations, putting money into the accounts of 20% of the poorest families in India, preparing a survival plan for the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and protecting the interests of strategic industries, among others.

"First thing to understand is that a lockdown is like a pause button, it's in no way a solution to coronavirus. When we come out of the lockdown, the virus will start its work again. So, it's important that we have a strategy to come out of it," he said. "The biggest weapon to fight the virus is testing."

Mr. Gandhi pointed out that India right now was testing 199 persons for every one

million people or 350 tests every district.

"If you have to fight the virus, you have to increase testing dramatically and your testing has to go from chasing the virus to moving ahead of it. That means you have to move into random testing," he said.

### 'Create 2 basic zones'

Asked if he favoured partial lifting of the lockdown, he said, "It should be a strategic opening. You open particular key areas, use testing to identify and this is where the point of ramping up testing is important. You use testing to identify dynamically which are the hot spots and you clamp down on those hot spots. You create two basic zones in India - a hot spot zone and a non-hot spot zone".

Besides managing healthcare infrastructure, the economy needed urgent attention as there would be a "financial backlash" because of COVID-19. "You are going to see the first waves of unemployment and then that will start to spiral, you will see massive pressure coming on our financial system."

The government needed to set up structures to manage funding to avoid a financial crisis in a few months, he said.

### Food and assistance

On migrants getting restive to return to their native place, he said, "There are some people who have suggested moving the migrant people, some people are suggesting don't move them. Give them food and assistance where they are. Whichever choice the government chooses, they need to act on it quickly. If they don't act on it quickly social unrest will develop quickly in the country."

## AICTE asks colleges to not demand fees

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Colleges should not demand fee payments from students until the ongoing COVID-19 lockdown is lifted, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) said on Wednesday.

"It has come to knowledge of AICTE that certain standalone institutions are insisting that students should pay the fees, including admission fees, during the lockdown," said a letter to all AICTE institutions from Member Secretary Rajive Kumar.

"It is clarified that colleges/institutions should not insist on payment of fees till the ongoing lockdown is lifted and normalcy is restored," he added.

Professor Kumar said the AICTE would issue guidelines on the revised fee payment timelines.

## India eyes record food production

Target of 298.3 million tonnes of foodgrain set after normal monsoon forecast

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI



**Staple crops:** Both rice and wheat production targets are minimally higher than the previous year. ■ AKHILESH KUMAR

sures taken to ensure a smooth and safe rabi harvest in the midst of the lockdown.

### Normal rainfall

On Wednesday, the India Meteorological Department issued its first forecast for the monsoon, predicting normal rainfall, with a chance of above normal rain in August and September.

The main kharif season crop is rice, and the Agriculture Ministry is targeting a harvest of 102.6 million tonnes, slightly higher than the last kharif season harvest of 101.95 million tonnes.

However, it has lowered its rice production target for the

next rabi season to 14.9 million tonnes. This means that the total rice production target for 2020-21 is 117.5 million tonnes, barely higher than the previous year's target of 117.47 million tonnes.

Wheat production is also expected to remain steady, with a 2020-21 target of 106.5 million tonnes, in comparison to the previous year's estimate of 106.21 million tonnes.

The Agriculture Ministry hopes to ramp up production of coarse cereals this year, but admits that the challenge is how to create demand for nutricereals or millets. It is targeting a har-

vest of 48.7 million tonnes in comparison to the previous season's 45.24 million tonnes.

With regard to pulses, the target is 25.3 million tonnes compared to the previous season's estimates of 23 million tonnes, with the entire increase projected to come from the kharif season.

### Oilseeds major priority

Oilseeds are a major priority, especially due to the disruption in edible oil imports caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The targeted harvest is 36.64 million tonnes, in comparison to the last season's estimates of 34.19 million tonnes. One challenge could be a shortfall in supply of soyabean seeds to the tune of 3.2 lakh quintals, due to unseasonal rains at the time of harvesting the seed crop.

Workers should wash their hands, legs and face with soap when coming out of the field for meal or rest, it added.

The Ministry has also created an action plan for oil palm plantation, given the disruptions in imports. It hopes to cover 31,500 hectares with about 45 lakh seedlings this year, with the bulk of the plantation in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

norms should be followed during field preparation, sowing and fertiliser application.

"Maintain social distance of atleast 1.2 metre during farm operations. Workers should be assigned separate duties with regard to farm activities," it said.

### Sanitisation important

"All farm equipment from seed drill, plough to tractor should be sanitized before use. Those working in the farm field should wear masks or cover their face with three layers of "chunnis, gamchha or towel," it added. Each worker should have a separate utensil and clean it with soap after use, the SOP said.

For operations like weeding and spraying of fertilisers and pesticides, the Ministry asked farmers to "Burn or bury in soil empty packets of pesticides. Sun dry empty bags of seeds, fertilisers for two days for re-use."

It also advised that farmers take bath and wash clothes with soap and sundry after the day's work.

news channel

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh on Wednesday announced that action would be taken against English news channel Times Now for airing fake news about Maharashtra Minister Jitendra Awhad's daughter testing positive for COVID-19.

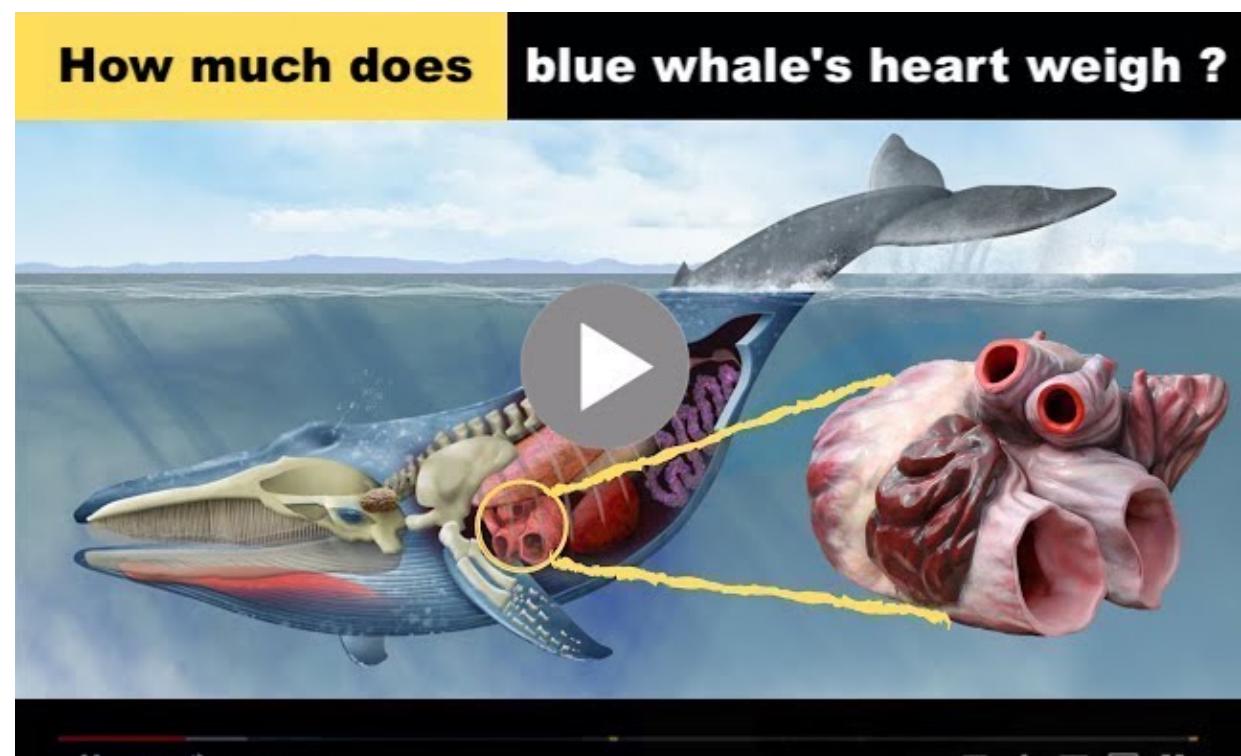
In a letter addressed to Maharashtra's Director General of Police, Mr. Deshmukh said that Mr. Awhad had sent him a letter regarding the news telecast by the channel.

PIL in SC against job cuts in media

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A public interest litigation petition was filed on Thursday in the Supreme Court stating that certain media organisations have issued termination notices, imposed wage cuts and unpaid leaves to their employees during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A joint petition filed by the National Alliance of Journalists, the Delhi Union of Journalists and the Brihanmumbai Union of Journalists said this amounted to an "inhuman and illegal treatment".



## Plea in SC against use of 'unproven' drug

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A petition filed in the Supreme Court contends that seriously ill COVID-19 patients in intensive care units in hospitals are subjected to "controversial, unproven, non-specific and potentially toxic off-label" use of anti-malarial drug Hydroxychloroquine and broad-spectrum antibiotic Azithromycin without taking any precautionary measures to prevent cardiac complications and possible death.

A non-governmental organisation called People for Better Treatment, through its president Dr. Kunal Saha, drew the court's attention to an extraordinary bulletin issued jointly on April 8 by the American Heart Association (AHA), the American College of Cardiology (ACC) and the Heart Rhythm Society (HRS) with stark warnings to doctors about the use of these two drugs on COVID-19 patients with existing cardiac conditions.

The bulletin had said the use of these drugs on patients with cardiac conditions would possibly trigger arrhythmia (abnormal heartbeat), heart failure and even death.

It had advised to follow specific therapeutic measures in such cases.

"Most of the drugs presently being used to treat COVID-19 patients are based primarily on anecdotal evidence and not on direct scientific data because very little actual research has been published on this new

strain of coronaviruses which was isolated for the first time only a few months ago. COVID-19 patients receive primarily symptomatic therapy because no specific drug against the new SARS-CoV-2 viruses has been invented till now... Needless to say that when treating the vulnerable patients with an unproven drug for its off-label use, doctors should be extra vigilant about its potential harmful adverse effects on COVID-19 patients," the petition said.

A joint petition filed by the National Alliance of Journalists, the Delhi Union of Journalists and the Brihanmumbai Union of Journalists said this amounted to an "inhuman and illegal treatment".

## IN BRIEF



## Doctor laid to rest after row over last rites

**GUWAHATI** The body of a 69-year-old doctor, who died of COVID-19 complications on Wednesday, was laid to rest on Thursday after localities in Shillong and beyond disallowed his last rites for fear of contagion. The doctor's body was interred at the Riatsamthia Presbyterian Church cemetery in Lawmali area about 3 km from the hospital where he died less than 48 hours after testing positive.

## Police, medical team attacked in Bihar

**PATNA** Villagers in Bihar have attacked police and medical teams who were out to enforce the lockdown and for COVID-19 screening in the past few days. At Jagapakad village in East Champaran, at least nine officials were injured in an attack by a group of villagers on Wednesday. Similarly, a medical team and some policemen were attacked at Akauni village in Aurangabad when they went there for screening.

## PPE testing lab shifted from Gwalior to Delhi

**NEW DELHI** To overcome delays and ensure swift delivery of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and masks to combat COVID-19, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has shifted the PPE testing facility at the Defence Research Development Establishment (DRDE) in Gwalior to the Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS) in Delhi. "INMAS is fully operational for testing of body suits and masks," the DRDO said.

## With 170 new cases, Mumbai crosses 2,000 mark

Maharashtra tally goes past 3,000, with 194 deaths

## STAFF REPORTER

**PUNE** The number of COVID-19 positive cases and deaths continued to rise in Maharashtra as the State crossed the 3,000-case mark on Thursday, with 286 new cases being reported. The tally went up to 3,202, while the death toll surged to 194 with seven new deaths.

Maharashtra has the highest death toll (more than 40%) and the highest number of positive cases in the country, accounting for a fourth of India's total positive cases.

Three of the new fatalities were reported from Mumbai, taking the city's death toll to 117. The majority of the new cases in the State - 170 of the 286 - were reported from the city, followed by Pune district, which report-



**Living hand to mouth:** Migrant workers sitting in their small room at Kherwadi in Bandra East, Mumbai, on Thursday. ■ ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY

ed 66 fresh cases, including three from Pimpri-Chinchwad. With the new cases, Mumbai city's tally of COVID-19 positive cases alone has crossed the 2,000-mark to reach 2,073,

Pune reported four deaths, taking its death toll to 46. According to Pune divisional authorities, three of

the dead were women. A 65-year-old woman from the Wakdewadi area, who was suffering from high blood pressure, a 54-year-old woman from Ganj Peth, and a 47-year-old woman from Kondhwa who had a kidney ailment, said Divisional Commissioner Dr. Deepak Mhaisekar.

Pune district's cumulative tally has touched 473 cases, with 435 of these from Pune city, around 40 of them from Pimpri-Chinchwad, and the rest from the district's rural parts.

Solapur district in the Pune division witnessed a sharp spike, reporting ten new cases. Nine of them

## 26 new cases in Dharavi

## STAFF REPORTER

**MUMBAI**

Dharavi on Thursday reported 26 new cases taking the total from Asia's largest slum to 86. The area also reported its ninth death, a 58-year-old man from Laxmi chawl. He was the first from Dharavi to test positive.

Of the new cases, a majority are from areas that had already reported COVID-19 cases in the past, while a few are from new

parts of Dharavi.

On Thursday, Dharavi's Mukund Nagar reported four new cases, thus totalling 18. Mukund Nagar is becoming one of the largest clusters within Dharavi. A total of 11 new cases were reported from Muslim Nagar, including a 13 year-old boy. Besides, newer areas of Dharavi reported cases on Thursday including Ramji chawl, Suryoday Society, Sairaj nagar, and Shiv Shakti nagar.

Army special trains to meet operational requirements

## DINAKAR PERI

**NEW DELHI**

To meet the operational requirements on the northern and eastern borders during the lockdown period, the Army has decided to run two military special trains on April 17 and 18, Army sources said on Thursday.

Separately, the Army issued fresh instructions to personnel on work and movement in compliance with the extended lock-down.

"Only personnel due to rejoin units deployed on the northern and eastern borders and have undergone the mandatory quarantine period and found medically fit will be accommodated," a source said.

The train on April 17 would run between Bengaluru-Belgaum-Secunderabad-Ambala-Jammu and the one the next day would run between Bengaluru-Belgaum - Secunderabad-Gopalpur- Howrah-New Jalpaiguri-Guwahati, the source stated.

This would enable decongestion of Category A and B training establishments in Bengaluru, Belgaum, Secunderabad and Gopalpur as well as assist in operational preparedness of active formations deployed on the borders, the source said.

The Army was also coordinating with the Ministry of Railways for operating additional trains in the coming weeks.

With lockdown extended till May 3, the Army issued separate instructions to personnel up to April 19 and from then to May 3.

## Gujarat sees 163 new cases in a day

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

**AHMEDABAD**

Gujarat recorded 163 new COVID-19 cases on Thursday, with the tally going up to 929 while three persons died and 73 had recovered so far.

So far, 812 people are under treatment while eight are on ventilator support with 20,903 samples tested in the State. Another worrisome factor is that the disease has spread to 24 of the 33 districts with the highest number (545) in Ahmedabad.

According to Principal Health Secretary Sanjay Kumar, till April 16 Bihar has done 8,846 sample tests at six centres with 607 under process. "Two more positive cases came from Buxar district on Thursday. The total number of COVID-19 positive cases in Bihar has gone up to 80 with samples of six persons - two males and four females of a family - having tested positive," he said in a tweet.

The two persons found positive had travel history from Asansol in West Bengal. On Thursday, eight persons whose samples earlier tested positive however were released from the Nalanda Medical College and Hospital (NMCH), which is designated as COVID-19 special hospital. Out of the eight, six were from Siwan (the red zone hotspot district) while one each are from Gaya and Gopalganj districts.

Earlier the testing was done according to Central guidelines which did not suggest taking samples of those who were asymptomatic... but now we have started door-to-door screening and the sample tests will be increased in the days to come," Ragini Mishra, Bi-

## Bihar to step up testing

The total number of positive cases has gone up to 80



**Ready for action:** Medical personnel at the Nalanda Medical College and Hospital in Patna. ■ RANJEET KUMAR

har's COVID-19 nodal officer, told *The Hindu* over phone.

**Recovery rate**

"Besides, the number of sample tests are population-based and Bihar's rank is way above so many other States," said a Health department official. He added that the "COVID-19 recovery rate in Bihar is 51.30%, which is much higher than several States." Earlier, the sample tests in Bihar were done only at two places but now it is being done at six places. "We are equipped to do more sample tests on a daily basis," said the Health Department official.

After experimenting with pool testing, which allows testing several samples together, in Agra, the State would now expand it to other districts.

## U.P. starts pool testing COVID-19 samples

Number of deaths in State climbs to 13

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

**LUCKNOW**

The Uttar Pradesh government on Thursday said it had started pool testing COVID-19 samples in the State.

Meanwhile, the number of deaths due to COVID-19 in U.P. climbed to 13 and the positive cases stood at 805, according to the State Directorate of Health Services.

After experimenting with pool testing, which allows testing several samples together, in Agra, the State would now expand it to other districts.

The first batch of 150 samples from Agra, tested in 30 pools of five samples each, turned out negative, said Amit Mohan Prasad, Principal Secretary, Health Department.

"The testing was quite encouraging," he said.

Agra has turned out to be a major hotspot in the State with the most number of positive cases, 167, as well as deaths, five. For the pool testing, the administration collected samples from "buffer zones" outside the containment areas in Agra, said Mr. Prasad.

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**  
(Re-Accredited with A Grade by NAAC)  
ABISHEKAPATTI, TIRUNELVELI-227 012, TAMIL NADU Phone: (O) 0462-2338632  
Fax: 0462-2343463 E-mail: register@msuniv.ac.in Website: www.msuniv.ac.in

Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Abishekappatti, Tirunelveli invites sealed tenders, under two-bid system, for Supply, Installation and Commissioning of the following equipments.

Sl. No	Name of the Equipment	Tender Number and Date	Last date for receipt of Tender	Date of Tender
1	Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Spectrometers with Accessories	No.MSR/P&D/GO259TN/CIF/NMR/2020, dated 17-04-2020	26.05.2020 4.00 p.m.	26.05.2020 5.00 p.m.
2	MALDI-TOF/TOF with Accessories	No.MSR/P&D/GO259TN/CIF/MALDI/TOF-TOF/2020, dated 17-04-2020	26.05.2020 3.00 p.m.	26.05.2020 4.00 p.m.

Tender Document, eligibility criteria, important dates, details about tender document fee, earnest money deposit, instructions, terms and conditions can be downloaded from the University website [www.msuniv.ac.in](http://www.msuniv.ac.in).  
Date: 17.04.2020 DIPR/1629/TENDER/2020

**REGISTRAR**

## West Bengal records 3 deaths, 24 new cases

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

**KOLKATA**

The West Bengal government on Thursday confirmed three more deaths due to COVID-19, taking the toll in the State to 10.

"Twenty four new cases were reported in the State in the past 24 hours," Chief Se-

cretary Rajiva Sinha said.

"The total number of active cases in the State stands at 144 as on April 16," he said. Mr. Sinha added that the three deaths were endorsed by the audit committee of doctors, which is looking into COVID-19 deaths, taking the number to 10.

## DIRECTORATE OF BASIC EDUCATION

Vidhya Bhawan, Nishatganj, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh-226007  
Tel: + 91 - 522 2780384. Email: [procurementcell@gmail.com](mailto:procurementcell@gmail.com)  
Website: [www.prernaup.in](http://www.prernaup.in), [www.basiceducationup.com](http://www.basiceducationup.com), [www.etender.up.nic.in](http://www.etender.up.nic.in)

Corrigendum for Tender number 2020 upbed 432559\_2

PRERNA Digital System Project for Elementary Schools of Uttar Pradesh  
This is for information of all the bidders, bidding for supply, commissioning of Android based Tablet integrated with biometric identification device and related services that the bid submission date has been extended till 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2020 for the tender document (Ref. Tender Notice No. 2020\_UPBED\_432559\_2).

For convenience and clarity, the corrigendum document has been uploaded on the below websites.

[www.etender.up.nic.in](http://www.etender.up.nic.in), [www.basiceducationup.com](http://www.basiceducationup.com), [www.prernaup.in](http://www.prernaup.in)

Director of Basic Education

## TIRUPPUR CITY MUNICIPAL CORPORATION CORRIGENDUM

TENDER EXTENSION NOTICE

Roc No.: E1/3620(1)/2017 Date : 15.04.2020

Name of Work : Appointment of project Management consultant for Smart City projects in Tiruppur City Municipal Corporation

It is informed that the due date of receiving tender fixed on 29.04.2020 up to 15.00 Hrs has been Extended to 13.05.2020 up to 15.00 Hrs and tenders will be opened on 13.05.2020 at 15.30 Hrs. The pre-bid meeting will be held on 06.05.2020 at 12.00 Hrs in the specified venue.

Please visit our website : <https://tntenders.gov.in>

Commissioner,  
Tiruppur City Municipal Corporation

## VIJAYAWADA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION (VMC)

e' Procurement Notice No.CE-02/VMC/AE/2020-21, Dt.16-04-2020

S. No. Name of the work No. of call Estimate Amount Rs. in Lakhs

1 Renewal of BT road with Hot Mix process to cross roads and Drains connecting Bandar Road & Eluru Road Ali Baig Street, Museum Road, Nakkala Road, Dornakal Road, Goodavalli Street, Rajagopalachari Street and other Roads in Governor peta & Surya Rao peta area 21<sup>st</sup> Division. 1<sup>st</sup> Call 712.00

2 Providing BT Roads, Drains & Paver Blocks at Swathi Press Road, Karnataka Rammohana Rao School Road, Ganganjala Kalyanmandapam Street, Purna Hospital Road, Boyapatavari Street, Balaji Street, Venuri Vari Street, Jadagam Vari Street and Govinda Rajulu Naidu street in Suryarao Peta 19<sup>th</sup> division. 1<sup>st</sup> Call 250.00

3 Conversion of old dump site into park with boundary wall, Site, Play Courts, Children play Equipment etc., at Ajith Singh Nagar (12.00 Acres) 2<sup>nd</sup> Call 500.00

Total (3 works) 1462.00

Contact : S.No. 1 & 2 - S.E(W), VMC, Vijayawada - 98665 14183, S.No. 3 - S.E(P), VMC, Vijayawada - 99639 95283.

Further details can be seen @ e' procurement market place @ [www.apeprocurement.gov.in](http://www.apeprocurement.gov.in)

Download of bid documents starts from : 17-04-2020 from 03.30 P.M.

Last date / time for receipt of tenders : 01-05-2020 upto 04.00 P.M.

Sd/- XXXXX  
CHIEF ENGINEER

## BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE

Office of the Executive Engineer, Projects-Mahadevapura, Old Madras Road, K.R. Puram, Bengaluru-560036

No.: BBMP/EE(P)/MZ/TN/01/2020-21 Date: 15.04.2020

**INVITATION FOR TENDER (IFT)**

(Short Term Tender Notification) (Two Cover) (Through GOK e-Procurement Portal Only)

The Executive Engineer (Projects-Mahadevapura) invites Item Rate tenders from eligible tenderers for the works details in the table given below. The Tenders may submit tenders for any or all of the works given in the table in appropriate class registered in Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike / CPWD / KPWD / Railways / MES / any State or Central Govt. organization.

Sl. No.	Name of the Work	Approx. value of work (Rs. in Lakhs)	EMD (in Rs.)




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# New normal: more airport time, no frills and higher fare

To ensure physical distancing of passengers, airlines will encourage check-in through mobile applications or automated kiosks

JAGRITI CHANDRA  
NEW DELHI

Passengers taking a flight must prepare to spend more time at the airport, temperature checks, fewer frills on board and possibly higher air fares, as airlines, airports and the government work to ensure physical distancing, hand hygiene and a sanitised environment to keep the COVID-19 infection at bay once the lockdown is lifted.

"The key aspect we have to keep in mind is the safety of passengers by ensuring social distancing so that the infection does not spread. This means travel time will increase. Where passengers were asked to report 45 minutes before the departure time (for domestic flights), they will now have to report two hours earlier. We will encourage passengers to use automated modes as much as possible to avoid human

contact. For example, they may be asked to check in through the mobile application or self check-in kiosks, which will undergo frequent cleaning," Vistara chief commercial officer Vinod Kannan told *The Hindu* in a telephone interview.

GoAir, however, requires its passengers to report three hours before a flight.

#### Norms being finalised

"The Ministry of Civil Aviation, the Airports Authority of India (AAI), the safety regulator DGCA and the aviation security watchdog Bureau of Civil Aviation Security are finalising guidelines for airports and airlines. Several airports have already started marking circles and squares at various contact points on their premises," AAI Chairman Arvind Singh said.

The CISF has submitted its recommendations on securi-

#### Safer flights

A look at how airlines would operate post the lockdown

■ Check-in time likely to increase from 45 minutes to 2/3 hours before flight departure

■ Air fares likely to go up, but if demand is low, airlines will make attractive offers

■ Self check-in through mobile apps or mobile kiosks preferred

■ Full service carrier Vistara to offer meals, budget airlines to discontinue



In queue: Passengers line up for check-in at the Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru in this file photo. ■ SAMPATH KUMAR G P

ty protocol to the Ministry of Civil Aviation, which include measurement of body temperature at the airport entrance, filling up of a questionnaire on health conditions by passengers, only alternate check-in coun-

ters being opened and security personnel equipped with protective gear. CISF airport in-charge M.A. Ganapathy said that at the time of entering the terminal building, passengers would be asked to remove their mask for

identification by security personnel and CCTV cameras.

Once you board the flight, the middle row seat is likely to be left empty, in accordance with the DGCA guidelines, or possibly four out of

six seats in a row could be left empty. While low-cost airlines IndiGo and GoAir will discontinue meals on board, Vistara will continue to provide them, with some changes in the delivery.

"In order to ensure a superior quality of service, our cabin crew members interact with passengers several times and explain the menu. We will limit the number of interactions. We will offer pre-packaged cold meals to minimise contact," Mr. Kannan said.

Passengers must also be prepared for a costlier travel so that airlines can operate flights in a cost-efficient manner despite being required to leave 33%-50% of their flights empty.

"If we are operating only two-thirds of our flight capacity, the cost per ticket will go up. But airfare is a function of supply and demand

and we can't predict the nature of demand. We know that in the first few days, there will be a lot of demand from passengers, but what happens thereafter is uncertain," Mr. Kannan said.

Vistara and other airlines have already announced that they will remove all reading materials from seat-back pockets, clean the aircraft after every flight and deep-clean the aircraft after every 24 hours and provide passengers with hand-sanitisers and masks.

With multiple agencies involved in minimising the risk of infection, Mr. Kannan advises passengers to travel free of stress. "This is not an easy time, but air travel is the safest mode. The air inside the plane is re-circulated through HEPA filters to minimise infection. Just remember to wear your mask and factor in extra time."

Copter makes precautionary landing

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A Cheetah helicopter of the Indian Air Force (IAF), going to Chandigarh with COVID-19 test samples of Leh, made a precautionary landing on the Outer Ring Road just outside Hindon in Ghaziabad on Thursday morning after developing a technical snag.

"Approximately 3 NM out of Hindon, aircraft developed technical snag and carried out safe a precautionary landing on Outer Ring Road highway. The actions taken by the pilots were prompt and correct," the IAF said in a statement.

A recovery aircraft was launched immediately from the Hindon airbase, the IAF said.

The helicopter was rectified and recovered back promptly and safely at Hindon, it added.

## 80 radio jockeys of Delhi FM Gold out of work

They have not been called since Mar. 20

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi's repeated pleas to employers not to lay off workers during the lockdown, 80 radio jockeys of All India Radio's FM Gold in Delhi are out of work.

The state broadcaster Prasar Bharati, which oversees the AIR and Doordarshan, has decided that in cities that has three FM channels, one will be dedicated to news about the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, FM Gold, mostly an infotainment channel, has suspended its usual shows.

All 80 jockeys who anchor the shows in Delhi are casual workers, and are paid for the shows they anchor.



Many AIR stations across the country have cancelled the booking of casual radio jockeys. This is a stark example of unbridled and arbitrary functioning of AIR...

RAMA SHARMA  
a radio jockey

cumstances, it has been decided that wherever any contractual, casual and outsourced staff member of the Ministries/Departments and other organisations of the Government of India is required to stay at home in view of the lockdown..., they shall be treated as 'on duty' during such a period of absence and necessary pay/wages would be paid accordingly."

"FM Gold Delhi is not alone in this situation. In fact, many AIR stations across the country have cancelled the booking of casual radio jockeys. This is a stark example of unbridled and arbitrary functioning of AIR, which shows how the country's biggest radio broadcaster is ignoring the Prime Minister's repeated appeals, and the instructions issued by the Union government," said Rama Sharma, a radio jockey working with FM Gold.

## Most COVID-19 positive Indians abroad are in the Gulf

Of the 3,336 infected Indians spread across 53 countries, 2,061 are in Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, UAE, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE  
NEW DELHI

The majority of Indians who tested positive for COVID-19 infection abroad are located in the Gulf countries, a source familiar with the figures said on Thursday.

The official maintained that India had sufficient quarantine facilities to house the affected individuals. However, a decision was taken not to evacuate the affected nationals spread across the world because of the highly contagious nature of the novel coronavirus that causes the infection.

"There is no shortage of quarantine facilities in India. In fact, the nature of the virus is such that it spreads ve-

ry fast. Therefore it is good that they remain where they are to avoid further spreading the virus, both in their host countries as well as in India," said the source.

The official said that total of 3,336 Indians spread across 53 countries have tested positive for the novel coronavirus and 25 Indians have died in the consequent COVID-19 infection. Out of the total, around 2,061 are in Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, UAE, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. On the northern coast of the Gulf, Iran also continues to host around 308 affected Indians, mainly in the cities of Qom and Tehran.

UAE's offer  
Prime Minister Narendra Mo-

di has been in frequent contact with the Arab leaders of the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council over the last two months as the cases increased among the blue collar Indian expats. The health related issues of the Indian workers in the region had been taken up most recently by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who wrote to Mr. Modi expressing concern about the "well-being of Indian diaspora" in the region, especially in Dubai.

The United Arab Emirates has extended an offer to evacuate all affected Indian nationals following required medical tests, though New Delhi is yet to respond to that gesture. Earlier, on April 13, India sent a Rapid Response Team to Kuwait which held interactions with officials there, as the Gulf monarchy emerged as the largest host of Indians affected by the novel coronavirus abroad. The United Arab Emirates is also among the 54 countries where India is supplying the COVID-19 Control Room in the last few weeks. That apart, 5,000 phone calls and 2,000 public grievances were also addressed regarding the welfare of Indians who are abroad in the current difficult circumstances.

#### Ministry's control room

To deal with the emerging situation, the Ministry of External Affairs set up a COVID-19 Control Room in March to serve as the nodal body for dealing with the Indians and their families living abroad. The official said that around 18,000 emails have been answered by the COVID-19 Control Room in the last few weeks. That apart, 5,000 phone calls and 2,000 public grievances were also addressed regarding the welfare of Indians who are abroad in the current difficult circumstances.

## Major batch of testing kits coming from China

They are expected to boost testing

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A large consignment of testing kits for COVID-19 is scheduled to reach from China on Thursday, sources have confirmed. The kits are expected to boost India's testing capacity in a major way.

According to available information, 5.5 lakh Rapid Antibody Testing Kits sourced from Guangzhou Wondfo and Zhuhai Livzon and 1 lakh RNA Extraction Kits from MGI Shenzhen are among the consignment, which is a part of a total order of 15 million personal protective equipment (PPE) kits and 1.5 million rapid

testing kits that India had ordered from China.

*The Hindu* had reported that India had called upon China to fulfil those orders amid concerns over tightened regulations on export of such equipment after several western countries complained over the quality.

India's Ambassador to China Vikram Misri, in an online interaction with reporters on Tuesday, said deliveries of the medical supplies for India would be stretched until April-end. Around six consignments of vital medical supplies were expected to reach India in the next fortnight.

## J&K govt clarifies on testing kits

'No interruption in testing because of shortage'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR

The Jammu and Kashmir government clarified on Thursday that the Kashmir Valley is not facing any dearth of testing kits.

"There is no truth that a testing kit consignment was diverted to Jammu. It was first delivered in Jammu and the next day it was received in Srinagar. There was no interruption in the testing process because of any shortage," said Dr. Samia Rashid, Principal of the Government Medical College (GMC), Srinagar.

A government spokesman said doctors at the SKIMS hospital confirmed that it was not facing any shortage of test kits and had ramped up the number to 1000 tests a day. However, the hospital has not clarified as how many fresh samples from the Directorate of Health, Kashmir, were received on Wednesday.

verted to Jammu. They were shifted to Srinagar only after the intervention of senior officials in the Union Territory.

Ms. Rashid said a third testing centre was being established at the Jhelum Valley Medical College, Bemina. Testing centres are there now at GMC, Srinagar, and the Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences hospital.

Civil society groups and traders' bodies have called for transparency in the mitigation plan pursued by the government to manage the crisis.

niday, due to the delay in testing kits arrival.

On the role of Dr. Jitender Mehta, Divisional Officer, National Health Mission, the spokesman said the former was actively involved in COVID-19 "mitigation and management". "Dr. Mehta had no role in the procurement process," the spokesman added.

Dr. Samir Mattoo, Director of Health Services, said his department was carrying out sample collection across the Valley aggressively.

Civil society groups and traders' bodies have called for transparency in the mitigation plan pursued by the government to manage the crisis.

## EPFO clears 3.31 lakh claims

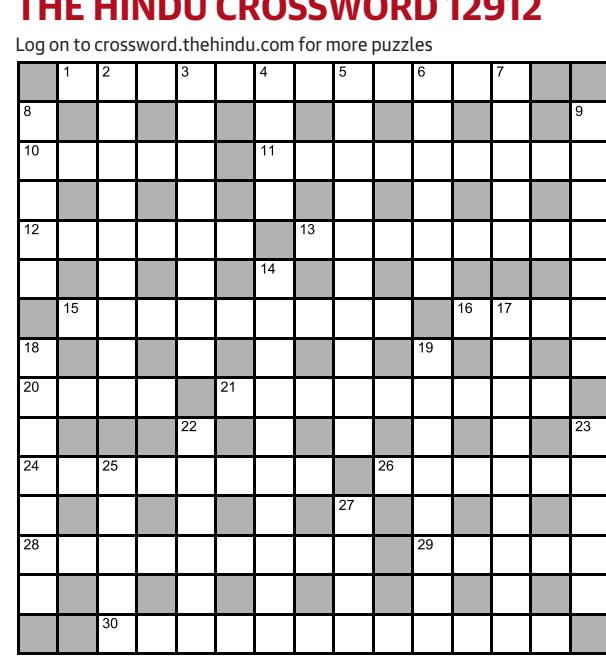
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) had processed 3.31 lakh claims disbursing ₹946.49 crore in 15 days under the special pandemic withdrawal scheme, the Labour and Employment Ministry said on Thursday.

As a part of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, the scheme had been notified on March 28 to provide relief to workers hit by the lockdown. "In addition, ₹284 crore has been distributed by the exempted PF trusts, notable among them being TCS," the Ministry said.

## THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12912

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



#### ACROSS

- Swarming action of COVID wronger, perhaps? (12)
- Stories of empty taverns stocked with beer (5)
- Pretender may die roaming around a little upset (9)
- Almost the end of lockdown? Too soon! (6)

- Settled confused lovers' feuds now and then (8)
- Prosperous section of prehistoric humanity (4)
- Wrote off some old debts (12)
- Restrain knight in stable (4)
- Reduce rent on losing money (4)
- Person who may invent a solution as sit-in sect comes to grief (9)
- Intensify smell in plastic closet (8)
- Dish falsely portrayed as cure (6)
- Same touch differently applied for facial hair (9)
- Go along with girl's tirade (5)
- Carefully raises limit on buying some indispensable common stuff (12)
- Questionably lives large, leaving little ultimately for rural folk (9)
- Pretender may die roaming around a little upset (9)
- Almost the end of lockdown? Too soon! (6)

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

## SUDOKU

5				2				
7			9					
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3			8			6	1	
		6	2		5	4		
8	5			1			7	
1	5		7				2	
				8			6	
				5			4	

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

#### Solution to puzzle 12911

W	R	I	T	E	O	F	F	G	O	O	U	P
I	S	S	O	A	K	A	A					
P	R	O	S	P	N	E						
J	L	E	T	H	P	D	A					
N	A											

# Safety kits sought for doctors

Former Haryana CM urges private medical practitioners to keep clinics open

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
CHANDIGARH

Former Haryana Chief Minister and Leader of the Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda on Thursday urged private doctors to keep their clinics and hospitals open amid reports that many have closed their clinics in the wake of COVID-19 outbreak.

Mr. Hooda said the State government should provide corona safety kits to all government doctors as well as private doctors to avoid any possible infection.

"Since the corona outbreak, the pressure is on the government hospitals which are overloaded. We must provide whatever relief we can to the government doctors who are at the frontline of our war against the deadly pandemic. I appeal to all private doctors to continue their services. In the times of pandemic, they can make a significant contribution by providing treatment of other diseases," he said.



Road map: Haryana Health Minister Anil Vij presiding over a review meeting regarding the preparedness for COVID-19 in Chandigarh on Thursday. •PTI

Mr. Hooda said private schools should also provide some relief to parents of students and sought the State government's intervention in the issue.

"All the economic activity has come to a standstill due to the lockdown and people are unable to meet even the most basic requirements as many avenues of income have been closed. Therefore, many parents are not in a position to pay the expensive

fees of private schools. The government should grant a concession in fees, by establishing synergy with such private schools. The government should help schools which don't have a strong financial base so that parents do not have to bear the cost of fees in times of economic distress," Mr. Hooda said.

Recognising the role of government employees in the present situation, Mr. Hooda said whether permanent or

temporary, all employees were saving lives. He appreciated the State government's decision to double the salary of the employees of the Health department.

He said while the decision was a welcome step, a similar announcement should be made for policemen, sweepers etc.

Mr. Hooda said media persons, like government employees, must also be recognised as corona warriors.

## 2.5 lakh Odia workers stuck in Gujarat

**STAFF REPORTER**  
BERHAMPUR

More than 2.5 lakh Odia migrant labourers stranded in Gujarat due to the lockdown are in a pitiable state as they are living in cramped rooms facing threat of infection and scarcity of food and no income.

Most of these workers are from the Ganjam district employed in the textile industries of Surat that have closed down because of the lockdown.

These workers are sending distress messages to the members of the Odisha Disaster Migration Mapping for Intervention (ODMMI), an organisation of social activists. Environmental activist Prafulla Samanta, who is part of the ODMMI, said they are keeping track of the situation through contacts in Gujarat and have also taken up the matter with the Odisha government.

Pitambar Pradhan, an Odia lawyer of a labour court in Surat, said accommodation is the major problem faced by these labourers. Usually a dozen workers take small rooms of 100 or 120 sq. ft. floor area on rent.

As all the textile units have closed down, all of them have to live in the cramped rooms where social distancing is quite impossible.

They cannot remain and sleep in the rooms due to summer heat. "If anyone of them gets infected with COVID-19, it could lead to a dangerous situation," said Mr. Mohapatra.

Mr. Mohapatra and Mr. Pradhan said it was high time that the Gujarat government provided accommodation to them in schools and colleges.

## Operation Coverup



Helping hand: Security personnel are given masks and the traditional Assamese gamosa by volunteers from an NGO to use as safety gear to curb the spread of COVID-19 in Guwahati on Thursday. •RITU RAJ KONWAR

## Elderly couple relive days spent in quarantine

They returned to Kolkata from Australia and remained for two weeks in unfamiliar surroundings

**BISHWANATH GHOSH**  
KOLKATA

So near, and yet so far. That turned out to be the case for an elderly couple from Kolkata who, upon their return from Australia on the night of March 21, were taken straight to a quarantine centre that was almost a stone's throw from their home.

Debabjyoti Ghosh Roy, 69, and his wife Baisakhi, 63, are now back home and can afford to look back in amusement at the nearly two weeks they spent in confinement in unfamiliar surroundings, but the overriding feeling is that of fear.



Debabjyoti Ghosh Roy and Baisakhi. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"When we get to hear that most people dying of COVID-19 are senior citizens, we feel scared," said Mr. Ghosh Roy, who and his wife had gone to Hobart to spend time with their son when they realised India could

soon be under lockdown. He hastily booked tickets and the two first flew from Hobart to Melbourne and then to Singapore. They landed in Kolkata at 10.45 p.m. on March 21, and it was around 3.30 a.m. that they – along

with the other passengers – were put in buses and taken straight to the yet-to-be-inaugurated campus of the Chittaranjan National Cancer Institute at Rajarhat, the township where they live.

### Ample facilities

"After basic medical examination we were sent to a hall on the sixth floor. We carried our luggage. The hall had been partitioned into many bays; our bay had 10 beds," Mr. Ghosh Roy said.

Mr. Ghosh Roy added: "It felt like a three-star facility, if not five-star. The sheets and blankets and towels were all brand new, so were the buck-

ets and mugs in the bathroom. The food was vegetarian but very good."

Three days later, they were told that they would be moved to another location because these beds would now be needed for those who showed symptoms. So several of those quarantined here were again put into a bus and taken to a three-bedroom flat.

On April 3, they were asked if they would like to go home. "I called up our housing society – they were more than happy to have us back. But the other inmates were not so lucky," Mr. Ghosh Roy said.

## Mumbai team develops 'voice-based test'

AI tool analyses noise distortion to identify if a person could be infected

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
NEW DELHI

A university in Rome is conducting a pilot run for a patented artificial intelligence-based tool developed by three biotechnology students and a professor from Mumbai, which they claim can test COVID-19 through voice-based diagnosis.

The tool is being tested by the University of Tor Vergata in Rome and has already been tested on 300 individuals.

According to the students and the professor from DY Patil Institute of Bio Technology and Bio Informatics, Mumbai, the tool can be used in smartphones.

The team includes bioinformatics students – Rashmi

Chakraborty, Priyanka Chauhan and Priya Garg.

"While several foreign universities are trying to launch a voice-based AI tool for COVID-19 detection, this Indian tool is fully functional and currently in use in Italy to successfully identify COVID-19 patients. The students have a full-fledged working software with a rich database of patients and healthy samples. This tool is being currently used by the University of Rome to detect COVID-19 patients with 98% accuracy," said professor Santosh Bothe, who supervised the project.

"As someone speaks to the microphone on the app, the tool breaks down the voice in multiple parameters

such as frequency and noise distortion. These values are then compared to a normal person's values and the patented technique then determines if the patient is positive or not," he added.

A team at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore, is also working on a diagnostic tool based on analysis of cough and respiratory sounds.

### Timbre is key

According to Giovanni Saggio, professor at the Rome university's Engineering department, the audio-based disease diagnosis tool can find coronavirus from the timbre of the voice.

"Each human voice has 6,300 parameters, and only

a few units, less than a dozen, specifically characterise individuals. The human ear is not able to distinguish them, but artificial intelligence does. Each one of our internal organs is sort of a resonator, so if we have a problem with our lungs or our heart, this is reflected in our voice," Mr. Saggio said.

"The same person has one voice when they are healthy, and another if they have a pathology. Since coronavirus compromises lungs and airwaves, the voice is definitely affected. The current novel coronavirus cases could be picked this way," he added.

Priya Garg believes this tool can be of great impact in the first level of screening.

## CRPF helps baby in Srinagar undergo emergency surgery

Personnel shift newborn to hospital and arrange money

**VIJAITA SINGH**  
NEW DELHI

Tahir Ahmad Dar (30), a dally wager in downtown Srinagar, was crestfallen when his newborn baby was detected with a congenital heart disease.

Doctors at the hospital where the child was born told Tahir and his wife, Hu-maira (27), to take the infant to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, as an urgent surgery was required.

The lockdown complicated things as Srinagar is among the 170 "hotspots" districts identified by the Union Health Ministry.

A friend who distributes medicines to the needy read Tahir's post on Facebook. He called the CRPF's Madadgaar helpline and sought their help. On Tuesday, constable Asif ul Rehman, who attended the call, reached



Tahir Ahmad Dar with his baby. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

out to Tahir and the baby was shifted it to the Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) in Soura, where an emergency procedure was done to save the baby. Tahir was told that the cost of the operation would be ₹5 lakh in Srinagar.

"I had no money. After a friend read my post, he contacted the CRPF. The CRPF personnel met me near my home and gave me money to get my son treated. This is my first child... we sensed that there is some problem when the baby refused to take his mother's milk," Tahir said on phone from Srinagar.

"Since his birth we have been in hospital. After the emergency procedure was conducted we have not met him, he is on ventilator but stable. Doctors say he is recovering," said Tahir.

Madadgaar (1441) is a 24/7 helpline launched by the CRPF in 2017 to help the residents of Jammu and Kashmir. Constable Rehman said the baby needed urgent medical attention and arranging transportation to the AIIMS would be difficult due to the restrictions.

## Infant in nomadic group dies

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
GUWAHATI

An infant among a group of 40 stranded nomads from Rajasthan died in western Assam's Chirang district reportedly because of hardships endured due to the lockdown.

Officials said the group had been in north-central Assam's Sonitpur district when the lockdown was imposed.

They had reached Rangiya, a major railway junction around 65 km northwest of Guwahati, to catch a train after believing that the lockdown would be lifted on April 14.

The group managed to board a truck that had come from Rajasthan. But the police did not allow the truck to cross the Assam-West Bengal border. The group was subsequently dropped in Chirang district on Tuesday. A nine-month-old baby did not survive the ordeal.

## Braving cancer and fighting the spread of novel coronavirus

Ailing anganwadi worker in Ganjam makes house visits

**STAFF REPORTER**  
BERHAMPUR

Despite under treatment for uterine cancer, Rama Sahu (46), an anganwadi worker of Khandara village in Ganjam district of Odisha, has not neglected her duty as an awareness building warrior against COVID-19.

Her husband, Ramesh Chandra Sahu, says, "No one knows that she has to wear an adult diaper when she goes out of home to serve the women and children of Khandara in the scorching sun. She never misses her duty and forgets her ailment and pain while doing her work."

Difficulties are not new to Ms. Sahu. The couple lost both their sons at a young age. Her husband left his business as a labour contractor in Pune to return home and

help her out. Local people praise Ms. Sahu's dedication.

Sarpanch Laxman Gouda said that every household was sure of a visit from her even during the lockdown. Thanks to her efforts, every woman in the village has taken an oath to follow all precautions, he said.

"I have taught them the proper use of home-made face masks and the proper way of washing hands with soap at regular intervals," Ms. Sahu said. Last week, she surveyed every household in Khandara to identify people having symptoms of cough, cold and fever.

## 13 arrested for illegal liquor trading in Odisha

Police personnel attacked, locked up

**STAFF REPORTER**  
BERHAMPUR

Thirteen persons allegedly involved in illegal liquor trading during the lockdown and in attacking a police patrol at Birikote in Gajapati district of Odisha were arrested on Thursday. The police team also arrested 14 others involved in the storage and trading of illicit liquor at Birikote.

Ban on liquor during the lockdown has led to illicit manufacturing and trading of liquor in several parts of the State, including Gajapati and its adjoining Ganjam district. Illicit liquor traders tried to seize the liquor and disperse the crowd, the mob attacked the police and damaged the police vehicle.

A sub-inspector and three constables, including two women, were allegedly beaten up and locked up.

are cashing in on the rising demand from alcohol dependent persons.

On Wednesday night, a police patrol from the Adava Police Station found a small crowd of people at Birikote. They had defied social distancing norms. It was found that country liquor was being marketed at the spot illegally. When the police team tried to seize the liquor and disperse the crowd, the mob attacked the police and damaged the police vehicle.

A sub-inspector and three constables, including two women, were allegedly beaten up and locked up.

## Golden Temple sees a big dip in offerings

SGPC chief urges people to donate so that the community kitchen can work

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
CHANDIGARH

Amid the ongoing lockdown in the wake of COVID-19, the offerings at Golden Temple have fallen drastically, forcing the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) to appeal to people to donate generously.

SGPC president Gobind Singh Longowal has urged people to donate in whatever possible way so that 'langar' (community kitchen), at the Golden Temple and other gurdwaras can continue.



Need for donations: Lakhs of people are served food at the Golden Temple every day. •PTI

"Shri Harmandir Sahib is a central place for Sikhs, where lakhs of people [san-gat] are served food at 'langar' every day. Today, due to

the coronavirus outbreak, most people are confined to their houses and very few people are visiting gurdwaras. At this time of crisis, I urge people to do

nate a portion of their produce, especially wheat, so that the 'langar' can be continued to be served to the poor and the needy," Mr. Longowal said in a video message.

He said that with the drop in people visiting the Golden Temple, the daily offering at the shrine had reduced to ₹10,000-15,000 in comparison to ₹20 lakh-25 lakh earlier. He said the monthly collection of the Golden Temple, Gurdwara Baba Deep Singh and other 40 gurdwaras was close to ₹12 crore in usual times.

"In the financial year of 2019-20, ₹85 crore was received, which included offerings in cash as well as donations made online," he said.

# Trump pushes for reopening economy

President says crisis has peaked; union and business leaders caution against early lifting of curbs

REUTERS  
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump plans to announce new guidelines to reopen the economy after a monthlong shutdown over the coronavirus outbreak, despite concerns from health experts, Governors and business leaders about a resurgence in cases without more testing and protocols in place.

Mr. Trump announced his decision to push States to lift stay-at-home and other restrictions that were imposed last month to halt the spread of the highly contagious disease as the number of deaths in the U.S. approached 31,000 on Wednesday — more than any other nation.

States' orders have also crushed the nation's economy to levels not seen since the Great Depression nearly



**Rising anger:** Demonstrators marching outside the Kentucky State Capitol against the current social distancing requirements. ■ REUTERS

## COVID-19

a century ago as a record more than 20 million Americans have sought unemployment benefits amid shuttered stores and restaurants, including another 5.2 million who filed for aid in the past week, pushing the U.S. unemployment rate to 8.2%.

The Republican President is scheduled to hold a call with the nation's Governors at 3 p.m. local time and said he would announce his plan at a news conference later on Thursday.

Thursday's unemployment data comes on the heels of retail data one day earlier showing a record drop in sales and the lowest factory output since the end of Second World War, further pressuring Mr. Trump, who had staked his reelection in November on the strength of the U.S. economy.

On Wednesday, Mr.

## Europe still 'in eye of the storm'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON

Parts of Europe moved cautiously to reopen their streets and economies on Thursday but the pandemic was far from beaten and the World Health Organization warned the continent was still in the "eye of the storm".

"We remain in the eye of the storm," the WHO's regional director for Europe, Hans Kluge, said.

Positive signs in Spain, Italy, Germany, France and

Switzerland were overshadowed by sustained or increased levels of infections in other countries, such as Britain, Turkey, Ukraine and Russia, he said.

"It is imperative that we do not let down our guard."

More than two million people have been infected with the virus around the world and 1,37,000, including 90,000 in Europe, have died.

Hard-hit parts of Europe have seen a slowdown in infections and deaths in recent

days, with Spain recording 551 new deaths on Thursday, almost half of the daily toll at its peak.

After weeks on strict lockdowns, Spain and Italy have begun to ease restrictions, allowing some businesses to reopen. Germany on Wednesday also announced initial steps to reopen some shops and gradually restart schools. Denmark began reopening schools for younger children after a month-long closure and Finland lifted a blockade of Helsinki.

Trump said data suggested new cases have peaked and that industry leaders in a round of calls offered him good insights into how to safely restart the economy. But the head of a major union warned the President not to reopen unless worker safety can be ensured, and chief executives from some of the biggest firms told Mr. Trump more testing was

needed to guarantee safety, according to media reports.

**Strong place**

"We're in a strong place, and I can assure you that the guidance being put out today is in line with what the experts are saying, it's in line with what the data is showing and it's a plan to put this economy back on track," White House press secretary Kay-

leigh McEnany told Fox News on Thursday.

More than 6,35,000 total U.S. cases have been reported across all 50 States. But not all States have been struck equally, as New York and others have been hit particularly hard. Even within States disparities are being seen in more urban and poorer areas.

That divide has inflamed

## Japan extends emergency

REUTERS  
TOKYO

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe expanded a state of emergency to include the entire country on Thursday. Mr. Abe said that the emergency would be in place until May 6. The government said it was considering cash payouts of ¥1,00,000 (\$930) for everyone, an attempt to cushion the blow from the pandemic to the world's third-largest economy.

## U.S., Russia can join forces'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin believes the global pandemic is an opportunity for his country to work together with the U.S., the Kremlin has said. "President Putin believes this pandemic is the time to help each other," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said after U.S. President Donald Trump offered to send ventilators to Russia.

political divisions as political leaders debate how and when to begin unwinding unprecedented lockdowns and prompting protests organised by conservative and pro-Trump groups against some State leaders who opted to keep residents at home.

States, meanwhile, are seeking \$500 billion more in fiscal relief from Congress.

# China says no plans to limit export of anti-virus supplies

It says goods will be inspected to ensure quality standards

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BEIJING

China will not restrict exports of medical goods needed to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, a government spokesman said on Thursday, amid global tension over scarce masks and ventilators.

China, the biggest maker of surgical masks and other products, announced last week it would start inspecting exports to make sure they meet quality standards following Western complaints some test kits and other products were faulty.

"China has not and will not restrict the export of epidemic prevention materials," said a Commerce Ministry spokesman, Gao Feng.

The government hasn't responded to questions about whether inspections might increase the time required to fill foreign orders, but Mr. Gao said Beijing has



**In full swing:** Employees working on a surgical mask assembly line in Nanchang, China. ■ REUTERS

taken steps to "speed up customs clearance" while "ensuring the export quality of epidemic prevention materials."

U.S. President Donald Trump said this month he would try to block manufacturing giant 3M Co. from exporting N95 masks. 3M warned other governments might retaliate and said later an agreement was reached to allow foreign sales.

## Extend Brexit transition, says IMF

REUTERS  
LONDON

Britain should ask for an extension to its post-Brexit transition period to ease uncertainty at a time when the world economy is being hammered by the COVID-19 pandemic, the head of the International Monetary Fund said.

"It is tough as it is. Let's not make it any tougher," Kristalina Georgieva told BBC radio.

"My advice would be to seek ways in which this element of uncertainty is reduced in the interests of everybody, of the U.K., of the

EU, the whole world."

The transition period is due to end on December 31, and barriers to exports and imports will go up if a new trade agreement is not reached by then, a challenge which has been made harder by the pandemic.

Ms. Georgieva was speaking after the IMF warned on Tuesday that the world economy is heading for its steepest downturn this year since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

She praised the emergency measures taken by Britain's Finance Ministry and the Bank of England (BoE), which she said had been taken "early" and were well-coordinated.

"That very strong package of measures is helping the U.K., but given the U.K.'s sizeable role in the world economy, it's actually helping everyone," Ms. Georgieva said.

The government has increased spending and cut taxes in measures that Britain's budget office estimates will cost £100 billion (\$125 billion). It has also offered guarantees for £330 billion of company loans.

The BoE has cut interest rates to 0.1%.

## South Korea's ruling party scores a landslide victory

Its pandemic response turns the tide

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
SEOUL

South Korea's left-leaning ruling party won a landslide election victory, results showed on Thursday, after the pandemic turned the political tide in President Moon Jae-in's favour.

His Democratic party secured the largest absolute majority in the National Assembly since the advent of democracy in 1987, on a turnout of 66.2% – the highest at a parliamentary election for 28 years.

Just a few months ago Mr. Moon was threatened by scandals over power abuse and sluggish economic growth, while critics called his dovish approach towards North Korea unrealistic.

But the South's relatively quick and effective handling of the epidemic – it has also exported test kits to at least 20 countries – was a boon for Mr. Moon and his party ahead of the polls, largely seen as a referendum on his performance.



Moon Jae-in

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## MARKET WATCH

	16-04-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	30,603	-0.73
US Dollar	76.87	-0.56
Brent oil	27.50	0.00

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	267.60	-1.30
Asian Paints	1743.10	24.90
Axian Bank	422.55	5.25
Bajaj Auto	2333.55	-1.60
Bajaj Finserv	4699.60	100.50
Bajaj Finance	2220.00	37.55
Bharti Airtel	500.45	-10.05
BPLC	355.40	1.55
Britannia Ind	2836.80	-0.55
Cipla	600.45	8.10
Coal India	147.40	0.55
Dr Reddy's Lab	3860.65	53.05
Eicher Motors	13371.35	56.45
GAIL (India)	89.25	2.65
Graim Ind	542.75	8.25
HCL Tech.	459.75	-19.00
HDFC	1625.75	29.45
HDFC Bank	879.75	16.45
Hero MotoCorp	1782.65	-41.45
Hindalco	120.55	5.45
Hind Unilever	2436.10	-51.45
ICICI Bank	342.00	14.65
IndusInd Bank	435.40	11.30
Bharti Infralet	171.50	-2.30
Infosys	623.85	-15.20
Indian Oil Corp	84.70	1.50
ITC	186.35	-3.00
JSW Steel	170.65	-0.75
Kotak Bank	1130.85	-42.90
L&T	911.65	31.50
M&M	356.70	3.55
Maruti Suzuki	5130.80	36.50
Nestle India Ltd.	17895.25	569.35
NTPC	95.10	5.20
ONGC	75.45	1.10
PowerGrid Corp	163.40	3.85
Reliance Ind	1168.05	18.20
State Bank	188.50	6.15
Shree Cement	18928.90	790.35
Sun Pharma	463.70	14.50
Tata Motors	74.65	1.75
Tata Steel	288.90	3.75
TCS	1716.05	-19.10
Tech Mahindra	517.65	-21.00
Titan	985.25	33.20
UltraTech Cement	3539.10	-61.05
UPL	363.20	12.65
Vedanta	82.70	4.10
Wipro	187.85	1.30
Zee Entertainment	135.55	1.80

## EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	76.66	76.98
Euro	83.40	83.75
British Pound	95.76	96.17
Japanese Yen (100)	71.21	71.51
Chinese Yuan	10.84	10.89
Swiss Franc	79.31	79.65
Singapore Dollar	53.72	53.96
Canadian Dollar	54.33	44.58
Malaysian Ringgit	17.51	17.59
Australian Dollar	48.31	48.51

Source: Indian Bank

## IN BRIEF



## Infosys to announce Q4 results on April 20

BENGALURU  
Bengaluru-headquartered information technology services major Infosys will announce the results for its fourth quarter and year ended March 31, 2020 on April 20. Usually it is Infosys, among domestic tech players, that shares quarterly earnings numbers first with the market, but this quarter, it has faced a week's delay.

## Pruned market hours to continue till April 30

MUMBAI  
The RBI has said that curtailed business hours for markets such as government securities and currency will continue till April 30. May 1, 2 and 3 are bank holidays. The shortened market hours came into effect from April 7. These markets are now open only between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. "In view of the order that the lockdown will continue to be in force till May 3, it has been decided that the amended trading hours for various RBI-regulated markets will continue till the close of business on Thursday, April 30, 2020," the RBI said.

## Allow home delivery by all retailers: RAI

NEW DELHI  
The Retailers Association of India (RAI) on Thursday urged government to "strongly consider" allowing all forms of retailers, not just e-commerce players, to operate home deliveries during the extended lockdown period.

Supporting the move to extend the lockdown to curb the pandemic, RAI said home deliveries by all players will facilitate availability of all goods at the doorstep of customers while supporting economic revival. "We urge the Centre to strongly consider [the suggestion that all] retailers be allowed the benefit of doing business via contactless home delivery," RAI said.

## TCS net drops as momentum reverses

Firm to honour campus offers; rules out retrenchments as also increments; promotions on track

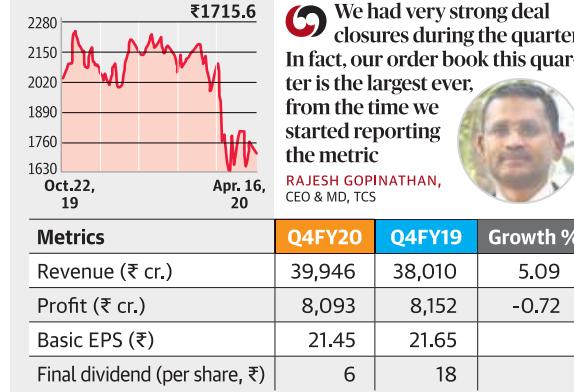
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

India's largest information technology services exporter Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) reported a marginal dip in its fourth quarter net profit to ₹8,093 crore compared with ₹8,152 crore in the year-earlier period as the COVID-19 pandemic completely reversed the positive momentum that the company had started seeing in some of its biggest verticals in the first half of the quarter.

The fall in profit came on a 5.09% growth in revenue to ₹39,946 crore in the quarter.

Rajes Gopinathan, CEO and MD, TCS said, "We had very strong deal closures during the quarter. In fact, our order book this quarter is the largest ever, from the time we started reporting the metric.

## Tough times



We had very strong deal closures during the quarter. In fact, our order book this quarter is the largest ever, from the time we started reporting the metric

RAJESH GOPINATHAN,  
CEO & MD, TCS

Metrics	Q4FY20	Q4FY19	Growth %
Revenue (₹ cr.)	39,946	38,010	5.09
Profit (₹ cr.)	8,093	8,152	-0.72
Basic EPS (₹)	21.45	21.65	
Final dividend (per share, ₹)	6	18	

pect to campus hiring, without any layoffs and will also offer promotions.

However, the company will not offer increments to its 4.4 lakh employees this year. "All offers made will be honoured; we don't see any form of retrenchment. Our talent model is proven and we are proud of our 4.4 lakh

employees," he said.

TCS hired 24,179 employees on a net basis in FY20, taking the total headcount to 4,48,464 as of March 31, 2020.

"We have made 40,000 campus offers this year and will honour all the offers made. We will start onboarding from June. Promotions this year will continue; however, there will be no increments at this point of time," said Milind Lakkad, Global Head, Human Resources.

N Ganapathy Subramanian, COO and ED, said: "COVID-19 has presented us with an operational challenge of scale, speed and complexity. Switching from a long-established infrastructure model of an organisation of over 4,48,000 employees in a matter of days is pushing the boundaries of location independence as well as agility to their limits.

"The outcome was our secure, border-less workspace framework, which has now enabled close to 90% of our employees to work remotely and securely."

"India growth down  
Geographically, growth was led by Europe (11.9%) and U.K. (5.4%), Latin America rose 3.9%, Asia Pacific grew 3.5% and MEA, 1.3%. North America inched up 0.2% while growth from India declined 1.9%.

Paras Bothra, president, equities, Ashika Stock Broking, told *The Hindu*, "TCS' Q4FY20 results were a tad below estimates. Also, the management stated that the positive momentum they were witnessing in their largest verticals reversed because of the pandemic. On the positive side, TCS had strong deal closures during the quarter."

## More time to renew third party, health policies

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD

TP policies fall due for renewal from March 25 to May 3 but are unable to renew in view of the prevailing situation. The extension is to ensure continuity of the statutory Motor TP cover from the date on which the policy falls due for renewal so that any valid claim triggered during the grace period can be paid.

These policies can be renewed till May 15.

Earlier this month, IRDAI had set April 21 as the date for renewal of the policies in light of the lockdown announced till April 14. With the government announcing extension of the lockdown till May 3, the regulator on Thursday updated its earlier communication.

IRDAI Member (Non-Life) T.L. Alamelu cited the Central government's direction, allowing till May 15 to policyholders whose motor

TP policies fall due for renewal from March 25 to May 3 but are unable to renew in view of the prevailing situation. The extension is to ensure continuity of the statutory Motor TP cover from the date on which the policy falls due for renewal so that any valid claim triggered during the grace period can be paid.

Likewise, another circular referred to government directions permitting health insurance policyholders, whose policies are due for renewal from March 25-May 3 but could not renew, to renew the same till May 15.

This will "ensure continuity of the health insurance cover from the date on which the policy falls due for renewal, so that any valid claim triggered during the grace period can be paid," she said.

## SBI to extend additional term loan facilities to borrowers, including NBFCs

To be offered on a case-to-case basis to investment grade firms

MANOJ SAHA  
MUMBAI

State Bank of India, the country's largest lender, has decided to extend term loan facilities to non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) as well as other companies to help tide over the liquidity mismatch these entities are facing due to the nationwide lockdown.

"We are working on a case-by-case basis on assessing the requirement of all companies including NBFCs. We will see what kind of support [term loan] we can give them. This will be on a case-to-case basis and on proper appraisal," a highly-placed

source in SBI told *The Hindu*.

"This is not a omnibus scheme," the source said.

SBI has over 100 NBFCs as its customers and whoever applies for the loan, a decision will be taken on extending the term loan facility after reviewing the company's financial position. The loans will be extended to firms having investment grade rating.

The official clarified there was no limit, upper or lower, as to the quantum of loan to be extended to these firms, and would depend on the requirement of the firm. "There is no set amount as to how much we will extend," the official said, adding that

this was an additional immediate liquidity support to the firms facing cash crunch.

NBFC borrowers of SBI have a good financial profile, except may be in one or two cases, as no such entity has faced a liquidity problem in the last one-and-a-half years, that is, since the IL&FS crisis.

"Most NBFCs [that had borrowed from SBI] have an investment grade rating," the official said. Last month, SBI opened emergency credit lines for working capital loans for all its clients, which was 10% of the existing facilities, provided the asset classification was standard.

This facility was offered to

all customers. However, NBFCs typically do not opt for working capital loans.

Banks generally extend term loans to these entities.

The NBFC sector faced a double whammy when RBI announced a loan moratorium for three months.

While banks have not offered a moratorium to NBFC borrowers, these entities had to offer the moratorium to their customers who had taken a home or car loan, resulting in a liquidity mismatch for NBFCs. Crisis had said NBFCs would be hit by it would face ₹1.75 lakh crore of debt obligation maturing by the end of the April-June quarter.

## Rupee hits a new low

Fear of delay in economic revival weakens currency

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

The rupee hit a new low against the dollar as it dropped to 76.87 on Thursday amid concerns of a delay in economic revival following the spread of COVID-19.

After opening at 76.75 a dollar as compared with Wednesday's closing of 76.44, the rupee slipped to 76.87 per dollar at close of day, depreciating 43 paise, or 0.56%, on Thursday. The domestic unit weakened with the dollar strengthening against various currencies.

According to dealers, the rupee will continue to be under pressure till signs of the pandemic peaking emerge. The government has now ex-

pected the nationwide lockdown, which started on March 23, by another 18 days to May 3, with stricter restrictions.

Currency traders see the rupee slipping to 77.50 to a dollar

## IN BRIEF



Anand is ambassador for WWF India

NEW DELHI

Five-time World chess champion Viswanathan

Anand is the new Ambassador for World Wide Fund for Nature-India's Environment Education programme.

Anand said, "Our children deserve a better, greener and more sustainable world than the one we are living in today, and it is our responsibility as parents and elders to show them the way."



Sharath Kamal jumps seven places to 31

CHENNAI

Indian paddler A. Sharath Kamal, who won the Oman Open Challenge Plus last month, jumped seven places to 31 in the International Table Tennis Federation world rankings released on Thursday. G. Sathiyan dropped a place to 32. Harmeet Desai, who had made the last four in Oman, was the bigger gainer, going up 15 places while attaining the 72nd rank.

## UEFA to meet on April 23

PARIS

UEFA will hold an Executive Committee meeting by videoconference on April 23, European football's governing body has confirmed, as it continues to look at ways of restarting the season. Before that, the heads of each of UEFA's 55 member associations will come together next Tuesday to look at developments across both domestic and continental competitions. AFP

## It's official – no IPL this summer

BCCI has a few options to explore; Sri Lanka shows interest in hosting event

AMOL KARHADKAR  
MUMBAI

A day after informing the eight franchises of the Indian Premier League's indefinite postponement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has "suspended IPL 2020 till further notice".

While confirming the deferral, BCCI secretary Jay Shah said in a statement released on Thursday the decision had been taken in consultation with franchise owners, broadcaster, sponsors and all stakeholders, adding "the IPL 2020 season will only commence when it is safe and appropriate to do so".

## Three possibilities

While resumption of sporting events cannot be predicted, here are the three possible windows being floated vis-a-vis staging IPL 2020:

**July-August:** Assuming that the pandemic is brought under control by June-end and international airspace is cleared, a window may open to stage the IPL in Sri Lanka in July-August. Since it will be the monsoon season in India, Colombo emerges as a


Oh, for a disinfected world! Several hurdles will have to be cleared before IPL 2020 can be a reality. ■ FILE PHOTO: K.V.S. GIRI

viable option.

While Colombo's three international venues is a logistical boon, Sri Lanka Cricket president Shammi Silva has expressed interest in staging the IPL.

But, given the evolving scenario, the IPL in this window appears to be a long shot, indeed!

**September-October:** At the moment, India is scheduled to participate in the Asia Cup, to be hosted by the Pakistan Cricket Board, in

the United Arab Emirates in September. But with the IPL being the BCCI's cash cow, it wouldn't be surprising if the BCCI attempts to pull out of the Asia Cup and instead stage the T20 extravaganza.

PCB chief Ehsan Mani has vehemently opposed rescheduling the Asia Cup to accommodate the IPL, but considering BCCI's clout, don't be surprised if the IPL is the first major cricketing event upon resumption of sporting action.

**October-November:** A five-week window opens up should the T20 World Cup – in Australia from October 18 – be postponed. The ICC is expected to present a clearer picture on the T20 World Cup in June.

Whatever the option chosen, a good chunk of India's international assignments as well as domestic season will be severely affected.

Meanwhile, until the pandemic subsides, BCCI can only wait and watch.

## Sheetal hopes action resumes soon

KAMESH SRINIVASAN  
NEW DELHI

They play a key role in the conduct of tennis around the world. Efficiency is silent and rarely noticed.

The Indian tennis officials, who have turned their passion and hobby into a full time profession in recent years, stay united and away from the spotlight.

## Thankless job

Officiating is a thankless job, but a rewarding one. The Indians officiate in the Grand Slams and other major events around the world.

Sheetal Iyer, Asia's only gold badge woman referee, spoke about the impact of the lockdown on the tennis fraternity.

"Travelling and work keeps you busy, doing something you love. Now, it is like a vacuum. You are doing nothing," said Sheetal, whose last assignment was being referee in the Davis Cup World Group-II play-off between Greece and Philippines in Manila, on March 6 and 7.

Sheetal has been assistant referee in three Asian Games, apart from being referee in many WTA events, including the premier event in Wuhan.

"It is a strange feeling. I have been home this long at a stretch after many years. Travelling, though not so welcome for me, had become a habit and integral part of life. I do miss it," added Sheetal.

Of course, Sheetal is happy to spend time with husband Sunder Iyer and son Atharva, who has finished his education in London.

"It has helped me understand and prepare myself for what is important in life, and how to face the future," Sheetal said.

Acknowledging the uncertainty created by the coronavirus pandemic on the tennis calendar for the rest of the season, Sheetal said that it was important to stay optimis



Happy days: Sheetal Iyer with the Greece team which won the Davis Cup tie against Philippines in Manila.

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

mistic. "There is uncertainty about when action will resume as this lockdown has not only affected the players, but the entire tennis fraternity. I hope things will resume soon and we will be back doing what we love," she said.

Sheetal believes that the international events would resume by September or October, and they could be preceded by the national events.

"I am looking at the scenario like a bump, and hopefully it will go off soon. Tennis has provided employment to so many youngsters in officiating, and I hope it will resume at the earliest," Sheetal said.

## AIFF mulls options

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA  
KOLKATA

The current football season in the country is incomplete and the AIFF is contemplating different possibilities to tailor-make tournaments for a shortened calendar next season.

"Due to the pandemic there is every possibility that we would not be able to start the leagues till late this year. That effectively would be consuming half of the new season," said AIFF senior vice-president Subrata Dutta. "We are figuring out the possibility of temporarily changing the formats to incorporate the tournaments in a shortened calendar next season," Dutta added.

The AIFF's League Committee is likely to meet by the weekend to decide the fate of all the inconclusive tournaments. Mohun Bagan has won the I-League with four rounds to spare while the remaining positions in the tournament are undecided. There are 23 matches left.

The current season ends on May 31 and with all leagues remaining incomplete, the AIFF is left with no other options but to fudge the season.

## SAI begins online series for coaches

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Sports Authority of India (SAI) held the opening session of its maiden online skill enhancement for national and accredited coaches on Thursday with more than 4700 coaches from across federations and academies participating.

The 21-day daily online sessions are being organised in association with various National Sports Federations and would see coaches – nominated by NSFs, state

governments and SAI – interacting with eminent Indian and foreign experts and Dronacharya, Khel Ratna and Arjuna awardees.

Thursday's opening session was addressed by Sanjeeva Singh (archery), Kamlesh Mehta (table tennis) and Partha Pratim Majumder (swimming).

It was also attended by Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju, Archery Association of India president Arjun Munda and SAI DG Sandip Pradhan.

"Skill upgradation is an

important aspect of coaching.

This initiative will ensure that coaches learn from the best in their disciplines and implement them during training," Rijiju said.

The three-week programme has been designated Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) and is open to 100 coaches per session, allowing High Performance Directors to assess each participant's individual needs and interests to create a customised learning

experience.

The series will see coaches from 16 disciplines including athletics, archery, boxing, badminton, fencing, hockey, gymnastics, table tennis, swimming, weightlifting, wrestling, cycling, taekwondo, football, judo and volleyball attending the sessions.

Each session will have three 20-minute segments on lecture, video demonstration and interactions.

Hockey sessions will begin from Monday.

## Olympic Games will 'kickstart' Japan economy, says IOC official

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
TOKYO

The postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympics will provide a welcome boost to the coronavirus-hit Japanese economy next year, a senior International Olympic Committee (IOC) official claimed on Thursday.

The IOC and Japan last month took the historic decision to delay the Olympics by one year, with an Opening Ceremony planned for

July 23, 2021.

IOC official John Coates told reporters holding the Games in 2021 could be a "very positive opportunity for an economic stimulus" that could "kickstart the economy again."

Economists at the SMBC Nikko Securities have estimated postponing the Games would reduce Japan's GDP this year by some \$6 billion – to be recouped next year if the Olympic Games

actually take place.

Coates claimed Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe "may well have had in mind that your country may be in a recession then and this would be an opportunity for a great economic stimulus."

In terms of the budget, organisers have already recognised there will be "massive" additional costs from the \$12.6 billion the Games were supposed to cost.

## Teaching kids how to deal with COVID-19

REUTERS  
MAARAT MASRIN (SYRIA)

Standing in colourful hula hoops carefully spaced to illustrate social distancing, young children in a camp in war-torn Syria give an enthusiastic welcome to a puppet show staged to teach them about the coronavirus.

Volunteers visited the camp for displaced Syrians in the town of Maarat Masrin, where they taught the children how the virus spreads and how to prevent infection.

Activities included a puppet show and painting on tents, with the emphasis on social distancing rules and the right way for the children to wash their hands. The children were given soaps, sanitisers and towels.

"We have tried to spread awareness among the most fragile group, the children, through painting a mural on one of the tents in the camp as well as a puppet show that summarises the global catastrophe in three minutes," said volunteer Samir Gohary.

## Forest fires rage in Odisha

With 3,531 spots, it is the most affected

SATYASUNDAR BARIK  
BHUBANESWAR

Large tracts of forests in Odisha have been engulfed in raging fire, making it the most affected State on Thursday.

In the last seven days since April 9, Odisha has recorded 3,531 fire spots, 139 fire spots in January, 326 in February and 1,122 in March. In the first week of April, it witnessed a sudden spurt with 1,151 spots.

The State had recorded 2,472 fire spots, Telangana and Chhattisgarh with 2,339 and 2,163 respectively.

According to an alert issued on the basis of satellite imageries of SNPP (Suomi National Polar-orbiting Partnership)-VIIRS (Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer

## 'He lived the enigma'

Film, TV and theatre actor Ranjit Chowdhry passes away

NAMRATA JOSHI

Film, television and theatre actor Ranjit Chowdhry passed away in Mumbai on Wednesday at the age of 65. Hindi film viewers will remember him for the eternal boyish charm that he exuded in the middle-of-the-road films of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Chowdhry was much loved as the confused, oddball, nonchalant but cheerful and likeable youngster in the heartwarming family films of Basu Chatterjee – *Khatta Meetha* (1978) and *Baton Baton Mein* (1979), and Rishi Kapoor's *Mukherjee – Khuboosar* (1980).

## Expatriate actor

Son of well-known theatre artiste Pearl Padamsee, Chowdhry had theatre and ad world stalwart Alyque Padamsee for his step-father. After a short stint in Hindi cinema, Chowdhry moved to the United States in the mid-1980s, which marked a new phase in his life and career. He went on to become a familiar presence in many South Asian-American diaspora films and can be counted as one of the pioneering



1955-2020

*sissippi Masala* (1991), *The Perez Family* (1995) and *Kama Sutra: A Tale of Love* (1996).

## Creativity and charm

"Ranjit rang the bell in Toronto years ago and entered our home and my life with an irascibility that was such a huge part of his nature, creativity and charm. He ended up writing the script of my first feature film and starring in it as well," said Deepa Mehta, in an email to *The Hindu*. That was *Sam and Me* (1991) based on the lives of Indian immigrants in Canada, in which he drew a lot from his own experiences. She also worked with him in *Fire* (1996) and *Bollywood* (2002).

Wrote Ms. Mehta: "He was unpredictable, brilliant, and yet had a restlessness that's somehow evaded his desire to find a creative home... It's hard to believe that the irrepressible Ranjit Chowdhry is dead. His life as I knew it was Shakespearean and it was a tragedy in its scope. The other aspect of dark comedy was tragedy in his case. And that's what made him unique. He lived the enigma."

## Pit viper in Arunachal has Harry Potter link

RAHUL KARMAKAR  
GUWAHATI

A new species of green pit viper found in Arunachal Pradesh has a Harry Potter link.

The scientific name *Trimeresurus salazar* has been inspired by Salazar Slytherin, co-founder of J.K. Rowling's fictional Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

The discovery by Zeeshan A. Ayaz Mirza of Bengaluru's National Centre for Biological Sciences, Harshal S. Bhosale of Bombay Natural History Society and four others was published in the April issue of *Zoosystematics and Evolution*. The new species is the fifth variety of reptile to have been discovered in the State in a little more than a year, beginning with the crypsis keelback followed by the impressive tortoise, so named because of the striking pattern on its back. The other two species are the Arunachal pit viper, India's fifth brown pit viper but with a reddish tinge, and a naticid burrowing snake similar to the shieldtail snake found in the Western Ghats.

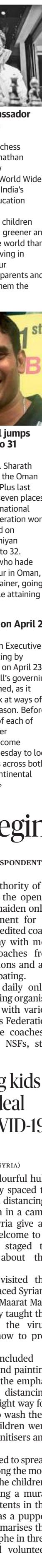


Trimeresurus salazar.

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

According to the researchers, Salazar's pit viper belongs to the genus *Trimeresurus* Laëpidae comprising "charismatic venomous serpents with morphologically as well as ecologically diverse species". At least 48 species are known to be distributed across east and southeast Asia, of which at least 15 occur in India. Of the species recorded from India, seven had been found in the northeast before the Salazar's pit viper, collected from the Pakke Tiger Reserve in Pakke-Kesang district, was identified as a separate species.

A ND-NDE



Sudden spurt: There has been an alarming increase in forest fires in Odisha this month. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Forest fires rage in Odisha

With 3,531 spots, it is the most affected

SATYASUNDAR BARIK  
BHUBANESWAR

Large tracts of forests in Odisha have been engulfed in raging fire, making it the most affected State on Thursday.

In the last seven days since April 9, Odisha has recorded 3,531 fire spots, 139 fire spots in January, 326 in February and 1,122 in March. In the first week of April, it witnessed a sudden spurt with 1,151 spots.

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