



Yediyurappa announces
₹1,610 crore COVID-19
relief package
page 5



PDP, NC condemn
extension of Mehbooba
Mufti's detention
page 8



Public transport may
resume soon with
guidelines: Gadkari
page 10



U.S. private contractors,
Venezuela dissenters plot
to oust Maduro, but fail
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NEARBY



'Home delivery' of liquor
in Punjab from today

CHEMIGARH
Punjab is all set to open
liquor vends from Thursday
and the Excise and Taxation
Department has issued
directions to the field staff to
be prepared for home
delivery as well. The home
delivery is proposed only
during the lockdown period.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

Delhi govt. to release 4,000 Tablighi members

NEW DELHI
The Delhi government will
release 4,000 persons
associated with the Tablighi
Jamaat over the coming days,
a source said on Wednesday.
While a little over 2,300 had
been rescued from the
Nizamuddin centre till April 1,
the rest were either visitors or
contacts of those rescued.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9

Police arrest 'Bois Locker Room' group admin

NEW DELHI
Delhi Police's Cyber Cell has
arrested the administrator of the
Instagram group 'Bois Locker Room', which was
being used to share offensive
messages and morphed
images of underaged girls. The
18-year-old administrator of
the group had appeared for
his Class XII board exams this
year, said the police.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 11

Virus tally crosses 50,000-mark; number of deaths surges to 1,771

Government readying train coaches, anticipating an increase in number of cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

For the second consecutive day, India on Wednesday recorded a three-digit rise in deaths though, at 126, it was lower than the previous day's spike of 195.

The number of confirmed COVID-19 cases rose by 2,958, the fifth day running when the daily increase exceeded 2,000. At 49,391 confirmed infections on Wednesday, only 14 countries have more cases than India. There were 33,514 active cases while 1,457 people recovered in the past 24 hours, the Health Ministry said. The death toll stood at 1,694.

However, reports from the State Health Departments put the total number of cases at 52,468, of which

COVID-19

35,545 are active. The number of deaths rose to 1,771.

On Wednesday, the Centre indicated that it was preparing for an "increase in cases" and readying railway coaches to function as COVID care centres. These carriages would be deployed at 215 stations.

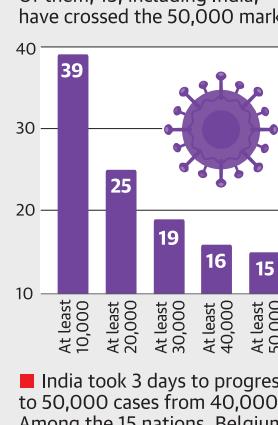
To house mild cases
While the Railways had said

Tracking the virus

India crossed 50,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases on Wednesday. While the cases and deaths are progressing much slower than in many countries, these figures have been steadily crossing milestones not yet reached by most nations

Cases

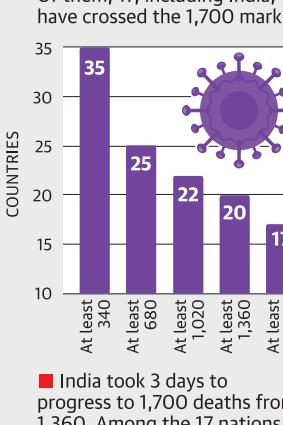
As of May 6, 39 nations had recorded at least 10,000 cases. Of them, 15, including India, have crossed the 50,000 mark



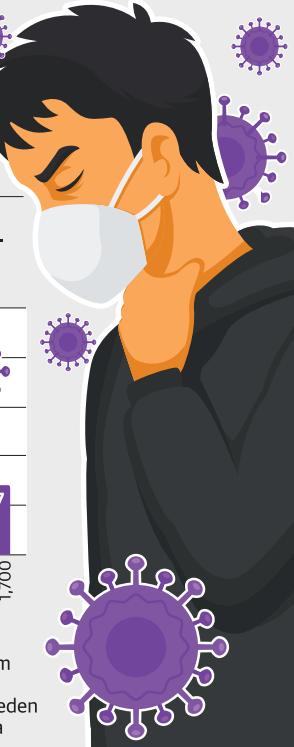
■ India took 3 days to progress to 50,000 cases from 40,000. Among the 15 nations, Belgium (13 days), Canada (6) and Peru (4) took more days than India

Deaths

As of May 6, 35 nations had recorded at least 340 deaths. Of them, 17, including India, have crossed the 1,700 mark



■ India took 3 days to progress to 1,700 deaths from 1,360. Among the 17 nations, Switzerland (11 days) and Sweden (4) took more days than India



in March that it would offer coaches if needed, this was the first time a detailed set of guidelines explaining how these compartments would be used were publicised by the Health Ministry. A COVID care centre coach ideally ought to have just one patient, but if need be it could have two at the most. These coaches would be used to house people with mild

symptoms, who could then be moved to dedicated hospitals, if required, the notification said.

Maharashtra leads the number of confirmed cases by a wide margin, with 12,089 active cases – Gujarat comes next at 4,496 – and 617 deaths. On Tuesday, the Health Ministry explained that the rise in casualties from Monday was due to

some States reclassifying some deaths as COVID-19 ones. For some weeks, West Bengal had stopped counting patients who died with COVID-19, but had accompanying ailments – diabetes and heart conditions, etc., – as "COVID deaths".

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8
MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGES 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 14

Centre is taking arbitrary decisions, say Cong. CMs

Sonia Gandhi, Manmohan question strategy on lockdown exit

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

At a videoconference with Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Wednesday, the Chief Ministers of the party-ruled States accused the Union government of taking decisions without consulting the States and not providing them with adequate funds to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

The meeting, attended by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, former Union Ministers P. Chidambaram and Jairam Ramesh and former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, was convened to discuss the policy to exit lockdown 3.0, scheduled to end on May 17.

"After May 17th, what? And after May 17th, how? What criteria are the Government of India using to judge how long the lockdown is to continue...?" Ms. Gandhi said at the meeting.

Endorsing her statement, Dr. Singh said, "The CMs need to deliberate and ask as to what is the strategy of the Government of India to get the country out of the lockdown."

Mr. Rahul Gandhi, Wayanad MP, said the central piece of the strategy to fight COVID-19 was "to protect the elderly as also those who are diabetic and have a heart



Taking stock: Congress president Sonia Gandhi with party Chief Ministers during a meeting on Wednesday. ■ PTI

condition".

Mr. Chidambaram said, "States are bleeding in terms of finances, but no money is being allocated by the government of India. A number of newspapers have brought out the unavailability of finances with States."

Punjab committees

Giving details of the meeting on Twitter, Congress communications chief Randeep Surjewala wrote Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh had informed that his government had set up two committees: to strategise on how to come out of the lockdown and to suggest measures for economic revival.

"Concern is people sitting in Delhi are deciding on classification of zones without

knowing what's happening on the ground," he was quoted as saying by Mr. Surjewala.

Puducherry Chief Minister V. Narayansamy, too, said the Centre was deciding on zones without consulting the States and creating "an anomalous situation". "People sitting in Delhi can't tell the States. No State or CM is consulted. Why? The PM is not saying a word on an economic package for the States," he said.

Both Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel highlighted the precarious financial situation of the States in the absence of Central assistance.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

+ Indians returning on Navy ships may have to pay up

External Affairs Ministry will take a call

SUHASINI HAIDAR
DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

Not just trains and flights, the government has decided that passengers who will be brought back by naval ships will also be charged for the service. While the charges will be "reasonable" or nominal, sources said a final decision would be taken by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

On Tuesday, the Ministry of Home Affairs had hinted at the possibility of a charge in its 'Standard Operating Procedure' for movement of Indian nationals stranded outside the country.

On payment basis
According to the Annexure (2-iv / Order No. (40-3/2020-DM-I(A)) issued on May 5, "The cost of travel as specified by the Ministry of Civil Aviation/Department of Mil-

Rescue flights delayed

The government's plan to operate Air India flights to bring back Indians from around the world was deferred on Wednesday by 24 to 48 hours. Sources confirmed that the delay was because the crew were required to undergo COVID-19 tests. ▶ PAGE 10

itary Affairs will be borne by such travellers."

Defence sources as well as MEA officials confirmed that sorties on naval ships and Air Force aircraft would be on payment basis, which would be determined by the MEA and the Department of Military Affairs.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

State of distress



Homeward bound: A migrant worker vacating a makeshift tent in Chikmagalur, Karnataka, on Wednesday as she leaves for her home town after the relaxation of restrictions imposed to curb the spread of COVID-19. ■ PTI

Hacker sees security flaws in Aarogya Setu

Developers of virus tracking app say no personal information is at risk

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
NEW DELHI

Ethical hacker Robert Baptiste on Wednesday alleged that security flaws in the coronavirus tracking app Aarogya Setu enabled him to see that five people at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and two at the Army headquarters were unwell.

Mr. Baptiste, who goes by Elliot Alderson on Twitter, also claimed that there was "one infected person at the Indian Parliament and three at the Home office".

On Tuesday, he tweeted that there were security issues with the app. Tagging the official account of Aarogya Setu, he said, "A security issue has been found in your app. The privacy of 90 million Indians is at stake."

I was able know who is infected, unwell, made a self assessment in the area of his choice.
Basically, I was able to see if someone was sick at the PMO or the Indian Parliament. I was able to see if someone was sick in a specific house if I wanted

ROBERT BAPTISTE, Ethical hacker



No personal information of any user has been proven to be at risk by this ethical hacker.

Team Aarogya Setu assures everyone that no data or security breach has been identified

TEAM AAROGYA SETU

Can you contact me in private?"
In response to the issues raised by Mr. Baptiste, the team of Aarogya Setu, in a statement, said no personal information of any user was proven to be at risk. "We were alerted by an ethical hacker of a potential

security issue of Aarogya Setu... No personal information of any user has been proven to be at risk by this ethical hacker. We are continuously testing and upgrading our systems. Team Aarogya Setu assures everyone that no data or security breach has been identified," the statement said.

Following this statement, Mr. Baptiste tweeted that he was able to "... know who is infected, unwell, made a self-assessment in the area of his choice. Basically, I was able to see if someone was sick at the PMO or the Indian Parliament. I was able to see if someone was sick in a specific house if I wanted... This is the issue."

SOURCE CODE ▶ PAGE 10

Delhi Police suffers first COVID-19 death

Two govt. hospitals refused to admit constable Amit Kumar; alleges colleague

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

A 32-year-old Delhi Police constable died on Tuesday night, hours after developing the symptoms of COVID-19. At least two government hospitals refused to admit him, his colleague alleged.

This is the first death in Delhi Police with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic. Deputy Commissioner of Police (North West) Vijayanta Arya said constable Amit Kumar was posted at Bharat Nagar police station. A resident of Haryana's Sonipat, Kumar is survived by his wife and a three-year-old son. Ten officers who came in contact with him have been quarantined, the police said.

A constable-rank colleague who was taking care of Kumar since Monday said he initially had fever but his



Constable Amit Kumar

condition deteriorated around 2.30 a.m. on Tuesday.

Kumar complained of shortness of breath and around 7.30 a.m., the colleague took him to Haiderpur COVID centre. "The staff there said they would conduct the tests. I told them to admit him but they asked me to take him to Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital," he said.

At BSA Hospital, the two

policemen allegedly waited for two and a half hours but the staff there said they could not admit Kumar.

"I took him to Deep Chand Bandhu Hospital from where we were sent to a COVID centre in Ashok Vihar for tests and check-up," the colleague said. The staff at the centre agreed to admit Kumar but allegedly said he will have to manage everything on his own. "I told them he can't even talk, he won't be able to do anything," said the colleague.

Kumar's condition deteriorated and he then brought Kumar back to his accommodation and made several calls to different hospitals but all of them allegedly refused to admit him.

The Station House Officer and other seniors at Bharat Nagar police station had been informed about Kumar's condition, it has been learnt.

Around 8.30 p.m., the colleague received a call from a senior informing him that Kumar can be admitted to Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital. "I drove fast but he died minutes before we reached the hospital," he said.

Kumar's test report arrived on Wednesday and he tested positive for COVID-19.

"Had any hospital agreed to admit him, he could have been saved," the colleague said. He said he was in constant touch with Kumar's family. "His wife is inconsolable. She is constantly asking to bring him back," he said.

A senior police officer said movement of his family from Sonipat will be facilitated if they are willing to visit.

Commissioner of Police S.N. Shrivastava tweeted that all assistance will be provided to Kumar's family.

Timings

DELHI

THURSDAY, MAY. 07
RISE 05:36 SET 19:01
RISE 19:01 SET 05:33
FRIDAY, MAY. 08
RISE 05:36 SET 19:01
RISE 20:09 SET 06:16
SATURDAY, MAY. 09
RISE 05:35 SET 19:02
RISE 21:17 SET 07:04

Delhi Weather

max min

Delhi City 35 24

Safdarjung 35 24

Palam 36 23

Delhi Palam Today

38°C Dry weather with

pleasant morning turns very

warm day with partly cloudy

sky. Night will be pleasant.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow

38°C A comfortable morning

with light winds and sunny sky.

Dry and very warm weather to

prevail.

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Air quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi 139 Gurugram 132

Ghaziabad 130 Faridabad 128

Noida 120 Greater Noida 120

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 24 HOURS) SOURCE: CPCB

IN BRIEF

5 STUDENTS FROM SSCBS WIN GLOBAL CASE COMPETITION AT HARVARD

Open Roads Blvd 31

Spann Salgotra BHU-21

Suresh Verma Bhupinder Singh DDU-21

Kunal Vats Raghav Nath Sparsh Sehgal won the event that

saw participation of over 140

teams from across the globe.

Ensure medical aid to Safoora Zargar, panel tells DG (Prisons)

The JMI student, who is pregnant, was arrested in connection with the Delhi riots

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A high-powered committee headed by a Delhi High Court judge has directed DG (Prisons) here to ensure that adequate medical assistance is provided to Safoora Zargar, who was arrested in connection with riots that broke out in north-east Delhi in February, and other pregnant prisoners currently lodged in jail.

Ms. Zargar, who is three-months pregnant, was arrested in April. She is pursuing her masters degree from Jamia Millia Islamia. The panel headed by Justice Hima Kohli gave the direction after perusing a representation sent by Wazahat Habibullah, chairperson of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, for the healthcare



The riots broke out in north-east Delhi in February this year. ■ FILE PHOTO: SANDEEP SAXENA

IIT-Delhi start-up comes out with washable mask

It's capable of 99.2% bacterial filtration

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

With face masks becoming mandatory to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, an IIT-Delhi start-up 'Nanosafe Solutions' has launched an antimicrobial and washable face mask 'NSafe'. The said mask is reusable up to 50 launderings, thus greatly cutting down the cost of use.

IIT-Delhi said that the 'NSafe' mask is a triple-layered product consisting of inner hydrophilic layer for comfort, middle layer having antimicrobial activity and outer most layer having



water and oil repellent behaviour.

"NSafe mask has 99.2% bacterial filtration efficiency [at 3 microns] along with breathability and splash resistance," the institute said.

Gurugram orders staggered opening of shops and restricts movement

Result of 17 more samples positive; COVID-19 tally 104 now

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

The local administration on Wednesday ordered staggered opening of the shops, except the essential commodities establishments, dividing them into three categories and reduced the operation hours, amid rising number of COVID-19 cases in the district.

Besides, the movement of individuals and vehicles has also been curtailed.

Meanwhile, 17 more samples have tested positive for COVID-19 in Gurugram taking

"A vilification campaign is being run against her and her unborn child on social media, and misogynistic comments are being made. Several comments outraging her dignity and threatening her family have also been made," read the notice.

Demanding information on whether the accused have been identified and arrested, and whether measures have been taken to remove the offending posts, DCW Chairperson Swati Malilai said: "Whether she is guilty or not will be decided by the court. But the way the trolls have outraged her modesty and vilified a pregnant woman's character is shameful."

The DCW has asked Delhi Police to provide the relevant information by May 10.

Extension of interim bail of prisoners recommended

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A high-powered committee has recommended further extension of the interim bail of 2,177 undertrial prisoners as, it said, it would be dangerous to put them back in jail during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The committee, headed by Delhi High Court Justice Hima Kohli, was of the opinion that the interim bail of such prisoners needed to be extended by another 45 days from the date of expiry of the relief and a judicial order was required in this regard from the High Court.

In the meeting held on Tuesday, it directed the Member Secretary of the Delhi State Legal Services Authority to place the committee's recommendations before the Registrar General of the Delhi High Court for necessary action.

Police try to interrogate DMC chief at his house

They leave after public outcry

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Delhi Police on Wednesday visited Delhi Minorities Commission chief Zafarul Islam Khan's residence to interrogate him in connection with a FIR lodged against him on charges of sedition.

A team led by an ACPO rank officer reached Mr. Khan's house but had to face a public outcry as AAP MLA Amanullah Khan and other local leaders along with their supporters gathered outside his residence.

The police team left the location and said they will serve another notice to Mr. Khan and ask him to join the probe. Mr. Khan said that he suffers from old age-related physical illnesses that make him vulnerable to COVID-19 and therefore cannot leave his house but was available to answer questions.

In a statement, Mr. Khan's lawyer said, "Section 160 of

the CrPC mandates that the police cannot compel attendance of a person above 65 years age at any place other than their residence for the purpose of investigation and interrogation."

An FIR has been lodged against Mr. Khan under Sections 124 A (Sedition) and 153 A, based on a complaint by a south Delhi resident.

The complainant has alleged that Mr. Khan, on April 28, had shared a post on social media which was "provocative". In the post, Mr. Khan thanked Kuwait for taking note of the persecution of Indian Muslims, in the context of the violence in north-east Delhi.

On May 3, Mr. Khan said he had not deleted his post and stood by it. "It has been erroneously reported that I have apologised for the tweet and deleted it. I apologise not for the tweet but because it was ill-timed."

HC seeks govt's reply on quarantine wards plea

'Lack of doctors, hygiene at Narela flats'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the Delhi government to reply to a petition alleging it was not providing doctors or maintaining hygiene in the flats, sufficient number of sanitation workers for carrying out sanitisation and disinfection of toilets and rooms, improving the quality of food and make provision of linen, soap, sanitisers and other essential items.

The court asked the government to submit its response in three days and listed the case for further hearing on May 14.

The plea alleged that the Delhi government is not tak-

ing adequate steps to control the spread of COVID-19 and implement quarantine facilities which include making doctors available, providing adequate hygiene in the flats, sufficient number of sanitation workers for carrying out sanitisation and disinfection of toilets and rooms, improving the quality of food and make provision of linen, soap, sanitisers and other essential items.

The government's counsel, however, stated that all facilities are available at the fourteen towers constructed by the DDA at Narela.

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT e-Procurement Notice INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

The Executive Engineer HPPWD, Bangana Division Distt Una H.P on behalf of Governor of H.P invites the online bids for item rate, in electronic tendering in 2 Cover System for the below mentioned works from the eligible and approved contractors/Firms registered with HPPWD Department.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimate Cost	EMD	Time Limit	Cost of Tender	Eligible class of contractor
1.	Periodical maintenance of Una Barsa Bhabla Kalkhar Nerchowk road(SH- P/L) 40mm thick bituminous concrete in km. 28/0 to 33/0 including culvert at RD 28/200 and 500mtr. Drain under MDR.	16892444	201500	One Month	5000	Class-A

1. Availability of Bid Document and mode of submission: The Bid document is available online and bid should be submitted in online mode on website <https://hpptenders.gov.in>. Bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of bids, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities (CA). "Aspiring bidders who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-tendering in HPPWD may obtain the same from the website: <https://hpptenders.gov.in>. Digital signature is mandatory to participate in the e-tendering. Bidders already possessing the digital signature issued from authorized CAs can use the same in this tender.

2. Key Dates:

1	Date of Online Publication	22.05.2020 11:00 HRS
2	Document Download Start and End Date	22.05.2020 17:00 HRS 29.05.2020 upto 17:00 HRS
3	Bid Submission Start and End Date	22.05.2020 17:00 HRS 29.05.2020 upto 17:00 HRS
4	Physical Submission of EMD and Cost of Tender Document	30.05.2020 upto 11:00HRS
5	Date of Technical Bid opening.	30.05.2020 11:30 HRS
6	Evaluation of Technical Bid.	Evaluation of technical Bid will be followed after verification of the documents.

1. TENDER DETAILS:

2. The Tender Documents shall be uploaded online in 2 Covers:

i) Cover 1: shall contain scanned copies of all "Technical Documents/ Eligibility Information".

ii) Cover2: shall contain "BOQ/Financial Bid", where contractor will quote his offer for each item.

3. SUBMISSION OF ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS: The bidders are required to submit (a) original demand draft towards the cost of bid document and (b) original bid security/Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) and other Technical Documents in O/o Executive Engineer HPPWD Division Bangana H.P as specified in key dates Sr. No. 5 on Tender Opening Date, failing which the bids will be declared non-responsive.

4. BID OPENING DETAILS: The bids shall be opened on **30.05.2020** at 11:30 HRS in the office Executive Engineer, Bangana Division HPPWD Bangana H.P. by the authorised officer. In their interest the tenderers are advised to be present along with original documents at the time of opening of tenders. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue.

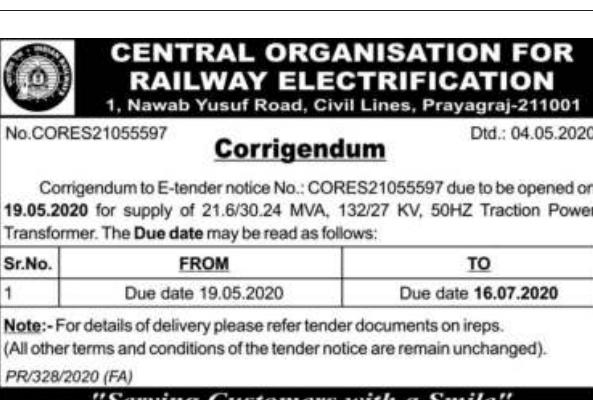
5. The bids for the work shall remain valid for acceptance for a period not less than 120 days after the deadline date for bid submission.

6. Other details can be seen in the bidding documents. The officer inviting tender shall not be held liable for any delays due to system failure beyond his control. Even though the system will attempt to notify the bidders of any bid updates, the Employer shall not be liable for any information not received by the bidder. It is the bidders' responsibility to verify the website for the latest information related to the tender.

7. The copy of EPF No/GST No must be attached.

Executive Engineer
HPPWD Division Bangana
Distt Una H.P on behalf of
Governor of Himachal Pradesh

HP / 0283/20-21



Corrigendum

Dtd.: 04.05.2020

Corrigendum to E-tender notice No.: CORES21055597 due to be opened on

19.05.2020 for supply of 21.6/30.24 MVA, 13/27 KV, 50HZ Traction Power Transformer. The Due date may be read as follows:

Sr.No. FROM TO

1 Due date 19.05.2020 Due date 16.07.2020

Note:- For details of delivery please refer tender documents on ieps.

(All other terms and conditions of the tender notice are remain unchanged).

PR/32/2020 (FA)

"Serving Customers with a Smile"



CORRIGENDUM

E-Tender Notice No.: L-Open-2019-20-23 Dated 05.03.2020. Name of works :

Provision of lifts (40 Nos) at Station @ 02 lifts per Station. Tender Open on : 05.05.2020. Tender to be open on : 20.05.2020.

Govt. launches Twitter handle for queries about virus

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government launched the Twitter handle '@DelhiVsCorona' to ensure the dissemination of "authentic information" about the disease.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had also set up a team of representatives to monitor this handle to ensure "speedy solutions".

"The Twitter handle @DelhiVsCorona will be a one-stop solution for all the COVID-19-related queries and complaints," the Delhi government said in a statement.

"This team will gather the live status of the situation in the government hospitals and provide authentic information on COVID-19," it said.

The team will respond and solve the issues of patients and doctors in the government hospitals, the statement also said.

'Can't allow movement on Haryana borders'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHANDIGARH

Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij on Wednesday said he has been receiving requests everyday from people wanting to cross the State border with Delhi but he will not give in to any pressure.

It will not work with me, he said, adding that the issue was linked to people's safety.

He said Haryana has sealed its border with Delhi as a spike in COVID-19 cases has been witnessed in the past few days in the State, with most cases being reported from districts adjoining the national capital.

Ever since we sealed these borders, I have to deal with many kind of pressures, which people try to put on me. But I am willing to take any kind of pressure because I have to keep people of my state safe, Mr. Vij said.

A few days ago, Mr. Vij had issued orders to stop daily movement of people on inter-State borders, especially the Delhi-Gurugram border.

Mr. Vij said during the past few days he has been getting phone calls daily as some people try to use their influence after which pressure is put on him to allow certain individuals or some people from a particular department cross the border.

We have also sealed borders Punjab, Himachal, U.P. and Rajasthan. This is our right, we have to protect our people, he said.

BJP leader for home delivery of liquor

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government should start home delivery of liquor to prevent an increase in COVID-19 cases and smuggling. Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri told Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal here on Wednesday.

He also demanded the rollback of increased prices of liquor arguing that it could trigger smuggling of liquor from neighbouring States of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

"The government should start a special website on which people can book and buy liquor online. With the introduction of home delivery, many people will get employment and social distancing will also take place," the BJP leader said.

Doubling time of COVID-19 in Capital is 11 days, says Minister

Delhi government removes one more area from containment zone

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi Health Minister Satyendra Jain on Wednesday said, "Doubling time of COVID-19 is now 11 days. There was a time when it was 4-4.5 days. If doubling time reaches 20 days, we will be more comfortable. About four days ago, it was 13 days, but now it has decreased as thousands of pending reports are coming."

In a related development, one more area was removed from the "containment zone" list by the Delhi government on Wednesday.

A containment zone has a stricter form of lockdown and entry and exit of people are not allowed in these zones and there are 87 such zones in the city.

Slams Central govt.

Meanwhile, AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said that the Central government was not providing financial assistance to Delhi to fight COVID-19 stating that Delhi is a Union Territory.

"The Central government



Homeless people at a food distribution centre in the Capital on Wednesday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

HELPLINE NUMBERS

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

had distributed ₹16,500 crore to almost all States, but Delhi was not given a single rupee from the disaster management funds and no BJP leader questioned this," he said.

Also, the Delhi government on Wednesday said that they were taking mea-

sures to ensure minimal disruption of immunisation services amid the nationwide lockdown.

Immunisation services

"The Delhi government is ensuring immunisation services at functional fixed public facilities and the govern-

ment has already issued instructions to all the District Immunisation Officers to update the list of children eligible for vaccination who could not be vaccinated due to the lockdown. Birth dose of vaccines [OPV, Hepatitis] and BCG were being given to newborns at all the delivery points even during the lockdown," an official statement said.

A total of 83 people working at Delhi government-run Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital, including doctors and nurses, have tested positive till now, said hospital officials on Wednesday.

Road to recovery



Shanti Path in Chanakyapuri wears a deserted look during the nationwide lockdown on Wednesday. ■ V. V. KRISHNAN

Police chief reviews opening of city liquor vends

Joint CPs told to suggest DSIIDC authorities to sell alcohol online to avoid crowding

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police Commissioner S.N. Srivastava on Wednesday held a videoconference with officers to review the preparedness and arrangements of personnel to han-

dle the COVID-19 pandemic.

He directed them to disinfest police stations and take adequate precautions as more police personnel were tested positive for the virus.

Amid huge crowds gathering at liquor shops across the

city, Mr. Srivastava re-

viewed the situation and heard strategies made by the Joint CPs for maintaining social distancing and crowd control. He directed Joint CPs to conduct meetings with DSIIDC officials and

suggest to them to execute sale through online portals to avoid crowding at vends.

Joint CPs and district DCPs should ensure that instructions issued by the government are complied with by all vends, he added.

Only half the liquor shops open shutters in Gurugram

Outlets struggle to meet demand due to scarcity of staff and stock as complaints of overcharging pour in

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Numerous complaints of overcharging were received with the opening of liquor shops in Gurugram on Wednesday, more than a month after they were shut due to the lockdown.

However, only half of the vends could open due to the scarcity of staff and stock. The upscale DLF areas recorded low business while long queues were witnessed in Sector 40, South City-I and on Golf Course Extension Road.

The vendors ensured that social distancing norms were largely adhered to and did not allow more than four-five customers inside. But there were complaints of overcharging at many places.

Deputy Excise and Taxation Commissioner, East Zone, Aruna Singh conceded that there were reports of overcharging. She said no maximum price was fixed for liquor in the State and incidents of overcharging were because of demand-supply

mismatch. Ms. Singh said the situation would become normal in a couple of days. Almost half of the 112 vendors opened their shutters in East zone while 26 sites are yet to be auctioned. The auction process was suspended midway due to the lockdown in March. It will resume on Thursday," he said. The officer said that some of the owners struggled due to the scarcity of stock and staff and many had not reached rent agreement for the spaces, forcing them to remain shut. He, however, expressed hope that all the vendors would become operational in the next few days.

Auction to resume
Deputy Excise and Taxation Commissioner, West Zone, H.C. Dahiya, said only 65 out of the total 106 vends under his jurisdiction opened and 40 sites are yet to be

auctioned. The auction process was suspended midway due to the lockdown in March. It will resume on Thursday," he said. The officer said that some of the owners struggled due to the scarcity of stock and staff and many had not reached rent agreement for the spaces, forcing them to remain shut. He, however, expressed hope that all the vendors would become operational in the next few days.

Meanwhile, DLF areas, including Cyber City recorded poor business due to the closure of the offices and the Cyber Hub. Sanjay of Krishna Wines near Ardee City said that around a hundred customers had come to them enquiring about liquor since morning, but they did not have enough stock. Waiting for his turn outside a liquor shop on Vikas Marg, Kanishk Sharma said that he was not

comfortable paying higher price after waiting in the queue for so long. "But I don't mind paying extra bucks if the delivery is made at my doorstep," he quipped.

The vend's manager said the rush was less than expected and the people seemed sceptical about venturing out due to corona threat. Ms. Singh said tenders for liquor vends in Haryana were given for a particular location and therefore online supply of liquor could be allowed only after necessary amendment in the excise policy. "As of now, a vendor is allowed to cater to a particular area only," said the officer.



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Back in U.P., migrants stare at an uncertain future

Many heave a sigh of relief after returning to their home State, but they have no means of livelihood once lockdown ends

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

The palatial red-white façade of the Charbagh railway station towers above Manfur Nishad and his two young sons.

As the evening light fades, his emotions reflect a sombre mix. While he is relieved to be back in his home State after being stranded in Gujarat during the lockdown, he is disappointed to find that he doesn't have a direct bus to his village near Kalpi town. The bus will drop him in the district headquarters of Jalaun, 45 km west of his destination, and 220 km from the State capital.

"If they drop me in Jalaun, I will be stranded. I don't have a single penny in my pocket to pay for any fare," said Mr. Nishad, desperately calling his relatives on the phone for guidance.

It is 7 p.m. on Tuesday, an hour since Mr. Nishad and 1,200-odd passengers got down from a special Shramik Express at the end of a 1,26-km journey from Vadodara.

In the labyrinth of parked State-run buses, the migrants, most of them labourers, workers and artisans, try to locate the designated vehicle that would take them home free of cost.

While the migrants said they were charged for the train journey, ranging from ₹600 to ₹800 each – they carried tickets displaying a fare of ₹555 – Mr. Nishad and his 12 colleagues managed with some monetary help from a senior policeman at Rajpipla in Narmada district.

Attempted walk

Mr. Nishad spent more than a month under quarantine in a school in the Gujarat town, 130 km from Surat, where he worked in a sari firm. After the lockdown was declared, Mr. Nishad and others tried to walk back home in Uttar Pradesh and even managed to reach near Rajpipla after



Manfur Nishad and his sons wait for a bus at Lucknow's Charbagh; (right) a passenger shows his train ticket. ■ OMAR RASHID



three days of toil before being stopped by police. Like lakhs of workers across the country, Mr. Nishad had no option but to return home. The textile firm he worked for shut and his ration ran out, forcing him to survive on the food provided by the government. But Mr. Nishad says he got bored of the "tehri" (spiced rice) served to them. "Ek mahina toh buri tarah se kata [We passed the month with much difficulty]," he says. The ₹500-₹600 he had with him before being sent to quarantine was spent on bidi and tobacco, he admits.

"Had they run the train then [in March], we would not have had to go through this difficulty. Many people are still stranded," Mr. Nishad says, echoing a common refrain among the other migrants.

Unemployed and back home for an unknown period, the migrant workers stare at an uncertain future. Like many migrants, he hopes to use his time and energy on farming; his family owns 8 bighas.

Unfair fare

A little distance away, Ajay Kumar, 24, was frantically trying to locate the right bus to Mainpuri. With a bag hanging on his left shoulder and a food packet, he says the ordeal would have been avoid-

Strength of home

Kallu Nishad of Kanpur faced a peculiar situation. He lost his Aadhaar card during the journey and approached officials for help. He heaved a

ed had the government acted sooner and made the journey free of cost.

"Nai kiya toh kya kare, marboori thi toh auna pada. Itna takleef nahi jhelna padta [But what can we do if they haven't? We had no choice but to return. However, it could have been made less arduous for us]," he says. In Surat, he worked at a dye and painting firm.

After arriving at Charbagh, the migrants were made to queue up at screening booths before being sorted for boarding buses. All the while, they were asked to maintain physical distance through the public announcement system.

Vinod, a native of the backward Siddharthnagar district, said he had to pay a total of ₹2,800 for his wife and three minor children. "It should have been less," complains Vinod, who sold 'khari toast' in a Gujarat town. Kusma, who is travelling with her son, 7, and husband, has argued that the migrants should not have been asked to pay. They paid ₹1,200 for the journey by bus to Vadodara and train to Lucknow for three members.

Financial stability

Kallu Nishad of Kanpur faced a peculiar situation. He lost his Aadhaar card during the journey and approached officials for help. He heaved a

sigh of relief when he was told that the medical certificate issued to him during quarantine in Narmada would serve as proof of identity. "Store it carefully," an official told him.

Kallu is an artisan in the embroidery sector in Surat and paid ₹600 for the journey with the money borrowed from a relative. Just before the lockdown, he was due to receive his wages for 12 days, but the manager delayed the payment till March 25, when the lockdown came into force. He then tried to walk back but was stopped. He stares at an uncertain financial situation, but argues that staying hungry at a familiar place is better than being stranded in an alien city.

"Wahan khane ko nahi milega toh kya karenge, ghar mein jorukha-sukha hai chalaenge [What would I do if I did not get food there? At home, I can manage even with meagre means]," he says.

Hariom, his wife, young child, ageing father and another female relative, also waited at the station for their bus. He was not sure if and when he would return to Tejgadh, near Vadodara, where he sold chowmein. "Sochega, abhi kehne ka nahi hai. Dhanda chalega toh Jayenge, warna yahan rahenge [I will think, can't say anything now. If my work resumes, I

will go back. Or else, I will stay here]," he says. He has five bighas of land to farm.

A young migrant who sold juices in Godhra said the government should have brought the migrants free of charge as they were without any income. He was dismayed by the entire experience and did not want to work outside any more. "Ab idhar hi padene. U.P. mein hi rehke kamaenge [Now I will stay back to study and earn in U.P.]," he said, as he advanced in the queue for thermal screening.

The enigma of return

Many like Pinki Srivastava of Kannauj, who drives an auto for a living, look forward to going back to work after the lockdown is over. But Suraj, a native of Agra's Bah, is unsure. He sold namkeen in Gujarat. Along with financial instability, migrants ran the risk of infection. "Kya pata, zindagi rahi toh phir aayenge [Who knows, if all is well, I will return]," he says.

The lockdown has not only affected workers and labourers but also derailed the lives of students. Arjun Patel of Varanasi is one of them. A PhD scholar in physics at M.S. University in Vadodara, Mr. Patel says he was not planning to go back home but had no option after the lockdown was extended. All research work has been sus-

pended till September. "What will I do there? Our work will be pushed back by six-seven months."

He is unhappy that the migrants were not informed beforehand that they would be charged for the travel. "I don't mind the fare. It's up to the government. But they should have given us the correct information. We were under the impression it would be free," he said.

Many migrants had attempted walking back home or hiring a vehicle before being put under quarantine.

Amir Ahmed, a construction worker in a Vadodara village and native of Budaun, did not take the chance. "People told me not to go back. What if someone thrashes you? How will you handle it," he said from inside the train moments after it arrived.

The passengers said their journey from Vadodara was smooth and they received food in Jhansi.

Situation so far

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has asked officials to prepare a strategy to provide employment opportunities for 15-20 lakh people who have come back to the State or are on the way. While those migrants without symptoms will be put under 14 days of home quarantine and given a ration kit, suspected cases will be sent to institutional quarantine.

So far, 19 trains from other States have arrived in various districts of Uttar Pradesh, including Agra, Kanpur, Jaunpur, Gorakhpur, Lucknow, Bareilly, Prayagraj and Ballia, said Awanish Awasthi, Additional Chief Secretary, Home Department. Each train carries around 1,200 persons.

Of the 19 trains, 13 were from Gujarat and four from Maharashtra. Nine more were expected on Wednesday, while clearance had been given for 38 fresh trains, said the official.



'One should take safety measures for family'

An Aligarh doctor recounts his fight with COVID-19

ANUJ KUMAR
GHAZIABAD

"The biggest worry was the health of family and friends," said Anant Sharma, one of the three doctors of Aligarh Muslim University's Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College who tested positive for COVID-19, after he was discharged on Wednesday. His second consecutive report came out negative on Tues-

day. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

were tested. "Thankfully, they all tested negative."

He could not determine his source of infection. He said he had worked with the other two doctors before they tested positive. "As none of us was posted in the fever clinic, we were not given PPE. However, now every patient who comes to the hospital is tested for COVID-19 and all the doctors have been given PPE."

Communal virus'

When he was in the hospital, a local MLA held JNMC responsible for the spread of the virus. The district administration complained of delays in reports. "Like COVID-19, the communal virus also demands social distancing," said Dr. Sharma. "The more you ignore it, the less it will spread."

Dr. Sharma has rented a flat in a society in Zakaria Market, near the medical college. "It is a predominant Muslim locality and the support we got from our neighbours will remain etched in our memory. So does the support of my friends and senior members of Resident Doctors' Association. Their messages, calls, and, not to forget, food gave me confidence that I am not alone in this fight."

Dr. Sharma has been advised two weeks of home quarantine. "I am eager to return to the front line. With the number of cases increasing in the city, that's where I should be," he said.

Let's visit quarantine centres together'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

In a meeting with Opposition leaders through video-conferencing on Tuesday, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar invited the leader of

High Court stays FIR against BJP chief Nadda

Post against Rahul by party IT cell chief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

The Rajasthan High Court has stayed a first information report registered against Bharatiya Janata Party president J.P. Nadda in connection with a social media post made by the party's IT department in-charge Amit Malviya allegedly disparaging Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over the fight against COVID-19 pandemic in Bhilwara.

The FIR was registered in Hanumangarh on the complaint of a Congress worker, Manoj Kumar Saini, who had taken exception to a

tweet by Mr. Malviya. The tweet said: "Sonia Gandhi claims Bhilwara tested 22 lakh people due to Rahul's warning! Wherever there is Rahul [Gandhi], can exaggeration and maths blunder be behind?"

No role in tweet'

Mr. Nadda had filed a criminal miscellaneous petition in the High Court, seeking directions for quashing of the FIR with the contention that he had no role in Mr. Malviya's tweet and he had falsely been accused of controlling the office of the IT department in-charge.

Home delivery of liquor likely in Punjab from today

Haryana to set up teams to crack down on liquor smuggling

VIKAS VASUDEVA
CHANDIGARH

Punjab is all set to open liquor vends in non-containment areas in the State from Thursday and the Excise and Taxation Department has issued direction to the field staff to be prepared for home delivery as well.

The home delivery is proposed only during the lockdown period, a senior official said on Wednesday.

"In view of the pandemic situation, we have proposed to start online delivery during the lockdown period. All liquor expect Punjab-Made Liquor (PML) can be delivered up to a maximum of two litres," said Navdeep Bhinder, Additional Excise and Taxation Commissioner. Ms.

Bhinder said the final decision on home delivery would be taken by the Cabinet on Thursday.

Shehzad Luthra, a liquor contractor, has demanded that the State government should come to the rescue of the business which is reeling under severe loss.

Extend business year'

"The dealers have lost several days of sales. The government must extend the business year from 365 working days to 465 so that the trade could regain its sales, protect the government revenue and manage to survive this prolonged agony which is perhaps the worst in many decades," he said.

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar directed

all Deputy Commissioners and Superintendents of Police to constitute district-level teams headed by a Magistrate to eradicate smuggling of illegal liquor across the borders and also prevent the supply of non-duty-paid liquor from the distilleries to the vends.

Mr. Khattar presided over a meeting with the officials through videoconferencing.

The Chief Minister directed the DCs and the SPs to ensure quick installation and regular monitoring of flow meters in every distillery. While directing the SPs to identify illegal godowns, if any, Mr. Khattar said an inventory of such liquor seized should be prepared, according to an official statement.

Assam traders' body seeks relief from donations and shutdowns

'Spare us for 2 years to put State's economy back on track'

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

A traders' federation in Assam has sought relief from donations by students', social and underground groups and periodic shutdowns in order to bring the State's economy back on the rails after the COVID-19 lockdown.

The All Assam Traders' Association, representing some 500,000 small and medium traders, said various groups should spare them from donations – a soft word for protection money – and avoid calling shutdowns for at least two years after lockdown ends formally.

The association has also sought relief from all kinds of taxes and interest on bank loans for a similar period.

Cost of bandhs

A 2003 study by the Federation of Industries and Commerce of North Eastern Region said Assam loses an estimated ₹900 crore annually because of Statewide, regional, district and localised shutdowns. An average trader also ends up paying 'donations' to at least 30 groups of all kinds every year.

"All organisations can help us recover faster from the economic disaster if they desist from referring to as 'bandh' culture.'

TENDER NOTICE					
SR. NO.	NAME OF BOARD/CORP./AUTH	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE (TIME)	AMOUNT / EMD (APPROX.) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH
1	MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, KAITHAL	NIGHT SWEEPING IN ALL COMMERCIAL AREAS AND MARKETS OF MC, KAITHAL.	04.05.2020 13.05.2020	83.52 LACS	http://etenders.hry.nic.in
2	HARYANA STATE HORTICULTURE DEVELOPMENT AGENCY	EMANELMENT OF REPUTED MANUFACTURING COMPANIES FOR SUPPLYING OF PLASTIC CRATES TO BENEFICIARIES OF THE STATE ON 50% ASSISTANCE THROUGH DBT UNDER MISSION FOR INTEGRATED HORTICULTURE (MIDH) FOR THE YEAR 2020-21	CLOSING DATE 14.05.2020	1 LAKH	http://etenders.hry.nic.in
3	MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, GURUGRAM.	CLEANING AND DE-SILTING OF STORM WATER DRAIN PIPE LINE, BOX TYPE DRAIN AND REPAIRING OF SOME DAMAGE LINE AND NEW LINE IN WARD NO.3 SECTOR 22 AND 23, GURUGRAM INCLUDING 02 YEARS MAINTENANCE + 1 OTHER WORK	04.05.2020 11.05.2020	201.90 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in
4	HVPNL PANCHKULA	CLEANING OF MOISTURE AND INSULATION OF COATING ON 11 KV BUS BAR OF 11 KV CUB PANEL SET O/ 12.05/16 MVA 66/11 KV POWER T/F T-1 INCLUDING LABOUR & MATERIAL	CLOSING DATE 21.05.2020	1.66 LACS	https://www.hvpn.org.in.
5	HVPNL PANCHKULA	CONSTRUCTION OF 1 NO. 33 KV LINE BAY AT 132 KV S/STN. CHANDER KHURD TO FEED 33 KV S/STN. GULLARWALA.	CLOSING DATE 08.06.2020	1.63 LACS	https://www.hvpn.org.in.
6	HVPNL PANCHKULA	PROVIDING 2 NO. 66 KV LINE BAYS AT 66 KV S/STN FROM 220 KV BAKANA TO RATTANGARH	CLOSING DATE 25.05.2020	6.23 LACS	https://www.hvpn.org.in.
7	HVPNL PANCHKULA	ERCTION OF HOT CHARGE 16/20 MVA, 132/11KV T/F AND ALLIED EQUIPMENTS AND STRUCTURE AT 220 KV S/STN. 1A, HISAR.	CLOSING DATE 02.06.2020	2.31 LACS	https://www.hvpn.org.in.
8	MC SONIPAT	OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF SEWERAGE SYSTEM EASTERN SIDE OF RAILWAY LINE UNDER MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, SONIPAT & ALL OTHER WORKS CONTINGENT THERE TO FOR ONE YEAR.	OPENING CLOSING DATE 28.05.2020	1.26 CRORE	https://etenders.hry.nic.in
9	MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE GHARUAUNDA	SUPPLY OF ELECTRICAL ITEM FOR MAINTENANCE OF STREET LIGHT AND HIGH MAST LIGHT IN GHARUAUNDA CITY.	06.05.2020 16.05.2020	9 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in
10	MUNICIPAL COUNCIL SIRSA	CONST. OF 15 N			



Preparatory work: Staff cleaning the terminal ahead of arrival of flights from the Gulf at the Kochi airport. ■ THULASI KAKKAT

Kerala on alert ahead of flights from Gulf

All returnees will undergo seven-day mandatory institutional quarantine

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government on Wednesday braced itself to receive non-resident Keralites returning home from COVID-19-hit countries in the Gulf.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the first two flights were likely to land in Kochi and Kozhikode from Abu Dhabi and Dubai respectively on Thursday.

The State is on high alert and has geared itself up to receive them. Officers in the rank of Deputy Inspector General of Police would monitor the disembarkation process at airports. They would transfer the arrivals into mandatory institutional quarantine for seven days.

Pregnant women and children have been exempted from the regulation. The police would escort them to home in designated vans and make sure they go into safe-isolation.

The police would not allow any person to receive or welcome the returnees. Mr. Vijayan requested the media to refrain from interviewing Non-Resident Keralites (NoRKs) on their arrival.

Thousands would trickle into the State steadily as air and sea travel picks up. Ma-

State, Centre differ on period of quarantine

Kerala says 7 days; MHA wants double

STAFF REPORTER
KOZHIKODE

The Union and State governments do not appear to be on the same page on the enforcement of quarantine norms for Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) who are returning home from Thursday. A section of Health Department staff believe this could turn out to be problematic.

The Kerala government has declared that those returning from abroad would have to be on a mandatory seven-day quarantine at State-controlled facilities

irrespective of their COVID-19 infection status or age. The Standard Operating Procedure released by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs on Tuesday night, however, says the returnees would have to give an undertaking that they are willing to undergo institutional quarantine for a minimum of two weeks at their own cost.

They would also have to submit results of the reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) test to the Indian missions where they have registered themselves.

Equipment (PPE) suits, infection control practices to be followed in flight as well as the management of health emergencies during flight.

'Well prepared'

Meanwhile, Health Minister K.K. Shylaja said the Health Department has been well-prepared to provide the best of medical care and protection to the Non-Resident Keralites (NoRKs) right from the time they land at the airports in the State.

In an official statement issued here on Wednesday, Ms. Shylaja said all activities were being coordinated around the four international airports in the State. Separate health applications (apps) have been developed for passengers alighting in each of the airports.

Details of those who have registered through Non-Resident Keralites Affairs (NoRKA) were available in the app and through QR code details. Each passenger could be traced and followed up.

Details could be collected manually from those who have not generated a QR code.

(With inputs from Kochi)

**FLIGHTS FROM U.S., U.K.
DELAYED** ▶ PAGE 10

ny in the U.S., U.K. and Europe were awaiting return.

Training for flight crew

Air India pilots and cabin crew of the flight departing from Kochi on Thursday to bring back stranded NRIs from abroad were provided training in infection control practices at Government

Medical College, Ernakulam.

All crew members were also subjected to Reverse Transcription-Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) test for COVID-19. An expert panel at the medical college trained the crew in keeping away infection that included steps regarding donning and doffing Personal Protective

A.P. reports two deaths, more cases in Karnataka, Telangana

Kerala finds no new cases, Kurnool leads red districts in Andhra Pradesh

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Andhra Pradesh reported two more COVID-19 deaths and 60 fresh cases on Wednesday, while Kerala had no new cases. In Telangana, 11 more tested positive for the virus, while in Karnataka, 20 new cases were detected.

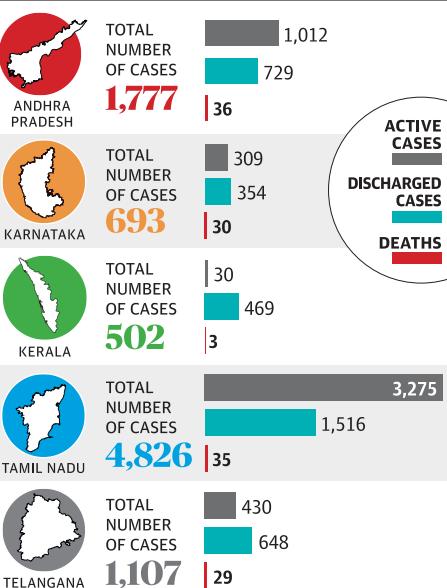
With seven more people recovering from the disease, Kerala had 30 patients undergoing COVID-19 treat-

Tough fight

With no let-up in the number of COVID-19 cases, the Andhra Pradesh government has taken up rapid testing to identify and contain its spread



Gearing up: Health officials getting ready to conduct tests in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday. ■ K.R. DEEPAK



ment, 18 of them in Kannur district.

Of the 502 cases reported in Kerala, 469 had recovered. Eight districts – Kozhikode, Malappuram, Thrissur, Ernakulam, Kottayam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha and Thiruvananthapuram – currently had no COVID-19 patients.

The number of those under surveillance came down to 14,670, of which 268 were in isolation wards in hospitals while the rest were on home quarantine.

Chief Minister, Pinarayi Vijayan, said that of the 34,599 samples the State had tested (including the 3,000-plus augmented survey samples), 34,063 were negative.

Of the 2,947 samples collected from selected priority groups in the population, 2,147 samples were negative.

There were 89 hotspots in the State and no new ones were declared.

Focus on two districts

In Andhra Pradesh the 60 fresh cases included 13 natives of other States after 7,782 samples were tested, taking the tally to 1,777.

One patient each in Kurnool and Krishna districts succumbed to the disease, a bulletin from the Health De-

partment said. The toll stood at 36 and 729 people had recovered, leaving 1,012 active patients under treatment.

Also, 140 patients were discharged after recovery, the first time such a large number were declared recovered in a day. Among those who recovered, 61 were from Krishna district and 39 from Kurnool.

Twenty patients were discharged in Chittoor, 10 in Anantapur, four in East Godavari, two each in Prakasam and West Godavari and one each in Guntur and Kadapa.

Meanwhile, most new cases were from the worst-hit districts of Kurnool (17), Krishna (14) and Guntur (12). Visakhapatnam had two new cases and Kadapa and East Godavari one case each. In the case tally, 12 natives of Gujarat and one of Karnataka were included.

A total of 1,41,274 tests had been conducted so far and the positivity rate was 1.26%, the recovery rate 41.02% and mortality rate was 2.02%.

Telangana's 11 new cases

pushed up the State total to 1,107. No deaths were reported and the toll remained at 29.

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation area continued to contribute to positives with 11 new cases. Ten out of 20 persons discharged from hospitals were from the GHMC too, of the total 648 in that category.

The State's active cases were 430, a bulletin from the Public Health and Family Welfare department said.

The number of districts with zero new cases over the last two weeks rose to 22.

In Karnataka, with 20 new cases on Wednesday, the total rose to 693.

Of the 20 new, 13 were from one location, Badami in Bagalkot. Except in one patient who had Influenza Like Illness (ILI), the infection had spread to 12 others from one patient in Badami, an official bulletin said.

While three others were from Dakshina Kannada, two were from Bengaluru Urban and one each from Kalaburagi and Vijayapura.

In Bengaluru Urban, two cases, of a 40-year-old female and a 25-year-old male, who were contacts of a 45-year-old male patient with ILI were reported.

An official said the 25-year-old man was working as a delivery boy in an e-commerce firm, but was at home for the past two months without work. His father was a contact of a patient who tested positive last week.

771 news cases in T.N.

Tamil Nadu reported a record 771 new cases of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on Wednesday, with three districts – Chennai, Ariyalur and Cuddalore – accounting for 78% of total cases. With this latest spike, the State's total number of COVID-19 cases climbed to 4,826.

Two more persons died of COVID-19 in Chennai, taking the total number of deaths in the State to 35. A total of 13,413 samples were tested today; the highest till date.

(With inputs from Vijaya-wada, Karnataka, Chennai and Hyderabad Bureaus)

Migrant labourers fume as Karnataka cancels trains

State government wants to kick-start economic activity

K.V. ADITYA BHARADWAJ

BENGALURU

The Karnataka government's decision to cancel trains to prevent migrant labourers from leaving Bengaluru has sown seeds of distrust and anger among those who want to go back to their native towns. Tension was brewing at a labour camp of over 700 construction workers at the site of an upcoming apartment complex in Konanakunte Cross on Wednesday.

Hundreds of people had packed their bags and gathered at the gates waiting to return home, but were not allowed to leave by private security guards. The labourers wanted no part in the government's attempt to kick-start economic activity. As their anger and frustration mounted, they started shouting slogans: "We won't work, let us go home".

The crowd eventually spilled onto the streets, and the police had a tough time 'pushing them in', as a se-



Tension brews: Workers protesting in front of their labour camp on Wednesday. ■ SAMPATH KUMAR G.P.

nior officer put it.

"This is a ticking bomb. We do not know for how long we can manage them. Going home is an emotional issue, not just an economic one," said a senior police official from one of the outer zones, which has a large concentration of labour camps.

Across the State, as many as 2.13 lakh migrant labourers, a majority from Odisha and Bihar, registered on the Seva Sindhu online platform to return home, said sourc-

es. However, just over 8,000 labourers were able to leave on eight trains before services were cancelled.

Many police personnel were not aware of the government's decision to cancel trains, which led to further confusion. Hundreds of labourers from Garudacharya palya turned up at the Mahadevapura police station on Wednesday morning, wanting to register on Seva Sindhu.

to return home, said sourc-

Yediyurappa announces ₹1,610 crore package

Cross-section of people to benefit

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

The Karnataka government on Wednesday announced a ₹1,610-crore relief package to help those in distress owing to COVID-19 lockdown.

Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa's announcement is aimed at helping a cross-section of affected people – small and large industrialists, weavers, flower growers, autorickshaw and taxi drivers, construction workers, barbers and washermen.

Flower growers, who have taken up cultivation on 11,687 hectares and have suffered huge losses with markets closing, have been given a one-time compensation of ₹25,000 per hectare. Mr. Yediyurappa said the government was also in the process of announcing a similar package for growers of vegetables and fruits.

In a bid to help revive MSMEs, which have suffered huge production losses owing to the lockdown,

the Chief Minister announced that their monthly fixed charges in electricity bills would be waived for two months.

Referring to the problems of construction workers, the Chief Minister said the government had provided a one-time compensation of ₹2,000 to 11.8 lakh of them among the total 15.80 lakh registered workers.

A one-time relief of ₹5,000 has been announced for washermen and barbers, both in urban and rural areas, as their business has come to a standstill in the last one and a half months.

Defends easing of norms
Defending the partial easing of lockdown norms to facilitate several economic activities, Mr. Yediyurappa said the move was inevitable as the State's economic development also needed to be focused upon alongside fighting the COVID-19.

KARNATAKA'S FRAGILE FINANCES

▶ PAGE 8

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Thursday: Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning likely at isolated places over Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Gangetic West Bengal, Odisha, Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Karnataka, Lakshadweep, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, central Maharashtra, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Rayalseema, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	4.2	30.0	25.0	Kozhikode	—	36.0	26.0
Ahmedabad	—	43.0	28.0	Kurnool	—	41.0	29.0
Aizawl	2.0	26.0	16.0	Lucknow	—	34.0	20.0
Alitalahabad	2.2	36.0	22.0	Madurai	—	39.0	28.0
Bengaluru	—	34.0	22.0	Mangaluru	—	36.0	26.0
Bhopal	—	40.0	25.0	Mumbai	—	35.0	29.0
Bhubaneswar	0.6	34.0	24.0				



Back home

As India brings back stranded expatriates, it must guard against a new wave of infection

After nearly two months, stranded Indians across the world will begin their journey home this week as aircraft and naval ships, in a government-coordinated plan, are to bring back about 15,000 nationals from 13 countries in the first week. The mammoth exercise, dubbed the "Vande Bharat" mission by the External Affairs Ministry, is expected to last for weeks, given the numbers of people who have registered with embassies in these countries. The stranded include business travellers and tourists who were unable to return in time; due to the pandemic, the last flights allowed to land with incoming passengers were on March 22. There are also students whose university hostels have shut down. Increasingly, those appealing to be allowed to return have included professionals and labourers who have lost jobs due to the economic impact of global lockdowns. With estimates of applicants ranging between 5,00,000 to 10,00,000, embassies and missions will have their task cut out prioritising lists of those who will return. According to the Standard Operating Procedures released by the Home Ministry, only those who have "compelling reasons to return" – people whose visas are expiring, who face deportation, with family emergencies, medical issues including pregnancy, and students who have lost their accommodation – will be allowed to return in the first phase, which is open to only Indian nationals at present. In addition, the government has also laid down stringent conditions which include "mandatory institutional quarantine" for 14 days. All those returning will also bear the costs for travel arrangements and accommodation.

Despite these, the returnees will no doubt be grateful to the government for its efforts, Indian diplomats who have helped keep them informed, organised food and shelter, and also to airline and naval crews who will carry out these operations despite the risks of infection. The efforts required by unsung diplomats and officials have been made all the more difficult by India's stringent lockdown and the government's decision not to allow its own nationals to return, even as about 60,000 foreign nationals were flown out during this period. As the government plans its exit from the lockdown, as well as its repatriation manoeuvres, it is necessary to consider putting in better systems so that it does not have to repeat the trauma of keeping Indian citizens stranded outside the country for extended periods away from their families. It is necessary that quarantine facilities are identified or makeshift centres built to deal with the large numbers of people who may need to return. In particular, the government needs to prepare for both a possible second wave of the novel coronavirus as well as a rapid increase in Indian expatriates needing to return given the drop in oil prices in West Asia and the downturn in global economies.

Blame game

The world needs more cooperation and less animosity in dealing with the pandemic

President Donald Trump's recent attacks on China over the coronavirus outbreak risk further deterioration of already strained ties between the two countries at a time when the global economy is in a precarious situation. Mr. Trump, under fire at home over his handling of the pandemic, seeks to hold China accountable for the infection spread. He has attempted to tie the virus to a virology lab in Wuhan, the epicentre of the outbreak, endorsing an unproven theory, while his administration officials accuse Beijing of withholding information about the virus. Over the past week, the President went so far as to seek compensation, threatening to impose more tariffs on China. This is a U-turn given his initial appreciation of his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping's handling of the crisis. Stepping up the attacks on China might help Mr. Trump, whose approval ratings are falling, to mobilise his base. The Republican Party has already issued a memo asking candidates to attack China. Mr. Trump echoed the party sentiment when he said last week that China "will do anything" to defeat him in the November election. His supporters are portraying Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic nominee, as a representative of the old political elite that is "soft on China". With six months left for the U.S. Presidential election, Mr. Trump and his party have effectively turned China into a campaign issue.

The question is about what shape this renewed anti-China rhetoric will leave U.S.-China relations; ties have been uneasy since Mr. Trump became President. The trade war by Mr. Trump and the push to weaken Chinese giant Huawei's global bid to roll out 5G technology had impacted the four decades long partnership. However, both sides agreed to an initial trade agreement in January that cut some U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods in return for China's pledges to buy more American products. A final trade deal is yet to be reached. If Mr. Trump decides to punish China over the COVID-19 outbreak, it would, in all likelihood, lead to the unravelling of the trade talks during an unfortunate time for the global economy. Also, China, which has brought the virus situation at home under control, has sent economic and medical assistance to the hardest hit countries. Even the U.S. is importing personal protective equipment supplies from China. When Mr. Trump halted funding for the World Health Organization last month, China stepped in with an additional \$30 million grant for the agency. Mr. Trump should look beyond his narrow blame game and see the larger picture. If the goals are to defeat the virus, save lives and rebuild economies and societies, those can be achieved only through global cooperation, not through unsubstantiated accusations, conspiracy theories and threats.

Resuscitating multilateralism with India's help

It could lead a coalition to bridge the global deficit of trust with China through a regime of rules



AMITABH MATTOO &
AMRITA NARLIKAR

En as the coronavirus pandemic unleashes its devastation across the globe, the great and the good have been quick to remind us of the value of multilateralism and the necessity to preserve it. And yes, they are right. To reduce the further spread of the virus, to develop effective medical treatments, and to curtail the worst effects of the inevitable recession that is already in the offing, cooperation among nations will be necessary. But there is a problem: multilateralism is possibly at its weakest today, when the need for it is more dire than ever before. Unless the fundamental problem is addressed, no meaningful fix will be possible.

We believe that India may be uniquely positioned to help resuscitate multilateralism. With the United States facing multiple internal challenges including the prospects of a deeply divisive Presidential election in November, New Delhi (together with like-minded partners even beyond the usual suspects) could assume leadership in strengthening constructive transnational cooperation. At a time when China is facing a global crisis of credibility, India may even consider a last-ditch attempt at mediation; to temper what is increasingly seen as Beijing's unilateral revisionism; revive the promise of the gradual socialisation of China into the international system; and its acceptance of the norms and rules that regulate the principal multilateral institutions.

Deepened by the pandemic
The malaise that afflicts multilateralism is not new. The paralysis of all three functions of the World Trade Organization (WTO) – negotiation, dispute settlement, and

transparency – was one sign of that deep-rooted malaise; the severely dented credibility of the World Health Organization (WHO) is just another more recent indicator. The pandemic has heightened the crisis of multilateralism, not created it. And amidst the many cracks in the system, it has deepened one especially dangerous fault-line: multilateralism, in its current form, is incapable of dealing with misuse by "systemic rivals", and this goes beyond the personality of its current Director-General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, and his perceived Chinese bias.

The underpinning assumption of the post-war multilateral system was that peace and prosperity went hand in hand. Some like-mindedness and a commonly-held purpose were also assumed among members: increasing economic integration and shared prosperity would help enhance these affinities and contribute to peace. Countries with fundamentally different domestic systems of governance did not form a part of this multilateral order, as was the case with the Soviet bloc in the Cold War years. None of our multilateral institutions was built for a world where the ties of interdependence – which were supposed to enhance the well-being of all – could themselves be "weaponized" for nationalistic gain, at the expense of other players. The misuse of existing rules (or loopholes within the existing rules) by several countries, especially by China (e.g. via forced technology requirements, intellectual property rights violations, and subsidies), to gain an unfair advantage in trade relations was already attracting critique in the last years. But the pandemic has provided us with some even more alarming illustrations of how damaging the weaponisation of global supply chains can be.

As death tolls rose (in some cases, to catastrophic proportions) many countries responded with export restrictions on critical medical supplies. This was far



from ideal, but almost inevitable given the absence of adequate stocks within countries, and little in the rules to curb export restraints. Recognising the shortages that countries were facing – masks, personal protective equipment, ventilators and more – to deal with COVID-19, China offered to sell these products to countries in need. For instance, when the European Union (EU) put up export restrictions, China stepped in at Serbia's request. But China's coronavirus diplomacy did not stop there. When India complained that test kits imported from China were faulty, China slammed it for "irresponsible" behaviour. When Australia indicated that it would conduct an independent investigation of China's early handling of the epidemic, China threatened it with economic consequences. Add to this the dangers of using faulty equipment on critical patients, plus the risks that several actors, including the EU and India, see of predatory takeovers of their companies by China. The pandemic is teaching countries, through bitter experience, that weaponised interdependence is not just a theory but a practice that is rapidly evolving. And it can have life and death consequences.

Against this background, repeated calls by heads of governments and international organisations urging countries to remain committed to multilateralism ring hollow.

Reforming multilateralism
To argue for a multilateral rules-based system will never suffice on its own; one must always address the issue of the goals and values that underpin the rules. The remedies are obvious.

First, of course, is the need for reassurance and policies that reflect a renewed commitment to the *raison d'être* of multilateralism. A "retreating" United States must, of course, demonstrate in word and deed that autocracy is not the way forward (of this global crises) and that it remains committed to strengthening global supply chains which are based on the promise of ensuring global stability and the attendant promise of peace and prosperity.

Second, irrespective of the above, there is an urgent need for some strategic decoupling, handled smartly in cooperation with other like-minded countries. This will not happen overnight. And it will undoubtedly cause considerable disruption to existing global value chains. This in turn, will result in a shrinking of the global economic pie. We will be less prosperous. But we will also be more secure.

Third, flowing from the above, a multilateralism that recognises the need for decoupling will necessitate closer cooperation with some and distancing from others. Membership of such renewed multilateral institutions would not be universal; rather, one would limit deep integration to countries with which one shares first-order values – such as pluralism, democracy, liberalism, animal welfare rights, and more.

A role for India

The current crisis in multilateralism could be a remarkable opportunity for India, a country whose pluralism, democracy, and liberalism have often been underestimated by the West. At an immediate level, the gains are obvious: India has also maintained a consistent reserve about a blanket entrenchment in global value chains. As some constituencies in the West seek a gradual decoupling from China, they would be well served to look toward India.

To make use of the opportunities, for itself and for the provision of certain global public goods, India's cooperation with like-mind-

ed actors will be key. Here, India could work closely with the Alliance for Multilateralism (an initiative launched by Germany and France) to shape both the alliance itself and the reform agenda at large. Working together with a group of countries from the developed and developing countries could further amplify India's voice.

But beyond these immediate gains could be a greater role for India. Not since Chernobyl has global public opinion lost as much faith in the competence and integrity of a great power as it has in China because of COVID-19 and the apparent malfeasance and the opaqueness with which it has dealt with the crises. While China may recover faster than most economically, and its military might remains intact, its image as a reliable partner has suffered a huge dent. Neither aid diplomacy nor the unleashing of Chinese soft power can easily recover the trust deficit that exists today between China and much of the rest of the world. While prudence may demand gradual decoupling, it is critical to not be seen as immediately isolating China; with fewer stakes in world order, Beijing's turn towards revisionism could be faster than anticipated. Instead, India could lead a coalition to bridge this deficit of trust through a regime of incentives and sanctions that seek to embed Beijing into a much more guided and directed socialisation into the rules of the international system.

Clearly, the strategic and economic have, however, to be in consonance with each other. In the longer term then, whether multi-polarity is the only firm guarantor of a sustainable and fairer multilateralism requires further debate among scholars and practitioners alike.

Amitabh Mattoo is Professor of International Relations at Jawaharlal Nehru University and Honorary Professor at the University of Melbourne. Amrita Narlikar is President of the German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA)

A war-like state and a bond to the rescue

With the pandemic's shadow over the economy, a Consol Bond issue is a more compelling solution for the government



RANGARAJAN MOHAN
KUMARAMANGALAM

As India's ominous COVID-19 curve stretches further, urgent attention needs to be paid to an economy that is teetering on the edge. Several economists, former Finance Ministers and central bank Governors have made the clarion call for a large stimulus to pull the economy back from the brink. There are a few who seem to believe that there are ways and means to provide this stimulus without breaking the bank as it were. As we spend more time in a national lockdown or quasi-lockdown situation, I believe that austerity measures and reallocations notwithstanding, we will definitely need to go beyond current revenue receipts to fund the complete stimulus.

A gathering financial storm
In the Budget before the pandemic, India projected a deficit of ₹7.96-lakh crore. However, even

then there were concerns around off balance sheet borrowings of 1% of GDP and an overly excessive target of ₹2.1 lakh crore through disinvestments. The financial deficit number is set to grow by a wide margin due to revenue shrinkage from the coming depression that will most certainly be accompanied by a lack of appetite for disinvestment.

In addition to the expenditure that was planned, the government has to spend anywhere between ₹5-lakh crore and ₹6-lakh crore as stimulus. The Finance Ministry is sanguine about this fact as was clear in a press conference held by the Economic Affairs Secretary on March 31, 2020, where he said that the government will not exceed the borrowing limits indicated in the Budget. The insipid stimulus provided by the government so far and recent announcements by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) only serve to highlight how out of touch with reality they are. All the RBI's schemes are contingent on the availability of risk capital, the market for which has completely collapsed. The two have tried several times over the last year to nudge banks into lending to below investment grade micro, small and medium enterprises, but have come

up short each time. Furthermore, while the 60% increase in ways and means limits for States is a welcome move, many States have already asked for double the limits due to the shortages in indirect taxation collections from Goods and Services Tax, fuel and liquor. The government and the central bank need to understand that half measures will do more harm than good. It will only lull us into a false sense of security, much like a lockdown without adequate testing.

Echo from the past
Politicians and epidemiologists across the world have used the word "war" to describe the situation the world is currently in. As we wage a united war against this virus, it would be interesting for us to look at war-time methods of raising financing. One such method that has been used as early as

the First World War is the Consol Bond. In 2014, the British government, a century after the start of the First World War, paid out 10% of the total outstanding Consol bond debt. The bonds, which paid out an interest of 5%, were issued in 1917 as the government sought to raise more money to finance the ongoing cost of the First World War. Citizens were asked to invest with the advertising messaging: "If you cannot fight, you can help your country by investing all you can in 5 per cent Exchequer Bonds. Unlike the soldier, the investor runs no risk."

One cannot help but wonder how successful a Consol Bond issue would be for the Indian government if the Prime Minister had made a similar call to every citizen of our country to invest in them instead of making donations to PM-CARES, or the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund. After all, most of the Consol bonds in the United Kingdom are owned by small investors, with over 70% holding less than £1,000. Furthermore, unlike PM-CARES, the proceeds of the bonds could be used for everything – from Personal Protective Equipment for doctors to a stimulus for small and medi-



Rangarajan Mohan Kumaramangalam is an Angel Investor and Working President of the Tamilnadu Congress Committee

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

States need funds

The report, "Centre has not stopped any funds to States", (*The Hindu*, Inside pages, May 5, 2020), had a statement from government of India officials rebutting the facts in a report the previous day - a byline news item, by N.J. Nair, headlined, "Scramble for funds as Centre tightens purse strings" (*The Hindu*, Inside pages, May 4). The report by Mr. Nair had portrayed a grim picture of Kerala's finances in the time of COVID-19.

It is true that the central government has transferred the revenue deficit grant and the share of central taxes as per the award of the 15th Finance Commission to State governments. But these are statutory transfers already provided for in the State

Budget. Our criticism has been that no additional money has been transferred to the State government because of the pandemic which has played havoc with the State's revenues. The Kerala government's own revenue receipts for the month of April this year is just ₹347.85. In April 2019, it was ₹3,399.86 crore. It may be noted that the devolution of tax share is substantially below the expected receipt because of a fall in the taxes of the central government. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) compensation of ₹652 crore released in April 2020 relates to the period October-November 2019. GST compensation dues, of ₹2,868 crore for the previous fiscal, are pending release from the Centre.

E-court
As a lawyer I was baffled to read the views on having a virtual judiciary (OpEd, "It's time for a virtual judiciary", May 6). The art of advocacy lies in the spirit of donning that regal attire and deftly putting across your case in the open court and fighting tooth and nail till the end.

T.M. THOMAS ISAAC,
MINISTER OF FINANCE AND COIR,
Government of Kerala

However, due to the catastrophe created by COVID-19, the idea of open court may be ruled out, but virtual courts can never be a substitute or the 'new normalcy', as suggested by the writers. The concept of trial, which forms the backbone of every case, can never be done virtually. The life of lawyers and judges is highly demanding, both physically and mentally. One needs to keep abreast of the latest positions of law in order to be relevant. Hence, one cannot belittle the virtual judiciary (OpEd,

as after all one also needs to relax.

K. INDU PRIYA,
Chennai

Stop the drift

The sledgehammer-like stripping down of Jammu and Kashmir's special status was assumed to be a panacea for the intractable problem ravaging the State since the 1990s (Editorial, "Dangerous drift", May 6). But, nothing has changed in the paradise of India. The

political process lies in tatters, with the imposition of a lockdown and the Internet clampdown only adding to grievances. Cross-border insurgency is on the rise which shows that a lot of heavy lifting needs to be done. The aspirations in the region need to be met in order to cement integration with India firmly.

GAUTAM GUNJAN,
Bokaro Steel City, Jharkhand

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:
In the graphic, "Painting messages", that accompanied the report "Virus kills three in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh" (May 6, 2020), the figures corresponding to the active Covid cases and the discharged cases in Andhra Pradesh got mixed up. The figures given in the text of the story – active cases - 1,094 and discharged cases - 589 – are correct.

It is the policy of *The Hindu* to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-28552963; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers' Editor, *The Hindu*, Kasturi Buildings, 859 & 860 Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002, India. All communication must carry the full postal address and telephone number. The Terms of Reference for the Readers' Editor are on www.thehindu.com

Fear and loathing in the land of the free

The presidential poll could be marked by amplified chaos and hamper U.S.'s recovery from COVID-19



NARAYAN LAKSHMAN

If U.S. President Donald Trump looked unassailable early this year as the prospective incumbent in November's presidential election, the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic, with its severe toll on human life and damage to the U.S. economy, has dented his re-election prospects considerably.

Presumptive Democratic nominee and former Vice-President Joe Biden has for several months now launched scathing attacks on Mr. Trump, specifically targeting the President's bumbling mismanagement of the pandemic, including his disregarding of intelligence calls to act fast and early, given the alarming signs of a biosecurity disaster emanating from China; his deliberate antagonism of Democrat-governed States in the context of their need for medical equipment; and his reckless comments on untested treatments for the infection.

The challenge before Biden

However, similar to former Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton in 2016, Mr. Biden cannot hope to win the electoral college – an institution that renders an absolute majority of votes insufficient to secure victory – without paying heed to undecided and independent voters, including in swing States. Going by the evidence of the previous election, these voters care as much about job security and the impact on this of globalisation, as much as they do about mainstream Democratic Party issues such as expanding the social security net for the middle class.

This cohort of the population – including factory workers, teachers, service sector employees, miners, truckers and farmers – may have thrown their lot in with Mr. Trump in 2016 in the belief that this rambunctious candidate would disrupt business-as-usual politics in the elite circles of Washington and bring real economic succour to where it was most needed. But do these voters continue to back Mr. Trump for the



Activists in Commack, New York calling for an end to the lockdown in the State, in a rally held earlier this month. ■ AFP

same reasons they did in the previous election? In part, this depends on how harshly they judge their President for his handling of the COVID-19 crisis – for the pandemic has now got inextricably enmeshed with one of the steepest economic declines witnessed in recent history.

On the one hand, in terms of pandemic politics, the impact of the virus has been more severe in Democratic-controlled States, mostly along the East and West coasts, than in the less-populated, Republican-dominated States – bearing in mind the caveat that testing levels across the country are not at their optimal level. Simultaneously, evidence, including that emerging from political rallies held across several States, suggests that the President still enjoys a considerable vector of support. These rallies saw gun-toting protesters raise slogans supporting early reopening of the U.S. economy and reject social distancing norms as a Democrat-perpetrated "hoax" leading to anti-economy lockdowns.

A second term for Trump?

Thus, it is unsurprising that Mr. Trump's ratings appear to be holding steady. Gallup's survey of 1,016 adults, taken in the last two weeks of April 2020, showed that Mr. Trump enjoyed a 49% overall approval rating – the highest of his presidency so far – and, unsurprisingly, a whopping 96% rating among Republican respondents. If this continues – and there is no reason at this point to assume it will not, given that the COVID-19 pandemic might subside to a

relatively manageable level and the economy may begin limping back toward normalcy before the election in November – the U.S. and the world may be staring at the prospect of a second Trump presidency.

That said, if the recent State-level polls in Wisconsin are a barometer for how the U.S. will cope with the presidential election, it is almost certain that there will be amplified chaos, contested outcomes and a heightened risk of a setback to the country's recovery from the pandemic – for several reasons.

First, the U.S. government at multiple levels has struggled to cope with the sheer bureaucratic requirements of tackling the pandemic. The administration's efforts to slow the spread of the virus has been hobbled by a lack of personal protective equipment, ventilators and more. In this context, it is an open question as to whether and how a mega-exercise in democratic practice can be carried out while remaining faithful to the notion of social distancing. Even if technological advances permit a massive transition to online campaigning and voting, uncomfortable questions about fake news, propaganda and foreign powers seeking to influence the outcome will remain.

Second, Mr. Trump's staccato, inconsistent response, sometimes bordering on the bizarre – such as his espousal of UV rays and injected disinfectant as potential antidotes to the coronavirus – is likely to produce an increasingly acerbic campaign. The President's impatience to get the U.S. economy opened for business,

combined with his anxiety over avoiding blame for failure to effectively contain the pandemic, will likely lead to a vindictive rather than a substantive race to the Oval Office.

A divided landscape

If indeed this is the scenario that the U.S. faces in the months ahead, it could be inferred that the very same worldview that propelled Mr. Trump to power in 2016 has remained dominant and has deepened its footprint on the landscape of U.S. policy in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In such a scenario, we might expect that the pandemic will only become one more excuse for the White House to shore up protectionism in international trade, harden national borders against undocumented workers and asylum seekers, degrade multilateral organisations and regional cooperation frameworks, shut down U.S. government institutions associated with reducing fossil fuel dependence, and shrink the economic space for government to provide public goods such as affordable healthcare.

Then, there is the denouement of the pandemic itself – will the Trump administration *de facto* put its faith in the notion of "herd immunity," and continue to prioritise economic activity over social distancing? Will the soaring death toll – which Mr. Trump predicted could exceed 1,00,000 – lead to further vitriol targeting China, even tectonic shifts in the foreign policy landscape? One thing is clear: with or without a vaccine, the coronavirus is here to stay, and will reshape social behaviour regardless of White House's policies.

Through this climate of fear and loathing, there is one hope for a less unhinged American future: that Mr. Biden will have the perspicacity to run a nuanced campaign, balancing policies promoting mainstream values of his party with bipartisan outreach that brings a large swathe of economically insecure, working Americans under the Democratic tent. American society, which is currently polarised over everything from the role of the government in the economy to immigration, gun control, and reproductive choice, is desperately in need of such a unifying force.

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Everyone wants a good stimulus

Such measures can take effect only after the lockdown ends



SRIVATSA KRISHNA

ture), and then how much more can we afford on top of that? On top of this is all the 'merit expenditure' on health and direct income support to the poor. Can we still formulate a stimulus package comprising 10% of GDP, to be foisted by the Central government alone?

It may be worthwhile to bear in mind that from 1947 to 1997, the Central government always routinely monetised its deficit, without leading to high rates of inflation, much less hyperinflation. The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) limits are hardly a grand success and routinely all governments have broken the barrier. Other countries with huge debt-to-GDP ratios like Japan (>200%) and U.S. (125%) get away with barely a rap on the knuckles but India is pulled up for minor slippages on a 70% debt-GDP ratio.

Third, some prominent commentators have argued extremely fallaciously, that bailouts should be based on need and not affordability. Given the data above, can one forget about affordability and print money with all the attendant side effects? Which economist will go and face the electorate, if the currency plunges, inflation rages and rating agencies downgrade us to junk? Shouldn't there be a more nuanced approach to what constitutes a 'good' stimulus?

Giving grant to States

Fourth, indeed there is a lot of liquidity in the economy, but limited credit is flowing due to anaemic lending. Thus, another mantra being espoused is that bank managers should be incentivised to lend and the government should indemnify loans given during this period. It remains to be seen what fiscal support tools the government will use that can ensure that credit flows to various sectors. The government owes about ₹1 lakh crore on tax refunds and also had promised to make up for any difference to the States, if the GST did not grow by 14% per annum. This is the time for it to transfer this to the States as a grant, for one year, to offset the revenue loss to States. Fifth, there is talk of going to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Do we really need the IMF's conditionality-led bailout when there is no foreign exchange crisis for financing rupee expenditure? What about the perceived global stigma of doing so? Won't the conditionality-led cure be worse than the disease?

Only a fool confuses fate with destiny. Fate is what happens to us. Destiny is what we make in spite of our fate. India's destiny appears relatively safe, if we cast the mind's eye around the globe. Lifting the lockdown will be the first step towards a good stimulus and one does need to un-handcuff a billion people to save their lives too.

Srivatsa Krishna is an IAS officer. Views are personal

Rent control amidst pandemic

Laws mandating the registration of tenancies need to be made applicable across States

SWASTIK HARISH & RASHA LALA

With the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown more discernible than before, there is a clarion call made to landlords by tenants to 'forgive' rent for a month or two – especially for poor migrant families, who do not have other housing options or savings. Government, civil society, academia, and migrants themselves are urging landlords to stop evictions as it would exacerbate the pandemic. It does not help matters that policymakers do not know who these landlords actually are, since the vast majority of rent arrangements in India are informal and unrecorded.

As of now, governments are 'ordering' or requesting landlords to excuse rent and stop evictions on the basis of the Disaster Management (DM) Act of 2005. This, however, is a very roundabout way, as this Act does not have any provisions for demanding continuation of rental housing arrangements. The focus has to shift away from the DM Act to rent control acts that actually aim to regulate rental housing. This is where some medium to long-term thinking on rent control laws in States, as well as the Central government's Model Tenancy Act, 2019, could be useful.

Regardless of how it sounds, landlords have a right to evict tenants as per any agreement they may have mutually. At the same time, tenancies are not unregulated by law – all tenancies should be administered by the state's rent control laws.

Interests of landlords & tenants
Typical rent control laws have historically favoured tenants, in extremis in fact – the logic being driven by a popular conception of landlords as petty capitalists exploiting poor, vulnerable tenants. This is only partly true. Research has shown that landlords, especially in the rental housing market in poor parts of our cities, are as poor and vulnerable as their tenants. Consumption data for poor households in urban areas indicate a uniform lack of savings or access to social and economic safety nets – for both landlords and tenants. In other words, landlords themselves, by and large, cannot afford a no-rent month.

So, we are faced with a terrible quandary – there is no legal obligation for landlords to excuse rent or not evict tenants in the current pandemic, and this is also a situation that they themselves cannot afford. This predicament is further compounded by the informality in the rental housing market – we do not even know how many people are giving out their houses on rent, for how much, how long, or under what terms and conditions.

Consider two things: first, we have to make the rent Act applicable across more and more tenancies. This means that all tenancies, including those informal in nature, must get registered under the Act. This is the only way we will know who actually the landlords and tenants are, and where these houses are. Here, we also see the proposed MTA playing a key role in emphasising the registration of rent agreements through to-be-established rent authorities in every State. This is doable, and all States should pursue it. Tamil Nadu has already launched such an authority that manages a portal for simplified registration.

Second, the rent Acts, as well as the Model Tenancy Act, need a *force majeure* clause for emergencies such as the pandemic. In times of dire stress, there is a strong case for passing an order to prevent evictions. When passed under a rent law, for registered tenancies, it will carry a far stronger legal sanction than under a disaster law.

We still need to consider that landlords may not be able to afford a rent-free month – they need the rent for their own survival. For this, a mobilisation of housing, welfare and disaster funds is required to make up for this loss of rent. Funds could also be crowd-sourced, acquired from corporate social interests, and grants from international and national donor organisations. The advantage of having registered tenancies would then be evident – because the government would be able to channel funds directly into the accounts of landlords and tenants.

The writers work at the Indian Institute for Human Settlements. Views are personal



DATA POINT

Job loss mounts

MASSIVE FALL | The average employment reduced from an estimated 404 million during 2019-20 to 396 million in March 2020. In April it came down to 282 million (122 million estimated job losses)

AFFECTED SECTORS | The small traders and wage-labourers category lost > 90 million jobs in April 2020 compared to the 2019-20 average. Significant no. of salaried workers too lost their jobs



Over 122 million people in India lost their jobs in April, according to estimates from Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy. Around 75% of them were small traders and wage-labourers. Tamil Nadu was among the worst-hit States. Its estimated unemployment rate in April was the highest among States and its labour participation rate among the lowest. Kerala had the lowest labour participation rate in April

AFFECTED STATES

The chart plots unemployment against labour participation rate (employed plus those searching for jobs) as of April 2020, across States. Tamil Nadu is among the worst-hit with a very high unemployment rate

Relatively low unemployment, low labour participation rate

Relatively low unemployment, high labour participation rate

Relatively high unemployment, low labour participation rate

Relatively high unemployment, high labour participation rate

April 2020 unemployment rate (%)

- According to CMIE, while the small traders which includes hawkers may return to work after the lockdown, the salaried workers will find it difficult to get their jobs back
- CMIE said in its report that the large scale loss of employment among businesspersons is an indication that the loss during the lockdown is not limited to just jobs but also to enterprises

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 7, 1970

Cricket Behind Barbed Wire

The Government of India's decision not to permit an Indian team to participate in the Commonwealth Games at Edinburgh if the impending South African cricket tour of England is not abandoned is in line with the stand taken by the majority of non-white member countries of the Commonwealth. The argument that politics should be kept out of sports is untenable in the case of South Africa for that country's whole attitude to sport has been politics-ridden. Its Government regulates sport at home on strict apartheid lines and has had no qualms about extending that pernicious doctrine even to international sport. It refused to entertain the M.C.C. team which included the coloured cricketer, Basil D'Oliviera. The South African visit has raised a storm of controversy within Britain itself. There is so much opposition to it that, if the tour does take place, it seems a certainty that anti-apartheid groups will make an attempt to disrupt the games. The M.C.C. has therefore made arrangements for the matches to be played in grounds protected by barbed wire fences. The Government cannot officially ban the tour because that will affect Britain's economic relations with South Africa. Further, the Conservative Party has come out in favour of the tour, thus making it a domestic political issue.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 7, 1920

Challenge to Sir J.C. Bose

(From second editorial)

A bold attempt is now being made by a distinguished scientific authority in London to discredit the great discoveries of Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose of Bengal. The scientific world has accepted them with admiration for the inventive genius of the reputed Eastern scientist. The challenge of Dr. Waller doubting the "validity of plant growth" is readily responded to by the unwavering declaration of eight Professors of University College, London and the Imperial College of Science, including Lord Rayleigh, published in the *Times*, that they are satisfied that Sir Chandra Bose's Crescograph correctly records the growth of plants. Dr. Waller proposes lecturing before the Royal Society demonstrating that Sir Chandra Bose's experiments with living plants can be reproduced with fiddle strings and he also hopes that Sir Chandra Bose will be able to attend the lecture. The entire scientific world and especially the whole of India will watch with considerable interest the development of this surprising venture.

FROM PAGE ONE

Virus tally crosses 50,000-mark

There was no media briefing by the Health Ministry on Wednesday, a practice institutionalised two weeks ago. Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan held a meeting with top Ministers in Gujarat and Maharashtra to review action plans in these States.

States needed to ensure that screening and testing of severe acute respiratory infections (SARI) and influenza-like illnesses were undertaken, and data from this exercise would be used to identify hotspots. "Aggressive behaviour change communication exercises need to be taken for removing stigma against reporting COVID-19," he noted.

Centre is taking arbitrary decisions, say Cong. CMs

"Until an extensive stimulus package is given, how will the States and the country run? We have lost ₹10,000 crore of revenue. The States have repeatedly requested the Prime Minister for a package, but we are yet to hear from the Government of India," Mr. Gehlot said.

Mr. Baghel said 80% of the small industries in his State had resumed opera-

This was because there were instances of people suppressing their illness or reporting too late to hospitals because of "fear or stigma", the Health Ministry said in a statement.

States needed to publicise the Aarogya Setu application and have more people use the Aarogya Setu Interactive Voice Response System that could be accessed by giving a missed call at 1921. The latter is useful for those who don't use smartphones and rely on feature phones. The use of the application would help users know if they were in the vicinity of someone who had tested positive for the disease.

Top Hizb commander killed in Kashmir: police

The security forces pressed into service helicopters and drones and used heavy machinery to cut off roads to seal the area where the militants were hiding. A house, where the militants were hiding, was also damaged when the security forces used explosives to flush out the militants.

"Naikoo had been continuously making audio and video clips and putting up on the social media to motivate youth to join militancy and went on recruiting new boys, the police said. He was a mastermind behind the revival of the Hizb outfit in J&K. His videos and audio carried pro-Pakistan and separatist propaganda," the police said.

Earlier, the security forces killed two unidentified militants in a pre-dawn operation in Pulwama's Sharshai. "The identification of the killed terrorists is being ascertained. Incriminating material including arms and ammunition was recovered from the site of encounter," the police said.

Besides, a Jaish-e-Muhammad militant was also arrested in Pulwama's Tral.

Naikoo, who was born in Pulwama's Beighpora village in April 1985, belonged to a family of farmers. His killing has struck a major dent in the striking capability of the Hizbul Mujahideen and its recruitment drive. Over a dozen local youth joined Naikoo's Hizb this year, a police official said.

He carried a reward of ₹12 lakh on his head, as the security agencies categorised him as "A plus plus" militant and remained "the most wanted since 2018".

A graduate in mathematics, Naikoo was a teacher and conducted coaching classes in 2010-11 before joining militancy in 2012.

Brain behind several attacks on the security forces and alleged informers, Naikoo surprised the security apparatus when his men kidnapped policemen and their family members in August 2018, in response to the arrest of the family members of the militants.

Indians returning on Navy ships may have to pay up

"Yes, There will a charge [for passengers on the INS ships], as has been mentioned in the PIB press release," an official said. "But it will be a reasonable amount." Another official said the "exact amount has not yet been decided", but was under discussion at present.

This is the first time such a charge will be levied for naval rescue operations that have in the past brought back thousands of Indians from the war zones in Yemen (2015), Libya (2011), Lebanon (2006) and Kuwait and Iraq during the Gulf War (1990).

"This is not an evacuation effort because this is not a government-sponsored operation," an MEA official said on Tuesday. "However, this is coordinated by the MEA and our missions worldwide," the official clarified, adding that returning passengers would also be charged for "mandatory institutional quarantine" facilities and any hospitalisation costs.

The naval operations for repatriation of Indians from

the Maldives and the UAE have already begun, with INS Jalashwa and INS Magar headed to the Maldives, while INS Shardul and INS Airavat are heading to the UAE. Indian missions in Male and Dubai/Abu Dhabi have opened up booking counters and online registrations. The ships will ply in addition to 64 aircraft in the first week beginning May 7, which will accommodate 14,800 stranded Indians returning from 12 countries, including the UAE.

The UAE is likely to see the largest repatriation effort thus far, with about 2,00,000 Indians registering to return. Among them are tourists, business travellers, and thousands of expatriate workers and professionals who have been laid off or completed their contracts. The naval operation from the Maldives will see 700,000 Indians return in the first round, estimate officials, who said between 3,000-4,000 Indians working and travelling in various atolls have registered to return.

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The UAE is likely to see the largest repatriation effort thus far, with about 2,00

Ahmedabad to shut down for a week

Grocery stores, vegetable outlets will remain closed till May 15; pharmacies, milk parlours will be open

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

AHMEDABAD

As the novel coronavirus infection is surging, authorities in Ahmedabad have imposed emergency-like measures shutting down the entire city, except for pharmacies and milk parlours, from Thursday till May 15 and deploying paramilitary forces.

All grocery stores, vegetable and fruit outlets and those dealing in essential services will remain shut. Even banking services, except ATMs, will not be available.

The civic body has requisitioned seven private hospitals for treatment of COVID-19 patients. It has directed all private nursing homes and clinics to open within 48 hours, failing which their licences would be cancelled.

These measures were taken after senior IAS officer Rajiv Kumar Gupta, tasked with supervising and guiding the efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19 in the city, held



Relief at last: Migrant workers arriving to board a train at the Sabarmati railway station in Ahmedabad on Monday. ■ AFP

the first meeting.

Ahmedabad, the worst-affected city in Gujarat, has so far recorded 298 deaths and 4,735 cases.

Dr. Gupta directed civic body officials to prepare a containment strategy for each of the 48 wards, create isolation and quarantine facilities in each ward and in-

crease testing on a war foot-

ing. "There are around 2,000 super-spreaders such as vegetable and fruit vendors, grocery-store keepers, salesmen at supermarkets and those delivering online services," a senior official said.

So far, over 100 vegetable and fruit vendors have been

found infected. This prompted the authorities to go for the complete shutdown.

Asymptomatic and mild-symptomatic patients will be quarantined at their homes, provided they have adequate rooms with attached bathrooms. Private doctors will be roped in for their treatment. Patients showing

symptoms will be treated at designated government hospitals.

The civic body's sudden announcement caused traffic jams in the city as people poured into the streets to buy essentials.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Vijay Rupani urged the Centre to depute a team of medical experts to Ahmedabad to guide officials and healthcare workers. In a letter, he said the AIIMS Director and others should visit the State.

On Tuesday, Mr. Rupani was reportedly reprimanded by the Centre for mismanaging the pandemic, which has spread to the entire State. Immediately thereafter, top officials were roped in to bring the situation under control.

On Wednesday, the State recorded 380 cases and 28 deaths, taking its tally to 6,625 cases and 396 deaths, and 1,500 persons have recovered and discharged from hospitals.

Maharashtra sees big surge

State reports 1,233 new cases; second highest spike till date

STAFF REPORTER

PUNE

A total of 1,233 new COVID-19 cases were reported from Maharashtra on Wednesday, as the State crossed yet another grim milestone to breach the 16,000 mark. Its cumulative case tally soared to 16,758, while a further 34 fatalities saw the death toll rise to 651.

After the 1,567-case surge on Monday, this is the second-highest spike reported in the State.

According to the State Health Department, 26 of the 34 fatalities (one of them a person hailing from Uttar Pradesh) were reported from Mumbai to take the city's death toll to 412. Three deaths were reported from Pune district. The cumulative fatalities here have risen to 122.

"Seventy-nine per cent of the deaths reported today had high-risk co-morbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, asthma and heart disease," said State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate.



No let-up: Health workers screening residents at Naik Nagar in Dharavi. ■ VIJAY BATE

As many as 275 persons were discharged on Wednesday, taking the cumulative discharge till date to 3,094, said Dr. Awate.

Of the 1,233 new cases, Mumbai city's share was a staggering 769.

Its cumulative tally crossed the 10,000-case mark to touch 10,714.

Pune district's tally, according to the State health department figures, has ri-

sen to 2,097.

However, going by the Pune district administration's figures, the total case tally stands at 2,287 with at least 86 fresh cases reported across the district on Wednesday.

Till date, 1,90,879 samples have been tested in Maharashtra of which 1,73,838 (nearly 90%) have returned negative while 16,758 have tested positive.

'Statistics of cases can't be compared'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Trinamool Congress hit out at the Union government for pushing the cost of ferrying migrant workers home on the States and said West Bengal is being unfairly targeted by false claims on masking numbers and "high mortality rate" in COVID-19 cases.

Trinamool Congress leader Derek O'Brien said the case fatality is an absurd metric for judging fatalities. "Epidemiologists around the world advise against getting into this early comparison because different regions are in different periods of the pandemic cycle," he said at a virtual press conference.

Party MP Sudip Bandopadhyay alleged that the Centre's lack of managerial efficiency in announcing the lockdown was the reason behind the suffering of the migrant workers.

Centre seeks better supervision in Bengal

Union Home Secretary stresses need to increase random testing in crowded clusters of the State

VIAJITA SINGH

NEW DELHI

Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla wrote two letters in a span of 24 hours to West Bengal Chief Secretary Rajiva Sinha highlighting "poor supervision and implementation of crowd control measures by the district authorities" in controlling COVID-19, and flagged stopping of essential goods vehicles by the State government to cross over to Bangladesh during the ongoing lockdown.

In a letter sent on Wednesday, Mr. Bhalla said the State's response to COVID-19 was characterised by a "very low rate of testing in proportion to the population and a very high rate of mortality of 13.2%", which was a reflection of "poor surveillance, detection and testing." He said there was a need to increase random testing in crowded clusters.

The May 5 letter says the



Ready for action: Health workers preparing themselves before collecting samples from patients in Howrah. ■ PTI

"unilateral action" of the State government in stopping vehicles to Bangladesh will have larger implications for the Indian government with regard to its international commitments. "This act of the State government amounts to violation of the orders issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs [MHA] under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, as well as Articles 253, 256 and 257 of the Constitution of India," the letter said. The MHA had

written to States on April 24 directing them to allow transportation of essential goods through land borders along Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh and sought a compliance report.

"I am constrained to say that we have not received the compliance report from the government of West Bengal. Further, it has been reported that goods traffic through border crossings between India and Bangladesh, falling within the State

Bengal records 112 cases, highest spike so far

KOLKATA

West Bengal recorded 112 COVID-19 cases on Wednesday, taking the number to 1,456. Four more deaths were reported, taking the number to 144. As many as 72 of these deaths were due to comorbidities. So far, 265 patients have been discharged. The State conducted 2,570 tests in the past 24 hours.

of West Bengal, has still not resumed. As a result, a large number of trucks carrying essential supplies, bound for Bangladesh, are stranded at different border crossing points," the letter said.

The letter adds that under Clause 12 of the new MHA guidelines on lockdown measures issued on May 1, "it has been clearly spelt that no State/Union Territory shall stop movement of cargo for cross border and trade under treaties

with neighbouring countries." The letter directs the State government to allow transportation through Bangladesh borders.

Lockdown violations

In the letter, Mr. Bhalla said lockdown violations had been noted in Kolkata and Howrah by specific groups in specific localities with media reports of "Corona Warriors". "This necessitates stricter enforcement of lockdown," the letter said.

"There remains gaps in the surveillance and contact tracing of positive cases. The State has not furnished any data regarding the number of individuals surveyed for signs of COVID-19 symptoms," the letter said.

Meanwhile, West Bengal had expressed its displeasure at not being consulted before the opening of the land border trade route.

(With inputs from Shivay Singh from Kolkata)

Delhi to release quarantined Tablighi members

Around 4,000 persons will be released over the coming days, says a govt. source

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Delhi government will release 4,000 persons related to the Tablighi Jamaat – either "rescued" by it from a congregation in Nizamuddin or those who came in contact with its members – over the coming days, a Delhi government source said here on Wednesday.

While a little over 2,300 of the 4,000 had been rescued

from the centre till April 1, the rest were either visitors or contacts of the rescued persons. Of the total 4,000, over 1,800 were placed under quarantine and over 500 were admitted to hospitals. All of them have completed the mandatory quarantine period.

According to the source, of the total 4,000 individuals, an estimated 900 were residents of Delhi and the rest belonged to other States.

They also fulfilled the requisite medical requirement of testing negative in two consecutive tests for COVID-19. However, some of them would be handed over to the Delhi police if they were part of the investigation related to the centre, the source said.

"Delhi Home Minister Satyendar Jain has issued an

order which also states that those who are named in the investigation will be sent to the custody of the Delhi police," the source said.

"The remaining will be sent back to their home States, for which purpose the Delhi government's Home Department has been asked to get in touch with the resident commissioners of these respective States," the source said.

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU - NAMAKKAL MUNICIPALITY

Dated : 06.05.2020
Rc No: 14381/2016/E1
CORRIGATION ON NOTICE INVITING REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION

Notice inviting RFP for Construction of a New Bus Stand/Infrastructure Project for Namakkal Municipality, Tamil Nadu on a PPP Mode (DBOT Basis), including financial management and maintenance for a period of 22 years published in the official website https://tenders.gov.in on 01.04.2020 and also in Hindi, English daily & Daily Thanthi, Tamil daily papers on 04.04.2020. Due to National lock down from 25.03.2020 to avoid the spread of Corona Virus(Covid-19), the last date of receipt of RFP has been postponed to the following dates.

RFP already invited on 12.05.2020 upto 14.00 hrs
Online : 09.06.2020 upto 14.00 hrs
Offline : 13.05.2020 upto 15.00 hrs
Office : 10.06.2020 upto 15.00 hrs

2. Date and time of Opening of the Application : 13.05.2020 15.30 hrs at Municipal Office, Namakkal
at Municipal Office, Namakkal

The RFP may be downloaded from the Official Website https://tenders.gov.in upto 09.06.2020, 14.00 hrs.
Commissioner, Namakkal Municipality.

KSEB KERALA STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD LIMITED - E - TENDER NOTICE

Office of the Chief Engineer, Transmission South Region - Thiruvananthapuram

1. Tender ID : 2020_KSEB_352480_1* Design, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of 14.1 Km, 110KV Double Circuit Transmission line from Cherai to Njarkkall on turn key basis* PAC: Rs.12,97,46,900/- Last Date: 14-05-2020, 3 P.M.

2. Tender ID : 2020_KSEB_352424_1* Upgradation of Poopally - Alappuzha portion of 66KV of Alappuzha Kuttanad single circuit feeder to 110KV DC feeder * PAC: Rs.13,13,97,397/- Last Date : 15-05-2020, 3 P.M.

Office of the Chief Engineer, Civil Construction South - Thiruvananthapuram

Tender ID: 2020_KSEB_352749_1* Execution of Rectification / Replacement of Penstocks, Butterfly valves, Gate valves and allied works of Sengulam Hydro Electric Project (4x12.8MW)* PAC: Rs.85,00,14,620/- Last Date: 16-05-2020
Visit www.etenders.kerala.gov.in & www.kseb.in
Ref. PR/MC1/E 191/E-Tender/2020

NOTICE INVITING RFP

The CEO, Life Mission invites online tender from eligible agencies for selection of Project Management Consultants.

Last date of on-line submission 25.05.2020
For details login to www.etenders.kerala.gov.in

Ph: 0471 2335524

Sd/- Chief Executive Officer
LIFE Mission
RO/00792/d3/2020/I&PRD

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH SAMAGRA SHIKSHA STATE PROJECT OFFICE, KBC BOYS HIGH SCHOOL CAMPUS, OPP RAITHU BAZAR, PATAMATA, VIJAYAWADA, ANDHRA PRADESH

Request for Proposal (Short Tender Notice)

e-procurement notice No. SSA-16021/4/2019-MIS SEC-SSA/1/2020-21, dt.06-05-2020

Samagra Shiksha, Andhra Pradesh is inviting Request for Proposal for procurement and supply of 3 (Three) pairs of uniform cloth under the scheme of "Jagananna Vidyav Kanuka" to all the students (approximately 31 lakhs in number) studying classes I to VIII in Government/MPZ/PPZ/Municipal/KGBVs/Model Schools/Ashram Schools/Residential/Aided Schools of Education and welfare departments in the State of Andhra Pradesh during the year 2020-21. For details please visit https://tender.approcurement.gov.in from 07-05-2020. Tender/RFP form can be downloaded from website. Eligible firms shall upload the prescribed format as per the schedules given in the above said site. Contact No. 0866-2428599, 7032091512.

Sd/- V.Chinaveerabhadru, I.A.S., State Project Director, Samagra Shiksha, Andhra Pradesh.

DIPR 39PP/CL, Dt: 06-05-2020

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Tender No.	Material Description	Due Date
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Detailed terms & condition, Tender Fee, EMD



Shashi Tharoor

Why make expats pay, asks Tharoor

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress MP from Kerala Shashi Tharoor, in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, questioned the Centre's decision to charge the expatriates for the air fare to bring them back home from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, and asked the government to use the PM CARES Fund instead.

In the letter, Mr. Tharoor also flagged the difficulties faced by Indian citizens in submitting the COVID-19 test results, a mandatory step, prior to their departure to India.

While appreciating the government for "finally deciding to address the plight of our stranded *pravasis*", Mr. Tharoor expressed concern over its decision to collect air fares from them. Some reports said the expatriates would have to pay ₹30,000-₹40,000 each in air fare. There was a strong case for the government to reconsider its position especially for the blue collar workers, those who have been laid off and those with limited resources, he said.

"Given these considerations, I would like to urge the government to strongly reconsider the existing decision and come up with a suitable alternative, particularly catering to our more financially vulnerable expatriates," he said.

Flights from U.S., U.K. delayed

Crew have to undergo COVID-19 tests; services from West Asia not affected

JAGRITI CHANDRA
SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

The wait to return home for thousands of Indians has become slightly longer after the government's plan to mount Air India flights to bring back Indians from around the world was deferred on Wednesday by 24 to 48 hours. Multiple government sources confirmed that the delay was because Air India crew are required to undergo COVID-19 tests.

However, passengers in West Asia will be unaffected as flights to the region will take off on schedule.

Destination countries require the crew to be COVID negative. These are a significant number of pilots and cabin crew who are required to undergo the test on short



Safe zone: A quarantine centre being readied for NRIs near the Calicut International Airport on Wednesday. ■ PTI

notice," a government official explained the reason for the delay in Air India flights..

By the original plan, flights from six countries were scheduled to land on Thursday, but will now arrive either on Friday or Saturday.

The first flight from the U.S. was scheduled to arrive in Mumbai from San Francisco at 4 a.m. on Thursday. It now stands delayed by 48 hours.

Similarly, a flight scheduled to arrive in Delhi from Washington DC at 1 p.m. on

Thursday will now land on Saturday. The first one from London was scheduled to arrive in Mumbai at 1.30 a.m. on Thursday, but this will now bring back Indians two days later.

Seven-day exercise

However, a flight each to Abu Dhabi and Dubai to be operated by Air India Express will arrive on Thursday without delay, as crew members were able to undergo the mandatory medical test. This Air India subsidiary will operate 22 of the total 64 flights planned by the Government of India.

The delay will have a cascading effect on the seven-day plan chalked out by the government. It was scheduled to end on May 13 but has spilled over to May 17.

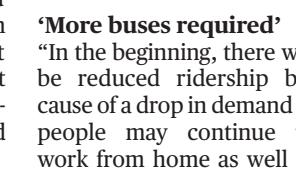


Nitin Gadkari

due to the need to maintain social distancing. We need to look how we can improve the finances of the operators and how we can have more buses to increase their number on the roads," Mr. Aggarwal said.

"With one-third of the capacity, how do we improve finances and how do we increase the number of buses? We need to look at the number of idle buses such as tourist buses and inter-city services. Can we get out of contract and stage carriage limitation to use them for city or regional operations? As far as the financial viability aspect is concerned, some financial support will be required, but we also need to look at the tax structure of bus services versus the metro services. There is also a need to revive the national bus rejuvenation programme," he said.

Ministry sources said there was no decision yet on reopening road transport and that the guidelines for it would be framed by the Union Home Ministry, followed by the State governments.



O.P. Aggarwal

'More buses required'

"In the beginning, there will be reduced ridership because of a drop in demand as people may continue to work from home as well as

Bus services may resume with guidelines: Gadkari

Officials say onus is on Home Ministry to frame the rules

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Bus services may resume soon, Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said on Wednesday.

Addressing a video-conference with members of the Bus and Car Confederation of India, he said: "We may soon start bus transport along with some guidelines. Airlines, railways and bus transport are required to be opened on a certain scale as there are many people stranded," the Minister said.

Mr. Gadkari said the challenge staring at the Ministry was to strike a balance between ensuring social distancing and commercial viability for bus operations.

Ministry sources said there was no decision yet on reopening road transport and that the guidelines for it would be framed by the Union Home Ministry, followed by the State governments.

'Grant them free rations, masks and medicines'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Communist Party of India (CPI) on Wednesday staged a "stand-in protest" at the party headquarters here against the Centre's "apathy" towards migrant workers.

Mr. Sidhu added that the Railway authorities insisted on advance payment before delivering the tickets and were not accepting government-to-government billing.

May 1 and in Hyderabad, Telangana, and Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, this week. The protests, the party said, would continue till the government changed its position towards the workers and the poor.

Mr. Raja said the party had alerted the Centre on the miseries of the poor, but its pleas fell on deaf ears.

The CPI has demanded that the migrant workers and the poor, who are suffering hardships because of the lockdown, be provided with

rations, medicines and

masks free of cost. They should not be charged for their return journey to their native States. He reminded the government that the migrant workers were an essential part of the economy.

Mr. Raja said there is a law

– The Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979 – to regulate the condition of service of inter-State labourers. "The government must respect the Act and implement it without any dilution...," he said.

CPI stages protest against govt. 'apathy' towards migrants

'Grant them free rations, masks and medicines'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

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rations, medicines and

Punjab refutes Centre's claim that 85% of the fare is borne by the Railways

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Railways on Wednesday said 122 Shramik Special trains had been run since May 1. "Till 1800 hrs [6 p.m.] today [Wednesday], we had run 122 trains," a spokesperson said.

Till Tuesday, the Railways had run 93 such trains. On Tuesday, Union Home Ministry spokesperson Punya Saliya Srivastava said these special trains had so far ferried nearly 70,000 migrants.



Home at last: Migrant workers bowing after they reached the Hatia railway station in Jharkhand on Wednesday. ■ PTI

a subsidised amount as claimed by the Centre.

While the Railways have said that the sending State needs to pay the consolidated fare and it is their prerogative to decide whether or

not passengers are charged, the Centre has claimed that 85% of the cost of the Shramik Specials will be borne by the Railways and the remaining by the States.

"FAQ: Is Punjab Govern-

ment paying 100% of the Railway Fare for the migrants travelling out of Punjab to their home states? Or, just 100% of 15% – implying that 85% is being paid for the Indian Railways," Punjab Special Chief Secretary K.B.S. Sindhu tweeted.

He said there was no official document explaining the 85% share of the Centre. The Punjab government was paying 100% of what the passenger was being asked to pay to board a train. "Everything else is either misleading or just notional," he said.

Mr. Sidhu added that the Railway authorities insisted on advance payment before delivering the tickets and were not accepting government-to-government billing.

Such protests have already been held in several States: in Patna, Bihar, on



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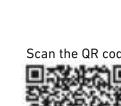
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Convince workers to stay, Centre tells trade unions

Minister didn't address issues: leaders

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

Santosh Kumar Gangwar

Labour and Employment Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar on Wednesday urged trade union leaders to convince workers to return to work, even as he skirted the concerns raised by them about the non-payment of wages during the lockdown, union officials said.

Addressing a meeting via videoconferencing with representatives of central trade unions to discuss labour welfare measures during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, Mr. Gangwar said it was essential to accept the "new normal". He added that the unions' suggestions would be taken into account.

Amarjeet Kaur, general secretary of the All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), said: "None of the is-

Publish Aarogya Setu's source code: hacker

User details secure, say officials

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Ethical hacker Robert Baptiste, who alleged security flaws in Aarogya Setu, called for making the application's source code open.

"...When you ask (force) people to install an app, they have the right to know what the app is really doing. If you love your country @SetuAarogya, publish the source code," he tweeted.

As per the statement issued by a team of Aarogya Setu, Mr. Baptiste pointed out that the application fetched user location on a few occasions. However, Aarogya Setu said, "This is by design and is clearly detailed in the privacy policy."

It noted that the application fetched a user's location and stored it on a server in a secure, encrypted and anonymised manner "I" at the time of registration, 2) at the time of self-assessment, and 3) when the user submits his or her contact tracing data voluntarily through the app or when we fetch the contact tracing data after the person turns COVID-19 positive".

Further, the French hacker had said that a user can get the COVID-19 statistics displayed on the home screen by changing the radius and latitude-longitude using a script.

The Aarogya Setu statement said, "The radius parameters are fixed and can only take one of the five values – 500 metres, 1 km, 2 km, 5 km and 10 km. These values are standard parameters..."

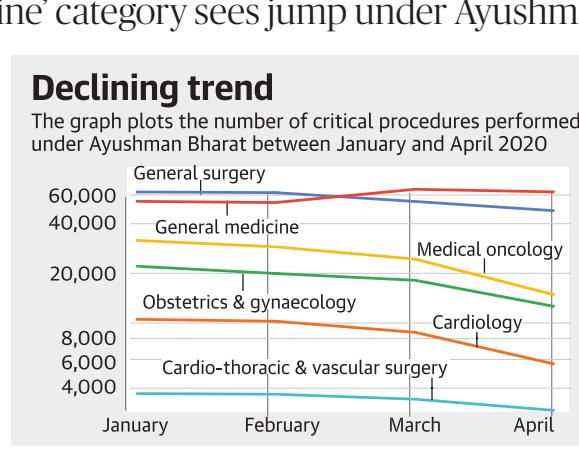
It added that a user could change the latitude/longitude to get the data for multiple locations.

Only 'general medicine' category sees jump under Ayushman Bharat, show data

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

Cardiology treatments offered under the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) declined 45%; 'general surgeries' plummeted 23% and procedures related to gynaecology and obstetrics nosedived 25% from February to April, according to data from the official National Health Authority viewed by *The Hindu*.

The only category of treatment that showed an increase, and in fact accounted for the largest number of treatments and procedures offered overall was 'general medicine'. In February, there were 54,179 procedures offered under this category. It increased to 65,336 in March and 68,519 in April, the data show.



There were 1,98,734 treatments offered under various AB-PMJAY packages in January, which slightly dipped to 1,93,679 in February; 1,88,116 in March and 1,51,672 in April. In the first month after lockdown, March 24 - April 24, 1,59,755 treatments were offered. The AB-PMJAY, according to the Centre, offers health

insurance to 10.74 crore poor, rural families and identified occupational categories of urban workers' families. The government-backed project offers an annual cover of ₹5,00,000 per family (on a family floater basis). It covers medical and hospitalisation expenses for several secondary care and tertiary care procedures.

These services can be accessed at several private hospitals also. With the lockdown, private hospitals largely shut down with the government itself encouraging people to visit hospitals only for essential treatments. However, with several reports of COVID-19 infections in healthcare workers and doctors, the number of visits to hospitals in general saw a decline, as evidenced by the PMJAY data.

"People are hesitant and afraid to go to hospitals. However, general medicine [that has shown an increase] could be because it covers a range of conditions from fever, respiratory illness and even COVID-19. I expect an increase in demand for other services in about two weeks," Indu Bhushan, CEO, AB-PMJAY, told *The Hindu*.

49 hours later

TT SRINATH

I had to spend 14 days in quarantine in Delhi after arriving from San Francisco, USA, on what was probably the last flight into India before the clamp down on international air-travel started on March 22. The lockdown followed on March 25, and I had to remain in Delhi for another 21 days. In this time, two friends and I decided to seek police permission to take a road trip by a private taxi to Chennai.

We were informed that such permission would be granted only in the event of a medical emergency, or in the case of a death, which required us to travel, and we met neither of these conditions. But the fact that we had completed mandatory quarantine, and had tested negative for COVID-19, meant that we could travel home. We were issued a discharge certificate from quarantine, a negative test report from health authorities and a quarantine release pass by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate. The travel pass bore each of our names, its validity, the reason for travel, the registration number and make of the vehicle as well as the name of the driver. The pass also indicated that the vehicle was to return before the validity expired.

However, finding a vehicle

to drive us to Chennai from Delhi was no mean effort. Taxi-hiring companies were wary simply because there was no food, lodging and public convenience. Even a puncture repair shop was unlikely to be open. Finally, Umesh Singh, a small-time taxi operator in Delhi, who we got in touch with through a relative, was willing to offer his only taxi – an SUV – with two of his drivers, the amiable Bablu and Prem Kumar, to drive us to Chennai. When we contracted Umesh's taxi, we were unaware that one driver would be asked to leave due to the physical distancing norm, but we realised it shortly thereafter and jettisoned Prem Kumar at Delhi itself. Neither the driver nor we were aware of the route, so we relied on Google Maps.

Plotting the route
The most convenient route would take us through Agra, Gwalior, Jhansi, Nagpur, Adilabad, Hyderabad, Ongole, Nellore and on to Chennai. Since only fuel bunks would be open, we were advised to carry enough food and li-

Some dhabas were cooking and offering the migrant workers free food



Quarantined in Delhi after returning from the U.S., then stuck in the lockdown, the writer embarked on a road trip to Chennai, covering 2,200 kilometres. As private vehicles begin to ply, taking stranded travellers home, he recounts his adventures on the drive



Are we nearly there yet? (Clockwise from above) Migrant workers walking home; the deserted Yamuna Expressway; and a police checkpoint ■ AP, REUTERS, PTI

quid to last the entire journey. It was also suggested that we drive non-stop as halting enroute may expose us to COVID-19 infection, if we came into contact with others. We were to carry soap and an adequate number of bottles of hand sanitisers. The lodging, where we stayed in Delhi, was extremely kind and packed us food that included sandwiches, vegetable *kati* rolls, fruits, dozens of drinking water bottles and juices. As we were unsure of the availability of public conveniences, the hotel suggested that we eat light over the 37-hour trip (per Google Maps) to Chennai.

What we found remarkable were the public conveniences at each fuel outlet, and the willingness to let us use it. We commenced our journey to Chennai at 7.30 am on April 27 from Delhi, passed into Uttar Pradesh through Faridabad in Haryana, and headed towards the Agra bypass. As there were no vehicles on the highway other than a few lorries, we hoped we could journey smoothly. At Agra, we were halted down at a 'check point', temporarily created in each State and at district entry points to make sure vehicles have necessary travel permits, passengers travelling in vehicles adhere to physical distancing norms and, in some cases, to do a quick thermal test on the spot. As our pass specified the destination as Chennai, we were not allowed to enter a

THE THIN RED LINE

In Tamil Nadu, the State e-pass control room has been issuing permits since May 2 via the portal <https://tnepass.tnega.org>. Individuals wishing to travel into and out of Tamil Nadu have to make use of this portal; the permit is processed in 24 hours and a colour-coded pass with a QR embed is issued subject to criteria fulfilment. An e-pass for travel is issued to an individual only under four categories: death/funeral, wedding, medical emergencies (concerning a blood relative) or return of stranded people. Relevant documents like death certificate, wedding invitation, medical certificate issued by the district Medical Officer or Superintendent confirming the nature of emergency, and, if you have completed quarantine, a negative COVID-19 test report and a quarantine discharge certificate from the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, District Magistrate or the city Corporation Commissioner (in case of Chennai) is required. Besides, individuals entering Tamil Nadu from other States will be put in mandatory quarantine for 14 days. Only one application per individual is entertained. In Tamil Nadu, only two people plus a driver are allowed to travel in a car or jeep. No pillion rider if you wish to commute on a two-wheeler.

were exhausted, as was our lone driver Bablu, and so we managed to request a hotel to give us two rooms to rest for a few hours because we had the requisite permissions.

An associate of my friend, who met us near the highway in Nagpur as we set off towards Telangana, brought us food for the remainder of the trip. We headed towards Adilabad next, expecting the journey to take us four hours.

At the Adilabad check point, however, the scrutiny was very thorough – our documents with photographs were sent to the Collectorate for approval, pending which we could not continue our journey.

While some who had crossed the check point a few days earlier told us to expect a wait time of three to five hours, we seemed to have a bit of luck. Our documents

were cleared in an hour, and we continued. We stopped at a closed *dhaba* enroute our next stop, Ongole. We asked a man, who seemed like its owner, if we could stand under the canopy and have our meal. He was considerate, and offered us a couple of chairs to sit and eat our meal. While there, we noticed several people, men, women and even young children, walking along the highway; we had spotted them in the morning too on our journey from Nagpur to Adilabad.

A health inspector, who was sitting on one of the chairs at the *dhaba*, explained that these were migrant labourers returning to their villages in Uttar Pradesh from Andhra Pradesh on foot, travelling, in some cases, nearly 1,300 kilometres. It was a heart-wrenching sight. Some *dhabas* were cooking and offering them free food, the health inspector told us. Along the way, lorries were stopping to help them: even though they were laden with goods, the drivers were allowing people to climb onto the tarpaulin and travel some distance, if not the whole, without charging them any money.

Welcome break

We continued our journey towards Chennai, but entering Andhra Pradesh from Telangana was an unpleasant experience. We were detained at the check point, and it took almost two hours before we were permitted to continue. Thus the journey from Nagpur to Ongole took us another 20 hours, but we were fortunate to be lodged for a few hours by a benevolent mill owner, a friend of a friend, in his guest house on the Ongole highway. We left for Chennai early next morning, hoping to reach in six hours. However,

we were once again stopped at a check point between Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu at Gummidipoondi, and were subjected to similar questions and document scrutiny.

In spite of offering all requisite evidence of good health, we were asked to wait for clearance from health authorities that delayed our entry into Chennai by three hours. When we reached finally on April 29 at 7 pm, it had been 49 hours of travelling; we had travelled 2,200 kilometres, burnt 150 litres of fuel and spent ₹2,300 in toll fees.



Bridge between cultures

Jason Moore's Zero To Travel is more than six years into its being, offering tips and tricks to those who have never considered travel as an option. It also features interviews with other well-known travellers and hobbyists who have expert views on culture shifts and proactivity. Moore considers the podcast to be ideal for those who want to discover the world on their own terms as a form of enrichment.

Do not miss the following episodes: on the Viking Biking movement in Norway featuring a chat with founder Curtis Rojak, purely because we do miss getting in touch with Nature, on medical tourism which has an interview with Patients Beyond Borders

CEO Joe Woodman, which would make for an enlightening listen during the ongoing global healthcare crisis. The podcast does not feature just interviews, but also debates such as 'is technology ruining your travel experience?' which reminds us of the beauty of going back to basics.

These episodes are quite lengthy – about an hour or so – so save these for when you really want to kick back, and switch your phone to 'do not disturb' for added escapism.

zerototravel.com/listen-to-podcasts/

Not always perfect...

Probably the most relatable podcast on this list, Not So Bon Voyage (When Sh*t Goes Wrong On The Road) is a peek into a given traveller's misadventures while they have taken a trip.

Be it car trouble or getting sucked out of a plane, this whole podcast hosted by Jules Hatfield and Christine Williams will have you either shocked or laughing out loud. Episode 22 sees someone getting mistaken for a murderer, while episode 13 is the story of a flight invaded by a ... possum. And what travel horror story is complete without a number of digestion problems? Cue episode 10, please!

Not So Bon Voyage does not extend its narrative to bullying; its aim is to reveal that trips do go wrong and human error can happen on a fantasy trip, and that you can look back on your own similar mishaps with a laugh.

notsobonvoyage.com/

We round up some podcasts which will have you tuning into virtual trips

For the vicarious traveller

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI



Get real, on a budget

Ideal for the budget-minded traveller, Jackie Nourse's podcast, JUMP With Traveling Jackie, kicked off in the year 2014. From finding the best deals for inexpensive flights and tips on biking through Europe to how people can pack light for a long trip, this is a fun one to listen to. 'Long-Distance Running As A Way To Travel' offers a new way to look at adventuring while staying fit. Nourse, in her 92nd episode, speaks to South African Mike Sewell, who embarked on a running expedition, running the length of the Carretera Austral. The episode offers tips on how to prepare your own running expedition... for when it is safe to go out, that is. Nourse is not afraid to venture into emotional topics, as she does in her 98th episode 'The Hardest Part of Travel Is Returning Home...' where she speaks with a family of five who had sold their house and decided to travel around the world for a year. The interview delves deep and addresses how one can keep the travel spirit alive after a huge adventurous trip has passed. With our new normal being housebound or city-bound, look to this episode for nuggets of wisdom.

travelingjackie.com/podcast/

Fall back in love with India

The mosaical experience from The Musafir Stories – India Travel Podcast looks at the travel stories of India. The speciality is that it details the stories of travellers of varying experiences, from rookie to expeditioner. Quirky episodes include 'The Power Plant Trail with Girish' which is worth tuning in for its approach to clean-tech. Girish Shivakumar narrates the trail from the Neyveli Lignite mining and power generation plant in Tamil Nadu to Mapro of Mahabaleshwar to Charanka solar power plant in Gujarat. It reminds listeners that travel can have a conscious purpose too, for which many, after lockdown, will bat. Other episodes explore the caves of Meghalaya, the ghost town of Dhanushkodi, and the greenery of Dalhousie – places we do not get to hear about often.

audioboom.com/channel/the-musafir-stories-india-travel-podcast

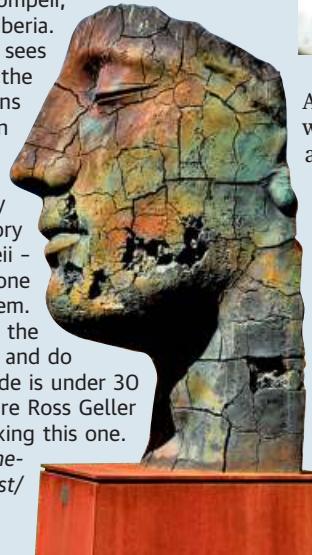


For intellectual heavyweights
For many, travel is fuel for the mind, a way to practically approach academia. Academy Travel's The Thinking Traveller takes listeners on a deep dive through history and philosophy in the name of armchair travel. Host Jo Litton speaks with academic tour leaders around the globe about Venice and iconic places such as Pompeii, Siberia.

The most recent episode sees Dr Kathleen Olive detailing the history of Japanese gardens and how they have become an art form, as well as comparing them to western gardens. Those fascinated by Pompeii and its brutal history will find the episode 'Pompeii – Uncovering The Truth' the one for them.

Think twice before hitting the snooze button on this one... and do not worry, each episode is under 30 minutes. In fact, we picture Ross Geller bookmarking this one.

academytravel.com.au/the-thinking-traveller-podcast/



As lockdown powers through to keep us safe, the mind is free to wander; either to the neighbouring State to see a loved one, or to a faraway destination that has long been lingering on your travel bucket list. One of the vehicles for this new breed of wanderlust is podcasts, in that we can mentally shut out our yet-to-be-completed household chores for just a few minutes and be as present as we can possibly be. We can expect high production value across these podcasts, but there are moments where audio can be affected by the environment which we consider the occupational hazards of being a traveller with a mobile office – adding a little ASMR to our own listening experience.

While we are well aware there is a world of travel podcasts out there, here is a selection of five, each catering to various trip-taking personas out there.

All the podcasts are available on Google Podcasts, Apple Podcasts and Spotify



MADHUR TANKHA

Priyanka Banerjee, a Delhi-based artist, has created a series of eight artworks putting the deer at the centre of her work, exploring subtle themes of its powerful antlers, athletic legs, and its friendly though timid disposition. Done in watercolours, acrylic on canvas, pen and pencil on paper - she was limited by what she had at home -- she looked at photographs taken in Gir National Park and Ranthambore, for inspiration.

This Paschim Vihar resident, who has had 12 solo and 20 group shows in Delhi, Jaipur and Agra, isn't formally trained in art. She did an arts appreciation course at the National Museum Institute, Janpath, about seven years ago, leading her into art writing.

Deer, she says, first found artistic representation in paleolithic cave paintings. For her though, there is a connect that goes deeper. "Like American Emily Dickinson's poem 'A wounded deer leaps highest', I too admire the spirit of this creature," says Banerjee.

Painting in a pause



Artist and writer Priyanka Banerjee draws a parallel between deer and humans, in the coronavirus lockdown

She feels deer mostly remain in the solitude of the wild and in the context of the current coronavirus lockdown situation, are symbolic of our existence today. "We are living in uncertain times. The sudden change from a

fast-paced life to a quarantined existence can be stressful. Just like the jungles where there exists an absolute calm, cities today have become isolated. In late March a nilgai was seen on a stretch of road in Noida.

The antelope walked about freely till it was spotted by cops. A few decades ago, these antelopes were natural inhabitants of the land," she says.

She herself tries to distract by getting away to the forest, where "the greenery, the gurgling streams, the chirping of birds and crickets, fills my heart with delight."

Through these paintings, she hopes to try to highlight the deer's role in ecological balance. "Despite several laws, many indulge in royal sports or poach their antlers for exorbitant prices. Some deer species like the black buck have been pushed to the verge of extinction and are counted as endangered species," she says, hoping that the lockdown will help us reconnect with Nature.

View her work on Instagram @priya_ban2003

Sending out a message
(Left) A deer in the wild,
Priyanka Banerjee
• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

IN OUR BACKYARD

The bright spot on a locked-down Thursday

The Gulmohar has flowers the colour of fire, and lights up our lanes at a time we're all struggling with the gloom of the coronavirus lockdown

ABHISHEK GULSHAN

One of the most beautiful trees in the world, the Gulmohar (*Delonix regia*), also called the Royal Poinciana, or sometimes the flame tree or fire tree, has been an inspiration for poets, writers, and artists across the world. Its scarlet flowers bloom in April and May, and it is perhaps one of the oldest ornamental trees to have been planted with one of the earliest records of cultivation in India. This comes from Sewree, near Mumbai, from way back in 1840, says Pradip Krishen's *Trees of Delhi*.

In non-flowering time you've probably stood in its shade, not realising that you're under a Gulmohar. It is abundant and familiar, which is why it is often referred to as the 'street tree'.

A middle-sized tree, Gulmohar likes a warm tropical climate and has disappeared from most of its ideal wild range in Madagascar (where the tree's first lone specimen was found in 1828). Owing to its ornamental brilliance, it has been planted

and colonised in several subtropical and tropical countries. Although the tree thrives in most soil conditions (though not in very dry or frosty conditions), it appears in most parts of Delhi-NCR, but it is not native to the land.

Being a deciduous tree, the leaves start turning yellow and shedding in November. The tree remains bare until most of March. During this period, it functions on minimal nutrients and water. Towards the end of March, new leaves with about 10-20 pairs of side stalks, with each stalk bearing up to 30 pairs of small blunt leaflets start filling the tree. The flowers of the Gulmohar appear in loose clus-

Endemic bird day

May 9 is Endemic Bird Day, a day to observe and document endemic and other birds in our vicinity. For details on how to contribute towards citizen science and on how and upload your lists to eBird.org please get in touch with ninox.edu@gmail.com

ters, each with five spoon-shaped petals that have wrinkly edges. Four are scarlet and one primarily white, with splatters of red and yellow on it. The tree blooms more when it gets an additional supply of water, apart from the ground water it has access to.

The tree has a shallow-root system, which makes it quite vulnerable to damage in storms. It doesn't have much timber value; neither does it have too many medicinal uses. You'd be planting a Gulmohar for its shade and beauty. The light brown bark facilitates easy hole-excavations, making it a favourite among cavity-nesting birds like the Coppersmith Barbet, Brown-headed Barbet, Common Myna and more.

The Gulmohar has a cultural significance in Kerala. A popular belief is that when Jesus was crucified, his blood was shed on the flowers of the Royal Poinciana tree in the vicinity, which gave its flowers that vivid scarlet colour.

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



POOCH CAFE

FAMOUS DOGS



CHARLIE YAPLIN

KNOWN AS THE LOVABLE TRAMP, CHARLIE FIRST CAME TO HOLLYWOOD IN 1914 AND BEGAN STARRING IN SILENT MOVIES SUCH AS THE PUP, THE BOWL RUSH, AND CITY BITES. THE MOVIES WERE BLACK-AND-WHITE, WHICH WAS PERFECT SINCE HE WAS COLORED IN. LATER THE MOVIES DEVELOPED SOUND AND WERE CALLED 'BARKIES,' WHICH CHARLIE MADE A FEW OF BEFORE HE HIT HIS CYCLE 3 YEARS.

HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



PEANUTS



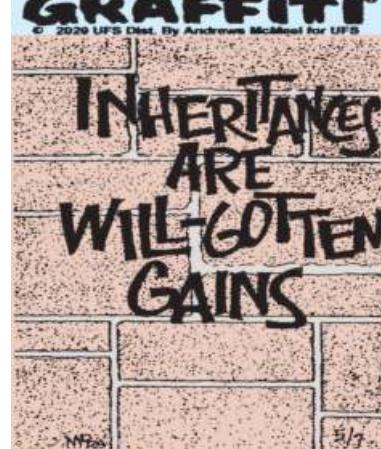
CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER



GRAFFITI



THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13350

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To play the Guardian Quick Crossword, The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.

- 4 Provokes – a stunt (anag.) (6)
- 5 Two people considered together (informal) (4)
- 6 Odds and ends used in a particular pursuit (13)
- 7 Beat back (7)
- 12 Instantly (2,1,5)
- 13 Woody centre of an ear of maize (7)
- 15 Region (6)
- 18 Inhabited (5)
- 19 River crossing (4)

The solution will appear on May 9, 2020.

Solution No. 13349

WUMO



HEALTH CAPSULES®



- 14 Exist permanently as part of (6)
- 16 Contest of speed (4)
- 17 Kept within limits (8)
- 20 Small thin sausage (9)
- 21 Be prostrate (3)
- 22 Someone excessively affected by a hard luck story (8,5)

- Across
- 1 Corporate raider who sells off parts of a company for personal gain (5,8)
- 2 Indian state, former Portuguese colony (3)
- 9 Boring hard cheese (informal) (9)
- 10 Quickness (8)
- 11 Form of hydrated silica, often used as a gemstone (4)
- 13 Clergyman (6)
- 14 Exist permanently as part of (6)
- 16 Contest of speed (4)
- 17 Kept within limits (8)
- 20 Small thin sausage (9)
- 21 Be prostrate (3)
- 22 Someone excessively affected by a hard luck story (8,5)
- Down
- 1 Rage (5)
- 2 Unscrupulous dealing (5,8)
- 3 Shyness (8)

PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



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A ND-NDE

European economy faces historic recession

Commission forecasts it to contract by 7.7% even as member countries are gradually easing restrictions

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BRUSSELS
The EU on Wednesday forecast a historic recession on the continent battered by the deadly coronavirus pandemic, as the U.S. and China escalated their war of words over the origins of the disease.

The grim prediction from Brussels came as Europe's biggest economy Germany unveiled plans for a near-return to normality, even as fresh data from the powerhouse revealed manufacturing and car sales have been badly hammered.

Countries in Asia joined step in easing punishing lockdowns that have kept swathes of humanity indoors for weeks and pummeled economies, tipping the world toward a recession not seen in decades.

Students in the central Chinese city of Wuhan, where the outbreak emerged in December, were back in

classrooms Wednesday, while South Korea lept back to life with offices and museums open once again.

The pandemic has now killed more than 2,57,000 people globally and officially infected nearly 3.7 million, although with only the most serious cases being tested the number is believed to be far higher.

COVID-19

Europe accounts for the lion's share of deaths and infections, though hardest hit Britain, Italy, Spain and France have started to see new cases and fatalities level off in recent weeks.

On the economic front the news was less optimistic.

The eurozone economy is forecast to contract by an eye-watering 7.7%, EU Economic Affairs Commissioner Paolo Gentiloni said.



New normal: An employee working on the assembly line of an automobile factory in Flins on Wednesday. ■REUTERS

"Europe is facing an economic shock without precedent since the Great Depression," he warned.

Governments are seeking to revive stalled economies by slowly lifting lockdown measures that have hemmed in more than 4.6 billion people worldwide – while avoiding a second wave of the virus.

Germany forged ahead

with its plans to reopen, and will allow all students back to school this month, all shops to reopen and even restart the top-flight football Bundesliga.

Drop in car sales
So far only some shops and schools have been open, and sports matches across the country have been suspended.

Russia records 10,000 cases for fourth day

MOSCOW

Russia recorded more than 10,000 new coronavirus cases for the fourth day in a row on Wednesday, surpassing Germany to become the country with the sixth-highest number of confirmed infections. Health officials on Wednesday reported 10,559 new cases over the last 24 hours, bringing the total number of infections to 1,65,929, with 1,537 deaths. AFP

But fresh data revealed the extend of damage in some sectors: car sales plunged by 61% last month while new industrial orders hit a record low in March.

In Britain, the Mayor of London eyed a gentler return to normal, saying pedestrian and cycle routes would be expanded to help people avoid public transport.

The U.K. on Tuesday overtook Italy for the highest number of deaths in Europe, and is now second after the US in terms of fatalities.

France is inching towards a May 11 deadline to allow some schools to open their doors again after almost two months, while lawmakers in Spain met on Wednesday to vote on extending lockdown measures by two weeks.

The vote comes as Spain

said foreign tourist arrivals plummeted by 64% in March, a major blow one of the country's key economic lifelines.

Some residents were in favour of a gradual return to normal to avoid a resurgence of the disease that has paralysed the country.

"The end of confinement wouldn't be bad, but we have to go through all the phases," said Adrian, a gardener in Madrid. "It's better to have a bit more patience."

A lab at the heart of U.S.-China virus spat

Trump claims virus came from the facility

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BEIJING

The Chinese laboratory accused by top American officials of being the source of the pandemic conducts research on the world's most dangerous diseases.

U.S. President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have both claimed that there is evidence the pathogen came from the lab in Wuhan – the city where the disease was first detected late last year.

But the World Health Organization (WHO) said Washington had offered no evidence to support the "speculative" claims, and scientists believe the coronavirus jumped from animals to humans, possibly at a Wuhan market selling wild animals.

The top U.S. epidemiologist Anthony Fauci has echoed the WHO's statement, telling National Geographic that all evidence so far "strongly indicates" a natural origin.

China's Foreign Ministry responded on Wednesday that Mr. Pompeo had no evidence and that questions over the origin of the virus should be left to scientists, "not politicians who lie for their own domestic political ends".

Here are some key questions about the Wuhan Institute of Virology:

What does it handle?
The Wuhan institute houses the largest virus bank in Asia which preserves more than 1,500 strains.

Could there be a leak?
US diplomatic cables seen by *The Washington Post* earlier said that officials were concerned about inadequate safety standards related to researchers' handling of SARS-like bat coronaviruses in the high-security lab.

The institute has said it received samples of the then-unknown virus on December 30, determined the viral genome sequence on January 2 and submitted information on the pathogen to the WHO on January 11.

In February, they published work concluding that the new virus shared a 79.6% sequence identity to the SARS coronavirus, and that it was 96% identical at



A file photo of a lab technician inside the P4 laboratory in Wuhan. ■AFP

the whole-genome level to a coronavirus found in bats.

The lab's researchers had already conducted extensive investigations on the links between bats and disease outbreaks in China, and had highlighted the need to prepare for viruses potentially spreading out of their natural reservoirs into human communities.

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What do researchers do?
Work by the lab's scientists helped to shed light on the COVID-19 pathogen in the early days of the outbreak in Wuhan.

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MARKET WATCH

	06-05-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	31,686	-0.74
US Dollar	75.72	-0.12
Brent oil	29.36	-1.83

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	270.15	7.05
Asian Paints	1610.65	-8.50
Axius Bank	388.85	-0.15
Bajaj Auto	2471.85	49.05
Bajaj Finserv	4692.90	63.70
Bajaj Finance	2106.25	103.90
Bharti Airtel	546.00	17.95
BPCL	343.80	-3.25
Britannia Ind	2987.70	8.95
Cipla	591.75	-5.15
Coal India	133.75	-4.25
Dr Reddys Lab	3852.50	18.60
Eicher Motors	13859.95	49.00
GAIL (India)	94.70	3.60
Grasim Ind	482.40	10.95
HCL Tech	519.10	-1.30
HDFC	1732.15	42.25
HDFC Bank	946.40	34.95
Hero MotoCorp	2026.75	61.40
Hindalco	118.60	2.70
Hind Unilever	2010.20	-31.30
ICICI Bank	341.40	10.55
IndusInd Bank	425.50	6.80
Bharti Infratel	160.90	-9.70
Infosys	665.90	-7.80
Indian Oil Corp	76.55	-2.15
ITC	163.90	-10.00
JSW Steel	165.80	1.90
Kotak Bank	1245.95	7.60
L&T	837.30	0.40
M&M	387.15	19.00
Maruti Suzuki	4843.25	13.40
Nestle India Ltd.	17309.30	-112.20
NTPC	94.70	2.10
ONGC	79.25	0.80
PowerGrid Corp	165.40	1.75
Reliance Ind	1460.75	0.10
State Bank	171.10	0.70
Shree Cement	18741.90	229.90
Sun Pharma	545.40	-1.90
Tata Motors	83.20	2.30
Tata Steel	277.75	5.10
TCS	1903.60	-29.15
Tech Mahindra	506.85	6.90
Titan	876.45	-10.50
UltraTech Cement	3324.40	40.05
UPL	379.00	-8.05
Vedanta	79.45	0.55
Wipro	187.05	2.85
Zee Entertainment	152.65	4.25

EXCHANGE RATES		
Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on May 06		
CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	75.56	75.88
Euro	81.52	81.86
British Pound	93.49	93.89
Japanese Yen (100)	71.09	71.39
Chinese Yuan	10.64	10.69
Swiss Franc	77.46	77.79
Singapore Dollar	53.20	53.43
Canadian Dollar	53.72	53.97
Malaysian Ringgit	17.46	17.56
Australian Dollar	48.54	48.79

Source: Indian Bank

+ Adani profit drops 78.44% to ₹61 crore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

Adani Enterprises Limited (AEL) reported a 78.44% drop in net profit for the fourth quarter to ₹61 crore compared with the year-earlier period.

The drop in profit came on a 2% increase in revenue to ₹3,698 crore. EBITDA for the quarter fell 31.38% to ₹647 crore.

Gautam Adani, chairman, Adani Group, said, "COVID-19 has brought things to a halt. We aim to emerge stronger once the situation normalises."

"The emphasis will be on continued incubation of future businesses and create value for our stakeholders in the long term," the chairman added.

The company has lined up capital expenditure worth ₹10,000 crore for FY21 of which ₹5,000 crore would be spent on the airports vertical alone.

GSK Pte, Horlicks to sell 5.7% in HUL for \$3.3 bn

HUL shares decline 1.57%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

GlaxoSmithKline Pte and Horlicks will sell 5.69% stake in Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) in a deal valued at ₹24,750 crore or nearly \$3.3 billion.

A total of 13.4 crore equity shares would be sold in bulk deals in a price band of ₹1,850 to ₹1,950 on Thursday. The base price is nearly 8% lower than Wednesday's closing price of ₹2,009.85.

Shares of HUL, which is the country's largest pure play fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) company, fell 1.57% on Wednesday.

In December 2018, HUL approved the merger of GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare India with the company, in a deal worth ₹31,700 crore to acquire Horlicks and Boost, among other health food drinks.

The all-equity merger transaction saw sharehol-



ders of GSK CH India getting 4.39 shares of HUL for every one share of GSK CH India. That, in turn, led to GSK Plc. holding 5.7% in HUL.

While deal was announced in December 2018, all the requisite approvals were obtained only last month.

Meanwhile, the share sale on Thursday will be managed by JP Morgan India, HSBC Securities (India) and Morgan Stanley India.

Touchless payments and virtual try-ons will be the new norm, says IBM's Prashobh Chandralayam. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

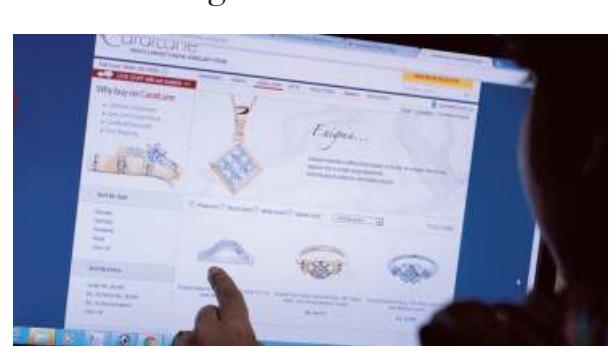
COVID-19 to help accelerate e-com adoption

Online sales will breach double-digit mark in the next 12-18 months: IBM

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA NEW DELHI

The COVID-19 pandemic could accelerate the adoption of e-commerce in the country, with online sales accounting for over 10% of Indian retail sales in the next 12-18 month period, from 5% currently.

"Demonetisation accelerated the adoption of digital payment in India and we expect COVID-19 to do the same thing for online commerce. Presently, 95% of India's retail sales do happen at stores, and online contribute only 5%. However, we expect this to change dramatically. Online sales will breach the double-digit mark within the next 12-18 months," Prashobh Chandralayam, executive director (Retail), Global Business Ser-



will be the new norm. The perfect combination of digital and physical will define the new shopping experience," he said. For example, trial rooms at fashion retail outlets will need to have virtual try-on facility with 3D avatars, as customers may not be comfortable trying out any garments in the trial

room. He added that customers would also want more information about the product they are buying, to know how genuine the product line is. "The entire product value chain will need to be articulated as part of the product info. Farm to fork and fibre to fashion is what matters. Customers will not shy away from paying extra money for the product information," he said.

Mr. Chandralayam pointed out that 41% of the world's GDP is retail and from a digital perspective, 40 petabytes of data is generated every hour in retail. "It's not just any data, it's the demand signal for the world. Post COVID-19 era, data signals from retail will provide vital clues on the shape of economic recovery," he said.

Touchless payments and virtual try-ons will be the new norm, says IBM's Prashobh Chandralayam. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

Talking about changes in shopping experience, Mr. Chandralayam said since safety and security was going to be the single most important thing, he expected end-to-end digitisation at stores to be mandatory. "Touchless payments and virtual try-on

will come days after the RBI and banks discussed moratorium, liquidity flows to NBFCs. ■ SOMASHEKAR GRN

the RBI had allowed banks to extend three-month repayment moratorium to their term loan customers without classifying them as non-performing assets.

Lenders' reluctance While the banks had extended the facility to the retail borrowers, they were reluctant to extend the same to the NBFCs, including housing finance companies and micro-finance institutions.

Bank funding is a key source of liquidity for the NBFCs.

As a result, NBFCs that had extended the benefit to their customers but were not granted one from the banks, were facing a severe liquidity crunch.

Rating agency Crisil had said that the NBFCs rated by

the agency would face a ₹1.75 lakh-crore debt obligation maturing by June end.

Similarly, micro-finance institutions had informed the RBI during a recent meeting that they had to repay a debt of ₹18,500 crore in the next three months.

Sa-Dhan, the industry body of micro lenders, had urged that the moratorium be extended until June 30, as March payments were mostly done by customers.

With SBI now deciding to offer the moratorium, NBFCs expect other commercial banks also to follow suit.

"Since the SBI had decided to extend the moratorium, we expect other banks also to extend the same benefit to the NBFCs," said the MD & CEO of a housing finance company.



quantum of shares traded comes close on the heels of many brokerages registering a spike in the number of new client additions in March.

Flavour of the season

Most of the discount broking firms like Zerodha, 5paisa and Upstox, among others, that predominantly cater to retail clients and are completely dependent on technology – clients trade through their apps – had reported a huge jump in new client additions.

"When the lockdown was announced, it became imperative for the people to organise their daily schedule. This also included people who are actively involved in the stock market. As life started getting re-organised, they had the time to devote to stock markets. This trend also hints at higher volumes in the coming months as clarity emerges in global and domestic factors driving the stock markets," explained Mr. Kejriwal.

Incidentally, both average daily turnover and the average trade size registered marginal increase on the NSE in April.

While the average trade size increased to ₹25,118 in April from ₹24,065 in March, the average daily turnover rose to ₹50,322 crore from ₹47,917 crore in the same period on the NSE.

Automobile majors resume partial operations

India's largest automaker Maruti Suzuki to restart vehicle production at Manesar plant from May 12



contact during transportation. There will be complete compliance with norms of social distancing and workplace sanitisation," the company said.

Operations at two other manufacturing facilities at Tiruvottiyur and Vallam Vadagal will resume in a phased manner, it said.

Royal Enfield said its manufacturing unit at Oragadam, near Chennai, was the first to begin operations in a staggered manner, with minimal staff over a single shift.

"We expect about 300 dealerships will be aligned to work in these units so as to avoid long-distance travel and minimise

lowed at dealerships as well," it added.

Meanwhile, MRF said it had partially resumed its operations at most of its plants with restricted manpower. Some of the stocking points have also partially resumed operations. The continuance of operations in these places however depends on

guidelines to help minimise

All activities would be carried out strictly in accordance with the government regulations and guidelines and observing the company's own concern for the highest standards of safety," the company added.

TVS Motor Company had commenced its operations in India across all its factories in Hosur, Mysuru and Nalgur.

A comprehensive preparedness manual has been designed for the employees to ensure complete adherence to necessary safety guidelines to help minimise

cash from ATMs, rushed to the kiranas to meet their banking needs.

"In such a situation, kirana stores, especially Digital Pradhans have emerged heroes. Armed with AePS and MicroATMs, they have been a saviour to populations faced with a scarcity of ATMs, helping them transact with ease," Mr. Mediratta said.

He said METRO Cash & Carry India has been helping in modernisation and digitisation of kiranas to make them attract more footfalls and profitability.

The kirana network also played a crucial role in enabling financial transactions for the masses during the lockdown.

Residents of high-rise buildings in Mumbai's Worli and small societies in Worli Koliwada invited retail agents of PayNearby to help them with banking services. Similarly, in rural areas, many people who were unable to travel long distances to conduct transactions or withdraw

"The ubiquitous nature of kirana has given it an advantage over the banking sector

Equity trades dip by 14% in April

Investors turn risk-averse on virus fear

ASHISH RUKHAIYAR MUMBAI

Equity markets witnessed the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing nationwide lockdown not only in terms of a drop in stock prices, but also the quantum of trading.

Data from the National Stock Exchange (NSE) and the BSE clearly show that the total number of transactions in April – the first full month of the lockdown – dipped by almost 14%, while the total number of shares traded fell a little over 27% from 5,884 crore to 4,273 crore equity shares.

On the BSE, while the number of trades dropped almost 14%, the total number of shares traded fell by 36%. Market participants attribute this to the increased underlying

**Sangakkara could stay on as MCC president**

LONDON The Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) on Wednesday announced that it would recommend a second term for its president Kumar Sangakkara owing to the global disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The recommendation for the extension will be taken up for approval at the AGM scheduled for June 24. PTI

**Bayern to sign Leroy Sane: report**

BERLIN Bundesliga champion Bayern Munich has reportedly agreed a transfer with Manchester City winger Leroy Sane on a five-year deal, according to Sport Bild. The magazine said Bayern wants to pay €40 million – half of Sane's estimated market value. AFP

Djokovic training: club admits mistake

MADRID The Marbella tennis club where Novak Djokovic broke confinement rules in Spain said it mistakenly allowed the top-ranked Serb to practice and apologised for the error. Djokovic had published a video of him training on Monday in apparent violation of Spain's current rules amid the coronavirus pandemic. AFP

APRC goes digital

CHENNAI The FIA Asia Pacific Rally Championship (APRC) will go digital this weekend (May 8-10) with the online running of the International Rally of Whangarei. Any gamer of the DiRT Rally 2.0 platform can take part in the rally. The virtual event is being held on the same dates as the New Zealand round that was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Pending resumption of the on-road championship, the Digital APRC will make use of dates made available by rounds forced to postpone due to the pandemic.

Belgian football season likely over

BRUSSELS The Belgian government announced on Wednesday it was suspending all sporting competitions until July 31, effectively putting an end to the country's football season. AFP

IN BRIEF

'Olympic medal is top priority'

Sathiyan admits that it's going to be 'very challenging' to achieve it

TABLE TENNIS

SHIVANSH GUPTA
CHENNAI

Ace Indian paddler G. Sathiyan has locked his eyes on three achievements he wishes to accomplish next: winning an Olympic medal, breaking into the world's top-10 and beating a top Chinese player.

"It's a Herculean task [to win an Olympic medal in Tokyo]... It will be sensational if I can make the quarterfinals and it will put me in a really good position to go for a medal at the 2024 Olympics," Sathiyan told Sportstar during an Instagram live session on Wednesday.

The Chennai-born paddler added that beating a top player from China will create a big sensation in India.

The first Indian player to break into the world's top 25, Sathiyan credited his success to coach and former National champion S. Raman.

"He turned me from a passive and a controlled player to an aggressive player. I used to believe that the more balls I played, the better it



Raman effect: Sathiyan credited his mentor and former National champion S. Raman for the transformation from a blocker to finisher. ■ FILE PHOTO: G. RAMAKRISHNA

was. He told me it was more about the quality on the ball and the aggressiveness with which I played."

Taking the baton
For a long time, Indian table tennis was synonymous with A. Sharath Kamal.

Now, and as Sharath says, the baton has been passed to Sathiyan. Asked whether that's added pressure or motivation, Sathiyan said: "It is

definitely motivating. What is even better is that he [Sharath] is still playing with us. So, it's great to receive such a compliment from him."

Sathiyan is spending most of his time during the lockdown at his residence in Chennai and has found a new playing partner in the Butterfly Amicus Prime robot.

"I have been playing with it so much that sometimes the machine heats up, it also needs a break. The robot is not able to take it and keeps getting tired," Sathiyan concluded.

India holds USA before losing to RoW

Anand draws both his matches

NATIONS CUP

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

India's joy of holding higher-ranked USA 2-2 ended with the narrow 1.5-2.5 loss to lowest-rated Rest of the World (RoW) on the first day of the \$180,000 FIDE Chess.com Online Nations Cup chess championship on Tuesday.

After Viswanathan Anand controlled the proceedings against Hikaru Nakamura and eventually drew, P. Harikrishna was better placed against Leinier Dominguez Perez.

Hari also drew and Humpy pulled off an effective victory after Anna Zatonskikh committed a late blunder.

However, Fabiano Caruana overcame Vidit Gujrathi in 119 moves to deny India a famous win and help USA salvage a match-point.

In the second round, Anand played a solid draw against Teimour Radjabov,

while Humpy and Hari were held by Mariya Muzychuk and teen-sensation Alireza Firouzja respectively. B. Adhiban faltered to lose to Cori Cori.

Easy for China
Top seed China posted an identical 3-1 victories over Europe and RoW to take the lead

The results:**Second round: Rest of the World bt India 2.5-1.5**

(Teimour Radjabov drew with Viswanathan Anand; Alireza Firouzja drew with P. Harikrishna; Jorge Cori bt B. Adhiban; Mariya Muzychuk drew with K. Humpy); China bt Europe 3-1; USA bt Russia 3-1.

First round: India drew with USA 2-2 (Anand drew with Hikaru Nakamura; Vidit Gujrathi lost to Fabiano Caruana; Harikrishna drew with Leinier Dominguez Perez; Humpy bt Anna Zatonskikh; China bt Rest of the World 3-1; Europe drew with Russia 2-2.

Standings: 1. China (4 match-points). 2. USA (3). 3. Rest of the World (2); 4-6. India, Europe and Russia (1 each).

Tennis relief fund raises \$6 million

Y.B. SARANGI
LOS ANGELES

A relief fund set up by the international governing bodies of tennis to assist players hit by the coronavirus pandemic has raised more than \$6 million, the ATP Tour said on Tuesday.

The ATP, WTA, four Grand Slam tournaments and the International Tennis Federation had all joined forces to create the fund designed to players ranked outside of the top 200 in the world in singles.

The funds will be distributed by the ATP and WTA and will target roughly 800 singles and doubles players from both tours.

Eligibility for cash from the funds will be determined by ranking and previous prize money earnings, the ATP said.

According to reports, each of the four Slam events chipped in \$1 million each. The WTA and ATP Tours were also reported to have added \$1 million each.

"As per the coaches' instruction, I am working on my overall game. But the focus is on building strength. The postponement of the Olympics is an advantage as I get more time to work on

I bank on speed and endurance'

Satish Kumar targeting super heavyweight medal at Tokyo



Welcome break: Satish Kumar, second from left, is thrilled at spending quality time with his family. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the areas of improvement."

Satish, weighing 95kg, is encouraged by the fact he is the first from India to qualify in super heavyweight. "I am very happy and proud ... Getting a lot of motivation. Hope to win a medal for the country."

Back to the roots

Satish, who got a taste of village life after 13 years, spoke about his plans for the lockdown period. "I stay in Noida. I knew we would not be able to get out of the room over there."

"I thought I should spend

some time with my parents. It is much better than staying in the city. In the village there is a lot of open space. I can do my running and get some fresh air."

"My children's online classes are on. I spend two-three hours with them. I play cards, ludo and carrom and devote some time for puja at the village temple."

"I go to our fields and work there. When wheat cutting was going on, I did my bit. Happy to be involved in agriculture after so many years," said Satish, with a sense of satisfaction.

NADA's hearings to be done online

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The National Anti-Doping Agency's director-general Navin Agarwal on Wednesday said the body will conduct its disciplinary hearings online from Friday despite the many logistical challenges to ensure cases don't pile up.

NADA hearings have not been taking place due to the lockdown to contain the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We will be starting with our online hearings from May 8.

"Both Anti-Doping Disciplinary Panel (ADDP) and Anti-Doping Appeals Panel (ADAP) hearings will be conducted for the cases which are pending," Agarwal said.

Audio calls

Listing inconsistent or unavailable internet as one of them, Agarwal said athletes will be allowed to participate via audio calls to ensure that things can be managed smoothly.

Real Kashmir coach to return home

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Stranded in Srinagar for more than a month due to the lockdown, Real Kashmir FC head coach David Robertson and his family will finally return to Scotland on Thursday, ending an anxious wait to attend to his sick mother. They will fly back home in a British Airways flight from Amritsar on Thursday.



Dr. Miguel Crespo. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

International Tennis Federation Academy opens doors to its resources

The courses are free now owing to COVID-19 and it may not happen again: Miguel Crespo, a pioneer in the coaching department

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

Indian tennis coaches have capitalised on the time available due to the lockdown by enriching themselves with the resources available freely at the International Tennis Federation (ITF) Academy.

In an attempt to help coaches around the world, the ITF has stepped up online content from its invaluable resources and made it free. The coaches have to

register, make use of the resources and get themselves certified, with about 30 courses available at the moment.

"To accept and adapt is the way forward," said Miguel Crespo, a pioneer in ITF's coaching department, when he addressed Indian coaches during a webinar organised by the national federation and the Sports Authority of India (SAI).

With 1,100 coaches regis-

tered with the ITF, India is already the world-leader, and Crespo had suggestions on how coaches could enhance their knowledge and guide others.

Blended learning
"It is all free and there is no excuse anymore," said Crespo. "It is blended learning. We will continue to have face-to-face courses, as well as the online part. The online courses started two years

ago. You can do several courses online and download certificates. The courses are free now, owing to COVID-19. It may not happen again," said Crespo, sounding a friendly warning.

"It is not just for coaches. Anyone can do them and improve their knowledge. There are courses for parents also. Many may know, but you can reinforce your knowledge," he said.

"The ITF is planning to

have parents' education, as a 20-minute online process and a two-hour face-to-face interaction," he added.

The content is in three parts – regular courses, a question-and-answer section and case studies. The ITF has also enhanced its library by putting videos, drills, interviews and articles in its I-coach centre, accessible to all registered coaches.

"There are already more than 3,000 pieces of con-

tent," said Crespo.

The ITF Advanced Coach- es Manual, which Crespo has co-authored with Dave Miley, is also free on the App.

Speaking about the importance of using technology wisely, Crespo said that it was equally important for coaches to focus on regular participants in tennis. "Competitive players are only five per cent. The rest are normal players. We need to help them," said Crespo.

we are living through a time of great uncertainty, owing to the global coronavirus pandemic. To cope with regulations of social distancing and lockdown, our teachers have initiated online teaching. They have also been regularly uploading study materials on the university website. In this spirit of online education, the university has also decided to open up free access to its digital collections. These would be accessible through the university website, www.cu- library.ac.in," Vice-Chancellor Sonali Chakravarti Banerjee said in a circular.

"The decision of the University, set up in 1857, has placed in public domain countless articles, journals and dissertations, including issues of The Calcutta Review dating back to 1844 and Tagore Law Lectures dating back to 1870. Now anybody, anywhere in the world, can access them any time.

Two major reasons
"There are two major reasons underlying our deci-

sion. The first is our responsibility to our students and our faculty, whose education and research have been ob-

structed by the prohibition on physical access to the library collections.

"The second is our respon-

sibility, as a public insti-

tution, to the citizenry as

well as the world at large," Ms. Chakravarti Banerjee said.

"Education is a public good; and the necessity and value of academic research increases, more than ever, if our society is to recover from the crisis.

"As a public university, we feel that it is our responsibility to make our digital collections part of a global academic commons, to facilitate the pursuit of knowledge beyond borders," she said.

Till now, the library facilities and resources, including digital collections, were primarily accessible to users within the university campus.

According to a senior univer-

versity official, this decision

to make the library's digital content public, even though prompted by the pandemic and subsequent lockdown, would, in all probability, continue to hold good even after the lockdown is lifted.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIJING

The Disneyland theme park in Shanghai will reopen on May 11 under enhanced health and safety measures, the company said.

Only limited attendance will be allowed initially, and visitors will need to book tickets and make reservations in advance.

Social distancing will be maintained in lines for amenities, in restaurants, on rides and other facilities and sanitisation and disinfection will be boosted, the company said in a release.

Visitors will have to wear masks and temperature screening will be a standard procedure.

Mickey will be back: Tourists at Disney town in Shanghai, China. ■ HU CHENGWEI/GETTY IMAGES

With warmer weather and new virus cases and deaths falling to near-zero, China has been steadily reopening parks, museums and tourist sites such as the

Great Wall of China and the Forbidden City ancient palace complex in Beijing. Walt Disney Co. has suffered \$1 billion in lost profits from the shutdown globally.

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