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Prime Minister Modi slams Pakistan in virtual NAM meeting  
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Former Pope Benedict complains of attempts to 'silence' him  
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## NEARBY



349 new COVID-19 cases, no death reported in city

NEW DELHI  
Delhi reported 349 new COVID-19 cases on Monday, taking the total number to 4,898, said the government. In all, 1,431 people have recovered and 3,403 are under treatment. No death was reported on Monday.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

## Police probe vulgar posts on social media

NEW DELHI  
Taking suo motu cognisance of social media posts in which teenage boys have glorified rape and posted obscene photos of women and minor girls, the Delhi police on Monday launched a probe. "We are registering a case under relevant sections of IPC and IT Act for obscenity," said DCP (Cyber Cell) Anyesh Roy.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

## Labourer completes quarantine on a tree

BHILWARA  
A migrant labourer, who walked 160 km from Ajmer to his village in Bhilwara district of Rajasthan, has completed the 14-day quarantine period on a platform built on a tree in his field outside the village. Kamlesh Meena, 24, took the unusual step when residents of Sherupa stopped him from entering the village.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 11

# Confusion prevails over who will foot migrants' train fare

Congress offers to bear cost; Railways, Health Ministry have differing positions

SANDEEP PHUKAN  
YUTHIKA BHARGAVA  
NEW DELHI

Soon after Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Monday asked the party's State units to bear the cost of rail travel of migrant workers, the Railways said the "sending States" needed to pay for sending people home on the 'Shramik Specials'.

"As per the guidelines issued, the sending State will pay the consolidated fare to [the] Railways. The sending State may decide to bear this cost or take it from passengers or take it from the receiving State after mutual consultation or may charge it to any fund. It is purely their prerogative," a Railway spokesperson said.

At a regular briefing, Health Ministry spokesman Lav Aggarwal claimed that though the government authority shall hand over the tickets to passengers cleared by them and collect the ticket fare and hand over the total amount to the Railways."

The government clarification was seen as damage control coming as it did after the Congress announcement. The party also cited a May 2 order where a senior Railway Board official said,



A family of migrant workers on board a special train in Ajmer, Rajasthan on Monday. ■ PTI

"The local State government authority shall hand over the tickets to passengers cleared by them and collect the ticket fare and hand over the total amount to the Railways."

### Nitish's gesture

Amid the controversy, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar chimed in to say that his government would not only bear the travel costs of the migrant workers, students and tourists but also give each of them ₹500 after their

21-day quarantine period was over.

BJP general secretary B.L. Santoshi, however, said in a

### COVID-19

tweet, "Let alone charging Railways don't have any ticket counters.. Trains are run on state requests. After the request Kerala, Rajasthan, Maharashtra make #MigrantLabourers pay & @INCIndiaChief issues statement &

usual suspects pump it up."

Earlier, in a statement, Ms. Gandhi called it "disturbing" that the Railways and the Centre were charging the migrant workers even for distress travel when it could spend nearly ₹100 crore on a public programme in Gujarat, a veiled attack on the 'Namaste Trump' programme to welcome U.S. President Donald Trump.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

# Nod for return of stranded Indians

Flights to start from Gulf on May 7

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
NEW DELHI

The government has decided to allow hundreds of thousands of Indians stranded in different parts of the world to return home in a "phased manner" beginning May 7, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) announced on Monday.

In the first phase, "distressed citizens" will be brought back on commercial aircraft and naval ships, according to a list prepared by the respective embassies, strictly on "payment-basis", the government added. The returnees would also have to pay for quarantine and hospital facilities that they need on return.

Sources told *The Hindu* that in the first phase from May 7-14, the government would allow more than 60 "non-scheduled, commercial" flights to operate from about 12 countries to India to bring back 15,000 citizens. At least half of those flights will be from the Gulf region, including UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman, while the rest would bring passengers from the U.S., the U.K., Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines and Bangladesh.

The flights would be spread over 10 States identified as having the largest numbers to return, with

### Rescue mission

- Citizens will be brought back according to a list prepared by respective embassies, strictly on payment-basis

- The returnees will have to pay for quarantine and hospital facilities that they need on return

- 60 non-scheduled, commercial flights to operate from about 12 countries in first phase



Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Delhi (NCR) receiving the maximum number of flights.

A meeting held at the Ministry of Civil Aviation looked specifically at flights, mainly operated by Air India, while it awaits a final plan from countries where Indians need to be airlifted from.

The first flights planned at present are from Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Riyadh and Doha, flying directly to Kozhikode and Kochi.

In a tweet, Kerala Finance Minister Thomas Isaac said the State is "hoping to meet the challenge of more than 5 lakh Kerala migrants returning home", indicating that the State expects to receive the bulk of returnees in the next few months.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

1,074 recover as India adds 2,573 cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

India on Monday registered the biggest single-day recovery so far of 1,074 COVID-19 patients, taking the total to 11,761. The recovery rate stood at 27.52%.

The 24-hour period also saw 2,573 new cases, pushing the tally to 42,836, of which 29,685 are active cases. With 83 new deaths, the toll rose to 1,389.

The Union Health Ministry, in statements, noted that the outcome ratio (recovered vs death) for all closed cases, which indicates the clinical management status in hospitals, was analysed since April 17 and this had shown improvement. Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary, said, "Earlier, the ratio was 80:20. It's now 90:10."

Data from the State Health Departments put the tally at 46,416, of which 32,203 are active cases. The death toll stood at 1,494, while 12,719 people have recovered.

During the relaxation period, States and Union Territories should ensure that rigorous containment measures were taken, so that the case load remained low, the Ministry said.

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

# + States with high swine flu rate record most COVID-19 cases

Five States account for majority of H1N1 infections

JACOB KOSHY

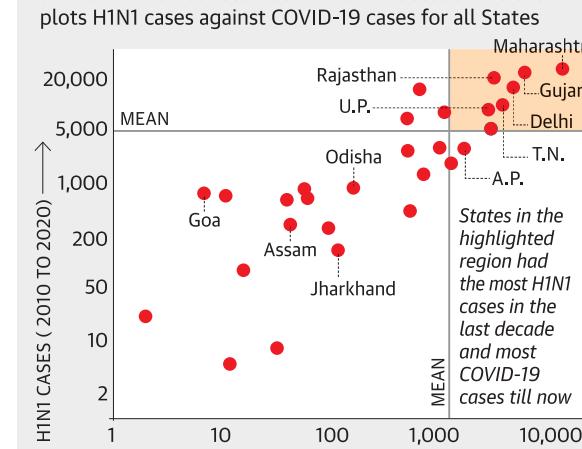
NEW DELHI  
Five States – Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Delhi, Tamil Nadu – account for about 70% of India's confirmed COVID-19 cases, that on Monday stood at 46,416.

However, data from the Health Ministry's National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), show that these are also States that consistently accounted for the bulk of swine flu cases, or seasonal influenza (H1N1) since 2015.

Last year, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Delhi and Maharashtra accounted for 15,580 cases of confirmed H1N1 – or 54% of the confirmed infections. In 2018 again, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat, made up 65% of H1N1 cases.

### Viral connection

Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Delhi and T.N., together account for about 68% of all COVID-19 cases and 63% of all the H1N1 cases recorded in the last decade. The chart plots H1N1 cases against COVID-19 cases for all States



In 2015, which saw 42,592 cases, the largest spike in cases since the swine flu pandemic of 2009-10, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Delhi polled 63% of the cases.

Excluding 2016, Maharashtra and Gujarat have either led or been among the top three in India's swine flu count.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

# Sensex falls over 2,000 points

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

The Sensex plummeted over 2,000 points taking cues from the global markets after the U.S. said it had evidence to prove that COVID-19 originated in a China lab.

The break in the four-day rising streak was mirrored by the rupee plunging 64 paise to 75.73 against the dollar.

Market participants attributed the drop in equity indices to the overall weak trend in global markets following rising tensions between the U.S. and China. On the domestic front, the 14-day extension of the lockdown dampened investor sentiment.

The 30-share Sensex lost a whopping 2,002.27 points, or 5.94%, to close at 31,75.35.

ON THE RAMPAGE ▶ PAGE 13

# In the slow lane



Rush returns: An elephant carrying banana trunks treading amid the heavy traffic in Guwahati on Monday after the Assam government announced relaxations in restrictions during the third phase of the lockdown. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR (REPORT ON PAGE 4)

# 'Special Corona Fee' on liquor in Delhi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR

Following a day of chaos at liquor shops, the Delhi government has decided to charge 70% over and above the maximum retail price of alcohol as a "Special Corona Fee".

The additional charges, a government spokesperson said, would come into effect from Tuesday morning. The Delhi Excise Act was amended to include these on Monday. A proposal to this effect was prepared by the Finance Department. According to a notification, the fee would entail "70% of the MRP on all categories of liquor sold through licensees for consumption off premises".

# Three CRPF jawans killed in militant attack

An unidentified person also died in the attack in north Kashmir's Kupwara district



Routine matters: The motorcade of Lieutenant-Governor Girish Chandra Murmu at the Civil Secretariat on Monday as the capital shifts to Srinagar despite the pandemic. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

to be an attacker, was also killed in the firing. Immediately after the attack to trace the militants," the CRPF official said.

However, a senior official in Kupwara said the local administration was ascertaining the identity of the person killed at the spot. "No weapon

was recovered from the pit where the person was found dead," the official said.

The attack comes a day after four soldiers, including two officers and a policeman, were killed in an 18-hour-long operation, also in Handwara.

More than 10 tear gas shells were lobbed. Around 70 people were detained

# Migrants take to Surat streets in protest, clash with police

Police fire tear gas to disperse protesters

MAHESH LANGA

AHMEDABAD

Chaotic incidents involving hapless and desperate migrant workers continue in Gujarat as they grow impatient to return to their native States.

On Monday, in the Kadodara area of Surat, hundreds of workers came out on the roads demanding that they be allowed to return to their States. The mob went berserk and clashed with policemen. The police used tear gas shells to disperse the crowd.

The fourth such incident in the migrant hub.

In Palanpur Jakatnaka within Surat city, hundreds of workers gathered with the same demand.



Giving a chase: Policemen firing tear gas at migrant workers in Surat, Gujarat, on Monday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

This is the fourth such incident in the migrant hub. In Palanpur Jakatnaka within Surat city, hundreds of workers gathered with the same demand.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

**Timings**

DELHI
TUESDAY, MAY. 05
RISE 05:38 SET 18:59
RISE 16:44 SET 04:13
WEDNESDAY, MAY. 06
RISE 05:37 SET 19:00
RISE 17:52 SET 04:52
THURSDAY, MAY. 07
RISE 05:36 SET 19:01
RISE 19:01 SET 05:33

**Delhi Weather**

max min

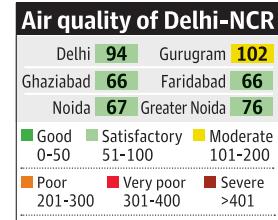
Delhi City 36 20

Safdarjang 36 20

Palam 36 20

**Delhi Palam Today**  
34°C The weather will be cloudy and warm. Spells of duststorm and thundershower with strong winds will prevail.**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
35°C Spell of duststorm and thundershower with strong winds is likely. A warm and cloudy weather to prevail.© Copyright Skymet Weather 2019  
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# Police probe vulgar posts on social media

Networking site told to share details of group members

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

Taking suo motu cognisance of social media posts on an Instagram group, on which teenage boys have glorified rape and posted objectionable pictures of women and minor girls, the Delhi Police on Monday launched a probe into the matter, a senior officer said.

"We have not received any complaint yet in this regard. But taking suo motu cognisance of the matter, we are registering a case under relevant sections of IPC and IT Act for obscenity," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (Cyber Cell) Anyesh Roy. The police have also written to Instagram to share details of the group members, he said, adding an investigation is under way.

The Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) also took cognisance of the matter and issued notices to Instagram and the Delhi Police seeking action reports.

**DCW notice**

"It is reported that the group is used for sharing objectionable pictures of minor girls and women many a times. Several other illegal acts and comments have been made on the group. This is a very serious matter wherein an open media platform is being used for illegal activities," read the notice to the police.

The women's panel has also sought details pertaining to the members of the group.

Terming the posts as "shocking," DCW chairper-

son Swati Maliwal said that those involved should be arrested and strict against should be taken against them.

**SFI condemns act**

Condemning the Instagram activity which has since gone viral, students' group SFI termed it "misogynistic" and a "glorification of harassment and objectification of women".

The SFI said, "The group members objectified women and circulated morphed pictures."

"Cyber abuse doesn't happen in isolation, it just portrays the inefficiency of our government in addressing the issues of oppression of women and LGBTQIA+," said LSR students' union general secretary Unnimaya.

## Sikh body to give food to home-bound migrants

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) on Monday said it will provide free packed food to stranded migrant workers, pilgrims and students who will travel to their

respective States on the special trains announced by the Centre.

It said vegetarian food packets would be given to all home-bound passengers for the entire travel period. DSGMC president Manjinder Singh Sirsa said: "Volunteers

of the DSGMC will distribute these food packets to railway passengers at New Delhi Railway Station, Old Delhi Railway Station, Anand Vihar station and Nizamuddin, apart from others, depending on the demand and routes that the trains take.

Punjab Government led by  
**Chief Minister**  
**Capt. Amarinder Singh**  
greets people on the  
**297th Birth Anniversary**  
of  
**MAHARAJA**  
**JASSA SINGH RAMGARHIA**

Legendary Sikh Warrior  
and founder of Ramgarhia Misls

Another shop in the market, Drapes and Decors, also did not see any sales on the first day of its opening after the lockdown. "Even before the lockdown, we were battling slowdown. And now this lockdown has hit even

# Gurugram shops see few customers despite relaxation in restrictions

People scared of coming out of their houses, say sellers

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
GURUGRAM

The district administration's orders allowing the opening of sector markets on Monday have evoked lukewarm response from the shopkeepers and the customers alike.

While the barber shops and saloons remained closed, a few garments and electronics shops that opened registered few sales.

Mehta and Sons, a branded garments shop, in Sector 31 opened around afternoon but did not register any sale. The shop's manager Naveen Kumar said they had opened with just four staff members and most of the day was lost in cleaning, dusting and arranging the stuff. "It will take a while before the word spreads and the customers come to the markets. People are little scared. We don't hope the things to become normal anytime soon," said Mr. Kumar.

Prateek Saxena, who runs hair-cut unisex saloon – Be U – in Sector 15 Part-II market, said he had opened the shop for cleaning and disinfection. He said he needed to apply for passes for two of his hair-stylists staying in Delhi before the resumption of operations.

Mr. Saxena said they now need to keep in mind the social distancing norms as well and won't allow more than three clients inside together.

"I have bought a thermal scanner to check the body temperature and ten litres

sanitiser," said Mr. Saxena.

However, Ritika, the owner of Belle's Saloon in Sector 14 market, said she would prefer to wait till May 17 despite the permission, since



Sector markets on Monday opened for the first time since the lockdown began. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

harder. These are really difficult times for the business," said shop's manager Ajay Kumar.

Prateek Saxena, who runs hair-cut unisex saloon – Be U – in Sector 15 Part-II market, said he had opened the shop for cleaning and disinfection. He said he needed to apply for passes for two of his hair-stylists staying in Delhi before the resumption of operations.

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sanitiser," said Mr. Saxena.

However, Ritika, the owner of Belle's Saloon in Sector 14 market, said she would prefer to wait till May 17 despite the permission, since

clients were anyway not expected to turn up. Abhishek, who runs a spa in Sector 31, said four of his spas were in shopping malls and not expected to open anytime soon, so he would open this spa in the sector market in a couple of days.

Rajesh of "R R Fabric" in Sector 46 market said he opened around noon and only one customer visited his shop. "It is not the kind of rush that was expected. People are hesitant to come out. We need to wait for a few more days to see how it unfolds," said Mr. Rajesh.

An adjoining electronic goods shop, however, registered some sale. "We have sold two-three items," said the manager.

However, Ritika, the owner of Belle's Saloon in Sector 14 market, said she would prefer to wait till May 17 despite the permission, since

the union had also complained about discrimination between the quarantining of doctors versus nurses and had called for the need to set up clear, streamlined protocols. However, with regard to certain internal issues, union spokespersons said a committee is looking into the demands but the matter cannot be resolved now as the Medical Director of the hospital is currently in quarantine.

## Migrant workers stage protest demanding to be sent home

'No more money, food to sustain families'

**ASHOK KUMAR**  
GURUGRAM

A large number of construction labourers inside Suncity Township in Sector 54 here on Golf Course Road protested on Monday saying that they could not sustain themselves and demanded that they be sent back home.

The labourers, including women, working at several construction sites inside the 180-acre township, a designated containment zone, took to the roads in the morning inside its premises demanding that they be sent to their hometowns.

The labourers said they did not have enough money and food to sustain their families and arrangements be made to send them back.

The police were called in and the situation was brought under control without the use of force.

Former Suncity RWA president Abbey Poonia said the construction activity inside the township had come to a halt following the lockdown and the labourers did not have enough to sustain themselves. He also alleged the shopkeepers inside the township were selling groceries and essential commodities to the labourers at a higher price forcing them to protest.

RWA's vice-president Prashant Kumar said around 150 forms were filled with the help of the district administration in the evening to facilitate the labourers' return back.

Local resident Sonal Pathak, a social worker, said the workers had little support from the builders and the residents were collecting funds among themselves to supply ration and other food items, such as biscuits, to the workers.

SHO (Sector 53) Deepak said labourers wanted to return to their homes, but the police officers spoke to them and brought the situation under control. He said no case was registered in this connection.

## Family of arrested Jamia scholar concerned about her health

Husband gets to speak to her for 5 minutes after a month

**SIDHARTH RAVI**  
NEW DELHI

"As a family, there is only pain and suffering for us," said the husband of Safoora Zargar, the Jamia Millia Islamia scholar who was arrested nearly a month back in connection with the north-east Delhi riots.

Ms. Zargar, who is three months pregnant, was charged under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and is currently in judicial custody at Tihar jail.

"If she was at home, she wouldn't even be allowed to get out of bed," said her husband, who got a chance to speak to her for five minutes for the first time since she was arrested on April 28.

"In terms of health, she is doing fine. She is managing. She is strong," he said. However,

for the family, concerns about conditions in the jail and the threat of the ongoing pandemic are weighing heavy.

"It's worse because we are not even able to communicate with her," he said, highlighting that they could not send her help and was barely in touch with her lawyer, given the lockdown restrictions.

Ms. Zargar was a part of student activism at the university and her husband insisted that "she was not interested in political activism". Before the anti-CAA protests, she had only ever been involved at a couple of university-level issues where she and others had gone up to the Vice-Chancellor, he said. He added, "At the end of the day, they are just students and the protests that were happening were entirely peaceful."

"All we do is pray for her and hope things change. We believe she has done nothing wrong and we have full faith in the judicial system," the husband said.

Commenting on the reasons for her arrest, he said: "You don't need to be a scientist to understand why this is being done...but we are hoping the judicial system comes through." Following an application from her lawyer, jail authorities agreed to ensure medical examination, proper nutrition and that she be allowed to talk to her family at least once a week. Her husband and her lawyer expect to speak with her for another five minutes this week.



Oppn. parties  
slam CM for  
opening  
liquor shops

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government's decision to open liquor shops may lead to a 10% increase in COVID-19 cases in the Capital, Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Legislative Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, claimed here on Monday.

Criticising the Delhi government's decision to open liquor shops, Mr. Bidhuri, in a letter to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, requested the Delhi government to reconsider its decision. Delhi Congress chief Ch. Anil Kumar also hit out at the State government for opening liquor outlets in the city to boost its revenue without "bothering about the health of the people".

## 12 fresh cases in Gautam Buddha Nagar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GHAZIABAD

Twelve new COVID-19 cases were recorded in Gautam Buddha Nagar on Monday. These include a CISF constable from Greater Noida's Surajpur, said Sunil Dohre, District Surveillance Officer. The total number of cases in the district now stands at 179. Of these, 77 are active cases.

**13 cases in Ghaziabad**  
In Ghaziabad, 13 new cases were reported, taking the tally to 95. Out of these 44 cases are active.

Earlier in the day, Deepak Ohri, Chief Medical Officer of Gautam Buddha Nagar, said that the results of a man, who had died at a private hospital on Noida on Sunday, confirmed that he had been infected with the COVID-19 virus.

The deceased was a resident of Ghaziabad's Khoda. The person was undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Sector 137. His sample was sent to a private lab in Delhi.

"Ghaziabad's medical team has been notified," Mr. Ohri added.

## Liquor shops open, then shut again

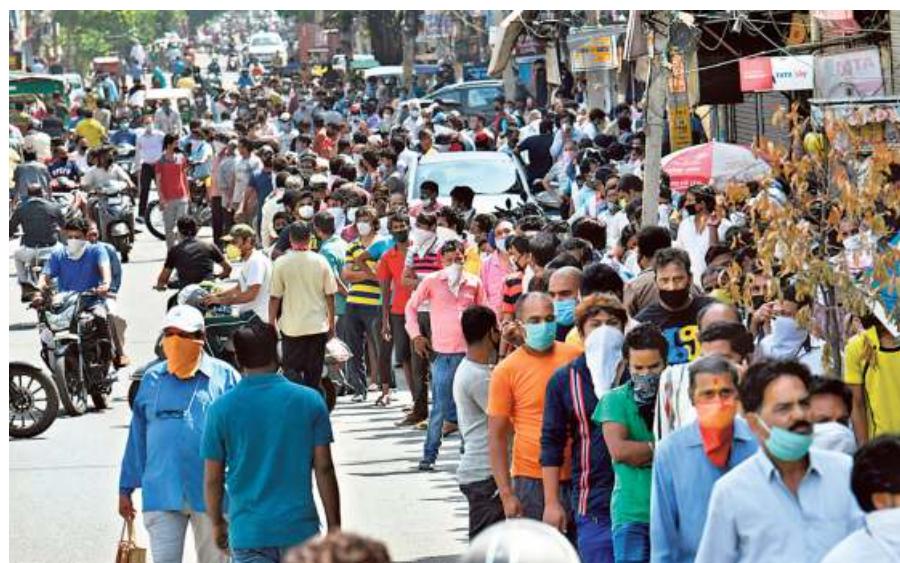
Chaos reigns across city as crowds fail to adhere to social distancing norms

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Hundreds of people thronged liquor shops across Delhi on Monday as the vends opened after a gap of 40 days, leading to chaos as customers did not adhere to social distancing norms. In north, east and south Delhi, the police had to resort to crowd-controlling measures to manage the crowd. By the afternoon, most of the shops were told to shut as the situation grew out of control.

"Liquor shops in Delhi will remain shut till vendors make arrangements such as deployment of marshals and markings on ground to ensure social distancing. All beat staff have been instructed to be vigilant and not allow any shop to operate if the vendor does not follow safety protocols," said a senior police officer.

With only a select number of vends open, those looking to buy alcohol had to first find a shop that was open and then join a serpentine queue. "I have visited four wine shops in the area but they are all closed. I have been walking from one shop to the other only to find shuttered stores. I came early hoping to avoid the rush but it looks like there are none open near my neighbour-



People form a queue to buy liquor in east Delhi on Monday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

hood," said Vivek, a resident of Jangpura.

In areas where the vends were open, residents complained about the chaos.

In C-Bock Market of Vasant Vihar, long queues outside a liquor shop prompted the Vasant Vihar Welfare Association to alert authorities about the situation. Chaos was also seen outside liquor shops in Malviya Nagar and Vasant Kunj with people queuing up as early as 7 a.m. to buy alcohol.

Health Minister Satyendar Jain said that the Delhi government did not give any

extra relaxation and the liquor vends were opened as per central government guidelines. The Excise Department said that 160 out of 800 liquor shops were permitted to open.

The four government corporations that own these vends are supposed to deploy marshals and ensure that no more than five people are allowed inside a vend at any given time, read an order issued by Chief Secretary Vijay Dev on Sunday. "The onus for opening any shop and fulfilling qualifying criteria under Clause-7 (ii) (d) of

the MHA's Order dated 01.05.2020 shall be on the corporation concerned," it further added.

Ravi Dhawan, Commissioner of the Department of Excise, Entertainment & Luxury Tax, did not respond to multiple phone calls and messages seeking comment.

A report prepared by Delhi Police on the situation suggested that shop timings should be extended and there should be sufficient stock of liquor. It, however, added that crowd-management measures need to be taken on priority.

## People throng shopping areas as govt. lifts some restrictions

Long queues seen outside confectionery, electronics stores

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

People spilled out on to the city streets in droves on Monday as restrictions were eased on the first day of the third phase of the nationwide lockdown.

Government offices and private offices can now open with reduced strength, and private vehicles are permitted to ply. Several standalone shops in residential areas, apart from those selling essentials, also opened their shutters, and queues were seen outside hardware and electronic stores.

HELPLINE NUMBERS

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



kept to ensure people use it before entering," he said.

Even though guidelines permit cigarette shops to function, a south Delhi shopkeeper said the police had asked him to shut his kiosk and await "further orders".

In Lajpat Nagar, several cycle rickshaws were seen ferrying people between the main road and the colony. They were, however, quickly stopped by the police as cycle rickshaws are not permitted to ply yet. "I have not earned anything for over a month. When there are customers, why not allow us to work? We have suffered enough already," said Kishen a cycle-rickshaw driver.

Despite many taking advantage of fewer curbs, several people said they would not allow domestic help to resume work immediately as they wanted to "remain cautious".

Many stores, including confectionery and electronics shops in west Delhi's Rajori Garden and Kirti Nagar also saw large crowds.

K.K. Gupta, 61, who runs an apparel shop in Bali Nagar with his son, said he had to open the shop to cover his rent and earn a living for his family. "The landlord let go of the rent for April but he would not have done it for May. How will I manage without opening the shop?" he said, adding that he is taking all precautions in wake of the pandemic.

"Only three people are allowed inside the shop at one time. All must wear masks, and hand sanitiser has been

## Stranded migrants wander city clueless

Some reach local offices, others go to police stations with 'forms', but to no avail

HEMANI BHANDARI  
NEW DELHI

As the government decided to ease lockdown restrictions, many who have been stranded in the Capital ran from pillar to post to seek permission from authorities to leave for their home States, but were allegedly shown the door.

Another person who wanted to leave Delhi but was unable to find a way was Ajay Bhatia. He belongs to Punjab and stays in Tilak Nagar on rent. Mr. Bhatia was recently terminated by Fareportal, a New York-based global tech travel firm in Gurugram.

"I have been stuck here in Delhi and paying rent for the house unnecessarily. I have applied for e-pass online, but it has been rejected four times. An official told me today that I need to apply online only and come back two

days later if I don't get any response," he said.

A bunch of migrant labourers from Bihar, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh were spotted roaming clueless about who to approach.

Mr. Darul from West Bengal and a few others

with him held a form in their hands which they believed they had to submit at the office of either the DCP or the DM. The form had been declared "fake" by Delhi Police on Friday. "We got this form from a photocopy shop for ₹5 and were told that we had to submit it to the police station in our area but they are not accepting it," said Mr. Darul.

The Delhi government had on Sunday said that Additional DM and Additional DCP would be the District Nodal Officers for supervising collection of data on persons willing to leave the Capital.

All who are willing to make their own arrangements for travel can proceed on the basis of transit pass issued by respective DMs, the order had stated.

## Kejriwal chairs Cabinet meet as govt. offices open

Training manual designed for caregivers, COVID-19 patients under home isolation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday chaired the first Cabinet meeting after government offices were opened as part of the new lockdown guidelines.

Among the major decisions, the Cabinet approved the process of home isolation of mild and asymptomatic COVID-19 positive pa-

tients. "A training manual has been designed which will be given to all patients and their caregivers. A team of health workers will call each patient and educate them on best practices for home isolation. This will be followed by a daily call that will track important vitals of the patient," the government said in a statement.

The Delhi government al-

so approved a proposal to extend a one-time financial assistance of ₹5,000 to owners of e-rickshaws registered in Delhi. "Permit-holders of paratransit vehicles who were also holding PSV badges have already been covered under the existing scheme," the statement said.

The Delhi Cabinet also approved ration for May to 38 lakh non-PDS card-holders

who registered for ration e-coupons online. Each individual will be given 4 kg of wheat and 1 kg of rice. Every family will also receive a COVID-19 relief kit that is being given to PDS card-holders.

Meanwhile, an ex-gratia amount of ₹1 crore was approved for the kin of Ankit Sharma, an IB staffer who died on February 26 in the north-east Delhi riots.

Govt. tells HC it is cognisant of delay

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The city government assured the Delhi High Court on Monday that from now on reports of COVID-19 tests will be received within 1-2 days from the date the sample is received by the lab concerned.

The Delhi government said there are 23 accredited labs that undertake COVID-19 testing in the Capital that have a collective capacity of conducting 3,000-3,500 tests per day. Out of the said 23 accredited labs, 10 are in the public sector and 13 are in the private sector.

It clarified that as on April 29, 7,794 reports were pending, out of which 5,944 were pending at the end of National Institute of Biologicals (NIB), Noida. After finding that the reports were not being received within a reasonable time from NIB, Noida, the Delhi government has

Test reports to be available in 1-2 days'

stopped sending any further samples to the NIB.

It further stated that till Sunday night, 3,790 reports were pending with the accredited labs which will be received within a day or two.

The Delhi government said it was cognisant of the delay in receiving reports and has dealt with the said situation without losing time.

The Delhi government's response came on a petition filed by advocate Rakesh Malhotra who raised the issue of delay in furnishing reports after conducting tests for COVID-19 on suspected people.

Mr. Malhotra contended that due to the delay the contact tracing is also getting delayed and the infection is multiplying rapidly in Delhi.

The court also directed the Delhi government to update its website to reflect the correct number of tests that are being conducted in the city,

interested candidates possessing the qualifications and experience may download the prescribed application format from the website of University of Madras. The filled in application shall be sent (only in the prescribed format) by e-mail and one hard copy by post duly superscribing the Envelope "Application for the post of the Vice-Chancellor, University of Madras, Chennai" so as to reach the following address before 05.00 p.m. on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

Dr.G.Rathinasabapathy, Ph.D.

Nodal Officer

Search Committee for Selection of Vice-Chancellor

University of Madras

# 577, Anna Salai, TNOU Administrative Building, III Floor  
Tamil Nadu Open University Campus

Chennai - 600 015

e-mail: vcsearchcommittee.unom@gmail.com

Applications received after publication of the notification in the website of University of Madras / newspaper alone will be considered. Applications received after the closing date will not be considered on any account.

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### SEARCH COMMITTEE NOTIFICATION

### APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHANCELLOR

The Government of Tamil Nadu vide G.O. (D) No.48 Higher Education (H1) Department dated 04.03.2020 have constituted a Search Committee to recommend a panel of three names to the Hon'ble Governor-Chancellor for appointment of the Vice-Chancellor, University of Madras, Chennai.

The Search Committee invites applications for the post of Vice-Chancellor, University of Madras, from distinguished academicians with highest level of competence, integrity, moral and institutional commitment and possessing the educational qualifications and experience as notified in the Madras University Act, 1923 copy of which is available in the University of Madras Website [https://www.unom.ac.in](http://www.unom.ac.in)

Interested candidates possessing the qualifications and experience may download the prescribed application format from the website of University of Madras. The filled in application shall be sent (only in the prescribed format) by e-mail and one hard copy by post duly superscribing the Envelope "Application for the post of the Vice-Chancellor, University of Madras, Chennai" so as to reach the following address before 05.00 p.m. on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

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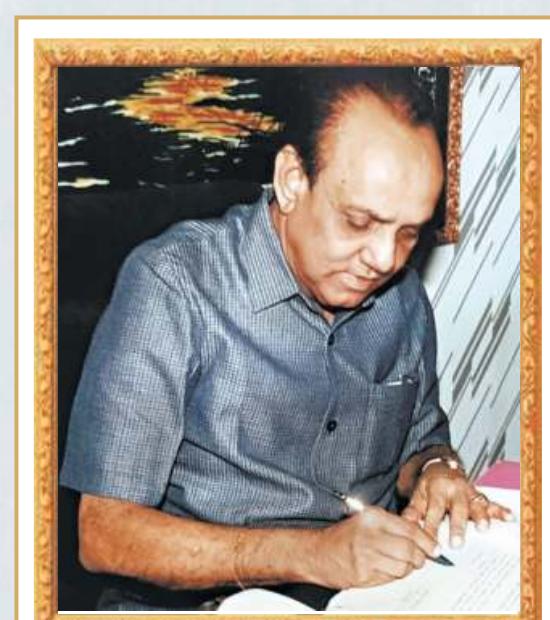
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## 27TH YEAR OF FOND REMEMBRANCE



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"HE WHO IS THE SAME TO FOE AND FRIEND AND IN THE SAME WAY WHO IS IN EQUABLE IN HONOUR AND DISHONOUR,  
IN COLD AND HEAT, IN PLEASURE AND PAIN AND IS FREE FROM ALL ATTACHMENTS IS DEAR TO ME."  
- BHAGAVAD GITA

FONDLY REMEMBERED BY  
MANAGEMENT, STAFF & STUDENTS  
MVJ GROUP OF INSTITUTIONS &  
MVJ FAMILY.

U.P. legislator held for curbs violation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GHAZIABAD/ LUCKNOW

Aman Mani Tripathi, an Independent MLA from Uttar Pradesh, was arrested in the Najibabad area of Bijnor on Monday evening along with six persons for violating lockdown norms, police said. Mr. Tripathi represents the Nautanwa Assembly segment of Maharaiganj district.

Sanjeev Tyagi, Bijnor Superintendent of Police, told reporters, "He was stopped during routine checking and was found without a travel pass." Mr. Tyagi said he has been booked.

The arrest of the MLA came hours after he was sent back from Uttarakhand for violating the rules of lockdown as he was trying to travel to Badrinath and Kedarnath on the pretext of praying for Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's father, who passed away recently.

## Punjab CM urges Shah to arrange special trains for migrant workers

Over 6.4 lakh migrant workers have registered on the State's Web portal

VIKAS VASUDEVA  
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Monday wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah seeking his intervention to arrange special trains for the next 10-15 days, beginning May 5, for transporting migrant workers stranded in Punjab to their home States.

Capt. Amarinder urged the Home Minister to direct the Ministry of Railways to make suitable arrangements, since the migrant workers stranded in Punjab are "understandably restless to return to their States".

The Chief Minister's request came as over 6.4 lakh migrant workers registered on the State government's Web portal.

In his letter to Mr. Shah, Capt. Amarinder said his go-



CM Amarinder Singh

vernment would indicate its daily requirement of trains in advance to the Railway Ministry for the next 10-15 days to transport all the people who had registered on the portal.

At the local level, officials were coordinating with senior railway officials and those in other States to plan the smooth movement of the migrants, he said.

The Chief Minister point-

ed out that a large number of workers come from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and other eastern States to seek temporary employment in the industrial and agricultural sector in Punjab. "These people, who were due to leave in March, normally after Holi, could not leave because of the imposition of the lockdown," he said.

### Letter to PM

Capt. Amarinder also wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, requesting him to issue urgent directives to six premier research institutions in the State to scale up their testing capacity to 2,000 tests daily to assist the Punjab government in its public health response to Covid-19. The State on Monday reported two more deaths related to COVID-19, taking

the total tally to 23, besides 132 fresh cases of COVID-19, according to an official statement.

The total active cases in the State at present are 1,081 and as many as 128 patients have so far been recovered.

In Haryana, one death was reported on May 4, taking the total to six while 75 fresh cases of COVID-19 surfaced, taking the total tally of cumulative cases to 517 in the State, according to a government statement.

Former Chief Minister and Leader of Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda expressed deep concern over the sudden spurt in cases. He said Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar should take the decision to relax the lockdown in the State only after reviewing the current situation.

## A 'new normal' day in Assam

Life back on track with conditions after relaxation of curbs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

A semblance of normalcy returned to Assam on Monday with the relaxation of COVID-19 lockdown allowing several commercial activities to resume across the State's green zones.

There are no red zones in Assam with 32 of the 43 who tested positive for COVID-19 having been discharged while one person died. Of the State's 33 districts, only four are marked orange zones.

People ventured out of their homes to buy essential commodities and other items as 33% of shops and commercial establishments were allowed to open by the government from 6 am to 6 pm. The business outlets have been instructed to open on a rotation basis.

State-owned and private buses began plying with 50% passengers under the Transport Department's watch. Government and private-of-



Heavy traffic on GS Road in Guwahati after relaxation of lockdown on Monday. • RITU RAJ KONWAR

fices also began functioning with 50% workforce. Private vehicles and app-based cabs allowed to carry a maximum of two passengers were on the streets too.

### Social distancing

"The police have been asked to monitor the movement of people to ensure they venture out with mask and maintain social distancing," Assam Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

The liquor shops, which were allowed to open two days ahead of the general relaxation date, did considerable business.

The Department of Excise could not provide data but the All Assam IMFL Retailers' Association said the daily sale in the State was about ₹15 crore.

Hotels, restaurants, gyms, salons, parks, swimming pools, shopping complexes, theatre halls and weekly markets continued to remain shut.

## U.P. MLA flags food delay at quarantine centre

OMAR RASHID  
LUCKNOW

A BJP MLA in Firozabad has flagged the delay in providing food and water to people kept in quarantine and isolation centres in the district.

In a letter to the Firozabad District Magistrate, MLA Manish Asija raised the issue of delay in serving food and water to people, including children, kept at the Agradham quarantine centre in Raja Ka Taal area of Firozabad.

On May 2, Mr. Asija said he received desperate messages from those under quarantine at the centre pointing out to him that they were yet to receive lunch even till 2.45 p.m. Worse, the quarantined people did not receive any water in the May heat till that time, apart from the half-litre water rationed to each one in the morning during breakfast, the legislator wrote.

Mr. Asija also pointed out that lunch was not served in the isolation ward in the district hospital even till 3.30 p.m. "... this condition of the people most affected by [novel] coronavirus is undoubtedly a cause for major concern," he wrote in Hindi.

The legislator appealed to the DM to probe the episode and take action against those involved in the "gross negligence".

Firozabad DM Chandra Vijay Singh said the food supplied to the centre was delayed as the contractor responsible for it suffered a death in his family.

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E-TENDER NOTICE No. Capt. 1628/2020/MTL 04.05.2020

No. Capt. 1628/2020/MTL 04.05.2020 e-Tenders (2 cover system, e-tender) (Tender No. 04/20-21) are invited from the reputed paper dealers/ suppliers/mills for the supply of 4500 ream of 70 gsm D/D milapto paper through online vide e-tender id 2020\_CAPT\_351240\_2. Due date and time of tender/ submission (online) 21.05.2020 upto 11.00 AM. For detailed information log on the website: <https://tenders.kerala.gov.in> & [www.capikerala.com](http://www.capikerala.com)

Sd/- MD, Capt

## Jharkhand launches schemes for job creation

The State faces spectre of massive unemployment with arrival of migrant workers

(CIME) data, the State is reeling

under severe joblessness with unemployment rate pegged at 47.1% – double that of the national average (23.5%). The arrival of an estimated 5 lakh to 6 lakh migrant workers is likely to worsen the situation.

In Ranchi, Chief Minister Hemant Soren unveiled three schemes – Birsa Harit Gram

Yojana (BHYG), Neelambar Pitambar JAL Sammridhi Yojana (NPSY) and Veer Sahid Poto Ho Khel Vikas Scheme (VSPHKVS) – to create wage

employment for workers in rural areas.

The BHGY is envisaged at bringing over two lakh acres of unused government fallow land under the afforestation programme. About five lakh families will be provided 100 fruit-bearing plants. The initial plantation, maintenance, land work and afforestation will be taken up through MNREGA.

### Fruit harvest

Each family is estimated to receive an annual income of ₹50,000 from fruit harvest after three years while the ownership of land will remain with the government

As per NPJSY, the government is aiming at creating agro-water storage units by arresting rainwater and run-off groundwater. Nearly 5 lakh acre of cultivable land can be irrigated through the initiative, said the State government. An estimated 10 crore person days will be generated through the scheme in the next 4-5 years.

Under VSPHKVS, as many as 5,000 sports grounds will be developed across the State. The government hopes to generate one crore person days through the scheme in the current financial year.

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Under V

Rush hour



**Long way to go:** Migrant workers boarding buses to reach the Chikkabanareswara railway station to travel to their homes on special trains arranged for them in Bengaluru on Monday. ■ PTI

## 5 trains cancelled in Kerala over NOC

Tension in A.P. town; migrants cross Telangana border; curbs eased in Bengaluru

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Bihar government has denied permission to the five 'Shramik Special' trains scheduled to depart from Kerala on Monday, jeopardising the return of migrants stranded in the State due to the COVID-19-induced lockdown. The trains were scheduled to leave from Alappuzha, Aluva, Ernakulam, Tirur and Shoranur.

The Bihar government's decision to refuse No-Objection Certificate (NOC) came as a surprise to Kerala as the railways had already operated 11 'Shramik Specials' from Kerala to Jharkhand, Odisha, and Bihar to facilitate the return of the migrants.

**Tension at Kovvur**  
Tension prevailed in Andhra Pradesh's Kovvur on Monday when stranded migrant labourers threw stones at government officials and the



**On the move:** Migrant workers on their way to Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra on the outskirts of Hyderabad. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

police expressing their resentment over not being sent to native places. Police resorted to lathi-charge to disperse the workers.

Officials clarified that they could not allow the labourers to leave the camps without clearance from the nodal officers of the concerned States. Additional forces were deployed in the town. Later, the officials held discussions with the labourers.

Meanwhile, there was no heavy rush of stranded workers or others at the exit and entry points on the inter-State border between Telangana and Maharashtra on the National Highway 44 on Penganga river bridge in Adilabad district as expected on Monday.

The proceedings were orderly and those headed towards Maharashtra had only to wait for 10 to 15 minutes

before the formalities were completed.

The outgoing persons were thermal screened and their details noted down. The incoming persons were not only being screened but also being stamped for home quarantine once they reached respective destinations.

### Back to normalcy

In Karnataka capital Bengaluru, life and businesses started limping back to normalcy after the lockdown restrictions were eased in most parts of the city from Monday, barring the 21 containment zones.

Most shops and commercial establishments opened their shutters. But hotels, malls, cinema halls, markets and barber shops remained closed.

(With inputs from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka Bureaus)

to arrive with the vehicle pass of the District Collector, were told by officials that their entry will be allowed only on Tuesday. In all, 24 people entered the State through the designated checkpost.

Till noon, 515 stranded Keralites were able to enter

the State after completing the formalities and health screening to confirm that they do not have symptoms of COVID-19. Over 28,272 people have applied for vehicle passes to enter by road and 5,470 passes have been issued till now.

In Manjeshwaram, 60

T.N. sees sharp spike with 527 cases; two deaths in Karnataka; 67 new cases in A.P.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

While Kerala did not report any COVID-19 case, Karnataka registered two deaths on Monday. Andhra Pradesh detected 67 fresh cases from six districts and Telangana reported only three cases on Monday.

### COVID-19

Kerala put 61 people on the recovery list on Monday and did not report any case for the second consecutive day.

A total of 462 people out of the 499 cases reported so far in the State have fully recovered from the disease. At present, only 34 patients are undergoing treatment in various hospitals in the State.

As on Monday, Thiruvananthapuram, Malappuram and Kozhikode have discharged all patients and join Ernakulam, Thrissur and Alappuzha which do not have any COVID-19 patients at present. The patients under treatment in hospitals are as follows: Kollam (3), Pathanamthitta (1), Kottayam (6), Idukki (1), Palakkad (1), Wayanad (1), Kannur (18) and Kasaragod (3).

The number of persons under surveillance is 21,724, out of whom, only 372 are isolated in various hospitals while the rest are on home quarantine. The State has tested 33,010 samples so far of which 32,315 have returned a negative result. Of the 2,431 samples tested as part of a sentinel survey among select groups in the population, 1,846 samples have tested negative.

### Karnataka toll 27

Two deaths, one in Kalaburagi and another in Davangere, were reported in Karnataka on Monday, taking the toll to 27. Both are known cases with comorbidities.

### Being cautious

The fight against COVID-19 is going on as usual though some lockdown restrictions were eased

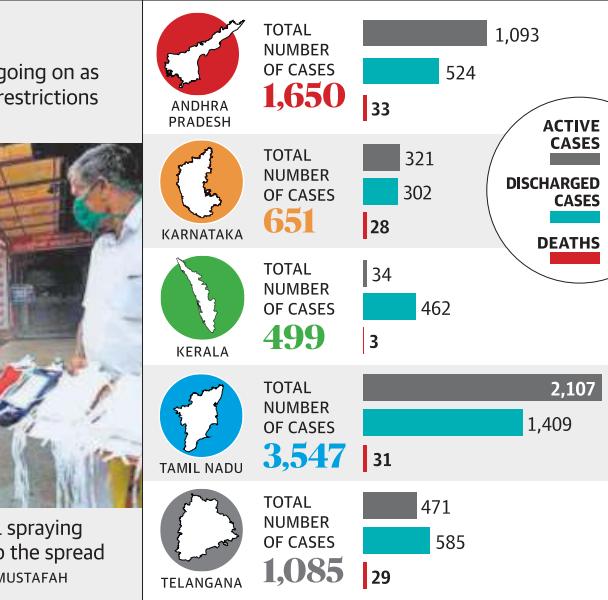


**Full force:** Fire force personnel spraying disinfectant in an effort to curb the spread of COVID-19 in Palakkad. ■ K.K. MUSTAFAH

seven from Bidar, two each from Mandya and Kalaburagi and one each from Chikkaballapura, Haveri, Vijayapura and Bengaluru Urban. In Bidar, one positive patient has spread the infection to seven others. "The lone positive case reported from Bengaluru Urban is of a 40-year-old police constable," the Minister added.

Meanwhile, 37 new cases, including Sunday's 21 reported in Davangere, have been detected on Monday, taking the total positive cases to 651.

Addressing press persons, Primary and Secondary Education Minister Suresh Kumar said 22 of the 37 new cases are from Davangere. "Nineteen of the 22 Davangere cases have contracted the infection from a nurse of a primary health centre there, who has tested positive. The nurse had attended a wedding in Bagalkot. Except one patient, who is an influenza like illness (ILI) case, the others are contacts of another positive patient," he said. The other cases include



from the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) limits. Of the patients admitted to isolation wards, 40 more were discharged. A total of 1,085 cases were reported till May 4. Of them, 471 are active cases, 585 were discharged and 29 people suffering from the disease have died.

### Sharp rise in T.N.

Tamil Nadu witnessed its sharpest rise yet of COVID-19 patients on Monday, with a record 527 cases. The fresh cases were reported from 19 districts, with Chennai accounting for 266 of them and Cuddalore witnessing a sudden spike, recording 122 cases in a single day.

With this, the total number of COVID-19 cases climbed to 3,550 in the State.

The State reported another death, taking the toll due to COVID-19 to 31.

A large number of the fresh cases were linked to the Koyambudu market, the bulletin said.

(With inputs from Bengaluru, Chennai, Vijayawada and Hyderabad Bureaus)

### IN BRIEF



#### About 2,500 liquor shops opened in A.P.

VIJAYAWADA

About 2,500 liquor outlets that opened across Andhra Pradesh on Monday after a gap of 40 days witnessed a heavy rush. People lined up in long queues violating social distancing norms and even jostled at some places forcing police to use mild force. At some places, like Aqiripalli in Krishna district, locals protested against the opening of the liquor vends. Police tightened security at the liquor shops to prevent any untoward incidents.

#### Life term for accused in priest's murder

KOCHI

Johnny, 58, a sacristan accused in the murder of Fr. Xavier Thelakkad of Kurishumudi Church, Malayattoor, was sentenced to life imprisonment and a fine of ₹1 lakh on Monday. It was on March 1, 2018 that the priest was murdered. The accused will have to undergo simple imprisonment for one more year if he fails to pay the fine, said the order by the Principal Sessions and District Judge Kauser Edappakathu. Public prosecutor T.P. Ramesh appeared in the case. ■ PTI

#### Salary deferment Ordinance challenged

KOCHI

The recently promulgated Ordinance that empowers the Kerala government to defer payment of salary of employees of the government before the Kerala High Court. The petitions have been filed by various employees' organisations. According to them, the Kerala Disaster and Public Health Emergency (Special Provisions) Ordinance has provided for deferment of the pay in part in the event of disaster and public health emergency in the State.

## Kerala govt. opens six border checkposts

After days of uncertainty, first batch of residents stranded in other States return home

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Ending 40 days of uncertainty, the first batch of Keralites who had been stranded in various States across the country since the COVID-19 induced lockdown were able to step into their home State on Monday through six inter-State border checkposts the government threw open for them.

The stranded who registered in the website of the Department of Non Resident Keralites and managed the digital vehicle pass that were issued from Sunday evening onwards on registering on the website www.covid19agratha.kerala.nic.in were the first to reach the border checkposts early in the morning, taking the authorities by surprise.

The border check-posts at Inchivila near Parasala on the Kerala-Tamil Nadu border after natives of Thrissur, who were the first



**Cautious steps:** A health worker conducting a thermal check on a man returning to Kerala at the Walayar checkpost on Monday. ■ K.K. MUSTAFAH

to arrive with the vehicle pass of the District Collector, were told by officials that their entry will be allowed only on Tuesday. In all, 24 people entered the State through the designated checkpost.

Till noon, 515 stranded Keralites were able to enter

the State after completing the formalities and health screening to confirm that they do not have symptoms of COVID-19. Over 28,272 people have applied for vehicle passes to enter by road and 5,470 passes have been issued till now.

In Manjeshwaram, 60

counters were set up to receive the returnees. School teachers were roped in to man the help-desks. Police, health and revenue officials in large numbers were in attendance to assist.

The district administrations had also arranged facilities at each designated entry point to accommodate at least 500 persons at a time.

The district administration has also readied ambulances to take symptomatic persons to the designated hospitals. Those without any symptoms were allowed to leave from the border check posts with the directive to undergo 14 days of home quarantine.

Those from neighbouring States seeking medical aid in Kerala, pregnant women, family separated from children due to lockdown, students, senior citizens and those who have lost their jobs are given priority over others to enter Kerala.

### WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

**Forecast for Tuesday:** Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning, hail and squall very likely at isolated places over Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand; with lightning and gusty winds at isolated places over west Rajasthan and Kerala and with lightning at isolated places over east Madhya Pradesh, Goa, Telangana and Karnataka.

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

Agartala ..... 61.4...32.0...22.7 Kozhikode ..... 36.0...27.4

Ahmedabad ..... -42.6...27.6 Ahmedabad ..... 2.9...42.2...29.0

Aizawl ..... 24.9...21.0 Lucknow ..... 1.4...36.3...24.0

Allahabad ..... 2.0...37.2...24.5 Madurai ..... 39.7...27.1

Bengaluru ..... 33.8...23.0 Mangaluru ..... 36.6...25.6

Bhopal ..... 42.1...25.0 Mumbai ..... 35.1...28.0

Bhubaneswar ..... 34.7...27.2 Mysuru ..... 1.5...35.4...23.6

Chandigarh ..... 10.8...34.7...19.6 New Delhi ..... 1.1...35.7...19.4

Chennai ..... 37.4...27.4 Patna ..... 35.4...25.0

Coimbatore ..... 36.7...26.1 Port Blair ..... 33.2...28.3

Dehradun ..... 14.7...35.9...29.3

Gangtok ..... 0.2...14.5 Puducherry ..... 41.1...23.0

Goa ..... 35.4...28.3 Raipur ..... 41.2...26.0

Guwahati ..... 14.0...34.0...21.4 Ranchi ..... 30.5...22.0

Hubballi ..... 37.0...24.0 Shillong ..... 21.3...-

Hyderabad ..... 41.2...27.6 Shimla ..... 1.2...24.8...14.4

Imphal ..... 9.0...27.7...19.6 Srinagar ..... 22.6...10.0

Jaipur ..... 6.4...38.8...22.0 Thiruvananthapuram ..... 34.7...27.3

Kochi ..... 34.2...27.2 Tiruchi ..... 39.9...28.4

Kohima ..... 8.8...22.4...11.0 Vijayawada ..... -

Kolkata ..... 34.2...25.8 Visakhapatnam ..... 2.7...33.1...26.0

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

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

Ahmedabad ..... 30.19...43...35...66...-

Bengaluru ..... 10.17...38...14...80...-

Chennai ..... 03...-...14...-...178...-

Delhi ..... 12.23...104...-...178...-

Hyderabad ..... 12.49...57...46...78...-

Kolkata ..... 03.07...14...34...56...-

Lucknow ..... 06.17...55...109



## App for one season

Aarogya Setu has sparked concerns; it cannot be made mandatory without legal backing

The Centre's national directive for the mandatory use of its COVID-19 contact tracing app, Aarogya Setu, as part of its COVID-19 combat measures, falls short of established legal standards for the protection of privacy. The first requirement laid down by the Supreme Court in *K.S. Puttaswamy*, namely, a law authorising the involuntary use of such an app, has not been fulfilled. The government has no power to make the app's use compulsory without legislative authorisation. There is no legislative guidance for the app's purpose, functioning, and the nature of the use of the sensitive personal data it collects. Going by the directive issued under the Disaster Management Act, all people residing in 'containment zones', all government and public sector staff and all employees, both public and private, who are allowed to work during the lockdown, will have to download the app, which also cautions against not keeping the phone's location and Bluetooth on. Lawyers and activists have raised concerns not only over privacy; they also fear that assessments made on the basis of information collected may be used to restrict public movement and access. The absence of a sunset clause or a rule limiting the purpose for which the data can be used or spelling out the entities authorised to use them are all valid concerns. Some, like Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, fear it could become a surveillance tool.

However, Aarogya Setu seems to be quite popular – downloads have crossed 75 million. And what the government has going for itself is that many countries are implementing mobile app use for contact tracing. More and more governments are introducing applications for automated location services to trace the contacts of those infected. India should abide by best practices elsewhere. The EU has laid down guidelines to the effect that such app use should be voluntary, that it should preserve user privacy and should not be used after it becomes no longer necessary. Israel's Supreme Court recently struck down emergency powers given to the country's intelligence agency to trace the phone location of COVID-19 patients without enabling legislation. Australia's tracking app has sparked privacy concerns, but the government has released a privacy impact assessment. While the intention behind the app's introduction may be good – as it is given that the government is keen on doing everything possible to keep a watch on the spread of the virus so that the lockdown, as well as relaxations given to zones based on colour-coding, are effective – it would be well-advised to heed privacy concerns raised by the Opposition, allay fears that it may become a permanent mass surveillance instrument and ensure that there is sufficient anonymising of data and its limited access. It has a duty to resort to methods that cause the least harm.

## Off course

The real issue with the Cauvery waters Authority is that it is rudderless

The Cauvery is a perennial source of controversies. The latest political row to erupt in Tamil Nadu is around the Centre's April 24 notification bringing the Cauvery Water Management Authority under the administrative control of the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti, which was created a year ago by combining two Ministries. Several political parties, especially the Opposition, and some farmers' associations were upset with the notification on the ground that the move has reduced the Authority to a "puppet" of the Centre. They point out that the CWMA was created on the direction of the Supreme Court in February 2018. It is also argued that between June 2018-May 2019, when the Union Ministry of Water Resources was in existence, there was no public notification on the CWMA being designated as an organisation under the Ministry. Such an argument is weak, as the CWMA, a body corporate, has been working all along under the Ministry. Even in the case of its predecessor, the Cauvery River Authority (1998-2013) with the Prime Minister as the Chairman and Chief Ministers of the basin States as Members, the Union Ministry of Water Resources had administrative control. In fact, the CWMA has had only a part-time head, the chairman of the Central Water Commission (CWC), attached to the Ministry. Besides, there are eight inter-State river water boards under the Jal Shakti Ministry. Along with the CWMA, four other bodies, including the Krishna and the Godavari Water Management Boards – which have been in existence since 2014 following the re-organisation of Andhra Pradesh – were designated to be under the Ministry. The formalisation of the CWMA's status corrects an apparent lapse on the Ministry's part and addresses administrative issues.

Apart from meeting the procedural requirement, the notification does not, in any way, alter the character, functions or powers of the CWMA that form part of a scheme drawn up a few years ago, and which was approved by the Supreme Court. If there is anything the Centre can be blamed for, it is the way the CWMA functions. Even two years after its formation, the Authority does not have a full-fledged chairman. The Centre would do well to act, at least now, in making the CWMA fully operational, when the southwest monsoon is about to set in. Successive governments at the Centre have been wary of acting decisively, other than under the orders of the Supreme Court for fear of alienating voters in one of the States involved. The latest episode should convince political parties that relentless politicisation of each and every matter concerning water resources does not benefit the stakeholders. The parties should realise that electoral gains or losses are not always linked to their stand on any one issue, even if it is the Cauvery, the lifeline of Tamil Nadu's rice bowl.

# MPLADS, its suspension, and why it must go

There are five reasons why the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme must be abolished



JAGDEEP S. CHHOKAR

All Opposition parties have been unanimous in their criticism of the government's recent move to suspend the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) for two years, approved by the Cabinet. The government's reason is this: to use these funds "to strengthen the government's efforts in managing the challenges and adverse impact of COVID-19 in the country".

Such political unanimity is not very common but does happen whenever self-interest is involved. Under the scheme, each Member of Parliament "has the choice to suggest to the District Collector for works to the tune of ₹5 crores per annum to be taken up in his/her constituency".

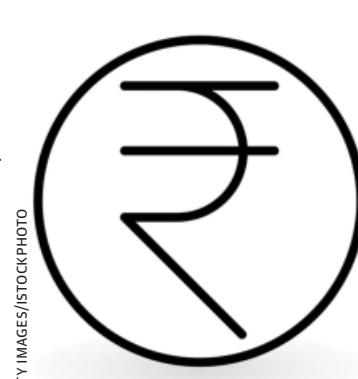
It must be said upfront that notwithstanding the fact that unilateral decision-making is inappropriate in a democracy, the decision to suspend MPLADS for two years is a good first step. In fact, the MPLADS scheme should be completely abolished, and for the following reasons.

First, the scheme violates one of the cardinal principles, which though not specifically written down in the Constitution, actually permeates the entire Constitution: separation of powers. Simply put, this scheme, in effect, gives an executive function to legislators (read legislature). The argument

that MPs only recommend projects, but the final choice and implementation rests with the district authorities is strange; there are hardly any authorities in the district who have the courage or the gumption to defy the wishes of an MP.

### CAG's observations

Second, implementation of the scheme has always left much to be desired. The details below, which are some of the observations made by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India, in a report make it clear: Expenditure incurred by the executing agencies being less than amount booked. Utilisation of funds between 49 to 90% of the booked amount; Though the scheme envisages that works under the scheme should be limited to asset creation, 549 of the 707 works test-checked (78%) of the works recommended were for improvement of existing assets; Wide variations in quantities executed against the quantities specified in the BOQ (Bills of Quantity) in 137 of the 707 works test-checked. Variations ranged from 16 to 2312%. ("2312%" is the figure actually mentioned in the audit report); Use of lesser quantities of material than specified by contractors resulting in excess payments and sub-standard works; "no accountability for the expenditure in terms of the quality and quantities executed against specifications"; Delays in issuing work orders ranging from 5 to 387 days in 57% of the works against the requirement of issuing the work order within 45 days of the receipt of recommendation by the MP; Extensions of time granted to contractors without following the correct procedure;



dure; Register of assets created, as required under the scheme, not maintained, therefore location and existence of assets could not be verified; "The implementation of the scheme was marked by various shortcomings and lapses.. These were indicative of the failure of internal control mechanisms in the department in terms of non-maintenance of records".

### Gaps in utilisation

Third, there are wide variations in the utilisation of the MPLADS amount in various constituencies. A report published in IndiaSpend has some very interesting insights based on data made available to it by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. Some of these are: "A year after they took office, 298 of 542 members of the 16th Lok Sabha – India's lower house of parliament – have not spent a rupee from the ₹5 crore that is set aside annually for them to develop their constituencies"; 508 MPs (93.55%) did not, or could not, utilise the entire MPLADS amount from May 4, 2014 till December 10, 2018, in 4 years and 7 months. Only 35 MPs of the

Lok Sabha utilised the entire amount of MPLADS during this period; Though ₹1,757 crore had been released for MPLADS, only ₹281 crore had been utilised by all the 543 MPs till May 15, 2015. This means only 16% of the money had been spent in one year by all the MPs put together, because the Lok Sabha was constituted in May 2014; Since the MPLADS began in 1993, ₹5,000 crore was lying unspent with various district authorities by May 15, 2015.

It is clear from the details above, as well as later experience, that most MPs use money under MPLADS quite haphazardly, and a significant portion of it is left unused.

Fourth, added to the data above is fairly widespread talk of money under MPLADS being used to appease or oblige two sets of people: opinion-makers or opinion-influencers, and favourite contractors. Sometimes these two categories overlap. An often-heard tale is that of the contractor being a relative, close friend, or a confidant of the MP, and the contractor and the MP being financially linked with each other.

Finally, we come back to the legality or constitutionality issue which was mentioned earlier. The constitutional validity of MPLADS was challenged in the Supreme Court of India in 1999, followed by petitions in 2000, 2003, 2004, and 2005. The combined judgment for all these petitions was delivered on May 6, 2010, with the scheme being held to be unconstitutional.

With due respect to the top court, it must be said that the Court does not seem to have been able to appreciate the situation in

totality. It seems to have placed an unquestioned trust in the efficacy of the scheme of implementation of MPLADS drawn up by the government without an assessment of the situation prevalent in the field, evidence of which is available in audit reports wherein gross irregularities and infirmities in implementation have been pointed out. The possibility that implementation of a lot of schemes bears no relationship to how the schemes were intended to be implemented, seems to have completely escaped the attention of the Court. Common experience does not support this because of large, yawning gaps being found in actual implementation.

### Cases of misuse

Reports of underutilisation and misutilisation of MPLADS funds continue to surface at regular intervals but there seems to have been no serious attempt to do anything about it till now. There are innumerable instances of misuse of these funds; one prominent example is the construction of a fountain in the open space of an unauthorised settlement, or a *jhuggi jhopdi* colony, which did not have provision of drinking water. The general belief in the settlement was that the contractor who bagged the contract to build the fountain was related to the local Member of Parliament.

Therefore, it would be in order to convert the two-year suspension into the complete abolition of this undesirable and unconstitutional scheme.

*Jagdeep S. Chhokar is a former Professor, Dean and Director In-charge of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad*

## A grain stockist with a role still relevant

In the middle of the pandemic, the FCI holds the key to warding off a looming crisis of hunger and starvation



SUDHA NARAYANAN

For several years now, the Food Corporation of India (FCI) has drawn attention for all the wrong reasons. Set up under the Food Corporations Act 1964, in its first decade, the FCI was at the forefront of India's quest of self-sufficiency in rice and wheat following the Green Revolution, managing procurement and stocking grain that supported a vast Public Distribution System (PDS).

Over time, however, many began to see it as a behemoth that had long outlived its purpose. Its operations were regarded as expensive and inefficient, a perception that has come to be accepted as fact. Even in the 1970s and 1980s, poor storage conditions meant a lot of grain was lost to pests, mainly rats; diversion of grain was widespread, prompting a former chairman to declare that there was a problem with "human rats" as well. By the late 1990s, the FCI was often referred to as the "Food Corruption of India", not entirely facetiously.

### Why it is better placed

Notwithstanding its dubious reputation, the FCI has consistently maintained the PDS, a lifeline for vulnerable millions across the country. Today, in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, it holds the key to warding off a looming crisis of hunger and starvation, especially in regions where lakhs of migrant workers have returned with little in hand by way of money or food. Before the lockdown, many experts had observed that with 77 million tonnes of grains in its godowns and on the eve of a new round of procurement – of a



bumper harvest of wheat – the FCI was facing a serious storage problem. This was worrying not just because of a shortage of modern storage facilities but also because the FCI lacked a "pro-active liquidation policy" for excess stocks. Today, this concern has all but disappeared, even if only temporarily, and many have called for opening up the godowns to release food stocks to those affected by the lockdown.

As of April 13, 2020, the FCI had already moved 3 million tonnes (post-lockdown), to States, including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Karnataka and those in the Northeast, where demand outstrips within State procurement and/or stocks. The FCI has also enabled purchases by States and non-governmental organisations directly from FCI depots, doing away with e-auctions typically conducted for the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS). With *rabi* procurement under way in many States, it seems that the country will secure ample food supplies to cope with the current crisis. Given the extended lockdown, the FCI is uniquely positioned to move grain across State borders where private sector players continue to face formidable challenges. With passenger rail and road traffic suspended, grain can move quickly without bottlenecks. Yet, there is a widespread sense that the FCI is simply not moving fast enough and could do much more.

First, the FCI is overwhelmingly reliant on rail, which has several advantages over road transport. In 2019-2020 (until February) only 24% of the grain moved was by road. The FCI has, however, long recognised that road movement is often better suited for emergencies and for remote areas. Containerised movement too, which is not the dominant way of transporting grain, is more cost-effective and efficient. Now, more than ever, it is imperative to move grain quickly and with the least cost and

effort, to areas where the need is greatest.

### Positioning strategy

Second, given that the coming months will see predictable demand of staples from food insecure hotspots where migrant workers have just returned or where work is scarce, one strategy that has been adopted widely in international food aid by the United States, for example, is "pre-positioning" shipments, where grain is stored closer to demand hotspots. The FCI already has a decentralised network of godowns. In the current context, it would be useful for the State government and the FCI to maintain stocks at block headquarters or panchayats in food insecure or remote areas, in small hermetic silos or containers; this would allow State governments to respond rapidly, not to mention the sense of assurance and psychological comfort that it will offer vulnerable communities.

This is especially relevant for regions that are chronically underserved by markets or where markets have been severely disrupted. Fourth, typically, the FCI's guidelines follow a first in, first out principle (FIFO) that mandates that grain that has been procured earlier needs to be distributed first to ensure that older stocks are liquidated, both across years and even within a particular year. It is time for the FCI to suspend this strategy, if it has not already, that enables movement that costs least time, money and effort.

Fifth, today farmers across the country growing for markets are seeking to reach out to consumers directly, many out of sheer despair. In many places, farmer producer organisations (FPOs) have been at forefront of rebuilding these broken supply chains. The FCI along with the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (NAFED), is well placed to rope in expertise to manage the logistics to support these efforts. NAFED has already taken the initiative to procure and transport horticultural crops. Several State governments too have put in systems to procure horticultural crops. The FCI should similarly consider expanding its role to support FPOs and farmer groups, to move a wider range of commodities including agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertilizers, packing materials and so on.

There are two major concerns that many articulate regarding the FCI's role. The first is a long-term concern regarding the costs of

food subsidy. An analysis of FCI costs spanning 2001-16 suggests, however, that on average about 60% of the costs of acquisition, procurement, distribution and carrying stocks are in fact transfers to farmers. Not all of what is counted as subsidy therefore represents a waste of resources, even if the distributional consequences and inefficiencies leave a lot to be desired. At the same time, the government needs to address the FCI's mounting debts – an estimated ₹2.55 lakh crore in March 2020 in the form of National Small Saving Funds Loan alone – and revisit its current preference for not liquidating these in order to contain the Union government's fiscal deficit. Some clarity on this aspect would enable the government to be bolder with deploying the FCI in the best possible way. A second concern is that extended food distribution of subsidised grain is akin to dumping and depresses food prices locally, in turn affecting farmers. These are legitimate concerns but perhaps only beyond the looming emergency this summer.

When the pandemic is past, questions will once again surface on the relevance of the FCI. Even in 2015, the Shanta Kumar report recommended repurposing the organisation as an "agency for innovations in Food Management System" and advocated shedding its dominant role in the procurement and distribution of grain. There is no doubt that the FCI needs to overhaul its operations and modernise its storage. At the same time, the relevance of an organisation such as the FCI or of public stockholding, common to most Asian countries, has never been more strongly established than now, even as we contemplate its new role in a post-pandemic world.

*Sudha Narayanan is Associate Professor, Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, Mumbai*



## 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.

### In stages

The total lockdown introduced throughout the country since March 25 encompassed a lockdown of the economy as well. Unorganised labourers and migrant workers engaged in construction work, brick-making, quarrying, plumbing and even electrical work, were all displaced. Therefore, there was a need and necessity to restart economic activities step by step. But the relaxation of the lockdown, from May 4 in Tamil Nadu State, is hasty as the State

government has actually opened the flood gates of most activities (Page 1, "COVID-19 cases cross 3,000 in Tamil Nadu", May 4). Most shops, establishments and markets seem to be open almost to the level of near normalcy irrespective of the colour-coded zones. People have been thronging these establishments with scant regard for social distancing. The government seems to have prioritised the restoration of economic activities over containment. There is a grave danger of

being too over-confident and bypassing the need to exit the lockdown in a calibrated way.

**MANOHARAN MUTHUSWAMY, Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu**

▪ With additional COVID-19 cases originating from the Koyambedu cluster in Chennai, and its subsequent dispersal to neighbouring districts, Tamil Nadu has, in one fell swoop, squandered all the painstaking gains achieved during the lockdown of the previous weeks. From the gleaming skyscrapers of Singapore to

the slums of Mumbai and the unregulated establishments in places such as Koyambedu, the Achilles heel has been the supreme indifference of the authorities to bringing in some sense of safety and a beneficial regulation of workers and traders. This callous disregard has now landed all of us back at square number one in the COVID-19 game of snakes and ladders. Unless and until we take care of the workers at the lower end of the spectrum and improve their working conditions, we

could face great difficulty in containing the virus.

**G. PARAMESWARAN, Coimbatore**

**Liquor queues**

Visuals of long queues, in many instances braving the scorching heat and dust, in front of liquor shops that were opened after a gap of 40 days of lockdown are nauseating. Tipplers thronging these outlets waiting for their turn as if they are waiting for a life-saving commodity is a sight that is strange. It is already very hard for the authorities

to enforce social distancing and other norms related to the novel coronavirus containment strategy. The purpose of the lockdown will be defeated if such disorder is allowed to spread. The unabated pace of the pandemic warrants strict adherence to guidelines. In addition, in many instances, spending money on liquor will be at the cost of the nutritional security of the person's family.

**Ds. D.V.G. SANKARARAO, Nellimala, Andhra Pradesh**

# COVID-19 and India's fiscal conundrum

While the case for an aggressive fiscal stimulus is clear, the options to finance it are not straightforward



RAMKISHEN S. RAJAN &amp; SASIDARAN GOPALAN



As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to ravage economies across the world, policymakers are desperately seeking effective ways to mitigate its economic effects. The immediate future appears dire for large emerging markets including India, which recently saw its growth forecast for 2020 slashed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to 1.9% from the previously estimated 5.8%. In April, the World Bank estimated that India would grow 1.5% to 2.8% in 2020-2021, the lowest since the start of the 1991 economic reforms. Dim as these projections are, what is of concern is that these are already starting to look overly optimistic considering that India has extended the lockdown.

#### Fiscal stimulus efforts

Given the severity of the crisis, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has responded proactively and aggressively to ease liquidity concerns although the credit easing policy does not seem to have been transmitted yet to many firms. It has also granted regulatory forbearance relating to asset classification to support economic activity, though some socialisation of losses might be inevitable over time.

In contrast, the Indian government's fiscal stimulus efforts have paled in comparison to the rest of the world's initiatives. India's fiscal stimulus to date, estimated at ₹1.7 trillion, is less than 1% of the country's GDP, which is paltry compared to the magnitude of stimulus injections undertaken by many East Asian countries such as Japan (20%), Malaysia (16.2%) and Singapore (12.2%).

With the Indian economy in the ICU, there has understandably been a lot of criticism regarding the gross inadequacy of the government's fiscal response to date. Several observers have emphasised the need for India to roll out a revival package of at least 5% of the GDP (₹10 trillion) to support the health and economic well-being of the most vulnerable (slum dwellers and migrant workers)

as well as micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

Some other lower-income countries have been reluctant to impose nationwide lockdowns as they recognise that this policy works best in countries that are sufficiently well endowed to offer appropriate compensatory resources to the most vulnerable.

#### Relief packages in Asia

While the case for an aggressive fiscal stimulus is clear in these exceptional circumstances, the options to finance it do not appear to be straightforward.

On the one end, most advanced economies can manage such financing by issuing bonds given their global demand. On the other, over 50 struggling low-income countries with limited resources to tackle the crisis have turned to the IMF for help. The G7 countries have in principle agreed to offer debt relief to low-income countries by suspending their debt service payments.

The ones caught in between are mostly the middle-income emerging markets in Asia and elsewhere, like India. To date, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank have committed to offering relief packages worth \$1.5 billion and \$1 billion, respectively, to India, while there are reports that the country has sought further multilateral assistance from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. While certainly helpful, these would be a drop in the bucket as such assistance can at best only be

supplementary to the larger underlying stimulus package that India may need to roll out. However, with a government debt of around 72% of GDP, which is comparatively higher than all other emerging markets in the region, India's fiscal room to opt for a massive stimulus appears much more limited. Any aggressive stimulus spending will not only result in a surge in India's gross public debt but will also negatively impact its credit ratings, highlighting the country's fiscal conundrum.

Even if the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management constraints are relaxed, given India's limited demand for domestic bonds, there is a need to seek capital flows to finance its additional stimulus by encouraging foreign investment in government securities. However, it is unclear how much the recently liberalised norms in this area will be of help, given the heightened risk aversion and short-term capital outflows from India and other emerging markets. In fairness to the government though, other large middle-income Asian emerging markets like Indonesia have also lagged in their fiscal response, despite being hard hit by COVID-19.

Some richer countries in the Asian region like Singapore have managed to tap into their deep reserve kitty benefiting from the significant role played by their sovereign wealth funds. While India does not have that luxury, it has been suggested that some of the country's \$476 billion of low-income households.

Ramkishen S. Rajan is Yong Pung How Professor at Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore, and Sasidaran Gopalan is Senior Research Fellow at the Nanyang Business School, Nanyang Technological University. Views are personal

foreign exchange (FX) reserves be used towards this purpose. However, this is an extremely risky option in light of India's sizeable current account deficits and heavy dependence on short-term capital inflows. Given the likely pressure on its balance of payments moving forward, utilising FX reserves does not seem to be viable at the moment.

A radical financing option would be to monetise the deficits by allowing the RBI to print money to buy the government bonds as long as inflation remains under check, though this might set a dangerous precedent (something the RBI stopped doing in 1997) moving forward. India has worked hard to move away from such money-financed fiscal stimulus policies that led to weak budget constraints and macroeconomic instability.

#### Adequate fiscal space

Although it is important to do whatever it takes to moderate the meltdown, offer disaster relief and eventually kick-start the economy, there are valid concerns that unless there is proper governance of any massive fiscal spending, even a very well-intentioned policy may end up doing more harm than good. Even countries like China have been guarded in their fiscal responses so far. In China, this was partly to avoid a rise in its shadow banking activities, which turned out to be one of the perverse side-effects of its massive stimulus post the global financial crisis.

Countries with higher initial public debt levels like India need to be particularly concerned as they also happen to possess the least state capacity to make tough decisions to return to a trajectory of fiscal credibility. This crisis has made clear the critical importance for countries to build adequate fiscal space to manage future economic distresses. Given the acute constraints on fiscal policy in India, there is clearly a need to start re-prioritising expenditures away from low-priority, unproductive areas towards greater spending on health and social safety nets for low-income households.

# A way out of the pandemic

Ramping up production of personal protective equipment for mass use will help



ROHIT AZAD &amp; C. SARATCHAND

elsewhere but that would mean putting these workers in harm's way. Moreover, this will only aggravate the health crisis as it may result in mass spread of the virus through community transmission.

#### An employment option

A mass-scale production of test kits, PPEs, etc. will have two effects, apart from the healthcare dimension, on the economy. One, it will increase direct employment in the test kits and PPE production industries while creating safe employment conditions in the essentials and other priority sectors. Two, since the essentials sector is at the core of this strategy, which has direct backward linkages with the agricultural sector, it will prioritise the ones worst affected by the lockdown currently. All this would require expenditure over and above the current stimulus since these test kits and PPEs would have to be provided gratis for it to have any meaningful effect. Public sector units would have to produce it apart from the private sector through subsidies given for their production.

It is true this will still not absorb all those who got displaced during the lockdown. For those who cannot be, the state will have to provide for basic subsistence requirements, both as basic income and in kind. The in-kind transfer in the form of free ration will be met by increased production of these commodities facilitated by this policy.

One may, however, object to this mass scale production of PPEs as wastage of resources in the long term. But that's not necessarily the case. Since these equipment are consumables, they will not leave a trace of unused stocks in the long run. Two, this does not require capital to be 'locked in' in the long run, which means the readjustment after the crisis will be less involved. In fact, as the workers have themselves proposed in the U.S., this could be done even by the automobile sector with its existing equipment.

But if essentials can be revived, why not revive the entire economy in this manner? It can be, but other questions will arise. As a result of a sudden halt in the economic activity, a large part of which caters to the elite, carbon emissions have declined. There is no point wasting resources on these activities in crisis situations such as these. The policy objective must be to protect the people and not necessarily the profits in these industries. Workers in such industries will be protected through the proposed unemployment allowance. In fact, an economy functioning in the way that is proposed here in the medium run may give us time to reflect on how to confront issues of climate change.

Rohit Azad teaches at JNU and C. Saratchand at Satyawati College, University of Delhi

## Rishi, the consummate actor

The star and the actor are seldom synonymous in Bollywood, but he was a rare synthesis of both

KUNAL RAY

Writing an obituary is the most excruciating thing. While it attempts to memorialise the life and work of an individual, it leaves a residue of sorrow that forever gnaws at your heart. Rishi Kapoor was a consummate actor. Another word that could best describe him is 'versatile'. *Mera Naam Joker*, *Rafiq Chakkar*, *Kabhi Kabhie*, *Amar Akbar Anthony*, *Sargam*, *Karz*, *Prem Rog*, *Saagar...* the list is endless. He was also referred to as the 'chocolate boy' for his impish good looks and the instant heart-throb status that was conferred upon him after the success of *Bobby*.

**The importance of pedigree**

While some will grudge him his pedigree which was Bollywood royalty to say the least, I would like to aver that pedigree alone doesn't make an actor. It could certainly get you a break or toehold in filmdom. No denying that being Raj Kapoor's son had its own advantages but by that logic, Rishi's brothers, Randhir and Rajiv, should have also found mainstream success like he did. Stardom operates in strange ways. Pedigree can make you a star but not an actor. In Bollywood, the star and the actor are seldom synonymous. Rishi was that rare synthesis of both.

If you look at his earlier films, they were a series of love stories, romantic comedies, some tragedies – atypical Bollywood genre films. What does an actor have to do in these films? The plot is predictable with some song and dance thrown in, and the end is everyone's guess. Rishi was not the darling of art house filmmakers or perhaps he never cared about those films which is the route many mainstream actors often take to prove their acting mettle. It is like an unwritten binary – go to art house for recognition of acting talent and do as you please in the usual commercial flare. Rishi Kapoor proved his versatility in the most mainstream of commercial Hindi cinema.

However, the actor in him perhaps



got a new lease of life in the second phase of his career starting with a film like *Luck by Chance* where he played an over-the-top Bollywood film producer. That was a significant revelation for many of us who grew up watching his films. He could no longer play the chocolate boy or the quintessential Bollywood hero. Age was not on his side. Rishi began to experiment with roles and that too in the format of mainstream Hindi cinema. Then came *Love Aaj Kal*, *Aurangzeb*, *Kapoor & Sons*, *Mulk*, *Rajma Chawal* and I wondered, where was this Rishi Kapoor hiding so far?

Does this also indicate that mainstream Hindi film actors at the peak of their careers are risk-averse or prefer to wait their turn till they can no longer play lead roles in films?

In retrospect, when Rishi was the leading star of Hindi films, the actors playing roles of his father or uncle had barely anything substantial to do in those films. They weren't incompetent actors either, but Hindi film scripts barely thought about those characters. This isn't the case when Rishi had to essay similar roles in his second phase. Think about the grandfather he played in *Kapoor & Sons*. It is a character written with special attention. Much of the credit goes to his performance for making the character entirely believable but that character wouldn't exist without the script.

Rishi Kapoor also featured in Habib Faisal's *Do Dooni Chaar* which is a little gem of a film. He played a middle-class school teacher in Delhi struggling to buy a new car for his family. Not only did he enliven the dilemmas of his character, he made you feel for the daily struggles of a common man in the big metropolis. If Rishi Kapoor were his son Ranbir Kapoor's age now, would he do films differently than what he did during his heyday? Perhaps that would give us a very different filmography and with it, an actor beyond our imagination.

Kunal Ray teaches literary and cultural studies at FLAME University, Pune



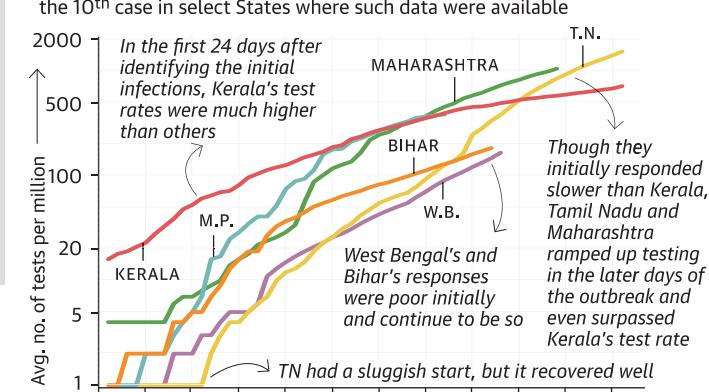
#### DATA POINT

## First-mover advantage

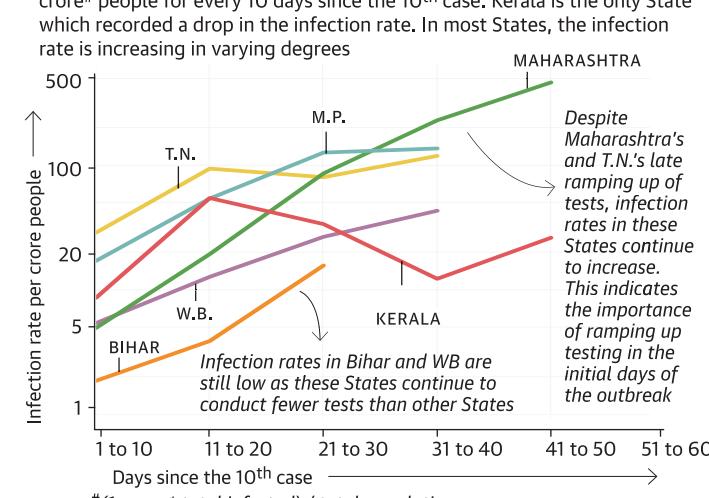
How a region deals with the initial days of the COVID-19 outbreak determines its handling of the crisis. Regions which ramped up testing in the first few days were able to flatten the curve early, while those which increased testing only later continued to record steep infection curves. By The Hindu Data Team

**1. A COMPARATIVE STUDY** | A recent data blog published by the World Bank compares the case curve in the town of Vo in Italy (3,305 residents) with the case curve in the Diamond Princess cruise ship (3,711 travellers). Vo tested almost all its residents after registering its first few cases, while the ship tested only those who showed symptoms. In the first round of testing, Vo detected more cases than the ship. In the second round, the number of new cases in Vo dropped. In the ship, asymptomatic persons spread the infection to others causing a surge in cases in the second round of testing. Notably, while Vo initially quarantined only those who were infected, the ship quarantined most of its passengers. Therefore, while lockdowns and quarantines help slow the spread, ramping up testing in the initial days flattens the curve

**2. HOW STATES TESTED** | The chart plots the seven-day rolling average (median) of COVID-19 tests conducted per million population since the 10<sup>th</sup> case in select States where such data were available



**3. IMPACT ON CASE CURVE** | The chart plots the infection rate per crore# people for every 10 days since the 10<sup>th</sup> case. Kerala is the only State which recorded a drop in the infection rate. In most States, the infection rate is increasing in varying degrees



**The Hindu**  
FROM THE ARCHIVES  
FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 5, 1970

Lall, Toast of Indian Camp

It would not be far wrong to say that Premjit Lall would play a key-role in India's fortunes in the Davis Cup competition. Tall, lithe and handsome, he was equally elegant in his play. He it was, who gave a psychological advantage by wearing out Ruffels in a five-set marathon in the opening singles. On the final day too, he was at the vanguard to see his country through when he literally outplayed Crealy in the reverse singles which gave India a winning lead over Australia in the Davis Cup East Zone final. He was the toast of the Indian camp this afternoon. Lall the National champion has thus become a national hero overnight. Taking Laver to five sets in the Wimbledon last year was no mean achievement. He proved he had that calibre of tennis needed to achieve success. In his matches here [Bangalore] he was superbly efficient and pleasingly flowing in the way in which he took the ball on the rise, used the reverse angles daringly, volleyed audaciously and served himself powerfully and cleverly out of any difficulty. He was quite fast all round, thus apparently having all the time in the world to cut off intended passes with decisive volleys, particularly off the backhand, picking his shots with a marksman's accuracy when clouting unreturnable drives off services.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 5, 1920  
Rent control.  
(From second editorial)

The New York State Legislature is taking the lead in the enactment of new laws to protect tenants of the middle and lower classes from the predatory "grasping" of profiteering land-owners. A Bill will in the near future be introduced in the British Parliament to extend the operations of the Rent Act in Britain. Under the Bill, there will be regulated increase in net pre-war rents not exceeding 30 per cent, and evictions will not be allowed except in cases where some satisfactory provision is made for accommodating the tenants. The cry of "high rent" is heard all over India. Leaders of public opinion, Municipalities and Provincial Governments are actively engaged in finding out a satisfactory solution of the difficult problem in the country. The fact that the Governor-General's assent has been given to the Calcutta Rent Act is deemed as a sign of the Government's recognition of the value of such relief measures.

## FROM PAGE ONE

## Confusion over who will pay migrants' train fare

"What is particularly disturbing is that the Central government and the Rail Ministry are charging them for train tickets in this hour of crisis," she said.

"Post the partition of 1947, this is the first time India witnessed a tragedy with such a massive human cost as thousands of migrant workers and labourers were forced to walk home several hundred kilometres on foot

-- without food, without medicines, without money, without transportation, without anything except for the desire to return to their families and loved ones," Ms. Gandhi stated. By making a "humble contribution", the Congress would stand "shoulder to shoulder in solidarity with the workers", she added.

(With inputs from Amarnath Tewary)

## Nod for return of stranded Indians

While the full estimate of Indians needing to return home could cross ten lakhs (a million), with more than two lakhs having registered to return from the UAE alone, officials said their return would be "prioritised and staggered".

Much of the migrant labour population in the Gulf will return aboard Indian naval ships, but officials say women, and particularly pregnant women will be given priority on aircrafts. It is unclear how much the tickets will cost, and how the fare will be collected.

Defence Ministry sources said specific instructions are awaited from the MEA on

the movement of the ships, which are on standby. According to a source, the first ships likely to be sent are the INS Jalashwa, the Navy's largest amphibious platform, and a few smaller Landing Ship Tank (LST) vessels.

Officials of the MEA, MHA, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Defence have been planning the massive repatriation exercise, which has been prompted by appeals from thousands of Indians who were stranded after the government announced a complete ban on incoming travel from March 22.

(With inputs from Dinakar Peri, Jagriti Chandra and Vijaita Singh)

## 1,074 recover as India adds 2,573 cases

"They must also ensure effective case clinical management and focus on infection prevention and control. It's important that as lockdown eases, we should follow protocol and guidelines related to physical distancing, follow preventive measures like hand hygiene and environmental hygiene and deal with COVID-19 by being careful, aware and alert," he said.

**M.P. situation**  
Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Monday

## Most COVID-19 cases in States with high H1N1 rates

The number of swine flu cases dipped to a 5-year low of just 1,786 cases in 2016.

In 2010, that saw the swine flu dig its heels in India, Maharashtra, with 6,814 cases, Delhi (2,725) and Karnataka (2,575) topped the list of infections.

While both H1N1 and COVID-19 are due to pathogens that trace their origins to viruses from non-human hosts, they belong to different families.

While both infiltrate the lungs and cause characteristic pulmonary infections, they have varying lethality. Swine flu infections have a higher case fatality rates (deaths per confirmed cases) and can cause significant deaths in children as well as those less than 60. COVID-19 on the other hand relatively more dangerous to those above 60 and almost harm-

less in children. "It may be too early to say this because we are still in the middle of a pandemic but it is possible that Sars-CoV2 may replace H1N1," Director, NCDC Sunil Kumar Singh, told *The Hindu*. "But we've noticed this pattern (of high number of COVID and influenza cases) in Gujarat and Maharashtra."

February-March are typical months for influenza in India. Most influenza activity in northern India was seen during the summer months, but in southern and western India, cases occurred mostly during winter months. In 2017, there was a summer and winter spike, the NMJ paper notes. Given the novelty of Sars-CoV2, scientists nowhere can rule out another spike later in the year. Infections in India, so far, are yet to peak.

## Stranded workers clash with police in Surat

Over the last three days, the Gujarat government has arranged over a dozen trains to ensure the return of migrant workers from Ahmedabad and Surat. However, as a hub for migrant workers from Odisha, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and other States, there are a huge number still awaiting their turn.

**Labour officers**  
On Monday, nine more trains with 10,500 migrants left for Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand.

The Labour department has decided to deploy labour officers at major stations and collectorate offices to facilitate the movement of workers. The Labour and Home departments have issued clear guidelines to Collectors regarding the movement of workers through trains.

According to official sources, almost two million people working in different locations from the State have enrolled with the local authorities for return to their States.

The Ministry statement was

## Chaos, crowding in front of shops unfortunate, says Kejriwal

CM warns of revoking relaxations, sealing areas where social distancing isn't observed

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

Terming the chaos and crowding in front of shops, without mentioning those engaged in the sale of liquor, in the Capital on Monday as "unfortunate", Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said his government would revoke relaxations and seal the areas where social distancing norms are not being followed.

He said the relaxations were announced in Delhi as per the Central government guidelines and appealed to the citizens to practise social distancing. "The whole of Delhi is in the red zone, and hence very few activities are allowed. We have decided to adhere to the Central government's guidelines for the red



People push each other to get into a queue outside a wine shop in east Delhi on Monday. ■ PTI

zones and allowed certain activities in Delhi," he said.

Talking about "crowding in front of shops", Mr. Kejriwal said it was "unfortunate" to see that people were not following social distancing at "a few locations across the city".

"Overcrowding and chaos

sions like sealing areas where the social distancing protocol is not followed by the people, and I will have to withdraw all the relaxations announced yesterday [Sunday]," he said.

These relaxations, he said, had been allowed to restart the economy and bring the lives of the people back on track. "If there are violations, we will have no option but to revoke these relaxations. Shopkeepers should take responsibility for the same, or we will have to seal those shops where violations are being reported."

Mr. Kejriwal requested the people to support the government in its fight against the COVID-19 pandemic just like they had done in the drive against dengue last year.

## Mallya seeks approval to move UK Supreme Court

HC had recently dismissed his appeal

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

Businessman Vijay Mallya has sought permission from the U.K. High Court to move the Supreme Court against last month's order dismissing his appeal challenging the lower court's clearance to his extradition to India in the IDBI Bank fraud case.

On April 20, a Division Bench of the High Court of Justice in the U.K. had turned down the businessman's appeal, concluding that there was a *prima facie* case of conspiracy to defraud, misrepresentation, conspiracy and money laundering against him.

"After the appeal was rejected, Mr. Mallya had 14 days to file an application in the High Court for an approval to appeal in the Supreme Court. He has submitted the application, which is likely

to be taken up soon. We are hopeful that the plea will be dismissed, given the strong observations in the April 20 judgment," said a senior Enforcement Directorate official.

If Mr. Mallya fails to get the permission and the final authority in the U.K. government clears the request for his extradition, investigating agencies will have 28 days to bring him to India.

In its 43-page judgment, the High Court did not find any merit in the objections raised by Mr. Mallya to the Senior District Judge's order on December 10, 2018, approving India's extradition request that was made on February 9, 2017.

The businessman faces allegations of wilful loan defaults to the tune of ₹9,000 crore. He had flown out of India on March 2, 2016.

## CPI(M) reaches out to other Opposition parties

Centre is getting clueless, says Yechury

**SOBHANA K. NAIR**  
NEW DELHI

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has reached out to other Opposition parties to bring them on a common platform to deliberate on the adverse economic fallout of the lockdown imposed to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

CPI(M) general secretary

Sitaram Yechury wrote to Congress president Sonia Gandhi, NCP president Sharad Pawar, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, DMK president M.K. Stalin, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, Aam Aadmi Party convenor Arvind Kejriwal and four Left parties, passing on the economic roadmap drafted by his party and calling for more ideas.

He said the Union govern-

ment was getting clueless – first stalling the movement to be taken up soon. We are hopeful that the plea will be dismissed, given the strong observations in the April 20 judgment," said a senior Enforcement Directorate official.

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crore. He had flown out of

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**SITARAM YECHURY**

of migrant workers and then herding them back after nearly 40 days of suffering.

Mr. Yechury told *The Hindu*, "It is very necessary for the sake of our country and we are working hard to make it happen. We find that on the one hand problems of people are actually getting compounded and no relief is in sight. The government's financial package is merely one per cent of the GDP [Gross Domestic Product]."

## India flays nod for Gilgit-Baltistan polls

Pak. SC allows govt. to hold elections

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The External Affairs Ministry issued a "strong protest" on Monday over an order by the Pakistan Supreme Court allowing the Imran Khan government to hold elections in the region of Gilgit-Baltistan of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

These relaxations, he said, had been allowed to restart the economy and bring the lives of the people back on track. "If there are violations, we will have no option but to revoke these relaxations. Shopkeepers should take responsibility for the same, or we will have to seal those shops where violations are being reported."

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**G**overnment of Pakistan or its judiciary has no locus standi on territories illegally occupied by it

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTRY

kistan or its judiciary has no locus standi on territories illegally occupied by it. India completely rejects such actions and continued attempts to bring material changes in Pak-

istan-occupied areas of the Indian territory of Jammu & Kashmir. Instead, Pakistan should immediately vacate all areas under its illegal occupation," the Ministry spokesperson said in a statement.

Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) responded to the *demande* by referring to the government's decision in August last year to amend Article 370 as "illegal and in clear violation of UNSC resolutions".

India's reaction is consistent with its previous objections against elections in G-B and in other parts of PoK, which it refers to as "Azad Jammu Kashmir".

"The Government of Pa-

the State police are investigating two FIRs – a hate case registered against Mr. Goswami and a complaint filed by the journalist alleging he was attacked.

While in the first case, Mr. Goswami was questioned by the police, two persons were arrested in the second case.

On April 24, the Supreme Court had protected Mr. Goswami from arrest in the hate case.

## Rajasthan defers staff salaries as revenues dry up

With depleting income amid the extended lockdown and mounting healthcare bills, Gehlot urges massive infusion of funds

**MOHAMMED IQBAL**  
JAIPUR

The revenue collection in Rajasthan in the first month of fiscal 2020-21, after the COVID-19 lockdown was enforced, has fallen by 70%, even as there was a shortfall of ₹18,000 crore in the last fiscal 2019-20, according to the State Finance Department.

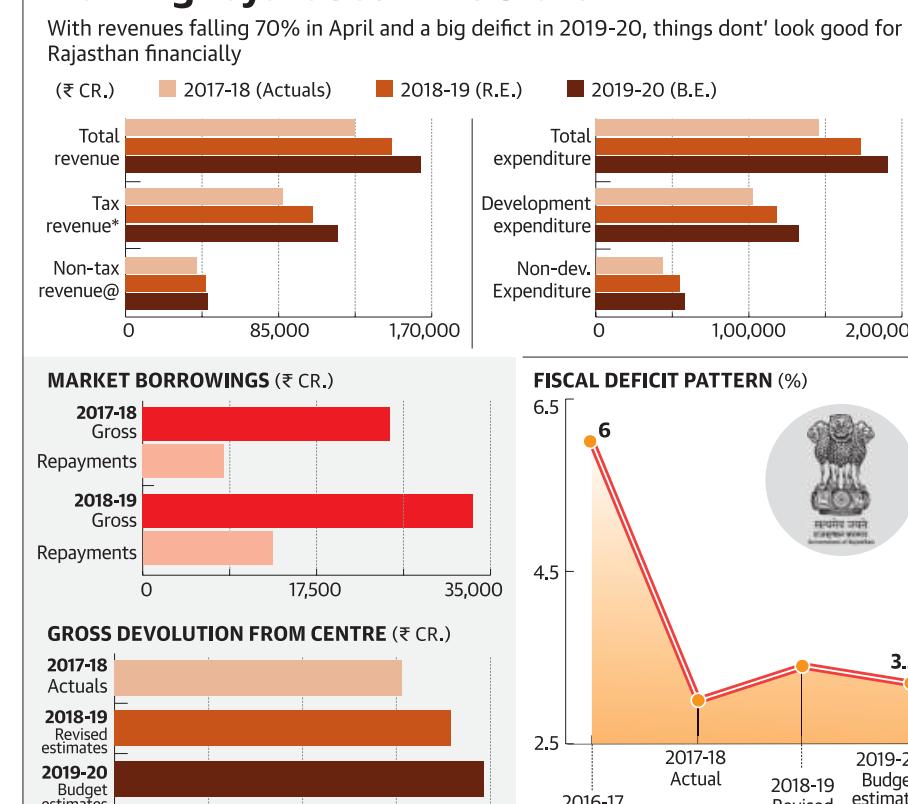
While the State had budgeted for revenues of ₹8,400 crore, including ₹6,800 crore through taxes and GST compensation and ₹1,600 crore of non-tax revenue, it has achieved only ₹1,800 crore by April-end.

**Massive shortfall**  
In March, there was a shortfall of ₹3,500 crore, putting the State in a fiscal crisis. Rajasthan has allocated ₹1,200 crore for the expenses to deal with the impact of COVID-19, including the expenditure for providing free wheat under the public distribution system to the beneficiaries of National Food Security Act.

The biggest decline in tax revenue earnings has been witnessed in stamp duty and registration in April, the State has got only ₹6 crore. For vehicle tax, the target was ₹500 crore, while the State collected only ₹8 crore.

## Nothing royal about this State

With revenues falling 70% in April and a big deficit in 2019-20, things don't look good for Rajasthan financially



\* includes share in central taxes | @ includes grants from Centre

SOURCE: RBI STUDY OF STATE FINANCES 2019

# Death rate high in Bengal: Central team

'State govt. should be transparent in reporting cases'

SHIV SAHAY SINGH  
KOLKATA

The Inter Ministerial Central Team (IMCT), which was stationed in Kolkata on Monday, sent its final observations to the West Bengal government highlighting "extremely high mortality rate" from COVID-19, and urging that the State government should be "transparent and consistent" in reporting figures pertaining to the pandemic.

In a letter addressed to Chief Secretary Rajiva Sinha, Apurva Chandra, team leader of the IMCT, stated that the Central team had written seven letters to him, and addressed four others to the Principal Secretaries of Home, Health, Municipal Affairs, and Food and Supplies Departments.

Referring to the informa-



**No way:** People on their way to a health centre requesting the police to let them through the barricades put up at Kolkata's Raja Bazar, which falls in red zone. ■ RAJEEV BHATT

tion shared by the State government on April 30 which "put the mortality to 105", Mr. Chandra also highlighted in his communication: "For a total reported number of 744 + 72 = 816 COVID patients, the mortality rate of 12.8 % is highest in the country. This extremely high mortality rate is clear indication of low

testing and weak surveillance and tracking."

Mr. Chandra also added that the State needed to be "transparent and consistent in reporting figures and not downplay the spread of virus".

The IMCT, which added that there was no evidence of daily surveillance of individ-

duals in containment zones, lauded the State government's efforts to increase the number of tests from 400 on April 20 to 2,410 on May 2.

The IMCT is returning to Delhi after spending two weeks in Kolkata. Two IMCT teams, one for south Bengal and the other for north, arrived in the State on April 20.

Mamata is running police state: Governor

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

The war of words between West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar and the ruling Trinamool Congress continued unabated with Mr. Dhankhar on Monday writing another strongly worded letter to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Mr. Dhankhar accused Ms. Banerjee "of running a police state". The Trinamool leadership responded saying the remarks put "parliamentary democracy under threat".

"West Bengal is, unfortunately, emerging as a police state with anyone posting on social media, to the distaste of the ruling dispensation, gets a police knock at his door," the Governor said in the letter.

Amid questions being raised about the number of cases, the Health department in the three-page bulletin said Kolkata recorded 24 infections in 24 hours and Howrah 21.

Earlier in the day, Chief Secretary Rajiva Sinha gave an explanation on how the

State government has "retrieved missing data" and that there were certain issues in obtaining "real time data". Mr. Sinha said 1,259 cases were recorded of which 918 are active cases.

Kolkata has recorded 683 cases which is about 54% of the infections. He said 218 persons had been discharged after recovery.

State has retrieved missing information: Chief Secretary

far including 2,201 in the past 24 hours.

## Buses allowed

The State government also announced a series of relaxations to the lockdown in accordance with the orders issued by the Centre.

Maintaining that it feels that the lockdown will be violated by the relaxations, Mr. Sinha said exemptions are aimed at giving some relief to the people.

According to the State government, inter-district bus services have been allowed. Tea shops and liquor shops will remain open and construction in rural areas is allowed. Private offices can operate with 25% staff. The Chief Secretary said no activity will be allowed in the 516 containment areas, 318 of which are in Kolkata alone.

## Dharavi tally crosses 600 mark

STAFF REPORTER  
MUMBAI

Dharavi reported 42 new COVID-19 cases on Monday – a sharp drop from Sunday's spike of 94 – bringing its tally to 632. So far, 20 people have died of the virus in the area.

Among the new cases is a one-month-old baby from the Matunga labour camp. While some of the patients are from areas that have previously reported cases (Mukund Nagar Kalyanwadi and Social Nagar), some are from newer parts such as Sabrina Bai chawl and Jalil compound.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has attributed the rise in cases to aggressive testing through fever clinics, dispensaries and survey of senior citizens.

It has screened around 80,000 people for symptoms so far.

Most of the positive cases have been found among close contacts of existing patients, and a majority are asymptomatic. The BMC has set aside four hospitals in Dharavi for symptomatic positive cases. It has increased the institutional quarantine capacity to 3,000.

"We have 2,380 people in institutional quarantine right now," said Kiran Dighavkar, assistant municipal commissioner of G North ward.



Fire and Emergency Services staff spraying disinfectant in Ahmedabad on Monday. ■ AFP

## Gujarat reports 376 cases and 29 deaths

Contagion spreading beyond hotspots

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
AHMEDABAD

Gujarat's COVID-19 infection rate continues to remain high with 376 cases and 29 deaths added on Monday. The State's cumulative figures now are 5,804 cases and 319 fatalities, while the recovery numbers stand at 1,195, including 153 patients who were discharged on Monday.

Monday was the fourth day that the State recorded 300 plus cases and 20 plus deaths as the contagion is spreading in areas beyond the hotspots identified by the local authorities.

With 259 cases on Monday, Ahmedabad's numbers have climbed to 4,076 cases and 234 deaths. It continues to account for nearly 70% of

cases and fatalities. The city is the worst hit after Mumbai in the number of infections and fatality. The recovery figure is 620, including 87 patients who were discharged on Monday.

At present, there are 4,265 patients undergoing treatment at various places while 25 are critically ill and have been provided with ventilator support. The State has tested 84,648 samples till Monday 5 p.m.

Vadodara reported 35 infection cases and two deaths, taking the city's numbers to 385 cases and 27 deaths while Surat recorded 20 cases and one death, bringing the numbers to 706 infections and 31 deaths.

## Medha seeks help for the stranded

STAFF REPORTER  
BHOPAL

Narmada Bachao Andolan's Medha Patkar began a 24-hour fast along with other activists in Madhya Pradesh's Barwani district on Monday morning demanding immediate transport for thousands of returning migrant workers stuck on the State's border with Maharashtra.

"No one cares for workers who contribute the most to the economy," said Ms. Patkar.

## Pregnant women in J&K to be screened

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir has made COVID-19 testing of all pregnant women mandatory, after a local court on Monday took *suo motu* cognisance of the deaths of two pregnant women in Anantnag district. "They have to undergo the test at least a week before [delivery]," said Shabir Sidiqui, Medical Superintendent of the Lal Ded Maternity Hospital in Srinagar.

## Private hospitals delaying discharge'

In Indore, patients say samples taken 4-5 times, many not informed of result

## Nine more die in M.P.

SIDHARTH YADAV  
BHOPAL

A 70-year-old man, who never contracted the coronavirus, was discharged from the isolation ward of a private COVID-19 hospital in Indore after 34 days.

The only member in his family to have tested negative, the man, a blood pressure patient, could not be left behind at home unattended. So, he too was admitted to the hospital along with 20 family members and waited as they were cured one by one. He was the last to step out.

The man underwent four tests and all were negative. Whenever a family member walked out, they requested that he be discharged too, but to no avail.

Many COVID-19 patients, and their family members

complain that private hospitals arbitrarily delayed their discharge. Most had their samples taken four-five times, many were not even informed of the results.

A high test pendency earlier and delay in sample collection by private hospitals, claimed district officials, had resulted in patients being

lay patient discharge and show their bed capacity to be full. "This way they can save expenses and don't have to admit new patients," she said.

## Impacts recovery rate

In Indore, five government-run hospitals and 16 government-backed private hospitals are helping combat COVID-19.

Delaying discharge, in the State's hardest-hit city would mean pulling down the recovery rate. While it was 7.5% as of April 23, it climbed to 22.5 by May 3.

District Chief Medical and Health Officer Pravin Jadia admitted that backlog of samples had earlier caused the delay in discharge. "Sometimes it had taken even 10 days. Now test reports are issued the next day."

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2. Tender No. 003/MYS/CIVIL/2020-21 – Internal Repainting for Township Quarters at BRBNMPL, Note Mudran Nagar, Mysore.
3. Tender No. 004/MYS/CIVIL/2020-21 – Annual Maintenance Contract of Railway Siding at BRBNMPL, Mysore.

For downloading tender documents, last date of submission of above tenders and other details, kindly visit our website [www.brbnmpl.co.in](http://www.brbnmpl.co.in). Further extension or amendment/s, if any will be uploaded on our website only.

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Raj.answad/C2018 RVUN/PR-3337

Chief Engineer (KSTPS)

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Manufacturing, testing, supply, Delivery and Operational Training/ Commissioning of Portable 5000V Digital type insulation testers	62	207/2020	27.5.2020 11.00 A.M.	2.6.2020 11.00 A.M.	9.6.2020 11.00 A.M.	10.6.2020 11.30 A.M.	12.6.2020 11.30 A.M.

EMD : 6,58,850/-

Minimum EMD : 1,64,720/-

# Indian health workers on edge in Oman

Medical professionals working in the nation are wary of contracting the infection before they return

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

As thousands of Indian expatriates wait to return home once the government begins to facilitate repatriation, 44-year-old J. Ramachandran, a medical professional in Oman, said he fears for both his health and future, as the numbers of those contracting the novel coronavirus in the West Asian country grow. Mr. Ramachandran, who works as a hospital administrator at one of the big healthcare chains, said that hospitals are running out of space for patients.

"Everyday we are receiving more and more cases of patients with coronavirus symptoms," Mr. Ramachandran told *The Hindu* over the telephone, "In most cases, we turn away those who don't have very serious symptoms as we don't have enough beds," he added, explaining that as "frontline



**Caught in a gulf:** Workers sewing masks and PPEs in a factory in a West Asian nation. ■ AFP

workers" Indians face the highest risk from the virus.

According to official figures, Oman has about 5,000 hospital beds, which include only about 147 ICU beds.

As the number of COVID-19 patients crossed 2,700, with a sharp upswing

enough to accommodate cases". In particular, said medical professionals, drugs to treat COVID-19, personal protective equipment (PPE) and masks were in short supply in private hospitals.

#### Not that bad'

However, Indian embassy officials said the situation was under control.

"COVID situation in Oman is not that bad," said a diplomat, adding that "Oman had the least number of cases per million and deaths per million in the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) region".

Mr. Ramachandran said the biggest fear for him and other hospital staff who were registered to leave, was that of contracting the novel coronavirus before they were able to leave, as the government had made it clear it would not allow anyone with COVID symptoms to board the planes and the ships be-

ing organised to bring them back. At the same time, Mr. Ramachandran said professionals and workers, who make up a large number of the 7.7 lakh Indians who live and work in the Gulf kingdom, were worried about losing their jobs. Last week, Oman's Finance Ministry issued a new set of guidelines ordering state-owned companies to "expedite replacement of expatriates with Omanis".

Mr. Ramachandran said he had worked in Muscat and the Omani city of Sohar for the past year before deciding to tender his resignation in March, and returning to his hometown of Coimbatore.

"Now that the government has said it will allow stranded Indians to return, I am happy, but I don't really know how long it will take before I get my turn," he said.

# Venkaiah defers decision on MPs' panels meetings

Opposition members have demanded videoconference

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu has deferred a decision on allowing parliamentary panels to hold a meeting via videoconference.

Several Opposition members have asked both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha Secretariats to find a way to hold meetings of the parliamentary panels to oversee the government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and the adverse economic fallout.

In his first meeting with the House Secretariat officials since the lockdown began on March 25, Mr. Naidu, according to sources, observed that there was need for undivided focus of the Executive on containing CO-



M. Venkaiah Naidu

rence. The meeting of his panel, scheduled for April 28, had to be cancelled after the Secretariat declined permission.

**Rules not amended**  
Congress leader and head of the Standing committee on Information and Technology Shashi Tharoor had also approached Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla seeking permission to hold a meeting. After initially agreeing, the Lok Sabha Secretariat balked and told Mr. Tharoor that the rules had not been amended to allow videoconferencing.

In Monday's meeting Mr. Naidu asked the Secretariat to reduce the expenditure with decline in government revenues and the economic slowdown due to COVID-19.

## Civil Services preliminary exam put off

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The preliminary examination of the Civil Services has been deferred from May 30, the Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions Ministry said in a press statement on Monday.

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) held a special meeting on Monday to review the situation after extension of lockdown till May 17.

"Taking notice of the extension of restrictions, the Commission decided that it will not be possible to resume examinations and interviews for the present. The Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination, 2020, scheduled to be held on May 31, 2020 therefore stands deferred," the statement said.

The statement said that when new dates were decided, "it will be ensured that candidates are given a notice of at least 30 days". "Since this examination also serves as the screening test for the Indian Forest Service examination, the schedule for the Indian Forest Service examination is also deferred. The situation will be reviewed again on May 20, 2020 and fresh dates for these examinations shall be notified on the UPSC website in due course," it said.

The Commission has already deferred the following: personality test for remaining candidates for the Civil Services Examination, 2019, and notifications for the Indian Economic Service/Indian Statistical Service Examination, Combined Medical Services Examination, the Central Armed Police Forces Examination, and the NDA & Naval Academy Examination.

### Consistent rise in recoveries

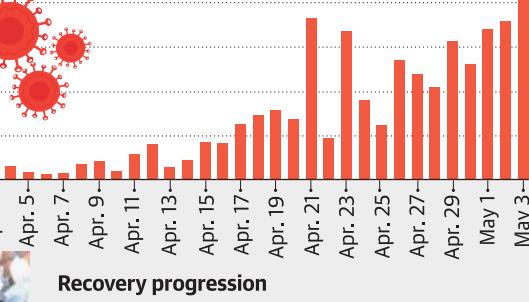
Between April 26 and May 3, more than 500 persons recovered from COVID-19 every day. As of 9:45 p.m. on May 4, 12,281 cumulative recoveries have been recorded

#### New recoveries

The chart shows the number of persons recovered from COVID-19 every day between April 1 and May 4. As many as 492 new recoveries have been recorded as of 9:45 p.m. on May 4

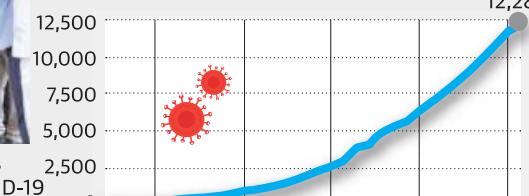


**Jubilant send-off:** Health workers celebrating the recovery of a COVID-19 patient in Ballari in Karnataka recently. ■ SRIDHAR KAVALI



#### Recovery progression

The chart plots the cumulative number of recoveries recorded between April 1 to May 4



## Farmers' group seeks waiver of crop loans

AIKSCC plans nationwide campaign

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Farmers groups are planning a nationwide campaign to demand full loan waiver, given the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, accusing the government of not keeping its promise to procure produce at minimum support prices from the fields.

This will start with a social media campaign on May 4 and 5, and will be followed by wider agitations and protests as the lockdown is lifted, the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC) said in a statement.

#### 'MSP claim belied'

The working group of the AIKSCC, an umbrella platform of more than 200 farmers groups, met on Sunday to discuss the impact of the lockdown on farmers

and others dependent on the agricultural economy.

"Under conditions of blockade and restricted private purchase, the government promised them procurement from the field at Minimum Support Prices. Unfortunately this promise largely remained confined to government claims, its weightment centres remained non-functional in most places and to top it all, it placed several restrictions on quantity to be procured in mandis and it ordered severe deductions due to allegedly shrivelled grains," said the AIKSCC statement.

The group claimed that the Centre was not ready to provide relief to farmers facing difficulty with repaying crop loans or getting new loans, although ₹68,700 worth of bad corporate loans have been waived off.

## Uncertainty over Puri rath yatra

STAFF REPORTER

BHUBANESWAR

The Managing Committee of Shree Jagannath Temple, Puri, on Monday recommended construction of chariots used in the annual rath yatra, but uncertainty continued to prevail over holding the mega festival scheduled for June 24.

As per tradition, construction of three majestic chariots for deities – Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra – begins from the auspicious day of Akshaya Tritiya. Since the nation was under COVID-19 lockdown, the chariot construction was not allowed. After zone-wise selected activities were allowed in the lockdown-3, the committee members discussed the issue of chariot construction at a meeting held through videoconferencing on Monday.

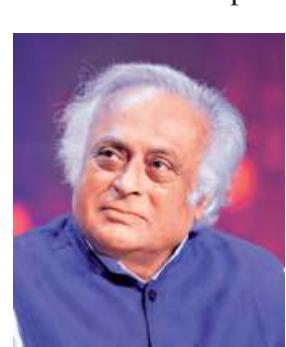
## SC to hear PIL on food security for all

Court to consider Jairam Ramesh's plea over 'acute food shortage' today

SOBHANA K. NAIR

The Supreme Court is set to hear on Tuesday a public interest litigation petition filed by Congress Rajya Sabha member Jairam Ramesh seeking universal coverage under the Public Distribution System and food security for all amid an "acute food shortage" due to the ongoing nationwide lockdown.

The lockdown to contain the spread of COVID-19 pandemic was imposed on March 25 and has been extended twice. It has now been extended up to May 17, though most restrictions have been lifted in designated green zones – districts that have remained free of a new case of infection for the last 21 days.



In his PIL petition, Mr. Ramesh has sought relaxations in the requirement of ration cards for supply of rations under the Public Distribution System during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to help mitigate the food shortages and prevent deaths of the poor.

He has argued that there have been numerous deaths due to starvation since the commencement of the lockdown and that there are many marginalised sections of people who are not covered under the National Food Security Act and in dire need of rations.

Any alternative remedy at this stage would take a long time, which could further accentuate food shortages and lead to wide-scale starvation deaths, Mr. Ramesh has contended.

"It may be further appreciated that this Hon'ble Court has, in the past, suspended the requirement of releasing rations against ration cards in situations of drought, etc. in *Swaraj Abhiyan II v. Union of India*,

(2016) 7 SCC 498," he said in the petition. In the 2016 judgment, the SC had ruled that "it would be inappropriate for the State Government to deprive any household in drought affected areas of the requisite food grains merely because they do not have a ration card".

The apex court had held that the ration card could be substituted by a valid identity card or any proof of residence.

The Congress MP has further argued that the Supreme Court had on earlier occasions observed that the right to life, enshrined under Article 21, implies the right to food, water, a decent environment, education, medical care and shelter, and is intrinsic to our survival.

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**A semblance of normalcy:** Garment shops open at Chikpet in Bengaluru; a mechanic repairing a two-wheeler in east Delhi; a cobbler fixing footwear in Mohali and a policeman raising his baton to disperse the crowd gathered outside a liquor store in Mumbai after the easing of lockdown restrictions on Monday. ■ V SREENIVASA MURTHY; PTI; AKHILESH KUMAR & VIJAY BATE



Odisha police book six for TikTok video

STAFF REPORTER  
BHUBANESWAR

The Bhadrak police in Odisha have booked six returnees undergoing quarantine for uploading their song-dance act on TikTok. They have been accused of violating social distancing norms.

The incident took place in the Bhatapara panchayat quarantine centre in Bhadrak district, where migrants, who had returned from West Bengal, were put up.

According to the Tihidi police, cases under Sections 188/269/270 of the Indian Penal Code and Section 51 of the Disaster Management Act have been registered.

Director-General of Police Abhay said, "Any conduct endangering the safety of others in the context of COVID-19 will be strongly dealt with as per law."

## Transgender teen placed in quarantine with four men

Odisha's Ganjam district does not have any separate facility, say activists

SIB KUMAR DAS  
BERHAMPUUR

Due to the lack of separate arrangements for transgender persons at a quarantine centre, Prasant\*, an 18-year-old transgender person, had to spend a 14-day quarantine period, till April 29, with a group of men.

Prasant is a resident of Mathura panchayat in Khallikote block of Ganjam district. Violating lockdown restrictions, Prasant had visited Purushottampur in the second week of April to take part in rituals related to the Danda Jatra festival. When Prasant returned home, the sarpanch of the area, as a precautionary measure against COVID-19, directed the teenager to remain in institutional quarantine at the Mathura panchayat.



**Tough stay:** The centre in Ganjam district where the transgender was quarantined. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Upon admission, Prasant was shocked to find there was no separate provision for the transgender community. Although Prasant contacted the sarpanch, no other solution emerged.

During their survey of preparedness of 120 quarantine centres in 18 panchayats

of Ganjam district, activists of Youth for Social Development (YSD) met Prasant, who was sharing a single room with four men. According to YSD director Bibhu Prasad Sahu, Prasant's repeated appeals for a separate room were not heeded.

YSD's survey found separate arrangements had been made for men and women in all 120 quarantine centres surveyed.

However, only 10 out of 18 panchayats had made separate provisions for pregnant women, only two had made separate provisions for young children, and only four panchayats had separate provisions for people with special needs. None of the panchayats had any facilities for the transgender community.

YSD urged authorities to take into account the special status of the transgender community. Mr. Sahu said, many men displayed a derogatory attitude towards the transgender community.

(\*Name changed to protect identity)

## DRDO develops a disinfection tower

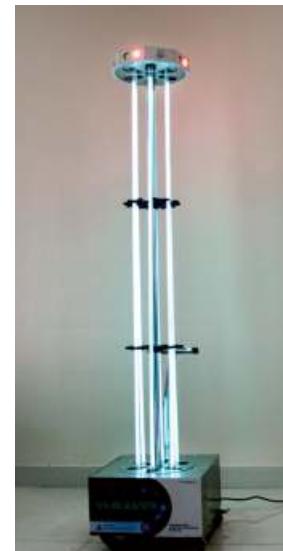
UV Blaster can disinfect gadgets

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has developed an ultraviolet (UV) disinfection tower for rapid and chemical-free disinfection of high infection-prone areas.

The equipment named UV Blaster is "useful for high-tech surfaces like electronic equipment, computers and other gadgets in laboratories and offices that are not suitable for disinfection with chemical methods. The product is also effective for areas with a large flow of people such as airports, shopping malls, metros, hotels, factories and offices," a DRDO statement said.

It was designed and developed by Laser Science & Technology Centre (LASTEC) based in Delhi with the help of New Age Instruments and Materials Private Limited, Gurugram.



The UV disinfection tower.

For a room of about 12 ft x 12 ft dimension, the disinfection time is about 10 minutes.

## IAS officer quits citing safety reasons

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Rani Nagar, a 2014 batch IAS officer of the Haryana cadre, tendered her resignation from service on Monday on "personal safety" grounds.

Ms. Nagar, who is presently posted as Additional Director, Social Justice and Empowerment, and Additional Director, Archives, sent her resignation to the Chief Secretary.

She also posted the letter on her personal Twitter handle.

In 2018, Ms. Nagar had levelled harassment allegations against a senior IAS officer, who had denied the charges.

ments and Materials Private Limited, Gurugram.

For a room of about 12 ft x 12 ft dimension, the disinfection time is about 10 minutes.

## Swine flu puts wildlife officials on high alert

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

The recovery of 28 pig carcasses from a stretch of the Brahmaputra river flowing through the Kaziranga National Park (KNP) has alarmed wildlife officials in Assam. There have been reports of pig farmers disposing of carcasses in the Brahmaputra and its tributaries after the outbreak of African Swine Fever (ASF) in mid-April.

The Bihlwan district, which had emerged as the first hotspot in Rajasthan after the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, has successfully controlled the spread of the disease with its containment model.

"Our Biswanath Division removed 28 pig carcasses from the river and had them disposed properly. But a major worry is the contamination of the river water which the animals and people in these parts use for drinking," KNP Director P. Sivakumar said.

## PM slams Pakistan in virtual NAM meeting

Modi asks for new global template



Narendra Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday made an indirect reference to Pakistan during an online meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Contact Group, and said some countries were fomenting terrorism in the midst of the global pandemic.

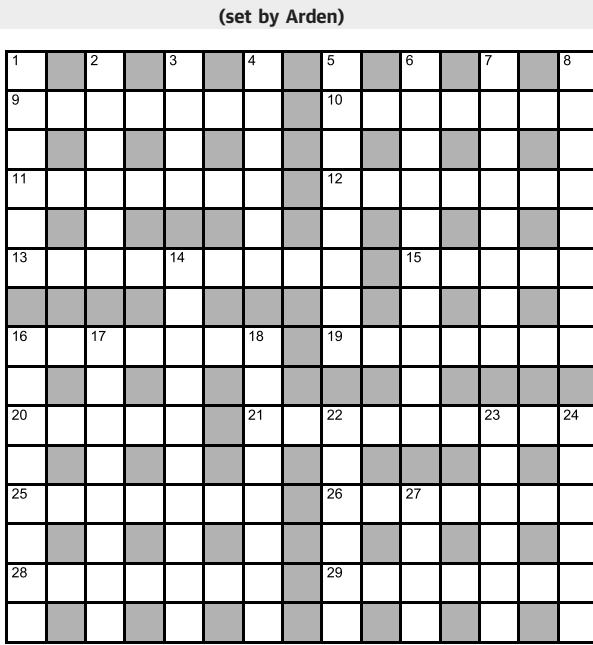
Mr. Modi supported a more representative post-COVID-19 world order and urged the World Health Organization (WHO) to focus on building health capacity in the developing countries.

"Even as we fight COVID virus, some people are busy spreading other deadly viruses such as terrorism, fake news and doctored videos to divide communities and countries," Mr. Modi said in a video statement to the NAM grouping, which met on the theme of "United against COVID-19".

## CROSSWORD + 12927

(set by Arden)

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### ■ ACROSS

- 9 Room let out, producing vibrations (7)
- 10 Base for globe in rotation (7)
- 11 Beginner had drowned in a river (7)
- 12 Dance with him, covered only with feathers (7)
- 13 Changing times in the saga about human knowledge (9)
- 15 Vermin left floating on a river (5)
- 16 Stop two dogs (7)
- 19 Marionettes put pressure on state to step back (7)
- 20 It's good for a Parisian – gets American bounty (5)
- 21 Picture left with two boys (9)
- 25 Harry watered plant (7)
- 26 After midnight lets them hang out here (7)
- 28 Starts collecting ice in large moving mass (7)
- 29 South wind close to cape, it's harsh (7)
- 30 Shoot faster in a way (6)
- 31 He could be alien, is keeping quiet (6)
- 32 See boss in shop, open door (4)
- 33 Persecution will increase during dance (6)
- 34 Strange thing to restrict drink (8)
- 35 Illegal trader in adulterated petrol – Henry's regularly missing (10)
- 36 Sailors love this sealant, it's perfect (8)
- 37 Cry over a point – shows how sharp you are (8)
- 38 Partners involved in creating new species, perhaps (10)
- 39 Alien boat held in custody for plying in coastal waters (8)
- 40 Call on the way going round the city (4,4)
- 41 Rapid changes in amateur stone worker (8)
- 42 Shabby defective strain gauge, not in use (6)
- 43 Bodyguards only inside the country (6)
- 44 Way to stop right to tap (6)
- 45 Shine, lacking on passion (4)

## SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12926

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

SPRUCE	CASHMERE	E
TEO	PAIN	N
ORATOR	TERMINAL	
PSL	MXE	I
CASTAWAY	METALS	
OUS	RARD	T
RA	ND	
COMPANION	WAY	
KELC	MTC	D
CUPBOARD	DLOVE	
FEC	ARS	W
HMS	DELIVERY	
OPTOUT	RE	
RHMIS	SCIENCE	
ACERBATE	SKINNY	
YNTEA	STEERAGE	
STEE	BEHOLD	

## FAITH

### Dharma and wisdom

In both the Ramayana and Mahabharata, we find adherence to dharma and we also come across people who violate the tenets of dharma, said Kidambi Narayanan in a discourse. Rama was the embodiment of dharma. When He is informed that He has to go to the forest, He willingly agrees, for He knows the importance of obedience to a parent. When Sita wants to accompany Him, He initially turns down Her request. He warns her of the dangers of forest life. But Sita cannot bear to be separated from Him. Kamban captures Her love for Rama, in a very emotional verse, where Sita asks Rama whether the hardships of forest life will be harsher than separation from Rama.

Sastras say that a man must not do something his wife disapproves of. Rama, therefore, does not insist that Sita must stay behind, but takes Her to the forest. Wise men know that it is Lord Narayana who is in control of our lives. They remain unmoved by disaster or good fortune. Vidura is a virtuous and wise man, and this is evident in his advice to Dhritarashtra. Vidura, after advising Dhritarashtra, says that Krishna's plans will ultimately prevail. Such wisdom as Vidura's is hard to find, for it is equally valid at all times.

But there is another character in the Mahabharata who sees God's hand in everything. Krishna is preparing to meet the Kauravas as a messenger of the Pandavas. Yudhishthira is not keen on war. Arjuna wants war, and Bhima is aching to kill Duryodhana. Sahadeva is silent and does not offer an opinion. Krishna asks him what he wants. Sahadeva says, "If I say I want war, will it happen? If I say I do not want a war, will that happen? If there is a war, can we predict who will win? And if we win, can we predict whether we will be joyful? Only You, Krishna, can answer all these questions."



Content creators on YouTube are taking a new approach with their reaction videos, adding cringy TikTok videos to their queue of laughs and laudits

PRABALIKA M BORAH

If you love TikTok, have you watched vloggers' reactions to TikTok videos? Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and isolation with people browsing with a vengeance to be the first to send a forward for a good laugh, these YouTube videos are quite the life-saver.

The lockdown period all around the globe has also seen a huge swell of TikTok videos of solo-dancing, pranks on family members and roommates, as well as dubbed videos from famous scenes of reality television shows, movies and songs – all of which have the cringe factor.

The YouTube reaction videos to the TikTok content are fun if you love puns and have a good sense of humour. The infinite scroll feature of the Internet can offer great things; you can chance upon new books, quirky accounts on social media and, sometimes, you will end up on an interesting page that promises to make you an overnight expert in their given topic.

I experienced the terms 'the web sucks you in' and 'deep dive' when I realised I had spent an entire Sunday afternoon watching vlogs on YouTube. What started with a link forwarded by a friend saw me finishing all the videos by that particular vlogger that very afternoon. By evening, I was not just an expert on the vlogger's choice of characters and style of video making, I also discovered more vloggers and, finally, stumbled upon react-to, the peppy short-form videos in the ByteDance-owned platform.

The reaction genre of online videos was made famous by U.S.-based YouTubers, the Fine Brothers. In 2015, they even tried to trademark the term 'react', which set off netizens' and content creators' collective fury. Also not on TikTok, is the unbeatable YouTuber Kalen Allen who got famous returning after making his first sass-filled food reaction video. There is no questionable



reaction shows the amount of time he spent on the Chinese video-sharing social network platform. The chaste Hindi and his style of interaction comes across as honest. Thugesh is ruthless and doesn't hold back even when it comes to doing a number on himself at times.

"Reaction videos are fun because we just have to react to what we see," says Sarbjit Sarkar aka Ranautneel. The 24-year-old TikTok star from Tripura mostly does eye-catching yet easy DIY recreations of celebrity dressing. "Instead of reactions, I like to recreate original videos in my style. I love watching

**More often than not when we see videos, especially on TikTok, the first reaction is 'why' and the vlogger's reaction videos act as an outlet to that emotion**

VIRAJ GHELANI  
YouTuber



recipe to which Kalen hasn't reacted to. Plus, this discussion would be incomplete without mentioning YouTube series *Pretentious Movie Reviews*. Comedians Biswa Kalyan Rath and Kannan Gill who started roasting movie scenes and songs from '80s and '90s rocked YouTube netizens' feeds from 2014 to 2017.

**A worthy time-pass?**  
When it comes to reactions to TikTok videos, Mahesh Keshwala – popularly known for his YouTube channel Thugesh – takes the cake. With more than 4,87,000 YouTube subscribers, Thugesh makes sure he shoots reaction videos that cover a cross-section of topics; his reactions to TikTok content run in three episodes. The collec-



reaction videos, but I think I am too small in the vlogging circuit to do reaction videos. My favourite reaction videos are make-up tutorials."

Speaking of TikTok India and dancer videos, it is worth spending some time watching Korean YouTubers react to Indian dance videos – one can browse through the *Namaste Korea* YouTube channel, which has more than 59,200 subscribers.

What makes reaction videos popular? "Literally everyone cringes at TikTok videos," says Mumbai-based YouTuber-actor-comedian Viraj Ghelani, who is known to be one of the popular faces on FilterCopy. He also feels that reaction videos are a distraction from the depressing news around us. "Reaction videos make us relate to it. More often than not when we see videos especially on TikTok, the first reaction is 'why' and the vlogger's reaction videos act as an outlet to that emotion."

If one has to discuss TikTok reaction videos and creativity, Tanmay Bhatt achieves it with his focus on background laughter and songs. In his March 22 video 'TikTok reacts to Corona Virus - Insane Cringe,' he explains that if TikTok was a movie, then the movie will be packed with 27,000 songs.

So, are we discovering more reaction videos these days? "In a way, yes. Practically everyone is on the phone looking for content. Vloggers are busier than ever to meet the demand. How the Internet works is interesting; any old video resurfaces when one person clicks or comments on it," concludes Viraj.

## TECH-A-BYTE



### Bring the warrior home

Start-up DIMA Business Solutions has made its security product, DIMA Warrior, free for the lockdown period until May 15. True to its name, DIMA Warrior fights against a host of threats: ransomware, malware, phishing, and more. This tool updates its threat database very frequently, is an easy-to-use, easy-to-set-up solution; it also has enhanced DNS query filtering capabilities, combined with dynamic threat intelligence feeds, allowing for the quick identification of suspicious device activity. With a minimum response time for faster Internet access, it uses a lightweight database structure that gets updated every 60 minutes.



### Red Dot for the bot

Gita, the robot designed, developed and produced by Boston-based Piaggio Fast Forward, has won recognition in two important categories of the Red Dot Awards: 'Product Design 2020' and 'Best of the Best'.

Pronounced 'jee-ta', the name means 'short trip' in Italian. The device is a unique follow-me robot carrier, with a payload of 20 kilograms, designed to follow the user indoors and outdoors, at a top speed of 10 km/hour and with a four-hour battery life.

It communicates through light, sound and touch, while using cameras and sensors to unambiguously identify and follow its owner. It also has a charging bin, where users can charge their phones. However, taking the Gita out in the rain is not advisable as the lid is not watertight.

Send feedback for the Wireless stories and your tech-related questions to [techknow@thehindu.co.in](mailto:techknow@thehindu.co.in)



JULIAN ALMEIDA

## GAMESPOT

# Throwback a punch

After nearly three decades, the cult classic Streets of Rage gets a fourth instalment and it is retro done right, bringing the '80s arcades to your home

protagonists are Adam Hunter and a host of classic versions of the characters, including some returning ones, that can be unlocked as you progress through the game.

#### Belt-fed dynamics

Dotemu has not changed the formula in any way. Streets of Rage 4 is still a classic 'belt-fed' game, as it was called in Japan,

which is a side-scrolling background you and your companions walk and fight through. You have freedom to move around the plane of the street, as you sidestep, punch and unleash special moves. Looks and gameplay-wise, the game embodies the classic beat-'em-up perfectly – from sprite movements to the multiple lives, to the neon-drenched environments. But that is where the similarities end, and only once you actually play it, you will notice the new things.

Special moves literally give

#### STREETS OF RAGE 4

**Developer:** Dotemu, Lizardcube, Guard Crush Games

**Publisher:** Dotemu

**Prices & Platforms:** ₹600 for PC, ₹2000 upwards for Playstation 4, Xbox One, Nintendo Switch



**Battle mania** Screenshots of some fight scenes in the game ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



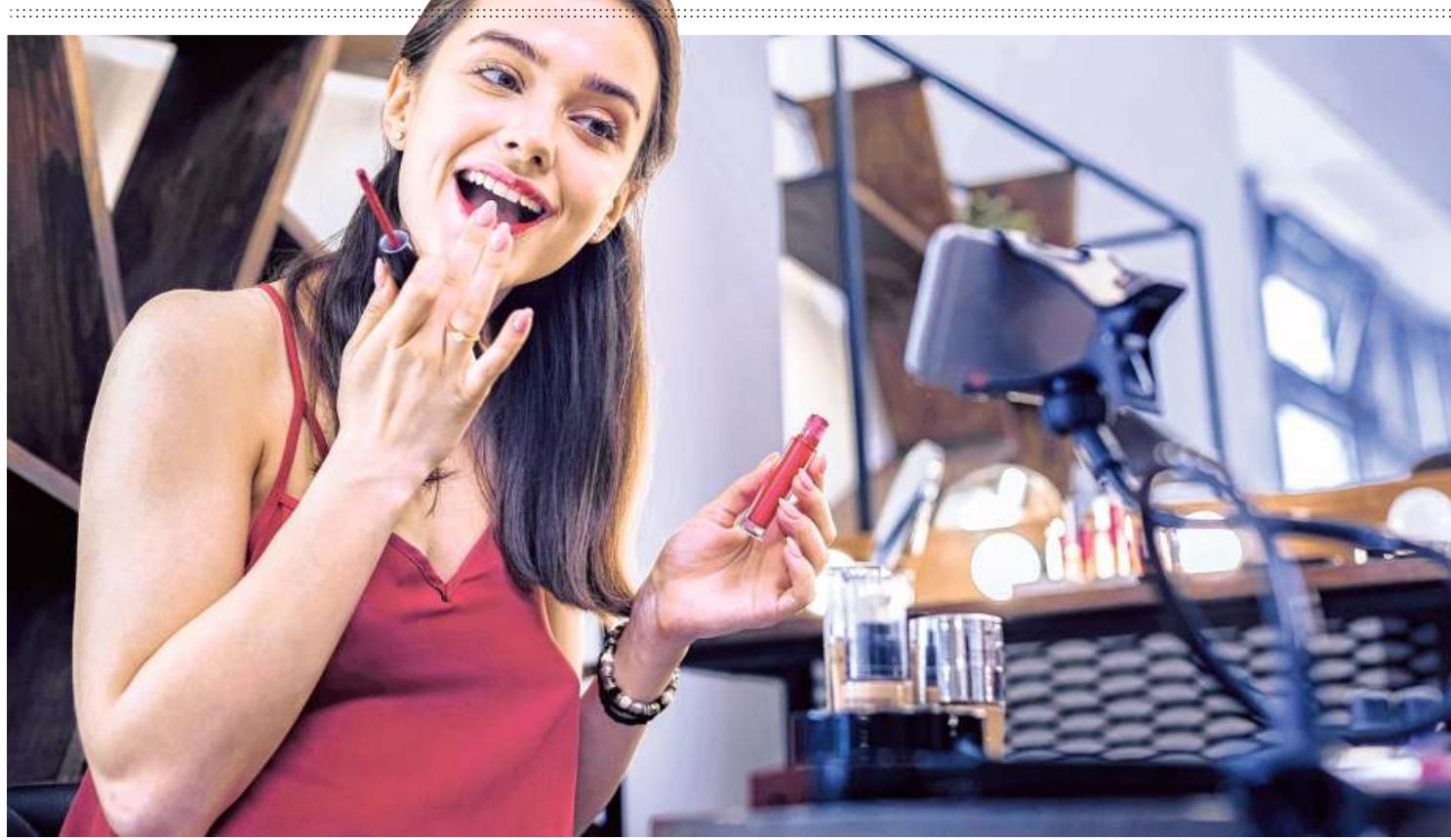
you life, as executing a successful Blitz Move will gain you some life. The health bar dips surprisingly fast and it is a neat gameplay tweak. While the move sets are limited, the game hides away Star Moves, which are area-effect power attacks that you get by finding star pieces hidden throughout levels. Rather than earning experience, the game uses an arcade-style point system to gain extra lives and unlock characters, a great reward mechanism that keeps fighting to unlock more support.

Using Star Moves at the right time, keeping a close eye on recovering your health and using your buddies to chain moves with is key; you can play Streets of Rage 4 solo, but the game encourages co-operative play. It is so much fun playing goon tennis by lobbing baddies into friends' power moves, using the environment to hurl foes and watching them bounce off into their friends like a pile of bowling pins. While the fun is still there, some of the problems do get inherited; it is hard to telegraph attacks diagonally, and the slow place may put people off, especially those used to faster games.

Pixelated sprites may do classic games justice, but I am glad Streets of Rage 4 went with a hand-drawn art style with excellent animations – similar to Street Fighter Alpha's art style – lending to the richly-designed stages packed with ambience. If you miss that 16-bit aesthetic, you can break hidden arcade machines with a taser to unlock and play a retro level with memorable fights from the previous games. Completing the Streets of Rage experience is the 90s electronics that somehow just works, offering rhythm to the gameplay and the player's adrenaline. Even the audio of punches and one-liners has an echo-like effect that tries to emulate the games of that era.

If you thirst for the fight that only a beat-em-up can give you, then Streets of Rage 4 is right up your alley. Whether you want a taste of the good old days, or if you want something new and different, the game has plenty of action and replay value, just make sure that you have friends along, watching your back.

The writer is a tech and gaming enthusiast who hopes to one day finish his sci-fi novel



# Catch the light. Pants are optional

What are you seeking? A year ago, you may have had a philosophical answer to that question. Now, it is probably bread, onions, milk and that perfect angle during video conferences

PRIYadarshini Paitandy

Given the lockdown, video calls are having a moment. Many of us are on them through the day, moving from Zoom, to WhatsApp to House Party and so on, for meetings, game nights, and even weddings. Admittedly, there is a learning curve. And, unlike your latest profile picture, in this case you can rarely use filters.



your phone is always on the top. Take a cue from that and avoid placing the camera low because that will show more of the ceiling than you. I have noticed on many calls the ceiling fan forms a halo around the face. And it gives more prominence to your chin and nostrils. If you still want a lower angle, make sure you trim your nostril hair," he laughs.



**Prop up your phone**  
Trust us, nobody wants a shaky tour of your surroundings. So, prop your phone in order to avoid constant movement. This also

**Hair we are**  
"Don't be shabby," says celebrity hair-stylist Savio John Pereira. Since the upper body is in focus, it is important to pay attention to every detail. Just as you would not like to



**A common sight on most calls is that of people repeatedly moving their heads or phones to get that desired angle**



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

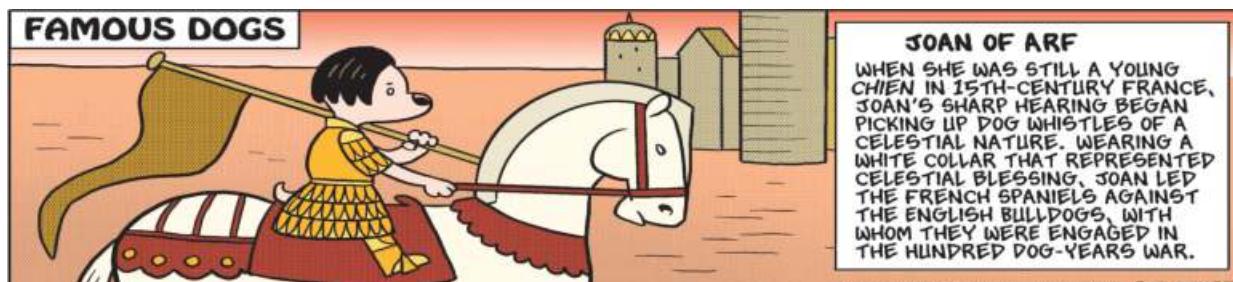
## Raise the camera

A common sight on most calls is that of people repeatedly moving their heads or phones to get that desired angle. "Eye level is the best," says Venket. You can place your phone or laptop on books or other objects so it reaches that height. "If you notice, the camera on your laptop or



© GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

## POOCH CAFE



## HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



## TIGER



# A tale inspired by dentures

Dinesh Devarajan's *The Teeth on the Bus Go Round and Round* is one of the 20 stories shortlisted for the Commonwealth Short Story Prize

PRAVEEN SUDEVAN

The summary of Dinesh Devarajan's story, *The Teeth on the Bus Go Round and Round*, is not the only one that offers intrigue among the 20 shortlisted for the Commonwealth Short Story Prize. But it is probably the most bizarre of all. "A grieving widow and her adolescent son go in search of a pair of lost dentures while being teased by her dead husband," it reads.

The writer reveals the story is semi-autobiographical. Before one almost exclaims, "What!?", he explains, "The original idea came to me when I was growing up in a middle-class household in Chennai. My mother and I went in search of my grandfather's dentures." It is darkly funny.

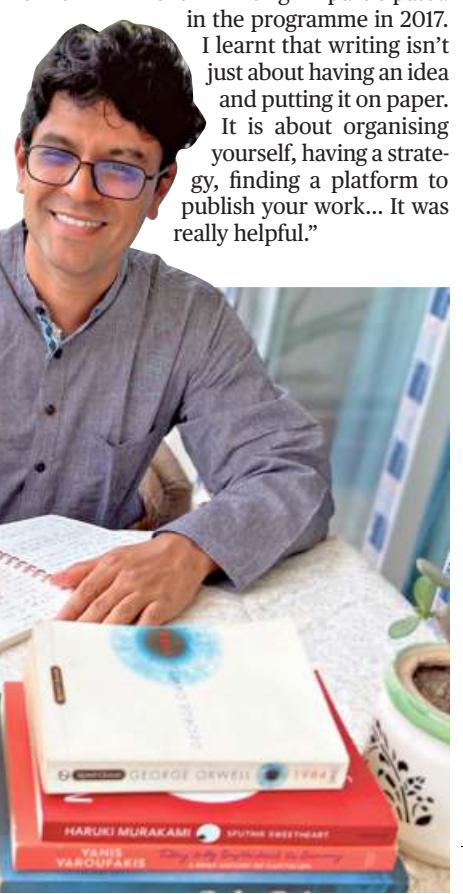
Devarajan had written a few lines, then, like "a rough sketch of a story". Like one of perhaps a million middle-class boys in Chennai, he grew up to be an IT professional. Devarajan, 37, lives in Bengaluru now. But his profession has not killed his passion. He continued to write stories. His little daughter deserves some credit, too. For, she demands new bedtime stories almost every night. A kids-friendly, rudimentary version of *The Teeth on the Bus Go Round and Round*, too, was narrated to her.

"Since I already had a few lines written, when I narrated the story to my daughter, I kind of got the structure of it." Dev-

arajan started writing the story last September. "It was challenging to write on working days. So, on weekdays, I would just write during breaks, for five or 10 minutes. I would get most of my writing done on weekends." He submitted the story a few hours before the deadline: October 31, 2019.

Devarajan is one of the five writers shortlisted for the prize from the Asia region. There are 15 others from four other regions. The judges will choose a winner for each of the five regions. These regional winners will be announced on June 2, before being published online by the literary magazine *Granta*. The overall winner will be announced on July 7. The shortlisted stories will be published online, in the online magazine of Commonwealth Writers, *adda*, which features writing from around the globe. Devarajan has also published his short story collections, *Two is Company* and *City of Gods* (both UNISUN Publishers). He credits Anita Nair's writing workshop, Anita's Attic, for his refinement in writing. "I participated in the programme in 2017.

I learned that writing isn't just about having an idea and putting it on paper. It is about organising yourself, having a strategy, finding a platform to publish your work... It was really helpful."



Write direction Dinesh Devarajan • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



## A podcast for couples

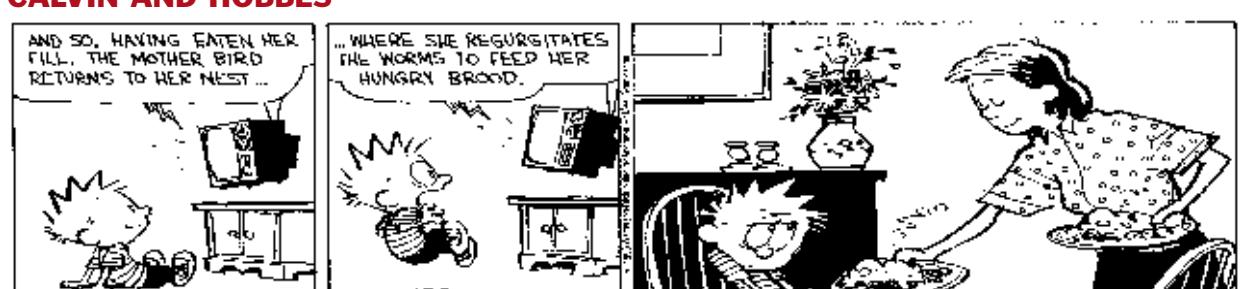
"These are not normal times," stresses world-renowned couples therapist Esther Perel in her podcast *'Where Should We Begin? With Esther Perel'* during a conversation with a couple in Italy, who are married for 10 years. The couple is frank and forthcoming about the struggles in their relationships and take the lockdown as an opportunity to reflect on some of the tensions that have emerged in their relationship. *'Where Should We Begin? With Esther Perel'* has spoken to many couples in Sicily, Italy and Bavaria, Germany. The podcast comes with a disclaimer that the couples are not her ongoing clients and for the purpose of maintaining their confidentiality, names and other identifiable characteristics have been removed. Listen to the podcast on Spotify.

With inputs from Sravasti Datta

## PEANUTS



## CALVIN AND HOBBES



## PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



# Europe emerges from virus lockdown

Global infections top 3.5 million; EU seeks to raise \$8.2 billion to discover a COVID-19 vaccine

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Rome  
Millions of Europeans emerged with relief from coronavirus confinement on Monday, with hard-hit Italy leading the way out of the world's longest lockdown.

At least 3.5 million people are now known to have been infected, but U.S. President Donald Trump offered hope for an end to the pandemic, saying he believed there would be a vaccine by year's end.

The search for a cure received a further boost when the European Union hosted a telethon for world leaders aimed at raising €7.5 billion (\$8.2 billion) to discover a COVID-19 vaccine.

Around 248,000 people have died since the coronavirus emerged in China late last year and swept across



**Back on the streets:** Storekeepers demanding resumption of commercial activities gather for a flashmob protest on Piazza San Marco in Venice on Monday. • AFP

the first day of the lockdown on March 9 with 174 fatalities, compared with 969 at the peak. In all, 28,884 people have died in Italy.

Meanwhile, statistics bureau ISTAT said on Monday that Italy's coronavirus death toll is much higher than reported.

In its first report of the epidemic's impact on Italy's mortality rate, covering 86% of the population, ISTAT said that from February 21, when the first COVID-19 deaths occurred, until March 31, nationwide deaths were up 39% compared with the average of the previous five years.

#### Masks mandatory

Many other European countries are also relaxing lockdowns, even as they continue to advocate social distancing, masks and more testing to try to track infections.

Spain made face masks mandatory on public transport starting Monday, two days after finally allowing people out to exercise freely af-

ter a 48-day lockdown.

Neighbouring Portugal allowed small shops, hair salons and car dealers to resume business from Monday, but ordered face masks to be worn in stores and on public transport.

Slovenia, Poland and Hungary joined Germany in allowing public spaces and businesses to partially reopen.

In Germany people queued up at hair salons as they finally reopened.

The pressure to reopen business is also being felt across the Atlantic, where the previously booming U.S. economy was supposed to be the centrepiece of Mr. Trump's November re-election bid.

With his poll numbers sagging, Mr. Trump has increasingly taken to blaming China for the coronavirus outbreak.

China's state broadcaster on Monday attacked U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for "insane" remarks in which he said the virus originated in a lab in Wuhan, the city where the pandemic

first emerged.

"Remember, China has a history of infecting the world and running substandard laboratories," Mr. Pompeo said Sunday.

#### Renewed tensions

The renewed tensions between the world's two biggest economies set financial markets on edge on Monday from Asia to New York.

Many parts of Asia have, however, begun to inch towards a post-pandemic life, with schools in the Vietnamese capital Hanoi reopening on Monday after two weeks without new infections anywhere in the country.

Malaysians headed back to work, while Australia and New Zealand discussed creating a "trans-Tasman bubble" that would allow travel between the two countries. Russia is rapidly becoming Europe's black spot, with officials in Moscow urging residents to stay home in an effort to tamp down the growing daily tally of new cases.

## In a first, U.S. top court goes live to hear cases

Nine Justices to take part in 10 cases

REUTERS

WASHINGTON

In a break from tradition caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Supreme Court on Monday for the first time will hear arguments in a case not in person but by teleconference – a trademark dispute involving the popular hotel reservation website Booking.com.

The nine Justices over the next two weeks are set to participate in arguments in 10 cases, using a dial-in format to combat the spread of the pathogen. In another first, the court will provide a live audio feed, making these the first arguments that the public can hear live. Cable TV network C-SPAN said it plans to broadcast that feed in all the cases.

Rather than the wide-

open questioning exhibited during typical cases in the Justices' ornate courtroom, the court has tweaked the format for the teleconference arguments so that Justices will take turns asking questions in order of seniority.

The first case is due to begin at 10 a.m. ET. The Justices will hear a bid by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to prevent Booking.com, a unit of Norwalk, Connecticut-based Booking Holdings Inc, from trademarking the site's name, contending that it is too generic to deserve legal protection. The case comes as Booking.com, along with the rest of the travel industry, has been slammed by the pandemic, which has caused tourism and business travel to evaporate.

## Former Pope says opponents are attempting to 'silence' him

Benedict denies rift with Pope Francis in his new biography

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BERLIN

Traditionalist former Pope Benedict XVI accuses opponents of wanting to "silence" him while associating gay marriage with the "Anti-christ" and attacking "humanist ideologies" in a new authorised biography published on Monday in Germany.

The 93-year-old, whose original name is Joseph Ratzinger, claims in *Benedict XVI – A Life* that he has fallen victim to a "malignant distortion of reality" in reactions to his interventions in theological debates. "The spectacle of reactions coming from German theology is so misguided and ill-willed that I would prefer not to speak of it," he said.

The former Pope – who dramatically resigned in 2013 – was especially criticised for a 2018 text that was seen as critical of the Jewish faith.

"I would rather not analyse the actual reasons why people want to silence my voice," he said.

The German branch of

Pope Benedict XVI

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"I would rather not analyse the actual reasons why people want to silence my voice," he said.

The German branch of



**Changing equations:** Chinese President Xi Jinping, left, reviewing the PLA's Navy fleet in the South China Sea. • AP/FILE

and the stock markets were rising. But then the virus hit the U.S. Mr. Trump immediately had two problems in his hands. One, the U.S. is one of the hardest-hit countries by the outbreak. Two, the economy tanked amid the virus crisis. About 30 million Americans have lost their jobs since mid-March. A Congressional Budget Office report forecasts that unemployment rate would average 14% this year – highest since the end of Second World War – and that

the U.S. economy would shrink by 12% in the second quarter. In the first quarter, the economy shrank by 4.8%, the first contraction since 2014 and the deepest since the 2008 recession. Mr. Trump has effectively lost the bet on the economy in an election year. Faced with these challenges, he seems to have zeroed in on his favourite foreign rival to mobilise his support base – China.

#### NEWS ANALYSIS

#### Run against China

Late last month, right-leaning academic and columnist Walter Russell Mead wrote in *The Wall Street Journal* that Mr. Trump's best re-election bet was to run against China. "With the economy in shambles and the pandemic ravaging the country, making the election a referendum on China is perhaps Mr. Trump's only chance to extend his White House tenure

# Trump relaunches campaign with a promise of vaccine

'Put the pandemic behind, embrace an incredible future'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump relaunched his election campaign on Sunday with a live television event inside the iconic Lincoln Memorial, promising an early coronavirus vaccine and urging Americans to put the pandemic behind them to embrace an "incredible" future.



President Donald Trump during a television event in Washington. • REUTERS

incredible following year," he said.

To a woman who called in expressing fear of financial ruin and eviction, Mr. Trump said her job would come back. "You get a job where you make more money," he said.

Saying Americans should start going back to beaches this summer and recommending that shuttered schools need to reopen in

September, Mr. Trump forecast good news on the hunt for a vaccine.

"We are very confident that we're going to have a vaccine... by the end of the year," he said, admitting he was getting ahead of his own advisors with the prediction. "I'll say what I think," he said.

#### Divisive style

He is doing poorly in most polls ahead of the November presidential contest against Democratic challenger Joe Biden, who remains shutered in his Delaware home.

Mr. Trump faces criticism for his divisive style during a time of national calamity. He is also accused by some of botching the early response to the COVID-19 virus.

With officials saying the viral spread has begun to taper, Mr. Trump is itching to return to the campaign trail.

## China province launches anti-racism push after outrage

Africans were 'forcibly evicted'; subjected to arbitrary quarantines

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

TOKYO

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Monday extended a state of emergency over the coronavirus until the end of May, warning it was too soon to begin relaxing restrictions. But Mr. Abe said on the show, where two moderators, as well as ordinary citizens via video, put questions to him in front of the monument.

"We're going to have an

can community shortly after a cluster of COVID-19 cases was found in a neighbourhood with a large migrant population, and a wave of reports about discrimination and xenophobia followed.

The new anti-racism rules came after many Africans in Guangzhou said they had been forcibly evicted by police from their accommodation, refused service at

shops and restaurants, and were subject to mass coronavirus testing and arbitrary quarantines.

Now, businesses and residential compounds "must implement non-discriminatory service... treat all Chinese and foreigners in Guangdong equally, and firmly oppose any racist or discriminatory speech and behaviour," according to a media report.

## U.S. demands justice from Pak. for scribe's murder

Daniel Pearl's family filed a plea in SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON/ISLAMABAD

The U.S. has again demanded justice for murdered American journalist Daniel Pearl, days after his family filed an appeal before the Pakistan Supreme Court against a verdict by a court in Sindh province which acquitted the prime accused and British-born top al-Qaeda leader Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh and three others in the case.

In office from 2005-13, the former Pope has frequently been criticised for his attitudes to Islam or to social questions, and is accused of attempting to undermine the modernisation drive of his successor Pope Francis.

Pope Benedict attempts to counter such claims in the biography, saying his "personal friendship with Pope Francis has not only endured, but grown".

In February, Pope Benedict was drawn into a Vatican intrigue when his private secretary was removed from Pope Francis' entourage.

On April 2, a two-judge Sindh High Court bench overturned the death sen-

tence of 46-year-old al-Qaeda leader Sheikh, who was convicted in the abduction and murder of Pearl in 2002. He has been in jail for the past 18 years. The court also acquitted his three aides – Fahad Naseem, Salman Saqib and Sheikh Adil – serving life sentences in the case. The Bench announced the verdict on the appeals filed by the four convicts 18 years ago.

"On the eve of World Press Freedom Day, we honour the legacy of journalist Daniel Pearl. We appreciate the Govt. of Pakistan's 4/22 appeal to reinstate guilty verdicts against Daniel's murderers, now buttressed by the filing of the Pearl family's appeal before the SC," State for South and Central Asian Affairs Alice Wells tweeted on Sunday.

## HRW: bodies dumped in Syria gorge

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BEIRUT

Human Rights Watch on Monday called for an investigation into a spectacular gorge in northern Syria that has been used as a dumping site for dead bodies over several years.

China has responded angrily to such attacks. "The H1N1 flu that broke out in the U.S. in 2009 [and] spread to 214 countries and regions, killing nearly 200,000 people; has anyone demanded compensation?" Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang asked last month. The official Xinhua news agency released a one-minute-forty-six-second video on April 30 defending China's handling of the pandemic and accusing the U.S. of ignoring its warnings.

With the election season heating up in the U.S., the China-bashing in DC is expected to increase, which could further complicate the trade and economic ties between the world's largest and second largest economies.

## What's the calculus behind Donald Trump's tirade against China?

U.S. President has turned Beijing's virus handling into an electoral issue

STANLY JOHNY

President Donald Trump and his aides have stepped up attacks on China in recent weeks over the COVID-19 outbreak as the U.S. was struggling to contain the spread of the virus and the economic crisis it triggered.

Mr. Trump first called the novel coronavirus a "Chinese virus". Last month, he suggested the U.S. seek damages from China over the outbreak which began in Wuhan. Mr. Trump has already restricted use of Chinese electrical equipment in the U.S. grid system. Some officials in the administration are prodding him to block a government pension fund from investing in Chinese companies. Moreover, Mr. Trump has linked a virology lab in Wuhan to the virus, an

allegation which the U.S. intelligence agencies are investigating.

Tensions between the two countries are not new. Bilateral ties were not particularly good since Mr. Trump became President. This time, Mr. Trump has taken tensions to new highs by endorsing the unproven lab theory and threatening China with punishments, which could have harsh economic consequences at a time when the global economy is in its deepest downturn in decades. Why is Mr. Trump doing this?

#### The new rival

Till early this year, the focus of Mr. Trump's re-election team was on the performance of the economy. The economy was growing, unemployment rate was low

and the stock markets were rising. But then the virus hit the U.S. Mr. Trump immediately had two problems in his hands. One, the U.S. is one of the hardest-hit countries by the outbreak. Two, the economy tanked amid the virus crisis. About 30 million Americans have lost their jobs since mid-March. A Congressional Budget Office report forecasts that unemployment rate would average 14% this year – highest since the end of Second World War – and that

the U.S. economy would shrink by 12% in the second quarter. In the first quarter, the economy shrank by 4.8%, the first contraction since 2014 and the deepest since the 2008 recession. Mr. Trump has effectively lost the bet on the economy in an election year. Faced with these challenges, he seems to have zeroed in on his favourite foreign rival to mobilise his support base – China.

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past January 2021," he wrote. China would soon become a political issue in the U.S. with both the Republican Party and President Trump turning Beijing into an electoral issue.

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A 57-page memo sent to campaign committees by the National Republican Senatorial Committee advised Republican candidates to address the pandemic by attacking China. It asked GOP leaders to tie Democrats to Beijing and "push for sanctions on China for its role in spreading this pandemic". Following the GOP memo, President Trump said on April 30 in an interview with *Reuters* that China "will do anything they can to have me lose this race". He added that Beijing wanted his Democratic opponent Joe Biden to win the November election. The America First Action political committee that backs Mr. Trump has launched advertisements at

the site since the area was wrested from the jihadis by Kurdish-led forces in late 2017 and found that bodies were dumped in the gorge. "Al-Hota gorge, once a beautiful natural site, has become a place of horror and reckoning," said Sara Kayali, Syria researcher at Human Rights Watch.

HRW investigated the site since the area was wrested from the jihadis by Kurdish-led forces in late 2017 and found that bodies

## MARKET WATCH

	04-05-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	31,715	-5.94
US Dollar	75.73	-0.85
Brent oil	26.93	4.99

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	266.35	-23.75
Asian Paints	1676.80	-81.90
Axist Bank	402.80	-42.10
Bajaj Auto	2442.15	-181.15
Bajaj Finserv	4762.35	-342.00
Bajaj Finance	2079.65	-238.45
Bharti Airtel	532.50	-18.20
BPCL	347.90	-22.10
Britannia Ind	3092.95	-72.80
Cipla	611.85	-22.25
Coal India	142.30	-6.20
Dr Reddy's Lab	3939.00	-2.70
Eicher Motors	13748.80	-959.15
GAIL (India)	93.50	-2.20
Grasim Ind	479.05	-25.85
HCL Tech	514.25	-29.30
HDFC	1724.35	-191.65
HDFC Bank	923.00	-78.80
Hero MotoCorp	2000.70	-166.00
Hindalco	115.90	-14.30
Hind Unilever	2082.65	-112.35
ICICI Bank	338.05	-42.10
IndusInd Bank	423.05	-45.10
Bharti Infratech	168.50	-5.90
Infosys	673.70	-41.80
Indian Oil Corp	79.75	-4.45
ITC	174.05	-8.00
JSW Steel	163.55	-17.10
Kotak Bank	1277.80	-79.40
L&T	850.65	-46.90
M&M	357.05	-9.60
Maruti Suzuki	4886.30	-472.50
Nestle India Ltd.	17456.45	-468.20
NTPC	91.45	-3.60
ONGC	76.55	-3.35
PowerGrid Corp	159.05	-3.00
Reliance Ind	1435.20	-30.80
State Bank	178.85	-11.65
Shree Cement	18625.00	-1142.90
Sun Pharma	465.45	-1.00
Tata Motors	83.90	-9.35
Tata Steel	273.60	-24.70
TCS	1930.45	-84.00
Tech Mahindra	502.45	-43.80
Titan	891.85	-78.20
UltraTech Cement	3347.60	-186.70
UPL	385.40	-34.65
Vedanta	79.95	-9.60
Wipro	190.05	-0.90
Zee Entertainment	146.40	-12.95

EXCHANGE RATES		
Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on May 04		
CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	75.51	75.83
Euro	82.56	82.91
British Pound	93.79	94.20
Japanese Yen (100)	70.64	70.94
Chinese Yuan	10.69	10.74
Swiss Franc	78.25	78.58
Singapore Dollar	53.26	53.49
Canadian Dollar	53.63	53.86
Malaysian Ringgit	17.50	17.59
Australian Dollar	48.35	48.56

Source: Indian Bank

+ Observe safety norms strictly at banks'

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The AIBEA has urged bank managements to ensure stricter implementation of safeguards in branches, prescribed under the standard operating procedures, as many staff have tested positive while two employees died of COVID-19 in Mumbai.

Earlier, a chief manager of State Bank of India lost his life due to the virus. Recently Uday Kamat, special assistant, IDBI Bank, Malad branch, Mumbai also died due to same reason.

"A number of employees from Bank of India, Central Bank of India, Oriental Bank of Commerce, Bank of Maharashtra, Bank of Baroda, etc. are undergoing quarantine," said C.H. Venkatachalam, general secretary, All India Bank Employees' Association (AIBEA), in a letter to the convener of the state-level bankers committee of Maharashtra.

## Debt recovery tribunal settles 23-year-old case

It holds virtual court amid lockdown

## SANJAY VIJAYAKUMAR

CHENNAI

Amid the COVID-19 lockdown, the Debt Recovery Tribunal I (DRT I), Incharge of DRT II (DRT 2), Chennai, has decided on a 23-year-old case and tendered the judgment by holding a virtual court via video conferencing, which is one-of-its-kind in the entire South India for a DRT.

The virtual court was held on Monday as notified by the Finance Ministry. The case pertains to Tamilnad Mercantile Bank versus Moolchand Finance Ltd. and 63 other defendants over alleged non-payment of dues worth ₹2.25 crore at the time of filing the case.

The other defendants in the case include Moolchand's guarantors and the persons to whom the mortgaged properties had been sold and the legal heirs of the deceased guarantor.

The case was filed by the bank in 1997 when the DRT

was established in Chennai and stood transferred to DRT 2 when it was constituted and remained on file for so many years without a decision.

N.V. Badarinath, Presiding Officer, Debt Recovery Tribunal - I directed the defendants to pay Tamilnad Mercantile Bank a sum of about ₹1.31 crore along with simple interest at 19% per annum on the said amount from December 1, 1996 till March 31, 1997 and thereafter (from April 1, 1997) with simple interest at 20% per annum till the realisation of the amount while rejecting a counter claim of the borrower company.

He also fixed quantum of liability for the various defendants.

The virtual court was made possible with software called Vidyo provided by the National Informatics Center (NIC), New Delhi under the guidance of the Department of Financial Services.

## Hero resumes manufacturing at 3 plants

Other units to reopen after supply chain partners are allowed to operate

## YUTHIKA BHARGAVA

NEW DELHI

The country's largest two-wheeler maker Hero MotoCorp on Monday said it had reopened three of its manufacturing plants in Haryana and Uttarakhand, with production expected to commence Wednesday onwards.

"To begin with, Hero MotoCorp is commencing operations in a graded manner at three of its manufacturing plants - Gurugram and Dharuhera (both in Haryana), Haridwar (Uttarakhand)...," the company said in a statement.

Additionally, operations have also resumed at the Global Parts Center (GPC) at Neemrana in Rajasthan.

"We are now ready to hit the ground sprinting as we commence the re-opening of our facilities. The well-being of citizens continues to be our focus and the running of our economic engines is crucial to ensure their health and prosperity," Pawan Munjal, chairman, Hero MotoCorp said.

The two-wheeler maker said only essential staff will come to work at all the other facilities and corporate offices, observing social distancing and all prescribed safety measures.

The remaining employees across all locations in India will continue to work from home till further notice.

The company's other manufacturing plants have also obtained the necessary permissions to reopen and these will commence operations after most of the supply chain partners of the company get the permissions to op-



Back in action: A file photo of an assembly line at the Hero MotoCorp Garden Factory at Neemrana. ■ S. SUBRAMANIAM

erate. Further, Hero MotoCorp's R&D facility - the Centre of Innovation and Technology (CIT) - has also received the necessary permission to reopen and will resume functioning soon, it added. "With meticulous planning and enthusiasm, we are set to recommence operations. I am optimistic that business and the economy will begin the trajectory of its gradual recovery from here," Mr. Munjal said.

Some of the guidelines to be followed by Hero MotoCorp's employees include

mandatory self-declaration of good health before joining and daily updates through Aarogya Setu and Hero App wherever applicable, wearing of face-masks, face shield, digital attendance through Hero App, regular sanitisation of personal items and work-stations, maintaining social distancing, no domestic or international travel, no celebratory or business gatherings, no visitors allowed to visit company premises, neither are employees allowed to visit company or dealer premises.

Additionally, employees above the age of 60, those employees with critical medical conditions and pregnant women, will need to work from home mandatorily.

"With the easing of restrictions in several parts of the country, most of the company's extensive customer touch-points, including dealerships, workshops and the secondary network, are expected to open gradually from today onwards," the company said.

## Cure.Fit fires 1,000 employees

## MINI TEJASWI

BENGALURU

Cure.Fit, a health, fitness and food start-up jointly floated by former Flipkart and Myntra executives Mukesh Bansal and Ankit Nagori, has laid off at least 1,000 people in India.

According to employees, the company 'forcefully' sought resignations from hundreds of people on May 1. However, they said the company had agreed to pay salaries for 30 to 45 days.

This unprecedented situation has forced us to close operations in small towns in India and the UAE. We have downsized our employee base across markets where we have shut operations and have initiated pay cuts across levels. The founders have taken a 100% pay cut, the management team 50% and the rest of the staff, depending on seniority, have a reduction of 20 to 30%, the company said.

## India stands out on Xiaomi's dial pad

No plans to hit hold button on 'anti-China sentiment,' says maker of smartphones



The Indian smartphone industry is likely to bounce back in Q3 and Q4 of the current year, says Mr. Jain. ■ ASHOK CHAKRABARTY

hoping the factories will be up and running very soon," Mr. Jain said.

Muralikrishnan B, chief operating officer, Xiaomi India, added the component supply chain was "quite smooth" and was not a chal-

lenge at all. "The challenge, if any, will only be in terms of manpower where with proper safety and hygiene procedures and social distancing at the assembly line, we should be able to resume production pretty soon."

To a query on the anti-China sentiment, Mr. Jain said, "Yes, I've seen it on social media... will it impact our India business? I don't think so... We are as Indian as any other firm. We have manufacturing plants here. We have our product teams, R&D teams here... all our servers are local servers. We have been able to generate employment for 50,000 people..."

On demand, Mr. Jain said the Indian smartphone industry is likely to bounce back in Q3 and Q4 of the current year. Citing analyst estimates, he said smartphone sales are likely to be 135-145 million in the current calendar year against pre-COVID estimates of 160-170 million.

## COVID-19 screening for corporates

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

As businesses gear up to reopen offices and layout procedure for screening of employees for COVID-19 before asking them to join work, Healthians, which provides at-home health tests, has launched Hplus CorpShield for dealing with the issue.

"Hplus CorpShield tackles the current problem by offering doorstep health screening of employees at ₹350 [per employee] and their housemates [to be charged ₹350 extra per housemate] before they are called to work," the company said in a statement.

AGEL has added 575 MW of capacity during the last fiscal and plans to add anywhere between 1 gigawatt (GW) to 2 GW of capacity in the current fiscal.

"We have already lost over two months in supply disruptions from China due to impact of COVID-19. Now, we need to catch up and complete the committed projects within time, even as the government has agreed to give an extension citing force majeure," Mr. Parimal said. The company plans to commence construction activity which was mandatorily suspended during the lockdown as per govern-

## Rupee snaps 4-day rally on U.S.-China tensions

Stronger dollar weighs on local unit

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The rupee ended its four-day rally as weakness in domestic equities spilled over to the currency market, pushing the domestic unit 64 paisa lower against the dollar to close at 75.73.

The rupee opened weaker at 75.70 compared to the previous close of 75.09. It hit the day's low of 75.80 before closing at 75.73, down 64 paisa from Thursday's close.

"Going ahead, sentiments remain weak and fresh concerns that trade tensions could delay an economic recovery are likely to weigh on the local unit. Rupee is likely to gyrate in the range of 75.20 and 76.60 in the near term," said Ms. Sachdeva.

following safe-haven buying as uncertainty increased after U.S. President Donald Trump threatened to impose new tariffs on China," said Sugandha Sachdeva, VP-metals, energy and currency research, Religare Broking. The dollar index, that gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.27% to 99.35.

"Going ahead, sentiments remain weak and fresh concerns that trade tensions could delay an economic recovery are likely to weigh on the local unit. Rupee is likely to gyrate in the range of 75.20 and 76.60 in the near term," said Ms. Sachdeva.

IndusInd Bank, Axis Bank, HUL, Reliance Industries, Tech Mahindra, Infosys and State Bank of India, among others, also declined. In the broader market, more than 1,800 stocks lost ground as against about 550 gainers.

The Nifty lost 566.40 points, or 5.74%, to close at

## IN BRIEF

**Swimming Worlds moved from 2021 to 2022**

LONDON The 2021 aquatics World championships in Fukuoka, Japan, will now be held from May 13-29, 2022, swimming's governing body FINA said in a statement on Monday. The decision follows the postponement of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. REUTERS

**Crowds, not logistics, the bigger issue: Colbeck**

MELBOURNE Australia can deal with the challenge of getting teams into the country for the T20 World Cup but whether it is worth having the tournament in empty stadiums is the main point for consideration, feels Sports Minister Richard Colbeck. "I'd love to see an Australia-India Test series this summer... the issue is not so much the teams as the crowds and that's probably one of the hurdles we really have to consider," Colbeck said on Monday. PTI

**All Dortmund players clear COVID-19 test**

BERLIN Bundesliga club Borussia Dortmund has stated all members of the professional squad and staff have tested negative during the first series of coronavirus tests. The club added that "further tests will follow" to ensure "the largest possible degree of certainty". IANS

**Kyrgios invites Nadal for Instagram chat**

PARIS Australian tennis maverick Nick Kyrgios has invited Rafael Nadal to take part in a video chat on Sunday despite their stormy and bitter on-court relationship. "Rafa lets do Instagram live together. I am down with it. Rafael Nadal let's do it," wrote the Australian on Instagram. AFP

# Producing champions a team effort'

Sindhu emphasises the role played by parents in an athlete's success

**BADMINTON****V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM**  
HYDERABAD

Champions are produced not by individuals but by a team, feels P.V. Sindhu. The team, according to her, includes parents, coaches, support staff and administrators, with each of them having a role to play.

In an online chat with the newly appointed Assistant Directors of the Sports Authority of India (SAI) on Monday, the World champion shared her remarkable journey: from learning the basics with coach Mehboob Ali at the IRISSET Stadium to training under the watchful eyes of Dronacharya S.M. Arif at the Pather and finally joining the Gopi Chand Academy in 2005 on the suggestion of the then coach Tom John and SAAP coach Govardhan Reddy.

"I am not saying this [team effort] just because my parents had a sports background (P.V. Ramana and P. Vijaya had represented India in volleyball). Parents are the

**Joy unlimited:** Sindhu has given her parents, Ramana and Vijaya, a lot to smile about.

most important part of an athlete's success as they understand the psyche of a child better than the others. I spend a lot of time with my father watching matches of myself and other players to analyse and plan my strategy against them," said the 24-year-old.

"Initially, the biggest challenge was travelling around 120km daily (to the Academy and back to her home in Secunderabad). My father taking long leave from Railway service was important as he guided me on the areas of improvement," she said.

Sindhu felt that the relationship between an athlete and a coach was crucial. "There should be a continuity in coaches. Unfortunately, most of the senior coaches have left even before their contracts ended. This should be looked into carefully as it affects the performances of the players".

## Carlsen triumphs

**CHESS****RAKESH RAO**  
NEW DELHI

Living up to his reputation, World champion Magnus Carlsen produced two flawless displays over four games and defeated Hikaru Nakamura 2.5-1.5 to win the \$250,000 Magnus Carlsen Invitational online chess tournament on Sunday.



Carlsen. ■ FILE PHOTO

The triumph was worth \$70,000 for Carlsen in the richest online event. Nakamura received \$45,000 for his performance in the 16-day competition.

Carlsen, known to wear down his rivals in long positional battles, reproduced the magic in the opening game. Playing white, Carlsen squeezed out a minor advantage after 67 moves and eventually won in 84.

Nakamura drew level following a fine technical victory in the second game. Carlsen again carved out a positional masterpiece in the third game to regain the lead. In the fourth, where Nakamura came close to winning, Carlsen summoned all his defensive skills to force a draw and win the title.

**The result (final):** Magnus Carlsen (Nor) bt Hikaru Nakamura (USA) 2.5-1.5.

## China favourite, India underdog

Top stars, barring World champion Carlsen, to participate

**RAKESH RAO**

NEW DELHI Even as sporting activity remains suspended given the COVID-19 pandemic, chess players continue to make their moves in online prize-money events.

The FIDE Chess.com online Nations Cup, the richest online team tournament, begins on Tuesday.

Barring World champion Magnus Carlsen, almost all the leading men and women players from four countries, one continent and a 'Rest of the World' combination will be on view.

**India seeded fifth**

India, seeded fifth, will be a rank outsider despite fielding its strongest possible combination of Viswanathan Anand, Vidit Gujrathi, P. Harikrishna, B. Adhiban, K. Humpy and D. Harika. Former World champion Vladimir

Anand. ■ FILE PHOTO

Kramnik as advisor to the Indian camp arouses added interest.

The event follows the double round-robin format, with the two leading teams battling for the title in a 'Super-final'.

China, the rating favourite, with Ding Liren, Wang Hao and Wei Yi, gains from the comeback of Hou Yifan, the world's strongest woman player.

Second seed Europe has Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, Levon Aronian and Anish Gi-

ri along with Anna Muzychuk on the fourth board. Garry Kasparov is back in the mix as the captain.

Russia relies on the flamboyance of Ian Nepomniachtchi, the speed-chess skills of Vladislav Artemiev and the experience of Sergey Karjakin, with Aleksandra Goryachkina being the top woman. But USA is the proverbial dark horse with Fabiano Caruana, Hikaru Nakamura, Wesley So and Irina Krush forming an intimidating combination.

**Potent combo**

The Rest of the World has the potential to slow down any serious title-contender. Teimour Radjabov, 16-year-old sensation Alireza Firouzja, Baseem Amin along with former women's World champion Mariya Muzychuk can be expected to cause a few upsets.

## Women's squad raises ₹20 lakh

Many current and former India players also contribute

**HOCKEY****UTHRA GANESAN**  
NEW DELHI

The Indian women's hockey team's efforts to crowd-fund support for poor and migrant workers has raised ₹20,01,130 through an 18-day online challenge.

The effort was launched on April 17 with an initial target of ₹15 lakh to feed 1,000 families.

The fitness challenge that ended on May 3 involved team members posting a new challenge everyday and tagging 10 people on the social media, who had to accept it and donate just ₹100 each besides forwarding the challenge to others.

"The response has been overwhelming and I would

like to thank everyone who took part in this initiative," captain Rani Rampal said.

"We saw people's support grow everyday. We would also like to thank Hockey India, coach (Sjoerd) Marijne and entire support staff for backing us in this initiative," vice-captain Savita Punia added.

Several current and form-

## Razor-sharp Sania stumps Purav

Warm banter makes talk-show enjoyable for tennis fans

**TENNIS****KAMESH SRINIVASAN**  
NEW DELHI

Purav Raja made Sania Mirza go through five strokes, real racquet in hand, during the popular 'Chai with Raja' Instagram show.

The 33-year-old Sania sportingly obliged and showed, with her razor-sharp responses to a variety of questions, that she could win any contest, with or without a racquet.

Sania, who has known Purav since the age of eight, showed a lot of warmth and camaraderie to make it an enjoyable show for the thousands of tennis enthusiasts who had tuned in.

Joking that she was honoured to be the first lady on the show, Sania said she might have felt offended that Mahesh Bhupathi was the first guest on the show, but then she saw how "under prepared" he was!

"You know me too well. So, I am nervous," said the six-time Grand Slam champion before opening up for a

Purav Raja and Sania Mirza.  
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

lively chat. Sania pointed out that Jelena Jankovic also had not won a Grand Slam singles title despite being World No. 1, as Purav's notes had only Dinara Safina's name. She did get both names.

She recalled five players who had trained with her in December and named the IPL captains of the Hyderabad team with ease.

She stumped Purav by recalling the names of seven

Davis Cup team captains – Leander Paes, S.P. Misra, Vijay Amritraj, Anand Amritraj, Mahesh Bhupathi, Rohit Rajpal and Jaidip Mukerjea. She was candid in saying that a lot of people would get that right.

On another note, Sania said Bollywood was close to her heart. She said many would be able to connect with the inspiring journeys of people who became superstars.

**Farah her favourite**  
She named Farah Khan as her favourite and added Riteish Deshmukh and Salman Khan to the list.

When asked who was more competitive, Paes or Bhupathi, Sania said that both were incredible competitors and it was impossible for her to pick one over the other, as she had won with both.

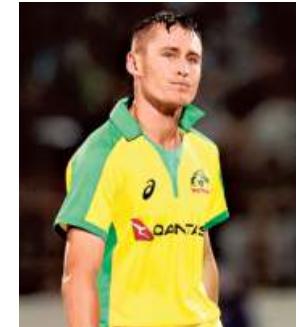
Naming Steffi Graf as her favourite player, Sania said being World No. 1 in doubles was more satisfying than being 27 in singles because "if you are No. 1 in the world in anything, it is special".

## 'Would be devastating if India can't tour Australia'

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

SYDNEY

Top Australian batsman Marnus Labuschagne on Monday said he and his team would be "pretty devastated" if India doesn't make the trip Down Under for a Test and limited-overs series later this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



India's tour of Australia will begin with a T20 tri-series in October and is scheduled to end with a four-match Test series in December.

The speculation on the tour is because of the travel restrictions currently in place and the uncertainty surrounding how long it would take to control the pandemic.

Replies to a query on

the tour in an online press conference, Labuschagne said, "Well, it would mean that we are not playing cricket which is pretty devastating for myself, the rest of the team and for the country."

## Sourav Kothari staying connected with the sport

I was prepared to switch to Pro Circuit this year'

**CUE SPORTS****Y.B. SARANGI**  
KOLKATA**Working out:** Former World billiards champions Sourav Kothari, right, and father Manoj keeping themselves in shape. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

do it over the study table when I stay in a hotel.

"Even though I am not expecting a shot, it is important to stay in touch physically and keep doing the eyeball movement," Sourav told The Hindu.

"If I miss the practice for a longer period, I take 30 to 35 hours to get back on top of my game. Here, I have not practised for 40-45 days."

**Quite a shock**

"I used to travel 15-18 days a month. It is quite a shock that I am not competing anymore. I was prepared to give my best and switch to Pro Circuit this year."

"I should have been in Sheffield competing in Challenge Tour now, but everything is gone."

Sourav is watching videos to relieve his moments of glory and pick up a few points from other champion cueists.

Having Manoj, the National chief cue-sports coach, by his side has helped Sourav. "It's tough as there is no motivation of playing in a tournament."

"Sourav is doing the bending down exercise for 30 minutes to one hour and also some stretching."

"Watching the videos keeps you connected," said Manoj, head of coaching of the Asian Confederation of Billiards Sports.

**Exploring new things**

Sourav is exploring some new things in life, including growing a beard.

"I could never grow a beard as it could get stuck with the cue. Now I enjoy doing it."

"My father has also grown a beard. I am cooking a lot, reading and trying to be a little more organised," signed off Sourav.

## Villagers in Assam get respite as hanging fence deters jumbos

Camera traps show elephants have been unable to enter villages near Manas National Park on majority of occasions

**RAHUL KARMAKAR**  
GUWAHATI

Elephants in Assam may have finally run into a barrier beyond their ability to bulldoze – a solar-powered hanging electric fence.

Camera trap records show the elephants attempting unsuccessfully to enter areas near eight villages, which lie at the edge of a 350 sq km reserve forest that was added to the Manas National Park in 2016, on at least 59 of the 65 occasions that the pachyderms had been sighted since October 14, 2019. The elephants, however, did manage to cross the fence without damaging it on eight occasions, due to a sudden

discharge of the batteries powering it around midnight.

But the villagers, who have borne the brunt of the elephant-man conflict, aren't ready as yet to call the latest barrier a success. For that, they would rather wait to see how the fence performs during the monsoon months ahead.

The core area of Manas is about 140 km west of Guwahati.

"There have been experiments with electric fences earlier to prevent elephants in the jungles from raiding the houses and the farmlands of the villagers leading to large-scale damage and loss of human lives," said



Brojo Kumar Basumatary, a field sociologist of Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) based in Chirang district's Panbari. "We undertook the hanging fence project in October 2019 and completed it in February this year. We planned it for more than the existing 5 km but could not go ahead

because of restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic," he told The Hindu.

The earlier project entailed stringing a solar-powered fence between two ordinary 7 feet tall poles, set 10 metres apart.

Elephants, however, would frequently uproot them for gorging on the granaries in the villages.

The hanging fence involves sturdier metallic poles with a strong cable strung from the top. Wires arranged 3 feet apart dangle from this cable without touching the ground for letting smaller animals up to 1 foot tall pass. The wires carry an aver-

age 9-kilovolt charge, the maximum being 11 kilovolts.

"The wires are non-lethal," said Bhaskar Choudhury, regional coordinator of WTI. "An elephant coming in contact gets a mild shock that works as a deterrent. And because of the hanging design, elephants can neither break the pillar nor slam the wires with tree branches," he added.