



Ex-CJI Ranjan Gogoi
defends nomination
to Rajya Sabha
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Rahul Gandhi bats
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Sensex plunges 811
points, or 2.58%, to
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UEFA postpones Euro 2020
by a year; French Open
moved to September
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Nirbhaya case: court
dismisses Mukesh's plea

NEW DELHI
A Delhi court on Tuesday rejected the plea of Mukesh Singh, one of the four death row convicts in the Nirbhaya gang rape and murder case, seeking to quash his death penalty claiming that he was not in Delhi on the day of the incident. Mukesh claimed that he was arrested from Rajasthan and brought to Delhi on December 17, 2012.

NORTH ▶ PAGE 5

Farooq visits family of
Mehbooba Mufti

SRINAGAR
National Conference president Farooq Abdullah on Tuesday visited the family of Peoples Democratic Party president Mehbooba Mufti in Srinagar. Sources said Dr. Abdullah, who was released on March 13 after over seven months of detention, enquired after the family members of Ms. Mufti, who remains in an isolated detention centre in Srinagar.

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OPPORTUNITIES ▶ PAGE 7

COVID-19 claims third victim in country

Number of cases rises to 137; Centre bans entry of passengers from Afghanistan, Philippines, Malaysia

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India reported its third death from the COVID-19 pandemic on Tuesday, with the Union Health Ministry putting the number of positive cases at 137.

The deceased person had a history of travel to Dubai and was being treated in Mumbai. Joint Secretary in the Union Health Ministry Lav Agarwal said at a press conference.

Earlier, a 76-year-old man from Kalaburagi in Karnataka with a travel history to Saudi Arabia and a 68-year-old woman in Delhi, whose son had tested positive, died from the infection.

Fourteen of those who had tested positive have been "cured/discharged" and 24 of those who had tested positive in India were foreigners, the Ministry said.

With 23 fresh cases reported across the country in the last 24 hours, Maharashtra continues to top the list at 36, followed by Kerala with 24, Uttar Pradesh at 14 and Karnataka at 11.

However, reports from the States put the number of positive cases at 143, including 41 from Maharashtra. West Bengal reported its first case of an 18-year-old youth, who recently returned from England, and was admitted with symptoms on Tuesday.

Extending travel curbs, the Centre prohibited the entry of passengers from Af-

Case count

With 31,506 cases, Italy had the most confirmed COVID-19 cases outside China as on Tuesday night. India's count was 137, according to the Union Health Ministry



COUNTRY	CONFIRMED CASES
China	81,058
Italy	31,506
Iran	16,169
Spain	11,309
Germany	9,257
South Korea	8,320
France	6,664
U.S.	5,702
Switzerland	2,700
United Kingdom	1,960
India	137

The big fight: Chennai Corporation workers spraying disinfectants at Sri Parthasarathy Swamy temple in Triplicane. ■ K.V. SRINIVASAN

Two new virus cases in Noida

Two new cases of COVID-19 came to light in Noida on Tuesday. "One of them is a woman resident of Sector 100 who has a travel history to France. The other lives in Sector 78 and is a colleague of a senior executive who tested positive on March 12," said Anurag Bhargav, CMO, Gautam Buddha Nagar.

► PAGE 4

51 private labs will soon be allowed to conduct tests

WHO prescription
on tests not for
India: ICMR chief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The "test, test, test" prescription of the World Health Organisation (WHO) is not for India, Director-General of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) Balram Bhargava said on Tuesday, stressing that community transmission of COVID-19 has not yet occurred in the country.

Dr. Bhargava, however, also announced that 51 private laboratories [accredited to the National Accreditation



ICMR D-G Balram Bhargava
■ V.V. KRISHNAN

Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) will soon be allowed

COVID-19

to test for COVID-19 to enhance capacity for diagnosis in addition to the 72 func-

tional laboratories.

"The WHO criteria are not country specific and we have told the country office that statements like these spread panic. This is more applicable for Europe, U.K., Italy, etc.," Dr Bhargava said. "While we cannot say that we have contained and avoided community transmission, we did close our borders very early."

On Monday, Director-General of WHO Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus had said: "We have a simple message for all countries: test, test, test. Test every suspect ed case."

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

Cong. moves
SC on MLAs

The Madhya Pradesh Congress on Tuesday approached the Supreme Court for a direction to grant it access to and communicate with its 16 'rebel' MLAs spirited away to Bengaluru ahead of the Assembly floor test.

ior advocate Mukul Rohatgi for Mr. Chouhan and nine other MLAs. "Issue notice in view of the urgency of the situation and notice is returnable at 10.30 a.m. at March 18. Liberty to serve the notice through email," the court ordered.

"We will have to issue notice. The appropriate thing would be to issue a short notice and keep it for tomorrow," Justice Chandrachud orally addressed se-

rvants.

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Government of Haryana
District Food, Civil Supplies
and Consumer Affairs Controller, Rewari
2nd Floor, Room No. 312, District Secretariat, Rewari
Website: <http://haryanafood.nic.in>
Ph. 01274-225214
Email: dfscrwr@gmail.com

Revised E-tender Notice for Transportation and Labour**& Cartage Contracts for the year 2020-21**

The e-tenders are invited for Transportation and Labour/Cartage for Kosli Mandi, Rewari Mandi, Bawali Mandi and Rail Head Khorai for the year 2020-21 under the chairmanship of DC Rewari in respect of State Procurement Agencies i.e. Food Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs Department, Hafed, HWC, HAIC and Confed on the following dates:

Work Description	Name of Mandi	No of Truck Required	Releasing/ Calling date for submission of tender	Closing date and time of Submission of Bid	Opening of Technical Bid & Checking of Documents	Opening of Financial Bid & negotiation & finalization	Place
Labour and Cartage	Kosli 30	13.03.2020	18.03.2020	12 PM	As per decision of District tender Committee	DFSC Office Mini Sect, Rewari	
	Rewari 70	6 PM					
	Bawali 10						
	Khorai 10						

- Tenders should submit both the tender bids "i.e. Technical Bid and "Financial Bid" only Electronic From (Refer tender documents) Financial Bid Proposal shall be submitted mandatorily online under commercial Envelope and original not be submitted manually.
- Each Technical Bid must be accompanied by an earnest money through RTGS.
- The Anaj Mandi Arthi Association may also participate in the Transportation work after quoting the rates in e-tender. The Condition of three years experience will not be applicable in case of mandi association.
- Tenders forms and details terms and conditions be downloaded from the website i.e. <https://etenders.hry.nic.in>.
- In case of any enquiry/problem, District Food & Supplies Controller, Rewari/District Manager of procuring agencies may be contacted.
- The District Tender Committee reserves the right to accept/reject any/all tenders without assigning any reason. After the final acceptance of the tender by the tender committee, no request for further increase of rate for any operation shall be entertained.

Ashok Kumar Rawat

Distt. Food & Supplies Controller,

PRDH 80421

Rewari

DELHI TODAY**Air Quality of Delhi-NCR**

Exhibition: An art exhibition by Raghu Vyas at Shridharani Gallery, Triveni Kala Sangam, 205, Tansen Marg, 11 a.m.- 8 p.m.

Exhibition: "Queen Campus", a solo exhibition of paintings by Shivani Soni at Triveni Gallery, Triveni Kala Sangam, 205, Tansen Marg, 11 a.m.- 8 p.m.

Culture: Akhila Bharata Sadhu Samajam presents discourse on Srimad Ramayanam by Sri Krishna Premi Swami at Sri Rajaram Mandir, Dasarath Puri, 7 p.m.

(Mail your listings for this column at cityeditor@thehindu.co.in)

**Deputy Commissioner, Nuh.
Community Participation/Press Notice****No. 252 / Nazar****Dated: 16-3-2020**

Online bids are hereby invited on behalf of Deputy Commissioner, Nuh from eligible contractors/agencies/firm for the work mentioned below:-

Sr. No	Name of Work	Time Limit for work	Earnest Money (Rs.)	Tender Document Fee & eService Fee (Rs.)	Start Date & Time of Bid Preparation & Submission	Pre-Bid Meeting	Expiry Date & Time of Bid Submission
1.	Tender for "Manpower Services Agency" for Deputy Commissioner Office Nuh	One Year	50,000	1000/- 2000	16/03/2020 at 5:00 pm	23/03/2020 at 3:00 PM	29/03/2020 at 5:00 PM

- Tender will be opened as per Key dates.
- The detailed tender notice and Tender Document can be seen on website: <https://nuh.gov.in> and download online from the portal <http://etenders.hry.nic.in>.
- Possession of Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) and registration of the contractor on the portal i.e. <https://etenders.hry.nic.in> is a prerequisite for e-tendering.
- For any other queries please contact District Nazar, O/o-DC Office Nuh, Mobile No 9812690630 or email to donuh@hry.nic.in.
- As the Bids are to be submitted online and are required to be encrypted and digitally signed, the Bidders are advised to obtain Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) at the earliest. For Further details, the Bidders should follow "Instruction to the Bidder", given in DNIT on the above said portal.

For: Deputy Commissioner

PRDH 80420 Nuh

**GUJARAT WATER SUPPLY & SEWERAGE BOARD,
GANDHINAGAR**
(Govt. of Gujarat Undertaking)

E-TENDER NOTICE NO. E-14 OF 2019-20

Invites online tenders ID No. 403959, 403961, 403962, 403963, 403964, 403965, 403966, 403967, 403968 for the work of (09) water supply scheme of taluka Vansada / Chikhli / Jalalpore / Navsari Dist. Navsari under Public Health Works Division, G.W.S.S.B. Navsari. An Estimate Cost. **72.78 lacs** for further details of tender Notes scope of work & specification etc. please visit web site <https://www.gwssb.org>, www.gwssb.nprocure.com, www.statetender.com, www.tradereader.com Upload Start date **19/03/2020** and Last date for submission of online tender is **03/04/2020** up to 18.00 hrs.

For any complaints in village level Water Supply Pls. Contact Gujarat Water Supply & Sewerage Board Help Line No.1916.

MAHITI/NAV/644/2020

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED**See Section 82 Cr. P.C.**

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused **Pooja Soni W/o Bharat Nathmal Soni R/o D-235, IIrd Floor West Vinod Nagar, Delhi** & also at Daspa Bus Stand near Thakur Tea Stall, Bhinmal, Distt. Jalor, Rajasthan, has Committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 455/19, U/s 408/411/34/201/120B IPC** has been registered at **P.S. DBG Road, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest therupon issued that the said **Pooja Soni** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said **Pooja Soni** has absconded (or is concealing herself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Pooja Soni** of **FIR No. 455/19, U/s 408/411/34/201/120B IPC** has been registered at **P.S. DBG Road, Delhi** is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **04.05.2020**

By order
Sh. Arul Verma
Chief M.M. Central District,
Tis Hazari Court, Delhi

DP/49/CD/2020

"SCHEME FOR CELEBRATION OF BIRTH/DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF EMINENT PERSONALITIES"

Delhi Government will provide assistance through empanelled agencies to the desirous Organization in the form of arrangement for tentage, sound system, lighting banners etc. For celebration of Birth Anniversary **Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar** on **14/04/2020**

Eligibility:-

- The following are eligible to apply for assistance under the scheme:-
- Registered NGOs, under Societies Registration Act which are in existence.
 - Only those NGOs are eligible which are registered under Society Registration Act and having audited accounts.

List of the items for providing assistance to the desirous NGOs are as follows:-

- Tentage
- Chairs
- Sofa
- Tables.
- Curtains, Mat etc
- Sound System
- Light System
- Generator
- Banners/Hoardings.

Procedure for applying:

The Organizations interested to apply may submit a detailed proposal, containing:-

- Details of such celebrations / activities organized by them in the past.
- The duly filed in applications & recommended by area MLA along with copies of Registration Certificate and audited accounts should be submitted by the registered NGO/Organization to the Department for the Welfare of SC/ST/OBC, GNCT of Delhi, B Block, 2nd floor, Vikas Bhawan, I.P. Estate, New Delhi-02, at least 15 days before the event positively. Applications received thereafter will not be considered.

For full details, please visit Department website:- scstwelfare.delhigovt.nic.in

**DEPARTMENT FOR THE WELFARE OF SC/ST/OBC
GOVERNMENT OF NCT OF DELHI,
B-BLOCK, VIKAS BHAWAN, I.P. ESTATE, NEW DELHI-02**

DIP/Shabdharth/1467/19-20

Agencies fined ₹1 crore for flouting dust norms

Delhi Police, DDA among those penalised by the DPCC

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) on Tuesday issued fines to ongoing construction projects at Delhi Armed Police Line in Dwarka, India International Convention Centre in Dwarka, and multiple projects of the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), among others for not following dust-control measures and thus causing air pollution.

Fines worth a total of ₹1 crore were issued to 19 projects across the city following an inspection drive.

"We have issued fines to the Delhi Police, DDA, CPWD (Central Public Works Department) and other private builders for violation of dust control measures. We have issued fines to the agencies that took environmental clearance for these constructions," a senior DPCC official told *The Hindu*.

"They will have to pay the fine and then send us a report on corrective measures



The violations were detected during an inspection drive in February. ■ FILE PHOTO

taken. Later, we will also inspect some of them," the official added.

The DPCC had carried out an inspection drive from February 15-28 and inspected 57 construction sites. Of these, 18 project proponents were fined ₹5 lakh each and one has to pay a fine of ₹10 lakh," the official said.

A set of guidelines on dust control, issued by the Central Pollution Control Board in November 2017, lists out several measures, including use covering sheets [plastic, tarpaulin, etc] on construc-

tion material that can easily get airborne, and on construction and demolition debris.

"Enforcement of dust control measures in building and road construction will have to be strengthened. The government has to ensure compliance and accountability with strong deterrence," said Anumita Roychowdhury, head of the 'Clean Air' programme at the Centre for Science and Environment, Delhi.

"In road construction, no one follows dust control norms. In building construction, big firms follow the measures, but the smaller ones do not," said C.R. Babu, professor emeritus at Centre for Environmental Management of Degraded Ecosystems, Delhi University.

"Usually such inspection is done during summer, and when pollution peaks in winter. But this year, we have started early and plan to continue the drive," the DPCC official said.

Man held for killing woman

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 23-year-old man was arrested for allegedly killing his distant relative, with whom he was in a relationship, after a quarrel.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said that accused has been identified as Heera Singh, a resident of Nainital.

The police said that on February 9, they received a complaint from a man who said that his 23-year-old niece was missing since February 5 after which a kidnapping case was registered.

The complainant told the police that the woman was a pharmacist in a hospital in

Delhi and mentioned that she had a friend, Heera Singh, who was also a pharmacist and a distant maternal uncle of the woman.

During investigation, it was revealed that Heera and the woman were planning to marry, but their families were against it. On February 6, a woman's body was found in Rampur, U.P.. The deceased was identified as the missing woman. On Monday, the police traced Heera's location and arrested him," Mr. Thakur said.

Heera allegedly told the police that they had gotten into a fight over marriage. In a fit of rage, he hit her with a brick several times killing her.

Corrigendum-1

Tender No. mentioned in the tender document may please be read as E-Tender No. DY CE-MLG-AFFOR-2020-02 instead of DY CE-III-MLG-AFFORESTATION-2020-02.

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Tender Notice No. 06 Dated 17.03.2020

Invitation of tenders through e-Procurement system

Dy. Chief Material Manager/Con, North Eastern Railway, Gorakhpur and on behalf of The President of India, invites tenders through e-Procurement system for the supply of the following items. Complete description of the item and other conditions are available on website www.ireps.gov.in.

Sr. No.: 01, Tender No. Due Date : 17205021 Dt. 20.04.2020, Brief Description of Stores : Relay AC Immune plug in type style QSPAI DC Neutral line. The interlocking code for this unit shall be ABDEJ.

Qty. Required : 716 Nos., Earnest Money : Rs. 63,370.00.

1. Above tenders are available on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in. The firm desires in participating against e-tender are advised to electronically regd. themselves on the above website for which they would require to obtain class-III digital certificate (if already not obtained) from certifying agencies authorized under Govt. of India IT Act, 2000. Manual offers will not be accepted.

2. Advertised tender of Dy. Chief Material Manager/Con, NER, Gorakhpur, are being opened through EPS (E-Procurement System) only. Firms desiring to participate in Dy. Chief Material Manager/Con, NER/ GKP should obtain necessary digital certificate and get themselves registered with CRIS/New Delhi.

Necessary details in this regard can be obtained from the website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>. In case of difference between English and Hindi version of the tender notice, the English version shall prevail.

4. Head of allocation towards cost of Earnest money & SD money is 00844556.

5. Item above is reserved to be procured from RDSO approved source only.

Dy. Chief Material Manager/

Vandalised medical shop opens shutters weeks after violence

Customers, neighbours told us not to be afraid anymore, says shop owner

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

In what can be called the first few glimpses of rebuilding lives, a medical shop run by Salman was finally opened on Monday in riot-hit Gautam Vihar. The shop was entirely vandalised and looted by a mob during the violence on February 25.

Showing a video shot by a neighbour which is still on his phone, Salman explained how the shutter was broken and articles in the shop were taken away by men, some of whom had covered their faces with handkerchiefs.

Recalling the incident, Salman said, he and his brother Waseem closed the shop in a hurry, leaving behind the day's earnings and ₹2 lakh which they had to pay to a distributor. Being the only Muslim-run shop on the stretch, Salman had asked his neighbours to take care as his house in Yamuna Vihar is about 3 km away from the shop and the neighbours tried their best, he said.

Neighbours' support
"Our neighbours in the street are good people. They told the mob not to harm the shop," he said.

Referring to one 'Bablu bhai', he said: "He [Bablu



Salman outside his medical shop in violence-hit Gautam Vihar on Tuesday. ■ HEMANI BHANDARI

bhai] had told that if you really worship Lord Ram then don't do this, but they didn't listen and continued to chant Jai Shri Ram." However, the neighbour ensured that the shop was not burnt to ashes. "While I think none of our neighbours were involved in vandalism, there could be others in the area who could have told the rioters that the shop is run by Muslims".

They damaged one refrigerator and burnt another, he said, adding that most drawers in the shop were broken and looted. "We were informed about the situation by our neighbours. So we called the welder and asked him to at least fix the shutter

the same day but when the welder was working, rioters again came and didn't let him work," he said.

Salman said he called the police three times on February 25, but no help came his way. "They called me back three days ago to ask why I had called on that day. I told them I have already got an FIR registered," he said.

Salman and his family didn't visit their shop for a week after the incident and finally visited later. On the same day, after taking stock, they went to New Usmanpur Police Station and informed the police. The FIR was registered without any hassle, he said.

The 28-year-old said that

they still didn't have the courage to open the shop but their customers encouraged them due to which they could take the decision. "Our customers called us and sympathised. One of the female customers even cried. People residing and working near our store also called and said that we should open again and shouldn't be afraid anymore," he said.

Restored back to shape

A week ago, after Holi, the repair work began. A few NGOs raised money for the shop and the family also received a compensation of ₹3 lakh from the government. "We got the whole shop repainted, changed the shutters, got new mirror shelves and purchased a new refrigerator. We have also started stocking up medicines. Thankfully, our distributors have told us to pay them when we are in a position to," he said.

With the shop running, the two brothers feed the family of 15, including six children, residing in a four-storey rented accommodation. "The funds were drying up. Till when could we sit at home? Thank God, we have been able to open," he said heaving a sigh of relief.

Deputy CM directs officials to expedite relief disbursement

More security to be in place as families shift back to homes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Tuesday convened an urgent meeting to discuss the status of relief disbursement to riot victims. Health Minister Satyendar Jain, District Magistrate (N.E.), District Magistrate (Revenue), Joint Commissioner of Police and other senior officers were part of the meeting.

Health Minister Satyendar Jain, District Magistrate (N.E.), District Magistrate (Revenue), Joint Commissioner of Police and other senior officers were part of the meeting.

As families affected by the riots are in the process of moving back to their homes from the relief camps, the Deputy CM asked for more police officers to be deployed in north-east Delhi, the Delhi government said in a statement.

"As the families are all set to move from the relief camps, it is important for us to ensure a safe environment for them. Tightening security by posting more police officers to the affected regions is a step to get their fears quelled and to restart their lives again. It is also important for us in our peace restoration measures," Mr. Sisodia was quoted as having said at the meeting.

With the shop running, the two brothers feed the family of 15, including six children, residing in a four-storey rented accommodation. "The funds were drying up. Till when could we sit at home? Thank God, we have been able to open," he said heaving a sigh of relief.

Errors, duplications
Citing discrepancies in a few forms in the context of mis-spelt names and duplications, Mr. Sisodia said, "I



Deputy CM Manish Sisodia chairing a meeting with Health Minister Satyendar Jain and other officials. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

minor damages have been received out of which 163 have been fully compensated.

Acid attack cases

The Delhi government's Relief Response Team highlighted three cases in which children were victims of acid attacks, the statement said.

"Acid attack cases have to be treated under the category of grievous injury and the compensation should be given accordingly. It not only impacts someone physically but also pushes the victim into a phase of immense mental trauma," Mr. Jain was quoted as having said.

So far, a sum of ₹13,51,51,590 has been disbursed to the riot victims, the statement said.

According to the Delhi government, 214 forms have been received for substantial damage to households and 203 of them have been provided with full monetary compensation. Also, 221 forms for households with

Panel gets 7,732 complaints on fake news within 2 weeks

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Committee for Peace and Harmony of Delhi Assembly on Tuesday said that it received 7,732 complaints within two weeks of the launch of a WhatsApp number and an email address to check fake news and rumour-mongering.

Earlier this month, the committee had released a number and email address in which people can forward messages that they find online, which can incite violence between religious communities. The committee investigates the messages and forwards them to law enforcement authorities to file FIRs, as per merit.

AAP Rajinder Nagar MLA Raghav Chadha, Chairman of the committee, said that out of the total complaints, they have screened 2,110 complaints and 504 of them were found to be inflammatory.

"The committee also summoned two complainants and heard their submissions at length. After preliminary inquiry and their statement, a fit case for FIR was made out. Both the complainants assured their support during the judicial process," an official statement said.

Report calls for ramping up medical services to riot victims

Police stopped our team of doctors from reaching hospital: Progressive Medicos and Scientists Forum

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Progressive Medicos and Scientists Forum (PMFS), one of the first groups to send medical relief to riot-hit parts of north-east Delhi, on Wednesday came out with a report on the medical emergency in the wake of violence here. The report details the role of police and calls for ramping up of medical services.

A team of about eight doctors, under the banner of PMSF, had made repeated attempts to reach Al Hind Hospital in Old Mustafabad, which had reportedly been overrun with victims with grievous injuries, on February 24 and 25. However, they were allegedly stopped by the police as well as rioters,



A shop in Gokulpuri's scrap market set ablaze by rioters. ■ FILE PHOTO: SANDEEP SAXENA

the group said. Ambulances were only able to reach the area following a High Court directive to the police to ensure safe passage, it added.

Al Hind Hospital, which catered to about 30-40 patients a day, had more than 200 patients on February 24 itself, the report reads. Quoting a doctor at the hospital, it

says: "These people [referring to attackers] had severely assaulted the victims that they were dying of agony and we had nothing in our hands.

Despite being doctors, we couldn't do much because the vital organs were punctured. Some had their skulls open from both sides with knives. Police had even beaten up a pregnant woman brutally."

Services at the hospital were reportedly kept up by the relentless efforts of registered medical practitioners and volunteers from the area before help could arrive.

Medical response

The report also calls into question the "sincerity and quality" of medical response from the government. It states that "even as the bodies in the GTB Hospital mortuary were mounting, the hospital authorities failed to perform the post-mortems on time as they were waiting for 'instructions' from the government". Post-mortems were finally carried out only after the Delhi Minorities Commission ordered the

hospital Superintendent to conduct the procedure on all cases within 24 hours of their arrival, it added.

A statement by the group lashes out at the poor state of health infrastructure in the area with "not even one mohalla clinic in the entire Mustafabad" and the publicly funded health insurance scheme not working out.

The team, which had reportedly set up a medical camp at the Idgah in Mustafabad, in a statement, called upon government authorities to organise efforts to "heal the physical, mental, physiological, and financial wounds which have disfigured the lives of people," an effort that could not be managed by civil society alone, they argued.

Women, activists write to CMs of States seeking de-linking of NPR from census

In Assam, vast majority of 19 lakh left out of NRC are women'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Women, including rights activists, doctors, lawyers, academics, anganwadi workers and others, on Tuesday wrote to Chief Ministers of all States, registering their reservations against the National Population Register (NPR) and demanding that it be de-linked from the census house listing.

"Women constitute nearly 50% of India's population and this opposition is based on clear evidence from our own lives"

names, have low literacy rates and leave their natal homes upon marriage with no documents in tow. In Assam, a vast majority of the 19 lakh left out of NRC are women. That is the reality."

Stating that Home Minister Amit Shah's statement that no one will be marked

"doubtful" in the NPR "carries no legal sanctity," social activist Anjali Bharadwaj said that the statement would on-

ly hold true when relevant statutes and rules are formally amended.

Activist Farah Naqvi added: "Women and children from Adivasi communities, Dalits, Muslims, migrant labourers, small farmers, domestic workers, sex workers and transgenders, if asked to 'prove' citizenship will all be at grave risk of being disenfranchised."

In the letter to the Chief Ministers, women have demanded that each State de-link NPR from the census and send enumerators out only with the census schedule. "Each State government must issue executive orders to de-link NPR and census immediately," they demanded.

Savarkar road sign vandalised in JNU

It sparked off a blame game between students' outfits

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The signage for a road recently named after V.D. Savarkar was defaced on Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) campus on Tuesday, sparking off a blame game between students' organisations. The sign was painted over with the name B.R. Ambedkar.

The JNU Administration had put up a signboard near Purvanchal Bus Terminal naming the road V.D. Savarkar. This was done on the basis of recommendations made by a committee set up to name roads on campus. The report was presented at an Executive Council meeting on November 13, 2019.

The JNU Students' Union (JNSU) said the administration knows that "Savarkar and his ideology is unaccep-



The defaced signboard on the JNU campus. ■ PTI

table to JNU students". "Mr. Savarkar's apology to the British, his antipathy to Muslims and women, and his endorsement to the two-nation theory are well known and he cannot be accepted as an icon of a secular, plural and inclusive nation," the JNSU said in a statement. "JNU believes in the ideals of Bhagat

BJP campaigns to spread awareness on COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Tuesday sought to create awareness on prevention of COVID-19 across the Capital. Delhi BJP president Manoj Tiwari initiated the campaign at Connaught Place and distributed sanitiser and masks.

"Due to the preventive steps taken by the government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, people are recovering from this infection," Mr. Tiwari said. "The people will also have to take some precautions for the prevention of COVID-19 such as maintaining distance from each other, using sanitiser, washing hands with soap/water, using masks in congested places and stay indoors," he said.

People should not panic, but needed to remain cautious and must consult a doctor if they feel any symptoms, he added.

Meanwhile, Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri led a similar campaign at the Rajiv Chowk Metro Station, gate no. 6 on. He, along with BJP MLAs and senior party functionaries, distributed masks and sanitiser. "We had distributed 10,000 masks and 2,000 sanitiser within three hours," Mr. Bidhuri said.

Virus outbreak forces workers to return home

Ban on weekly markets to hit livelihood

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Around a week ago, newly wedded Rishi Kumar took a train to Delhi from Moradabad railway station, hoping he would return with a gift for his wife next month.

Kumar, who works for a packers and movers company and resides in a one-room house near Kashmere Gate with three others, packed his bag on Tuesday and headed to his Siras Khera village without any gift for his wife.

"My employers told us a disease is killing people in thousands. They paid us for the week and asked us to leave. There hasn't been much business over the last few days," he said, worrying how will he repay the money he took from his relatives for the wedding.

Daily wagers hit

The COVID-19 outbreak in the Capital has hit a large number of daily wagers, roadside vendors and labourers who come to Delhi in search of livelihood.

Many have been returning to their villages due to lack of work opportunity with the epidemic affecting the business in daily markets. "It has hit everyday life here. The footfall has dropped drastically," Dinesh Sharma, a wholesale supplier

IN BRIEF

Appear in-person only in urgent matters: NGT

NEW DELHI

In view of COVID-19 outbreak, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed advocates, litigants and parties to appear in-person only in urgent matters and avoid unnecessary crowding on its premises.

REGIONAL APPOINTMENT



DELHI JAL BOARD: GOVT. OF N.C.T. OF DELHI

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER (D)

KAROL BAGH, NEW DELHI-110005

Applications are invited from the eligible officers for filling up the post of the Member (Finance) in Delhi Jal Board on deputation basis initially for a period of one year in the Pay Band of Rs. 37,400-67,000/- (Pre-revised)/Level 14 in 7th CPC, within 21 days from the date of this advertisement to the Member (Administration), DJB. For further information, please visit our website www.delhijalboard.nic.in.

(SANDEEP GULATI)
ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER (D)

Issued By P.R.O. (WATER)
Advt. No J.S.V. 925/2019-20

Accused runs an academy in Sonipat

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 28-year-old boxing coach has been arrested for allegedly sexually assaulting his 19-year-old student in February, the police said on Tuesday. The victim was representing Haryana in the West Bengal Classic, and the incident took place while on

the way to Kolkata.

"The woman said that she along with her team members and the coach were on their way to Kolkata and had boarded a train from the New Delhi railway station to participate in the tournament," said a police officer.

The coach, she alleged, sexually assaulted her on the way and also during the stay in Kolkata.

The complaint was submitted by the victim on February 13 and a case under

Restaurants advised to shut down

National Restaurant Association of India issues advisory even as eateries in city record low footfall

JAIDEEP DEO BHANJ
NEW DELHI

The National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI) has issued an advisory to all its members to shut down their restaurant operations from March 18-31, or till such a time when no new COVID-19 cases are reported.

This comes at a time when the hospitality industry is taking a beating due to dwindling sales because of the virus outbreak.

In a statement on Tuesday night, the NRAI said: "We find ourselves in an unprecedented situation where we are compelled to make difficult decisions which have massive financial implications on our businesses but we are doing this in the larger benefit for our teams, guests and communities."

The association said that most employees use public transport to commute and they run a huge risk of getting infected and further becoming carriers of the virus.

"Therefore, to avoid such risk, we have advised all our members to shut down their operations and help curtail the spread of the deadly virus," the NRAI added.



A group of tourists at India Gate in New Delhi on Tuesday. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

from landlords to various departments of the government, banks and financial institutions and seek their support in mitigating our losses as far as possible," the NRAI said.

One of the first to announce that they will be shutting all restaurants from midnight on March 17 is a group called First Fiddle that owns a number of restaurants in the city.

Priyank Sukhija of First Fiddle said, "In the wake of COVID-19 outbreak, the First Fiddle family is committed to safety. These are times when we need to think about our staff and patrons more than our business. At mid-

night Tuesday, we at First Fiddle are shutting down all our restaurants till March 31, across the country. We will be back with a bang once the virus is gone," he said.

COVID-19

He added that he also urges the government to take similar steps to curb the COVID-19 outbreak before it goes out of our hands.

Even those restaurants open have reported low footfall. Anil Kharb, assistant manager at Kampai located in Aerocity, Delhi, says that his restaurant mostly caters to Japanese customers and a

few Indians but recently, since the past few weeks there has been a 70% reduction in the footfall due to the virus scare.

"We ensure safety of our guests by taking suggested measures. Hand sanitizers are kept at the entrance and at every table. Our serving and kitchen staff are strictly complying to wearing masks," Mr. Kharb said.

"We used to receive close to 45-50 guests each day but now it has come down to 2-3 a day. The ones visiting are trusting us with the hygiene and we are dedicated to ensuring that. We are strictly following the use of masks, gloves, sanitizers along with

infra-red thermometers installed for the staff," said Bhaskar Joshi, Food and Beverage Executive at Prego - The Westin Gurgaon.

With those practising social distancing avoiding malls, restaurants that normally see walk-in customers throughout the day are finding business tough. Nirjan Sharma, assistant manager of Vasant Kunj Socials said, "We are located inside Ambience Mall, so most of our customers are mall visitors. People are avoiding such crowded public spaces which is reflected in the restaurant business as well. The reduction is more visible in foreigner crowd as compared to Indians."

Food delivery app Zomato

has also told customers that they can instruct delivery vallets to leave the package at the door of the order that has been paid for.

It added that customers can check hygiene ratings of restaurants through the hygiene rating filter on the app before ordering food.

"We are continuously training and educating our delivery partners on the best practices of personal hygiene, proper method and frequency of hand washing/sanitising as well as what to do in case they have any symptoms of COVID-19. We are especially emphasising on best practices on how to handle food packages to ensure safe and hygienic delivery," Zomato said.

(With inputs from Aishwarya Tripathi)

Two new cases reported in Noida

Both the patients are in their 20s

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

Two new cases of COVID-19 came to light in Noida on Tuesday. "One of them is a woman, who lives in Sector 100 and recently travelled to France. The other lives in Sector 78 and is a colleague of the senior executive of a leather factory in Greater Noida, who lives in Delhi, and tested positive on March 12," said Anurag Bhargav, Chief Medical Officer (Gauhati Buddha Nagar).

We have started screening all the families in the two societies. It is important for all the residents to follow the guidelines

B.N. SINGH
District Magistrate

are stable. "They are in their 20s and are expected to recover soon," he added.

On the line of treatment, he said, as there was no specific medicine, physicians are treating them according to symptoms. One of them is Tamiflu. He refused to divulge whether the physicians were following the same line of treatment followed by the doctors of the Sawai Man Singh hospital in Jaipur while treating two Italian patients.

District Magistrate B.N. Singh told reporters there was no need to panic.

"We have started screening all the families in the two societies. It is important for all the residents to follow the guidelines," he said.

The Apartment Owners' Associations (AOA) of the two societies have shut down the common areas and have asked the flat owners not to allow visitors and keep a watch on the support staff.

He said not all the residents would be tested. "Only those who are symptomatic would be checked. Rest have been asked to go into self quarantine," he said.

A training session was conducted for Noida police by Dr. H.S. Dhanu to spread awareness among police officers.

Let staff work from home, Gurugram MNCs advised

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

The district administration on Tuesday issued an advisory for all multinational companies, information technology firms and industries in Gurugram to allow their employees to work from home till March 31 to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

District Magistrate Amit Khatri has appointed the District Food and Supply Controller as nodal officer for enforcement of provisions of the Centre's notification on masks and hand sanitizers.

The District Drugs Control Officer has been directed to ensure sufficient availability of surgical and protective masks and hand sanitizers at prices not exceeding the Maximum Retail Price.

As per the district administration, information was received about 1,486 passengers with travel history outside India or suspected cases in Gurugram; 1,273 out of them are in home quarantine and three each are admitted to three hospitals.

A total of 21 samples, including four on Tuesday, have been sent for examination. One came back positive and 15 negative.

The results for five samples are awaited. Four passengers are untraceable due to incomplete address.

Demand for chicken drops by up to 75%

Poultry industry hit by rumours that COVID-19 can be caused by eating meat

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Despite several reports stating that COVID-19 does not have any effect on animals, poultry businesses across several cities have taken a hit due to rumours on social media. Narendra Singh, who runs a shop at Prithviraj Market, said that over the last one week, sales have dropped by 50%.

"Sales, especially in the last one week, have been really low with not even half of the stock being sold. As a result, prices have also come down slightly and now chicken is being sold at ₹180 per kg instead of ₹200," added Mr. Singh. Business has also hit bigger establishments like Green Chick Chop and Republic of Chicken, said representatives of the respective shops.

Sandeep Singh of Republic of Chicken in South Extension said, "Even though for us prices have not been affected, sales have dipped by nearly 15%-20% since the beginning of this month."

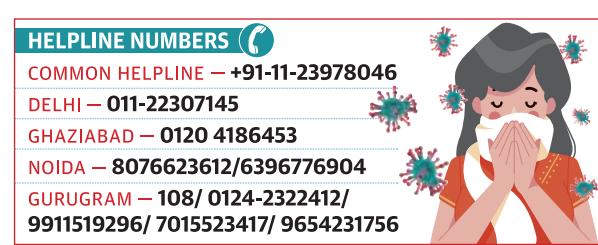
Mohammad Haroon, a poultry shop owner based in Mayur Vihar said, "In Delhi, it has started hitting with low sales, however, we are hearing that places outside the city has been worse. Over the last one week, since the time, the panic around the COVID-19 began, sales have started slowing down."

For Ashu Qureshi, who runs a small restaurant Delhi-6 Special in Pasonda area of Ghaziabad, COVID-19 has come as a bad omen.

"We are staring at joblessness. There is 70% fall in bu-



A chicken specialty restaurant in Pasonda, Ghaziabad, on Tuesday. ■ ANUJ KUMAR



siness. Chicken business runs on the patronage of Hindu families and they have stopped eating since the rumours spread that eating chicken causes the new flu," he said.

"The wholesale prices have dropped to around 100 a kg and even less depending on quality but we sign agreements with suppliers which say that for six months we have to buy chicken at ₹60 a kg. Now we can only reduce the quantity, we can't change the rate," he said, adding he had a staff of 15 to look after.

Mohd Ilyas of Chicken Supreme Corner echoed, "It is all a creation of WhatsApp messages. During bird flu, similar rumours were spread," he said. Mr. Ilyas said that the dip in demand for chicken has a spiral ef-

fect. "The business of a tea seller that stands in front of our shop has also come down," he added.

'Blessing for some'
Mohd Suhaib of Pakkeezah Meat Corner at Garima Garden here had a different take. "The dip in prices has come as a blessing for the underprivileged. We are seeing a rush of auto wallahs and daily wagers as now chicken is selling at the price of vegetables. They are not concerned about the rumours," he said.

Meanwhile, Broilers Breeders Association, North India, Gurbindir Bisla, told The Hindu that the demand for chicken had dropped by around 75% and the prices had also nosedived to around 20% of the total production cost causing a huge

loss to the poultry industry. "Over the past month, the sale has reduced to around 25% and the prices have also fallen drastically. While the cost of production is around ₹80 per kg, some States have witnessed the sale at ₹12-15 per kg. The price for Tuesday was ₹30 per kg," said Mr. Bisla, a resident of Haryana's Jind. He said there were around 15,000 broiler poultry farms in Haryana alone.

Mr. Bisla said that despite clarification by the government that the virus cannot transmit from animals to humans, the rumours have gained ground and the demand had plummeted.

He said that the association was in talks with government officials to provide surplus wheat and rice to poultry farmers at a subsidised rate of ₹10 per kg to reduce production cost.

Confirming the trend, an employee at Fresh and Frozen, Vatika Town Square, Sector 83, Gurugram, confirmed that the demand for raw meat, including chicken, mutton, fish and kebab, had decreased by more than 50% over the past five days due to COVID-19 scare, though the baked meat items were still in demand.

However, Sumit, who runs franchise store of "Sardar - A Pure Meat Shop" in Sector 31, Gurugram, said the sales at his shop were not affected. "We cannot do much about the myths being spread on social media about meat consumption, but we have not suffered any fall in demand," said Mr. Sumit.

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Homeward bound



Students vacate their hostels in Jawaharlal Nehru University after being advised by the administration to go back home in view of the COVID-19 outbreak, in New Delhi on Tuesday. ■ BIBEK CHETTRI

Plea in HC to evacuate Indian students in Tehran

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday agreed to hear urgently a petition seeking to ensure safety of Indian students studying in Iran in the wake of COVID-19 outbreak.

The petition was filed by parents of Indian students studying in Iran. The petition sought an early hearing, which the High Court allowed and listed it for hearing on Wednesday.

On March 12, the High Court directed the Centre to contact the students in Iran and give them assurance. The court had also asked the Centre to submit a status report mentioning if any policy has been formulated and steps taken to evacuate Indians from Iran.

Govt. begins disinfection drive for public vehicles

Certificate given to sanitised vehicles

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Tuesday began a disinfection drive for public service vehicles such as autorickshaws, gramin sewa, phat-phat sewa, maxi cab, eco-friendly sewa and others. The Delhi government said, 1,751 vehicles were sanitised in the first shift from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. These included 1,182 autorickshaws and 194 e-rickshaws among others.

A worker disinfects a DTC bus at Rajghat depot in the Capital on Tuesday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

has advised that everyone should get their vehicle disinfected everyday although this service is not mandatory for all.

The petition alleged that the government was giving priority to pilgrims, who are in Iran, a claim which was denied by the Central government counsel. The Delhi government

DU teachers get option to work from home

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Delhi University (DU) said on Tuesday that teachers had the option of working from home as a precautionary measure to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. The move to allow teachers to work from home came a few days after some academic council members wrote to the Vice-Chancellor, urging him to ensure the same.

Last week, the university had announced that classes were suspended till March 31. "The teachers have the option to work from their homes," the DU said. "The teachers may use this period to complete their pending research work and publish it. Libraries will also be closed for students until March 31." The members, who had written the earlier letter, welcomed the move, but said it addressed their concerns in a selective way.

'No permission to be granted for protests'

Police urge people to remain indoors

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Tuesday said that no permissions will be granted for any protests, rallies or dharnas to contain the spread of COVID-19.

In a statement, the police said, "It is appealed not to assemble at any place for protest, dharna, rally or any other activity, whether in close space or outside, till March 31, 2020. Delhi Police

Civic bodies take steps amid virus outbreak

Public places asked to keep sanitisers

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

will not issue any no-objection certificate or permission in respect of such gatherings.

The police also said that no licence or permission will be issued for public entertainment activities and that an order to this effect is being issued. The police appealed to people to remain indoors "as far as possible" and to not come outside unnecessarily.

Leaders of the three municipal corporations of Delhi on Tuesday said that various precautions were being undertaken in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic. Market associations, restaurants and cafes have been instructed to keep sanitisers as well as set up public wash basins, the South Delhi Mayor said. An aware-

Timings

DELHI
WEDNESDAY, MAR. 18
RISE 06:27 SET 18:32
RISE 02:40 SET 13:13
THURSDAY, MAR. 19
RISE 06:26 SET 18:32
RISE 03:30 SET 14:08
FRIDAY, MAR. 20
RISE 06:25 SET 18:33
RISE 04:14 SET 15:04

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	28	14
Safdarjung	28	14
Palam	29	14

Delhi Palam Today
28°C A hazy morning lies ahead. A warm afternoon is likely. Weather will remain mainly sunny and dry.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
30°C Haze will prevail in the morning. A rise in day temperatures is likely. A sunny sky will prevail.

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THE HINDU
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Plea in HC against U.P. law on recovery of damage to property

PIL urges court to issue direction declaring ordinance 'ultra vires' to Constitution

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) has been filed in the Allahabad High Court seeking the suspension or stay against the ordinance brought by the BJP-led Uttar Pradesh government for the recovery of damage to public and private property during protests, bandhs and riots.

The plea, filed by lawyer Shashank Tripathi, urges the court to issue a writ order or direction declaring the ordinance "ultra vires" to the Constitution.

"To evade from justifying itself from court of law, the State has played mischief upon the Constitution," argued Mr. Tripathi in the plea, referring to the questions asked of it by the High Court and the Supreme Court in the 'name and shame' hoardings episode.

The State government re-

G To evade from justifying itself from court of law, the State has played mischief upon the Constitution

SHASHANK TRIPATHI
Petitioner

cently armed itself with the stringent new law to recover compensation from those who damage public and private property during protests and riots. Claims for compensation will be decided by designated 'Claims Tribunals' that will be authorised to investigate the complaints and assess the damage.

Ordinance notified
The government on Sunday notified the 'Uttar Pradesh Recovery of Damage to Public and Private Property Ordinance, 2020', promulgated by Governor Anandiben Pa-

tel.
The Cabinet met under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday and approved the ordinance.

'It's not consistent'
According to the PIL, the ordinance under question is not consistent and is in contradiction and departure from the ordinance-making power of the State provided under Article 213 of the Constitution.

Owing to the "quasi-judicial nature" of the tribunals provided in the Constitution, the ordinance talks about judicial activity but without procedural and functional safeguard required at law, the plea says.

It also contends that the ordinance under question has not been promulgated on. As such, the same has got no force as legislature and is redundant. The ordinance in question, being in

excess of competence, is unconstitutional, it further states.

As per the ordinance, the owner of any private property or the head of the office concerned, in respect of public property, may file claims for compensation within three months of any incident that causes any damage during public protests, bandhs or riots. The claim can cite as respondents those who "exhorted" or "instigated" or "committed" acts that caused the damage, as well as those named by the police.

'No appeal'

Every order or award passed by the Claims Tribunal will be "final" and no appeal against such orders will be "maintainable" before any court, it says. Also, no civil court will have the jurisdiction to entertain any questions on the claims.

Court dismisses Nirbhaya convict Mukesh's petition

He claims that he was not in Delhi on the day of incident

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI/PATNA

A Delhi court on Tuesday rejected the plea of Mukesh Singh, one of the four death row convicts in the December 16, 2012 Nirbhaya gang rape and murder case, seeking to quash his death penalty claiming that he was not in Delhi on the day of the incident.

In his plea, Mukesh claimed that he was arrested from Rajasthan and brought to Delhi on December 17, 2012, and was not present in the city on December 16, when the crime took place.

The plea also alleged that Mukesh was tortured inside Tihar jail.

The public prosecutor told Additional Sessions Judge Dharmendra Rana that Mukesh's plea is frivolous and a tactic to delay the hanging on March 20.

The judge asked the Bar Council of India to give appropriate sensitisation exercise to Mukesh's counsel



Mukesh Singh. • AFP

M.L. Sharma.

On March 5, a trial court issued fresh warrants with March 20 at 5.30 a.m. as the date for the execution of convicts Mukesh Singh (32), Pawan Gupta (25), Vinay Sharma (26) and Akshay Kumar Singh (31).

NHRC dismisses plea

In another development, the National Human Rights Commission on Tuesday dismissed a plea by the mother of convict Mukesh Kumar

seeking its intervention to prevent the death sentence being carried out.

In a statement, the NHRC said Ram Bai wanted the commission to "prevent the unlawful execution of her son Mukesh Kumar" on Friday.

"The matter is outside the purview of the commission. The complaint is therefore dismissed," the NHRC said.

Seeks divorce

Meanwhile, convict Akshay's wife filed a divorce petition in a local court in Bihar's northeastern Aurangabad district.

"My husband is a convict in the Nirbhaya case but he is innocent... Now, I want to be legally divorced from him before he is hanged as I don't want to live the life of a widow," Punita Devi said in her petition filed at a family court. The court has fixed March 19 as the next date of hearing.

EMPLOYMENT NOTICE FOR THE POST OF PEON

Applications for one post (General category) of Peon in the pay scale of Rs.4440-7440 + 1300 Grade Pay (D.L.), purely on temporary basis for Ambala Sessions Division are hereby invited from the general public. The essential qualification for the aforesaid post shall be as follows:-

PEON

Appointment to the post of Peon shall be made from the candidates who have passed middle standard examination and possess knowledge of Hindi or Punjabi.

AGE

The minimum age limit of candidate for appointment to the post of Peon shall be 18 years and the upper age limit shall be 42 years as on 1.1.2020 in accordance with the latest instructions of the Haryana Government in this regard.

LAST DATE

Last date for receipt of the applications shall be **1.4.2020 till 5:00 P.M.**

DATE & TIME OF INTERVIEW

Interviews for the post of Peon shall be held as per alphabetical orders of the names of the candidates as per the schedule given below:-

Date	Alphabetical order	Reporting Time	Time of interview
5.4.2020	A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J,K,L,R	9:30 A.M	10:00 A.M
6.4.2020	M, N, O, P, Q, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z & Candidates sponsored by employment exchange	9:30 A.M	10:00 A.M

Candidates are directed to report on the above mentioned dates and time in Judicial Court Complex, Ambala City.

NOTE:-

(i) Applications on plain paper affixed with recent passport size photograph of candidate giving details viz. Name, Father's Husband's name, Date of Birth, Sex, Educational Qualification, Category, Present/ Permanent address, contact number and Experience if any, alongwith attested copy of Date of Birth proof, educational qualification and other relevant documents should reach either by registered post or by hand well before the closing date at the following address:-

**The Superintendent,
Office of District and Sessions Judge,
Judicial Court Complex,
Ambala City, Haryana**

(ii) Incomplete applications and those filled without photographs and attested copies of Date of Birth, educational qualification and other relevant certificates shall be straightway rejected without any information to the candidate.

(iii) No correspondence whatsoever, shall be entertained in respect of incomplete applications or those which are received in this office after last date of submission of application.

(iv) This office will not be responsible for any postal delay.

(v) The candidates shall also bring their original documents on the date of interview.

(vi) The candidate must mention the name of post on the head of application.

(vii) No TA/DA shall be paid.

(viii) The number of vacancies may increase or decrease.

District & Sessions Judge, Ambala.

SOUTH DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

NOTICE For INVITING TENDER (TOLL TAX DEPARTMENT)

Notice Inviting Offer cum Request For Proposal (RFP) NIT No: ADC/TT/HO/2020/D-1330 Dated 16.03.2020

ENGAGEMENT OF A CONTRACTOR BY SDMC (Lead Corporation on behalf of all the three Municipal Corporations of Delhi) FOR TOLL & ENVIRONMENT COMPENSATION CHARGE (ECC) COLLECTION AT BORDER POINTS FROM SPECIFIED COMMERCIAL VEHICLES ENTERING DELHI

The South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) invites sealed technical and financial proposals from interested developers/toll plaza operators to collect toll tax from specified commercial vehicles, upgrade/modify, operate, and maintain 124 toll plazas/posts/barriers locations bordering Delhi. In addition to toll collection, the contractor shall also separately collect ECC as per actual basis and deposit the same on weekly basis. Collection of Toll & ECC shall be through newly installed RFID System at 13 entry points and manually or likely to be installed RFID system at remaining entry points of Delhi. The work shall be granted for a period of five years with provision of increase of 5% (five percent) in the existing awarded amount/committed amount after every two years.

• Reserve Price: Rs. 636.00 crores annually (Rs. Six Hundred Thirty Six Crore only)

• Earnest money deposit: Rs.13.00 crores: Rs.7.00 crores in the form of BG, should be kept valid for the period of 120 days and Rs.6.00 crores in the form of DD.

• An Applicant Firm or Consortium of Firms may submit their proposal.

*This reserve price is for toll amount only.

NOTE-The Applicant / Firm / Member of a consortium of firms and their subsidiaries either wholly owned or subsidiaries with percentage of any holding or step down subsidiaries with percentage of any holding or subsidiaries by control of composition of board / associates / consortium who has not cleared past dues of SDMC and has been black-listed by either SDMC or any Govt. organization/Ministry/PSUs shall not be eligible to participate in the tender and such participation will be rejected, summarily.

RFP document shall be issued to intending bidders from **17.03.2020 to 27.03.2020 upto 4.00 P.M. (by hand)** from the office of Additional Deputy Commissioner, Toll Tax Department, 14th Floor, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Civic Centre, Minto Road, New Delhi-110002 (Phone: 011-23226422) (Email-ID: tolltaxsdmc@gmail.com) for a non-refundable fee of Indian Rupees 1,00,000/- (Rupees One Lakh Only) payable through bank drafts/bankers cheque of an Indian Nationalized/Scheduled bank in favour of Commissioner, South Delhi Municipal Corporation.

Pre-bid conference -21.03.2020 at 11:00 AM.

Submission of Technical and Financial Proposal/Bid to: In Conference Hall, 23rd Floor, SDMC, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Civic Centre, Minto Road, New Delhi-110002 (Phone: 011-23226422)

The technical and financial bids, alongwith a duplicate copy, must be submitted in separate sealed Envelopes 1 & 2. Envelope 1 titled "Technical Proposal", Envelope 2 titled "Financial Proposal", put together in a Cover Envelope, superscribed, either Original Proposal or Duplicate copy followed by: "Engagement of a Contractor by SDMC for toll/ECC collection at border points from specified commercial vehicles entering Delhi".

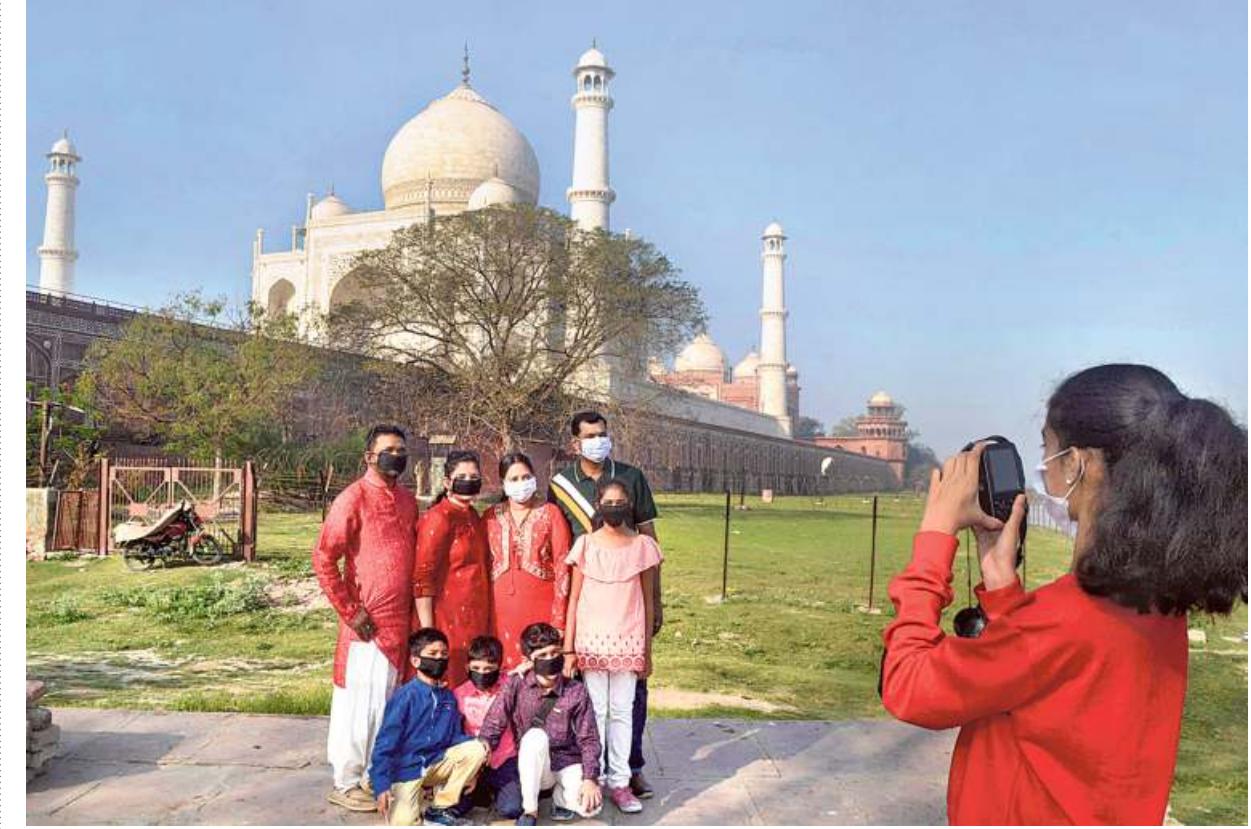
Last date of submission of Proposal **30.03.2020** on or before 03.00 P.M. (IST). Date of opening Technical Bids **30.03.2020** at 03.15 P.M. (IST).

This NIT issued subject to outcome of WP(C) No. 14283/2019 and WP(C) 2241 of 2020 pending before Hon'ble High Court of Delhi.

For more detail login to http://mcdonline.gov.in/tri/sdmc_mcdportal/

Ro No. 176/DPI/S/2019-20

Abnormal times



Visitors wearing masks pose for a photograph against the backdrop of the Taj Mahal in Agra on Tuesday. • PTI

Opposition slams Punjab govt.

'Claims of achievements nothing but a pack of lies'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

The Opposition parties in Punjab have termed the claims of 'achievements' by the ruling Congress government on completion of three years in office as a pack of lies and accused it of failing to fulfil its election promises.

Former Deputy Chief Minister and Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal on Tuesday described the three years of Amarinder Singh-led Congress rule as "a period when Punjab remained a headless State with no government visible either in the civil secretariat or in villages, towns and cities."

'No loan waiver'
Accusing the Congress government of not fulfilling any promise made to the people, Mr. Badal said: "Forget implementing a ₹90,000

crore farm loan waiver, the government has not even released one rupee to any farmer from the ₹3,000 crore allocated for loan waiver to farmers in last year's budget.

"As matter of fact, the last three years had witnessed an end to all pro-people measures launched by the previous SAD-BJP government, including making the State power surplus and novel healthcare measures like free cancer treatment," he said.

'No loan waiver'
Accusing

COVID-19 casts shadow on Bodoland polls

Many have raised concerns about election rallies where people would come in close contact

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

The Assam government's decision to restrict large gatherings as a precaution against the COVID-19 may cast a shadow on the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) elections scheduled for April 4.

Most of the candidates have filed their nominations for the 40 seats straddling the four districts that comprise the BTC. The deadline for submitting papers is Wednesday and the last date for withdrawal of candidature is March 21.

People across the BTC,

particularly in headquarters Kokrajhar and other towns, have raised concerns about the poll campaign and election rallies where hundreds of people come in close contact.

No instructions yet

"We have not had any instructions," said Pramod Boro, president of the United People's Party Liberal, which seeks to end the 17-year rule of the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) in the BTC. "So the election is on unless a decision is taken in view of the pandemic," he added. Mr. Boro filed his

nomination from the Tamu-pur council seat on Monday.

A former ally of the Congress, the BPF has also been ruling Assam as one of two minor regional partners of the Bharatiya Janata Party since 2016.

"Our feedback is that there is no threat of the virus in the BTC areas, as people from outside are not involved in campaigns," Assam's Social Welfare Minister Pramila Rani Brahma told *The Hindu*.

"There is no need to panic and impact the polls," she added.

Ms. Brahma represents

the BPF from the Kokrajhar East Assembly constituency and is one of the key campaigners of the party.

The Congress, however, contended that it would be foolish to think that the people of BTC were immune to the virus that has killed more than 6,000 people across the globe.

Take no chances'

"Why was the decision to hold the polls taken in such a crisis?" asked State Congress general secretary Durga Das Boro. "I have told the State election authority that we should not take any

chances against the pandemic," he added.

The State Election Commission, which is conducting the council polls, said any decision on rescheduling the polls would be taken by the Governor, who is the constitutional head of areas under the Sixth Schedule.

The 8,871 sq km BTC falls under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

Governor Jagdish Mukhi could not be contacted immediately, but a Raj Bhavan official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the matter would be discussed.

NSCN(I-M) cancels programmes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the "parallel government" of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) too.

The Government of People's Republic of Nagaland, run by the Isak-Muivah faction of NSCN, on Tuesday, announced the cancellation or postponement of a string of programmes "to stand in solidarity with the declaration of COVID-19 as a pandemic by WHO".

"We have decided not to celebrate our Republic Day," said a spokesperson.

Special court accepts Akhil Gogoi's bail plea

He was arrested for 'links with Maoists'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

A special court of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday accepted the bail plea of Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti leader Akhil Gogoi, who has been behind bars for more than three months.

The NIA had on December 12, 2019, arrested Mr. Gogoi for his alleged links with the Maoists and for "abetting, inciting hatred and causing disaffection towards the government" during the protests against the Citizenship (Amend-

ment) Act.

He was charged under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

Mr. Gogoi's counsel had on Monday moved the bail petition, which the special court accepted as the NIA could not file a charge sheet against him within 90 days. He was granted bail on a sum-
try of \$30,000.

NIA officials said they will appeal against the special court's decision.

The peasant leader had been suffering from kidney and back-related complications for about a month.

Odisha temple cancels festival

STAFF REPORTER

BERHAMPUR

Severe restrictions in the wake of the COVID-19 forced the cancellation of the famous Chaitra Jatra festival at Tara Tarini hill shrine in Odisha's Ganjam district on Tuesday.

COVID-19

Besides, restrictions under Section 144 of CrPC imposed by the administration was strictly enforced at the hill shrine. No shops were allowed to open.

The temple was, however, decked up and the servitors performed all the rituals. The deity was ready in 'Mahalaxmi Besha', but there were no devotees for darshan.

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JMFC AT MANGALURU

O.S. No. 184/2014

PLAINTIFF

Sri. K.L. SHIVAPRASAD,

S/o Sri. K.S. Lakshminarayana,

Aged about 44 years,

Residing at

Door No. 23-9-667-668,

Opp. Cascia High School,

Jeppu, Mangalore

V/s

Defendant

1. Smt. JANJINI RAMADAS,

W/o late. Ramadas,

aged about 65 years,

Door No. 672/1,

Opp. Cascia High School,

Jeppu, Mangalore.

Since dead by her LRs

1(a). Smt. SARITHA ATTAVARA,

W/o Late. Ranjith Attavara,

aged about 52 years.

1(b). NIHAL ATTAVARA,

S/o Late. Ranjith Attavara,

aged about 25 years,

1(c). KRISH ATTAVARA,

S/o Late. Ranjith Attavara,

aged about 23 years,

1(d). Smt. REKHA CHATTERJEE,

W/o Late. Aloke Kanti Chatterjee,

aged about 59 years,

Residing at B-58, G-3,

Shalimar Garden-2,

Sahibabad, Ghaziabad,

Uttar Pradesh.

And also residing at

Door No. 23-9-672/1, "Pragathi",

Opp: Cascia High School,

Jeppu, Mangalore.

By order of the Court

1(e). Smt. REENA RATHAN,

W/o Rathna Kumar,

aged about 55 years,

Residing at Door No. 23-9-672,

Opp: Cascia High School,

Mangaldevi Road,

Jeppu, Mangalore.

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DEFENDANT No. 1(d)

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suit against the defendant

Smt. Ranjini Ramadas

for declaration and for other

equitable remedies. During

the pendency of the above

proceedings, the defendant

Smt. Ranjini Ramadas has

expired. You are one of the

Legal Heir/Representative 1(d)

<div data

The questions COVID-19 may be posing to corporates

Do you wake up to the necessity of a business continuity plan only when a crisis looms on the horizon? Or, do you have one in place much before a contingency arises?

PRINCE FREDERICK
LIFFY THOMAS

In 2015, when Chennai "went under" due to an unusual flood situation, many software companies, especially those functioning on its IT Corridor, were scrambling around to make arrangements to ensure that business operations continued without any break.

In most of the cases, the affected company shifted operations to any of other metros where it had an office. The crisis would have driven home to some companies, the importance of having a business continuity plan in place. The December Deluge, as it is remembered in Chennai, was not unusual in delivering this message. Following every crisis that disrupts regular business functions, there is bound to be some introspection, which however proves fruitful only if it translates into efforts to have a business continuity plan. It may be difficult to predict when a crisis will strike, but chalking up a broad spectrum of crises that can be expected and having back-up work plans should not be a challenge.

K.S. Raja Rajasekar, deputy general manager - HR, Kone Elevator, says that companies should have a basic business contingency plan; and during a crisis situation they should only be fine-tuning it, factoring in the unique aspects of the ongoing crisis.

That takes us to the question: What are the salient features of an effective business continuity plan?

Process simplification
Creating a template of regular processes with crisis situations in mind is an essen-

tial aspect of such an exercise.

This template simplifies the regular processes so that anybody down the totem pole can perform them, says Raja Rajasekar.

Process simplification, Raja points out, will enable employees of allied departments to perform the functions of a department that may be hard hit by a crisis.

Parallel workforce
In certain places, geographical and geo-political risks may be apparent, but there would be no telling when it would become a problem to be dealt with.

"Companies may venture into certain places despite apparent geographical and geo-political risks, as the benefits may outnumber the risks."

"However, the risks can't be ignored, and these proactive companies will have a 'parallel site' elsewhere with a workforce trained to take up any 'emergency' work that may arise from 'site A'. When there is no emergency work to attend to, this 'parallel workforce' will be going about its regular work in its own geographical space," says Kamal Karanth, co-founder, Xpheno, a specialist staffing organisation.

Risk to people
From the viewpoint of day-to-day operations as well as larger organisational management, risk involving people can't be swept under the carpet – usually, people readiness constitutes the major part of any response to a crisis.

"Some companies ensure that the CEO and COO don't travel by the same flight – that is a measure that factors in the extreme unpredictability-of-life quo-



Employees of the Government Medical College and Hospital at Nagpur wearing masks as a precautionary measure against the Corona virus. PHOTO: SUDARSHAN

tient. There are organisations that will groom successors, who can step in quickly when there is a leadership-related crisis pertaining to either day-to-day operations or the larger management of the organisation.

For the sake of keeping costs down, senior leaders may sometimes also perform functional roles, but this can come back to haunt an organisation when the unforeseen strikes.

Companies also have to look at the span of control of a leader, restricting it to a manageable number of reportees, if necessary, so that there is no breakdown, when this person is faced with an emergency situation," says Karanth.

Creative de-risking
There is no limit to how a

crisis can be tided over, because each comes with its own challenges, and an effective response to one may not always just involve reorganising work patterns, but also effecting tweaks in the mundane aspects of organisational functioning. It may sometimes call for out-of-the-box restructuring of regular work. As part of its contribution to prevent the spread of COVID-19, WaterScience has introduced a work-from-home policy for all functions except production. However, the production process is characterised by an interesting modification.

"We are in the business of manufacturing products and obviously, that is one function that can't be performed from home; and so we have instituted a 'contact-less' manufacturing"

process that has been split into four steps – Releasing raw material, sub-assembly, full assembly and packaging," says Pavithra Rao, co-founder and vice-president – Growth and Revenue at WaterScience. Only one of the four processes will happen at any given time and only four people will be in the 16,000 sq ft facility at any point of time.

"The facility is sanitised after every group of employees leaves and before the next group steps in. With this process, we ensure minimal contact and exposure, while ensuring our shower and tap filters get manufactured," says Pavithra.

"In Bengaluru, as a response to the COVID-19 outbreak, a business major

with 14 offices in the city has undertaken many measures beyond providing 50 percent of its workforce with the work-from-home option. In each of its offices in Bengaluru, it has shut down the cafeterias, but keeps the kitchens working.

"Employees can't congregate at the cafeterias and have food there, but the company has designed a system for people to order food from the kitchens and have it delivered at their desks. At each of its offices, the company has reduced entry to just one entrance, to pre-empt the possibility of laxity in monitoring at some entrances," explains Karanth.

Be open to new ideas

Buildmet fibres, a Bengaluru-based packaging industry that employs nearly 1000 employees, has sought suggestions from its workforce to tide over the situation arising from the COVID-19 outbreak.

"The work-from-home option is not possible for us and we work round-the-clock including on Sundays. Besides following all the necessary precautions during the week, we set aside Sundays, when a large part of our workforce doesn't work, for carrying out an extensive sanitisation exercise around our facility. We are interacting with companies from other industries to see if any other best practices can be followed. Meanwhile, we have asked our employees to come with new ideas," says S. Ramakrishnan, manag-

Presenting remote-working models

There are a number of benefits to working remotely, but it is not without its set of challenges. Here is some help on how to deal with the initial hiccups.

Avtar Group has launched 'Flexurity' to provide solutions for organisations implementing the 'Work From Home' model. The suite of assessments and algorithms proposes to untangle the problems faced by organisations unaccustomed to managing a remote workforce.

According to a release, more than 58% of organisations are unprepared to deal with remote working without a sizeable dip in revenue.

Flexurity is an extended assessment mechanism that allows decision makers – even in small business units and MSMEs – to determine which jobs can be performed almost 100% as effectively as from the office. The solution also suggests which remote-working model will best suit a particular job. It obtains inputs in the form of a clear job description, which leads to a score that the team leader or a business head works with to provide reasonably accurate predictions of revenue, said the release. While sectors such as technology, banking and financial services are not location-specific and benefit from work-from-home models, the manufacturing sector will find it difficult to introduce the models, says the release.

Masterclass
Pesto Tech, an edutech start-up, is launching free master classes on remote work. These are being offered in two formats – one, "how to

make organisations remote-ready" is targeted at employers and the other, "how to work effectively while working from home" is for employees. EnableX, a communication-platform-as-a-service (CPaaS) player that helps enterprises through its video-conferencing solution, is offering its service free-of-cost for two months. 'EnableX Video Conferencing' is accessible on mobile devices such as smartphones, tablets, laptops and desktop computers and comes with collaborative features such as screen-sharing, active talker, and recording, says a release.

Upskilling
Whether you are a college student or a professional, certification training providers have something to offer to help you learn new skills in your field of specialisation. Simplilearn is offering 13 foundational programmes for free on its Android mobile app (bit.ly/simplicertified). The programme extending to over 100 hours covers industry-relevant areas like AI, Machine Learning, Data Science, Big Data, Cyber Security and Digital Marketing, and those who have enrolled also receive a digital certificate for each course.

Great Learning is offering 'Olympus' free to university professors, administrators and students to conduct their classes online. This would enable professors and students to conduct live online classes, share learning material, address student queries, share assignments, conduct quizzes and exams.

Students and working professionals who want to spe-

cialise in Data Science, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and Cybersecurity can take up free courses on these that are being offered until April 30.

upGrad 'Live Platform' is being offered to colleges and universities free-of-cost. Ac-

cording to a release, the platform replicates a real-time classroom learning experience by providing interactivity, real-time doubt resolution, in-class concept check and session analytics to gauge live-session performances.

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KERALA



Health hazard: A foreign tourist walking on the road near the Shangumugham Beach in Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday; schoolchildren shielding their faces with cloth in Visakhapatnam; marshals wearing masks at the Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru; and a view of the normally busy stretch behind the historic Charminar in Hyderabad. ■ S. MAHINSHA, K.R. DEEPAK, V. SREENIVASA MURTHY & NAGARA GOPAL

ANDHRA PRADESH



KARNATAKA



TELANGANA



Virus cases rise to 11 in Karnataka

Woman who returned to Bengaluru from Dubai tests positive for COVID-19

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

A 67-year-old woman from Bengaluru tested positive for COVID-19 on Tuesday, taking the number of cases in Karnataka to 11. Health Department officials said the woman had returned to Bengaluru from Dubai via Goa on March 9.

COVID-19

She has a medical history of chronic kidney disease (CKD) but has been in strict home quarantine since coming to Bangalore. "On March 16, she was admitted to a designated isolation hospital,"



High demand: A hawker selling masks near M.G. Road in Bengaluru on Tuesday. ■ SOMASHEKAR G.R.N.

read a bulletin released by the Health and Family Welfare Department.

Officials said 21 high-risk contacts had been identified, including five family members, and were under

strict home quarantine. "So far, no close contacts have shown symptoms."

The Department also released details of patients 9 and 10 who tested positive late on Monday night. Pa-

tient no. 9 is a 63-year-old man who was the family doctor treating the 76-year-old man from Kalaburagi who died and later tested positive for the virus.

The patient has been admitted to an isolation facility in Kalaburagi and is stable. Fifty primary contacts have been traced. All are asymptomatic and are under strict home quarantine.

The tenth patient is a woman, 20, from Bengaluru who returned from the U.K. on March 14. She, too, has been admitted to an isolation facility and is stable. Five primary contacts have been identified and are under strict home quarantine.

Cipla to join hands with CSIR-IITC for virus drugs

HYDERABAD

Indian Pharmaceutical giant Cipla has voluntarily come forward to immediately manufacture three promising chemical compounds with anti-viral properties to treat COVID-19 and has sought the help of Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR)- Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IITC) to make the Active Pharma Ingredients (APIs) for the same.

A.P. High Court to hear only urgent cases

VIZAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh High Court has begun hearing only urgent cases in view of the COVID-19 outbreak. The HC Registrar General said in a notification that the court will consider only petitions for urgent hearing, bail and suspension of sentence. Those with high body temperature will be denied entry into the court and will be subjected to the standard operating procedure, the notification said.

Ships kept off shore for screening in Vizag

VISAKHAPATNAM

About 20 ships have been kept at a distance of 10 nautical miles from the Visakhapatnam port for either want of documentation to berth or COVID-19 screening. VPT Deputy Chairman P.L. Haranadhi said arrangements have been made for quarantining crew members, if they were found with symptoms of COVID-19.

Minister opts for quarantine after hospital visit in Kerala

V. Muraleedharan had visited SCTIMST on March 14

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST), where patient care activities have been reduced to only high priority and emergency surgeries for the next two weeks after several senior doctors and paramedical staff went on self-quarantine following COVID-19 exposure, was put on the defensive again on Tuesday with Union Minister of State for External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs V. Muraleedharan opting for self-quarantine.

The institution was on the verge of a shutdown after 76 hospital employees, including 43 doctors, had to go into self-quarantine after they were inadvertently exposed to COVID-19 from a doctor colleague who had tested positive for the disease.

Mr. Muraleedharan, who had attended a meeting at SCTIMST on March 14, decided to go into quarantine of his own volition on Tuesday. His office reportedly sought a clarification from the SCTIMST as to why he had not been informed



In a fix: The Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology in Thiruvananthapuram. ■ S. MAHINSHA

Tourists face the music

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Despite the Kerala government's appeal against acts of targeting foreigners over the COVID-19 scare, instances of visitors being singled out and humiliated have surfaced in the State.

The latest incident was

reported from Kannur where two tourists had to go without food for four days after hotels allegedly refused to serve them. The tourists were seen crying out of hunger on the wayside by locals, following which the police and the local authorities extended them a helping hand.

Mr. Muraleedharan had not visited the hospital wing and that none of the officials who participated in the meeting, including the Director, had any contact with the said doctors in recent times.

2 more monkey deaths in Kerala

NIV test results rule out KFD

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

A disease is spreading among the Bonnet macaque population in Vadakkanchery, near Thrissur, in Kerala, claiming 11 animals so far.

Two animal deaths were reported on Monday. Though it was initially suspected that the monkey deaths were due to Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD), which could be transmitted to human beings by ticks found on monkeys, the samples tested negative at the National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune.

The test results from the NIV were obtained on Monday and the cause of death was not KFD as apprehended.

The cause of disease needed to be investigated further, said R. Jayachan-

dran, Chief Disease Investigation Officer, Palode.

Veterinary experts suspect that a sexually transmitted disease might have broken out among the monkey population. All the dead ones were found to be females in the breeding age group. Autopsy indicated that the dead animals had uterine infections, said David Abraham, assistant forest veterinarian, Thrissur.

An alpha male, which would have mated with the females, might have spread the disease among the population. There were around 15 to 20 members in the group and a few of them were exhibiting signs of being sick, he said.

The deaths were reported at Vallal Nagar grama panchayat, near Vadakkanchery. A few more animals are likely to die.

Body of woman found in culvert

Shamshabad police begin probe

STAFF REPORTER
HYDERABAD

In a shocking incident, the body of a woman aged between 25-30 years was found on Tuesday under a culvert near Chevella, Rangareddy district in Telangana.

The body without clothes was found by the villagers of Tangedupally around 7 a.m. They immediately alerted the Chevella police, who rushed to the spot.

According to police, the woman's head had been bludgeoned with a heavy object. The victim's hands were found tied and her face disfigured to prevent her from being identified. Jewellery was also found on her person.

Police suspect that the victim was killed elsewhere and her body was dumped at the culvert a day or two ago.

Setting sail



Making way: One of the four ferry boats built at the Cochin Shipyard passing through the Pamban rail bridge on its way to the Kolkata port. The ferries were commissioned by the Inland Waterways Authority of India. ■ L. BALACHANDAR

Battle-ready LCA Tejas takes to the skies

It signifies exemplary team work between various stakeholders, says HAL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BENGALURU

The first Light Combat Aircraft Tejas in Final Operational Clearance-standard (SP-21) took to the skies for its maiden flight here on Tuesday, the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited said.

Piloted by Air Cmdr. K.A. Muthana (Retd), Chief Test Flying (Fixed Wing), the aircraft took-off from the HAL airport at around 12.30 hours, the Bengaluru-headquartered defence PSU said in a statement.

Exemplary work

It was airborne for 40 minutes. This flight signifies exemplary team work among the stakeholders of the LCA Tejas programme such as HAL, Directorate General of



Up in the air: A file photo of a Light Combat Aircraft Tejas in 2017. ■ SOMASHEKAR G.R.N.

Aeronautical Quality Assurance, Centre for Military Airworthiness and Certification, IAF and Aeronautical Development Agency, HAL

CMDR. R. Madhavan said. "HAL achieved the momentous feat within a record time of 12 months after release of Drawing Applicability

ty List [DAL] and SOP [Standard Operating Procedure] by CEMILAC," the statement said.

"This would pave the way for production of remaining 15 fighters from FOC [Final Operational Clearance] block, which are planned to be delivered during the next financial year."

Advanced features

The FOC aircraft are equipped with advanced features such as Air-to-Air refuelling and Beyond Visual Range (BVR) missile system.

"It imbibes a lot of manufacturing improvements which were based on the operational feedback of LCA IOC [Initial Operational Clearance] fleet with IAF," HAL said.

Nourishment increases Vizag beachfront

Subdued tidal waves also contribute to the phenomenon, says expert

SANTOSH PATNAIK
VISAKHAPATNAM

The most frequented area in the city – the Vizag beachfront – has increased significantly, thanks to the nourishment of eroded beaches undertaken by the Visakhapatnam Port Trust (VPT), and the lull in the activity of tidal waves.

The phenomenon, which has brought cheer to locals as well as the tourists, is expected to last for some time. "Till the onset of the southwest monsoon or the occurrence of a system in the Bay of Bengal, the extended beachfront will continue. This is mainly because of low tidal wave activity leading to less taking away of sand into the sea," V.S.N. Murthy, former officiating director of

the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO), told *The Hindu* on Tuesday.

The VPT has engaged Dredging Corporation of India Ltd. (DCIL) for the nourishment project, after entering into an agreement with it last year for a three-year contract at a cost of ₹39.96 crore. Beach nourishment is

an annual project for the port. It is undertaken in February-March when the climate is very conducive for nourishment.

Nourishment has been undertaken since 1976, with the construction of Outer Harbour. Under the present project, 2 lakh cubic metres of sand will be extracted from

the 'Sand Trap' between 'Dolphin's Nose' and 'South Breakwater'. The 'Sand Trap', extended over 3-4 km, is created to stock sand for use whenever it is required. However, formation of frequent systems in the Bay have led to declining sand deposits and the total accumulation has come down from 4 lakh cubic metres by half over the last few years.

Combined factors

NIO Visakhapatnam Regional Centre In-Charge G.P.S. Murthy said a combination of factors like low velocity in wind speed, reduced pace of winds, and nourishment of other severely eroded beaches in the area have led to increase in the beachfront area.



On the edge: Two women standing near the shoreline at the YMCA beach in Visakhapatnam. ■ C.V.SUBRAMANYAM

Make tests free, ICMR tells private labs

Council to press into action two rapid-testing units



The ICMR will share the SOPs for laboratory testing.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry has made it mandatory for private institutions to notify COVID-19 patients while the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has appealed to private labs which have approached them to offer the test for free.

"They have come forward to help us and this is our appeal to them during this time of need to offer their services for free. ICMR will share the SOPs for laboratory testing and provide positive controls for establishing the test as soon as the concerned private laboratory has procured the primers, probes and reagents as per SOPs. Adoption of commercial kits for testing should be based

should be only offered when prescribed by a qualified physician as per the ICMR guidance for testing.

"Appropriate bio-safety and bio-security precautions should be ensured while collecting samples from a suspect patient. Alternatively, a disease-specific separate collection site may be created. Also, all the private testing laboratories are to ensure immediate/ real-time reporting to State officials of the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme and ICMR headquarters for timely initiation of contact tracing and research," noted ICMR.

Meanwhile, the Health Ministry issued an advisory on handling of bodies with COVID-19 stating that autopsies should be avoided.

"If autopsy is to be performed for special reasons, a well-trained and limited staff should be used. Embalming of the body should not be allowed," the guideline says.

on validations conducted by ICMR-National Institute of Virology, Pune," ICMR Director-General Balram Bhargav said on Tuesday.

ICMR is also pressing into action two rapid-testing units at Odisha and Noida which can test 1,400 samples a day and this would be functional by the end of the week. It has proposed to install more such units in at least 5 locations urgently.

The Council also issued guidelines to private sector labs stating that the test

Diagnostic tests being evaluated for COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Two diagnostic tests for COVID-19 – the first to be developed in India – are currently being evaluated by the National Institute of Virology in Pune, a senior official in the Department of Biotechnology told *The Hindu*.

"The NIV is in the process of checking if these work and can be deployed for large scale testing," said Renu Swarup, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology.

"Hopefully we should know of their suitability in the next two weeks," Ms. Swarup added.

On Tuesday, the government said it was readying guidelines for private diagnostic companies to develop tests to detect the SARS-

CoV-2 virus. All companies – and the ICMR themselves – currently rely on multinational companies for their diagnostic test kits. To accelerate development of drugs and diagnostics, the government will be forming a Rapid Response Regulatory Framework to rapidly eval-

COVID-19

uate potential diagnostic kits and vaccines against COVID-19. Currently these processes, led by the Drug Controller General of India and Review Committee on Genetic Manipulation, take 30-45 days, and the proposed farmework aims to bring the cycle to 7 days.

'54,000 people under community surveillance'

NEW DELHI

Around 54,000 people across the country are being kept under community surveillance through health workers to contain the spread of COVID-19, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan told the Rajya Sabha replying to a supplementary question raised by BJP MP Ashok Vajpayee. Mr. Vardhan added that research was underway in finding treatment for the virus.

Three more confirmed cases in Ladakh

SRINAGAR

Three fresh cases of COVID-19 were confirmed by the Ladakh administration on Tuesday, taking the total number of cases to six in the sparsely populated cold desert region. All the patients were male. "Three more from Ladakh have tested positive. Two are from Leh district and one is from Kargil district. All of them are in isolation wards," said Commissioner Secretary, Ladakh, Rizgin Sampehl.

Ministry orders closure of ASI monuments

NEW DELHI

The Union Culture Ministry on Tuesday ordered the closure of all 3,691 Centrally-protected monuments and ancient sites as well as those maintained by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministry had, on Monday, ordered the closure of 143 ticketed monuments and museums maintained by the ASI as well as the National Museum in Delhi from Tuesday till March 31.

Platform tickets turn dearer in some zones

NEW DELHI

In a bid to discourage gathering of crowds, some zonal railways have hiked the platform ticket charges from ₹10 to ₹50, officials said. Mumbai, Vadodara, Ahmedabad, Ratlam, Rajkot and Bhavnagar in Western zone, Chennai in Southern zone, and Mumbai (CST), Bhusawal, Nagpur, Solapur and Pune in Central zone have witnessed the price rise. PTI

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Wednesday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning, hail and gusty wind likely at isolated places over Vidarbha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

CITY RAIN MAX MIN CITY RAIN MAX MIN

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala31...	19.1	...	Kozhikode37...	26.4	...
Ahmedabad36...	18.6	...	Kurnool38...	24.8	...
Aizawl23...	12.2	...	Lucknow29...	14.0	...
Allahabad29...	14.6	...	Madurai36...	25.6	...
Bengaluru33...	22.5	...	Mangaluru35...	25.0	...
Bhopal31...	14.8	...	Mumbai37...	20.2	...
Bhubaneswar35...	21.0	...	Mysuru34...	22.0	...
Chandigarh25...	14.5	...	New Delhi27...	13.6	...
Chennai33...	25.8	...	Patna28...	16.9	...
Coimbatore34...	23.4	...	Port Blair31...	26.5	...
Dehradun27...	9.9	...	Puducherry33...	24.4	...
Gangtok18...	9.0	...	Pune37...	18.1	...
Goa33...	24.1	...	Raipur33...	22.3	...
Guwahati32...	14.8	...	Ranchi29...	15.4	...
Hubballi36...	22.0	...	Shillong20...	13.5	...
Hyderabad35...	22.5	...	Shimla17...	6.1	...
Imphal27...	12.3	...	Srinagar20...	4.0	...
Jaipur30...	15.0	...	Thiruvananthapuram33...	26.0	...
Kochi33...	26.4	...	Tiruchi36...	25.3	...
Kohima23...	12.5	...	Vijayawada36...	23.0	...
Kolkata32...	23.7	...	Visakhapatnam33...	25.4	...

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	44	47	17	.75	.94	...
Bengaluru	12	.56	89169	...
Chennai	37	.17	80	.127
Delhi	17	.42	46	.228
Hyderabad	02	.54	38	.76	.92	...
Kolkata	19	.83	52	.113	.116	...
Lucknow	04	.38	46	.227
Mumbai	41	.78	28	.205	.277	...
Pune	52	.19	95	.82	.78	...
Visakhapatnam	39	.4986	...

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

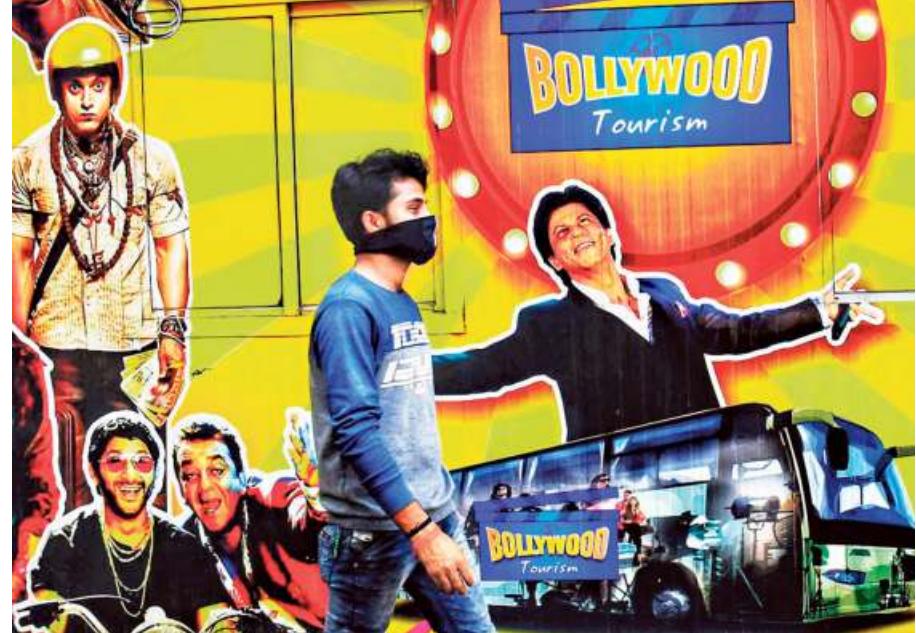
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

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

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

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

Trouble in paradise



Curtains down: A Filmcity worker walks past a ticket booking window for tourists which was closed after COVID-19 threat at Goregaon in Mumbai. ■ AADESH CHOUHDHARI

'Save us' appeal Indian pilgrims stranded in Qom

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Claiming that a number of Indians in Iran are facing extreme difficulties, a group of pilgrims from Kashmir and Kargil have sought immediate help from the Government of India as reports suggest that a number of them could be infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Nadeem Yaqoob Hussain Bhat of Budgam in Kashmir left with a team of 33 Shia pilgrims on January 31 to visit Iraq, Syria and Iran but is now stuck without food and money in Iran's holy city of Qom.

The team reached Qom just as the city became the epicentre of the coronavirus crisis, prompting cancellation of Iranian flights to India.

After 16 days, Mr Bhat says he is on the verge of a medical breakdown.

"Iran is cracking down on the coronavirus emergency and in Qom especially, there are many hard measures but our biggest worry is that the longer we stay here the greater is the chance that we could all fall sick. We are

scared and have no money," said Mr Bhat.

"If we fall sick then there is no scope of getting treatment here as there is no space in Iran's hospitals that are overrun with their own patients," he added.

Mr Bhat also said several of the Indian pilgrims have tested positive for COVID-19.

However Dammu Ravi, Additional Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs in charge of coordination of India's response to the global pandemic did not confirm the authenticity of the list.

"We have to expect that given the situation in Iran where the virus is widespread there may be some cases."

The total number of Shia pilgrims stuck in Qom is around 850 according to Mr Ravi. Asghar Ali, the team leader of another group of pilgrims from Kargil trying to control the worsening situation.

"We are unable to get food as restaurants have shut and hotels are asking us to get out but where do we go? We request the Indian Government to urgently help us," said Mr Ali speaking over phone.

Over 80 trains put on hold over COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Over 80 trains have been put on hold across the country citing low occupancy amid outbreak of the COVID-19, even as the Ministry of Railways on Tuesday constituted a "COVID response" team.

"Across Indian Railways, the cancellation percentage has gone up by about 80%," a statement from the East Coast Railway (ECR) said. The statement said if required more trains could be cancelled.

The South Central Railway will be cancelling 29 trains. Central Railway has cancelled 23 trains while Western Railways has cancelled ten trains. The number of trains cancelled in the ECR and the Northern Railways stands at five.

Milder cases drive spread of coronavirus, finds study

R. PRASAD
CHENNAI

Eighty-six per cent of people in China who were infected with novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) were not tested in the two-week period before travel restrictions came into force on January 23 in Wuhan and other cities. And these undetected cases contributed to the majority of virus spread in the community, says a paper published in the journal *Science*.

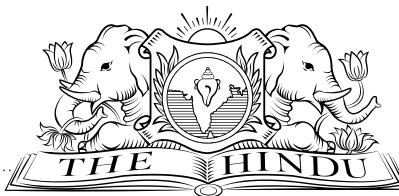
Undetected cases can expose a large population to the virus than would otherwise occur.

The researchers used a computer model that draws on observations of reported infection and spread within China in conjunction with mobility data from January 10-23 and January 24-February 8. People who experienced mild, limited or no symptoms were not detected but spread the virus anyway.

"Per person, these undocumented infections were 55% as contagious as the documented infections – about half as infectious per person as a documented case who has more severe symptoms and maybe shedding more," Prof. Jeffrey Shaman from Columbia University, one of the corresponding authors of the paper, said in a press briefing.

Even though the undetected cases are only 55% as contagious compared with those who exhibit severe symptoms and are detected, due to their greater num-

bers, they facilitated the rapid spread of the virus throughout mainland China. These cases were the source of infection for 79% of documented cases, the researchers said.</p



For a floor test first

The BJP might have been morally deviant, but Kamal Nath must prove his majority quickly

Propriety and law require the Kamal Nath-led Congress government in Madhya Pradesh to prove its majority on the floor of the legislature at the earliest. Delaying tactics by Mr. Nath with more than a little help from the Speaker, who has adjourned the Assembly until March 26, go against democratic principles. Equally, Governor Lalji Tandon's position that the government will be presumed to have lost the majority unless it takes a floor test immediately is untenable. The situation in the State raises other questions of morality and legality also, as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) innovates questionable routes to power that it did not win in the election. The Congress had won a narrow victory in the State in 2018, after a 15-year gap. The resignation of 22 party MLAs has pushed its government into a crisis. These MLAs had won against BJP candidates. Their resignations, and the defection of Jyotiraditya Scindia from the Congress to the BJP, can be explained only as a high form of perfidy and shameless personal greed. That said, it is curious that the Speaker accepted the resignations of six MLAs while keeping the other 16 pending. The Speaker is expected to be non-partisan. That he has found a rather ingenious excuse, the pandemic, makes the scene a bit complicated, but not defensible.

The BJP, the Congress and the rebel MLAs have all approached the Supreme Court which has taken up the matter with urgency. The BJP is replaying the script that it has perfected in other States, most notably in Karnataka last year to unseat the Congress-JDS government. The Court ruling during the Karnataka crisis was that a time-frame for deciding on resignations by MLAs could not be forced on the Speaker. The Court also ruled that MLAs could not be forced to attend the Assembly session by being issued a whip by the party they belonged to, weakening the lynchpin of the Anti-Defection law. The Congress has alleged that the 16 MLAs are under duress and in detention by the BJP. While the judiciary will force some solution to end the current impasse, the larger question facing democracy is that of trust and transparency. Assemblies are elected for a five-year term, and the Anti-Defection law was brought to raise the threshold and stop the dismantling of a popular mandate through opportunistic manoeuvres, as it is unfolding in Madhya Pradesh. Engineered resignations of lawmakers have become a new tool for sabotaging mandates and camouflaging defections. When the top court adjudicates on the Madhya Pradesh petitions, this larger point must be taken into consideration. The situation demands new guidelines by the Court to deal with the now-familiar malaise, beyond setting a reasonably quick deadline for a floor test.

Epicentre shifts

Global efforts to counter the virus have been uneven, with Europe and the U.S. faltering

With 1,08,394 cases reported from outside mainland China as on March 17, there are more people infected with the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) in other parts of the world than in mainland China (81,058). Also, as on March 17, the number of deaths (4,279) in the rest of the world is more than in mainland China (3,226). On Monday, there was just one new laboratory-confirmed case and 12 deaths reported in Wuhan; outside Wuhan, no new case has been reported from Hubei province for 12 consecutive days. Even as Iran recorded 16,169 cases and 988 deaths so far, it is in Europe that the virus seems to be galloping. Besides four countries reporting a very high number of cases, all other European countries have recorded at least one case so far, thus shifting the pandemic's epicentre from China to Europe. Here, Italy and Spain have been the most affected, with 27,980 and 11,309 cases, respectively. On March 16, with 3,590 new cases, Italy reported the biggest jump in case load in a single day while deaths in Spain nearly doubled to 288. Germany (8,084) and France (6,664) have been the other two countries badly affected too. With 2,158 deaths, Italy has reported the highest mortality from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outside China.

There are big lessons that India and the rest of the world can learn from Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong and South Korea on containing the spread. Taiwan began airport screening even before China reported its first case of human-to-human transmission on January 20. Together with closing its borders by January-end, it raised awareness about the virus and the disease, and ways to minimise risk through handwashing and the use of face masks. Taiwan essentially cut the transmission chain even before the virus could gain a foothold in the country. Following the World Health Organization's guidelines to a tee, Singapore went after all suspect cases by testing all influenza-like and pneumonia cases and aggressively tracing contacts. Like Taiwan and Hong Kong, Singapore too instituted travel restrictions by early February. Not only did it make testing and treatment free for all its residents, it paid \$100 a day to self-employed people to ensure none violated quarantine. Besides closing most of the border crossings with China and contact tracing, Hong Kong had a 14-day quarantine in place from February 5 onwards and containment measures – shutting down schools and asking people to work from home – in place by the end of January. South Korea's massive community-level screening, contact tracing and quarantining after the outbreaks in two churches helped in containment. Contrast this with how the U.S. floundered for weeks on several fronts, including the use of flawed testing kits. A lesson from the pandemic is how containing an outbreak is dependent on quick public-health responses.

A revival of multilateralism, steered by India

A leadership role by India in mobilising world collaboration would be in keeping with its traditional activism globally



SHYAM SARAN

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought out in sharp relief the compelling reality that has been staring us in the face for the past several years. This reality has two aspects. One, that most challenges confronting the world and likely to confront it in the future, are cross-national in character. They respect no national boundaries and are not amenable to national solutions. Two, these challenges are cross-domain in nature, with strong feedback loops. A disruption in one domain often cascades into parallel disruptions in other domains.

Thus the use of chemical fertilizers and toxic pesticides may promote food security but have injurious health effects, undermining health security. Whether at the domestic or the international level, these inter-domain linkages need to be understood and inform policy interventions. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reflect this awareness.

Rise of nationalism

The intersection of cross-national and cross-domain challenges demand multilateral approaches. They require empowered international institutions of governance. Underlying these must be a spirit of internationalism and solidarity, a sense of belonging to a common humanity. But over the past decade and more, the world has been moving in the reverse direction. There has been an upsurge in narrow nationalism, an assertion of parochial interests over pursuit of shared interests and a fostering of competition among states rather than embracing collaboration.

COVID-19 has brought these deepening contradictions into very sharp relief. This is a global challenge which recognises no political boundaries. It is intimately linked to the whole pattern of large-scale and high-density food production and distribution. It is a health crisis but is also spawning an economic crisis through disrupting global value chains and creating a simultaneous demand shock. It is a classic cross-national and cross-domain challenge.

The direction now

But interventions to deal with the COVID-19 crisis are so far almost entirely at the national level, relying on quarantine and social distancing. There is virtually no coordination at the international level. We are also seeing a blame game erupt between China and the United States which does not augur well for international cooperation and leadership. While this is the present state of play, the long-term impact could follow alternative pathways. One, the more hopeful outcome would be for countries to finally realise that there is no option but to move away from nationalistic urges and embrace the logic of international cooperation through revived and strengthened multilateral institutions and processes.

The other more depressing consequence may be that nationalist trends become more intense, countries begin to build walls around themselves and even existing multilateralism is further weakened. Institutions such as the United Nations and the World Health Organization, which are already marginalised may become increasingly irrelevant. There could be a return to autarkic economic and trade policies and an even deeper and more pervasive anti-globalisation sentiment. Unless there is a conscious effort to stem this through a reaffirmation of multilateralism, we are looking at a very

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO



depressing decade ahead. This is when the world needs leadership and statesmanship, both in short supply. This is in contrast to the U.S.-led response to the global financial and economic crisis of 2008 when the G-20 summit was born and a coordinated response prevented catastrophic damage to the global economy. Is there a role here for India which is a key G-20 country, the world's fifth largest economy and with a long tradition of international activism and promotion of rule-based multilateralism?

In this context, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks at the recent *The Economic Times* Global Business Summit are to be welcomed. While speaking of the COVID-19 crisis, he said, "Like today, the world is facing a huge challenge in the form of Corona Virus. Financial institutions have also considered it a big challenge for the financial world. Today, we all have to face this challenge together. We have to be victorious with the power of our resolution of 'Collaborate to Create'."

He went on to observe that while the world today is "inter-connected, inter-related and also interdependent", it has "not been able to come on a single platform or frame a Global Agenda, a global goal of how to overcome world poverty, how to end terrorism, how to handle Climate Change issues."

Mr. Modi lauded his government's policy of seeking friendship with all countries as contrasted from the earlier policy of non-alignment. He seemed to suggest that non-alignment was a defensive policy which advocated

"equal distance from every country". Now, he claimed, India was still "neutral" – presumably meaning non-alignment – "but not on the basis of distance but on the basis of friendship".

He cited India's friendship with Iran and Saudi Arabia, and with the U.S. as well as Russia. Elaborating on this, he added, "There was a time when people were neutral by creating equal distance, but we are now neutral by creating equal friendship. Today we are being friends and trying to walk together. This is the very essence of India's foreign policy and the economic policy of India today."

India's foreign policy

Mr. Modi may wish to distinguish his foreign policy from that of his predecessors, but what he describes as its "essence" is hardly distinguishable from the basic principles of Indian foreign policy since Nehru. India's non-alignment was anything but defensive. The international peace-keeping contribution that the Prime Minister referred to has its origins in Nehru's sense of international responsibility.

India has always professed its desire to have friendly relations with all countries but has been equally firm in safeguarding its interests when these are threatened. India's non-alignment did not prevent it from forging strong and mutually beneficial partnerships with major countries. The India-Soviet partnership from 1960-1990 is an example just as the current strategic partnership with the U.S. is.

The foreign policy of his predecessors had been rooted in India's civilisational sense, its evolving place in the international system and its own changing capabilities. Their seminal contributions should be acknowledged and built upon rather than proclaim a significant departure. The Prime Minister's plea for global collaboration to deal with a densely inter-con-

nected world is in line with India's traditional foreign policy. A leadership role in mobilising global collaboration, more specifically in fighting COVID-19 would be in keeping with India's traditional activism on the international stage. The Prime Minister has shown commendable initiative in convening leaders of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation nations for a regional collaborative effort on COVID-19. This should be followed by an international initiative, either through the G-20 or through the U.N.

Pandemic as opportunity

The Prime Minister made no reference to the role of the U.N., the premier multilateral institution, as a global platform for collaborative initiatives. There may have been irritation over remarks by the UN Secretary General on India's domestic affairs and the activism displayed by the UN Commissioner for Human Rights on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act controversy. This should not influence India's long-standing commitment to the U.N. as the only truly inclusive global platform enjoying international legitimacy despite its failings. If one has to look for a "single platform" where a Global Voice could be created, as the Prime Minister suggested, surely a reformed and strengthened U.N. should be on India's agenda.

The COVID-19 pandemic presents India with an opportunity to revive multilateralism, become a strong and credible champion of internationalism and assume a leadership role in a world that is adrift. The inspiration for this should come from reaffirming the well springs of India's foreign policy since its Independence rather than seeking to break free.

Shyam Saran is a former Foreign Secretary and a Senior Fellow, Centre for Policy Research

Coming to terms with biometrics in policing

Modern technology has dangers, but there should be hope that care and sophistication would transform investigation



R.K. RAGHAVAN

Ever since the police became a formal organisation nearly 150 years ago, there is global consensus that the police charter ought not to be restricted to a mere maintenance of peace in public places. It should focus equally on crime prevention and detection. Speaking of police handling of crime, the traditional argument of criminologists is that while preventing a crime is arduous and usually beyond human capacity (because of the dimensions and complexities of modern society), solving a crime is relatively easy.

Police history has shown up fault lines in law enforcement strategy in discharging the twin tasks. It is in the area of crime detection that the police in most nations have lost public confidence. Even police forces which have huge manpower and can afford to buy the latest technology have not exactly distinguished themselves in their efforts to boost success rates in solving crime – it is now between 30% and 40%. Except in sensational cases which have attracted public and media attention, the Indian police have also been guilty of underperformance.

Crimes using knives continue to worry London's Metropolitan Police, while the frequency of gun violence is high in U.S. cities. All this despite robust and aggressive policing. While cases of grave sexual assault as in the Nirbhaya case have damaged the police's reputa-

tion as far as ensuring the safety of Indian women is concerned, even allowing for substantial non-reporting of assaults on women, I believe there is a degree of enhanced sense of security among Indian women, attributable to some extent to greater police sensitivity and also to increased precautions being taken by women.

The two sides

However, there is a dismaying paradox here. Citizens no doubt demand newer crime control measures which will keep them safe. At the same time they resent productive and smarter police innovations in the field because of perceived danger to individual rights and privacy. Surprisingly, the campaign against police experiments has been spearheaded by some women activist groups. Their stand is that the end cannot and should not justify the means used by state agencies. This explains the sharp adverse responses, albeit only by a few groups, to a counter-crime facial recognition technology. This is the technology that seeks to make inroads into the underworld's ability to be elusive and their machinations in order to escape detection by the police radar.

Taking into account how criminals merge with the community to escape identification, the police in several countries have sought the help of expert security agencies to scan faces seen in public spaces. This is with a view, whenever necessary, to run them against available databases of faces used in crime fighting.

The resistance especially in the United States and the United Kingdom, against facial recognition software, has been baffling. Its



modest use in India explains the lack of public discourse on the pros and cons of facial identification software.

Gauging the opposition

Opposition to facial recognition technology has come mainly from two groups. The first are those who believe that the software discriminates against minorities and ethnic groups, especially blacks and other non-whites. The suggestion is that there is a disproportionate number of black and non-white faces captured by this software if one considers their large numbers in a community. This charge applies mainly to the police in the U.S. It mirrors the movement until recently in New York City against the use of 'stop and frisk' practice to combat crime. Several studies conducted in reaction to sharp protests by African-American groups revealed that more black and brown people were stopped and frisked than was warranted. The same charge of bias has now been brought against face recognition technology. This is, however, not comprehensible because the cameras are meant to take pictures at random rather than of specific segments of the population. The police in such cases are on a roving mission hunting

for faces that have already come to adverse notice.

Next are rights activists who focus on privacy violation. Criticism is mainly on the ground that technology, despite the tall claim of infallibility by those producing it, has many a time been found guilty of errors. Therefore, harassment of innocent citizens is not uncommon.

Perhaps the stoutest defender of facial recognition technology is Cressida Dick, Metropolitan Police Commissioner. Addressing the Royal United Services Institute recently, she dismissed the charge that the practice of capturing faces – "policing without consent" – harms individuals, either physically or in terms of reputation. She pointed out how the moment there is no match of a face with existing records, it is deleted. She commented on how citizens have no qualms in handing over their data to private companies, especially while unlocking phones using one's fingerprint. She added that data, even when there are matches with the existing Met database, are deleted within 31 days of capture if there is no requirement for further investigation. The Commissioner also referred to the solving of at least eight crimes in recent months with the help of facial recognition. There is no reason to believe that this is a specious claim.

U.S. study

In contrast to this one has the study of 2019 by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) in the U.S. which found that many of the current facial recognition algorithms were likely to misidentify members of some groups 100 times more frequently

than they do of the other groups. In its study, the NIST took up 189 algorithms from 99 organisations and its findings raise doubts about the wisdom of employing facial recognition software indiscriminately. The study surmised that error rates could perhaps be brought down by using a diverse set of training data. Whether the misidentification is due to bias built into the software is not clear. However the danger of misidentification cannot be brushed aside.

The point that critics of facial recognition technology who raise privacy concerns should remember is that our faces are already online in a number of places. Increased use of CCTV cameras in a number of public places is in a sense a threat to anonymity. When this is the reality, how can we object to the police scanning us for the laudable objective of solving a case under investigation?

In the ultimate analysis, any modern technology is fraught with hidden dangers. There is no claim of infallibility either by the software maker or by the person selling it or who advocates its deployment.

Grave errors from its use are however few and far between. Just as DNA testing establishes either the guilt or the innocence of a person arraigned for crime, facial recognition performs an equally vital role in criminal justice administration. Over the years I have seen a marked improvement in the way policemen, even at the bottom of the pyramid, handle digital evidence. The hope is that similar care and sophistication will soon mark criminal investigation by police forces across the globe.

R.K. Raghavan is a former CBI Director

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.

Gogoi for Rajya Sabha

The nomination of the former Chief Justice of India, Ranjan Gogoi, to the Rajya Sabha, brings under the spotlight the issue of judicial integrity and the doctrine of separation of the judiciary from the executive. What is more unfortunate is the defence of citing past political appointments of judges such as Justice Ranganath Mishra and Justice Baharul Islam. Nothing can be more damaging for our democracy than people's

diminishing faith in the judicial system. Impartiality and an aloofness have been its hallmarks and should not be diluted. Justice Gogoi has overseen a number of path-changing judgments and it would not be right for him to move into politics. ABHISHEK SINGH TOMAR, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

It is true that in the past, Chief Justices have accepted high public office after retirement but what is unique and unfortunate in the Gogoi case is that he has been offered a Rajya Sabha membership by the ruling party. This assumes relevance because it is he, as a Chief Justice of India, who presided over the Bench that gave the Ayodhya verdict, a case of far-reaching consequence to the ruling party. Immediately, after his retirement, he was given Z-plus security and other benefits which have not been conferred to any other retiring CJI. This has cast a shadow on the institution. In contrast is Justice H.R.

Khanna who wrote the sole dissenting judgment in the *habeas corpus* case during the Emergency and which cost him the office of CJI. He walked away to lead the life of a judicial monk. His portrait is in the Court's hall – an example to emulate. N.G.R. PRASAD, D. NAGASAILA, Chennai

Waiting for a cure
The very word COVID-19 strikes an invidious and incalculable terror along with anguish as

pandemic continues its march. Despite efforts, there does not seem to be much headway in slowing the spread. One hopes that the wringing of our hands in utter despair and that medicine is able to provide the breakthrough. For nations, this is the time for cooperation. MANI NATARAJAN, Chennai

Will he?
The depiction by cartoonist Surendra, of actor

Rajinikanth on a treadmill with a placard reading 'Coming soon!' (OpEd page, Cartoonscape, March 17) is a subtle message that he will not enter politics just as the treadmill only rotates where it is. While his die-hard fans still 'believe' he is the right person to make a difference perhaps the 'Coming soon' placard is more a foretelling of his forthcoming film than about his political plunge. A. JAINALABDEEN, Chennai



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Revisiting scientific temper

In the wake of COVID-19, Indians have made some progress towards inculcating a scientific temper



RAJEEV BHARGAVA

An unexpected outcome of COVID-19 is the growing awareness of how disease is transmitted and what might be done to prevent this. Virtually every TV channel has insisted on washing hands with soap or alcohol-based sanitiser, sneezing into the crook of one's elbow or coughing into a handkerchief, besides keeping a safe distance from one another. These precautions presuppose an elementary understanding that COVID-19 spreads through the inhalation of droplets released by the infected person's cough or sneeze and by contact with infected surfaces. The existence of bacteria and viruses that invade our bodies and cause the infection is also part of this presupposition. In short, this indicates a tacit acceptance of elements of the empirical-causal world view. It was heartening to see even babas and yogis concede that if symptoms include respiratory disorder and high fever, then contacting doctors trained in evidence-based medical systems is necessary. Baba Ramdev even admitted on TV that no evidence exists that by drinking cow urine, one could cure COVID-19, even though, he claimed, it could help in preventing it.

Towards fact-based reasoning
It does not follow from this that our society has imbibed this outlook on the world, for many astrologers were seen claiming that SARS-CoV-19 was caused by the conjunction of Rahu and Ketu. Some swamis are convinced that the cure lies in propitiating the virus by performing rituals, accompanied by a cocktail of cow urine, dung and ghee. Even so, it is heartening that when push comes to shove, many Indians might be more willing to rely on evidence-based reasoning than on ineffective, false speculations or brazen misinformation. When what is at stake is life itself, people choose whatever they find is effective. Should we not assume that they do so because at least some of them are convinced that performing rituals is unlikely to produce the de-



sired outcome, but regular washing of hands might? That the Rahu-Ketu story is less plausible than the virus-infection story? This switch from speculative stories involving malignant spirits to stories involving non-subjective, material, observable entities occurs when people themselves experience what works and what does not.

Two generations or so earlier, cutative pill-popping became part of the wider public culture. Although its misuse, dangers and excesses are well-documented, it can't be denied that careful intake of pills, under expert supervision, and in correct dosage, can help cure infectious disease. With our rather enlightened response to COVID-19, we appear to have reached a similar stage in the public culture of disease prevention. Equally important is scrupulous data gathering. Indian TV channels continually gave figures on how many people are infected by SARS-CoV-19; the countries where the incidence of disease was high; what percentage was cured and what percentage died; of those who succumbed, how many already suffered from other fatal ailments; and whether or not a correlation exists between age, propensity to infection and fatality. There is greater public awareness about the role of data in disease management and prevention. These are small steps towards the wider acceptance of evidence-based reasoning, a tiny victory for the empirical-causal explanatory story of the world. Since these are crucial ingredients of the scientific outlook, one can even say that we have made some progress towards inculcating a scientific temper.

Observing, classifying, recognising patterns of regularity, and identifying causes are all integral features of science. Yet, not all of us do

science. Nor do we need to. What has become increasingly vital for our survival today is that everyone grasps the broad features and uses of science, that we imbibe scientific temper. Science is important because science works; scientific temper, because in its absence, the benefits of science won't reach everyone.

The role of science in life

Bringing a rather outdated term 'scientific temper' back into circulation might raise some hackles, however. How can modern science be valorised after an awareness of the devastation it has caused? Nuclear destruction, industrial pollution, climate change and a technologically induced sedentary lifestyle are all undeniable facts. But science continues to play a limited but critical role in human life. In one sense, it always has. This is to do with our inescapable interaction with the natural world and our need to harness its powers. Pre-language science in which knowledge embodied in skills, neither consciously nor symbolically available but generated in practical interaction with the world, has been around for two million years. And scientifically oriented stories, with an explicit, language-dependent understanding of nature, developed some 40,000-50,000 years ago when, to explain, predict and control nature, we began telling each other how and why things happen. An idea then took hold that performing a particular ritual to appease spirits delivers us from disease and death and could provide all the goods we need (magic, astrology, shamanism.) Our pre-modern stories attempted many things, including to explain, predict and control. Modern science is a radically improved version of this limited aspect of earlier stories. Besides,

it has originated from and built upon them. Scientists readily acknowledge that myths, legends and stories continue to be the source of current scientific insights. In this sense, a science independent of myth and religion is woefully inadequate for living. The other big limitation of modern science is that it plays virtually no role in mutual or inter-cultural understanding or in our indispensable ethical projects of self-exploration, self-understanding or self-realisation. That role in providing collective and individual self-knowledge and ethical guidance is played by the humanities, interpretive social science and religions.

With these qualifications, we must readily acknowledge that scientific temper is useful in certain contexts and necessary for specific purposes. If so, what are the other preconditions for building it? First, a disposition to not accept any opinion or claim at face value, or to reject in haste anything that conflicts with one's own settled views. For instance, to not immediately accept when told that eating a clove of garlic will reduce high BP, or that the rate of economic growth in India is 7%. A healthy scepticism towards these figures is crucial. Moreover, no claim or data can be accepted merely because it is supplied by those in majority, political power, or religious authority. Evidence-based claims are the enemy of prejudice and dogma. Second, good science recognises that truth is always elusive, that all human endeavour, including scientific enquiry, is imperfect, corrigible, in constant need of critical scrutiny and revision. Third, in principle, science is anti-authoritarian. No matter how hierarchical in practice scientific institutions are, or how powerful its leaders, the fact remains that if a research assistant comes up with a result that challenges established scientific claims, then it must be addressed, examined and if confirmed, displace the view held by established authority. So, if scientific temper is important, what kind of public culture is needed to advance it? Who must be responsible to take it forward? And how can we nudge people into evidence-based reasoning not from self-interest alone but from commitment to the common good?

Rajeev Bhargava is Professor, CSDS, Delhi

A case for more policewomen

Increasing the number of women recruits alone will not be enough; institutional changes are as important



DEVYANI SRIVASTAVA

At least since 2009, when the Home Ministry set 33% as the target for women's representation in the police, increasing women's recruitment in the police force has been the goal of the Central and State governments. Yet, India persists with a male-dominated police force. In 2019, women comprised less than 10% of police personnel. Only seven States (Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Gujarat and Sikkim) had more than 10% policewomen. In fact, there has been only a 5% increase in the number of policewomen in a decade (3.65% in 2009 to 8.98% in 2019).

Also worrying are signs that States with relatively high proportions of policewomen appear to hit a plateau. The figure for policewomen in Maharashtra and Himachal Pradesh has stayed at around 12% for the past four years. Some places like Chandigarh have even recorded a decline.

Challenges
Reservation has been the primary tool to increase women's representation. Yet, no government has developed an action plan with clear timelines to meet the quota within a specified time period. Thus, it is not surprising that the annual change in the share of women in the police force from 2012 to 2016 was found to be less than 1% across States, according to the India Justice Report, 2019. At this rate, most States will take over 50 years to achieve the 33% target.

Selective implementation
While States adopt the reservation policy, they are very selective about its implementation. Very few States apply reservation for women at all the entry points (constable, sub-inspector, and deputy superintendent of police levels) or to all posts at each level. Some States (Kerala and Karnataka) have reservation for women only at the constable rank. Some (Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu) extend it to the constable and sub-inspector ranks. But here too there are restrictions: reservation is limited to specific cadre posts within each rank.

This has resulted in huge disparity in the representation of women across ranks. There are far fewer women at the gazetted ranks at the State level (assistant sub-inspector to deputy superintendent of police) than those at the constabulary level. This means that women are most prominent in the most junior ranks. While this is not a negative in itself, in the absence of institutional support, women remain in large numbers at the bottom of the ladder without moving up.

Restricting women's quotas to entry levels or select posts not only shrinks the potential pool of women recruits in a given year but al-

so reduces the proportion of women likely to get promoted to leadership and supervisory positions. As a consequence, there are not enough women personnel to perform exclusive functions when gender-based crimes are reported. For instance, in 2013, the Home Ministry said that at least three women sub-inspectors should be available in a police station as investigating officers. Tamil Nadu, which has the highest percentage of women personnel (17.46%), requires 6,057 women sub-inspectors to meet this standard across its 2,019 police stations. At present, it has barely one-fourth of that requirement.

Also worrying are signs that States with relatively high proportions of policewomen appear to hit a plateau. The figure for policewomen in Maharashtra and Himachal Pradesh has stayed at around 12% for the past four years. Some places like Chandigarh have even recorded a decline.

Challenges
It is time to look beyond numbers to institutional barriers that hinder women's growth within the service. Frequent inter-district transfers and disallowing postings in home districts for specified periods of time coupled with poor childcare support systems and lack of adequate facilities and infrastructure present distinct difficulties for women. Taken together, these and other barriers limit the avenues for women's promotion. Sexual harassment at the workplace that policewomen suffer is not adequately acknowledged. There is even less recognition of the impact that the policing sub-culture, with its association with "masculinity" and coercive force, has on the participation of women. No wonder it is common to hear the police being described as policemen – as if women in the police don't exist at all.

The underlying assumption seems to be that an increase in numbers will automatically make the organisational culture more egalitarian. This is far from the truth. Women are typecast – for example, they are asked to deal with crimes against women, while they are kept outside the mainstream of varied experiences. As a result, new recruits will become increasingly ghettoised in the absence of a framework to guide their career path. Increasing the number of recruits alone will not be enough; institutional changes embedded in principles of diversity, inclusion and equality of opportunities are as important. Otherwise, discrimination and exclusion will continue to persist even as the numbers of women increase.

Devyani Srivastava is Senior Program Officer in the Police Reforms Programme of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

A prediction model for COVID-19

The SEIR model was helpful in making estimations in the case of Ebola and SARS

ATANU BISWAS

hospitalisation period is calculated to be 12.39 ± 4.77 days.

The prediction for Wuhan was done in four phases: a) December 1-January 23; b) January 24-February 2; c) February 3-15; d) thereafter. On January 23, airplanes, trains, and other public transportation within the city were restricted and other prevention and control measures such as quarantine and isolation were gradually established in Wuhan. Phase II continued up to the extended spring festival holiday. More medical resources were provided from February 3. It is assumed that the prevention and control measures were sufficient and effective from February 16.

The decreasing BRN rates

In Wuhan, home to 11 million people, the initial number of cases was 40, estimated by a group of researchers led by Natsuko Imai of Imperial College. The number of exposed was assumed to be 20 times this number. The BRN in the first three phases was estimated to be 3.1, 2.6, and 1.9, respectively. In the *Cell Discovery* article, the BRN is assumed to have decreased to 0.9 or 0.5 in phase IV, based on previous experience in SARS. According to an article in *Science* in 2003, the BRN of SARS decreased from 2.7 to 0.25 after the patients were isolated and the infection started being controlled.

Following the model, the number of cases in Wuhan reached 17,652-25,875 in phase I, to 32,061-46,905 in phase II, and to 53,070-77,390 in phase III. The epidemic peaked on February 23rd or February 19th with 58,077-84,520 or 55,869-81,393 infections, according to the BRN value of 0.9 and 0.5, respectively. In reality, the number of daily cases in Wuhan has been reducing remarkably since February 16.

The BRN value for India is unknown due to inadequate data so far. However, it can be kept small by isolating patients and controlling infection by extensive checking at airports and other important places. With 110 'active' cases as on March 16, a BRN value of 0.5 might not be alarming. Let's hope that it will remain so.

Atanu Biswas is a Professor of Statistics, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata



DATA POINT

No-fly zone

Close to 5,680 planned flights which were supposed to either depart from or arrive at 10 foreign airports this week were cancelled mostly due to travel bans related to COVID-19. Airports in Italy and South Korea are the most affected, while the ones in India and the U.S. are less affected. In all the graphs, only departures from and arrivals to Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai and Bengaluru have been considered to represent India's figures. By Vignesh Radhakrishnan and Sumant Sen

ARRIVALS | Of the 209 cancelled arrivals into Indian airports, 11% of flights were coming from Mumbai, 6% each were from Delhi, Kuala Lumpur and Muscat

Mumbai	Delhi	Kuala Lumpur	Muscat	Bahrain	Riyadh	Hyderabad	Bengaluru
11%	6%	6%	6%	4%	3%	4%	4%

Of the 2,778 cancelled arrivals into airports abroad, 2% each were coming from Amsterdam, Shanghai and Warsaw

Amsterdam	Beijing	Hangzhou	Paris	Nanjing	Xi'an	Barcelona
2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

Shanghai	Chengdu	Xi'an	Barcelona	New York
2%	1%	1%	1%	1%

GROUNDING

Close to 70% of departures from and arrivals to Rome international airport were cancelled this week. Airports in the capitals of S. Korea, France, Germany, Spain, and the U.K. recorded 30-45% cancellations. Chinese airports were in a similar range

DEPARTURES | Of the 191 cancelled departures from Indian airports, 11% of flights were heading to Mumbai, 9% to Delhi and 6% to Muscat

Mumbai	Delhi	Ahmedabad	Kochi	Frankfurt	Jeddah
11%	9%	3%	3%	4%	3%

Amsterdam	Beijing	Nanjing	Xi'an	Barcelona
2%	1%	1%	1%	1%

Source: Flight Radar 24

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 18, 1970

Are taxpayers in U.S. honest or artful?

Americans are either the world's most honest taxpayers or the world's most ingenious tax cheaters. Very few are ever convicted of failing to give the Government its due (says a report in the International Herald Tribune). Only 561 persons out of 110 million individual taxpayers were judged guilty of tax fraud in the fiscal year that ended June 30, 1969. Are Americans really 99.9995 per cent honest with their taxes? The Internal Revenue Service concedes that it may miss a cheater now and then, but its officials are convinced that most people pay their taxes fully - if not always cheerfully. The revenue service investigated 8,273 cases of possible tax fraud in the last fiscal year. It recommended prosecution in 1,139 cases. A total of 649 indictments were obtained and 561 persons pleaded guilty or no contest or were convicted after a trial. These figures involve only hard-core cheating. Thousands of additional persons gave themselves the benefit of the doubt in figuring out their tax returns and some of them were caught. But they usually paid up when they received a deficiency notice from the Government

FROM PAGE ONE

COVID-19 claims third victim in the country



No rush: Commuters seen with masks at Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus in Mumbai on Tuesday. • VIVEK BENDRE

The Health Ministry also made it mandatory for all hospitals (government and private), medical officers in government health institutions and registered private medical practitioners, including AYUSH practitioners, to notify persons with COVID-19 symptoms to the district surveillance unit concerned.

"All practitioners shall also get the self-declaration forms of patients who are having travel history of COVID-19-affected countries," the Ministry said, adding that such persons must be isolated in the hospital and tested for COVID-19.

All Ministries and Central government departments were advised to take mea-

sures, such as installing thermal scanners at the entry of government buildings and compulsorily placing hand sanitiser at the entrance. Visitors to government buildings ought to be "discouraged to the maximum extent" and meetings conducted through video-conferencing, the Ministry said.

With reports of 250 Indians in Iran potentially affected by the virus, Ravi Dammu, a senior official in the Ministry of External Affairs, said he was not in a position to confirm the number. "But it is likely that some of them may have tested positive," he said in response to questions by reporters.

51 private labs will be allowed to conduct tests

ICMR also released a preliminary report of its sample testing for community transmission and noted that 500 of the 1,020 samples picked up to get trends and indications of third-stage transmission have all tested negative. "We will have the full report in within a day or two," Dr. Bhargava said.

He added that there is no evidence of community transmission and the random samples, picked up (between March 1 and 15) from ICU patients who have been admitted with respiratory distress, have shown no indication of it.

Only imported cases
"India has witnessed only imported cases of COVID-19 and limited local transmission from imported cases to their immediate contacts. Community transmission has not been documented till now. If community transmission is documented, our testing strategy will undergo changes to evolve into a stage appropriate testing strategy," he added.

ICMR has also scaled up its testing operations and released revised testing guidelines, which include testing

norms for health care workers looking after patients with respiratory distress. "Health care workers managing respiratory distress/Severe Acute Respiratory Illness should be tested when they are symptomatic," it said.

The revised norms specify that all asymptomatic patients, who have taken international flights in the past 14 days, should get tested if they develop symptoms. Also symptomatic people who come in close contact with laboratory-confirmed cases must be tested.

Announcing a major scale-up of testing facilities, ICMR said: "We appeal to all private laboratories to offer COVID-19 diagnosis free of cost. We have 72 functional ICMR laboratories in the government sector for testing and 49 more – under organisations such as the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR), the Department of Biotechnology, and the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) – will be active by the month-end. Private NABL-accredited laboratories will soon be operationalised."

UIDAI can issue notice on complaint

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The government informed the Lok Sabha on Tuesday that the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) might issue a show-cause notice on receipt of a complaint from "any person" or law enforcement agencies to ascertain if Aadhaar was procured through fraudulent means or by submitting false or fake documents.

To a question by H. Va-santhakumar of the Congress whether the government was aware that people across the country had been asked to prove their citizenship by the UIDAI, Minister of State for Home Nitinandan Rai said, "In case the allegation is found to be correct, after a due inquiry, the Aadhaar number is omitted [cancelled] or deactivated [suspended], as the case may be, in accordance with Regulations 27 and 28 of Aadhaar (Enrolment and Update) Regulations, 2016."

No plan to ban TikTok, says Kishan Reddy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Union Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy informed the Lok Sabha on Tuesday that the government received no inputs suggesting a counter-intelligence threat to the country from TikTok, a video-sharing social networking service.

BJP member Subhas Sar-

kar sought to know whether the government had received any piece of intelligence from the United States on the negative effect of the popular application on India, and whether the government was considering to impose a ban on it.

Mr. Reddy said in a written reply that there was no proposal to ban the application.

systems on the earlier ones," a Navy source said.

These systems are available to India following the conclusion of the foundational agreement Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COM-CASA) with the US. In November 2019, the Defence Acquisition Council, chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, approved the procurement of six additional P-8I aircraft.

"These aircraft will also be in the same configuration as the earlier eight aircraft. Plans are on to install encrypted communication

Gogoi defends RS nomination

Former CJI says he will address media on 'why I accepted the offer humbly'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Former Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi on Tuesday justified his nomination to the Rajya Sabha but declined to elaborate upon the reasons that made him weigh and accept the offer.

President Ram Nath Kovind on Monday named Mr. Gogoi for one of the 12 seats to which members are nominated. "I will probably go to Delhi tomorrow [Wednesday]. I will address the media after returning from the swearing-in to say why I accepted [the offer] humbly and why I am going to the Rajya Sabha," he told newsmen at his residence here.

I will probably go to Delhi tomorrow [Wednesday]. I will address the media after returning from the swearing-in to say why I accepted [the offer] humbly and why I am going to the Rajya Sabha

RANJAN GOGOI
FORMER CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA

cepted [the offer] humbly and why I am going to the Rajya Sabha," he told newsmen at his residence here.

Mr. Gogoi said he would

Sabha. Two others from the northeastern region – academic B.B. Dutta from Meghalaya and boxer M.C. Mary Kom from Manipur – have been nominated.

The former CJI, who supervised the exercise to update the National Register of Citizens in Assam and delivered the judgment in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute, earlier in the day told a media group that the need for the legislature and the judiciary to "meet at one point of time" made him accept the nomination.

It is an assault on Constitution: Cong.

Singhvi quotes Arun Jaitley

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The government's decision to nominate former Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi to the Rajya Sabha is an "unpardonable assault on the basic structure of the Constitution..." the Congress said on Tuesday.



Mr. Singhvi said former Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi became a Rajya Sabha member five or six years after retirement.

Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala asked whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi considered the advice of his late Finance Minister before nominating Mr. Gogoi. "Did PM Modi consider the advice of his former colleague and Law Minister and Finance Minister, Late Sh. Arun Jaitley, before recommending Ex-CJI Ranjan Gogoi to Rajya Sabha," he asked on Twitter.

Rescind Justice Gogoi's nomination, says CPI(M)

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Left parties have demanded that the nomination of former Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi to the Rajya Sabha be rescinded to preserve the constitutional balance.

ment appointment [of a judge] is a scar on the independence of the judiciary."

CPI general secretary D. Raja said the nomination raised several questions about the independence and credibility of the judiciary.

"This was also the reason why I decided not to take up any post after retirement. According to me, the acceptance of nomination as member of the Rajya Sabha by a former Chief Justice of India has certainly shaken the confidence of the common man in the independence of the judiciary, which is part of the Basic Structure of the Constitution," he said.

Rahul bats for Tamil Nadu MPs in Lok Sabha

Speaker's decision not to allow members from the State to ask supplementaries is unacceptable'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said the Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla's decision not to allow members from Tamil Nadu to ask supplementaries was "unacceptable" and an "insult to the people of the State".

I am surprised as to how Justice Ranjan Gogoi has compromised the noble principles of the independence and impartiality of the judiciary

KURIAN JOSEPH,
Former SC judge

successive Chief Justices. The press conference was held when the case of death of judge Loya was pending in the court.

"We have discharged our

debt to the nation" was the statement made by Justice Ranjan Gogoi along with the three of us on January 12, 2018. I am surprised as to how Justice Ranjan Gogoi, who once exhibited such courage of conviction to uphold the independence of the judiciary, has compromised the noble principles of the independence and impartiality of the judiciary.

Mr. Kurian said on Tuesday.

Mr. Lokur had also reacted sharply to the nomination of Mr. Gogoi.

Mr. Gogoi's nomination comes less than six months since his retirement in November 2019. As the Chief Justice of India, he had led the Constitution Bench that ruled in favour of the Hindu side on the ownership of the disputed land in the Ayodhya title appeals.

Mr. Kurian said public

confidence in an independent judiciary would crumble the moment there was a perception that a section of the judges was biased or looking forward.

to ask supplementary questions.

When the Speaker continued with the next question, members of various Opposition parties, including the DMK, the Congress and the NCP, walked out. Trinamool Congress members, however, did not join the walkout.

Addressing the media outside, Mr. Gandhi once again referred to Monday's Question Hour when he claimed that he was not allowed a second supplementary to his starred question on 50 wilful defaulters.

"I am a Member of Parliament, I have certain rights and he can't take away my rights. But today, our Tamil Nadu MPs wanted to ask a supplementary about the Tamil language... This is an absolute insult to the people of Tamil Nadu," he said.

In a tweet, Mr. Gandhi called it a departure from the established parliamentary practice.

"The people of Tamil Nadu were disrespected in Parliament today when the Speaker refused to allow a supplementary question on the #Tamil language. I strongly protest this injustice done to the Tamil people & the disregard for established practices & traditions of Parliament," he said.

During Zero Hour, the leader of the single largest Opposition party, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, spoke about the hike in the excise duty on petrol and diesel. He alleged that the government had cheated the common man.

Dayanidhi Maran of the DMK made a similar allegation, saying a "serious loot" was taking place.

In an oblique reference to Pakistan, he said, "We are witnessing how making terror and violence weapons of politics and diplomacy destroys a society and a nation. The world is also watching where the supporters of terror and violence are placed..."

In a video message to mark the birth centenary of Sheikh Mujib Rahman, he said 'Bangabandhu' devoted every moment of his life towards bringing Bangladesh out of the phase of genocide.

In an oblique reference to Pakistan, he said, "We are witnessing how making terror and violence weapons of politics and diplomacy destroys a society and a nation. The world is also watching where the supporters of terror and violence are placed..."

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Dayanidhi Maran of the DMK made a similar allegation, saying a "serious loot" was taking place.

No meetings of SC, ST panels held in 25 States in 3 years

They were meant to monitor SC-ST Act implementation

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

The State-level committees of 25 States and Union Territories, meant to monitor the implementation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1995, had not met even once in three years – 2016, 2017 and 2018, according to information provided by the Union Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry to Parliament on Tuesday.

Replying to a question by DMK MP D. Ravikumar, Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Thawarchand Gehlot told the Lok Sabha that the 1995 rules formed under the Act mandated the setting up of State- and district-level vigilance and monitoring committees.

The State-level committees, headed by the respective Chief Ministers, are supposed to meet twice a year, according to the rules.

However, the data provided to the Lower House showed that the State-level committees in 25 States and Union Territories – Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu, Delhi, Lakshadweep and Puducherry, the data provided

wadeep – had not held any meeting in the three years. In 2016, there were two meetings of the committee in Haryana and one each in Karnataka and West Bengal. The next year, in 2017, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, West Bengal and Puducherry held one meeting each, while Haryana had two.

In 2018, there was one meeting each in Assam, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Maharashtra, Chandigarh and two and three meetings in West Bengal and Gujarat respectively.

Similarly, the district-level committees mandated by the rules had held no meetings in three years in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Chandigarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Delhi, Lakshadweep and Puducherry, the data provided

Rahul attacks govt., but Karti compliments it

Economic tsunami is coming: Rahul

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Even as former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said in New Delhi that the Narendra Modi government was ill-prepared to deal with the economic "tsunami" that was going to be exacerbated because of COVID-19, his party colleague Karti Chidambaram complimented the government in the Lok Sabha.

Though he highlighted the issue of "sub-standard and unhygienic" conditions of the quarantine facilities for international passengers, Mr. Karti Chidambaram, Lok Sabha member from Tamil Nadu, prefaced it by saying, "I must compliment the government on the efforts it is making to contain the pandemic. It's a fast evolving crisis and one should not play with it. We must compliment the government on its efforts and support the government in whatever it's doing."

Mr. Karti said many of the people, most of whom were quarantined following their return from abroad, have the wherewithal for self-isolation and should be allowed to do so.

Mr. Gandhi told reporters, "I have been saying that an economic tsunami is coming and even before COVID-19. Now I can say 100 per cent it is coming and would ask the government to get ready for it. I am trying to tell the Prime Minister, get your head out of the sand. Your head is right now in the sand, pull it out, look around what is going on."



Thawarchand Gehlot



Karti Chidambaram

No plan to ban TikTok, says Kishan Reddy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Union Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy informed the Lok Sabha on Tuesday that the government received no inputs suggesting a counter-intelligence threat to the country from TikTok, a video-sharing social networking service.

BJP member Subhas Sar-

kar sought to know whether the government had received any piece of intelligence from the United States on the negative effect of the popular application on India, and whether the government was considering to impose a ban on it.

Mr. Reddy said in a written reply that there was no proposal to ban the application.

systems on the earlier ones," a Navy source said.

These systems are available to India following the conclusion of the foundational agreement Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COM-CASA) with the US. In November 2019, the Defence Acquisition Council, chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, approved the procurement of six additional P-8I aircraft.

A Navy will start receiving four more P-8I long-range maritime reconnaissance Anti-Submarine Warfare aircraft from Boeing from May and the process will be completed by January 2022, according to Navy sources.

These aircraft will also be in the same configuration as the earlier eight aircraft. Plans are on to install encrypted communication

Navy to get four more P-8I

Nath calls for
'freedom' of
Cong. rebels

STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath on Tuesday requested Governor Lalji Tandon to ensure 'independence' for the 16 rebel Congress MLAs "held in captivity" in Bengaluru and an atmosphere free from fear so they could take a decision.

In a letter to Mr Tandon, Mr Nath said, "They have been made to stay in a hostage-like situation where no one can meet them, talk to them, and they are being stopped from returning to Bhopal, while BJP leaders are meeting them, influencing their minds... forcing them to make false statements before the media."

Meanwhile, the State BJP leaders approached Governor requesting him to block all decisions taken by the government in the past three days, after three Congress leaders were appointed to head State Commissions.

Rebel Cong. MLAs under duress'

The lawmakers did not appear to attest resignations, says Speaker Prajapati

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL



Drama on: Rebel Congress MLAs from Madhya Pradesh during a press conference at a resort in Bengaluru on Tuesday. ■ PTI

Prajapati asked: "Like other politicians of the State, are they giving statements before the press willingly in an independent atmosphere without fear?"

As for the MLAs, pledging allegiance to Jyotiraditya Scindia who had switched over to the BJP, releasing videos on social media and holding press conferences to say they were in Bengaluru of their own accord, Mr. Pra-

ters, claiming they were not fit to be members as they failed to appear on two occasions.

Mr. Prajapati wrote to the Governor that despite directions to them under Rule 276-1(B) relating to the functioning of the Assembly to appear before the Speaker, they had failed to appear. And even during the session on March 16, they remained absent.

"Family members of

some of them have even expressed concern over their security," he wrote. "As the presiding Speaker of the Vidhan Sabha, I am extremely worried about these members going missing."

Pressure from officials'

Meanwhile, the BJP accused the Congress government of "pressing, threatening and luring" families of rebels using government officials.

Party vice-president and former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said, "We are preparing a list of such officials, and want to make it clear they won't be spared."

"It would be wise for them to stick to their administrative roles, and not immorally interfere in politics."

On Tuesday, Returning Officer A.P. Singh accepted Rajya Sabha nominations of Mr. Scindia and Sumer Singh Solanki of the BJP after considering written objections of Congress nominees Digvijaya Singh and Phool Singh Baraiya.

Floor test can be meaningful only when all elected representatives can attend and exercise their freedom

bel' MLAs, respondents in

the case.

The BJP has already moved the apex court for early holding of the floor test. The court has urgently scheduled the hearing for March 18.

The confinement of the MLAs since the beginning of March and holding them in resorts in Bengaluru is a fraud on the Constitution, the Congress petition said.

The petition sought a direction to allow the rebel MLAs to participate in the ongoing Budget session of the Assembly.

Alternatively, if the MLAs have resigned and their seats fallen vacant, a trust

vote cannot be held until by-elections to these seats are held, the Congress argued.

The Congress complained to the apex court that the BJP has confined the legislators in Karnataka with the aid of the State apparatus. They have been held incomunicado to even families and party members.

The petition said "the floor test can only be meaningful when all the elected representatives are able to attend and exercise their freedom without any pressure or duress."

"For that, even assuming but not conceding that the MLAs have tendered their resignations from the Assembly, they are still members of the Madhya Pradesh Congress Committee. As such there is no reason as to how and why members of

the INC not be allowed to meet these persons," the petition said.

Abortions till 24 weeks for special categories

Lok Sabha passes Bill to raise limit

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha on Tuesday passed a Bill to extend the upper limit for permitting abortions from 20 weeks to 24 under special circumstances.

The "special categories of women" include rape survivors, victims of incest, the differently abled and minors, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said moving the Bill.

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020, which seeks to amend the MTP Act, 1971, was passed by a voice vote after a debate that lasted two-and-a-half hours. Though Opposition members had moved amendments, they were defeated.

Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar of the Trinamool called the Bill a step in the right direction

and offered several suggestions. She said that an anomalous foetus could be identified by a ultrasound scan within 16 to 18 weeks instead of waiting for 24 weeks.

Ritesh Pandey of the BSP and Amol R. Kolhe said abortion should be considered a fundamental right of a woman.

Opposing the Bill, Dean Kuriakose of the Congress said unrestricted abortions should not be encouraged as "abortions are a crime against humanity".

P. Ravendranath Kumar of the AIADMK urged the Minister to increase the number of medical college seats in view of the low number of gynaecologists.

Unsafe abortions were a major reason for mortality of pregnant women, he added.

SC upholds right of women naval officers

Bench says denial of permanent commission to SSC officers reeks of a stereotypical mindset

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday upheld the right of serving Short Service Commission (SSC) women officers of the Navy to be granted permanent commission (PC) on a par with their male counterparts.

A Bench of Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and Ajay Rastogi said the "101 excuses" devised by the government, including motherhood and physiological limitations, reeked of a stereotypical mindset.

"The battle for gender equality is about confronting the battles of the mind. In the context of the armed forces, specious reasons have been advanced by decision makers and administrators. They range from physiology, motherhood and physical attributes to the male dominated hierarchies," Justice Chandrachud



At the helm: The court quashed the stipulation making permanent commission for women prospective. ■ K.R. DEEPAK

observed in a 64-page judgment.

Policy letter

The judgment was based on a case filed by 17 women SSC officers, represented by senior advocate Aishwarya Bhati, who were denied PC and discharged despite completing 14 years of service as

SSC officers after January 2009.

In a slew of directions, the court quashed the stipulation in the policy letter of September 26, 2008, making permanent commission for women prospective and restricting its application to specified cadres/branches of the Navy. It directed that SSC women officers found suitable for the grant of PC shall be entitled to all consequential benefits, including arrears of pay, promotions and retirement benefits as and when due.

In the judgment, Justice Chandrachud referred to a submission that vessels of a Russian origin are deployed by the Navy and they have no bathrooms for women officers. The court called these submissions both illusory and without any foundation.

"Women officers have worked shoulder to shoulder with their men counterparts in every walk of service. The

supposed explanations based on duties at sea or Russian vessels are devices adopted to justify an action which is not germane to the proper discharge of duties and the maintenance of discipline among members of the Armed Forces," the court said.

Contrary

It held that such submissions were plainly contrary to the policy letter of February 25, 1999 issued by the Ministry of Defence to the Chief of the Naval Staff, emphatically stipulating that women officers of all branches/cadres could be directed to serve on board ships, both during training and subsequent employment in accordance with the exigencies of service.

"In the face of this communication, it is impossible to countenance a submission that women cannot sail alongside men sailors."

Impose ban orders, say businessmen

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

India must impose ban orders under Section 144 of the Cr.PC and lockdowns across key cities by March 20 to contain the spread of COVID-19, a group of entrepreneurs and venture capitalists urged the Union government on Tuesday.

In a representation, the group said the actual number of cases in was likely between 600 and 2,500, as learnings from Wuhan suggested that the actual undiagnosed cases were five to 20 times of the diagnosed cases.

Community transmission could begin sooner than 30 days from today, and a lockdown now might help save five times more lives in just 90 days.

India has started with good containment efforts, but it is time for stricter measures, it added.

CAA won't lead to expulsions: Ministry

It tells SC that the 'benign' Act merely offers 'amnesty' without hurting secularism

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) is a "benign" law, which does not lead to expulsion or refoulement of illegal migrants, the Union Home Ministry told the Supreme Court on Tuesday.

Other laws dealt with the expulsion of illegal migrants. The CAA, on the other hand, merely offered "amnesty" without hurting India's secularism.

It relaxed the settled principles of Indian citizenship for Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians persecuted in "the



democratic states" of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, the Ministry said. The CAA, however, does not cover persecuted Muslims from these countries.

But the Ministry argued that "the country is divided primarily on the basis of re-

ligion with no fault of citizens" in 1947 and these six persecuted minorities had been suffering historic injustice in the three countries.

"India represents the sole rational and logically feasible place to seek shelter for these communities," it said in a reply spanning over 130 pages in the court.

'Natural refuge'

The Ministry said the "numerous military regimes" in Pakistan, the civil wars and Taliban in Afghanistan and the "horrible civil war" that led to the creation of Bangladesh accentuated the existing religious perse-

cution of these six communities. India was their natural place of return.

The Ministry dismissed fears about the CAA facilitating a nationwide National Register of Citizens (NRC) to expel "doubtful citizens". Section 14A of the Citizenship Act of 1955, which provides for the preparation of NRC and issuance of national identity cards, was introduced way back in 2004.

The section, along with the Citizenship Rules of 2003, dealt only with the "process" of registration of Indian citizens and issuance of national identity cards.

Farooq visits family of Mehbooba

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah on Tuesday visited the family of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti's family in Srinagar.

Sources said Dr. Abdullah, who was released on March 13 after over seven months of detention, enquired after the family of Ms. Mufti, who remains in an isolated detention centre in Srinagar.

Sources said Ms. Mufti's mother, Gulshan Ara, and daughter, Iltija Mufti, received Dr. Abdullah.

"It was purely a courtesy visit. Dr. Abdullah being the senior-most leader in the political landscape of J&K, it's a gesture we appreciate," Ms. Iltija told *The Hindu*.

Dr. Abdullah's gesture is significant in the wake of the Gupkar Declaration signed by the regional parties jointly on August 4 in Srinagar, just a day ahead of the Centre's decision to revoke J&K's special status.

ODISHA STATE MEDICAL CORPORATION LIMITED
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Advertisement for Recruitment

No.02 /OSMCL/HR/2020 Date : 07.03.2020

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सं./NRSC/PUR/e-TENDERS/2020 दिनांक/Date : 17.03.2020

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France locks down over pandemic fears

Macron asks the French to stay at home for 15 days; EU plans to ban non-essential travel to continent

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

France moved into a near-total lockdown on Tuesday over fears of COVID-19 spread, the latest country to impose draconian restrictions affecting the lives of millions of people.

European leaders also plan to ban all non-essential travel into the continent on Tuesday in a bid to stem a pandemic that has killed thousands, upended society and battered economies.

With French President Emmanuel Macron describing the battle against COVID-19 as a "war", governments around the world are scrambling to keep the public safe, slamming borders shut and forcing citizens to stay home.

The crisis is infecting every sector of the economy, and global stocks have been on a rollercoaster ride, with Wall Street on Monday sinking more than 12% in the worst session since the crash of 1987.

After the initial outbreak

COVID-19

in a Chinese city in December, Europe has emerged as the epicentre of the virus SARS-CoV-2, with more deaths now recorded outside China than inside.

COVID-19 has now killed more than 7,000 people worldwide, including over 2,100 in Italy, the worst-hit country outside China, and over 1,80,000 cases have been recorded in 145 countries.

In a sombre address to the nation, Mr. Macron ordered the French to stay at home for 15 days from midday Tuesday, following similar measures by other European countries.

Most shops, restaurants and tourist sites in the

world's most visited country are already shuttered, but in some areas desperate shoppers crowded supermarkets before the new rules took effect.

About 1,00,000 police and gendarmes will be out on the streets to enforce the measures, after Mr. Macron warned violations would be punished. "We are at war, a public health war certainly. We are fighting not against an Army or another nation. But the enemy is there, invisible and elusive and on the move," he said.

Meanwhile, Spain on Tuesday confirmed nearly 2,000 new cases of COVID-19, sending the total spiralling past 11,000, with 491 deaths.

With European nations already closing their borders, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said she would ask the leaders of the bloc's Schengen visa-free border zone to stop all non-essential travel into the area.

Test, test, test: WHO

The head of the World Health Organization called on Monday for every suspected COVID-19 case to be tested, something which would send the known tally of the sick sky-rocketing.

"You cannot fight a fire while blindfolded," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told journalists. "Test, test, test. Test every suspected case."

"Every country, with no exceptions, needs to take their boldest actions to stop or slow down the virus threat," Hans Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe, told a press conference on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Iran announced another 135 deaths from the disease, bringing the toll to 988 in one of the world's worst-hit countries.



Towering problem: A couple standing in front of the Eiffel tower in Paris on Tuesday, a few hours before the order to all French citizens to stay indoors came into effect. • AFP

Polish Ministers are being tested, under quarantine

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WARSAW

Poland's Ministers were under quarantine on Tuesday after one of them tested positive for COVID-19 as authorities introduced sweeping measures to combat the spread of the disease.

All members of the government, who attended a March 10 meeting, had been tested and the results should be known by Tuesday, said Michal Dworczyk, head of the Prime Minister's chancellery.

"Until that time, all these people remain in quarantine," he told Polish Radio.

Poland's Environment Minister Michal Wos said Monday he was under quarantine after testing positive for the novel coronavirus, adding that he was feeling fine.

Prime Minister Mateusz

Morawiecki was among the 15 government members under self-quarantine on Tuesday, along with the Ministers of health, defence, interior, justice and culture, he said.

Members of the government were all "working remotely", Mr. Dworczyk added.

A nation of 38 million people, Poland was among the first EU members to introduce sweeping measures to contain the spread of the deadly novel coronavirus, including shutting its borders to foreign travellers, closing schools and urging citizens to stay home.

It had 205 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including five deaths, as of Tuesday morning, with the Health Ministry warning cases could rise above 1,000 this week.

Just one fresh case in Wuhan

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MADRID

China on Tuesday reported 21 new cases of the virus, 20 of them imported. Just one new case was confirmed in Wuhan, where the illness was first detected in late December. The update raised China's totals to 80,881 cases and 3,226 deaths.

Pak. reports 212 cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LAHORE

The number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Pakistan sharply rose to 212 on Tuesday, amid conflicting statements by authorities on the nation's first casualty, a suspected patient in Lahore, due to the SARS-CoV-2 infection.

Trump administration seeks \$850 billion stimulus fund

Package to contain the economic damage from COVID-19

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump will ask Congress to approve a massive \$850 billion emergency spending package to contain the growing economic damage from the COVID-19 pandemic, according to media reports on Tuesday.

The measures are expected to include a payroll tax cut and \$50 billion in aid to troubled U.S. airlines hit hard by the near total shutdown in the travel industry, *The Washington Post* reported, citing four officials familiar with the matter.

The package, which is in addition to the \$100 billion in spending directed at paid sick leave and expanded unemployment benefits already moving through Congress, surpasses the \$700 billion emergency program known as TARP to save the banking system during the



Donald Trump

2008 global financial crisis.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin is expected to present the proposal to Senate Republicans, the *Post* reported.

Democratic package

Republican leaders last week dismissed the Democratic package in the house as an inflated wish list of items. And since then the damage has accelerated with businesses forced to close

and whole States under lockdown.

Mr. Trump has been pushing for a cut or suspension of taxes deducted from all American paychecks at least through the November presidential election.

But Democrats and many economists say focus on payroll taxes misses workers who are laid off, unemployed or are paid hourly.

Most economists agree the crisis calls for a massive response to flood the economy with cash to keep households and businesses afloat.

The Federal Reserve has slashed the benchmark lending rate to zero, where it was during the 2009 global financial crisis.

It has taken extraordinary steps to ensure the financial system has plenty of cash to keep it from locking up, but Fed Chair Jerome Powell said a fiscal response will be "critical."

U.S. and China exchange barbs

Trump calls SARS-CoV-2 'Chinese virus'; Beijing slams usage

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

tries, like Airlines and others, that are particularly affected by the Chinese Virus," Mr. Trump tweeted on Monday night.

He doubled down on the comment on Tuesday while Tweeting about how U.S. States were being affected, saying: "Some are being hit hard by the Chinese Virus, some are being hit practically not at all."

"It did come from China, so I think it's very accurate," the U.S. President told a news conference.

Mr. Trump's allies had previously referred to the

pandemic as "Chinese coronavirus", but Beijing said on Tuesday it was "strongly indignant" over the phrase, which it called "a kind of stigmatisation".

The U.S. should "immediately stop its unjustified accusations against China," Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said.

A commentary by the official Xinhua news agency said using "racist and xenophobic names to cast blame on other countries can only reveal politicians' irresponsibility and incompetence which will intensify fears".

Sri Lanka infections jump to 43

Government suspends all international flight arrivals for two weeks

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Even as the number of COVID-19 cases in Sri Lanka rose to 43 on Tuesday, the government decided to suspend all international flight arrivals for two weeks beginning Wednesday midnight, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's office said.

The move, according to government officials, is aimed at halting entry of any possible new cases into the country, and allowing health officials to focus on arresting the spread of the pandemic within the country.

In a televised address to the country, Mr. Rajapaksa asked all citizens to support the government in combating COVID-19 and sought a strong mandate in the general elections scheduled next month. Sri Lanka is scheduled to hold parliamentary



No entry: A worker spraying disinfectant at a bus terminal in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on Monday. • AP

elections on April 25, that many opposition parties want postponed in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak.

On Tuesday alone, 15 new cases of COVID-19 were reported by Sri Lanka's Health Ministry. While it remains unclear how many suspect cases have been tested, the Sri Lankan health officials have been able to test every day since

the outbreak, authorities said they were looking for persons who arrived from "high-risk" countries and yet had evaded quarantine.

Police on Monday said they arrested two individuals on charges of spreading fake news pertaining to the coronavirus on social media.

Meanwhile, Sri Lankan

missions in India on Tuesday took efforts to ensure the speedy return of 300 pilgrims currently touring India, officials said.

Maldives steps up fight

The Maldivian Cabinet on Tuesday decided to cut MVR 1 billion (nearly \$65 million) from its annual budget and redirect the amount towards efforts to combat COVID-19, government spokesman Maabrook Azeem told *The Hindu* from Male via telephone.

The Maldives has so far confirmed 13 cases of COVID-19. All of them are foreigners who were visiting the island nation. "Our economy depends almost entirely on our tourism sector. With that and our imports taking a big hit after the coronavirus outbreak, we are gearing up with a swift strategy," he said.

U.S.-led coalition troops to leave Iraq bases

BAGHDAD

The U.S.-led coalition will redeploy hundreds of troops from bases in Iraq, including to outside the country, U.S. officials said on Tuesday. The announcement came hours after a rocket attack on an Iraqi base housing foreign troops, the 24th such attack in less than six months. AFP

Malaysia recovers \$322 mn from 1MDB

KUALA LUMPUR

Malaysia has recovered \$322 million stolen from the scandal-hit sovereign wealth fund 1MDB — a fraction of the more than \$4.5 billion U.S. prosecutors say was looted. Steps are being taken to recover another \$1.6 billion, Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin's office said. AFP

Little-known ex-Governor Zurfi named new Iraqi PM

He is tasked with forming a government within 30 days



Adnan al-Zurfi

on a successor to Adel Abdul Mahdi, who resigned in November during mass unrest, in which hundreds of people died.

He now has to win the confidence of Parliament for his new Cabinet, a difficult task as major Iranian-backed groups objected to his nomination.

"Zurfi will face tough resistance inside Parliament and he will need a miracle to pass his government," said a Shi'ite lawmaker, on condition of anonymity.

If Mr. Zurfi can secure parliamentary approval for his Cabinet, he would run the country until early elections can be held.

He is the second politician on the scene to Adel Abdul Mahdi, who resigned in November during mass unrest, in which hundreds of people died.

Mr. Zurfi, who lived in the U.S. as a refugee in the 1990s after fleeing Saddam, is seen as a comparatively secular figure in a country long dominated by sectarian parties.

Lawmakers told Reuters that President Barham Salih had named Mr. Zurfi only after larger rival Shi'ite political parties failed to decide

He won 5 of 6 States in March 10 voting

candidates based on the State-wide result. The remaining 58 are determined based on the results of the State's 10 congressional districts, and those results might not be calculated until the election is certified by the secretary of state's office, which could be as late as March 27.

In Washington, Democrats used vote by mail for the first time to allocate delegates instead of the smaller caucuses used in previous years.

After delivering a speech last week that appeared aimed at de-escalating the primary battle against Mr. Biden, Mr. Sanders laced into his opponent on Sunday night with a vigour that signalled that the fight — if not for delegates, then for the soul of the Democratic Party — was not over.

Washington was a state that Mr. Sanders had been hoping to win.

In 2016, he won more than two-thirds of the delegations from the Washington caucuses over Hillary Clinton.

Of the state's 89 pledged delegates, only 31 are allo-

cated based on the State-wide result. The remaining 58 are determined based on the results of the State's 10 congressional districts, and those results might not be calculated until the election is certified by the secretary of state's office, which could be as late as March 27.

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MARKET WATCH

	Sensex	30579	% CHANGE
Adani Ports	267.15	5.75	
Asian Paints	1731.60	48.20	
Axis Bank	488.35	-20.25	
Bajaj Auto	2270.45	-69.10	
Bajaj Finserv	7017.50	-47.10	
Bajaj Finance	3444.85	-227.40	
Bharti Airtel	454.70	-10.10	
BPCL	357.20	-7.45	
Britannia Ind	2686.00	-23.00	
Cipla	401.75	5.35	
Coal India	145.90	2.00	
Dr Reddys Lab	2781.20	-45.75	
Eicher Motors	17061.10	567.40	
GAIL (India)	74.65	-3.50	
Grasim Ind	555.65	-21.25	
HCL Tech	450.65	-0.05	
HDFC	1755.80	-85.95	
HDFC Bank	975.10	-24.40	
Hero MotoCorp	1841.15	57.65	
Hindalco	115.40	-0.25	
Hind Unilever	2004.05	62.15	
ICICI Bank	367.25	-35.65	
IndusInd Bank	604.15	-60.00	
Bharti Infratech	194.40	-15.00	
Infosys	554.95	-28.20	
Indian Oil Corp	89.40	-0.30	
ITC	149.15	1.90	
JSW Steel	176.45	-9.55	
Kotak Bank	1322.70	-61.00	
L&T	956.75	-11.95	
M&M	373.40	-18.40	
Maruti Suzuki	5603.95	123.70	
Nestle India Ltd.	14541.00	143.80	
NTPC	88.10	-2.70	
ONGC	60.00	-0.15	
PowerGrid Corp	162.00	4.05	
Reliance Ind	1008.00	-7.70	
State Bank	215.15	-8.20	
Sun Pharma	370.15	1.60	
Tata Motors	77.95	-5.00	
Tata Steel	282.75	-6.85	
TCS	1658.00	-38.40	
Tech Mahindra	595.45	-7.95	
Titan	1001.00	-10.35	
UltraTech Cement	3470.45	-47.60	
UPL	350.85	-25.95	
Vedanta	75.00	0.15	
Wipro	173.10	-6.65	
YES Bank	58.65	21.55	
Zee Entertainment	133.10	-33.25	

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
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YES Bank	58.65	21.55
Zee Entertainment	133.10	-33.25

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	74.05	74.37
Euro	81.49	81.84
British Pound	89.56	89.97
Japanese Yen (100)	69.26	69.56
Chinese Yuan	10.55	10.59
Swiss Franc	77.26	77.60
Singapore Dollar	51.79	52.02
Canadian Dollar	52.32	52.55
Malaysian Ringgit	17.01	17.09

Source: Indian Bank

BULLION RATES CHENNAI

March 17 rates in rupees with previous rates in parentheses
Retail Silver (1g)..... 38.1..... (40.8) 22 ct gold (1g)..... 3820..... (3943)

SBI assessing virus impact on sectors

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

State Bank of India (SBI) is assessing the impact on its loan portfolios in sectors such as aviation and tourism, which were badly impacted by the spread of COVID-19.

"We are studying the impact of coronavirus on sectors such as aviation, hospitality and tourism," SBI chairman Rajnish Kumar said on the sidelines of an event. The Reserve Bank of India has also asked banks and financial institutions to assess the impact on their balance sheet, asset quality, liquidity, etc. due to further spread of the virus.

On Monday, the Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation (CAPA) said the pandemic will push most airlines across the globe to bankruptcy by the end of May.

Welcoming the initiative, the official said: "Almost all cement manufacturers have had a very bad third quarter due to the economic slow-

Yes Bank all set to lift deposit withdrawal cap

CEO designate says liquidity not a problem; ATMs fully loaded; lender eyes recovery of up to ₹8,500 crore next year

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Private sector lender Yes Bank has assured all its customers they need not worry about their deposits after the moratorium is lifted, as branches and automated teller machines (ATMs) will have adequate cash.

The moratorium, which was imposed on March 5 with deposit withdrawals capped at ₹50,000, will be lifted on Wednesday at 6 p.m. This is the first time in banking history that a moratorium will be lifted from a commercial bank as, in all previous cases, such lenders were merged with other banks.

"We have taken adequate precautions. All our ATMs are full with cash. All our branches have adequate supply of cash. So, from Yes Bank's side, there is absolutely no issue on the liquidity front," said Prashant Ku-



Taking position: (From left) Ashutosh Khajuria, ED, Federal Bank, Prashant Kumar, administrator, Yes Bank and Rajnish Kumar, chairman, SBI, on Tuesday. ■ PRASHANT NAKKE

mar, the Reserve Bank of India-appointed administrator of the bank. He will take charge as the MD and CEO of the reconstructed bank on March 26, along with a new board. The RBI has assured liquidity support to the bank, if required, after the

moratorium is lifted.

Allaying concerns that the depositors will rush to withdraw their deposits after the moratorium is lifted, Mr. Kumar said only a third of the depositors have withdrawn the full amount available during the moratorium pe-

riod. In the past three days, more money came into Yes Bank compared with the withdrawals, he said.

But Mr. Kumar acknowledged that deposits were his biggest concern.

"We want to build a granular retail deposit franchise

and we need to move away from the dependence on bulk deposits," he said.

As part of the reconstruction plan, the bank has received investments from eight banks, including the State Bank of India, which will be largest shareholder with a 48% stake.

The capital adequacy ratio of the bank, which had dipped below the regulatory requirement, will be addressed by this capital infusion.

Regulatory requirement

"If we take into account the capital infusion of ₹10,000 crore and written down value of ATI bonds, then, we are above the regulatory capital requirement," Mr. Kumar said. The bank would raise more funds before it finalises the annual results, that is, during the first quarter of FY21.

"[As much as] 80% of the

funds raised in the next year will be for growth," he said, adding the bank is also expecting a strong recovery in the next financial year – to the tune of ₹8,500 crore.

Though the revival scheme of Yes Bank mandates that the SBI cannot reduce its stake below 26% in the next three years, SBI chairman Rajnish Kumar said not even a single Yes Bank share it holds would be sold before the three-year lock-in period ends.

The SBI has appointed two nominees on the board of Yes Bank – Partha Pratim Sengupta, deputy managing director and chief credit officer and J. Swaminathan, deputy managing director, strategy and chief digital officer.

"This is being addressed on a one-on-one basis with the State governments and at the industry level by RBI. On Tuesday, the Yes Bank stock surged 58% on the BSE to ₹58.65 per share after Moody's upgraded the bank's ratings to a 'positive' outlook on Monday.

Bears beat down stocks in last hour of trade

Banking stocks lose ground

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

ICI Bank and State Bank of India were among the top losers in the Sensex pack.

Incidentally, the BSE Bankex was the worst performer among the sectoral indices, shedding 1,181 points, or 4.46%. Market participants say stocks may remain volatile in the near future as fresh cases of COVID-19 emerge from regions outside China, thereby adversely affecting global growth.

On BSE, as many as 1,677 stocks declined on Tuesday, as against 751 gainers. Further, 354 stocks touched their lower circuit.

As per provisional numbers, foreign portfolio investors were net sellers at ₹4,044.69 crore on Tuesday.

FPI sales at a record high as virus spooks markets

Expect uptick in purchases by foreign portfolio investors, as some macro signs look good, say analysts

ASHISH RUKHAIYAR

MUMBAI

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), who have been the prime drivers of every bull run that the Indian capital market has seen till date, have been record sellers during the current month.



SHAPUR KOTWAL

As much of a landmark product for Tata Motors that the Harrier SUV was, it was not perfect. The car was launched with just one engine-gearbox option, engine refinement was not great and there were some goodies missing from the package too. What you see here is the updated, BS-VI-compliant Harrier and it redresses the major shortcomings of the first model. It gets the option of an automatic gearbox, the engine has been re-tuned to make more power and the features list now sees the inclusion of the segment-popular panoramic sunroof as well. So just how much nicer is it?

In BS-IV form, the Harrier's 2.0-litre diesel engine makes 170hp, a good 30hp up from its earlier output. Push off and the additional power is instantly noticeable. There is still a fair bit of turbo lag below 2,000rpm, but there is a stronger tug from the get-go and once you get to the meat of the powerband, the Harrier pulls strongly all the way to the 5,000rpm red-line. The drive modes work particularly well too, and the gap between them feels most pronounced on part throttle. This is especially true in Sport mode, when the engine feels especially willing and responsive. For those interested in greater fuel economy, Eco mode is quite usable in city traffic.

The improvement in performance is tangible; a quick test reveals a 0-100kph sprint time of 11.25sec as against 12.24sec for the 140hp version. The gap keeps growing beyond that speed. The clutch on the manual variant feels a touch smoother as well but it is still a bit heavy and the clutch engagement is not as progressive as we would have liked – an issue com-

Tata Harrier gets a BS-VI update

mon with other Fiat 2.0-litre multijet-powered SUVs. On the plus side, it is evident that Tata has worked hard to improve the overall noise, vibration and harshness (NVH) levels; the engine is much quieter than before at all engine speeds.

The new Hyundai-sourced 6-speed automatic unit feels brilliantly integrated with the engine. Step-off from rest is smooth and seamless, enhancing the Harrier experience considerably, especially in start-stop traffic. In fact, it's clear that the gearbox has been optimised to respond best to gentle throttle inputs for the cut-and-thrust of urban driving. Mash down on the accelerator, however, and there is some delay and even a hint of hesitation serving up the right gear.

There are no paddleshifters, and shifts in manual mode aren't blisteringly quick, but that's what one expects from a typical torque converter unit. Interestingly, in manual mode, the gearbox only shifts up automatically when the engine brushes against the redline and only shifts down when engine speeds fall below 1,500rpm. It holds onto a gear for most of the engine's powerband, giving you a better sense of control, especially on a winding road.

On the highway, the Harrier feels nicely planted. The long travel sus-

TATA HARRIER BS-VI SPECIFICATIONS

LENGTH: 4598mm

WIDTH: 1894mm

HEIGHT: 1706mm

WHEELBASE: 2741mm

BOOT SPACE: 425-810 litres

ENGINE: 1956cc, 4-cyls, turbodiesel

POWER: 170hp at 3750rpm

TORQUE: 350Nm at 1750-2500rpm

GEARBOX: 6-speed manual/6-speed automatic

FUEL TANK CAPACITY: 50 litres

pension soaks up potholes effortlessly though you can feel an underlying stiffness on uneven roads.

The hydraulic steering is a weak link. It has an inconsistent feel and is prone to some torque steer. There is also steering kickback on big bumps and the Harrier tends to tramline on uneven surfaces too. It has the right heft at highway speeds, which is reassuring, but it's quite heavy at low speeds and requires a fair amount of

Smoother, more refined, effortless and punchy to drive, the Harrier is now more attractive and capable

effort. The brakes could do with better feel too. They lack bite, and the excessive pedal travel isn't very reassuring, although the Harrier stops quite effectively under hard braking.

The updated Harrier looks near-identical to the BS-IV model though Tata has made a few updates. The alloy wheels are new and the wing mirrors are now smaller, marginally reducing the big blind spot created by the units on the BS-IV model. Inside, early Harrier owners will notice that fit and finish is far improved and the USB slot in the central console is now more accessible. In fact, the overall sense of quality in the cabin, with all its plush materials, is now genuinely top class.

However, the digital tachometer is still hard to read accurately, the gear indicator on the automatic lags considerably behind when you shift gears and the touchscreen still isn't seamless or slick to operate as its competition.

Seat comfort is super-impressive. Space in the cabin is massive and the large seats support your back, shoulders and thighs superbly. The seat height, especially at the rear, is just perfect. With the acres of legroom in the back and the new panoramic sunroof that brightens up the cabin, this clearly is one of the best SUVs in its

class. Tata has cleverly even used a heat-reflecting blind to reduce heat soak from the big glass area. Also, you just can't miss the tough build. The entire bodyshell feels nicely taut and rigid, and more importantly, it's rattle-free on rough roads. The doors feel solid too, but the thick rubber sealing means you have to slam them tightly shut.

The 2020 Harrier is available in multiple variants that start with the XE at ₹13.69 lakh; the option of the automatic gearbox is available from the mid-level XMA trim (₹16.25 lakh) and onwards. The top-of-the-line XZ+ and XZA+ are priced at ₹18.75 lakh and ₹19.99 lakh respectively, and are the variants that come kitted out with the



A compelling buy The features list now includes a panoramic sunroof

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

big rain-sensing and anti-pinch panoramic sunroof, powered driver's seat and diamond-cut wheels. Terrain Response Modes, an excellent JBL sub-woofer-equipped audio system and six airbags are part of the package, but are also on the lower XZ and XZA variants. Dual-tone models are quite affordable, with only a ₹10,000-15,000 increase in price; this is also true of the popular Dark Edition. The Harrier misses out a few features offered on its rivals like connected tech, cooled seats and wireless charging, and given the Harrier's price, it isn't unreasonable to expect an electronic parking brake. The thrust lever-like handbrake has been carried forward and remains fiddly to use.

Smoother, more refined, more effortless and punchy to drive, and better-equipped as well, the Harrier is now more attractive and capable. The new 6-speed automatic gearbox works superbly at low and medium speeds. With new features like the massive panoramic sunroof, the updated Harrier is clearly a more compelling buy. There are features missing – as is a petrol engine option for those who don't want a diesel unit. Still, one thing is for sure.

With prices starting at ₹13.69 lakh and topping out at ₹20.25 lakh, the Harrier is clearly a much stronger contender in this space – both for the competition, and for your money. The question is, does the Tata badge has the bandwidth to pull in buyers at this price point?

POOCH CAFE



PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



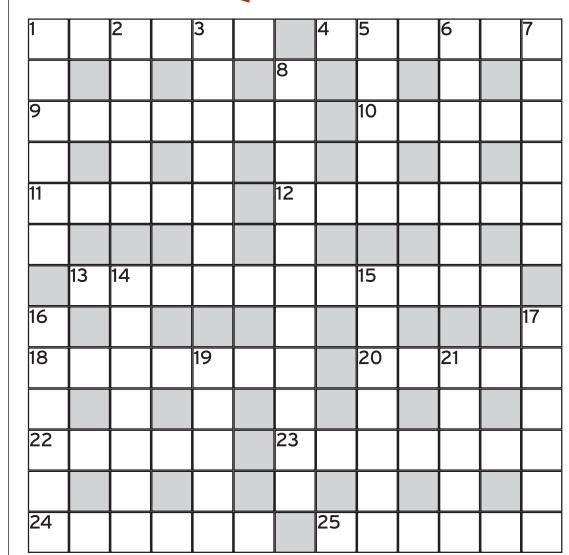
CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER



THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-1330



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

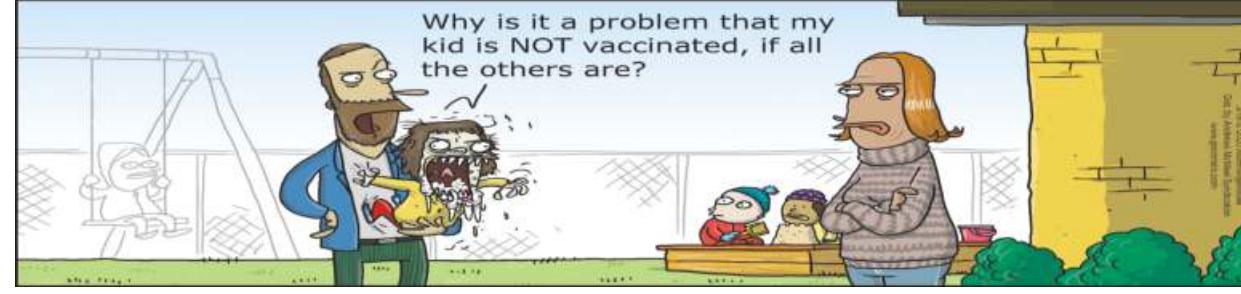
- 7 Discover the position of something (6)
- 8 Sink to the floor with legs apart (2,3,6)
- 14 Dashing (7)
- 15 Discover (7)
- 16 Vivid (6)
- 17 Open (a bottle) (6)
- 19 Direct (a bullock) (5)
- 21 Eighth letter in the Greek alphabet (5)

The solution will appear on March 19, 2020.

Solution No. 1329

D	E	C	A	F	M	A	J	O	R	E
R	A	B	I	G	N	S	T	U	P	U
F	A	L	T	E	D	R	U	B	A	N
S	C	E	L	I	N	S	E	L	A	N
I	T	C	H	W	I	T	E	L	I	E
C	A	N	D	L	E	P	O	W	E	R
D	P	L	A	I	A	M	S	A	I	A
E	M	P	A	S	I	P	A	I	P	A
S	A	P	S	E	M	S	E	M	S	E
P	A	R	I	T	Y	I	R	O	N	E
T	E	L	L	Y	B	E	A	T	T	I

WUMO



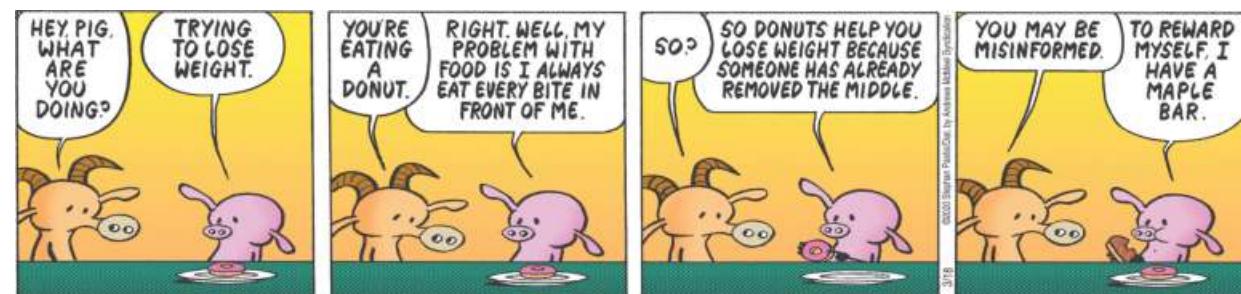
HEALTH CAPSULES

WHAT FOODS SHOULD I AVOID WHEN FOLLOWING AN ANTI-INFLAMMATORY DIET?
ART HOI DODD © 2020 GCOMICS.COM/Graffiti

INFLAMMATORY FOODS INCLUDE:
PROCESSED FOODS,
FOODS WITH ADDED SUGAR OR SALT,
UNHEALTHFUL OILS,
PROCESSED CARBS FOUND IN WHITE BREAD AND WHITE PASTA, PROCESSED SNACK FOODS SUCH AS CRACKERS AND CHIPS, COOKIES, CANDY, ICE CREAM AND EXCESS ALCOHOL.

Food Capsules is not intended as the final diagnostic resource.

PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



- 22 Crafty behaviour (5)
- 23 (Of a project) cause to sink without trace (7)
- 24 Informal collarless top (1-5)
- 25 Hard blow with a flat object (6)
- Down
- 1 Stuff and nonsense (6)
- 2 Extensive landed property (often rolling) (5)
- 3 Line drawing (7)
- 5 Wantful (5)
- 6 Narrow piece of ribbon worn round the head (7)

UEFA postpones Euro to next year

Copa America also pushed to 2021 as COVID-19 claims its biggest sporting casualty

FOOTBALL

REUTERS
LAUSANNE

The Euro 2020 football championship, trumpeted as a continent-wide feast of football from Dublin to Baku to mark UEFA's 60th anniversary, was postponed for a year on Tuesday as the coronavirus pandemic claimed its biggest sporting casualty yet.

Europe's flagship tournament, staged every four years and second only to FIFA's World Cup in terms of prestige in football, will now be staged from June 11 to July 12, 2021.

The fate of the 24-nation, month-long showpiece due to start in June had hung in the balance ever since Europe's domestic leagues began shutting down in the wake of the sweeping health crisis, which has killed more than 7,000 people worldwide.

Emergency meeting
UEFA eventually relayed the news after an emergency video conference with all 55 of its affiliated national federations and representatives from clubs and leagues.

"We are at the helm of a sport that vast numbers of people live and breathe that has been laid low by this invisible and fast-moving op-



Hard decision: As a fallout of the coronavirus pandemic, UEFA has been forced to shift its flagship competition, the European football championship to be held in 12 cities, to 2021. ■ AFP

ponent," UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin said in a statement confirming what the Norwegian and Swedish FAs had already leaked earlier in the day.

"It is at times like these, that the football community needs to show responsibility, unity, solidarity and altruism."

It was a widely expected move, with pressure ramping up from Europe's big domestic leagues.

Playoffs in June

Sixteen playoff matches were due to be held on March 26 and 31 to decide the full lineup of nations for the tournament.

They will now be played in the international window at the start of June, subject to a review of the situation.

The global sporting calendar has been shredded by the virus, with a host of blue ribbon events cancelled and competitions suspended, and the fate of the Tokyo Olympics this year now hangs in the balance.

All five of Europe's top domestic leagues – England, Spain, Italy, France and Germany – are suspended, along with the Champions League, Europa League and World Cup qualifiers.

This year's 12-nation Copa America was also postponed until 2021 on Tuesday, the

South American Football Confederation (CONMEBOL) said.

Domestic competition
With the Euros and Copa now postponed for a year, it could provide some flexibility for domestic competitions, all left in various states of limbo by the stoppage, to be concluded once the pandemic eases.

Leagues had urged UEFA to give priority to completing domestic competitions, as clubs throughout Europe feared they would lose significant ticket and associated match-day revenue by not completing the season while still having to pay player sal-

aries. While the domestic leagues will welcome the news, next year's international calendar already looks crammed.

The women's European Championship is due to be held in England in the summer.

FIFA's revamped Club World Cup in China, featuring eight European club sides, is scheduled from June 17 to July 4.

The host cities for Euro 2020 were Glasgow, Dublin, Bilbao, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Munich, Rome, St. Petersburg, Bucharest, Budapest and Baku, with the climax set for London's Wembley Stadium.

'Here to win matches for India, not replace Hardik'

Playing with two allrounders is good for any team: Dube

CRICKET

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

Shivam Dube's exploits in the Ranji Trophy and India-A matches last year came at a time when Hardik Pandya and Vijay Shankar were nursing injuries. The burly cricketer was soon catapulted into the India squad.

The Mumbai allrounder, who has played 13 T20Is and one ODI, has had a topsy-turvy ride so far. The six-hitting sensation opens up in a chat with *The Hindu* on being considered as Hardik's replacement and that fatal over when he conceded 34 runs in the final T20I against New Zealand in Mount Maunganui in February.

Excerpts:

You have had limited opportunities in international cricket. Your best moment so far...

The knock in Thiruvananthapuram (30-ball 54 after being promoted to No. 3 against West Indies) was satisfying. Any good outing in international cricket, be it with bat or ball, gives you a lot of confidence. What really pleased me about that knock was that it came under pressure.

The women's European Championship is due to be held in England in the summer.

The women's European Championship is due to be held in England in the summer.



Lacking bite: Dube didn't have a good time in New Zealand, even conceding 34 in an over in the final T20I. ■ AFP

tions to the captain. I think there's a better chance of winning games when you have two allrounders.

Can you talk us through that over in Mount Maunganui...

You saw all about that over, why do you want to ask me about it! But I'll tell you about that. There was a dropped catch, a misfield and all that. It's part of the game. I know I went for 34 runs, but it's okay. It happens sometimes under pressure. What matters the most is we won the match.

The series was already claimed, but despite that over, we won 5-0. After the match, all the teammates

told me "don't worry, it happens". Even I thought the same. There is no point in thinking about it all the time. Had the catch been taken off the second ball, the over would have been drastically different and we wouldn't be discussing it right now.

Goal for the next 12 months?
I was really looking forward to playing the Irani Cup (suspended due to COVID-19). For me, it's just the beginning, I need to improve a lot. I am not someone who sets goals in terms of numbers. Be it on the field or off it while working on my fitness, I just have to ensure that I keep getting better.

India's First Class cricket as good as anywhere else'

World Cup-winning coach Whatmore bats for DRS in Ranji

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

Dav Whatmore is one of cricket's most successful coaches. He masterminded Sri Lanka's stunning triumph at the 1996 World Cup and played a key role in transforming Bangladesh into a competitive side.

"The health and well-being of all those involved in the preparations is our No. 1 concern," IOC president Thomas Bach said.

"All measures are being taken to safeguard the safety and interests of athletes, coaches and support teams.

We are an Olympic community; we support one another in good times and in difficult times."

The IOC will hold further talks with National Olympic Committees and athletes' representatives.



Making a point: Though Whatmore is happy with the current Ranji format, he feels that the Plate Group needs a re-look.

Looking back at Kerala's dismal campaign, he admitted he was very disappointed. He felt that the State has to strengthen its domestic structure.

Whatmore believes that the Ranji Trophy could do with DRS. "I think it will come eventually," he said. "It would be expensive, but if there is one organisation that can afford it, it is the BCCI."

He said Chennai, where he spent three years, had a good structure. "You see cricketers making money playing there. The city has a great cricket culture."

Whatmore's association with Kerala may have ended, but he said he would be returning to India before long. He did not rule out the possibility of coaching a team in the next Ranji campaign.

The Hindu has learnt that at least two teams are keen to sign him on.

Indian GP-1 open only to Natl. campers

ATHLETICS

STAN RAYAN
KOCHI

Just a day after announcing that there would be strict screening for non-campers at the Indian Grand Prix-1, the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) has decided that the event in Patiala on Fri-

day will be for National campers only.

"Following the necessary directions and advisory regarding entry into the SAI NS-NIS campus issued to the AFI, we regret to inform you (non-campers) that your entry for the IGP-1 competition is not accepted," said a note to the athletes and coaches from the federation on

Tuesday.

"However, in order to provide you a fair chance to compete, AFI will introduce new competitions once the prevailing conditions improve and restrictions are lifted."

The AFI did not specify whether the restrictions would apply for the Indian GP-2 too.

Sport and Shelley, an eternal golden braid



BETWEEN WICKETS

SURESH MENON

It must have come as a shock to many that the most powerful entity in sport is not television, not the sponsor, nor the player or official but a virus too small to be seen under an ordinary microscope.

The first virus in biology was discovered well after the death of the poet Shelley, or *Ozymandias* – his poem about hubris – might have turned out differently.

Thanks to the coronavirus, many of us are thinking of what we do, why we do it, and what it all means. It is an alternative to thinking of death and pandemics and what-might-have-beens.

Most profound activity

Sport is a pointless activity and in that lies its allure. It is also one of the most profound activities we can engage in. Is scoring a goal at Wembley more important than discovering a mathematical formula? That is the wrong way to put it.

Sport is not utilitarian – it does not lead to something else, it does not stand for something else. It is not

a distraction from life, but life itself – lived at a different angle. Sports are their own means and ends, the goals artificial, the need real.

In a wonderful essay titled *Why cricket?*, Mike Marqusee said, "We watch sports precisely for all those things that lie beyond the functional."

Sportsmen, unaware, live by the credo of the mathematician G.H. Hardy who said: "I have never done anything 'useful'. No discovery of mine has made, or is likely to make, directly or indirectly, for good or ill, the least difference to the world..." Replace "discovery of mine" with "century of mine" or "outswinger of mine" and that would still be right.

Yet, there is about the perfect cover drive something that makes us feel good about ourselves, just as there is in mathematics a beauty beyond mere efficiency.

We need cricket not because it tells us about life or holds up a mirror to society, (it might, but that's incidental), but for its own sake. As sports events around the world are cancelled, we realise afresh how necessary sport is.

A couple of days ago, someone tweeted a tiny bit of the action from India's Test against West Indies in 1974-75, Bengaluru's first-ever. It was the first Test I saw every ball of. As a schoolboy, I sat high in the stands and had to strain my neck to see some of the action. Two greats made

their debut along with me – Gordon Greenidge and Viv Richards. The great fielder Eknath Solkar took what he considered his finest catch.

Skipper Clive Lloyd made a brutal century, Alvin Kallicharan a gentle, pleasing one. While Lloyd dropped the medium-pacers into the stands, Kallicharan dropped dead at his feet the spinners Prasanna and Chandersekhar. On a turning track this was skill of the highest order.

What I also remembered when I saw the tweet was what I was thinking at that age, what I felt about school, the books I was reading, the friends I had in the neighbourhood. It was like Proust's madeleine, unlocking memories one hadn't visited in years. It was comforting to know they were still there, nearly half a century later.

Not all of us need sport to remind us of ourselves. Whatever is a passion will have the same effect – music, movies, books, theatre, politics. Sport is not a distraction but intricately woven into the tapestry of our lives. When the soccer manager Bill Shankly said, "Football is not a matter of life and death, it's more important than that," he was exaggerating, but also making a point.

At the other end of the scale is Noam Chomsky who dismissed sport as "an area which has no meaning and probably thrives because it has no meaning, as a displacement from the serious problems one cannot

influence."

There is near-religious fervour

The search for meaning in sport is a doomed exercise because sport, as played, is meaningless. But that does not make it insignificant or without value. In fact, what coats cricket (or soccer or tennis or basketball) with significance is the shared experience, the near-religious fervour with which fans approach it. Marx might just as easily have said that sport is the opium of the people and given opium a positive spin.

But that's the demand side of sport, so to say. On the supply side is the unfolding narrative that is unpredictable, aesthetic, contains short-lived successes and failures, and in its range and scope allows both performer and spectator to discover aspects of herself that lead to greater self-knowledge.

Sport, unlike art or music or literature, can take the shape of whatever emotion we pour into it – and this makes the competition special and different from other, more consequential endeavours, like wars or oil pricing.

And that is why we love it so much. The cancellations are a reminder, like the spread of the coronavirus itself, that we are insufficiently grateful for what we have and that our egos don't amount to much – something Shelley told us two centuries ago.

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China gives go-ahead for human trials of COVID-19 vaccine



Fighting the virus: Chinese President Xi Jinping, second right, visiting the Academy of Military Medical Sciences in Beijing on March 2. ■ AP

Researchers will do tests on 108 healthy persons

REUTERS
BEIJING

China has given the go-ahead for researchers to begin human safety tests of an experimental coronavirus vaccine in the race to develop a shot against the COVID-19 epidemic that has killed more than 7,000 people world-

wide. Researchers at China's Academy of Military Medical Sciences, affiliated to the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), received approval to launch early-stage clinical trials of the potential vaccine starting this week, the ruling Communist Party's *People's Daily* reported on Tuesday.

Scientists in the United States said on Monday that clinical trials had begun for a vaccine developed by its Na-

tional Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and the U.S. biotech firm Moderna.

COVID-19

Details in the Chinese clinical trial registration database show that a "Phase 1" test that will examine whether experimental shot is safe in humans aims to recruit 108 healthy people.

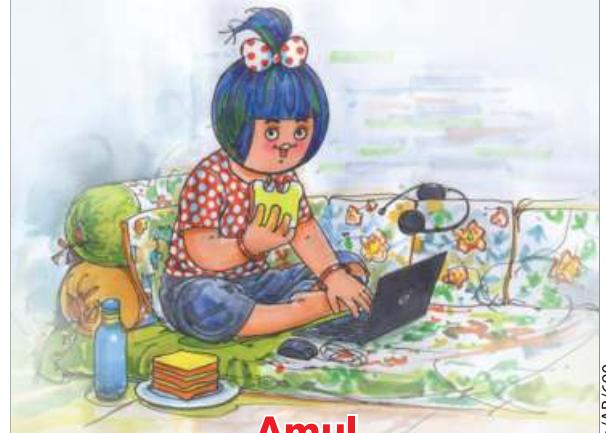
The volunteers will take

part in the study to take place from now until December 31.

The trial will be conducted by China's Academy of Military Medical Sciences and the Hong Kong-listed biotech firm CanSino Biologics, the database showed.

Experts at the World Health Organization say they do not expect any fully tested and approved vaccine to reach the market until the middle of next year.

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Actor Idris Elba tests positive for coronavirus

Tom Hanks and wife out of hospital

REUTERS
LONDON

British actor Idris Elba said on Monday he had tested positive for the new coronavirus, joining Tom Hanks and his wife, Rita Wilson, among the first major celebrities to contract the respiratory disease.

Mr. Elba, who starred in TV police drama *Luther* and played the Norse god Heimdall in *Avengers: Infinity War*, said in a Twitter post that he had no symptoms but was isolating himself from others. It was not clear where he was located.

"This morning I tested positive for Covid 19. I feel ok, I have no symptoms so far but have been isolated since I found out about my possible exposure to the virus. Stay home people and be pragmatic. I will keep you updated on how I'm doing... No panic," Mr. Elba, 47, wrote.

Mr. Elba said he had taken



the test because he found out on Friday that he had been exposed to someone who had contracted the disease. He did not identify the person.

Mr. Hanks and Ms. Wilson, have left a hospital in Australia's Queensland state five days after testing positive for the coronavirus, *People* magazine has reported. The pair are now resting at a rented home in Australia and remain under quarantine in the house.

Pressing pause



Still life: A visitor inside London's Tate Britain Museum, which announced on Tuesday that it will close till May 1 as a preventive measure against COVID-19. ■ REUTERS

Stranded OCIs request govt. to allow them back

Students asked to leave universities

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

When Sundareshan Krishnaswamy, a vice-president with American tech company Oracle, left Bengaluru on March 3 for a business trip in the United States, he couldn't have imagined the nightmare that awaited him, that divided his family across four countries, and left him stranded without a home and access to much needed medicines.

Hundreds of Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) cardholders like him, who are permanently based in India but were travelling, studying or working abroad, have appealed to the government to make an exception for them to return, with little headway so far.

'Hands tied'

Officials say their hands are tied as the government decided on March 11 to cancel all visas issued to non-Indians, and suspend OCI rights for the duration of the coronavirus-related directions as well.

"We have lived in India for 15 years, and don't have a home outside," Mr. Krishnaswamy's son Siddharth Aatreya, a student at the U.K.'s University of Cambridge told *The Hindu* over the telephone. "[My father] has a limited supply of insulin and hypertension medication, which will run out in two weeks, he needs to return home to India," Mr. Aatreya said.

Mr. Krishnaswamy was in North Carolina, when the government issued its notification. According to his son, he immediately rescheduled his flights to travel home via Chicago and Frankfurt. However, when he went to board his flight to Bengaluru in Frankfurt, he and about 15-20 other OCI cardholders were told that the airline would not board them. This left Mr. Krishnaswamy, who is a Canadian citizen, stranded in Germany, while his wife is in Bengaluru, one son in the U.K. and the other, also a student, in Canada. "Living outside India for all of us will mean moving into a hotel, which is a huge financial strain,"

said Mr. Aatreya, who has tried to contact the local Indian High Commission and even addressed tweets to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), with no response yet.

Missions overwhelmed

While Indian missions worldwide have been authorised to issue visas for urgent requests, they too are inundated, said officials. Several missions that had originally put the 'emergency' visas for OCIs' form on their website have had to take them down, given the huge response. Hopes for the Krishnaswamy family returning early have been further complicated as more and more countries are put on the Ministry of Health's no-fly list.

Apart from business travellers, the OCI rule has affected hundred of students with OCI status in various universities abroad, whose parents and family live in India. Anju Sharma (name changed at her request) says that she had no choice but to fly to the U.K. so as to care for her children, whose hostels have been shut down, but who can't fly home.

Many are going online to try and get their protests heard. A petition on the website change.org started by a parent last week has received nearly 4,000 signatures. "Please let our children enter India," says the petition addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, by Kavitha Prasad, a parent. "Our kids have to vacate their college rooms and have nowhere to go," it adds.

MEA response

When asked about the demand from OCIs to allow them to return to India, MEA spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said the matter is "under constant review by the Group of Ministers and the Committee of the Secretaries". "The discretion to decide on compelling cases rest with Heads of Mission. However, the country-specific travel advisories and applicable health protocols will still be enforced," said Mr. Kumar.

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