The Indian EXPRESS
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TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2020, MUMBAI, LATE CITY, 12 PAGES

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POST-MAY 3 ROADMAP

PM underlines the twin challenge: restarting economy, fighting Covid

Migrant workers wait for their medical check-up at a quarantine centre in Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, Monday. *Ritesh Shukla*

RBI opens Rs 50,000 cr liquidity window for mutual funds

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

SOOTHING THE frayed nerves of the investor community, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Monday announced a special liquidity window of Rs 50,000 crore to bail out mutual funds hit by the turmoil in the debt fund segment, that led to the closure of six credit risk funds by Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund.

Under the special liquidity facility for mutual funds (SLF-MF), the RBI will conduct repo (repurchase agreement) operations of 90 days tenor at the fixed repo rate of 4.40 per cent for banks. Funds availed under the SLF-MF will be used by banks exclusively for meeting the liquidity requirements of MFs.

A repurchase agreement (repo) is a short-term agreement to sell securities to buy them back at a later date. The one selling the repo (banks) is effectively borrowing and the other party (the RBI) is lending.

The RBI's liquidity offer is expected to bring some degree of comfort in the debt market which has been under huge redemption pressure, especially in the credit risk fund category which has assets of over Rs 55,000 crore. Faced with huge redemptions, Franklin Templeton had closed six credit schemes, effectively locking up Rs 28,000 crore of investors' money last week,

The whole debt segment had witnessed outflows of Rs 1.94 lakh crore in March.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EXPLAINED

MFs get liquidity, confidence

THE LIQUIDITY window will help MFs meet any redemption pressure on debt schemes in a troubled market situation that is devoid of liquidity and investor confidence after the Franklin Templeton abrupt closure of schemes. The liquidity window can create buyers for lower rated debt securities and help fund houses honour redemptions avoiding a spill over.

'Lockdown has saved thousands of lives... have to be brave and bring in reforms... danger of virus far from over'

LIZ MATHEW, ABANTIKA GHOSH & DIPANKAR GHOSE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

THE LOCKDOWN is set to continue in red zones and other areas of concern beyond May 3. Curbs would be stricter in states with a big spike in cases. And, with infections likely to peak again in June-July, a balance should be struck between restarting the economy and containing the COVID-19 spread.

With a week left in the second phase of the extended lockdown, these are some of the key takeaways from Monday's videoconference between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Ministers, sources told *The Indian Express*. It was the fourth such meeting since March 22, two days before the lockdown was first imposed.

With Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman attending the conference for the first time, sources said the Prime Minister assured that the state of the economy is good and there is no need to panic. "We have to give importance to the economy as well as continue the fight against COVID-19... We have to be brave and bring in reforms that touch

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

At the videoconference with CMs, Monday. *PTI*

States guarded on lifting lockdown, want clarity on movement of workers

MANOJ C G & SANTOSH SINGH
NEW DELHI, PATNA, APRIL 27

MOST STATES on Monday indicated at the videoconference with Prime Minister Narendra Modi that they wanted the lockdown to continue in some form post-May 3, while adding that they would follow the Centre's lead on the matter.

West Bengal accused the Centre of sending mixed signals with the relaxation of some curbs, while Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha, facing the prospect of hundreds of migrant labourers returning, asked it to specify guidelines in this regard.

The PM, one Chief Minister said, did not respond to demands for an economic package.

"The mood was in favour of continuing the lockdown with concessions," Puducherry CM V Narayanasamy said, while telling

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

CORONA COUNT

28,380 CASES | 886 DEATHS

6,362 RECOVERED

6,65,819 samples have been tested as on April 27

Justice can be done without robes or congregation: CJI on lockdown lesson

SEEMA CHISHTI
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

THE EXPRESS INTERVIEW
WITH
JUSTICE S A BOBDE
CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA

THE SUPREME Court was hoping to start tapping artificial intelligence to reform its processes in March but then came COVID-19 and, as it has done across the board, the outbreak pushed all plans to the backburner and has forced a rethink in the judiciary as well. In an interview at his office in his residence, Chief Justice of India Justice S A Bobde spoke to *The Indian Express* on his vision for the Court in the post-COVID world.

This is the time of webcasts and hearings... Could this have been the opportunity for making the Court much more open?

That is a wider issue, whether to televise Court proceedings or not. That needs to be seen as to which case should be televised, and those important hearings are not taking place, we are not dealing with it, we are currently in fire-fighting mode, new technology — that is, old actions in a new way.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Cabinet to again ask Governor to name Uddhav as MLC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

THE MAHARASHTRA Cabinet on Monday decided to reiterate its recommendation to Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari to nominate Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray as a member of the Legislative Council through the Governor's quota at the earliest. The Cabinet meeting was chaired by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar.

On April 9, a Cabinet meeting, also chaired by Pawar, had recommended that Koshyari should appoint Uddhav on one of the two vacant posts of Legislative Council through the Governor's quota. With no decision taken by the Governor so far, the Cabinet has decided to reiterate its request stating that Governor should take a decision on the matter at the earliest.

"At present, the government and administration are fighting the battle with full force against coronavirus. The crisis is increasing day by day. In such a scenario, it is important to remove instability in the state. So, the Cabinet today decided to reiterate that its recommendation of appointing Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray as a member of the Legislative Council on one of the two vacant posts be processed by the Governor at the earliest," a statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office said.

The decision of nominating Uddhav through the Governor's quota was taken to avoid a constitutional crisis due to the deferment of the Legislative Council polls on nine seats by the Election Commission (EC) in the wake of the nationwide lockdown.

As per Article 164 (4) of the Constitution, any minister who

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Amid Covid uncertainty, Arvind Subramanian at Express e-Adda today

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

Former Chief Economic Advisor

AS COVID-19 pushes the economy into a recession, policy makers are struggling to balance the imperatives of public health and economic well-being. To discuss the contours of a prudent yet compassionate macro-economic policy framework, *The Indian Express* will host its first online Express Adda on Tuesday, with former Chief Economic Advisor Arvind Subramanian.

He will be in conversation in the Express Adda webinar with Harish Damodaran, National Editor, and P Vaidyanathan Iyer, Executive Editor (National Affairs).

Subramanian would likely reflect on the immediate and medium-term challenges facing the economy, the policy options before leaders, and the trade-offs there in. He has had first-hand experience with ideating and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

The Indian EXPRESS E-ADDA
Associate Partner

BUSINESS AS USUAL
By UNNY

THE WORLD

BORIS BACK AT WORK, WARNS AGAINST EASING CURBS TOO SOON

IN US, CONFLICTING MESSAGES STOKE CONFUSION PAGE 10

Not hostage to Govt, says SC, seeks its response on migrant workers in a week

ANANTHAKRISHNAN G
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

MAKING CLEAR that "this institution is not hostage to the government", the Supreme Court Monday gave the Centre a week to respond to a prayer for interstate movement of migrant workers stranded due to the nationwide lockdown.

The bench of Justices N V Ramana, S K Kaul and B R Gavai asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta to inform it about the steps being taken in this regard.

"We are only asking if there is any proposal regarding this," Justice Kaul observed after the Solicitor General said the government was seized of the emerging situation and would examine concerns raised in the plea.

Mehta said the Centre was consulting the states on the issues being faced by the migrant workers. He urged the court to record his statement instead of issuing any direction.

The bench objected to a tweet by advocate Prashant Bhushan — he was appearing for petitioner Jagdeep Chhokar — in which he targeted the functioning of the court.

"You don't have faith in us. How can we hear you?... An order can always be criticised... You say that you are with this institution for more than 30 years. You know some orders are favourable, some are not. You should not have said such things... This institution is not

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Another Mumbai cop dies, third in four days

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

A 56-YEAR-OLD Mumbai Police head constable, infected with COVID-19, passed away at KEM hospital on Monday afternoon. He is the third policeman in the city to have succumbed to the pandemic since Friday.

The deceased, Shivaji Sonawane (56), who was posted at the Kurla traffic police division, was admitted to KEM hospital on April 21. Sonawane had been suffering from high fever for a few days prior, but it was after he started losing consciousness on April 21 that his son rushed him to the hospital.

A senior police officer said that Sonwane was initially turned away at Rajawadi hospital and referred to Kasturba hospital. However, he could not be admitted to Kasturba hospital either. Doctors there told Sonawane's son to go to KEM hospital instead. All three are run by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

Dr Vidya Thakur, Superintendent of the 100-bed Rajawadi hospital, said, "We usually have a few beds free as new patients are admitted and discharged every day. I will have to check why this patient was not admitted. Sometimes, the family does not provide us the patient's correct medical history, which makes their clinical assessment difficult."

BMC spokesperson Daksha Shah said she was not aware of the case, and would need to get details from the hospitals. "No BMC hospital turns away a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

Probe against 3 I-T officers for report 'contrary to policies'

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

TERMING A report titled FORCE (Fiscal Options & Response to COVID-19 Epidemic) prepared by 50 young IRS officers as a position "contrary to current policies of government", the Centre on Monday initiated a formal inquiry against three senior Income Tax officers.

Among other measures, the report had advocated a hike in income tax rate to 40 per cent for those earning over Rs 1 crore a year for a limited period of time, levy of a 4 per cent COVID-19 cess on taxable income over Rs 10 lakh, and re-introduction

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

INSIDE

EARLY SCREENING HELPS KARNATAKA PAGE 5

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

In war room, 5 teams of doctors, data analysts keep watch

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

IN NIRMAN Bhawan, which houses the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, a lounge on the first floor, where joint secretary-level and above officers would gather to celebrate birthdays, has been functioning as a COVID-19 "war room" for about a month-and-a-half now.

This is where about 30-odd people — including doctors, data analysts, information communication technology specialists and public health professionals from various agencies — have been collecting and analysing granular data from the states to identify the gaps, or forecast a sudden surge in cases and warn the states to take action accordingly.

They have been divided into five teams, each tracking different sets of data, all projected onto five giant screens in the war room.

One team tracks the growth of cases and deaths, doubling time and identifies hotspots.

Another team keeps a watch on the availability of infrastructure, down to the district level.

A third team looks at future projections to assess the state-level preparedness, and shares this data with the states every day. "For example if there is a facility or a district where there is no assigned ventilator, we flag that to the state. We take inputs from states, analyse them and give them feedback," said a team member.

A fourth group looks at the projections to see where the numbers are headed; and the last team tracks global trends vis-a-vis India, and sets deliverable goals for the states.

There is also a dashboard tracking social media, identifying fake news and information that needs to be relayed to the states among other things.

Explaining their work, a member of the team that tracks hotspots said: "Our job is basically to look at data and give inputs to the states or the ministry, as the case may be, so that they are prepared for the future. That is why we work with doubling time, rather than looking at the number of fresh cases each day, to detect a trend. When you work on doubling time, you can foretell a surge before it happens."

A screen shows all the emerging hotspots like Ahmedabad and Indore as well as the existing ones like Mumbai, Pune and Delhi. And at the click of a mouse, all the relevant data, including the number of cases, deaths and doubling time, come up on the screen. "All the inputs go straight to the secretary," said an official.

This was where the list of hotspots, that Health Secretary Preeti Sudan shared with states earlier this month, originated.

A committee room on the second floor has been converted into a second war room for Health Ministry officials, to relay feedback to states on a daily, sometimes an hourly, basis.

A Central team at a control room in Pimpri-Chinchwad in Pune. *Express*

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WEB EXCLUSIVE

CLASSICAL DANCERS BRINGING AWARENESS THROUGH ONLINE PERFORMANCES
Several Indian classical dance exponents are attempting to use the current times as their theme while creating choreographic movements.

VIDEO OF THE DAY

DELHI COPS DEPLOY 'CORONA MEN'
Volunteers on roads donning corona helmets to scare people

FULL COVERAGE

MANIPUR SHOWS THE WAY TO DISTRIBUTE
People walk past stalls taking what they need at a safe distance

EXPRESS AUDIO
Why Franklin Templeton shut multiple funds
NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY
In today's episode 3 Things, we look at why a major mutual fund house shut a bunch of schemes and why the RBI has got involved

FROM PAGE ONE

Govt silent

The Indian Express that Modi praised Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot for his handling of the coronavirus issue.

Again, Andhra Pradesh was among the few states to seek relaxation. Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy said that with 80% of the state a virus-free "green zone", this may be considered. However, Jagan did not say if the state would lift restrictions after May 3. In a televised address later in the day, the CM said that with a vaccine not likely for a year, developing herd immunity was the only option.

Maharashtra, the state with the most coronavirus numbers, indicated that it could continue the lockdown.

Bihar CM Nitish Kumar sought directions on the issue of its students stuck in Kota and other places, as well as on migrant labourers, while leaving a decision on extension of the lockdown to the Centre. Facing flak for not bringing back students from Kota, he said unless there was a direction from the Centre, it amounted to violation of the curbs.

On whether the lockdown should go on after May 3, Nitish said, "Experts should be consulted. Bihar will abide by whatever decision the Centre takes." It also expressed concern over people returning to the state without screening.

Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik sought framing of a national SOP for movement of people stranded across the country. The state estimates that over five lakh of its workers are stranded in different parts of the country.

Narayanasamy, who raised the issue of students stuck abroad, said the PM made a "passing remark" saying the migrant labour issue has to be considered, but did not offer any solution.

"The Chief Ministers were unanimous in telling the PM that the way in which the coronavirus cases are increasing, there should be a cautious approach and the PM has to take a call on the basis of observations by CMs. Most of the BJP-ruled CMs said the lockdown should continue and economic activity should be slowly started," he said.

Narayanasamy said he was among the CMs who sought an economic package, as well as the states' share of GST revenues. "The PM did not respond to that directly. He praised state governments for doing a Herculean task... He praised the Rajasthan CM for his handling of the coronavirus issue," the CM said.

According to him, the PM said, "Every state has some party in power, which realises that it has a chance to take the country forward.... *Hamein reform bhi karna hai. Agar reform karne ki disha mein rajya initiative leta hai, aap dekhiye yeh sankat ko hum bohot bade avsar main palat sakte hain. Main Ashok Gehlotji ko badhai dunga. Unhone kai initiative liye. Unhone labour ke liye samay seema ki bi badotri ki hai. Theek hai alochana thodi hue hogi, lekin Rajasthan ne disha dikhayi hai* (We have to carry out reforms. If a state takes an initiative for reform, we can turn this crisis into a big opportunity. I want to congratulate Ashok Gehlot. He has taken many initiatives. He has increased the time limit for labourers as well. There must have some criticism, but Rajasthan has shown the way)." The Prime Minister was apparently referring to the Rajasthan government's decision to increase working time in factories from 8 hours to 12 hours.

Accusing the Centre of making contradictory statements, West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee wanted greater clarity on the Home Ministry order regarding this. "We are in favour of the lockdown. But the Centre on one hand emphasises on this, and on other hand, issues orders to open shops. If you open shops, how will you enforce the lockdown?" Banerjee said.

She added that the state would plan up to May 21. "From the Prime Minister's speech, it was clear that this will continue for long."

Fighting a surge in numbers and a high fatality rate, Gujarat CM Vijay Rupani called for a "phased" lifting of the lockdown, "citing the interests of small and medium entrepreneurs and labourers". He said at the videoconference that most of the deaths in the state were due to comorbidities.

Having directed opening of single-unit shops except in containment zones on Saturday, Gujarat has revoked the order for Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Rajkot and Surat. Rupani said he had received representations from shopkeepers saying they preferred staying closed till May 3, while adding that the state would go by what the Centre decides.

Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath did not give any indication of the state's plan, even as he ordered officials on Monday to create facilities to quarantine about 10-15 lakh people. Significantly, it also arranged to bring home about 10,000 students from different districts of the state stuck in Prayagraj.

Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren, however, said the state was in no position to bring back its students or labourers. "We have been saying that we want to bring (stranded students, labourers) back. But the MHA issued orders that ban inter-state travel till May 3... Other states are flouting the orders and we have been left helpless," Soren told reporters.

Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar urged the government to remove the uncertainty around dates of competitive examinations. Punjab sought permission for reopening of small shops, businesses and industries in all areas except containment zones.

Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan said the state had told the Centre that the lockdown can continue partially till May 15, advising "a cautious approach" on lifting restrictions. Tamil Nadu CM K Palaniswami sought more RT-PCR kits for the state to take testing up from 10,000 a day from 7,500. Meghalaya CM Conrad Sangma suggested an "Economic Task Force" including all states to suggest solutions to initiate economic activities.

Madhya Pradesh said it would wait for the Centre's guidelines to decide its post-May 3 plan, while Telangana CM K Chandrashekar Rao said the lockdown should be extended if necessary as it was the only weapon against the virus.

(With inputs from Kolkata, Ranchi, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Chandigarh, Thiruvananthapuram, Guwahati, Bhopal, Mumbai)

CLARIFICATIONS & CORRECTIONS

27.04.20, PAGE 7

In the article 'How MPLAD scheme works...', the photo caption wrongly said the scheme was announced in December 2013. It was announced in December 1993.

The error is regretted.

PM underlines the twin challenges

the lives of common citizens," Modi said. On their part, many states suggested that the lockdown should continue with curbs being eased in green zones.

Gujarat, which has recorded 3,548 cases so far, sought a gradual and phased exit from the lockdown. Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik proposed an extension by another month from May 3, and Meghalaya's Conrad Sangma wanted the curbs "to continue with relaxation on activities in green zones or non-COVID-affected districts".

Sources said almost all the states were of the opinion that restrictions on inter-state transportation, including by air and rail, should continue. Kerala submitted that it wanted to continue restrictions on inter-district and inter-state transport till May 15.

"Bihar made the point strongly that while the Disaster Management Act does not allow travelling from one place to another, one state is getting children from Kota, another is moving its migrant labour," a senior state functionary, who attended the meeting, said in a reference to UP and MP.

Highlighting the importance of strictly enforcing guidelines in hotspots or red zone areas, the Prime Minister asked the states to work towards converting the red zones into orange zones and thereafter to green zones. Sources said the modalities of an exit strategy for green zones would be announced closer to May 3.

Modi underlined that the lockdown has yielded positive results as the country has managed to save thousands of lives in the past one-and-a-half months. Pointing out that India's population is comparable to that of the combined population of several countries, Modi said the country has been able to protect its people because of timely measures taken.

"He, however, forewarned that the danger of the virus is far from over and constant vigilance is of paramount importance," an official note released after the videoconference stated.

Sources quoted the Prime Minister as saying that he has learnt from experts that COVID-19 cases could peak again in June-July. "They feel that with the lockdown, the spike may be avoided for April-May, but when the lockdown is lifted in some places, it may spike in June," sources said.

Referring to the Prime Minister's remarks, the official note said: "He said that as per experts, the impact of coronavirus will remain visible in the coming months. Reiterating the mantra of do gaz ki doori (maintaining a 2-metre distance), he said that masks and face covers will become part of our lives in the days ahead."

Modi also signalled that restrictions could be voluntary, too. "...Under the circumstances, everyone's aim must be rapid responses. He pointed out that many people are self-declaring whether they have cough and cold or symptoms, and that this is a welcome sign," the note said.

According to sources, states with a number of COVID-free districts, including from the Northeast, wanted some restrictions to be eased so that economic activities could be revived. Most states also favoured opening up zero-case districts (283 so far), limited relaxations in orange zones, and strict curbs in red zones with containment areas.

They suggested that whenever there is a fresh case in a green zone, or when an orange zone slips into red, there should be a swift crackdown in terms of restrictions and contact-tracing operations. According to the Health Ministry, orange zones are areas that have reported no case in 14 days and while green refers to those with no fresh case in 28 days.

The videoconference came on a day when 1,463 new cases were recorded in the last 24 hours, taking the total count to 28,380. The country, however, also recorded 60 deaths, the highest toll so far in a single day, taking the total number of fatalities to 886.

In Monday's meeting, the chief ministers of nine states — Meghalaya, Mizoram, Puducherry, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, Bihar, Gujarat and Haryana — got a chance to speak. Others were given the option of either attending the meeting themselves or assigning the respective chief secretary or a state minister. Kerala, for instance, deputed its chief secretary while submitting its suggestions in writing.

On the other issues that came up, sources said while Kerala wanted Indians from overseas to be brought back, Modi said it has to be done keeping in mind that their families are not under any risk.

Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga told The Indian Express that he raised concerns about the porous international borders that the state shares with Myanmar and Bangladesh. "We only have one COVID-19 patient who is recovering... But we are concerned about sharing our borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh, both of which are hotspots," he said.

(With Esha Roy)

RBI opens Rs 50,000 cr liquidity window

Mutual fund experts said the RBI move on pumping liquidity will boost investor confidence in the sector. "It's a good confidence building measure taken by the RBI. to ensure continued confidence of the investors in the MF industry as also normal functioning of the markets. The MF industry continues to be on sound footing both on portfolio quality as also on the liquidity front despite an isolated incident in these challenging times," said Nilesh Shah, Chairman, Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI).

This is the third time the RBI is opening the liquidity window for the financial sector players in the last 15 years. The RBI had opened special liquidity repo window for mutual funds in October 2008 (at the time of the global financial crisis) and again in July 2013, when returns on debt mutual funds dropped sharply after the rupee fell significantly against dollar and mutual funds feared redemption pressure. However, when the IL&FS fiasco hit the financial sector two years ago, the RBI did not approve a Finance Ministry proposal to open up a special liquidity window for NBFCs.

On Monday, the RBI said banks can extend loans to mutual funds and undertake outright purchase of and repos against the collateral of investment grade corporate bonds, commercial papers (CPs), debentures and certificates of Deposit (CDs) held by MFs.

CJI Bobde

To what extent has the COVID effect led to a decline in Court activity?

In January this year, there were up to 205 filings per day and a total of 4,108 for the month. In April, the e-filing is just 305 so far (until April 26). That gives you some idea of the extent of the impact of COVID.

What is the Supreme Court doing at a time when there are major challenges to right to livelihood, migrant populations, medical care as well as threats to right to life, Article 21, which the Court has so well-defined?

It is a huge challenge and I am not sure we can do it only by reading opposing affidavits in Court.

We have asked the government to report to us on the actions they are taking in all this: medical, nutritional, regarding shelter and transportation and whether transportation is consistent with social distancing norms. We have made provisions for states for the release of prisoners, enabled the freeing of those held in detention centres in Assam.

A monitoring committee or oversight by the Supreme Court could help?

Officers, by the very nature of their jobs are present in each of the 700 plus districts. The Court cannot monitor activities of all officers in districts. We can certainly ask and have asked government what is being done and they have reported steps they are taking, there is no reason to find fault.

There are a large number of important cases of habeas corpus in Jammu and Kashmir, electoral bonds, digital privacy and other rights and other Constitutional matters. When will they be heard?

These and so many other matters are there, I cannot say when they will be heard but we will certainly hear them.

Habeas Corpus should be the most urgent petition?

On Habeas and others, we are conscious of the nature of these petitions and they will be decided.

Will there be a summer vacation this year?

That is yet to be decided. The Committee in the Court that is looking at this (consisting of Justices R Nariman, U U Lalit, A M Khanwilkar and L Nageswara Rao) will submit its report to me at the end of the lockdown and in any case the full court has to decide on this. We are mandated to work 210 days in every calendar year.

What is your vision of the Judiciary in the post-Covid world?

The entire fraternity of judges and lawyers would have realised what is essential to the judicial process and what is not. There would have been the realisation that there needs to be a different emphasis for a more just society and that problems can be addressed in many ways other than the traditional ones.

Justice can be equally done without robes or congregation. This was always so but now people would have experienced it. The older generation of lawyers and judges would undoubtedly feel a little uncomfortable with the new introductions of features like video-conferencing, e-filing and the absence of the usual kind of an "audience." One senior advocate has remarked that "we will have learnt not to interrupt our opponents" which is how it should be in any way.

I think the litigating public, judges and lawyers would have realised that such large congregations are not necessary in the administration of justice. Maybe the importance of the brief, precise argument, oral or written, would have been established.

So also, the pleadings. The transmission of records from one court to another would be far more efficient.

In January 2020, from district and taluka courts to high courts, there were 26.84 lakh pages that were transmitted! Then there is paper work from high courts to the Supreme Court. So that is the volume currently, then is the matter of speed. With digital keeping, that is also speeded up, as the moment an appeal is filed, from a district court, the judgment to a high court, the entire record can be transmitted by the High Court over the Net.

The digitisation of records, though we are some distance from achieving it as this crisis of Covid erupted, but if this happens in each of the 17,500 district courts, of course, the problem of authentication of these digital records is there, to prevent tampering. We are looking at that but, hopefully, this digital culture would strike roots. Then this would be the basis for the Artificial Intelligence (AI) which we can then introduce. It will be most effective when it has electronic data to work on. We were meant to launch AI in March but could not do so. An algorithm has enormous speed. 10 lakh words per second!

The most important thing is that there is a shift in consciousness, the legal community during the lockdown has been forced to deal with the electronic medium and it is conscious of the importance of electronic transmission, making submissions, records can also be transmitted by advocates via emails and WhatsApp to the Registry. If email fails then WhatsApp is the 'stand-by' mode.

What is the relationship between the Judiciary and the Executive, and other pillars in a democracy, as this has been discussed recently.

It is a Constitutional relationship, defined by the Constitution of India. The Judiciary has primacy in the judicial field, the Legislature in its field and the Executive in its field.

So you do not think it is important for the Judiciary to 'ease' the path of the Executive?

There is a well-known term called "judicial review" which is a power the Courts have, as it is the Judiciary which has to decide if their (Executive's) actions are in accordance with the Constitution.

Anything else you may wish to say?

(Smiles) - Stay Safe.

Adda today

framing key structural reforms — from introduction of Goods and Services Tax to the Direct Benefit Transfer scheme — during his term as CEA in the Ministry of Finance.

A non-resident Senior Fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics and a Visiting Lecturer in Public Policy at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, Subramanian's presence couldn't have been more timely as the government discusses a fresh fiscal relief package for the economy and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) continues with a series of measures to inject liquidity into the financial system.

The Express Adda is a series of informal interactions organised by The Indian Express Group and features those at the centre of change. Among the recent guests were Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Nobel laureates Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, and Chief Economic Advisor Krishnamurthy Subramanian.

SC on migrants

hostage to the government," Justice Kaul told Bhushan after Mehta drew the bench's attention to the tweet.

Bhushan said: "I understand, Sir. This is not lack of faith in the institution."

"Don't try to project that you are the only concerned person in the country," Mehta intervened.

"I have never said that I have no faith in this institution," Bhushan said, adding "if the objection is to me, I will withdraw. Some other lawyer will appear".

"Why should we ask you to withdraw?" Justice Kaul asked.

"I only expressed my views. Some retired judges are also saying the same thing," Bhushan said.

"We also have some views. So what?" countered Justice Kaul.

Bhushan said the migrant workers have have only a day's ration and are in a desperate situation. "Why people who have tested negative can't go to their respective homes, I don't understand," he said, adding that this violates their fundamental right.

The court then pointed to reports about some states taking steps to address this.

Bhushan replied that the steps were only for students. He also cited news reports which said 96% of the workers are not getting wages, and have very little food. Mehta said the report was wrong.

Bhushan said the government was not enforcing the fundamental rights of the people and, therefore, he was pleading to this court to enforce their fundamental rights. "This is the institution in which one has a lot of faith," he said.

Justice Gavai pointed out that he had come across reports that the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister was saying he will bring back 15 lakh labourers.

Bhushan replied that this will clash with the Centre's orders. He said it seemed as if the Centre had shut its eyes.

Intervening, Mehta said the government was very concerned and was helping the migrant workers. He said the government was consulting states on how many have to be transported to their states and how many have to be given help and what kind of help. "We are taking all kind of steps," he said.

Justice Kaul asked Mehta "are you ready to examine this".

The SG replied that the government was examining everything. "Brilliant ideas of the petitioner are not required," he said.

"So, you are in consultation with states?" Justice Kaul asked. "Many things are being discussed," Mehta said, assuring the court all points raised by the petitioner will be examined by the government.

Taking a dig at Bhushan, Mehta said, "every time Mr Bhushan loses, he goes to the lawns and says this is a black day. You cannot run government as a PIL petitioner."

He also raised questions on the data cited by Bhushan to make his claim about migrant workers not being paid. He sought two weeks to reply, but the court granted him one week.

3 I-T officers

of wealth tax for individuals with net wealth of Rs 5 crore and more.

Officials in the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) officials said the Board issued chargesheets to the three officers under Rule 14 of Central Civil Services (Classification, Control & Appeal) Rules, 1965 for violation of conduct rules. The three senior I-T officers have been divested of their current responsibilities. No action was, however, taken against the young officers who had written the report, they said.

The three officers against whom action has been initiated, with the approval of the President of India, are: Prashant Bhushan (1988 batch), General Secretary of IRS Association, Sanjay Bahadur (1989 batch), Principal Director (Investigation), North East Region and Prakash Dubey (2001 batch), Director, DoPT and Joint Secretary, IRS Association.

The statement of articles of charges framed against these officers said the officers had "without any authority guided preparation of document titled FORCE in which a position contrary to current policies of government on various matters related to income tax, like tax slabs, incidence of tax, administration and collection of tax has been taken."

"This document, having been unauthorisedly released in the public domain, has created confusion and uncertainty with respect to the policy of government with respect to income tax which can have an adverse impact on economy, especially during this time when country is battling a pandemic and the government is keen to ensure a stable tax regime," it said.

It further said that unauthorised preparation and release of such a document for wide dissemination also "amounts to criticism of government policies" by senior tax officers thereby "causing avoidable embarrassment to the government".

In a statement earlier in the day, CBDT said it had never asked the IRS Association to prepare such a report and that "necessary inquiry" would be conducted.

Cabinet to again ask Governor to name Uddhav as MLC

is not a member of the House, needs to get elected to the Legislative Assembly or the Council within six months of appointment. Uddhav, who was sworn in on November 28, 2019, has time till May 27 to get elected to the legislature, failing which, he would have to step down as the CM. The Cabinet would have to resign.

Shiv Sena ministers said they hope the Governor would appoint Uddhav as MLC at the earliest. "We had sent the recommendation on April 9. Now, we decided to reiterate our recommendation and request the Governor to take a decision. We hope he will decide soon," a Sena minister said.

NCP legislators Rahul Narvekar and Ramrao Vadkute, who were nominated to the Legislative Council through the Governor's quota, quit the party and resigned as legislators in the run-up to Assembly polls last year. In December, the names of NCP's Shivajirao Garje and Aditi Nalawade were sent by the government for their nomination, but they have not yet been approved by the Governor. The term of these two seats ends on June 6, 2020.

FULL REPORTS ON

Two held, four detained as police patrol team attacked at Shivaji Nagar

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

AT LEAST two persons were arrested and four others detained after a mob of around 30 people allegedly attacked a police patrolling team and pelted their vehicle with stones at Shivaji Nagar area in Govandi on Sunday, police said. The crowd reportedly tried to take off a mask a police inspector was wearing and attacked another officer with an iron rod, police added.

According to police, there have been several complaints about difficulty in enforcing the lockdown in the eastern suburbs, including Shivaji Nagar, of the city that comprises mostly of slums.

A senior police officer said around 6.30 pm Sunday, a police team from Shivaji Nagar station reached the Road No. 8 and 90 Feet Road intersection and asked a crowd, which had gathered in the area, to return home. "A crowd of around 25-30 men and two women tried to obstruct the policemen and started chanting slogans against the police. Someone from the crowd then tried to take off a mask worn by Police Inspector Khandekar," the officer said. Khandekar is 56 years old and was unnecessarily put to risk by exposing his face, he added.

"Someone from the crowd also pulled out an iron rod and hit another officer. The officer, however, managed to move away, but the rod hit his hand, injuring him. As the police team started to leave, someone from the crowd also pelted stones at their vehicle," the officer added.

The police team alerted the police station, following which a large police unit was sent to the spot that had to use force to disperse the crowd.

Police have registered an FIR against the people who had assembled at the spot under various sections, including obstructing a public servant from carrying out his duty. "Based on CCTV camera footages, we have identified around four persons, two of whom have been placed under arrest. We are trying to identify others who will also be arrested," the officer said.

The officer added that several people have been circulating video clips of people being on the road in these areas and have been trying to give it a communal colour. "Hence, we have been making extra efforts to ensure that people do not assemble outside their houses and follow social distancing," the officer added.

BMC'S COMMUNITY HEALTH VOLUNTEERS

In the frontline of Covid fight, but poorly paid, exposed to risk

LAXMAN SINGH
MUMBAI, APRIL 26

COMMUNITY HEALTH Volunteers (CHVs), who form the backbone of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) health workers, have become the most vulnerable of the civic body's frontline staff in the coronavirus fight. Over the last few days, six CHVs have tested positive in Mumbai, raising concerns among the workers.

There are about 4,000 community health volunteers in Mumbai, who work on the ground and help implement health schemes of the civic body as well as the state and central governments.

They also aid awareness campaigns at the grassroots level. These workers receive a remuneration of Rs 5,000. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, these workers have been acting as foot soldiers of the BMC, going door to door and contact-tracing, having traced over a lakh high and low risk contacts so far.

However, lack of adequate safeguards and safety equipment have made these volunteers vulnerable to the infection.

> **Cases have increased in the city and we are scared to enter areas for contact tracing. Most of the times, we buy masks, gloves and hand sanitisers on our own. If masks and gloves are provided, we are told to reuse at least five to six days by washing them."**
>
> **ANUJA BHALE**
> COMMUNITY HEALTH VOLUNTEER IN BHARAT NAGAR

About a fortnight ago, when a woman volunteer tested positive in Bandra east, CHVs at Bharat Nagar in Bandra east and Santacruz health posts threatened to stop work unless given proper safety gear like masks, gloves, hand sanitizers and PPEs. They resumed work after civic officials warned of termination under the epidemic Act.

"We are called 'corona warriors' by people. But what kind of warriors are we? Fighting without proper safety gear only puts ours' and the lives of our families at risk," said Anuja Bhale, a community health volunteer in Bharat Nagar.

Bhale joined BMC as a volunteer in 2012. There are about 200 health posts across the city, from where these grassroots workers operate.

Their duty hours are 9 am to 2 pm but most work till 5 pm. And hardly get week offs amid the outbreak.

"Cases have increased in the city and we are scared to enter areas for contact tracing. Most of the times, we buy masks, gloves and hand sanitisers on our own. If masks and gloves are provided, we are told to reuse at least five to six days by washing them," said Bhale.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Deputy Executive Health Officer, Dr Daksha Shah said, "We will look into the matter and also ensure that all CHVs get safety equipment. On insurance, I will check with the HR department. Also, the hiked honourirum proposal has been cleared. I will check the status."

Rupam Arkekar, a community health volunteer from Santacruz health post, said when her friend tested positive, she faced major discrimination from her family as well as neighbours. "Her family blamed her for putting them at risk. They were angry as they were placed in quarantine. Neighbours were also hostile," said Arkekar.

Most of the CHVs live in chawls. "My neighbours have complained against me to the police saying that I am going out and spreading the infection. I have to explain that I am a CHV," she said.

The work these volunteers do deserves better pay, the union representing them said. Also, there is no clarity on whether these workers will be covered by health insurance, it said. "As the CHVs are involved in surveying and awareness campaigns of government-run health schemes they know each and every household very well," said Prakash Devdas, president of Mahapalika Arogya Seva Karmchari Sangathana.

No HC relief on plea seeking to stay burials at Bandra cemetery

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

THE BOMBAY High Court on Monday refused to grant interim relief on a plea by residents, who had claimed that permitting the use of the burial ground at Bandra (West) to bury COVID-19 victims will lead to community spread of the virus.

Seeking directions to the BMC to cancel permission to bury bodies at the cemetery, petitioners Pradeep Gandhy and others, who live near Konkani Muslim Cemetery, had on April 14 moved court. The residents had claimed that the burial ground is located in the heart of Bandra (West), next to their residences, and as per a revised BMC circular of March 30, COVID-19 victims cannot be buried near residential areas.

However, Monday, advocate Pratap Nimbalkar, appearing for the trustees of the cemetery, said due process was being followed before disposing bodies. Petitioners had not placed any scientific reasons to show coronavirus spreads through bodies, he added. Referring to a notification issued by the Union Health Ministry on March 15, Nimbalkar said, "The notification says there is unlikely to be an increased risk of COVID-19 infection from a body to anyone if standard precautions are followed while disposal."

> **Residents claimed the burial ground is located in the heart of Bandra (West), and as per a BMC circular, cononavirus victims cannot be buried near residential areas**

After hearing submissions, Justice B P Colabawalla noted petitioners have not submitted any material to show or prove that burial of a body infected with COVID-19 would put residents living in vicinity at risk. The court directed the BMC to remove locks put up on the gates of the cemetery by local residents on April 13, following a protest against the burial of body at the ground.

4 test positive at Mantralaya, contact tracing on

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

THE STATE secretariat, Mantralaya, was sanitised on Monday after three members of the housekeeping staff and one doctor working for the emergency ambulance service tested positive for COVID-19.

Additional Chief Secretary (PWD) Manoj Saunik said, "Every inch has been sanitised, contact tracing is on. Some people have been quarantined. All protocols for screening are being followed."

The administration has decided to install thermal scanners at the security gate from Tuesday. The PWD has shot off a letter to the concerned ward officer stating that as the department staffers come into regular contact with sanitation workers, all staffers be tested. An additional thermal scanner will also be dedicated to the PWD.

Mumbai fire brigade personnel fumigate Mantralaya on Monday. *Express*

A contractual worker attached with a private company and employed by the housekeeping wing, had developed fever and tested positive. Following this, around 40 people were tested. The private company staffers are deployed to clean the lobby and outer areas of the Mantralaya.

Of those who tested positive, one contractual worker and two members of the emergency medical staff were staying at Mantralaya itself to limit exposure.

"The ambulance on duty has been sanitised and another has been pressed into service as a stand by," said Dr Ashish Yadav, zonal manager, (Mumbai) of 108 BVG India, which runs 93 emergency ambulance services in the city.

An official said that as a precautionary measure, thermal scanners had already been installed at all state owned residential complexes housing top bureaucrats and politicians.

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CORONA WATCH

FIVE MORE BEST STAFFERS TEST POSITIVE

Mumbai: Five more employees of BEST undertaking tested positive for COVID-19 on Monday, taking the total number of employees infected by the virus to 13. On Monday, three conductors, one driver and a mechanical staffer deployed at BEST's Dadar workshop were found positive. A conductor who was deployed at Colaba depot, and the staffer from the Dadar workshop, both lived at the Parel quarters that had been sealed. Another conductor, attached to the Santacruz depot, lived at Juhi Nagar while the third was attached to Vikhroli depot and lived in Bhandup. Both lived at containment zones, said BEST officials. The driver from Deonar depot, meanwhile, lived at Kamothe in Navi Mumbai. Cases had been reported near his residence. Chief Medical Officer Dr Anil Singhal said of the five infected, most lived in or near containment zones.

11 TABLIGHI MEMBERS ARRESTED

Mumbai: Eleven members of the Tablighi Jamaat were arrested in Bandra last week for attending a religious congregation at the Nizamuddin Markaz in New Delhi in March. Those arrested are Indonesian nationals, said Abhishek Trimukhe, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Zone IX. Trimukhe said that after attending the congregation, the foreign nationals had arrived in Mumbai in March. They were tracked down by the police on April 1 as part of a nationwide effort to identity and locate all individuals who were part of the gathering. Trimukhe said that one Indonesian national had initially tested positive for COVID-19, resulting in all of them being placed in quarantine in a hotel in Bandra west. The foreign nationals were tested again last week. "After all of them tested negative, they were arrested on April 23," he said. The foreign nationals were booked for violating the Foreigners Act, which prohibits tourist visa holders from participating in religious activities and for failing to disclose their activities to authorities in Mumbai.

LOCO PILOT TESTS POSITIVE

Mumbai: A loco pilot with Western Railway (WR) on Monday tested positive for coronavirus, taking the total number of affected employees to 35. Of them, 16 are admitted at Jagjeevan Ram hospital, including around eight personnel of Railway Protection Force (RPF). The loco pilot who tested positive had come to work three days ago at the Mumbai Central carshed for shutting diesel locomotive engines. He later developed symptoms and admitted himself at Jagjeevan Ram Hospital on April 24. He tested positive on April 26. Two of his family members have also been quarantined and would undergo test. In the meanwhile, WR has sought a list of all those who had come in contact with him at work. **ENS**

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00116 Chennai Central-CSMT parcel train will originate from Chennai Egmore at 10.00 hrs with effect from 27.4.2020
00115 CSMT-Chennai Central parcel train will terminate at Chennai Egmore at 19.00 hrs instead of 18.35 hrs from immediate effect.
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State reports 27 Covid deaths, highest in a day; toll rises to 369

Gadchiroli, Wardha only districts with zero cases in state

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, NAGPUR, APRIL 27

Fumigation at Lower Parel in Mumbai. *Nirmal Harindran*

MAHARASHTRA MONDAY registered 27 Covid-19 related deaths, the highest single-day toll since the first coronavirus case in the state in the first week of March, taking the toll to 369. The total number of Covid-19 cases in Maharashtra grew by 522 taking the tally to 8,590.

The total number of districts that have no Covid-19 patients has now slipped to two after Bhandara district in Vidarbha registered its first case. A 45-year-old woman from Garada village has tested positive. The only two districts which have no instances of Covid-19 patients now are Gadchiroli and Wardha. The previous single day highest toll for Maharashtra was 25 on April 10.

The spike in numbers is attributed to the inclusion of the six deaths from Amravati which had occurred between April 20-25 in the state's tally on Monday.

Mumbai continued to add the highest number of cases to the state's tally, registering 366 more over the past 24 hour. The total COVID-19 count in the city now is 5,776, while 15 more deaths on Monday took its toll to 219. After Mumbai, Amravati saw six deaths. These deaths had taken place between April 20 and 25 but were included in Monday's tally. Pune, which remains the second worst-hit in the state, saw four deaths while one death each occurred in Jalgaon and Nandurbar.

Of the 27 deaths, 15 were men and 12 women. Thirteen of the 27 were over the age of 60, while eight were in the age group of 40-59. Only six were below the age of 40. Twenty-two of those who died suffered from diabetes, hypertension, asthma or heart disease. One was afflicted with HIV while another was suffering from cancer.

On Monday a total of 92 patients were discharged taking the total number of people who have recovered to 1,282. The state has so far conducted tests on 1.10 lakh people. A total of 1.45 lakh people are under home quarantine while another 9,399 are under institutional quarantine.

The districts which have the highest number of cases include Mumbai and Mumbai suburban with 5,776 followed by Pune with 1,099 and Thane with 752. Palghar with 146, Nashik with 142 and Nagpur with 127 are the other districts with the highest number of cases.

Districts which have over 50 cases include Solapur with 65, Yavatmal with 62 Raigad with 61 and Aurangabad with 52.

Districts with less than 50 cases are Ahmednagar with 42, Akola with 29, Satara 29, Sangli 27, Amravati with 22, Buldhana with 21, Dhule with 25, Jalgaon 20, Nandurbar 11, Kolhapur 11 and Latur 10.

There are 12 districts with less than 10 cases. They include Ratnagiri 8, Hingoli 8, Osmanabad 3, Nanded 3, Jalna 2, Chandrapur 2, Sindhudurg 1, Parbhani 1, Beed 1, Washim 1, Bhandara 1, Gondia 1.

The highest fatality due to the pandemic is in Mumbai with 219 deaths followed by Pune with 100 and then Thane with 14. However there are 13 districts including Kolhapur, Sindhudurg, Jalna, Hingoli, Parbhani, Osmanabad, Beed, Nanded, Yavatmal, Washim, Bhandara, Gondia and Chandrapur among the infected states which have not seen a single death.

8,590

TOTAL POSITIVE CASES IN MAHARASHTRA

Number of deaths	369
Total number of people discharged	1,282
Number of people tested	1,10,642
Total number quarantined	9,399
Number of new cases	522

Justice Dutta hits the road to arrive in Mumbai to take charge as CJ

OMKAR GOKHALE
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

Justice Dipankar Dutta

AFTER THE President appointed him Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court, Justice Dipankar Dutta of the Calcutta High Court made a 2,000 km, three-day road journey starting April 25, to reach Mumbai and take up his new assignment, as there was no other way to get here amid the lockdown.

Justice Dutta, who was scheduled to arrive in Mumbai late Monday, will take the oath of office on Tuesday evening at Raj Bhavan. Sources in the HC said he opted for the road journey to assume office without any delay.

The April 23 notification of Justice Dutta's appointment came after the Supreme Court collegium on April 19 recommended his elevation as the Chief Justice (CJ) of Bombay High Court. Thereafter, the Calcutta HC registry on April 24 informed the Bombay HC registrar general to make necessary arrangements for Justice Dutta to reach his designated residence in Mumbai on Monday, April 27.

Justice Datta's route to Mumbai took him first to Bhubaneshwar, where after a brief lunch stop, he and his son set off for Vishakhapatnam. They halted the night there, leaving early the next morning. Their next stop was Vijayawada, where they stopped for lunch. From there, Justice Datta and his son headed towards Solapur where they halted on Sunday night. On Monday, they halted in Pune, and were expected in Mumbai by the evening.

The Calcutta HC registry had asked the Bombay HC administration to move the Maharashtra government to consider Justice Dutta, his family members and court officials travelling with him, as state guests once they entered the state, and extend facilities to them accordingly.

Tuesday's oath taking ceremony will take place before a select gathering at Raj Bhavan. "In view of the current situation, only a limited number of guests, including the chief minister, deputy chief minister and a few HC judges, have been invited to the ceremony," a release from the Governor's office said.

The departing Bombay HC Chief Justice, Bhushan P Dharmadhikari, who was sworn in on March 20, served his last day in office on Monday, April 27. Justice Dharmadhikari, who has served as a Bombay HC judge for nearly 16 years, will attain his retirement age of 62 on April 28. He was appointed as acting CJ on February 24 after former CJ Pradeep Nandrajog's retirement.

Justice Dutta, second senior-most judge of the Calcutta HC, was born in February 1965. He obtained his LLB degree from University of Calcutta in 1989. He enrolled as an advocate the same year and practiced in the Supreme Court and HCs, dealing with constitutional and civil cases.

Justice Dutta has served as the junior standing counsel for West Bengal between May 2002 and January 2004, and as a counsel for the Union government since 1998. He was elevated as a permanent judge of the Calcutta HC on June 22, 2006.

DELIVERY OF NEWSPAPERS

Cannot make sweeping statements: HC to govt

OMKAR GOKHALE
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

THE AURANGABAD bench of the Bombay High Court on Monday pulled up the state government and said it cannot make general and sweeping statements without any reference to opinions of experts working in the health sector about increasing chances of COVID-19 infection spreading through newspapers.

A single judge bench of Justice Prasanna B Varale was hearing a plea through videoconference. The HC has taken suo motu cognisance of newspaper reports related to the government's earlier decision prohibiting door-to door delivery of newspapers during the lockdown.

The government had on April 18 issued guidelines to control the spread of the pandemic and prohibited door-to-door delivery of newspapers and magazines while exempting print media from the lockdown. The court on April 21 directed the government to file its response on the decision within a week's time. The bench appointed advocate Satyajit Bora as amicus curie.

However, the same day, the government permitted door-to-door delivery of newspapers in the state, except in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and Pune, where it said it may be sold at exempted units such as grocery stores and milk vends.

Government pleader D R Kale submitted the state's response on Monday. One of the submissions in the affidavit said, "According to experts, COVID-19 virus can stay on various surfaces for a considerable amount of time and the newspaper is something that will be passed on hand to hand by various people which can increases the chances of infection spreading to more people."

The court observed, "One fails to understand the logic behind the statement made in the affidavit that the newspaper is something that will be passed on by hand to hand by various people which can increase the chances of infection spreading to more people."

Justice Varale said in the order, "It seems that this is only a general and sweeping statement made in affidavit in reply. There is no reference to any comment of the experts in the field or any opinion formed by anybody working in the health area."

The court said that on the contrary, the statements of certain experts published in newspapers are to the effect that there is no need to carry an impression that the newspaper is a medium for spreading of coronavirus.

On April 21, Justice Varale had noted that while majority of newspapers are available in e-paper mode, it is not possible for majority of public to have access to e-paper as they may not be conversant with the technology or are used to reading of hard copy of a newspaper. The court on Monday asked the government to file an additional response to its queries along with report by amicus curie and posted further hearing to June 11.

Loan waiver benefit for 12 lakh farmers delayed, govt reaches out to RBI

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

THE UDDHAV Thackeray-led coalition in Maharashtra has decided to approach the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) seeking a special concession for farmers in the state.

With the lockdown and the economic damage caused by it stalling the ambitious plan to write off crop loans of several lakh farmers, the government on Monday decided to write to the regulatory bank, urging it to direct banks to postpone recovery of farm loan arrears for 2019-20 by a year.

Earlier this year, the state had rolled out its flagship scheme – writing off arrears up to Rs 2 lakh for loans availed between April 2015 and March 2019. While 29.73 lakh farmers were identified as beneficiaries, a government statement, released on Monday, said that 11.59 lakh of them — roughly 38 per cent — were yet to receive the benefit owing to the lockdown. The total amount due to be released to them works out to Rs 9,866 crore.

At a Cabinet meeting Monday, a decision to approach the RBI was taken in this context. "To ensure that farmers receive fresh credit for sowing these kharif and rabi seasons, we will ask RBI for a one-year moratorium on loan payments," an official said.

In another decision, the state on Monday decided to dive into the contingency fund to compensate milk producers who have suffered heavy losses during the lockdown. With hotels, sweet shops, and restaurants still shut, the government has claimed that consumption of milk has dipped by 17 lakh litres. The state has now decided to buy four crore litre milk from such producers over the next two months, and convert it into milk powder and butter, which will be sold in the open market. The initiative will cost the state exchequer Rs 127 crore.

Another decision for amending the Act to allow GST dealers extended time for making payments and adhering to various tax compliance deadlines was also taken. To enable this, the state has invoked the force majeure clause replicating a similar move by the Centre.

A decision for similar amendments in rules and regulations governing the functioning of co-operative housing societies was also taken to ensure that get added time for meeting various statutory requirements.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet also to credit three months advance allowances under various social welfare schemes to help poor, pensioners, widows and divyangs. For this purpose, Rs 1273.25 crore was allocated.

Wadhawan brothers at the CBI court in Mumbai on Monday. *Express*

CBI gets custody of Kapil and Dheeraj Wadhawan till April 29

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

A DAY after the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested Kapil and Dheeraj Wadhawan, promoters of Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd, in connection with the alleged fraud linked to loans obtained from Yes Bank, a special court in Mumbai on Monday sent them to CBI custody till April 29.

The Wadhawan brothers were arrested from Mahabaleshwar Sunday after the court vacated a stay on the execution of a non-bailable warrant against them.

The CBI had submitted before the court that the duo had been issued notices to appear before them in connection with the multi-crore scam, but had not joined the investigation. The CBI had further said that the two were part of a criminal conspiracy along with the Yes Bank's former CEO and founder, Rana Kapoor, who is currently in jail.

The probe agency claimed that between April and June 2018, the Wadhawans, along with Kapoor, had entered into a conspiracy, by the Yes Bank investing Rs 3,700 crore in short-term debentures of DHFL. The CBI claimed that simultaneously, Kapil paid a 'kickback' of Rs 600 crore to Kapoor and to his family-linked ventures, as loan.

After Kapoor's arrest last month, the CBI had claimed that the amount that was given as loan to RKW Developers Private Limited — a DHFL group company — for their Bandra Reclamation Project, was "siphoned off" by Kapil as it was transferred from RKW to DHFL without making any investment in the project. While seeking their custody, the CBI sought to probe further into the transactions to investigate into the alleged illegal kickbacks. CBI had sought their custody till May 4.

The Wadhawans through their lawyer said that they had not been absconding and claimed that they were in correspondence with the CBI, giving them specific reasons why they had not been able to come forward to join the probe. The brothers along with 21 others had travelled from Khandala to Mahabaleshwar on April 9, during the national lockdown, leading to them being placed in quarantine.

The state Home Minister, Anil Deshmukh, had said Saturday, their quarantine period was over and their custody could be taken by the CBI or ED since both the agencies wanted to interrogate them.

In favour of lifting lockdown in non-hotspot areas: Minister

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PUNE, APRIL 27

IN WHAT can be indicative of the state government's line of thinking with regard to the gradual lifting of the lockdown, Minister for Medical Education and Culture Amit Deshmukh said he was in favour of lifting the lockdown in non-hotspot areas in the urban belt. Deshmukh, who was addressing the media on Monday via a webinar, also said the state had enough testing kits and personal protection equipment (PPE).

"If urban areas have, say more than 50 per cent of hotspot areas where coronavirus cases are reported every day, then it makes sense to keep the city under lockdown. However, if there are areas in the city where no cases have been reported in a long time, I see no reason why such areas should not be allowed to function," he said.

Deshmukh's comment assumes significance as the country reaches the last week of the lockdown. Maharashtra, which has been reporting a steady increase in cases, has recorded a majority of positive cases from the urban regions of Mumbai, Thane, Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad. Civic authorities have already identified numerous hotspots in these areas, where number of positive cases have increased in last few days.

Asked about the availability of PPE kits, N95 masks and testing kits, Deshmukh said the state had enough. At present, Maharashtra has recorded the largest number of tests being conducted in the country with the minister saying they needed to wait for the central government's directions for increasing the number of tests.

Mayor dons nurse's uniform to motivate health workers

Mumbai: Amid rising coronavirus cases among healthcare workers in Mumbai, Mayor Kishori Pednekar donned the nurse's uniform to keep their morale high. Pednekar, a former nurse, visited BYL Nair hospital and spoke to second and third year nurses. The mayor also plans to visit Sion hospital on Tuesday.

The mayor tweeted, "AnythingForMumbai We can't do work from home, we are on the field for you, stay at your home, take care."

Pednekar, in her video address to people through her Twitter handle, said, "Our doctors, nurses, staff members are fighting the pandemic. They are taking care of COVID-19 patients, therefore, I have to stand with them to motivate them."

ENS

NUMBER WATCH

Figures for April 26 released by the Maharashtra Police

1,037 (73,735)

Cases registered under Section 188 (Violating an order issued by a public servant) of the Indian Penal Code

Persons who violated quarantine	0 (610)
Phone calls made to 100 pertaining to COVID-19	577 (79,051)
Number of infected police personnel	0 (107)
Cases of illegal transport	8 (1,100)
Arrests	411 (15,845)
Vehicles seized	395 (48,177)
Fines imposed	Rs. 4.20 lakh (Rs. 2.78 crore)

**Total figures for all categories in brackets*

POST-LOCKDOWN

Talks on with other states to revive domestic tourism: MoS

MAYURA JANWALKAR
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

WITH INTERNATIONAL tourism likely to remain inactive for over a year due to the coronavirus pandemic, Maharashtra Minister of State (MoS) for Tourism Aditi Tatkare said talks were on with other state governments to promote domestic tourism.

The sector has come to a standstill in the country since a nationwide lockdown was implemented on March 24.

Tatkare said during a recent video-conference, state Tourism Minister Aaditya Thackeray, his Rajasthan counterpart and the tourism secretaries of the two states discussed on how they could revive the sector after the lockdown was lifted. "International tourism, I feel, will be closed for at least one-and-a-half year until a vaccine (for COVID-19) is developed. That will give us the chance to promote Indian tourism more. We are working on the lines of *'Videsh bahut dekh liya, ab apna desh dekh lo'* (Enough of seeing foreign countries, now see your own). (During the video-conference) we discussed how we can promote tourism in Rajasthan and Maharashtra. We are planning to do this (meetings) with other states as well. If we start planning now, then by November-December we will be able to open up," said Tatkare.

The MoS said there were two possibilities: either Indians may not want to travel at all, or due to the mental exhaustion from staying at home during the lockdown (from March 24 to May 3, so far), they may want to travel.

Amit Chakravarty

Tourism, the young NCP leader said, will also undergo a makeover in the days ahead and discussions are also being held over allowing bookings only to those who have tested negative for the coronavirus. "…like travellers to Africa are required to take the yellow fever vaccine to be allowed entry, we are thinking whether something like that should be done," Tatkare said.

Highlighting the need to make sanitisation facilities at tourist spots mandatory, she said, "We may not have given this a lot of importance in the past, but we will have to have mobile toilets, handwashing facilities, sanitising tunnels and temperature guns at entry points to check if anyone is symptomatic (to novel coronavirus). This will have to be a part of our lifestyle. Hygiene was never as important as it is now."

Tatkare added that in the days ahead, interactions will also be held with states that thrive on tourism like Kerala, Gujarat, and the northeastern states. Tourist spots, she said, will have to reopen in phases. "We cannot open everything in one go. We will have to do it phases. For example, if we open Ajanta Ellora (in Aurangabad) first, the entire tourism department will concentrate its efforts there to see if we are falling short on any front, how many people are visiting, are facilities enough and if over 14 days we find there is nothing wrong, only then we can think of reopening other tourist spots."

Among the major challenges, she said, was the reopening of places of worship, like temples, dargahs, and churches, that people may throng.

"Tourist places can be opened a little later, but places like Siddhivinayak, Shirdi, Haji Ali, Mahim church will have to be opened. They are visited not only by devotees but also by tourists. That is one thing we will have to properly take care of," said Tatkare.

The MoS added Maharashtra was also in discussions with other states to introduce 'special packages' for tourists. For example, Tatkare said, tourists visiting both Rajasthan and Maharashtra may be offered special deals by resorts or hotels in both the states. This, she said, may revive the dormant hotel business.

"Confidence building among tourists will be key for assuring them that the places they visit are safe and sanitised," said Tatkare.

Revamped facilities, early screening help Karnataka keep numbers down

JOHNSON T A
BENGALURU, APRIL 27

EARLY response, aggressive contact tracing plus quarantining and good medical infrastructure have helped Karnataka, that saw the country's first death due to coronavirus, keep down its COVID-19 numbers. Once No. 3 in the country, it is now at No. 11 in terms of tally.

On Monday, its numbers stood at 512 cases and 19 deaths. This includes 193 who have recovered, 294 who are still in hospital isolation and five in ICU. While over 7,000 beds have been set aside for COVID-19 care in government and private care facilities, only 324 beds are occupied at present.

"We have not added a large number of cases and the credit goes to health workers," State Health Commissioner Pankaj Kumar Pandey said.

Health Secretary and Additional Chief Secretary Jawaid Akhtar said they were not letting their guard drop. "Our preparedness by way of infrastructure, materials required and human resources is to tackle even the worst-case scenarios," he said.

As early as February 4, more than a month before the state got its first case, the Karnataka Department of Health and Family Welfare cited the WHO to declare coronavirus a public health emergency, and kicked into motion its disease surveillance systems across districts. The state's system has been honed over the SARS outbreak in 2003, bird flu and swine flu in 2009, MERS in 2011, and Zika and Nipah viruses recently.

"The healthcare system in Kerala gets a lot of credit but the system has worked quite effectively in Karnataka as well. This is because we began work very early. In early March we were sending nurses every night to the airport to screen international passengers," said Dr H D R Radhakrishna, the Superintendent of the 250-bed C V Raman General Hospital in east Bengaluru, which is now a COVID-19 quarantine facility.

The state's first coronavirus patient was an information technology sector employee who had returned from the US and tested positive on March 8. Two days later, an elderly man who had returned from Saudi Arabia succumbed, becoming the first casualty due to the virus in the country.

Acting on the advice of experts such as cardiac surgeon Dr Devi Shetty, Dr R Ravindra of the Indian Medical Association and Private Hospitals and Nursing Homes Association, which cited the devastation being caused by the disease in Europe, the BJP government in the state introduced a partial shutdown on March 13, involving primarily curbs on large gatherings.

With a medical infrastructure including as many as 60 colleges, 200 B.Sc nursing institutes, revamped government hospitals, as well as district and teaching hospitals in almost all its 30 districts, Karnataka was well-equipped to handle the emergency. As the cases started surfacing, Victoria Hospital in Bengaluru, a 100-year-old facility attached to the Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute, was converted into a 300-bed COVID-19 centre. The doctors, nurses and staff directly dealing with patients at the hospital were housed on the campus.

Dr Asima Bhanu, the nodal officer at the trauma care centre at the hospital, which currently has 42 patients, says, "We are like a family here. We try to ensure that all the needs of the patients are looked after. While even biryani is being supplied, there is no one to really ask them what they want. We are trying to do that." A 'Corona Conquerors' WhatsApp group that includes the patients helps them stay in touch.

Dr Balaji Pai, neurosurgery professor who is the special officer in-charge of the trauma centre, said most of the patients at the hospital were asymptomatic. "Only one or two patients are in ICU. Our role is confined to looking after their requests and needs."

Dr Asha Benakappa, former director of the state-run Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health in Bengaluru, commended the role of "young doctors, the residents and the fellows in teaching institutes, who are shouldering much of the clinical work".

The State-run Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Chest Diseases has the example of the newly married Dr Arvind Ram, who lived out of his car for over a fortnight while on duty as a nodal officer for coronavirus patients. Dr Deepak U G, earlier in-charge of the patients in a monthly rotation system, sent his family away to ensure they were not exposed to the virus.

A government doctor warned that the positive picture hides the fact that while the state had focused on teaching hospitals, it has ignored basic healthcare facilities like PHCs. "The last-mile connectivity in the healthcare system is lacking, like in most places in India," says Dr Abhijit Bhograj. A free Sunday clinic his family runs on the outskirts of Bengaluru gets nearly 1,500 people on an average, from rural areas of the state as well as Andhra Pradesh. Pointing out that this shows the lack of doctors in these parts, Dr Bhograj added, "For the first time in 45 years, the clinic is shut due to coronavirus."

'No dearth of possibilities in UP, we can give immediate employment to 15 lakh people'

UTTAR PRADESH Chief Minister **YOGI ADITYANATH** speaks to **LIZ MATHEW** about the steps taken by the state government to contain the spread of coronavirus, protect health workers and help stranded migrant labourers. Excerpts:

UP, the most populous state, has so far been able to contain the spread of the virus to an extent. How did you manage it?

I am grateful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had warned the country against this danger. Also, a comprehensive action plan was implemented in India. UP followed the PM's guidance in letter and spirit. Being the most populous state, the danger was highest here. But a time-bound action plan and its effective implementation led to considerable success. My cabinet colleagues worked with me to formulate an action plan. Whether it is paying maintenance allowance to street vendors or providing food grains to weaker sections, the 'Team 11' of senior officials effectively implemented the plan. Each of these teams has responsibility and accountability. As a result, today there are 10,000 isolation beds, 20,000 quarantine beds, 1,000 ventilators and 17 testing labs in the state. More than 60,000 samples have been tested. When the corona threat was sounded, we had only one lab where 50 tests could be conducted. Today, 4,000 tests are being conducted daily in 17 labs. Not only Team 11, I too communicate continuously with officials working in the field. I hold review meetings with Team 11 every day.

Is the state able to conduct adequate number of tests?

We have 24 state medical colleges. We established testing labs in 10 of them. The other seven labs are established in other institutions. Now, new laboratories are being set up in four government medical colleges and six divisional headquarters. COVID sample collection centres have been set up in each district. Our government has created a COVID Care Fund which will be used to increase testing facility. Besides, UP is the first state to conduct pool testing.

Has the government taken adequate steps to protect health workers?

Firstly, I thank all health workers, doctors and nurses who are working to serve humanity. Our topmost priority is to protect them. We have given full protection to Corona Warriors. If anyone violates rules, strict action is taken under law. We have adequate PPE kits, N95 masks and sanitisers to protect them. Secondly, I keep appealing to people that we should respect and encourage doctors, nurses, police personnel and health and sanitation workers. Incidents of stone-pelting against health workers were reported at some places. Soon after, clear instructions were given to take stringent action against such persons, including under NSA. In order to protect health workers, police team will accompany Health Department

THE EXPRESS INTERVIEW
WITH YOGI ADITYANATH
CHIEF MINISTER, UTTAR PRADESH

teams for sample testing or screening in hotspot areas.

Is the government taking steps to stop community spread of the virus?

Lockdown rules, social distancing and sealing of hotspot areas are the steps being taken. The government will take further steps if needed. We will not allow community spread. An order has been issued for not keeping people together in quarantine centres and shelter homes. I have given instructions that no public gathering should be allowed till June 30. No one is allowed to enter a hotspot except police, medical teams and those associated with doorstep delivery. The result of such strictness is evident. In UP, 19 districts are free from corona .

Migrant workers returning to the state may lead to rise in unemployment. Does the state have programmes for them? What measures have you taken to check the virus spread?

The state government has taken the responsibility of migrant labourers who are in UP or stranded in other states. We deployed nodal officers in every state so that labourers living there do not face any problem. We have sent letters to CMs regarding this. Regarding workers from other states, we have kept them in quarantine and made arrangements for food. We are also making efforts to provide employment to them here.

UP was reeling under unemployment before 2017. But when we made efforts after forming the government, there was a lot of employment generation. The workers, who you are saying will lead to increase in unemployment, will also get employment here. There is no dearth of possibilities. There are challenges but we also have opportunities. During lockdown, the government has provided direct and indirect employment to more than 1.5 lakh people through doorstep delivery. We are in a position to provide immediate employment to 15 lakh people. There is opportunity in government construction work, MNREGA, MSME enterprises and work done through voluntary organisations. Instructions have been given to prepare an action plan for the post-lockdown period. I want to assure everyone that no labourer in UP will have employment problems.

Concern was raised about fear created among Muslim minorities regarding communal profiling of corona patients. This seems to have made tracing patients tougher. Your comment?

Team-11 is monitoring every activity in the state. At a time when the government was almost successful in controlling corona, the Tablighi Jamaat brought new concerns because most of the cases were related to Tablighis. But our government resolved this matter very well. We have a better system, from hospitalisation to quarantine facilities, so that there is no atmosphere of fear. The work of identifying patients is being done at every level, in which all departments are working jointly. Some people of the Tablighi Jamaat tried to remain in hiding, but after the government's appeal and strictness of police, they came forward.

The CAA protests and Tablighi-related COVID-19 cases appear to have created a communally charged situation. Do you think this could threaten the state's development?

Coronavirus is a global disease. It is totally unfair to associate the CAA issue with it. Disease does not differentiate on the basis of caste or religion. It is a different matter that due to the Tablighi Jamaat, the disease spread rapidly among many people. The WHO advisory is to maintain social distance so that the chain can be broken. The same appeal is being made by the central and state government to all citizens. The law is doing its job to protect people. There is no communal discrimination in UP.

Fake news and rumours have led to fatal incidents like lynching in some parts of the country. Has your government taken steps to contain this?

A team of 30 police officers is working round the clock to check the spread of fake news. This team tracks the geographic origin of accounts of those posting fake news and creates a database. The social media team identifies the case and gives it to the district cyber cell. This includes cases of hate speech or fake news. FIR is being registered in such cases. Accounts on Twitter and Facebook, WhatsApp and TikTok which are spreading fake news are being blocked.

The state police's move to travel to Delhi to summon a senior journalist booked over a tweet has drawn criticism. Your comment?

The law is taking its course against anyone spreading false news, fake news or rumour, no matter who they are. In the time of crisis, journalists should give correct information to the public. Criticism on fake facts intended to mislead people is not good.

FULL INTERVIEW ON
www.indianexpress.com

Gujarat unit readies parts, unsure of sales as automobile hub still empty

AVINASH NAIR
SANAND (GUJARAT), APRIL 27

Libra Stampings LLP
No. of workers: 50
Usual strength: Around 50

AS A car pulls into the parking lot of MSME Libra Stampings LLP in Gujarat's automobile hub of Sanand, near Ahmedabad, Yatish Kumar Pandey, who has been trimming shrubs, rushes into the guard room, slips on a backpack containing a disinfectant, and hurries back out to sanitise the handles of the vehicle.

Known to all at the small factory as "Pandeyji", the 45-year-old from Chitrakoot in Uttar Pradesh explains, "The car handle is the one place most owners should be wary of."

Among the neighbours of Libra — which manufactures 'stampings', or parts used in submersible pumps, supplying them across the state — are Tata Motors and Ford Motors. However, since relaxations in the lockdown starting April 22, Libra is among the few units that has reopened at the Sanand GIDC (Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation).

The bustling hub stands quiet, with most units marked by locks on their front gates or lonely watchmen. The handcarts and kiosks selling tea and food are missing.

Libra's 50-odd labourers, now split into two shifts of 25 each, are sharing duties. Pandey, for example, is a gardener, earning Rs 10,000 a month. For the reopening, the company gave him "training" on disinfecting people coming into the premises. He checks them with a thermal scanner, asks them to use a hand sanitiser, and sanitises their vehicles with the disinfectant spray in his backpack. No one apart from staff and government officials are allowed in.

Libra is among the few units that has reopened at the Sanand GIDC. *Javed Raja*

Should the gun show red when someone is checked, Pandey is expected to alert the bosses.

The staff have been given masks to wear at all times, as they spread out over the vast shop floor of over 22,000 sq ft.

Naresh Vidhani, who owns Libra with elder brother Kanhaiya, says they have been able to restart as they managed to convince all their labourers to stay back when the lockdown began in March. "We have housed them, we pay them regularly and we have kept our unit canteen open," he adds.

Ashwini Kumar, Secretary to Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, said around 40,000 industrial units with five lakh workers have reopened in Gujarat. "This is an important step towards normalisation. Things will slowly fall into place," he said.

WORK IN PROGRESS
FIELD REPORTS FROM FACTORIES

However, the Sanand Industrial Association said that while almost all units can now restart operations, many are hesitant due to the lack of markets and workers.

Naresh says they too are not sure about sales. "We are currently packaging the materials gathering dust for one-and-a-half months, keeping them ready for despatch whenever our clients ask for them. Our production is minimal as most of our clients are yet to start operations," he says. Their monthly average is 125-150 tonnes of stampings, but the Vidhanis have not set any targets for the coming months.

Talking about the efforts to keep back workers, Naresh says, "I cajoled them, told them we would provide food and shelter and they were much safer on the campus than outside."

With no food stalls open, the labourers are dependent on the kitchen set up at the back of the unit, run by Uday Singh and two helpers, who are from Rajasthan. They make rice, dal, pooris, sabzi and butter-milk for lunch and dinner, with the vegetable the only variant on the menu, apart from breakfast. The vegetables and milk are supplied daily by a local vendor.

At their living quarters on the first floor of the unit, the 25-odd not on duty that day lie on bunker beds across two large rooms with fans whirring against the summer heat. Their shoes lie strewn across the corridor, while clothes hang from multiple strings. There are 10 toilets, an equal number of bathrooms and a space to wash clothes.

The workers are not allowed to leave the premises. Only five staff members, including the Vidhani brothers, have transit permits.

Basant Yadav, who hails from Chapra in Bihar, says he last went home six months ago. "My mother and wife are back there. Now, there is danger that I might get infected on the way and end up transferring coronavirus to them. So the best option for me is to be at the factory and wait till the disease subsides," he says.

Suraj Kumar, however, won't wait a day longer once they are allowed to go. "When the trains begin, I plan to return," says the 30-year-old.

Naresh is apprehensive he may not be able to hold on to them a second time. "We manufacture only one part of the motor. Till the time the other players open, we have to go slow or just wait. We do not expect the situation to normalise before four-six months," he says.

Karnataka man who tested positive for COVID kills self

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, APRIL 27

A 50-YEAR-OLD chronically ill man, who had been on dialysis for over 15 years and tested positive for COVID-19 on April 24, on Monday jumped to death from a trauma care centre building at the Victoria Hospital where he was receiving treatment. The incident came a day after a 45-year-old woman, who was chronically ill, died in the ICU of the designated COVID-19 treatment hospital.

The 50-year-old lived with his brother in south Bengaluru. The suicide led to the first post-mortem in Bengaluru after a positive coronavirus test. The suicide has not been accounted for as a coronavirus death.

"The post-mortem was necessary despite the patient being COVID-19 positive because the death involves a medico-legal case," an official at the Victoria Hospital said. "Patient admitted on 24-04-2020 with history of pneumonia, known case of hypertension, HCV positive and chronic kidney disease on regular dialysis died on 27-04-2020, with non-COVID cause," the Karnataka health department said Monday.

"He was admitted in the ICU and so he was isolated... After breakfast he went to the top of the building unnoticed by anyone," a senior doctor at the Victoria Hospital said. Two nephews of the deceased were at the hospital. "He was undergoing dialysis on a regular basis.... We cannot understand why such a thing would happen. He called last night to say he was doing fine," said one of the nephews.

Arnab questioned by Mumbai Police

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

REPUBLIC TV editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami on Monday spent more than 12 hours at a police station and was questioned by Mumbai Police in connection with an FIR over his remarks on Congress chief Sonia Gandhi and the Palghar lynching.

The FIR had been filed by Nagpur Police based on a complaint by the Maharashtra Energy Minister Nitin Raut over Goswami's statements in his show on Sonia Gandhi in connection with the Palghar incident. The charges include provocation with intent to cause riot, promoting enmity between two groups on grounds of religion or race, deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs and defamation under relevant sections of the IPC. The case was transferred to Mumbai Police after the Supreme Court set aside Goswami's plea that all hate speech cases against him be quashed.

The investigators served Goswami two notices on Sunday and, accordingly, he went to the police station at 9.30 am Monday.

In his statement on the Republic TV website, Goswami said he was questioned for 12 and a half hours. "The interrogation that was done today was about my comments on Sonia Gandhi. I have made it very clear that I stand by my comments. I have made it absolutely clear that everything I have said is correct. I have said to the police my side of the story and they are completely satisfied. I have cooperated with the investigation…," the statement said.

He told mediapersons, "I don't want to ascribe motive now. But everyone who is watching here today knows exactly that I am on the side of the truth. I stand by every single comment...."

His lawyer Kantawala told the media, "There were lots of questions presented in front of Arnab. There were clips which were shown, the whole television programme was also shown to him and whatever queries he was asked, he has answered each one of them." Deputy Commissioner of Police Abhinash Kumar (zone III) said, "The Nagpur case got transferred to Mumbai and we are currently probing that. Besides, the investigator has the power to decide for how long he needs to interrogate a person."

Youth Congress workers Arun Borade and Prateek Mishra, who had allegedly accosted Goswami early Thursday, were granted bail by Bhoiwada Court on Monday.

FROM PAGE ONE

Mumbai cop dies

patient unless there is no bed available," she added.

When doctors at KEM hospital also said they could not treat him, Sonawane's son contacted his father's reporting officer, the senior police inspector of Kurla traffic division, who in turn contacted the senior inspector of Bhoiwada police station. It was only after he spoke to the hospital authorities that Sonawane was admitted. He had been breathing with the aid of a ventilator since the last two days, an officer said.

This is the third death in the Mumbai Police. On Friday, a constable posted at Vakola police station succumbed to the virus, while another constable passed away on Sunday. A total of 107 police personnel, most of them posted in Mumbai, Thane and Pune, have tested positive so far. Seven of them have recovered. A senior officer said those who are experiencing symptoms are not reporting them immediately due to the fear that they or their families would be stigmatised.

The deaths of their colleagues in the space of 96 hours has rattled the constabulary. "There is a fear that police personnel can catch the virus while being deployed on the frontlines, or doing desk work in an office or even while commuting to and from work," said a state police officer.

It is convention for senior officers to visit the families of personnel who die in service, but they have not been able to follow this practice in the case of the three constables who died. But at least for one family, the condolences came over the phone from the highest level of the force and the government.

"Home Minister Anil Deshmukh and Maharashtra DGP Subodh Kumar Jaiswal called us to express their condolences and offer any assistance that we may require," said the son of the constable who passed away on Friday. The home department has announced a compensation of Rs 50 lakh and a government job to a member of each family.

While police personnel have been provided safety gear like N95 masks, gloves and face shields, the constabulary is concerned about the exposure to the virus. "Senior officers do not want me to touch registers that we pass them though we are all wearing gloves. At every public place, it is the constable who interacts the most with residents. There is no telling where and from whom we will contract the infection," said a constable.

Personnel above the age of 50 or suffering from diabetes or hypertension have been kept away active field deployment. "We have instructed them to either stay at home or work, inside police stations," said a senior officer.

The officer added that instructions have also been passed on to the force that only the aged and diseased should worry about contracting COVID-19 and exercise adequate precautions. "We want healthy and young members of our force to understand that even if they do test positive, they will recover in three to four days."

Navi Mumbai Police Commissioner Sanjay Kumar said that immediately after Sonawane's death, he made a group call to members of his force. "I told them to stay alert, be prepared and not remove their safety gear even if it is uncomfortable to wear. Instructions have been passed to every member of the force to eat right and get enough rest," he added.

One constable so far has tested positive in Navi Mumbai. Kumar said that 2,600 police personnel in the Navi Mumbai area have been tested so far and an equal number of personnel is expected to be tested by the end of this week.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

No one should buy vegetables from Muslims: UP BJP MLA

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, APRIL 27

Suresh Tiwari

BJP MLA Suresh Tiwari has reportedly asked people in Deoria district not to purchase vegetables from Muslim vendors.

The legislator from the district's Barhaj constituency was heard making the remarks in a video doing the rounds on social media. "Keep one thing in mind, I am telling everyone openly, no one should purchase vegetables from miyas (Muslims)," he told some people, including government officials.

When contacted, Tiwari said he had made the statement last week during his visit to the office of the Barhaj Nagar Palika, where several government officials were present.

"After hearing complaints that people of a community were selling vegetables after contaminating them with saliva in an attempt to spread coronavirus disease, I advised them not to purchase vegetables from them... After the situation gets normal then decide what they want," said the MLA.

The legislator claimed he had only given his opinion, and it was up to people to decide if they wanted to follow it. "Everyone can see what Jamaat members have done in the country," Tiwari said, referring to the Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Delhi last month.

State BJP spokesperson Rakesh Tripathi said the party does not endorse such statements. The party would take cognizance of the matter and question Tiwari about the circumstances in which he made the remarks, he added.

ICMR tells states to return rapid test kits

Highest single-day toll: 60 deaths in 24 hours, total 886

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

THE INDIAN Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has asked all states and Union territories (UTs) to return the rapid test kits procured from two companies in China as they have shown "wide variations in sensitivity". The kits were to be used only for surveillance and not for diagnosis, but that too stands suspended now.

Facing questions on the pricing of these kits, the ICMR also issued a clarification stating that it has "not made any payment whatsoever", and the "Government of India does not stand to lose a single rupee".

Meanwhile, in the highest single-day toll so far, 60 deaths were reported in the last 24 hours, taking the total toll to 886. With 1,463 new COVID-19 cases being reported Monday, the tally has gone up to 28,380 (6,361 recovered).

In a letter to chief secretaries of states and UTs on Monday, the ICMR said some states had raised issues regarding the performance of the rapid test kits. "The ICMR, thereafter, has also evaluated the kits of Guangzhou Wondfo Biotech and Zhuhai Livzon Diagnostics in field conditions. The results have shown wide variation in their sensitivity, despite early promise of good performance for surveillance purposes. In view of this, states are advised to stop using these kits procured from the above-mentioned companies and return them, to be sent back to the suppliers." It reiterated that the RT-PCR throat/nasal swab test "detects the virus early and is the best strategy to identify and isolate the individual."

At the daily briefing, Health Ministry Joint Secretary Lav Agarwal said: "Rapid diagnostic kits have a limited role to play. We have been highlighting their role in epidemiological investigation or surveillance. We have followed the full process in their procurement and no payment has been made to these companies. Required action has also been taken for non adherence to quality standards."

Sixteen districts, which earlier had positive cases, have not reported any fresh case in the last 28 days. While three new districts — Gondia in Maharashtra, Davanagere in Karnataka and Lakhisarai in Bihar — have been added to this list, two other districts — Pilibhit in Uttar Pradesh and Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar in Punjab — have dropped out.

A total of 85 districts have not reported any new case in the last 14 days.

The ICMR said 6,65,819 samples had been tested till Monday morning. The inter-ministerial central team that went to Pune has found that the city currently has a doubling time of seven days (the national doubling time is 10 days), and one out of nine samples tests positive (the national average is one out of 23 samples).

Responding to a question on the high case load and death rates in states like Maharashtra and Gujarat, Agarwal said: "These are very densely populated areas — places like Mumbai and Pune. So it is important to adhere to the containment strategy, whether it is a cluster or an outbreak, deploy sufficient manpower for a house-to-house survey, identify those with acute respiratory diseases or influenza like illnesses."

Parameswaran Iyer, Secretary, Drinking Water and Sanitation, who heads the empowered group on logistics and supply chain, outlined the steps being taken by the government to tackle challenges in four critical sectors — agriculture, manufacturing, logistics and feeding vulnerable groups.

In its clarification on the rapid testing kits, the ICMR said the evaluation committee got four bids — of Rs 1,204, Rs 1,200, Rs 844 and Rs 600 — for the kits from Wondfo. The lowest bid offer was considered.

Saying that it tried to procure the kits directly from Wondfo company in China, it said: "However, quotation received for direct procurement had the following issues: Quotation was FOB (Free on Board) without any commitment on logistics issues. The quotation was on the basis of 100% direct advance without any guarantees. There was no commitment on timelines. Rates were communicated in US dollars without any clause for accounting for fluctuations in prices."

So, it said, it went through Wondfo's exclusive distributor for India, who quoted an all-inclusive price without any clause for advance. "It needs to be also remembered that this was the first ever effort by any Indian agency to procure such kits and the rate quoted by the bidders was the only reference point... It needs to be stressed that ICMR has not made any payment whatsoever in respect of these supplies. Because of the due process followed (not going for procurement with 100% advance amount), GoI does not stand to lose a single rupee," the ICMR said.

INDORE

1 in 5 samples positive, admin says situation better

DIPANKAR GHOSE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

EVEN AS the COVID-19 situation in Indore has improved from registering 256 positive cases in one day last week to reporting 295 new cases over the past eight days, the percentage of positive cases is still 21.02 per cent — indicating that one in five samples are testing positive.

Numbers issued by the state government indicate that while the percentage of positive cases is coming down, it is still alarmingly high. While April 17 saw a positive percentage of 25.12, the numbers dropped to 21.02 per cent by April 24. The mortality rate is down, from 10 to 11 percent recorded on April 13 to 5.3 to 4.84 per cent recorded last week. Recovery rate has gone up from 8.05 to 9.09 per cent.

A health department official said, "While it has come down slightly, one in five people to be testing positive, even from containment zones, is very high. Recovery rates are also quite low, but hopefully they will pick up. The continuing high percentage of positive cases is definitely a worry."

Data shows that on April 17, there was a positive rate of 25.12 per cent, a mortality rate of 5.33 and a recovery rate of 8.05 per cent. By April 25, the positive percentage stood at 21.02 per cent, mortality rate at 5.6 per cent and recovery rate at 9.09 per cent.

Indore Commissioner Akash Tripathi said the numbers may be high but the samples returning results are those collected primarily from containment zones. "We finished surveying containment zones a few days ago. Now we are surveying remaining areas. But samples being tested are mainly still from containment zones and samples we are getting from 'yellow hospitals' to which symptomatic patients are coming." Tripathi said he is expecting another jump in cases over the next two days before the numbers start stabilising.

While the state government has argued that the high numbers are because of extensive testing, data shows that at least over the last week, from April 17 to 25, there have been only 2,087 new tests. The numbers between April 19 and 21 are stark, with only 166 new tests over three days, and 33 positives among them. Since April 21, four days have seen 320, 428, 311 and 441 tests, respectively.

The Indore Commissioner said there were clear signs of improvement in Indore.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

WESTERN RAILWAY

INTERVIEW FOR CONTRACT MEDICAL PRACTITIONER AND PARAMEDICAL STAFF

Engagement of Contract Medical Practitioners (GDMO & Specialist) & Para-Medical staff on Contract Basis in Jagjivan Ram Railway Hospital, Mumbai Central

In view of **COVID-19** Pandemic, **Jagjivan Ram Hospital, Mumbai Central,** Western Railway will be conducting Telephonic/ Whatsapp interview for filling- up the posts of Contract Medical Practitioners (GDMO / Specialist) and **Para-Medical categories in Group 'C'** on full-time contract basis for **THREE MONTHS** to work in COVID Isolation wards of Jagjivan Ram Railway Hospital.

The candidate may apply only **ONLINE** on our official website : **http://203.153.40.19/bct** and as well as on **ekarmikbct** downloadable application available in Google Play store.

The date of submission of online application is from **28.04.20 to 30.04.20 up to 17.00 hrs.** Interviews will be held through **whatsapp/ telephonically from 1.5.2020 onwards.** Applications sent by post will not be accepted. Former Railway/Government Employees up to the age of 65 years can also apply.

The detail of the posts, age limits, Remuneration for Which application are invited.

Sr. No.	Category	Total Vacancy	SC	ST	OBC	EWS	UR	Age limit for the post in years as on date of Notification	Remuneration in Rs. Per month
1.	CMP -GDMO	13	02	00	03	01	07	53 Years	75,000/-
2.	CMP Specialist Intensivist -2 Physician- 3 Anesthetists -6	11	01	00	02	01	07	53 Years	95,000/-
3.	Nursing Supdt	35	05	02	09	03	16	20-40 Years	44900/- + Allowance
4.	Lab Assistant	05	00	00	01	00	04	18-33 Years	21700/- + Allowance
5.	Radiographer	05	00	00	01	00	04	19-31 Years	29200/- + Allowance
6.	Clinical Psychologist	05	00	00	01	00	04	18-33 Years	35400/- + Allowance
7.	ECG Technician	02	00	00	00	00	02	18-33 Years	21700/- + Allowance

Age Relaxation: 5 years for SC/ST and **3 years OBC** as admissible as per Rules

For more information visit **www.wr.indianrailways.gov.in** under News and recruitment section and on **http://203.153.40.19/bct** and apply online on the same within scheduled date & time.

VISIT> **http://203.153.40.19/bct** CLICK > **MEMO/NOTIFICATION**
on Home screen > click **DISPLAY MEMORANDUM** > select type > **NOTIFICATION** > click **SEARCH**

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भारतीय कंटेनर निगम लिमिटेड
Container Corporation of India Ltd.

कॉनकॉर CONCOR A Navratna Company

(भारत सरकार का उपक्रम) (A Govt. of India Undertaking)
ICD, Tughlakabad, New Delhi – 110 020

TENDER NOTICE(E-Tendering Mode Only)

CONCOR invites Online Open E-Tender in two bid system for 'Point to Point Road transportation and Movement of Double Decker Locks at MMLP Kathuwas (CMLK), Rajasthan'. The bid document may be downloaded from the website **(www. tenderwizard.com/CCIL)** on **Payment of Rs.1000/- online.**

Tender No.	CON/NR/TC/RTO/CMLK/2020
Estimated Cost	Rs. 4,07,47,067/- (excl. GST) per annum
Period of the contract	2+2+1 years
Earnest Money Deposit	Rs.5,00,000/- through e-payment.
Cost of Document	Rs.1,000/- inclusive of all taxes & duties through e-payment
Tender Processing Fee (Non-refundable)	Rs. 5,310/- inclusive of all taxes & duties through e-payment.
Date of Sale (On Line)	From 28.04.2020 at 15:00 hrs. to18.05.2020 upto 16:00 hrs.
Prebid meeting	On 08.05.2020 at 15:00 hrs. at Northern Region, ICD/Tughlakabad.
Issue of Corrigendum (if any)	On or after 11.05.2020 on www.tenderwizard.com/CCIL only
Date & Time of submission of tender	19.05.2020 upto15:00 Hrs.
Date & Time of Opening of tender	On 20.05.2020 at 15:30 hrs.

For eligibility criteria and other details please log on to **www.concorindia.com** or **eprocure.gov.in** or **www.tenderwizard.com/CCIL**. Bidders are requested to visit the websites regularly. CONCOR reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reasons thereof.

Group General Manager (C&O)/Northern Region

INDIAN RAILWAYS INSTITUTE OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING, NASIK-ROAD

Open E-Tender Notice

Tender Notice No. IRIEEN/W/S/01(2020-21) Date : 27.04.2020

DIRECTOR General, Indian Railways Institute of Electrical Engineering, Eklahare Road, Nashik-Road, (Telephone Nos. 2407322, 2462545, 2462546) invites for and on behalf of the President of India from reputed and experienced contractors through E-tendering system.

1) Name of Work : Maintenance of lawns and gardens for a period of 01 year at IRIEEN.
2) Approximate cost of work : ₹ 29,48,849/-
3) Completion period : One year.
4) Earnest Money to be Deposited : ₹ 59,000/-
5) Date & Time for closing of tender : 22.05.2020 upto 1500 hrs.
6) E-Tender Information is also available on the notice board of Director, Indian Railway Electrical Engineering Institute, Nasik-Road.
7) The tenderer should participate electronically in the e-tender only through the website **www.ireps.gov.in** and do not have permission to present manual proposals against e-tendering and no manual proposal will be opened nor will it be considered.

Sd/-
For Director General/IRIEEN, Nashik-Road
For & on behalf of the President of India

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY

शुद्धि पत्र

मण्डल रेल प्रबन्धक (वाणिज्य), उत्तर पश्चिम रेलवे, अजमेर द्वारा अजमेर मंडल की 10 गाड़ियों के 12 रकों की बाहरी सतह पर विनाइल रैपिंग के माध्यम से वाणिज्य विज्ञापन प्रदर्शन के ठेके की ई–निविदा सं. G-11/Vinyl Wrapping/2019-20 दिनांक 19.03.2020 को आमंत्रित की गई थी, परन्तु लॉकडाउन के कारण अब यह निविदा दिनांक 11.05.2020 को 15:00 बजे खोली जाएँगी। अन्य शर्तें यथावत रहेंगी। **नोट** : सभी संभावी निविदाकर्ताओं से अनुरोध है कि इस निविदा से संबंधित किसी भी अन्य शुद्धिपत्र हेतु, वे नियमित रूप से वेबसाईट **www.ireps.gov.in** देखें

वरि मण्डल वाणिज्य प्रबन्धक, उप रेलवे, अजमेर

420-SP/20

JHARKHAND BIJLI VITRAN NIGAM LIMITED
(CIN : U40108JH2013SGC001702)
Engineering Building, HEC, Dhurwa, Ranchi – 834004,
Email:- cecr2018@gmail.com,Fax: 0651-2400799

1st Time Extension Notice of NIT No. 306/PR/JBVNL/2019-20

for **"Supply, Installation, testing & commissioning of Three Phase four wire Trivector Energy 0.2s Accuracy class 33KV ABT Meter and system maintenance of ABT metering system for five years under ADP head for Electric Supply Area Jamshedpur"**

Timelines for participating in the all the above e-tender is detailed below :

Sl. No.	Particulars	Estimated Date
1	Pre bid meeting	04.05.2020 at 12:30hrs
2	Last date & time of receipt of Bid documents online	Upto14/05/2020 at 18:00 hrs.
3	Last date of physical submission of tender fee & EMD:	Upto15/05/2020till 15:00 hrs.
4	Technical Bid opening due date	15/05/2020 at 16:00 hrs.

Bid uploading / opening will be through e-tendering norms only. The complete Tender documents can be downloaded through website www.jharkhandtenders.gov.inBidder may contact help desk of e-Procurement system at the following web address: www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in.

Contact of Official:- GM(Coml) – 9431708983

General Manager (Commercial)
JBVNL,Ranchi

PR No. 227267
PR 228003(Jharkhand Bijlee Vitran Nigam Ltd)20-21*D

Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Ltd.
(A Govt. of India Undertaking, Ministry of Defence)
Regd. Office: 43/46, Garden Reach Road, Kolkata 700 024

E-TENDER NOTICE FOR ONLINE BIDDING

(1) NIT NO. SCC/AJK/OT(Press)/CanteenService.HR/025/N.ET-1067
NAME OF JOB: BIENNIAL RATE CONTRACT FOR PROVIDING LUNCH AND OTHER ALLIED SERVICES IN GRSE CONTRACTOR'S WORKMEN CANTEENS

(2) NIT NO. SCC/AS/OT(PRESS)/CAR.HIRE/012/N.ET-1121
NAME OF JOB: BIENNIAL RATE CONTRACT FOR HIRING OF DIESEL CARS AT GRSE KOLKATA

Due date for NIT No. 1 & 2: 21 days from date of publication

1. Details will be available in e-tendering portal **https://eprocuregrse.co.in** and websites **https://www.grse.in/index.php/tender.html** & **https://eprocure.gov.in/cppp/**
2. Any addendum/corrigendum to this tender enquiry will be published in above websites only.

"In pursuit of Excellence and Quality in Shipbuilding"
Visit us at : www.grse.in

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BRIHANMUMBAI MAHANAGARPALIKA

(S.W.M.'s Department)

No. Dy. Ch. E/Civil/05/Env/AYC Dtd. 27.04.2020

Short E-Tender Notice

SUB :- Appointment of Design & Built Turnkey Contractor for construction of dwelling units under Ashray Yojana. For Group 1 to 11

SR NO	Bid No	Name of Work	EMD in Rs	Contact Details
1	7100177559	Group-1, Tenaments 1016 of 300 sqft & 105 of 600 sqft	1,58,88,960/-	Shri A. M. Taware 9819111472
2	7100177560	Group-2, Tenaments 1152 of 300 sqft & 105 of 600 sqft	1,76,51,520/-	Shri A. M. Taware 9819111472
3	7100177561	Group-3, Tenaments 1104 of 300 sqft & 85 of 600 sqft	1,65,11,040/-	Shri Tanaji Rupnar 9930323952
4	7100177562	Group-4, Tenaments 846 of 300 sqft & 85 of 600 sqft	1,31,67,360/-	Shri Tanaji Rupnar 9930323952
5	7100177564	Group-5, Tenaments 1399 of 300 sqft & 145 of 600 sqft	2,18,89,440/-	Shri Tanaji Rupnar 9930323952
6	7100177565	Group-6, Tenaments 1057 of 300 sqft & 85 of 600 sqft	1,59,02,000/-	Shri Prabhakar Pawar 9869258729
7	7100177566	Group-7, Tenaments 864 of 300 sqft & 85 of 600 sqft	1,34,01,000/-	Smt. R. A. Deshmukh 8369085035
8	7100177567	Group-8, Tenaments 510 of 300 sqft & 40 of 600 sqft	76,47,000/-	Smt. R. A. Deshmukh 8369085035
9	7100177568	Group-9, Tenaments 516 of 300 sqft & 50 of 600 sqft	79,83,360/-	Shri Pramod Waghmare 9833183418
10	7100177569	Group-10, Tenaments 1564 of 300 sqft & 155 of 600 sqft	2,42,87,040/-	Shri Pramod Waghmare 9833183418
11	7100177570	Group-11, Tenaments 754 of 300 sqft & 66 of 600 sqft	1,14,82,600/-	Shri Sale 9967858133
Time Period		**18 Months (Including Monsoon)**		
Cost of Tender		**Rs. 8,085/- (Rs. 7700/- + 2.50% SGST+2.50%CGST)**		

Details of E-Tender and HEADER DATA is as below.

Date of Issue and sale of Tender (Start Date)	28.04.2020 from 1100 Hrs.
Last date & time for sale of tender	29.05.2020 upto 1200 Hrs.
Submission of Packet A, B & Packet C (Online) & Receipt of Bid Security Deposit/ EMD	29.05.2020 upto 1600 Hrs.
Pre-Bid Meeting Date, Time & Venue	11.05.2020 from 1200 Hrs. (Office of : Jt. M.C. (S.W.M.) 3rd Floor, MCGM Head Office Annexe Building, 1. Mahapalika Marg, Mumbai-400001.
Opening of Packet 'A'	03.06.2020 after 1601 Hrs
Opening of Packet 'B'	10.06.2020 after 1601 Hrs
Opening of Packet 'C'	08.07.2020 after 1500 Hrs

Any changes will be displayed on MCGM Portal **http://portal.mcgm.gov.in** or in the office of Dy ChE (Civil) Env/AYC - Email- **ee.swm@mcgm.gov.in**

This tender documents is not transferable.

The MCGM reserves the rights to accept any of the application or reject any or all the applications received for above subject without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd/-
(Shri. Rajesh Dange)
Dy. Ch.E. (Civil) Env/AYC

PRO/39/ADV/20-21

MCGM HELPLINE NUMBER 1800221292 from 9 a. m. to 9 p. m.
FOR Homeless/Stranded Migrants/ Workers for food & shelters

TAMIL NADU SLUM CLEARANCE BOARD
CHENNAI CIRCLE-III
NOTICE INVITING SHORT- TENDER

Tender Notice No. SCB / 105 / HD / SE (CC-III) / 2020 **Date: 27.04.2020**

For and on behalf of the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board, one sealed tender consisting of two separate sealed covers one for Pre-qualification with EMD and other one for Price Bid with name of work duly superscribed in both covers are invited from eligible Contractors who are in the field of Construction Industry and are registered contractors of TNSCB under Class-I and above or Government Departments / Government undertakings / Government / Semi Government Bodies / Quasi Government / Public Sector undertakings / Housing Boards / Corporation Undertakings / CPWD and registered as a legal entity in India, by the Superintending Engineer, Chennai Circle-III, Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board, No.5, Kamarajar Salai, Chennai 600 005 **upto 3.00 PM on 13.05.2020** and the same will be opened at 3.30 PM on the same day in the presence of the Tender Scrutiny Committee and bidders / their authorised agents

Sl. No.	Name of work/Estimate No.	Approximate Tender Value (Including GST@12%) (Rs. in lakhs) ---------- Period of contract	EMD (in Rs.)	To whom EMD / Tender Schedule cost to be Drawn
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1.	Construction of 700 tenements (G+4 storied) adopting T.D.09C, 09D & 09E/2020 including internal water supply, sanitary and electrification arrangement with development works at **Pakkam A Village in Thiruvallur Taluk at Thiruvallur District** under Housing For All (PMAY). Estimate CER No.16 / HFA / 2020-21.	6969.00 ---------- 18 Months	34,95,000/-	Executive Engineer / Reconstruction Division / TNSCB / Chennai-10
2.	Construction of 920 tenements (G+4 storied) adopting T.D.09A, 09B, 09C, 09D & 09F/2020 including internal water supply, sanitary and electrification arrangement with development works at **Nathamedu Pakkam B Village in Thiruvallur Taluk at Thiruvallur District** under Housing For All (PMAY). Estimate CER No.17/ HFA / 2020-21.	9770.00 ---------- 18 Months	48,95,000/-	

The EMD should be drawn as Demand Draft or Banker's cheque or FDR / Bank Guarantee from any Nationalised / Scheduled Banks, payable at Chennai in favour of Executive Engineer, mentioned in **Column (5)**. The tender documents can be obtained from the office of the Superintending Engineer, Chennai Circle-III TNSCB, No.5, Kamarajar salai, Chennai 600 005 on written requisition along with cost of the tender documents to a value of 16,900/- (Non-Refundable) in the form of Demand Draft or Banker's Cheque upto **3.00 PM on 12.05.2020** drawn in favour of the Executive Engineer mentioned in **Column (5)**.

Note:
1. Detailed tender notice, conditions for participating in the tender can be had from the Office of the Superintending Engineer, Chennai Circle-III Circle, TNSCB, Chennai 600 005.
2. Detailed tender notice, conditions for participating in the tender and the tender documents are also available at **www.tenders.tn.gov.in** which can be downloaded at free of cost. The tenderer shall keep a watch over the web site till the preceding date of tender for any notifications.

The undersigned reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reasons thereof .

No.5,Kamarajar salai, Chennai-600 005 **DIPR/1696/TENDER/2020** **SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER CHENNAI CIRCLE-III**

TAMIL NADU SLUM CLEARANCE BOARD
SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (CHENNAI CIRCLE-II)

NOTICE INVITING SHORT- TENDER **Tender Notice No. SCB/331 /D1/SE(CC-II)/2019** **Date: 27.04.2020**

For and on behalf of the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board, one sealed short tender consisting of two separate sealed covers one for Pre-qualification with EMD to be enclosed in A cover and another for price schedule with name of work duly superscribed to be enclosed in B cover are invited from the registered contractors of TNSCB under Class -I and above or Government Departments / Government undertaking / Public Sector Undertaking, registered as a legal entity in India by the Superintending Engineer, Chennai Circle-II, Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board, No.5, Kamarajar Salai, Chennai - 600 005 **upto 3.00 PM on 14.05.2020 and the same will be opened at 3.30 PM on same day** in the presence of the Tender Scrutiny Committee.

Sl. No.	Name of work/Estimate No.	Approximate Value (Including GST) (Rs. in lakhs) ------ Period of contract	EMD (in Rs.)	To whom EMD / Tender Schedule cost to be Drawn
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1	Construction of 384 Nos of Tenements adopting type design 37-B & 37- F / 2019 (G+7 Storeyed) including internal and external water supply, sanitary and electrification arrangements with developments works at **Perumbakkam Phase-IV Scheme in Chengalpattu District** under HFA of PMAY (AHP). **Estimate CER No. 01/HFA/2020-21.**	3757.00 ---------- 15 Months	18,89,000/-	Executive Engineer/ Chennai Special Division-I, Chennai-119.
2	Construction of 256 Nos of Tenements adopting type design 37-C/2019 (G+7 Storeyed) including internal and external water supply, sanitary and electrification arrangements with developments works at **Perumbakkam Phase-V Scheme in Chengalpattu District** under HFA of PMAY (AHP). **Estimate CER No. 02/HFA/2020-21.**	2414.00 ---------- 15 Months	12,17,000/-	
3	Construction of 256 Nos of Tenements adopting type design 37-E/2019 (G+7 Storeyed) including internal and external water supply, sanitary and electrification arrangements with developments works at **Perumbakkam Phase-VI Scheme in Chengalpattu District** under HFA of PMAY (AHP). **Estimate CER No. 03/HFA/2020-21.**	2414.00 ---------- 15 Months	12,19,000/-	
4	Construction of 384 Nos of Tenements adopting type design 37-A & 37-D/2019 (G+5 Storeyed) including internal and external water supply, sanitary and electrification arrangements with developments works at **Perumbakkam Phase-VII Scheme in Chengalpattu District** under HFA of PMAY (AHP). **Estimate CER No. 04/HFA/2020-21.**	3700.00 ---------- 15 Months	18,60,000/-	
5	Construction of 144 Nos of Tenements adopting type design 37-A/2019 (G+5 Storeyed) including internal and external water supply, sanitary and electrification arrangements with developments works at **Perumbakkam Phase-VIII Scheme in Chengalpattu District** under HFA of PMAY (AHP). **Estimate CER No. 05/HFA/2020-21.**	1387.00 ---------- 12 Months	7,04,000/-	
6	Construction of 156 Nos of Tenements adopting type design 37-C & 37-G/2019 (G+5 Storeyed) including internal and external water supply, sanitary and electrification arrangements with developments works at **Perumbakkam Phase-IX Scheme in Chengalpattu District** under HFA of PMAY (AHP). **Estimate CER No. 06/HFA/2020-21.**	1504.00 ---------- 12 Months	7,62,000/-	
7	Construction of 144 Nos of Tenements adopting type design 37-A/2019, (G+5 Storeyed) including internal and external water supply, sanitary and electrification arrangements with developments works at **Semmancherry Scheme** in Greater Chennai Corporation Division No. 200 under HFA of PMAY (AHP). **Estimate CER No. 07/HFA/2020-21.**	1462.00 ---------- 12 Months	7,41,000/-	

The EMD should be drawn as Demand Draft or Banker's Cheque or FDR or irrevocable Bank Guarantee from any Nationalised / Scheduled Banks, payable at Chennai in the prescribed form in favour of the Executive Engineer mentioned in Column (5). The tender documents can be obtained from the office of the Superintending Engineer, Chennai Circle-II, TNSCB, No.5, Kamarajar salai, Chennai - 600 005 on written requisition along with cost of the tender documents to a value of **Rs.16,900/-** (Non-Refundable) in the form of **Demand Draft or Banker's Cheque upto 3.00 PM, on 13.05.2020 drawn in favour of Executive Engineer, mentioned in Column (5).** The tender documents are also available at **www.tenders.tn.gov.in** which can be downloaded from **28.04.2020 to 13.05.2020 upto 3.00 P.M.** The downloaded tender documents shall be submitted without any alteration, whatsoever it may be, in full shape or otherwise the tender will be liable for rejection. The tenderer shall keep a watch over the Website till the preceding date of tender for any corrigendum. If the due date of opening of the tender happens to be a holiday, the same will be received and opened on the succeeding working day without any change in time. Clarification, if any on Bid Criteria and other details regarding the tender can be had on all working days from the Office of the Superintending Engineer, Chennai Circle-II, TNSCB, Chennai - 600 005. The undersigned reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reasons thereof.

DIPR/1694/TENDER/2020 **Superintending Engineer, Chennai Circle-II.**

TRANSMISSION CORPORATION OF A.P. LIMITED, VIJAYAWADA

'e' PROCUREMENT NOTICE

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R. O. No. 15PP/CL/ADVT/1/1/2020-21 **CHIEF ENGINEER, TRANSMISSION**

Govt. of Bihar

Rural Works Department

Invitation of Proposals

Selection of Consulting Firm to provide the services of Environmental Specialist & Social Development Specialist.

Country : **India**
Name of the Project : **Bihar Rural Roads Project**
Credit No. : **5938IN**
Assignment Title : **Selection of Consulting Firm to provide the services of Environmental Specialist and Social Development Specialist.**
Reference No. : RWD/MMGSY(WB)/HQ/SERVICES/2019-20/04

The Rural Works Department has received financing from the International Development Association (IDA) (the "Bank") in the form of a "credit" toward Bihar Rural Roads Project. The BRRDA, an implementing agency of the RWD, intends to apply a portion of the proceeds of this credit to eligible payments towards the consulting services: **Selection of Consulting Firm to provide the services of Environmental Specialist and Social Development Specialist** in the State of Bihar for which this Invitation of Proposal is being issued.

The consulting services ("the Services") include providing the services of an Environmental Specialist (1 No.) and an Social Development Specialist (1 No.) for a period of 24 months which may be extended based on the performance of the individual. The detailed Terms of reference for the aforesaid assignment is provided in the RFP.

The Rural Works Department, Government of Bihar now invites eligible consulting firms ("Consultants") to submit their proposals for providing the Services. Interested Consultants may download the RFP document free of cost from www.rwdbihar.gov.in. The Consultants would be responsible for ensuring that any addenda available on the website is also downloaded and incorporated.

The attention of interested Consultants is drawn to paragraph 1.9 of the World Bank's *Guidelines: Selection and Employment of Consultants [under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits & Grants] by World Bank Borrowers* ("Consultant Guidelines"), setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest.

Consultants are allowed to associate with other firms in the form of a joint venture or a sub consultancy to enhance their qualifications.

A Consultant will be selected in accordance with the QCBS method set out in the Consultant Guidelines.

Further information can be obtained from Sri Nalin Kumar Sinha, Project Director, MMGSY during Office hour or on Mobile No. 8986915039 at the address below during office hours i.e. 10:00 to 18:00 hours from **27/04/2020 to 13/05/2020.**

Proposals in hard copy duly page numbered and hard bound only and super scribed "**Selection of Consulting Firm to provide the services of Environmental Specialist and Social Development Specialist in the State of Bihar**" must reach the following address not later than **15/05/2020 up to (3.00 PM)** – The Engineer-in-Chief, Rural Works Department,5th Floor, Vishweshwaraiya Bhawan, Off Bailey Road, Patna-800001.

For further details please visit website **www.prdbihar.gov.in**

(Praveen Kumar Thakur)
Engineer-in- Chief

PR. No. 000415 (RWD) 2020-21

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CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK
YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED DAILY

TOTAL CONFIRMED: **3,002,303** DEATH COUNT: **208,131**

Source: Johns Hopkins University, updated at 11:00 pm on April 27

Why is the death rate higher in some countries than others?

ONE OF the ways in which the burden of any disease is measured is by seeing how many deaths it is causing. In the case of COVID-19, which has now infected over 30 lakh people in 185 countries and regions and killed close to 2.1 lakh, this burden has varied widely — countries have reported very different case fatality ratios (CFR), which is the number of deaths divided by the number of confirmed cases.

While many things about the novel coronavirus remain unknown, broadly speaking, CFR depends on three broad factors:

First is the number of people tested. Testing rates have been different in different countries — India continues to be among the countries where testing is widely seen to be inadequate. More aggressive testing identifies more asymptomatic infected persons, and people with milder, less noticeable symptoms. Since CFR relies on the number of confirmed cases (which is a specific number) and not the total number of cases (which can only be an estimate), more testing lowers the ratio.

The second factor is demography. As a general principle, any virus poses a greater threat to those with weaker immunities, and a vast majority of deaths from COVID-19 have been of people with co-morbid conditions. Older people are more vulnerable; indeed, the virus has wreaked the greatest havoc in populations that are older.

Finally, the strength and capacity of healthcare systems matter greatly. Countries like Italy or Spain saw their hospitals overwhelmed, and unable to adequately care for the flood of patients. In India, where resources are limited and critical care capacities constrained, the danger from an uncontrolled spread is that much greater.

In absolute numbers, the US carries the greatest burden of COVID-19, accounting for nearly a third of all cases. Spain and Italy follow, together accounting for over 14% of global cases.

In terms of observed CFR, a different set of countries leads the chart. According to the Johns Hopkins University coronavirus resource centre dashboard, the highest mortality is in Belgium (15.4%), followed by France (14.1%) and the UK and Italy (13.5% each). The CFR of the US is 5.7%.

Belgium's deaths per 1 lakh population are 62.11, the highest in the world, followed by Spain (49.63), Italy (44.09) and France (34.17).

INDIA COUNT: 28,380 (886 DEATHS)

TOP 10 STATES

REST OF INDIA

Andaman and Nicobar Islands	33
Arunachal Pradesh	1
Assam	36
Bihar	277
Chandigarh	30
Chhattisgarh	37
Goa	7
Haryana	289
Himachal Pradesh	40
Jammu and Kashmir	523
Jharkhand	82
Karnataka	511
Kerala	469
Ladakh	20
Manipur	2
Meghalaya	12
Mizoram	1
Odisha	108
Puducherry	8
Punjab	313
Tripura	2
Uttarakhand	51

Union Health Ministry update as of 11 pm, April 27. Some states may have reported higher numbers. Only states/UTs with at least one case listed above.

6362 PATIENTS DISCHARGED IN 30 STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES

Have a question on the COVID-19 outbreak and what you should/should not do?
Write to explained@indianexpress.com

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Why rapid tests are off, again

After allowing rapid tests in certain zones, ICMR has asked states to return test kits to suppliers. A look at how such tests work, why states have been demanding it, and how their debate with ICMR has unfolded

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

ON MONDAY, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) put an end to the question of rapid tests when it told the states that the newly procured kits for such tests had failed quality checks and should be returned to the suppliers.

This effectively brings the curtains down on a long conversation on rapid testing between the states and the ICMR, at least for the time being. A look at the tests, how the conversation started and where it stands internationally.

What is a rapid test?

A rapid test essentially is a test that takes less time than the 8-9 hours that the standard RT-PCR test result takes. In the Indian context, a rapid test means the serological tests with kits that India had imported from China, which have now failed quality tests.

The difference between the two procedures is that the RT-PCR test looks to find the virus in nasal or throat swabs of the patient, while the serological test usually looks for antibodies in the blood, which the body develops to fight the virus. Blood has two components, a matrix called plasma and the blood cells. The plasma minus the components of whole blood that cause it to clot, known as serum, is examined in a serological test.

According to the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, "Serology tests are blood-based tests that can be used to identify whether people have been exposed to a particular pathogen. Serology-based tests analyze the serum component of whole blood. The serum includes antibodies to specific components of pathogens, called antigens. These antigens are recognized by the immune system as foreign and are targeted by the immune response."

The serological test is faster, taking less than 30 minutes, while the PCR-based test takes up to nine hours. The long wait time is also because the nasal or throat swab is first subjected to a screening test to decide the family of the virus; if that test confirms that it is a coronavirus, then a second test is done to ascertain if it is indeed the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV2.

Blood sample taken in a slum area in Kolkata last week. Since then, ICMR has said newly imported rapid testing kits have failed quality checks. *Partha Paul*

The Health Ministry as well as the ICMR have reiterated several times that the "gold standard" for diagnosis is RT PCR, and the serological tests should be used only for the purpose of generating epidemiological data or for surveillance in hotspots.

Are there different kinds of rapid tests?

While these commonly look for antibodies developed against the virus, rapid tests (also known as point of care immunodiagnostic tests) can also seek to detect the presence of the virus itself. More specifically, the latter kind of rapid test looks for viral proteins expressed by the SARS-CoV2 virus in a sample taken from the respiratory tract of a person. If the presence of the protein is detected, it is inferred that the virus is present too.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO): "There is another, more common type of rapid diagnostic test marketed for COVID-19; a test that detects the presence of antibodies in the blood of people believed to have been infected with COVID-19. Antibodies are produced over days to weeks after infection with the virus. The strength of antibody response depends on several factors, including age, nutritional status, severity of disease, and certain medications or infections like HIV that suppress the immune system. In some people with COVID-19, disease confirmed by molecular testing (e.g. reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction: RT-PCR), weak, late or absent antibody responses have been reported."

This is the test kit that India had imported.

What has India's stand on rapid tests been, and how has it evolved?

Kerala was one of the earliest states to announce rapid tests. States like Tamil Nadu and Chhattisgarh too pushed the ICMR for a direction to follow the "South Korea-China model" of rapid tests, until the ICMR gave in earlier this month. On April 4, the ICMR said rapid tests could be used in areas reporting clusters (containment zones) and in large migration gatherings/evacuees centres.

However, after the kits rolled in from China, complaints started pouring in from the states. On April 21, while asking the states to suspend the tests for a few days pending field testing, Dr R R Gangakhedkar, head of epidemiology and infectious diseases at the ICMR, said: "We have been getting complaints that when the serological tests are being done on the blood samples of people who have already tested positive in the RT-PCR test, the accuracy ranges from 6% to 71%. This needs to be investigated."

He added: "This is a first generation test developed in just three-and-a-half months and needs refinement, yet the variations cannot be ignored. We will send personnel from eight institutes to the field to validate the kits. Meanwhile, we have advised the states not to use the tests for the next two days till we come out with an advisory."

What has been the global experience for rapid tests?

Singapore was the first country to use rapid tests, while South Korea has been the standout example. In its containment strategy, South Korea aggressively used mass testing, including with serological kits, to reduce the number of cases. Experts say they used their experience of SARS and MERS to take quick and decisive action. While it is testing that has earned it global praise, it is also a fact that South Korea's success was as much because of its hospital infrastructure that was already ramped up during the earlier outbreaks. Even in Daegu, where the country's 31st patient became an index for some 1,100 contacts, hospitals were clogged but hospitalisation rates remained high.

The WHO has been cautious about rapid testing. In a scientific brief on April 8, it said: "However, before these tests can be recommended, they must be validated in the appropriate populations and settings. Inadequate tests may miss patients with active infection or falsely categorize patients as having the disease when they do not, further hampering disease control efforts. At present, based on current evidence, WHO recommends the use of these new point-of-care immunodiagnostic tests only in research settings. They should not be used in any other setting, including for clinical decision-making, until evidence supporting use for specific indications is available."

The WHO brief covers rapid tests that detect both the virus and the antibodies developed against it.

In homemade masks, two fabrics better than one

KABIR FIRAQUE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

WITH SURGICAL and N95 masks in short supply, the Health Ministry recently published an advisory on how you can make your own face cover at home. For material, the Indian advisory recommends cotton, while the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend "cloth face coverings" without specifying the fabric.

Now, a study has examined the ability of various materials to keep out respiratory particles — and by extension the novel coronavirus — and identified a combination of two fabrics as possibly the best: either cotton plus natural silk, or cotton plus chiffon. If the fit is good, such homemade masks can effectively keep out aerosol particles, the researchers report in the American Chemical Society's journal *ACS Nano*.

Why size matters

An aerosol is a suspension of particles or droplets in the air. The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly through respiratory droplets, particularly when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines two size ranges for droplets through which respiratory infections can be transmitted — 5-10 microns in diameter (respiratory droplets) and less than 5 microns in diameter (droplet nuclei). One micron is a millionth part of a metre.

It is respiratory droplets (the larger size range) that are thought to be the primary route of COVID-19 infection. Airborne transmission, which is through droplet nuclei (the smaller size range), was not reported in a large study in China, the WHO notes. It says airborne transmission may be possible "in specific circumstances and settings in which procedures... that generate aerosols are performed". The bottom line is that while infection through the smaller droplet nuclei has not been ruled out, the evidence so far is that this virus spreads mainly by latching on to the larger respiratory particles.

Testing the fabrics

At the University of Chicago, molecular engineer Supratik Guha and colleagues tested common fabrics, alone and in combination, for their ability to filter out aerosols that are similar in size to respiratory droplets. They used an aerosol mixing chamber, which produced particles ranging from 10 nanometres to 6 microns in diameter. One nanometre is a billionth part of a metre. For context, 10 nanometres would fall within the WHO definition of droplet nuclei, while 6 microns would qualify a particle as a respiratory droplet.

A fan blew the aerosol across various cloth samples, at an airflow rate corresponding to a person's respiration at rest, the American Chemical Society said in a statement. The researchers measured the number and size of particles in the air before and after passing through the fabric.

The best performance was by one layer of a tightly woven cotton sheet combined with two layers of chiffon (90 per cent polyester and 10 per cent Spandex). The cotton-chiffon combination filtered out 80-99% of the particles, depending on particle size. This is close to the performance of an N95 mask material, the researchers said.

When the chiffon in the combination was replaced with natural silk or flannel, or when the experiments simply used a cotton quilt (*rajai/razai*) with cotton-polyester filling, the results were similar, they said.

Why it works

Tightly woven fabrics, such as cotton, can act as a mechanical barrier to particles, the researchers explained. Fabrics that hold a static charge, like certain types of chiffon and natural silk, serve as an electrostatic barrier.

The researchers, however, stressed the importance of a properly fitted mask. Even a 1% gap between the face contours and the mask reduced the filtering efficiency of all masks by half or more.

HOW FABRICS FILTER PARTICLES

Cotton acts as a mechanical barrier to particles; silk or chiffon act as an electrostatic barrier. *ACS Nano*

AN EXPERT EXPLAINS

The number of tests required per day cannot be the same across India

LEE HILBORNE

We constantly hear in every country, bar South Korea, that it is not testing enough. What does it really mean?

Testing in this context is generally driven by the need for data to make public health determinations and provide some guidance to individuals wondering if they had immunity. We need to have enough testing as communities — same in US and India — to, with reasonable certainty, understand how many people at any one time are acutely infected, whether or not they have symptoms. Since people without symptoms can spread the infection, it's important to have this insight. It doesn't mean we need to test everybody all the time, but we need to have a big enough sample to have a reasonable degree of certainty that the numbers are correct. Knowing who is infected will give us better information on the R0 (rate of spread), understand the risk at present, and also look at infection as efforts are made to ease social restrictions.

Then we need to know how many people have antibodies, and presumed immunity. This is important to determine when "herd immunity" exists and how far we are from that goal. That number needs to be informed by the R0 and rate of transmission because you need a greater number of people immune if the R0 is higher. I don't think we will have approached herd immunity until there is an effective vaccine given that the numbers we are seeing now vary from under 10% to just over 20% in the US, depending on the location. Because there is variation by location, that's the reason having the data by geographic area is important.

Are the number of tests per day linked to determining the date of the opening of the lockdown?

Not the number per se, but the extent to which the number informs us with good probability that there is a reduced risk of continuing to spread the virus. The number of tests per day would be determined by ascertaining statistically the number of people with active infection in a region. In areas where there is more social crowding, the number of people with active infection would need to be lower because each one has a greater risk of transmitting disease due to proximity to others.

So what is that requisite number of tests per day for a country like India with a population of 1.3 billion to decide on opening the lockdown?

As discussed earlier, I don't think it's by India as a whole, but numbers would be different in Mumbai, Delhi, and other large cities. Probably fewer in smaller areas, and those with less risk. I am working with some colleagues now to try and determine this with greater precision.

RT-PCR and the antibody tests — which of these two is more important for containing the spread of COVID-19?

As I mentioned, both are important because they provide different information. Long term, the antibody test may be more important but during an acute infection, the most important thing to know is who has active disease, and that's the question the RT-PCR test answers. The need to know who has the infection in the population, even if asymptomatic, means we should be examining presumed healthy individuals, not just those that are sick.

Based on the test results that you have seen and analysed, what are the big things that have registered with you?

We know that the positivity rates we see underestimate the true infection because what is reported are those that test positive — and negative. But because many who might have mild symptoms don't get tested, that information is very biased. Similarly, the mortality rate is overstated because the denominator includes just those tested. Also, because collection is not perfect, there are some people with the infection who may have a negative RT-PCR test. For the antibody test, I think it supports the notion mentioned above — because the prevalence of antibodies is considerably greater, even though still low, than would be suggested by those who have positive results.

What is the problem with antibody test kits? There seem to be all kinds of reports about the unreliability of these tests.

This is a Buyer Beware situation. There are reliable tests on the market and there are unreliable or "junk" tests. I don't want to speculate on the motivation for putting out lousy tests. Normally when we bring a test to market, there are strict evaluations that come first. Because of the emergency there was a relaxation of those requirements. It does suggest that a reasonable amount of oversight is in the best interest of the public to protect us all from dangerous tests, the same as for drugs and medical devices.

Is the problem with the test kits imported from China?

Again, it's not that the products are made in China — but rather whether they are made properly with the right amount of quality control, production standards and consistency. Because many of the initial tests were developed in China, some were good and some were bad. Purchasers should make sure that their vendors have recognised good manufacturing practices.

(Dr Lee Hilborne is Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at David Geffen School of Medicine at University of California-Los Angeles, and Medical Director of Quest Diagnostics at Southern California. He was formerly president of the American Society for Clinical Pathology, and a member of US CDC's Clinical Laboratory Improvement Advisory Committee. He spoke to ***Sushant Singh****)*

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

HUMAN DIGNITY IS THE SAME FOR ALL HUMAN BEINGS: WHEN I TRAMPLE ON THE DIGNITY OF ANOTHER, I TRAMPLE ON MY OWN. — POPE FRANCIS

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

WAYS OF OPENING UP

As economic costs rise, prime minister's meeting with chief ministers signals cautious shift in lockdown strategy

ON MONDAY, PRIME Minister Narendra Modi held another video conference with state chief ministers to discuss the ongoing battle against the coronavirus, and to plan ahead. This, the fourth such interaction, was held amid growing signals of the government preparing for a gradual easing of the national lockdown as economic concerns begin to loom larger — with the prime minister himself noting that "we have to give importance to the economy as well as continue the fight against COVID-19". This signals a cautious shift in strategy. As the lockdown has progressed, with the disruption in economic activity intensifying, its toll becoming more visible, the stark debate of lives vs livelihoods is being steadily recast and reframed. Among several state governments too, as the fiscal strain is beginning to show, the mood seems to be shifting from unqualified support for a nation-wide lockdown to a push towards a gradual and calibrated exit.

To be sure, as states are on different infection trajectories, each one will have to firm up separate plans for easing and exit. States with lesser number of infections, or with a better grip over the spread of the virus, are likely to press for easing more restrictions so as to allow economic activities to resume, at least in the green zones. Yet even the modalities of the exit from the lockdown in the green zones will have to be worked out carefully. One thing is clear: Both Centre and states must work together to figure out ways to allow economic activities to resume while minimising the health fallout — even as any such joint strategy will need to take into account, and make space for, the differences across states and the varied emphases of state governments. As the number of cases mounts - during a meeting of state chief secretaries, the central government projected the number of infected in the country to reach 65,000 cases by May 15 — and the capacity of the healthcare system of the country comes under more strain, coordinated action at various levels of government will become more urgent to ensure continued expansion of the institutional capacity — setting up of containment wards, production of ventilators, ensuring adequacy of testing equipment.

During the course of the interaction on Monday, the prime minister also spoke of the need to usher in reforms that touch the lives of common citizens. While fiscal and monetary support will be needed to nurse the economy back to health, given the collapse in economic activities, the need to push through contentious but required factor market reforms that address the long-standing structural issues that plague the economy, cannot be overstated.

WITH DIGNITY

Video clip from Agra quarantine facility drives home urgent need for training and monitoring healthcare workers

A VIDEO CLIP that went viral on social media on Sunday framed the indignities meted out to people at a quarantine facility in Agra. The 25-second clip shows a PPE-clad (personal protective equipment) person tossing water bottles and food packets outside a locked gate and dozens of people stretching out their hands through the iron grille for these essential supplies. The woman shooting the video can be heard saying that she was brought to the centre for a check-up, which wasn't conducted. Agra's district magistrate has confirmed that this shocking incident "happened a few days ago", ordered an inquiry into the incident, and claimed that "everything is fine now". However, the visuals raise serious questions over the methods used in dealing with the pandemic in a city, which, only two weeks ago, was being lauded by the Centre for developing a model strategy against the novel coronavirus.

On April 5, the Centre issued guidelines for quarantine facilities in the country: "Disposable and pre-packed food needs to be served to quarantined people and they are to be kept on separate beds with distance of 1-2 metres with no bed facing opposite to each other". The document emphasises a humane approach towards quarantined people, including providing them "counselling and psycho-social support". It also talks of providing "regular training to all the staff" at the quarantine centres. The incident at the Agra facility reflects poorly on the sensitivity, and also the training and monitoring, of healthcare workers at such facilities. The according of human dignity is a constitutional necessity — in several verdicts, the Supreme Court has underlined that the assurance of dignity is central to the Right to Life under Article 21. But a compassionate approach in the country's battle against the coronavirus is also needed to enhance the prospects of its success — humiliation of the kind meted out at the Agra facility could deter people from self-reporting their symptoms or cooperating with officials involved in contact tracing efforts.

UP's Additional Chief Secretary (home) Awanish Kumar Awasthi has described the Agra incident as an "isolated" one. However, last month, health officials in Bareilly provoked outrage when they sprayed disinfectants on migrants returning from Delhi. The state government would do well to recognise that most of the country's successes so far in the battle against the pandemic have come when administrations and officials have reached out to the people — to give a helping hand and also to enlist their trust and support.

A HOME IN ART

Zarina Hashmi's works reflected on the idea of displacement and exile — the leitmotif of the times

ZARINA HASHMI WAS just 10 when India was partitioned. Growing up in Aligarh, where her father taught history at the university, the Partition was an intense experience as the violence unleashed by it set in motion a gigantic process of displacement. Her immediate family had stayed on in India. But in the late 1950s, just after Zarina had completed her degree in Mathematics and got married, they migrated to Pakistan. It marked the beginning of exile for Zarina, who travelled with her diplomat husband on his postings. She studied print-making with Stanley William Hayter in Paris and learnt woodblock printing in Japan. In the Sixties, she returned to India and worked with papermakers in Jaipur. In the early '70s, she left for New York, which became her home in exile for over four decades.

Home, exile and memory were the tropes she leaned on to create art. Over the years, the idea of home became an abstraction for her, appearing in her minimalist works as mere lines on grey sheets, or in shades of black and white. The idea of home became inseparable from the idea of exile, both embedded in memory. Her works recall the deep humanist anguish and sense of loss that distinguish Partition literature and art. In fact, she spoke about discovering a home in literature, especially Urdu poetry, and that seems to have provided a reference point to her exile.

Since displacement and exile are a leitmotif for the 20th century, Zarina's work has a certain universality, which also makes her more than just a reflective chronicler of the Partition. An unusual 1991 bronze work, "I went on a journey III", is of a crumbling house without windows on four wheels, each pointed in different directions, indicating the impossibility of movement. In the atlas of her world, exile seems to have been the only permanent state of existence, especially when the nation state and its cities are experienced as cartographic prisons, something that eloquently showed in her works.

Costly to bypass MPC framework

In unpredictable times, RBI should preserve its inflation credibility. This requires making MPC more enduring

URJIT R PATEL

FOLLOWING THE GLOBAL financial crisis of 2007-08, India, like many other countries, embarked on a stimulus. The pump-priming did not end too well. By 2013, India crossed or approached double-digit figures in inflation and the national fiscal deficit, in addition to looming bad loans. In summer 2013, when the Federal Reserve indicated a possible reversal of its ultra-accommodative policy, macroeconomic parameters for India were so weak that it got caught up in the "taper tantrum" and experienced external sector fragility. While fiscal excesses and financial sector stress remain issues today, India has improved significantly on at least one dimension — namely, inflation — which has also stabilised the external sector.

How was this beneficial progress achieved? Starting in September 2013, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) initiated an effort to build credibility with domestic savers and international investors on maintaining inflation at prudent levels. Three years later, the RBI Act was amended to put in place a flexible inflation targeting framework. A Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), comprising of RBI representatives and external members appointed by the Government of India, was enjoined with the legal mandate of managing the policy (repo) rate so as to keep consumer price inflation at a target level of 4 per cent, while keeping in mind economic growth.

By objective measures, the MPC framework until recently worked well. It lent transparency and democratic accountability to the process of interest-rate setting; combined with efforts on managing food inflation, it has brought inflation closer to the target; it has contributed to tempering household inflation expectations and has kept borrowing costs at reasonable levels in spite of the high level of government borrowing and several other distortions. Indeed, rating agencies and multilateral institutions repeatedly mention the MPC and the inflation targeting framework as a landmark structural reform towards sound macroeconomic management.

Yet, since last year, somewhat inexplicably, a series of monetary actions by the RBI have left the MPC's decision on the policy rate partly redundant, diluted the accountable process of monetary decision-making, and put at stake the sanctity of the framework.

Let me elaborate.

> The MPC framework until recently worked rather well. It lent transparency and democratic accountability to the process of interest-rate setting; combined with efforts on managing food inflation, it has brought inflation closer to the target; it has contributed to tempering household inflation expectations; and, it has kept borrowing costs in the economy at reasonable levels in spite of the high level of government borrowing and several other distortions. Indeed, rating agencies and multilateral institutions repeatedly mention the MPC and the inflation targeting framework as a landmark structural reform towards sound macroeconomic management.

With a stated intention to improve the transmission of monetary policy to households and corporations, the RBI has pumped unprecedented levels of money (close to Rs 7 trillion) into the banking system. It has done so mostly by purchasing government bonds but partly also by purchasing dollars. Given impaired financial sector balance-sheets, transmission to economic growth has been at best muted; liquidity is no silver bullet to durably address financial sector stress. The primary effect of excessive liquidity has, instead, been to monetise the government's expenditures and keep its borrowing costs low. With its declared aim not being met satisfactorily, the RBI has doubled down on liquidity supply, with the same outcome.

An important casualty has been the MPC framework.

At times, even when the MPC has kept the policy rate unchanged, the RBI has injected yet more liquidity to move medium-term interest rates down; the two actions have been noted to be in direct contradiction of each other. If the objective is to move medium-term rates, why not build consensus within the MPC to cut the policy rate more aggressively and communicate the rationale?

Further, given the enormous liquidity glut, every night banks park liquidity with the RBI at a (reverse repo) rate lower than the policy rate and which is not set by the MPC; nevertheless, this rate used to be changed only as part of the MPC Resolution. Lately, the RBI has moved this rate progressively lower than the policy rate; recently, it has done so outside of the MPC meeting cycle and not as part of the MPC Resolution. There are straightforward tools in liquidity management to ensure that in surplus conditions also, the central bank transacts with banks at the policy rate - technically, by switching from "deficit" to "floor" system of liquidity management. Such a switch is routinely adopted by central banks when they provide excess liquidity; the RBI has chosen not to do so.

The net effect is that market interest rates are being increasingly controlled by the RBI rather than the MPC. Indeed, there is a proposal that the rate at which the RBI absorbs liquidity be still lower, likely divorced from the policy rate set by the MPC. The spirit of the MPC framework enshrined in the RBI Act is being violated. It is unclear how the MPC can be expected to satisfy its legal mandate if what it seeks to achieve via setting of the policy rate is in conflict with, or compromised by, the RBI's liquidity management.

These developments have the potential to pose risks for India's macroeconomic stability going forward: The implicit monetisation of fiscal expenditures through government bond purchases by the RBI in the secondary market has postponed the recognition of the untenable fiscal reality. The delay has meant the government has had limited policy space since the onset of COVID.

Supply-chain disruptions due to measures taken to contain the pandemic raise the possibility of cost-push inflationary pressures, especially given the excessively easy fiscal and monetary conditions. This can abruptly raise economy-wide borrowing rates, inflict losses on banks, and imperil financial stability.

If the gains in inflation credibility built by the MPC framework are dissipated by ineffective policies and operations, both household and investor expectations for inflation could unhinge. It is disturbing that while referring to desirable levels of inflation, analysts appear to have already stopped referring to MPCs mandated target inflation rate of 4 per cent and the focus has instead shifted to the upper tolerance limit of 6 per cent. Worse, it could instigate turmoil in the external sector. Excessively low bank deposit rates may induce some non-resident deposits to exit India.

In a highly unpredictable time such as this, the RBI should preserve its inflation credibility. This requires making the institution of MPC more enduring, not bypassing it. Decision on monetary policy actions based on voting by committee members, provision of inflation and growth forecasts in the resolution statement, and coordination of rate-setting and liquidity management, need to be adhered to.

Even in desperate times, we need to follow due processes and justify with substance the extraordinary actions so that commitment is provided as to how these actions will be unwound when necessary.

The writer is former Governor, Reserve Bank of India

AN UNPARALLELED ACT

It was theatre that defined and consumed Usha Ganguly

NEELAM MANSINGH CHOWDHRY

DO WE CELEBRATE a life or mourn a death is a question that assails me as I reflect on the passing away of theatre director Usha Ganguly in Kolkata last Thursday. Her plays, among them *Court Martial* and *Rudali*, enacted by her theatre group Rangkarmee, founded in 1976, conveyed her single minded obsession and commitment to her work that can loosely be classified as representational realism.

Within this vast framework, she injected flashes of experimentation, taking risks with dramatic flourishes that added a freshness and verve to her work. With her distinct way of dealing with social narratives, storytelling, and structures, Usha effectively and dramatically wove all these strands together. Her theatrical generosity was visible in the way she accepted and admired other directors' way of working with alternative sensibilities.

Usha was a friend and confidant of decades, someone I deeply admired. An enduring memory I have of her — one that is indicative of her indomitable and infectious spirit — dates back to our trip to Lahore in 2005 for a theatre festival organised by Madeeha Gauhar of the Ajoka Theatre group. As part of our hosts' *mehman nawazi*, we were taken to the famous food street in Lahore's Anarkali Bazaar. The atmosphere in this delightful labyrinth of streets was carnivalesque. Anarkali Bazaar's food street is well known for its varied cuisine, but more so for the fact that it is part of the city's centuries-old red light area. We were enjoying the festive atmosphere and eating the delicious food when, without notice, Usha jumped up and, with vivacious abandonment, began dancing as if she were in a trance. She swirled, gyrated and pirouetted, singing all the while along with the minstrels. One of the Pakistani actors accompanying us somewhat inappropriately remarked that, "aaj badnam basti mai ek sirfzaidi ka nacch dekha" (in a disreputable locality a respectable women is dancing), but he did so with secret awe and admiration. Other patrons at surrounding tables and cafes too were captivated by Usha's unprompted performance and gravitated towards her clapping, singing and swaying with the music.

> Usha's capacity to spread herself across so many varied theatrical milieus and coalesce them into a cohesive whole was indeed a rare talent. What impressed me the most was that her work cut through multiple social strata, appealing to a varied range of people from students to farmers and, of course, the cognoscenti.

Whenever we met, our conversation was never personal and began and ended with the new plays she was scripting, the shows she was participating in, and the pressures of operating a big theatre company. It was theatre that defined and consumed her. Once she told me that she managed 38 shows in a month - one in the morning in a school courtyard followed by another in a bank, and yet another in the evening in a posh Kolkata theatre. The latter were part of the folklore and history of Bengali theatre, where stalwarts including Nati Binodini, Utpal Dutt and Shambhu Mitra had performed. Usha's capacity to spread herself across so many theatrical milieus and coalesce them into a cohesive whole was a rare talent. What impressed me the most was that her work cut through multiple social strata.

I always looked upon Usha as a movement, comprising students and theatre professionals. Even stragglers were welcome and some ended up gradually becoming an intrinsic part of her journey as a director. Compassion and the ability to make an immediate connect with her players and audiences were the intangible thread that kept her theatre company together for so many years.

The most amazing and mysterious improbable, however, was that most of her productions were in Hindi. Her working in Hindi in Kolkata, the heart of Bengali theatre, and being wholly accepted there, has never ceased to amaze me.

But I do have one regret.

Whenever we met, she always expressed a desire for me to direct her. She often said that she was even willing to come for an extended period to Chandigarh to make this happen. Regretfully, I allowed that moment to pass, thereby missing the opportunity to work with an actor with incredible talent, charisma and an insatiable urge to explore, investigate and tread new theatrical paths.

The writer is a Sangeet Natak Akademi winner and professor emeritus at Panjab University

INDIAN EXPRESS

APRIL 28, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

ASSAM SOS

THE ASSAM GOVERNMENT has sent an urgent message to the Centre for supply of essential petroleum products, including aviation fuel, as it has failed to lift the available stock at the Gauhati refinery following workers' non-cooperation. The state government said air services to Assam and other parts of the north-eastern region were going to be affected as aviation fuel with the Indian Oil Corporation was not allowed to reach the Borjhar airport for refuelling aircraft. The message said, besides this, transport services, including transportation of essential commodities for the region, had been seriously affected.

AMERICAN WARNING

PRESIDENT CARTER'S NATIONAL security adviser, Brzezinski, said that he would not rule out another mission or any other option to free the hostages in Iran while still hoping for a peaceful solution. Defence secretary Harold Brown declared that the United States would refuse to engage in any barter for the return of the eight dead men left behind when the rescue mission was aborted. Brzezinski warned Iran: "Do not scoff at American power. Do not scoff at American reach. It is in Iran's interest to resolve it peacefully. It is our preference to resolve it peacefully if possible, but the United States is prepared to do all that is necessary to obtain the release".

EMBASSY SIEGE ENDS

THE 61-DAY HOSTAGE standoff at the Dominican Republic embassy ended when a Cuban jetliner left Bogota for Havana with an estimated 15 leftist guerillas and an undetermined number of hostage diplomats abroad. Several diplomats apparently were freed just before the Soviet-built Ilyushin jet departed at 8.20 am local time, approximately 90 minutes after the guerillas left the embassy with their hostages in two Red Cross buses. It was believed that five diplomats were on the flight and that 11 were freed. Those freed were taken from the plane and driven in a speeding bus across the airfield.

THE IDEAS PAGE

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"A country's public image is ultimately earned by its efforts, rather than empty talk or lies. Chinese people should keep calm and maintain confidence and patience."

— GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Let's fill up the tank

Sharp fall in oil prices is opportunity for Union government to increase stockpile, achieve a degree of energy security

SHASHI THAROOR

C R Sasikumar

OIL PRICES CONTINUE to decline globally, with crude hitting multi-decade lows, as global demand evaporates. Earlier last week, in unprecedented price action, the near-month contract for West Texas Intermediate (WTI) sweet crude oil dropped to -$37.63 a bbl. A negative price has never before been registered for a major global crude oil benchmark. The extreme price action is a signal that there is a global oil glut with few places to store oil. Global oil markets have been severely disrupted. While WTI does not feature in India's basket, Brent Crude Oil, which does, is trading around $25 a barrel, the lowest in 18 years.

The economic consequences of COVID-19 are going to be drastic for India and the world. It is hard to say what kind of recovery the economy and markets will undergo when this is over, though there is much glib talk of it being "V", "U" or "L" shaped. But whichever letter of the alphabet wins the race, one opportunity is clear: Even as India suffers from a lockdown, a silver lining for future recovery and reconstruction is the price of oil.

Given India's growth aspirations and lack of self-sustaining oil production, a sharp reduction in oil prices is a bonanza. Normally, reduced oil prices would translate into surplus for the consumers and a fiscal bonus for the government through increased tax collections. However, given that the demand for petrol has slumped, those gains will not accrue right away. But India should look at this as an opportunity to strengthen its energy security by buying oil and filling up our Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR). Considering that India was the third-largest consumer of energy in the world, as well as the third-largest importer of oil in 2018, we are particularly vulnerable to oil price fluctuations. The dramatic reduction in oil prices offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity for us to fill up our reserves in an extremely cost-effective way.

Currently, we do maintain an emergency stockpile of oil reserves: Under the existing Strategic Petroleum Reserves programme, India claims to have 87 days of reserves. Out of this, refiners maintain 65 days of oil storage and the rest of the reserves are held in underground salt caverns maintained by Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited (ISPRL). The existing and planned capacity for the underground reserves is 10 and 12 days of import cover for crude oil respectively.

There are a couple of issues to be highlighted here. First, capacity does not directly translate into utilisation, which is partly because oil is an expensive commodity most days of the year. In 2019, the average closing price of a barrel of crude was $57.05. In 2018, it was $64.90, and in 2017, U$50.84. Of the existing 10 days of capacity, only about 50 per cent is utilised.

The second issue is with regard to the refinery holdings. In India, the SPR arrangement between the oil refineries and the Union or state governments is not specified well, though most of the refineries that hold stock are publicly-owned companies. In fact, a breakdown of which refineries hold SPR and in what form (crude or refined) or information about where they are located is not publicly available.

The first step, therefore, should be to introduce transparency and accountability in relation to the SPR. The procedures, protocols and facts about Indian SPR storage require greater public and parliamentary scrutiny, just like India's other strategic reserves (for instance, foreign exchange). For this, there should be timely and reliable dissemination of information. Instead, it is now shrouded in secrecy.

The lack of transparency around our SPR holdings is compounded by the ambiguity surrounding the mobilisation process. SPR reserves are meant to be used in emergencies, where time is likely to be of the essence. The SPR mobilisation process could be made more efficient by laying out designated roles for different agencies to avoid redundancies in times of crisis. There should be role and process clarity regarding SPR mobilisation. For instance, to begin with, there should be clarity on who (or which agency) can define an emergency and therefore order a mobilisation.

Further, in order to mitigate risks better, India should look to diversify its SPR holdings. Diversification can be based on geographical location (storing oil either domestically or abroad), storage location (underground or overground) and product type (oil can be held in either crude or refined form). Storage and transportation costs could be saved by diversifying geographically. With oil dirt-cheap, if we can purchase more than we can store in our existing facilities, why not go abroad for more storage space?

For instance, one option could be to operationalise, modernise, and add to the oil tanking facilities at Trincomalee in Sri Lanka. Another opportunity would be to enter into a strategic partnership with Oman (Ras Markaz) for oil storage, which would also help India avoid the potential bottleneck of the straits of Hormuz. However, since many of these places could potentially be vulnerable to geopolitical risks, only a small part of India's overall SPR strategy should involve storing abroad.

> To mitigate risks better, India should look to diversify its SPR holdings. Diversification can be based on geographical location (storing oil either domestically or abroad), storage location (underground or overground) and product type (oil can be held in either crude or refined form). Storage and transportation costs could be saved by diversifying geographically. With oil dirt-cheap, if we can purchase more than we can store in our existing facilities, why not go abroad for more storage space?

Diversification could also be in the form of ownership — either publicly owned through ISPRL or by private oil companies, such as ADNOC of Abu Dhabi, which could fill up the SPR when prices are low and take advantage of price arbitrage. This could achieve a degree of price stability and reduce the cost for India to buy such large quantities of oil. The only requirement for this to work is to have a clear contract with the private companies about the mandatory minimum level of stock that they should preserve for use in emergency times. The Takshashila Institution, an independent think-tank, has raised several of these issues in a recent white paper. It serves as a timely reminder for policymakers to take action.

To ensure that SPR and oil security remain a priority in the near future, ISPRL should consider filling up the SPR reserves right now — and each time the price of Brent crude oil falls below a certain price, say $35 per barrel. Buying crude on the forward market is another option, but oil prices are in "contango" — which means that, contrary to normal times, future prices are higher than spot prices.

Energy is and will remain vital to India's aspirations for growth. The sharp fall in the price of oil presents an opportunity for the Union government to increase its SPR stockpile and achieve a degree of energy security. This is especially important at this time when every rupee needs to be conserved to get back on a positive economic track and lift the most vulnerable segments of our population.

The message is clear: While prices are low, we should fill up our reserve tanks and rent space abroad. The oil will come in handy when prices have gone up — and more importantly, when we need it.

Tharoor is the Lok Sabha MP from Thiruvananthapuram. The author is grateful for substantive and technical inputs from Anupam Manur and Rohan Seth, researchers at the Takshashila Institution

Proving the pessimists right

Corona crisis delivers yet another blow to wilting political fortunes of Pak PM

RAJA MANDALA

BY C RAJA MOHAN

REPORTS FROM Pakistan claiming that premier Imran Khan's days are numbered are probably just speculation, informed or otherwise. But there is no doubt that the shine has long gone from Khan's government that came to power less than two years ago amid much popular expectations. His indecisive leadership in handling the corona crisis may have tipped the scales for Pakistan's deep state that has always treated the civilian leaders with disdain.

Khan's critics call him the "selected" prime minister. His party did emerge as the largest single party in the July 2018 elections. The army was widely seen as stitching up a majority for Khan in the national assembly and installing him as the prime minister. That does not, however, take away the high personal standing of Khan.

Khan is a genuine national hero in Pakistan. He has much good will around the world, including India. His call to cleanse Pakistan of corruption did find some resonance amongst the Pakistani people. The partnership between Khan and the army seemed a mutually beneficial one. Khan needed the army's support to come to power. And the army could do with a credible face that could confront and delegitimise the old political class, and create the basis for an overhaul of the Pakistani system.

Optimists hoped that Khan's special stature with the people would give him room to bargain with the army that has steadily gained ground against the elected leaders in recent decades. Pessimists, however, were convinced that Khan will find it hard to find wiggle room, and that he will be dumped once his political utility is over.

Historical record certainly rests with the pessimists. There was a time, a little over three decades ago, when Benazir Bhutto came to power after the death of General Zia-ul-Haq in a mysterious air crash in 1988. The arrangements that followed the decade-long rule of General Zia were described as a "troika"- an elected PM, a civilian president and the army chief.

In the years before and after General Pervez Musharraf's military rule (1999-2008), the civilians struggled to hold their own against the army. Nawaz Sharif, who rose to prominence with the support of the army, sought to create space for himself on all the three occasions he became the PM. But each time, the deep state humiliated him.

The civilian president Ghulam Ishaq Khan sacked him in 1993 and Musharraf's coup ousted him in 1999. The current army chief, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, got the judiciary to remove him from the office on charges of corruption in 2017.

Asif Ali Zardari, who led the Pakistan Peoples Party to power in the 2008 general elections, tried to assert himself when the US forces raided Abbottabad to kill Osama Bin Laden much to the embarrassment of the Pakistan army. But that weak attempt failed and Zardari is now serving out a 15-year prison sentence.

By the time Khan came to power, the PM's office had, largely, been hollowed out. None of Benazir's successors have had much say in running national security policies. They are the preserve of the army. The defence ministry was always run by the army. The key foreign policy accounts — India, Afghanistan, China, Saudi Arabia, and the US — were closely supervised by the army. And, as difficult domestic security challenges became serious in the last decade, the army took direct control of law and order in many areas.

After Musharraf, the army learnt to run the system without being formally in charge. That left the civilian leaders with the job of running a competent front office for the army and managing the economy with some effectiveness. Khan, who inherited an economy that was in a bad state, has struggled to put it back on the rails. And the army chief was quickly inserted into the economic decision-making space.

Because Khan had no power, does not mean that he would be spared of criticism. His government has been widely blamed for the "weak responses" of Islamabad to the Balakot attack by the Indian Air Force in February 2019, the Modi government's move to change the constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir last August, and Delhi's pressure campaign at the international Financial Action Task Force that is monitoring Pakistan's commitments to curb terrorism on its soil.

The corona crisis was, arguably, an opportunity for Khan to rise to the occasion and demonstrate his leadership in tackling a grave challenge to Pakistan's economy and security. But, as Khan fumbled, the army moved to quickly sideline him and take charge. This does not necessarily mean General Bajwa has decided that Khan is no longer a useful political asset. That might happen only when the General concludes that the post-corona geopolitical environment, including in Afghanistan, has turned more conducive to direct rule by the Army.

The writer is director, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore and contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express

A judicious balance

Judiciary has set an example on how to combine social distancing and work

PAYAL CHAWLA

WHILE THE lockdown has been extended, it is unlikely to continue indefinitely. A phase-wise opening of the economy is anticipated. But the crisis is neither over nor is the virus disappearing. Not until a vaccine is developed and accessible to all.

The lockdown by the government was timely to ensure the virus's containment. It also bought the government time to organise the much-needed resources to fight the virus. Be it importing or manufacturing PPE kits, including N95 masks, coveralls, goggles, nitrile gloves, ventilators; enhancing testing facilities, permitting door-to-door sample pick-up services by private laboratories or innovations such as AgVa portable ventilators and splinter ventilators — it is all happening and is much-needed. But this is not the sound of the pandemic ending. It is only the beginning.

Despite this reality, it is also not possible to have an indefinite lockdown. The economy simply cannot sustain it. And the success of how we keep this virus at bay will depend on how we balance two antithetical interests — social distancing on the one hand and the continuance of work on the other.

In a surprising but pleasant move, it is the judiciary that has shown us how this antipodal balance can be achieved. No, not by way of a judgment, but by swiftly adapting itself to technology. Long perceived as the monolith reluctant to change, the judiciary has acted with uncharacteristic speed and led by example.

In the run-up to the days of the lockdown, the courts had realised that its corridors would be a breeding ground for the pandemic. They quickly organised themselves to hear only matters of extreme urgency. As the lockdown ensued, courts adopted various technology platforms such as WhatsApp calls, video-mobile, Zoom.us and video conferencing to hear matters. Listing of matters could be done over a phone call to the designated registrar. "While the system is yet not perfect, but it is indeed heartening that even in these difficult times, justice can be accessed," says Jaideep Gupta, senior advocate, who has appeared before the Supreme Court (SC) in hearings conducted through WhatsApp and video-mobile calls. Things are not perfect and there is much to be done. But in all fairness, the system is evolving every day.

Taking cognisance of a letter sent by Vikas Singh, the former president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court held that technology "has enabled courts to enhance quality and effectiveness of the administration of justice". The apex court authorised high courts to take such measures as necessary for their continued functioning through video-conferencing and adopt the requisite modalities suitable for their transition, and also for district courts in each state to adopt this model. The SC observed that while "scaling down of conventional operations within the precincts of courts, was a necessity to reduce transmission of the virus", at the same time "access to justice is fundamental to preserve the rule of law".

In recent days, the SC began hearing what it categorised as "short matters", which include tenancy disputes, compensation matters, transfer petitions, bail and anticipatory bail matters. The Delhi High Court and certain tribunals have also further streamlined the process of e-filing and listing of urgent matters.

In the days to come, we anticipate and hope that the courts will expand on the as-yet-unwritten definition of "urgency" to permit access to virtual courts to a larger number of litigants. Also, judges must seriously consider operating from their home offices. The process of notarisation and oath commissioners must be dispensed with and filings need to be permitted under the attestation of the concerned lawyer. Such a model is already in place in certain courts such as the Madras High Court. The courts should also consider dispensing with oral hearings, except in urgent or exceptional matters and decide matters based on pleadings/written submissions, at the very least in those cases where both parties are agreeable and regarding more routine matters. Justice D Y Chandrachud has propagated the institutionalisation of technology even after the lockdown is lifted.

It is hoped that this transition in the judicial model will be an inspiration to other sectors. Of course, there will be sectors, such as manufacturing and construction, where the work-from-home model will not be possible and yet their commencement may be imminent to keep the economy afloat. For them, strict protocols for social distancing, to the extent possible, are already underway and will need to be strictly enforced. The ban on large gatherings, including religious and social ones, must continue.

However, sectors where work-from-home is an option, such as the services and educational sectors, must take a leaf out of the judiciary's book and mandatorily continue to operate within the confines of the lockdown guidelines. They must recognise their unique place in this moment of crisis and use their skills in confinement — not merely as a duty but as an obligation — for the development and continuance of the economy, while allowing the necessary space for the social distancing of those who have no option but to leave the safety of their homes.

Chawla is a practising advocate and founder of JusContractus, a Delhi-based law firm

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DON'T BICKER

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Finding the cure' (IE, April 27). While the tearing hurry for discovering a vaccine to COVID-19 is understandable, countries must be wary of ignoring the standard testing protocol. Also, misgivings among countries since the time the pandemic broke out need to be set aside. This is not a time to blame each other and widen faultlines. Cooperatioon, especially in terms of scientific and medical research, is the need of the hour. Finding a cure and making it available worldwide is imperative.

Vijai Pant, *Hempur*

PROTECT DOCTORS

THIS REFERS TO the article 'Safety of healers' (IE, April, 27). Mindless attacks on doctors and paramedical staff by COVID patients and their families are beyond comprehension. The government has done the right thing by stipulating seven years of imprisonment for offenders. Doctors and medical staff on the frontline deserve respect. Such attacks happened in the past as well. Malpractice by a few doctors and profiteering by some private hospitals should not cast a shadow over the entire medical fraternity. Those enganging in violence against healthcare professionals must be held to account.

Bholey Bhardwaj, *Mumbai*

PROVIDE RELIEF

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Humanitarian emergency' (IE, April 27). Providing universal free rations and doorstep delivery of foodgrains in tamperproof packets are both within the capacity of the state machinery. This will ensure nobody is deprived of food in the ongoing crisis. The government can use technological solutions like geotagging to ensure accountability on the ground. Universalising this scheme would make the pilferage in the supply chain redundant, as the abundance of supply with the people would mean no demand for the grade of foodgrain distributed by the PDS in the black market.

Sudip Kumar Dey, *Kolkata*

INTERNET RIGHTS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'I tweet therefore I'm heard' (IE, April 27). The digital divide makes the state distant from those who need it. Education is the best tool for social and economic mobility. During the lockdown, middle and upper-class child are getting online education but the poor who need it the most are excluded. Likewise in health, the Aarogya Setu app and Google maps provide information regarding corona but those without internet find it difficult to access this basic information.

Suchak D Patel, *Ahmedabad*

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301.

INDIAN-AMERICAN MADE US ENVOY TO OECD

US President Donald Trump has nominated senior Indian-American diplomat Manisha Singh as America's next envoy to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. Singh, 49, is currently Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs at the State Department

PANDEMIC WATCH

Imran Khan

PAKISTAN

Imran changes media team amid criticism

Islamabad: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday changed his media team for the second time since coming to power in 2018 amid mounting criticism of his government for failing to address the key issues of the country. Prime Minister Khan appointed Senator Shibli Faraz as the new information minister of the country. Faraz is the son of eminent Urdu poet late Ahmad Faraz. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) for information and broadcasting Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan was also removed and was replaced by former military spokesman Lt Gen (retired) Asim Saleem Bajwa.

THAILAND

Lowest number of cases in past six weeks

Bangkok: Thai health authorities on Monday reported the country's lowest number of new cases of the coronavirus in more than six weeks, as the government considers easing some restrictions imposed to control the spread of the virus. Nine new confirmed cases were reported, the smallest single-day increase since March 14. Thailand has confirmed 2,931 cases, including 52 deaths. Officials said a proposal will be submitted to the Cabinet on Tuesday for easing restrictions.

SINGAPORE

Tally crosses 14,000 after 799 new cases

Singapore: Singapore's coronavirus tally reached 14,423 on Monday after 799 new cases were reported with majority of them being foreign workers, including Indians, residing in dormitories, which have emerged as the hotspots for the transmission of the disease in the country. Releasing the latest figures, the Ministry of Health said that the vast majority of cases are work permit holders residing in foreign workers' dormitories. Fourteen of the latest cases are Singaporeans or permanent residents (foreigners).

Boris back at work, warns against relaxing virus restrictions too soon

ADITI KHANNA
LONDON, APRIL 27

PRIME MINISTER Boris Johnson on Monday warned against relaxing the coronavirus restrictions too soon as the country was still facing a moment of "maximum risk", in his first remarks since returning to work after contracting the disease that has killed over 20,000 in the UK.

While declaring that the tide is being turned on the coronavirus pandemic in the country, he urged the British public to contain their impatience against the crippling lockdown.

"We are beginning to turn the tide…There are real signs we are passing through the peak," said Johnson, in an upbeat address to the nation on the steps of 10 Downing Street.

"I ask you to contain your impatience because I believe now we are coming to the end of the first phase of this conflict," he said, promising "maximum transparency" on the decisions to be taken as the UK enters phase two of the Covid-19 fightback, which will involve one by one firing up the "economic engines" of the UK economy.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson speaks outside 10 Downing Street on Monday. *Reuters*

Johnson said the UK has "so far collectively shielded our National Health Service" and "flattened the peak" - but he could not yet say when or which restrictions would be lifted.

Johnson wanted to send out a clear message that this is the moment of "maximum risk", making it imperative that no steps can be taken to ease up restrictions that could lead to a risk of a "second spike" of infections.

And comparing the fight to someone being attacked, he noted: "If this virus were a physical assailant, an unexpected and invisible mugger – which I can tell you from personal experience, it is – then this is the moment when we have begun together to wrestle it to the floor.

"And so it follows that this is the moment of opportunity, this is the moment when we can press home our advantage, it is also the moment of maximum risk.

"I know there will be many people looking at our apparent success, and beginning to wonder whether now is the time to go easy on those social distancing measures…I entirely share your urgency, it's the government's urgency and yet we must also recognise the risk of a second spike." **PTI**

U.K. SAYS IT WON'T EXTEND E.U. TALKS DESPITE OUTBREAK

THE BRITISH govt insisted Monday it won't extend the deadline for striking a post-Brexit deal with the European Union, despite the upheaval due to Covid

CABINET OFFICE Minister Michael Gove said 'it is still entirely possible' to seal an agreement by the December 31 deadline

THE EU is considerably more pessimistic. Michel Barnier, chief negotiator, called a round of talks last week 'disappointing'

BARNIER ACCUSED the UK of refusing to 'engage seriously' on fundamental issues. Trade, security and a host of other issues have to be covered

In US, conflicting messages stoke confusion in states

NEW YORK TIMES
NEW YORK, APRIL 27

AS SEVERAL states moved ahead with plans to tentatively restart their economies, many Americans were confronted with yet another new calculation on Monday. After weeks of being told to simply stay home, they would now have to decide how to make sense of conflicting messages from local politicians and public health officials.

Dr Deborah L Birx, the White House coronavirus response coordinator, cautioned that Americans should expect some form of social-distancing guidelines to continue for months.

"Social distancing will be with us through the summer," she said Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press." Her comments came after Vice President Mike Pence suggested that the coronavirus epidemic would be under control by the end of May.

"I think by Memorial Day Weekend we will largely have this coronavirus epidemic behind us," he said late last week.

While states and localities face different challenges across the country, the pressure to ease restrictions will only grow as the economic pain deepens, restlessness grows and spring turns to summer.

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo of New York laid out a broad outline on Sunday for a gradual restart of the state that would allow some "low risk" businesses upstate to reopen as soon as mid-May.

China targets US response

Beijing: China is fighting back against calls for an investigation into its role in the global pandemic, citing faults with the US response to the outbreak and calling for Washington itself to admit error.

"We hope the U.S. will respond to people's concern from the U.S. and the international community. Perhaps the World Health Organisation can also be invited in to assist in the investigation," Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said on Monday.

The Xinhua News Agency also ran a commentary accusing US Republicans of seeking to gain political points by attacking China. **AP**

CHINA TO FOCUS ON HIGH-RISK GROUPS

Medical workers collect swabs from high school teachers for tests at a school in Hubei province, China, on Monday. China will focus testing on high-risk groups such as people from infected areas or with symptoms, a top official said. *Reuters*

Iran plans to reopen mosques in areas free of coronavirus

REUTERS
LONDON, APRIL 27

IRAN PLANS to reopen mosques in parts of the country that have been consistently free of the coronavirus outbreak as restrictions on Iranians gradually ease, President Hassan Rouhani said on Sunday.

Iran, one of the Middle Eastern countries hardest hit by the pandemic, will be divided up into white, yellow and red regions based on the number of infections and deaths, Rouhani said, according to the presidency's website.

Activities in each region will be restricted accordingly, so an area that has been consistently free of infections or deaths will be labelled white and mosques could be reopened and Friday prayers resumed, Rouhani said.

He said the label given to any region in the Islamic Republic could change and he did not specify when the colour-coding programme would come into force.

Deputy Health Minister Iraj Harirchi said in an interview with state TV on Sunday that 116 counties in the country could be considered white at the moment and 134 yellow.

Iranians have returned to shops, bazaars and parks over the past week as the country eases coronavirus restrictions, with the daily increase in the death toll below 100 since April 14. The toll rose by 60 over the past 24 hours to 5,710.

Anti-shutdown protesters in San Diego. *AP*

NZ has won battle against transmission: PM

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WELLINGTON, APRIL 27

PRIME MINISTER Jacinda Ardern on Monday claimed New Zealand had scored a significant victory against the spread of the coronavirus, as the country began a phased exit from lockdown.

"There is no widespread, undetected community transmission in New Zealand," Ardern declared. "We have won that battle." After nearly five weeks at the maximum Level Four restrictions — with only essential services operating — the country will move to Level Three late on Monday.

That will allow some businesses, takeaway food outlets and schools to reopen.

Jacinda Ardern

But Ardern warned there was no certainty about when all transmission can be eliminated, allowing a return to normal life.

Everyone wants to "bring back the social contact that we all miss", she said, "but to do it confidently we need to move slowly and we need to move cautiously."

"I will not risk the gains we've made in the health of New Zealanders. So if we need to remain at Level Three, we will."

The easing of restrictions came as New Zealand, a nation of five million people, reported only one new case of COVID-19 in the past 24 hours, taking the total to 1,122 with 19 deaths.

EXPLAINED

Strict curbs, widespread testing credited for progress

STRICT MEASURES implemented early into the pandemic's timeline played a key role in helping New Zealand contain the outbreak. The country began quarantining all incoming travellers starting March 14 (then among the toughest measures). It began locking down on March 23 and implemented its toughest "level 4" lockdown on March 25. Experts said widespread tenting also played a key role, with the country reportedly having one of the highest testing rates per capita in the world.

Pelosi endorses Joe Biden for president

AGENCIES
NEW YORK, APRIL 27

NANCY PELOSI, the speaker of the House, endorsed Joseph R Biden Jr on Monday as the Democratic Party continued to coalesce around its presumptive presidential nominee.

In a video released on Monday morning, Pelosi drew on her years of working with Biden behind the scenes on legislation when he was Obama's vice president, describing Biden as "a leader with the humility to seek expertise and science, and the confidence to act upon it."

Meanwhile, Indian-American Congress- woman Pramila Jayapal endorsed Biden's 2020 White House bid, saying he is a dedicated public servant with the ability to unite Americans. Jayapal is the first Indian-American woman to be elected to the US House of Representatives.

"He (Trump) and his administration have demonstrated repeatedly — and most recently in their disastrous response to COVID-19 — an inability to govern, make tough decisions, speak the truth and unite the country in common purpose. Any progress toward a better future requires defeating him this November," she said.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi

PRIMARIES: THE DEMOCRATS

OTHER TOP GLOBAL STORIES

He found one of Stalin's mass graves, now he's in jail

ANDREW HIGGINS
SANDARMOKH (RUSSIA), APRIL 27

THE DAY began, like many others in her childhood years, with hours of tramping through an insect-infested forest with the family dog while her eccentric father, Yuri Dmitriev, wandered off to hunt in vain for corpses buried among the trees.

On that day more than 20 years ago, however, Dmitriev, an amateur but very determined historian, finally found the gruesome prize he had long been searching for — burial mounds containing the remains of political prisoners executed by Stalin's secret police.

"Everything started here," said Dmitriev's 35-year-old daughter, Katerina Klodt, during a recent visit to the forest at Sandarmokh. "My dad's work has clearly made some people very uncomfortable."

The forest at Sandarmokh in Russia where thousands of victims of Stalin were executed. *NYT*

Dmitriev is now in jail, awaiting trial on what his family, friends and supporters dismiss as blatantly fabricated charges of pedophilia, an accusation that has frequently been used to discredit and silence voices the Russian authorities do not like.

An official in Karelia complained last year that the jailed historian's life work — the commemoration of Stalin's victims at Sandarmokh forest — had created an "unfounded sense of guilt" and been used by "foreign powers for propaganda against Russia."

In pursuit of a guilt-free version of Russia's past, men in camouflage uniforms visited the same forest last summer to do their own digging, uncovering the remains of 16 corpses that they hope will prove that the killing at Sandarmokh was, at least in part, the work of foreigners, not just the Soviet secret police.

Sponsored by the Military Historical Society, a state-funded organisation notorious for its nationalist take on Russian history, the diggers were looking for evidence to support a highly contested theory put forward by two Karelia historians. They argue that the thousands of people buried at Sandarmokh are not all Stalin's victims but also include Soviet soldiers executed by the Finnish Army during World War II.

With the 75th anniversary on May 9 of the Red Army's victory over Nazi Germany and its allies like Finland, the suffering inflicted on Russia by its own rulers has become an unwanted distraction from memories of the country's immense wartime sacrifice against foreign enemies.

President Vladimir V Putin and his officials do not deny the horrors of the Stalin era, but intent on convincing Russians their country is besieged by external foes, want them focused on crimes committed by foreign aggressors.

Dmitriev, meanwhile, has been sitting in a pretrial detention centre in Petrozavodsk, the capital of Karelia. Late last month, a municipal court — sealed off to visitors because of the coronavirus — extended his detention for another three months.

Klodt said she had no doubt about her father's innocence and blamed his travails on his stubborn insistence that all victims be remembered, not just those killed by foreigners. Sitting on a bench near a tree pinned with an American flag commemorating a man from San Francisco executed in Stalin's Great Terror, she pointed with disgust at a snow-covered hole dug by the Military Historical Society as part of its search for Russians killed by Finland.

"I am so tired of this circus," she said. "I don't understand what they are trying to prove." **NYT**

Rumours of Kim Jong Un health untrue: South Korea

ASSOCIATED PRESS
SEOUL, APRIL 27

SOUTH KOREA'S government has dismissed rumours that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is in fragile condition, as speculation about his health intensifies amid the North's silence on his whereabouts.

There are concerns, particularly in Seoul and Washington, about what would happen to North Korea and its nuclear programme if anything had actually happened to Kim.

For South Korea and the US, Kim's absence would mean the departure of a man they've dealt with over the past two years to try to achieve the North's denuclearisation, though talks have stalled in recent months.

Unification Minister Kim Yeon-chul told a closed-door forum in Seoul that South Korea has "enough intelligence to confidently say that there are no unusual developments" in rival North Korea that would back up speculation about Kim's health, his ministry said on Monday.

On Monday, North Korea's state TV broadcast said Kim sent his thanks to workers and officials at a tourist resort construction site on the east coast.

The unification minister's comments are a reiteration of earlier South Korean statements that Kim Jong Un appeared to be handling state affairs normally and that no unusual activities had been detected in North Korea.

GOLD	RUPEE	OIL	SILVER
₹41,705	₹76.25	$26.15	₹38,100

Note: Spot gold markets shut due to lockdown in major states. *Indian basket as on March 19, 2020

SENSEX: 31,743.08 ▲ 415.86 **NIFTY:** 9,282.30 ▼ 127.90 **NIKKEI:** 19,783.22 ▲ 521.22 **HANG SENG:** 24,280.14 ▲ 448.81 **FTSE:** 5,850.44 ▲ 98.21 **DAX:** 10,606.92 ▲ 270.83

International market data till 1900 IST

DIVESTMENT WATCH
OIL MARKETING COMPANIES

Sliding crude prices, struggling global energy cos deter govt's BPCL stake sale plan

SUNNY VERMA & KARUNJIT SINGH
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

EXPLAINED

Adequate valuation may take time

THE CENTRE'S plans to sell its entire stake in BPCL are expected to face hurdles as the unprecedented slump in global crude prices may deter international interest in the state-owned energy major in the near term, as per a senior government official and sources in the energy industry. The government may have to wait longer for bids at an attractive valuation as major international energy players are battling the financial stress caused by disruption in the crude oil market.

Industry sources said many refining companies globally have filed for bankruptcies recently, creating a negative spiral for energy assets. Since January, a total of 10 companies, including Whiting Petroleum and Echo Energy Partners in the US, have filed for bankruptcies. As prices of crude fall, domestic oil marketing companies (OMCs) such as Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) typically tend to benefit from it. But this is the first time that despite oil prices hitting new lows, OMCs had to shut their refining plants and lower their capacity due to the nationwide coronavirus-induced lockdown. This is the first time that refineries in India are running at low capacity of 25-30 per cent, industry sources said. Shutting down of refineries is a big challenge as costs of restarting them rises significantly.

On April 12, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies agreed to reduce production by 9.7 million barrels per day (bpd) in May and June — nearly 10 per cent of global supply. However, even this could not stop further fall in oil prices due to the demand collapse, with the International Energy Agency projecting demand to shrink by 29 million bpd this month alone. This has created a tough scenario for BPCL's stake sale to go through at an attractive price in medium term.

An analyst at a leading brokerage firm, who wished to remain anonymous, said "the government would likely want to wait for the valuation to improve," adding that major global upstream players, such as Saudi Aramco, who were thought to be interested in purchasing a stake in BPCL would have to cut capital expenditure and acquisition targets, given the impact on their businesses from the fall in crude prices.

Steep fall in demand means the valuation for BPCL would remain depressed for some time. "Even when demand recovers, I don't think refining margin will recover soon," he said.

SLUMP IN crude oil prices may create fresh challenges for privatisation of BPCL as refineries and oil companies across the world are facing financial stress.

Despite the fall in oil prices, leading analysts expect demand to decline over the medium term. Also, many refineries globally are filing for bankruptcies as low prices make exploration of oil and gas unviable. Given that BPCL will be a sort of a model case of privatisation, the government may have to wait to get adequate valuation for its stake sale.

Shares of BPCL fell nearly 55 per cent from the high of Rs 549 on November 21, 2019 to Rs 253 on March 23, 2020 as the lockdown led to a crash in stock markets. It has since recovered to the Rs 350-level per share, still 36 per cent lower from November highs.

The Centre, last month, invited expressions of interest (EOIs) from interested parties with a net worth of at least $10 billion for the strategic sale of BPCL — one of the largest oil marketing and oil refining companies in India with a refining capacity of 38.3 million metric tonnes per annum or about 15 per cent of the country's total refining capacity.

Divestment of the government's 52.98 per cent equity stake in BPCL forms a key part of its Rs 2.1-lakh crore disinvestment target for FY21. Finance Ministry officials did not reply to queries seeking comment for this story.

"The valuation for BPCL will be lower due to the current situation and this has partially been reflected in the stock prices. Earnings for BPCL in Q1 would definitely be impacted by lower marketing volumes," said Mayur Matani, equity analyst at ICICI securities, adding that once economic activity recovers, BPCL would do well on the marketing front as its marketing margins would benefit from low crude oil prices.

"Even if crude oil prices touch $30-$40 per barrel, it is a very good scenario for the marketing business (once demand picks up). So, in the near term, there will be some pain. Nobody who is willing to invest right now is actually looking for results in the next six months," he said.

'NO DECISION ON MONETISING PART OF THE FISCAL DEFICIT'

Going beyond 3.5% fiscal deficit target 'unavoidable': RBI Governor

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

RESERVE BANK Governor Shaktikanta Das on Monday said meeting the fiscal deficit target in FY21 is going to be challenging and the central bank has not yet made a decision on its monetisation. While several economists and former top officials of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have suggested the government overshooting its fiscal deficit target due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant lockdown, Das said that going beyond the 3.5 per cent target for fiscal deficit for the current fiscal year becomes "unavoidable".

"We will deal with it keeping in view the operational realities, the need to preserve the strength of the RBI's balance sheet, and most importantly, the goal of macroeconomic stability, our primary mandate," Das said in an interview to Cogencis.

When asked whether the RBI would monetise part of the fiscal deficit through private placement of bonds or issuance of any specific pandemic bonds, Das said, "We have not taken any view on the subject. When the time comes, we will take a judicious and balanced view, keeping in mind the parameters I set out earlier."

> **"The mantra of coming out of the *chakravyuh* has to also be thought through very carefully and be factored in when entering the *chakravyuh*"**
>
> **SHAKTIKANTA DAS**
> GOVERNOR, RBI

Talking about steps to combat the impact of the pandemic, Das pointed out that it was as important to make plans for exiting the extraordinary measures that are undertaken in response to a situation. "The mantra of coming out of the 'chakravyuh' has to also be thought through very carefully and be factored in when entering the 'chakravyuh'," he said, citing the hard-to-exit battle formation from the epic Mahabharata.

Das also allayed fears that the central bank would resort to withdrawing accommodation quickly. "To ensure the markets don't read me differently and think that RBI is going on a tightening mode, let me make it very clear: the exit has to be well-timed, when you are confident that things are working and near normal," he said.

He said the RBI is ready to take more measures to improve flow of credit to small non-bank financial companies (NBFC) and microfinance institutions (MFIs). The challenge of ensuring flows to mid- and small-sized NBFCs and MFIs is still there, the RBI chief said. "That is an issue that is very much on our table. We will take further measures as necessary to address that challenge."

The Reserve Bank had fine-tuned the targeted long-term repo operations (TLTRO) and announced 'TLTRO 2.0' aimed at directing funds to NBFCs through banks. However, the first TLTRO 2.0 saw demand for just about half of Rs 25,000 crore on offer. The RBI was aware that the demand may not be as good as other repo operations, despite some additional incentives, Das said. "We had a sense that the response may not be as good as TLTRO despite the additional incentives such as exemption from being reckoned as adjusted net bank credit."

"The auction results convey a telling message, which is that the banks are not willing to take on credit risk in their balance sheets beyond a point. We are reviewing the whole situation and based on that, we would decide on our approach," he said.

Ind-Ra: FY21 growth to hit 29-yr low of 1.9%, slip into negative territory if lockdown extended

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

INDIA RATINGS & Research (Ind-Ra) has cut the country's FY21 growth forecast to a 29-year low of 1.9 per cent from 3.6 per cent estimated earlier, assuming that the partial lockdown to counter the COVID-19 pandemic will continue till mid-May. In case the lockdown continues beyond that, Ind-Ra then expects gross domestic product (GDP) growth to slip into negative territory, contracting to a 41-year low of 2.1 per cent.

"... if the lockdown continues beyond mid-May 2020 and a gradual recovery takes root only from end-June 2020, GDP growth may slip further to negative 2.1 per cent, lowest in the last 41 years and only the sixth instance of contraction since FY52," Sunil Kumar Sinha, principal economist, Ind-Ra said. Many global and domestic research agencies have already cut India's growth forecast for this fiscal. The IMF expects the Indian economy to grow 1.9 per cent, while the World Bank has made a projection of 1.5-2.8 per cent.

On the fiscal front, lower tax and non-tax revenue due to lockdown and slowdown, along with the need to provide fiscal stimulus, will "destabilise the fiscal arithmetic of both union and state governments", Ind-Ra said. "Even without any significant fiscal stimulus, Ind-Ra expects fiscal deficit of the government to escalate to 4.4 per cent of GDP in FY21 (FY21 Budget Estimate: 3.5 per cent of GDP) and a stimulus package of INR4 trillion would push it to 6.0 per cent of GDP."

The agency, in its report, said that GDP may come back to the January-March FY20 level only by October-December FY21, due to resumption of normal economic activities during July-September FY21 and festive demand during October-December FY21.

On the recent measures taken by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) that included a cut in repo rate by 75 basis points (bps), cut in the cash reserve ratio by 100 bps to 3 per cent and a targeted long term repo operations (TLTRO) worth Rs 1 lakh crore, it said the steps were focussed on easing the tight monetary conditions building up in the economy but the financial market reacted otherwise.

"... the spread between the repo rate and capital market instruments, such as benchmark G-sec, AAA corporate bond, commercial paper of NBFCs, which were either flat or declining since the beginning of March 2020, started inching up after 13 March 2020. The spread rose abruptly in the range of 50-80 bps on the next day of RBI's Monetary Policy statement and have remained thereabout since then. It is due to this kind of risk aversion that deployment of TLTRO funds so far has largely been into the bonds issued by public sector entities and large corporates," Sinha said.

Given the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, the agency expects the risk aversion to continue, saying that the funds available under TLTRO 2.0 may also not flow to the targeted segment i.e. investment-grade bonds, commercial papers, and non-convertible debentures of NBFCs, with at least 50 per cent of the total amount going to small and mid-sized NBFCs and microfinance institutions.

Crisil lowers growth forecast by half to 1.8%

Mumbai: Rating agency Crisil on Monday nearly halved its GDP forecast for India to 1.8 per cent for 2020-21 while projecting total losses of Rs 10 lakh crore or Rs 7,000 per person due to "disastrous" lockdowns to control COVID-19 pandemic. The agency had a GDP growth estimate of 6 per cent for FY21, which was last revised to 3.5 per cent in late March. **PTI**

'VC inflows tumble to just $2.2 bn in Mar quarter'

Hit by coronavirus-driven uncertainties, VC investments in the country plunged to a meagre $2.2 billion in the March 2020 quarter, a KPMG report said

SLOW DEAL FLOW IN Q2: While the pipeline for deals is expected to remain relatively robust, deal flow is expected to become very slow, particularly in the second quarter

ROBUST INVESTMENTS OVER LONG TERM: Though venture capital (VC) investments may be challenging in the short term, it is expected to remain robust over the longer term

Major fundraises recorded in March quarter:
- $400 million by Byju's
- $110 million by Unacademy
- $150 million by mobility firm Bounce

Likely hot sectors of venture capitalists:
- Education technology, or edutech
- Auto-tech
- Health-tech related to fitness

Challenges for cross-border VC investment:
- Travel and movement restrictions
- Inability to conduct in-person due diligence and face-to-face meetings

International firms and corporates, *which contribute a major amount of VC to India, waited in the March quarter to see how COVID-19 affects them, thus deferring many VC deals*

$6 billion: *Inflow of VC investments into the country — a record — during the December 2019 quarter*

Source: KPMG/PTI

FPIs continue to be sellers as markets rise on liquidity boost to MFs

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

FOREIGN PORTFOLIO investors (FPIs) continued to remain sellers in domestic equity markets, even as the benchmarks rose on Monday on the back of the Reserve Bank's announcement of a Rs 50,000-crore liquidity support for mutual funds and in anticipation of a fiscal package. The Sensex ended the day 415.86 points, or 1.33 per cent, higher to close at 31,743.08. The Nifty50 closed 127.9 points, or 1.40 per cent, higher to settle at 9,282.3.

According to provisional data, FPIs sold equities worth $120.3 million. Domestic institutional investors (DIIs) bought equities worth $150.02 million. They were large sellers in March, pulling out $8.3 billion. In April, FPIs have continued to sell but the extent of selling has reduced and the net outflow till April 27 is at $408.6 million. This, some market experts said, may suggest that FPIs still believe in India's consumption story.

Other experts believe the continued selling in emerging markets is because investors want to pile up on cash due to the on-going pandemic. The F&O segment recorded a turnover of Rs 7.15 lakh crore against the six-month average of Rs 14.42 lakh crore. The cash market turnover stood at Rs 45,740.8 crore against the six-month average of Rs 39,134 crore.

Meanwhile, the rupee appreciated by 21 paise to close at 76.25 against the US dollar on Monday, tracking positive domestic equities and weakening of the American currency in the overseas market. **FE WITH PTI**

Asset quality could come under stress, says IndusInd Bank MD-CEO

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

> **The bank's net profit fell 16% year-on-year to ₹302 crore in the March quarter as a result of higher provisions**

INDUSIND BANK could see asset quality deteriorate as a result of the disruption to the economy after the COVID-19 outbreak, MD and CEO Sumant Kathpalia said Monday. Speaking to the media in his first post-results interaction, Kathpalia indicated the private sector lender's credit costs could go up to as much as 180 basis points (bps); in a business-as-usual scenario, the lender's credit cost would have ranged around 120-130 bps, he said.

Kathpalia said offering projections on loan growth, at this juncture, would be incorrect. "I somehow think all of us are in this situation of perfecting our balance sheet and making sure our collections are on track and our portfolio remains as an asset. We are not seeing any high delinquencies."

IndusInd Bank's net profit fell 16 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) to Rs 302 crore in the March quarter as a result of higher provisions. Its net interest income increased 45 per cent y-o-y to Rs 3,231 crore and net interest margin increased 10 bps sequentially to 4.25 per cent. Total advances grew 11 per cent y-o-y to Rs 2.07 lakh crore as on March 31, 2020 and total deposits rose 4 per cent y-o-y to Rs 2.02 lakh crore. **FE**

Q4 RESULTS

HDFC Life profit slips 14.3% to ₹312 cr

Mumbai: HDFC Life on Monday reported a 14.3 per cent decline in its net profit at Rs 311.71 crore in the March quarter due to fall in investment income. In the year ago period, the private sector life insurer had reported a profit after tax of Rs 364.01 crore.

The investment income fell to negative Rs 10,229.92 crore in the quarter as against an income of Rs 3,755.6 crore in the year-ago period. For FY20, profit remained flat at Rs 1,295 crore. HDFC Life's new business premium grew 15 per cent to Rs 17,239 crore in FY20 as against Rs 14,971 crore in 2018-19.

"We believe that insurance remains a multi-decade opportunity with significant potential," the company's managing director and chief executive officer Vibha Padalkar said. **PTI**

Adani Power reports loss of ₹1,312.86 crore

New Delhi: Adani Power Monday reported a consolidated net loss of Rs 1,312.86 crore for the quarter ended March 31, mainly due higher operating cost.

The company had posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 634.64 crore in the year-ago quarter, Adani Power said in a BSE filing. Its total income slipped to Rs 6,327.57 crore in the quarter from Rs 8,077.89 crore in the year-ago period. Total expenses in March quarter stood at Rs 7,980.17 crore as compared to Rs 8,162.01 crore in same period of 2018-19.

An official said that the loss is mainly due to rise in operational costs in the quarter and entire fiscal. The company's consolidated net loss stood at Rs 2,274.77 crore in 2019-20 compared to Rs 984.40 crore loss in 2018-19. **PTI**

US WTI crude plunges 18%, Brent hovers near $20 a barrel

REUTERS
NEW YORK, APRIL 27

BRENT CRUDE hovered around $20 a barrel and US crude plunged 18 per cent on Monday, driven lower by skittish investors fleeing the US benchmark due to lack of available storage to deal with a COVID-19-induced collapse in demand. Even as governments worldwide are taking tentative steps to lower restriction on movement to help economies rebound, fuel demand remains weak.

US West Texas Intermediate crude futures fell $3.14, or 18.5 per cent, to $13.80 a barrel by 1742 GMT. Brent crude slid $1.40, or 6.5 per cent, to $20.04 a barrel.

Meanwhile, global stock markets rose on Monday as investors cheered news that more countries and US states were looking to ease lockdowns and the Bank of Japan expanded its stimulus program, while the price of oil continued to crumble as storage runs out.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 1.21 per cent to 24,063.47, the S&P 500 gained 1.36 per cent to reach 2,875.31 and the Nasdaq Composite added or 1.2 per cent to settle at 8,738.51. The pan-European STOXX 600 index rose 1.77 per cent and MSCI's gauge of stocks across the globe gained 1.64 per cent.

A guard stands next to a money changer in Tokyo, Japan. The Bank of Japan, on Monday, announced expansion of its stimulus program. *Reuters*

SP Infra to sell 317-MW solar assets to KKR for ₹1,554 crore

New Delhi: Infrastructure developer Shapoorji Pallonji Infrastructure Capital (SP Infra) on Monday announced a Rs 1,554-crore deal with global investment firm KKR to sell five solar assets with a total capacity of 317 megawatts.

According to a company statement portfolio comprises 169 megawatts (MW) in Maharashtra and 148 MW in Tamil Nadu.

The SP Infra has the signed definitive agreements with KKR, under which the company will sell five operational solar energy assets to KKR for a total consideration of Rs 1,554 crore ($204 million), the company said.

More details of the investment have not been disclosed. The transaction is subject to customary approvals. **PTI**

'UAE tells banks to freeze accounts of NMC founder Shetty, others'

REUTERS
DUBAI, APRIL 27

> **NMC, founded by BR Shetty in the mid-1970s and the largest private healthcare provider in the UAE, was placed into administration this month**

UNITED ARAB Emirates lenders have been told by the central bank to freeze the accounts of NMC Health shareholder BR Shetty and his family, three sources with knowledge of the matter said. NMC, founded by Shetty in the mid-1970s and has become the largest private healthcare provider in the UAE, was placed into administration this month.

Its shares, which NMC plans to delist in London, were suspended after more than halving in value since December, when short-seller Muddy Waters questioned its financial reporting.

The UAE freezing directive, which was issued by the central bank last week, extends to two other NMC shareholders, Khalifa al-Muhairi and Saeed Mohamed Butti Mohamed al-Qebaisi, the sources, who had seen the order, told *Reuters*.

The directive also calls for the freezing of bank accounts of several former executives including ex-CEO Prasanth Manghat and his family, two of sources said.

Sebi reduces filing charges for draft papers, broker turnover fees

Mumbai: In order to help market participants tide over the current situation due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) announced reduction in broker turnover fees.

At the same time, the market regulator also announced reduction in filing fees on offer documents for public issues, rights issues and buyback of shares.

Sebi in its circular on Monday stated that benefits of reduction in broker turnover fees will automatically be passed to the investors as well. The broker turnover fee will be reduced to 50 per cent of the existing fee structure for the period June 2020 to March 2021. **FE**

BRIEFLY

Deferral of GST, GAAR reporting

New Delhi: The Income Tax Department on Monday deferred for the third time the requirement for companies to include in their I-T audit report the details of the GST and GAAR.

Lawsuit against Wipro in US

Washington: A group of five former employees of Wipro in the United States has filed a class action lawsuit accusing the Indian IT company of "employment discrimination" against individuals who are not South Asian and who are not of Indian origin. Wipro, headquartered in Bengaluru, has over 14,000 employees in the US. **PTI**

From my point of view, I'm very pessimistic that the circuit can resume a normal activity. In tennis, you need to travel every week, stay in hotels, go to different countries."

RAFAEL NADAL

Ombudsman wants administrator

Citing 'financial irregularities and wilful contempt' in DDCA, he asks Delhi High Court to supersede Apex Council

NIHAL KOSHIE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

THE DELHI and District Cricket Association's (DDCA) ombudsman Justice (retired) Deepak Verma has asked for the appointment of an administrator to run the conflict-ridden state unit, citing financial irregularities and wilful contempt of orders passed by him and the court.

In his letter to the Delhi High Court, the ombudsman said the administrator, once appointed, would supersede the DDCA's Apex Council. Members of the council and the ombudsman have been at loggerheads over the debarring of four officials and the status of the state cricket unit's standing counsel.

"It is for everyone's information that owing to the current mess and the situation created in DDCA including but not limited to financial irregularities and wilful contempt of Orders passed by Ombudsman and High Court, I have made a reference to the Hon'ble Delhi High Court to intervene in the affairs of DDCA. I have further requested the High Court that present Apex Council be superseded and an Administrator be appointed (whosoever the High Court deems fit)," he wrote.

The state body has been in the news for the wrong reasons after it came to light last week that its general secretary Vinod Tihara has been jailed since mid-March. Tihara was arrested by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence for allegedly violating GST norms and was lodged in a Meerut jail. The constant squabbling between members has resulted in DDCA's legal bills running into crores of rupees, while coaches and other support staff remain unpaid for the previous cricket season. The move by the ombudsman to request the high court to put an administrator in charge comes after weeks of differences between Justice Verma and apex council members, who have accused him of passing 'one-sided orders' and 'failing to recognise resolutions passed by a majority'.

In March, Justice Verma had order a forensic audit of the DDCA for the past five years after a tender worth Rs 6.5 crore was awarded to a contractor for modernisation of the bar, restaurant, member's lounge and cricket library. He took the decision when he received no response from Apex Council members after he asked them to submit all documents related to MSL Jangid JV, the contractor. A director and member of the infrastructure committee visited the given address of the contractor in Noida and claimed that no such company existed at the site. He also informed the ombudsman of the same. "I would like to point out that since the complaints were primarily made against the agreement (between DDCA and MSL Jangid JV), it would be proper to conduct the forensic audit in relation to the said agreement first, followed by detailed and comprehensive audit of the entire DDCA," the ombudsman said in an order dated March 20.

Justice Verma also stated that a copy of his letter to the Delhi High Court, asking for an administrator to be appointed, was submitted to standing counsel Gautam Dutta so that he could present the hard copy to the high court. The court has listed May 1 as the date to consider the ombudsman request.

Dutta said: "The Hon'ble Ombudsman has issued a reference to Hon'ble Chief Justice, Delhi High Court to dissolve the Apex Council and appoint an Administrator at DDCA, given the situation at DDCA. It was listed today before HC. The judge recused. Now to be listed on 1 May before the parent bench which had passed the status quo orders on 13.03.2020."

The continuation of Dutta as the standing counsel has been a bone of contention as the Apex Council had removed him from his post earlier this month and claimed it to be a majority decision.

Members debarred

However, on April 15, the ombudsman debarred four members of the Apex Council - Apurv Jain, Nithin Gupta, Alok Mittal and joint secretary Rajan Manchanda - from administrative and financial work or taking any decisions related to DDCA. The ombudsman also stated that "Mr Gautam Dutta shall continue to perform his functions as DDCA standing counsel at least till the time the complaints pending before me attain finality." Verma added that the "resolution to remove the standing counsel was unlawful as the persons who have presented and approved the resolution are facing a disciplinary inquiry before me".

Manchanda said that he would knock on the door of the court to stop the appointment of an administrator. "The ombudsman has been interfering in the day-to-day affairs of the Apex Council and the DDCA, which is not acceptable. We will challenge his decision to ask for an administrator. At the same time, we are ready to co-operate with any inquiry the ombudsman wants to conduct but if he wants us to submit any papers, then I request him to wait till the lockdown ends as all relevant documents are at the DDCA office," Manchanda said.

If HC appoints an administrator, it won't be the first time the DDCA is headed by a former judge. In 2016, Justice Mukul Mudgal was appointed as observer and a year later Justice Vikramajit Sen took over as administrator.

For several years, DDCA has never been far from scandals and squabbles. The above picture was taken during a protest against the then DDCA administrators in 2009. *File*

Akmal deserves his three-year ban, reckons former great Abbas

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
KOLKATA, APRIL 27

FORMER PAKISTAN greats have little sympathy for Umar Akmal following the latter's three-year ban from all forms of cricket on corruption charges. Pakistan legend Zaheer Abbas tore into Akmal for his tendency to "misbehave" and his failure to report corrupt approaches despite being a senior cricketer.

"How can you say he is a great talent when he isn't following the rules? If you aren't following the rules, then you aren't a great player. Great players always follow the rules. Sachin Tendulkar, for example. If you aren't following rules, you are doubtful about your career," Abbas told *The Indian Express*.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Monday banned Akmal for not reporting spot-fixing offers ahead of this year's Pakistan Super League (PSL). "Umar Akmal handed three-year ban from all cricket by Chairman of the Disciplinary Panel Mr Justice (retired) Fazal-e-Miran Chauhan," PCB said in a tweet. He was provisionally suspended on February 20.

The former Pakistan captain also opined that in all likelihood Akmal wouldn't be playing for Pakistan again. "I think his international career is all but over. He deserved the punishment," he said.

"He (Akmal) wasn't a junior player. He was playing for Pakistan for a long time. He must have been told by the PCB about the ICC Anti-Corruption rules many times – what to do when a corrupt approach is made. But he was ignoring it. PCB got to know that somebody (a corruptor) was trying to get hold of Umar. Later on he confessed, but it was too late," Abbas said.

The PCB formally charged Akmal with two breaches of its Anti-Corruption code for two unrelated incidents on March 20. The charges come under Article 2.4.4 of the Board's Anti-Corruption Code, which deal with the failure to disclose (without delay) "full details of any approaches or invitations received by the Participant to engage in Corrupt Conduct" to the PCB's Vigilance and Security Department.

At a hearing at the National Cricket Academy, he represented himself, while the PCB was represented by lawyer Taffazul Rizvi.

Umar Akmal has featured in 16 Tests, 84 T20s, and 121 ODIs for Pakistan.

Akmal's career has been littered with disciplinary issues – including public criticism of former Pakistan head coach Mickey Arthur – for which he received fines and suspensions. But this is for the first time that the middle-order batsman has been sanctioned for breaching the Anti-Corruption code. In 2018, however, Akmal told Samaa TV that he had been offered $200,000 by bookmakers to leave alone two deliveries during Pakistan's 2015 World Cup opener against India. "... every match I play against India, they offer me money to make some excuse and opt out of the game," he had said.

Stormy petrel

Akmal is a case of a talent gone awry. "From the very beginning he used to misbehave. But when I was the Pakistan team's chief batting consultant during a tour to Dhaka some years ago, he didn't show any misbehaviour in front of me," Abbas said.

Somehow, corruption code breaches keep surfacing in Pakistan cricket. From Saleem Malik to Umar Akmal, it's a long list; Pakistani cricketers banned for corruption. "The PCB does have a robust anti-corruption programme. Akmal was caught because PCB was keeping an eye on him. But if Pakistan were stricter on those players who started match-fixing, I think this (corruption) would have gone a long time ago," he remarked, without taking names.

CROSSWORD 4103

ACROSS

1 Prejudiced legal system? (4,3)
4 Possibly evict a smelly cat (5)
7 Don't work for nothing (4)
8 Extinct animal is around in changed form (8)
10 Pipe bursts each summer (10)
12 Subject about right for a mundane circle (6)
13 Consents, but will be a long time coming round again (6)
15 She's possibly recalled in a famous children's story (10)
18 Keep up support (8)
19 Vocal comeback in the choir (4)
20 He may be spotted laughing (5)
21 Report of big air crash (7)

DOWN

1 Pack a quarter in of the best (5)
2 Official who looks very sour when put out (8)
3 A matter of some gravity (6)
4 She must step in line to succeed on stage (6,4)
5 Farm product from a co-operative allotment (4)
6 Sailors about to obtain objectives (7)
9 It's as rapid a variety as a houseplant enthusiast may desire (10)
11 Salesman fortified with liquor is superseded (8)
12 Ruth and I are upset about politician making a success (7)
14 He may go to pot (6)
16 Mother is upset over our love affair? (5)
17 Kind of apple tree (4))

Solutions Crossword 4102: Across: 1 Joint action, 9 Dialect, 10 Arena, 11 Lead, 12 Complied, 14 Spirit, 16 Tongue, 18 Eighteen, 19 Scum, 22 Train, 23 Saracen, 24 Penetration. **Down:** 2 Omaha, 3 Noel, 4 Author, 5 Teaspoon, 6 Opening, 7 Adolescents, 8 Daydreaming, 13 Distance, 15 Ingrate, 17 Geyser, 20 Cacao, 21 Grit.

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis

CALVIN & HOBBES by Bill Watterson

MARVIN by Tom Armstrong

DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)
Today's social and romantic planetary pattern is one to be welcomed and enjoyed, so do the sensible thing and make love and friendship your highest priorities. In fact, it's a day which favours everyone with a poetic outlook on the world. If you stick to your normal rut you'll miss out.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)
Something marvellous is about to happen. Partners, loved ones and colleagues, in fact anyone you're involved with very closely, will change their minds. They may even come out with it and say that you were right all along. Give it a few more days.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)
Take the initiative, especially at work. You may find that news which has been held up will now arrive, if not today then certainly by the end of the week. When it does appear, you'll be able to clarify your options. Mind you, too many choices could be the last thing you need now.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)
If the current working pattern of your life does not live up to expectations, or if you do not feel that you are being adequately rewarded, it's because you are not drawing on your personal skills. Do something about it. And if someone else has the best ideas then listen carefully.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)
The Moon encourages you to deal with business, especially anything in which other people are closely involved. The only trouble is that it also heightens your imagination while reducing your grasp of the facts. You may turn this to your advantage.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)
At the moment, you should listen to what partners are saying. You may have to be a mind-reader to pick up the full significance of their words and thoughts, and at the very least you'll be forced to read between the lines. But, then, that's the best way to pick up the messages that have passed partners by.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)
There's a chance that you may remain trapped in an emotional rut or oblivious to the many unique opportunities which are beginning to present themselves. Your best approach today should be to tackle routine chores, clearing the decks for the future.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)
There seems to be reasonable scope for pleasure today. The implication is that even the dullest activity can be livened up if only you would change your attitudes. There's also a chance to improve relationships with children and younger family members.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)
Sometimes life can be surprisingly logical. For the next few days you will get nowhere unless you start at the beginning, then deal with the middle, and finish at the end. In other words, if you do things out of their proper order you may waste your time.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)
You have a few days in which to think, talk and ponder the future. The mood of the moment is rather poetic, so you may concentrate on conveying meaning rather than listing the facts. After all, what you really want is for partners to actually understand you.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)
Your stars are nicely adventurous and certainly very hopeful. Perhaps you can leave all dull and boring matters for next week and exploit every opportunity to socialise, travel and expand your spiritual horizons. The only trouble could be caused by rising costs, so just keep an eye on your commitments and don't promise more than you can afford.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)
Soon you will hold most of the trump cards. For now, your hand is not very much stronger than partners', which means that you cannot afford to squander your opportunities or waste your many talents. By tomorrow time will have moved on and you might have missed your chance — for another month.

JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

He will have true glory who ___ it. - Livy (8)

DGWEE
AFIMSS
AHTIS
ELUXDP

SOLUTION: WEDGE, SAITH, MASSIF, DUPLEX
Answer: He will have true glory who **despises it**. - Livy

SUDOKU 4193

Difficulty Level 2s
Instructions
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Difficulty Level
1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius

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

SOLUTION SUDOKU 4192

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

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