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on Sunday



THE HINDU GROUP

# All it took was a microscopic organism to make us more human.

A virus has locked us down in a new world. One where we no longer haggle with the vegetable vendor, because we know he needs the money more than we do.

Today, we respect healthcare professionals, people in uniforms, and delivery agents, leaving no occasion to thank them.

We insist that our house helps stay home and take care of themselves, we make sure they are cared for.

Aged parents do not have to wait for our weekly phone calls, because it happens almost twice every day.

We have, by all means, become more human. This pandemic has changed us, for, we have developed new habits. If these are not the habits worth keeping, then what are?

THE HINDU

Mail us about the one new habit that made you happy this lockdown at [keepthehabit@thehindu.co.in](mailto:keepthehabit@thehindu.co.in) and we will feature it.

#KeepTheHabit



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**STEP**  
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Give free rations to 8 cr. migrants within 15 days, Paswan tells States

page 6



Northern theatre command needs Navy element: General Rawat

page 7



M.P. CM seeks help from his counterparts to tackle migrant rush

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Donald Trump hopeful of COVID-19 vaccine by year-end

page 9

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### NEARBY



Virus claims two more lives in police ranks

MUMBAI  
A 32-year-old assistant police inspector from Mumbai became the eighth – and the youngest – COVID-19 fatality in the State police force on Saturday morning. His was the second COVID-19 death within the force in the last 24 hours, after a 57-year-old assistant sub-inspector died on Friday night. The 32-year-old API was found unconscious in his bathroom and rushed to Sion hospital on Saturday.

REGION ▶ PAGE 3

### BEST employs family members of four victims

MUMBAI  
The Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) undertaking said on Saturday it has provided employment to one family member from each of four of its staff members who died of COVID-19. Six employees have died since the undertaking reported its first case on April 2. General manager Surendrakumar Bagde said family members of the remaining employees will also be inducted soon as per its policy.

REGION ▶ PAGE 3

CLASSIFIEDS ▶ PAGE 4

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# Govt. throws open defence production and coal sectors

Fourth tranche of stimulus focuses on reforms across industry, aviation & space

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Steps to indigenise defence production by banning the import of some weapons and platforms while hiking foreign direct investment into the sector were among the highlights of the fourth tranche of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan package, which seemed to focus more on industry reforms than any sort of economic stimulus.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also announced measures to introduce commercial mining in the coal sector, liberalise the mineral sector, ease airspace restrictions and encourage private involvement in space and atomic energy projects.

### Boost for growth

"Many sectors need policy simplification. Once we decongest sectors, we can also provide the necessary boost for growth and employment," Ms. Sitharaman said, noting that structural reforms were the focus of Saturday's announcements.

"These sectors with these reforms are going to be the new horizon for growth and, therefore, we see great potential in more investments which can be drawn with the

### Breaking down walls

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a set of structural reforms across sectors as a part of the efforts to boost a sagging economy



**COAL**  
Commercial mining on a revenue sharing basis to be introduced. Companies in the private sector will be allowed to carry out exploration



**MINERALS**  
Composite exploration-cum-mining-cum-production regime for minerals to be announced. 500 mining blocks will be auctioned



**DEFENCE**  
A list of weapons/platforms for ban on import will be notified. FDI limit in manufacturing under automatic route to be raised to 74%



**CIVIL AVIATION**  
Restrictions on utilisation of the airspace will be eased so that flying becomes efficient. Now, only 60% of the airspace is freely available



**POWER**  
Power departments/ utilities and distribution companies in U.T.s to be privatised. It will be in line with the tariff policy which is to be announced



**SPACE**  
Privatisation to be introduced. Planetary exploration, outer space travel to be opened to the private sector



**ATOMIC ENERGY**  
Research reactor in PPP mode to be set up for the production of medical isotopes



reforms that we are announcing today. More production can be clearly marked, and certainly it will lead to lot more employment possibilities," she said.

Most industry groups welcomed the package, although some in the space sector said the measures to boost private participation had to go beyond mere intent. However, labour unions across the ideological spectrum, including the RSS-

based Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, slammed the reform measures.

"This was less of a stimulus and more of industrial reforms, which could have been announced at any time. They have used this crisis time to utilise the ordinance route or other ways to fast-track industrial reforms, which would have faced resistance otherwise," said Ernst and Young's chief policy adviser D.K. Srivastava,

who is also a member of the Advisory Council to the 15th Finance Commission.

"The sectors covered are of strategic importance but these policies will be rolled out over a 3-6 month period, and any implication for supporting or reviving the economy as it comes out of lockdown is missing," he said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGES 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12

Put money in the hands of people: Rahul

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Union government should not act as a *sahukar* (money lender) giving loans to people; instead it should help them with direct cash transfer, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi said on Saturday. He appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to rethink on the economic stimulus package.

Interacting with journalists of regional media via videoconference, Mr. Gandhi said that as an Opposition leader, he was trying to put pressure on the government to directly transfer money into people's hands, and warned that an "economic storm" was on its way.

**'Govt. should rethink'**  
He reiterated that exiting the lockdown was not an event or an on-off switch. The government must get out of it "intelligently" so that the economy as well as the vulnerable sections were protected.

"I don't want to make a political statement but I have a serious reservation about the nature of the package that the government has given and I would like it to reconsider," Mr. Gandhi said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6



Fatal journey: Police personnel carrying out rescue operations near Auraiya in Uttar Pradesh on Saturday. ▶ PTI

# 24 migrants die in U.P. road accident

Trailer rams into lorry near Auraiya

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
LUCKNOW

Twenty-four migrant workers were killed and several injured when a trailer truck they were travelling on rammed a lorry near Auraiya in Uttar Pradesh early on Saturday, police said.

An injured woman said they had stopped the vehicle so that they could refresh themselves.

than number plate, laden with cement bags, rammed into it from behind," said the DM. "Maybe the driver fell asleep," he added.

**Most from Jharkhand**  
Of the deceased, 12 were from Jharkhand, four from West Bengal and two each from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Many of the injured were from Madhya Pradesh. Fifteen of the seriously injured were shifted to the Safai Medical College, Auraiya. Archana Srivastava said 24 persons were declared brought dead to hospitals.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

8 WORKERS KILLED IN

MADHYA PRADESH ▶ PAGE 8

## A ticket home



The lucky few: Migrant workers from West Bengal gather at the Girgaum Chowpatty (beach) police station for their roll call on Saturday evening. The workers will be sent back by train to their home State on Sunday. ▶ VIVEK BENDRE

# Gujarat 'super-spreaders' spike national tally

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI/AHMEDABAD

India recorded its highest-ever single day increase of 4,820 COVID-19 cases on Saturday, with Gujarat accounting for 1,057 of them.

The Gujarat numbers spiked after its Health De-

partment announced that 709 "super-spreaders" were found positive, besides the 348 infections recorded in the past 24 hours. Over 6,500 samples of "super-spreaders," including vegetable vendors and grocery shop owners were tested.

According to data from the State Health Departments, India has 90,582 cumulative cases, and 54,531 active ones. The death toll stood at 2,874.

With 30 municipal areas accounting for almost 80% of the country's COVID-19

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

cases, the Union Health Ministry on Saturday asked States and Union Territories to focus not just on containment zones but also buffer zones around them to break the chain of transmission.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

+

# Mumbai crosses 18,000 mark

Cases in city nearing a peak, say civic officials; death toll touches 696

JYOTI SHELAR

MUMBAI

Mumbai reported 884 new cases on Saturday, pushing the number of COVID-19 cases in the city to 18,555. In the second-highest single-day jump, 1,606 cases were recorded in the State, taking the tally to 30,706.

The State also reported the highest number of 67 deaths, taking the fatalities to 1,135. Health officials however said that only 22 of the 67 deaths were recorded in the past 24 hours while the remaining were between April 14 and May 14.

Mumbai reported 41 deaths, pushing the death toll in Maximum City to 696. Civic officials said Mumbai is inching towards a peak now.

"We are definitely nearing a peak now, but cases will stabilise after that," additional municipal commissioner Suresh Kakani told *The Hindu* on Saturday. He said cases will increase in the coming two weeks. There have been many projections on cases and deaths in Mumbai. Sources said that the civic body estimates 30,000 cases by May 31. The city's doubling rate is now 13 days.

The number of deaths in Mumbai too have seen a spike. Of the 696 deaths, nearly 58%, or 406, have been recorded this month. The 41 deaths reported on Saturday include 26 men and 15 women.

To prepare for the expected surge, the civic body has taken over large open spaces and is converting them into



Tracking the pandemic: Civic officials show graphics of COVID-19 status at Pune data collection centre. ▶ JIGNESH MISTRY

quarantine facilities and modular medical facilities. The latest addition is the iconic Wankhede Stadium. So far, NSCI Dome in Worli, Race Course in Mahalaxmi, MMRDA Grounds in Bandra Kurla Complex, and NESCO in Goregaon have been taken over. The civic-run Nair Hospital which was converted

into an exclusive COVID-19 facility commissioned its 750<sup>th</sup> bed on Saturday and the total number of beds will be increased to 1,000 by end of this month.

### New facilities

The two big COVID care facilities at MMRDA Grounds and NESCO will be commis-

sioned soon. The civic body has shortlisted names of a few doctors and two of them will be selected to head the new modular facilities.

The NESCO facility will have 2,600 beds with 300 ICU beds and 50 dialysis machines.

Aaditya Thackeray, MLA from Worli, in a social media post on Saturday said the Goregaon facility will be operational in 48 hours. The facility in BKC will have 1,000 beds initially and another 1,000 will be added in the second phase. It will have 220 high dependency units and many oxygen support beds.

The BKC facility will be handed over to us in a few days," said Mr. Kakani. "We are most likely to open the BKC facility first. Once it is full, we may open the Goregaon facility," he said.

Two of them were part of a group of seven who returned from Kolkata by road

Both tested positive in the TrueNat test and confirmatory reports are awaited.

The fifth positive case was that of a worker from an industrial unit in the State. He has been shifted to a COVID care hospital.

Goa Health Minister Vishwajit Rane meanwhile, said the seven people who had travelled to West Bengal by sea in April, went to deliver river barges to a company in Gopalpur near Kolkata and returned to Goa by road on Friday morning.

Of these seven, three tested positive in a TrueNat test.

However, a confirmatory test showed that only two of them were positive. They will have to undergo another test after 72 hours.

The TrueNat testing kits

use Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) technology, which uses a swab sample from the throat to diagnose the disease.

Others who tested positive include a truck cleaner from Agra, and another man from Sangli.

More tests

"Three of the seven tested positive at Mollem border checkpost on Friday. However, fresh tests will be conducted on all the three patients within 72 hours after one of the swab samples

proved negative at the Goa Medical College and Hospital.

The other four of the se-

ven returnees have been put under institutional quarantine," the Minister said.

The results of 35 people, Mr. Rane added, who came from Thiruvananthapuram by train were reported negative.

"Another batch of 129 out of 323 passengers who arrived from Delhi by another train were being tested currently. Their swabs have been taken and testing is underway. They will be sent to Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Fatorda for quarantine until the results are out," Mr. Rane said.

Two of these passengers have tested positive as per rapid TrueNat tests and their samples have been sent to Goa Medical College and Hospital for confirmation.

Goa had initially reported seven cases which was brought down to zero by April 17. The State remained

COVID-19 free between April 3 and May 14.

On May 14, Goa recorded seven cases in a single day when a family of five, including a one-year-old girl, the family driver and another

# HC allows goods tempo into Matheran

Handcart pullers not available, residents being forced to buy essential items at inflated prices: petition

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Saturday accepted a decision taken by a committee set up by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change permitting a goods tempo to ferry food and other essential items to Matheran hill station, some 80 km from Mumbai.

**Matheran was declared an eco-sensitive zone in 2003 and no vehicles are allowed beyond Dasturi Point, apart from ambulances, the fire brigade and solid waste management vehicles.**

Justice S.J. Kathawalla was hearing a plea filed by former MLA Suresh Narayan Lad, seeking relaxation on vehicular restrictions in Matheran so essential goods could be provided to the residents in view of the lockdown.

The plea sought directions to the Ministry and the Raigad District Collector to relax norms to enable small tempos and trucks to enter the town with essentials. An interim monitoring committee was set up under the chairmanship of Shivaji Daund, Divisional Commissioner, Konkan region, to hear the petition and take appropriate decision. The court was on Saturday informed that the committee had permitted the Municipal Council of Matheran to hire a goods tempo to ferry essential items to the town once a week.



**Tough task:** Usually, goods are transported into Matheran through hand-pulled or horse carts, since it is an eco-sensitive zone. ■ FILE PHOTO

The court, while accepting the recommendation, however, directed the vehicle be deployed thrice a week instead of once. It also

accepted another recommendation of the committee, by which a proposal would be submitted to the Central Railway for approv-

ing goods transport by attaching dedicated goods coaches with the Dasturi Na-ka-Matheran train.

The petition had stated

## Ensure essentials reach tribals amid lockdown'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court has directed the State government and civic authorities to provide essentials to tribals in various districts.

Additional government pleader B.V. Samant told the court on Friday that several measures had been adopted to supply food grains and essential items to the tribal community. He said the process of issuing ration cards to

tribals was also under way.

### Process delayed

However, the petitioner's advocate Vaibhav Bhure argued that this process was delayed as authorities were asking for various documents, which tribals were unable to furnish.

Mr. Samant assured the court that all essential items were reaching each and every member of the tribal

# U.P. Police comes to Mumbai residents' rescue in distress

Multiple agencies come together to deliver medicines

GAREEMA BANGAD

MUMBAI

In two separate incidents since the nationwide lockdown came into effect, the Uttar Pradesh Police have extended help to Mumbai residents, in an effort involving multiple agencies from both the States.

As per the petition, even during normal conditions, vehicular traffic in Matheran was restricted and goods are transported into the town through hand-pulled or horse carts. However, since the lockdown, many of the handcart pullers and horses are not available.

Residents, meanwhile, are buying essential items at inflated prices, many of them being forced to pay ₹250 extra per gas cylinder and ₹10 to ₹15 more per kg for vegetables and fruits, it said.

The court accepted the decision of the committee and disposed of the petition.

Residents are very important for my conditions, but they were not available in the medical stores in Mumbai. I tried to call up the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare helpline, Mumbai emergency services helpline and Uttar Pradesh State helpline, but couldn't find a solution," Mr. Verma said.

**Instagram post to rescue**  
Finally, he put up a post on Instagram on May 10, which caught the eye of RJ Pinky from Varanasi. "RJ Pinky contacted the 112 helpline

The medicines finally reached Mr. Verma on May 14. "We also followed up with him and he sounded much better when I spoke with him on Saturday," Mr. Singh said.

### Not first incident

This is not the first time that the U.P. Police have helped out a Maharashtra native in distress. On May 3, Mandar Patade, a resident of Mumbai, informed them that his mother, who was stuck in Gorakhpur since March 11, was diabetic and urgently needed her medicines. He tagged the U.P. Police and Maharashtra Cabinet Minister Aaditya Thackeray in a tweet, asking for help.

"Mr. Patade's mother was visiting Gorakhpur for a wedding in March and got stuck here due to the lockdown. We asked for the prescription and arranged and delivered the medicines to his mother within four hours. One of our police response vehicles travelled around 50 km to deliver the medicines," Mr. Singh said.

Asim Arun, Additional Director General, 112 Emergency Services, U.P., said, "Extraordinary times call for extraordinary solutions to help the citizens in need. We are grateful to the RPF and Mumbai Police for being a part of the relay."

## Officer who gave Wadhawans travel nod resumes work

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

The IPS officer, who was sent on compulsory leave by the State government for allowing DHFL promoters accused Kapil and Dheeraj Wadhawan, accused in the Yes Bank fraud, to travel during the

lockdown, has resumed work after being exonerated, a senior official said.

The government had last month sent Amitabh Gupta, principal secretary (special), Home Department, on compulsory leave for issuing a letter allowing the Wadha-

wan brothers to travel from Khanda to Mahabaleshwar.

Additional chief secretary, finance, Manoj Saunik had probed the matter. "Mr. Gupta has joined office again. He was exonerated by the panel probing his role," a senior official said on Saturday.

Timings	
SUNDAY, MAY 17	
RISE 06:04	SET 19:07
RISE 02:48	SET 14:49
MONDAY, MAY 18	
RISE 06:03	SET 19:07
RISE 03:23	SET 15:36
TUESDAY, MAY 19	
RISE 06:03	SET 19:08
RISE 03:56	SET 16:24

**Mumbai Weather** max min  
Mumbai Airport 34 28  
Pune 37 25  
Mumbai City 34 28

**Mumbai Today**  
34°C A dry and warm weather with partly cloudy sky to prevail. Humid conditions to increase.

**Mumbai Tomorrow**  
34°C A cloudy sky is likely to persist. A warm and cloudy day. Spell of light rain and thunderstorms to occur.

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The Executive Engineer, President Estate Project (PEP), CPWD, Rashtrapati Bhawan, New Delhi (Phone No: 011-23793470 Email Id: bb.sharma61@gov.in) on behalf of The President of India invites Request for Proposal (RFP) on line bid two-bid system for the following work:

1. RFP No: 08/EE/PEP/2020-21
2. Name of work: Selection of System Integrator for the Design, Development, Implementation and Maintenance of ERP Solution for CPWD. (SH: RFP for Hiring of PMU Consultants for ERP Implementation).
3. Earnest Money: Rs. 16,00,00/-
4. Period of completion: 24 Months
5. Last time and date of submission of bid up to 03:00 PM on 01/06/2020
6. Date of Pre-bid meeting: 3:00 PM on 22/05/2020

The bid forms and other details can be obtained from the website [www.tenderwizard.com/CPWD](http://www.tenderwizard.com/CPWD).

The press notice is also available on [www.eprocure.gov.in](http://www.eprocure.gov.in).

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Divisional Railway Manager (WA), Western Railway , 6th floor, Engg. Deptt, Mumbai Central, Mumbai - 400008 invites E tenders as per details given below				
Sr. No.	Tender Notice No & Date	Work & Location	Approx. Cost of Work in ₹	EMD in ₹
1	BCT/20-21/75 dtd 15/5/2020	Repairs to MCGM ROBs and MCGM FOBs including old staircases on condition basis etc between Churchgate - Khar Section as per IIT report.	₹8,73,70,507.72	₹5,86,900.00
2	BCT/20-21/76 dtd 15/5/2020	Repairs to MCGM ROBs and MCGM FOBs including old staircases on condition basis etc between Santacruz - Dahisar section as per IIT report.	₹6,23,29,213.00	₹4,61,700.00
3	BCT/20-21/77 dtd 15/5/2020	Replacement of bearings of MCGM ROBs and its ancillary work in Churchgate - Khar section as per IIT report	₹4,94,68,517.13	₹3,97,400.00
4	BCT/20-21/78 dtd 15/5/2020	Replacement of bearings of MCGM ROBs and its ancillary work in Santacruz - Dahisar section as per IIT report	₹7,91,94,567.21	₹5,46,000.00
5	BCT/20-21/79 dtd 15/5/2020	Zone 3C-2 Marine Lines - Khar section General repairs, Painting etc in zone in the jurisdiction of SSE(Bridges-Lower Panel), between Marine Lines (incl) and Khar (incl) for FOBs, ROBs only.	₹49,94,721.34	₹99,900.00
6	BCT/20-21/80 dtd 15/5/2020	Zone 3C-2 - Santacruz - Virar Section - General repairs, Painting etc, in zone in the jurisdiction of SSE (Bridges-Lower Panel), between Santacruz (incl) and Virar (incl) for FOBs, ROBs only.	₹49,41,103.69	₹98,800.00

SR.No.1 Date & Time of Submission on 22.06.2020 till 15.00 hrs, Date & Time of Opening on 22.06.2020 at 15.30 hrs

SR. No. 5 & 6 Date & Time of Submission on 10.06.2020 till 15.00 hrs, Date & Time of Opening on 10.06.2020 at 15.30 hrs

Regarding detailed nature of work, containing cost of tender document (non refundable) EMD, eligibility criteria, similar nature of work, detailed tender conditions, please visit [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in). Manual offers will not be considered.

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## TV actor found dead at his Kharghar residence

RAINA ASSAINAR  
NAVI MUMBAI

A television actor died by suicide at his residence in Kharghar on Friday night after fighting with depression for months.

Amarjyot Singh alias Manmeet Grewal (32) was debt-ridden. "Even before the lockdown he was upset about the loan. When the lockdown came into force, his income went down and the depression increased as there was no work," sub-inspector Ajit Kamble, Kharghar police station, said.

Grewal's wife was preparing dinner when she heard a loud noise from the bedroom. She rushed in to check on the actor, and found him dead. "We searched the house but there was no suicide note. His wife told us about his debt and depression. The

post-mortem report confirmed death due to asphyxiation," Mr. Kamble said.

Grewal was worked in SAB's *Aadat Se Majboor* and TV's *Kuldeepak*.

In a veiled attack on Lead-

### Helplines

BMC mental health helpline:

022 24131212 (24x7)

Vandrevala Foundation:

18602662345/

18002333330 (24x7)

I Call:

022-25521111

(8 a.m. to 10 p.m.

|Monday to Saturday)

The Samaritans Mumbai:

8422984528/

8422984529/

8422984530 (5 p.m.- 8 p.m. all days)

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

The Shiv Sena on Saturday accused the State unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of trying to block Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's election to the Legislative Council, but credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amit Shah for not creating political instability.

The Sena-Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)-Congress government in the State was "atmanirbhar" (self-reliant), said the Sena mouthpiece *Saamana* in its editorial.

"Despite attempts to create hurdles in the functioning of the State government in the last six months, Mr. Thackeray has been elected unopposed to the Legislative Council," the editorial said.

"While the State is fighting the novel coronavirus, Mr. Patil is trying to do whatever it takes to bring down the government," it said.

er of Opposition in the Assembly Devendra Fadnavis, the editorial said attempts

were made to put the government in a fix by blocking Mr. Thackeray's nomination to the Council through the Governor's quota.

"Some people thought Mr. Thackeray (who had to get elected before the end of May) will have to resign, there would be President's rule and they could return by having an early morning swearing-in," it said.

The editorial also took a swipe at State BJP chief Chandrakant Patil for predicting a "political earthquake" in the State unit of the Congress, a ruling coalition partner.

"While the State is fighting the novel coronavirus, Mr. Patil is trying to do whatever it takes to bring down the government," it said.

## CM's election: Sena slams Fadnavis, but compliments Modi, Shah

Multiple agencies come together to deliver medicines

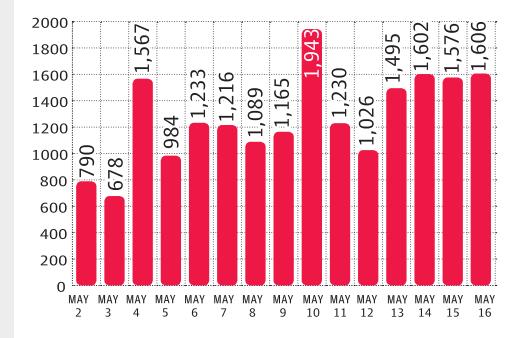
**Sending the medicines via freight train would have taken almost**

**Maharashtra COVID-19 tracker**

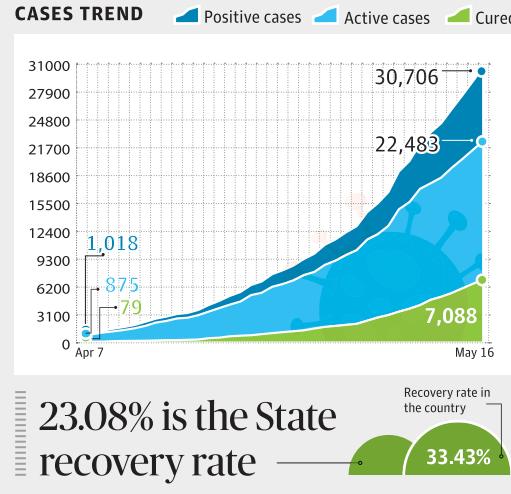
TOTAL CASES	NEW CASES	ACTIVE CASES	RECOVERED	DEATHS
30,706	1,606	22,483	7,088	1,135

**DISTRICTS AFFECTED: 34**

DISTRICT	CASES	DEATHS	DISTRICT	CASES	DEATHS
Mumbai	18,555	696	Hingoli	66	0
Thane	3,834	47	Nanded	59	4
Pune	3,647	188	Sangli	45	1
Nashik	835	35	Latur	34	1
Aurangabad	873	25	Buldhana	26	1
Raigad	414	12	Kolhapur	27	1
Solapur	371	5	Nandurbar	22	2
Palghar	390	13	Jalna	21	0
Nagpur	352	2	Sindhudurg	10	0
Jalgaon	250	30	Parbhani	6	1
Akola	236	14	Osmanabad	7	0
Satara	131	2	Chandrapur	5	0
Yavatmal	99	0	Washim	3	0
Antragati	105	13	Wardha	2	1
Ratnagiri	91	3	Beed	1	0
Dhule	77	8	Bhandara	1	0
Ahmadnagar	72	3	Gondia	1	0

**POSITIVE CASES OVER LAST 15 DAYS**

884 (77%) of Saturday's cases are from Mumbai

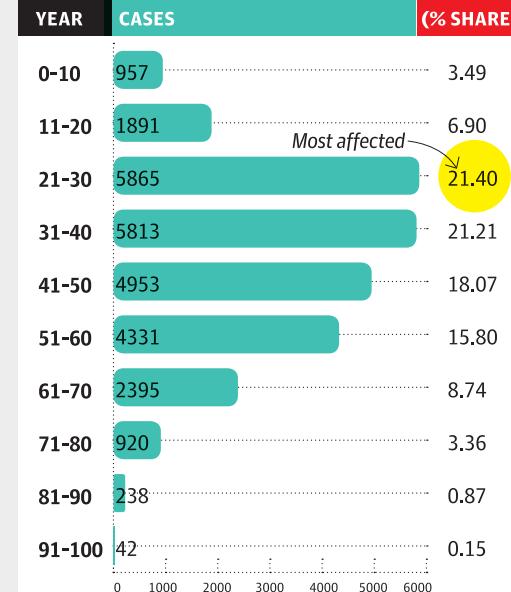


23.08% is the State recovery rate

MORTALITY RATE

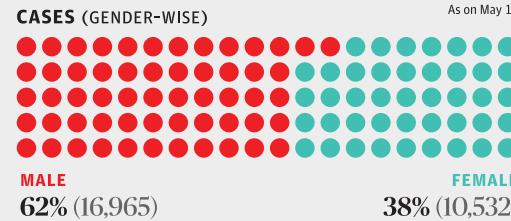
Maharashtra 3.69%

India 3.15%

**AFFECTED (AGE-WISE)****QUARANTINE NUMBERS**

3,34,558 | 17,048

Home quarantine Institutional quarantine

**CASES (GENDER-WISE)****DEATH (GENDER-WISE)**

72% of deaths due to co-morbidities

**HELPLINE NUMBERS**

Toll free number: 104/1075

Maharashtra: 020-26127394

National: 1075/1800-112-545/011-23978046

State helpline email id: ssuumarashtra@gmail.com

**CITY-WISE HELPLINE NUMBERS**

Mumbai city: 022 22664232 Palghar: 02525 297474  
Mumbai suburbs: 022 Raigad: 02141 222118  
26556799 / 26556806 Ratnagiri: 02352 226248  
Thane: 022 25301740 Sindhudurg: 02362 228847

Source: Public Health Department, Maharashtra, BMC

# Virus claims two more lives in police ranks

32-year-old assistant police inspector from Mumbai becomes youngest COVID-19 victim in the Maharashtra police force

GAUTAM S. MENGLE  
MUMBAI

A 32-year-old assistant police inspector (API) from Mumbai became the eighth – and the youngest – COVID-19 fatality in the State police force on Saturday morning. His was the second COVID-19 death within the force in the last 24 hours, after a 57-year-old assistant sub-inspector died on Friday night.

The 32-year-old API was found unconscious in his bathroom and rushed to Sion hospital on Saturday morning, where he was declared dead before admission.

On Saturday afternoon, his colleagues bid him a tearful adieu, with Home Minister Anil Deshmukh and all se-

nior officers in attendance.

His colleagues said he had been on leave since May 13 due to fever and cold and had undergone tests for COVID-19. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone V) Niyat Thaker said his test reports came on Saturday morning, confirming him to be COVID-19 positive.

Mr. Deshmukh, Mumbai Police Commissioner Parambir Singh, Joint Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Vinoy Kumar Choubey and other senior officers visited the central Mumbai police station where the API was posted to pay their respects. Mr. Deshmukh was seen consoling one of the API's colleagues who broke down.

"We are all here to help you with whatever you need. Just let us know what is needed and keep up the good work together," Mr. Deshmukh told the personnel.

Mr. Singh counselled the personnel on precautions to be taken in light of the rising number of cases.

The 57-year-old assistant sub-inspector, who passed away at Kasturba Hospital on Friday evening, had been on leave for the last 15 days. The Mumbai Police, as a measure to curb the spread of the infection in their ranks, have been sending high-risk personnel above the age of 55 years on leave.

Till now, 1,140 policemen have tested positive for COVID-19 in the State, while 268 have recovered.



In gratitude: An artist paints a floor mural dedicated to the police force in Mumbai. ■ AFP

## 80 new cases in Navi Mumbai, 12 in Panvel

Two APMC workers among three deceased

RAINA ASSAINAR  
NAVI MUMBAI

The Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation recorded 80 COVID-19 cases on Saturday, taking its tally to 1,128.

Three fatalities took the death toll in the city to 26, while 95 recoveries pushed the number of those who have recovered so far to 367.

Two of the deceased, aged 48 and 40, were Turbhe residents who contracted the virus at the APMC market where they worked. The third was a 51-year-old woman from Koparkhairane.

Of the 80 cases on Saturday, Turbhe reported the most with 25, Koparkhairane 15, Nerul 12, Vashi nine,

Ghansoli seven, and Belapur and Airoli six each.

The municipal corporation has tested 8,121 people so far, and 913 reports are

pending. Currently, 10,063

people are in home quarantine, while 9,941 have been discharged after quarantine.

The Panvel Municipal

Corporation reported 12 fresh cases on Saturday, taking its total to 246. Eleven new cases in the Panvel rural limits took its tally to 209.

**BEST employs family members of four COVID-19 victims**

According to sources, a staff member from Deonar depot is suspected to have died of COVID-19, but test reports are awaited. "It is important to ascertain if the person had contracted COVID-19 or not. There have been cases where workers have died due to other reasons or pre-existing conditions," a senior official said.

**Workers' demands**

Several unions of BEST workers have said the administration has not paid adequate attention to the health and safety needs of employees, and demanded that the families of COVID-19 victims be paid ₹1 crore.

The BEST has become the sole transport lifeline during the lockdown, ferrying essential service personnel across the city and running point-to-point buses for municipal workers and hospital staff from the outskirts. They have also provided transportation to quarantine facilities for passengers arriving at Mumbai airport. Besides, 72 AC minibuses will soon be converted into ambulances.

"We want the administration to provide separate hospital facilities for positive workers and separate quarantine facilities for those who are asymptomatic."

**APMC market to resume work tomorrow partially**

screen every individual entering the market with thermal scanners and pulse oximeters. If anyone is found to be symptomatic, a swab test will be conducted.

On May 14, Navi Mumbai Municipal Commissioner Annaheeb Misal had directed the APMC market to take the entire process to book and buy produce online. "We have decided to develop an app through which farmers, traders and the consumers can trade. It will take around 10 days to develop it," Mr. Daund said.

In the meeting, the authorities decided on a standard operating system to

ic," Jagannarayan Gupta, leader of the BEST Kamgaar Sanghatna, said.

BEST Sanyukt Kamgaar Kruti Samiti, an umbrella body of BEST workers, said its members will stay at home unless the administration ensures the safety of employees, and demanded that the families of COVID-19 victims be paid ₹1 crore.

The BEST has become the sole transport lifeline during the lockdown, ferrying essential service personnel across the city and running point-to-point buses for municipal workers and hospital staff from the outskirts. They have also provided transportation to quarantine facilities for passengers arriving at Mumbai airport. Besides, 72 AC minibuses will soon be converted into ambulances.

"We want the administration to provide separate hospital facilities for positive workers and separate quarantine facilities for those who are asymptomatic."

**Liquor sales in Thane**

Thane District Collector Rajesh Narvekar issued an order on Friday evening saying that home delivery of liquor will be allowed only within the limits of municipalities in the district, barring containment zones.

(With PTI inputs)

The Navi Mumbai APMC will reopen the vegetable, masala and grain markets from Monday, while the fruit and onion-potato markets will open on May 21.

The decision was made in a meeting with all stakeholders from the market and Konkan Divisional Commissioner Shivaji Daund. "Police staff, our staff, and all members of the market had kept operations open even during the crisis. The market was shut for seven days for sanitisation of the premises and to test all of those working there. Around 6,000 people, including traders, transporters, workers and labourers, were tested during this period," Mr. Daund said.

In the meeting, the authorities decided on a standard operating system to

## GOVERNMENT OF INDIA MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Appointment of Vice Chancellor of Central University of Tamil Nadu

The Vice Chancellor, being the academic as well as administrative head, is expected to be:

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- A distinguished academician, with a minimum 10 years' of experience as Professor in a University or 10 years' of experience in a reputed research and / or academic administrative organisation with proof of having demonstrated academic leadership.
- Preferably not more than 65 years of age as on the closing date of receipt of applications of this advertisement.

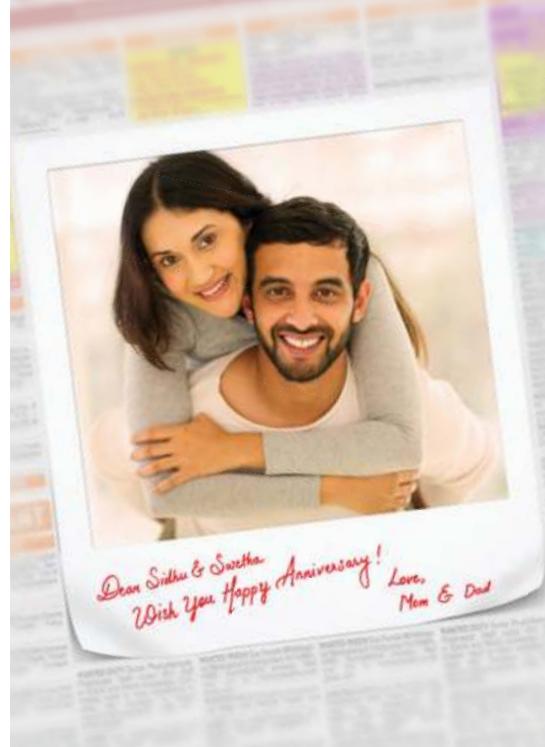
### Salary and Service Conditions

- The post carries a pay of Rs. 21000/- (Fixed) per month with Special Allowance of Rs. 11250/- and other usual allowances.
- The terms and conditions of the services will be those as set forth in the Act, Statutes and Ordinances of the University.

### Procedure for appointment

- Appointment will be made from a panel of names recommended by a Committee constituted under the provisions of Central Universities Act, 2009.
- The advertisement and the format of application are available on the websites <a

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## MATRIMONIAL

### BRIDE/BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

#### INDEX OF MATRIMONIAL

BRIDE/BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

BRIDES WANTED

BRIDES & GROOMS WANTED

Classification common for Brides, Bridegrooms, Brides & Grooms

Assamese

Awadhi

Bengali

Bhojpuri

Bihari

Chhattisgarhi

English

Gujarati

Haryanvi

Hindi

Kannada

Kashmiri

Konkani

Malayalam

Manipuri

Marathi

Marwari

Nepali

Oriya

Parsi

Punjabi

Saurashtra

Sindhi

Tamil

Telugu

Tulu

Urdu

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### FAIR BEAUTIFUL slim PG doctor 3rd year MD Anesthesiology Chennai 30/165 Father Kerala Nair Surgeon Chennai, Mother Tamil CSI, Doctor grooms MD MS MCh DM from Kerala & TamilNadu preferred. 9840053081/9840985383

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### SMART ATTRACTIVE and religious girl 23/173cm doing house work (BDS)from Ernakulam. 9447184209

### TAMIL

### COSMOPOLITAN

## TAMIL

GOVT DOCTOR, 29, CHRISTIAN AD Need Doctor or Equivalent Govt job. Contact: 9940116954

CSI CHRISTIAN Nadar Girl Fair, Good Looking, 03-04-1986, born / 152cm / SCSI M.Phil., working as Assistant Professor in a Reputed Women's College, Mount Road, Chennai. Both Parents Doctors (Private). Suitable Alliance, Employed / Settled in Chennai / With Clean Habits from Same Community. Contact: 9841271524

HINDU BRIDE 39, B.Sc., Smart, Working. 1st Marriage Annanagar Chennai, seeks suitable groom Ct: 73389 7305810258

## ENGINEER

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## TAMIL

CHRISTIAN PROTESTANT girl. God fearing, fair, 164, 28ys, M.Tech - Software Engineer, working at Coimbatore City now. Engineering Graduates or Any Post Graduates from anywhere in India abroad. Ct 9788431790

SC HINDU 39yrs/167cm MCA IT Professional from well settled family @ Coimbatore. Seeks groom below 45 yrs well settled, Educated, Broadminded, Caste no bar. Early marriage. Email: m12907@gmail.com, CT: 7708930197.

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NAIDU (CNB): 26/160, V.Fair, MBBS, Business Family, Very Rich Seeks Groom - Doctor / Business.

WE ARE looking for an alliance for our son aged 29 years, residing in Hyderabad, height 5'9". Hindu, Brahmin, Iyer. The bride should hail from a decent, educated family, Hindu Brahmin and should be an employed girl. 9894799638

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BRAHMİN, 28, 183 cms, Professional, Masters from a premier Institute. Lives in Mumbai. Father is a Management Consultant. Looking for a compatible and well educated match from the same community. Contact: 6366448344

MUDALYAR, 29, 183 cms, Businessman, M.E. Lives in Chennai. Father is a Businessman. Family is financially well off. Looking for an amiable and well educated match from the same community. Contact: 9366448344

## ELITE GROOMS WANTED

BRAHMİN, 26, 176 cms, Student, pursuing Law from a premier Institute. Lives in UK. Father is a Chartered Accountant. Looking for a likeminded and well educated match from the same community. Contact: 6366448343

MUDALYAR, 25, 163 cms, Dentist, BDS, Lives in Chennai. Father is a Businessman. Family is affluent. Looking for an amiable and well educated match from the same community. Contact: 6366448344

## PILLAI/CASTE NO BAR

30, 160 cms, Finance Director, M.B.A. Lives in Chennai. Father is a Businessman. Family is financially well off. Looking for a compatible and well educated match from the same community. Contact: 6366448343

## VANIYA CHETTIAR/CASTE NO BAR

25, 158 cms, Doctor, M.D. from a reputed Institute. Lives in Madurai. Father is a Businessman. Looking for a suitable well educated match from any community. Contact: 6366448345

## REDDY

25, 175 cms, Professional, B.E. Lives in Chennai. Father is a working Professional. Family is financially well off. Looking for a likeminded and well educated match from the same community. Contact: 6366448345

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26, 173 cms, Doctor, M.S. Lives in London. Father is a Senior Consultant. Family is affluent. Looking for a compatible and well educated match from any community. Contact: 6366448346

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Architect, own firm in Chennai. Father, mother Iyengar. Looking for a professionally qualified Vegetarian girl between 24-28 years with no Dosham in Horoscope. Pls. call 9440953298

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## Tightrope walk



**Treading carefully:** A toddy tapper moving from one coconut tree to another using ropes in Meenakshipuram, Palakkad district, on Saturday. ■ K.K. MUSTAFAH

## Police cane migrant workers in A.P.

Nearly 500 labourers were walking towards their home States from Tamil Nadu

STAFF REPORTER  
VIJAYAWADA

The police on Saturday used force on migrant labourers who were walking to their home States. A few workers suffered injuries in the lathi-charge.

More than 500 labourers, who were walking on the National Highway, were provided shelter at the Vijayawada Club. When they came to Kannadurgamma Varadhi in Guntur district on Saturday, the police asked them to go back. When the workers tried to continue their journey, they were caned.

The labourers from Bihar, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and other States



**Acting tough:** A policeman wielding a lathi on migrant workers in Guntur district on Saturday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

homes and provided food. On Friday, they were shifted to Vijayawada Club.

### Never return to A.P.'

"We will never return to Andhra Pradesh. Hundreds of workers are walking on roads for more than a month, and the officials did not even offer us a packet of biscuit. Instead of helping the poor labourers, the police are beating us mercilessly," a woman labourer said.

Earlier, incidents of police beating up the migrant workers had been reported from Mangalagiri, Kovvur, Polavaram and other places in the State during the lockdown period.

had migrated to Tamil Nadu a few months ago. The COVID-19 pandemic put them out of work, forcing them to return to their home States.

On the directions of Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney, they were shifted to shelter

## Koyambedu link pushes up cases in Andhra Pradesh

One dies in A.P.; Karnataka to inspect quarantine hotels after complaints

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

One more person with COVID-19 died in Andhra Pradesh and 48 fresh cases were reported on Saturday, after 9,628 samples were tested.

Kerala reported 11 positive cases, all of them imported. Seven were expatriates who came home recently and the rest, Non-Resident Keralites from Chennai and Maharashtra.

Karnataka announced it would have hotels inspected after several complaints were raised over poor quality of food and unhygienic accommodation provided in private quarantine in Bengaluru.

In Kerala, Thrissur accounted for four cases, Kozhikode three, and Malappuram and Palakkad two cases each.

Four COVID-19 patients who tested negative were declared as having recovered.

Of the 587 cases reported by Kerala so far, only 87 remained in treatment in various hospitals, while 497 had recovered.

So far, 55,045 people had arrived in the State from abroad and other parts of the country, by air, road, rail, and through seaports.

The State had 56,981 people in the surveillance category, of whom, 56,362 were in home quarantine while 619 were isolated in hospitals.

Kerala had tested samples from 43,669 persons, of which 41,814 returned a negative result. As part of the ongoing sentinel surveillance, the State had tested another 4,764 samples from priority groups in the population on a random basis, of which 4,644 samples were negative, an official release said.

### On track

Andhra Pradesh government has organised special trains to take migrant workers from Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam districts to their hometowns



**Patient wait:** People standing in a queue outside the Visakhapatnam Railway Station to board train to Rajasthan on Saturday. ■ K.R. DEEPAK

**ACTIVE CASES**

**DISCHARGED CASES**

**DEATHS**

**TOTAL NUMBER OF CASES**

**953**

**1,353**

**49**

**ANDHRA PRADESH**

**559**

**496**

**37**

**KARNATAKA**

**87**

**497**

**3**

**KERALA**

**587**

**6,970**

**TAMIL NADU**

**10,582**

**74**

**TELANGANA**

**504**

**971**

**34**

Announcing Karnataka's intention to have hotels inspected over complaints on private quarantine facilities, Primary and Secondary Education Minister Suresh Kumar said: "In such cases, BBMP should cancel the licence of the hotel. I will speak to the BBMP commissioner and ask him to initiate immediate action."

A day after recording the biggest spike in the number of positive cases on a single day and crossing the 1,000 mark, Karnataka on Saturday reported 36 new cases, taking the total to 1,092.

With 14 new cases, Bengaluru reported the majority. All the 14 were contacts of a housekeeping staffer of a hotel in Shivajinagar. The individual had become a super-spreader, having infected 29 persons in one week, said Mr. Suresh Kumar.

One more passenger in Udupi, who had returned from Dubai, and 11 inter-State travellers who returned from Mumbai, Maharashtra and Ahmedabad tested

positive. Of the new cases, eight were reported from Kalaburagi, four from Hassan, three from Shivamogga, and one each from Udupi, Mandya, Dharwad, Davangere, Ballari, Bagalkote and Vijayapura.

All four and three cases in Hassan and Shivamogga respectively, one each from Kalaburagi, Dharwad and Bagalkote had a travel history to Mumbai, and the lone case

### COVID-19

in Ballari had travelled to Ahmedabad.

The State Government would write to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) to initiate action against Lal Path Labs in Bengaluru for discrepancy in COVID-19 testing of a pregnant woman.

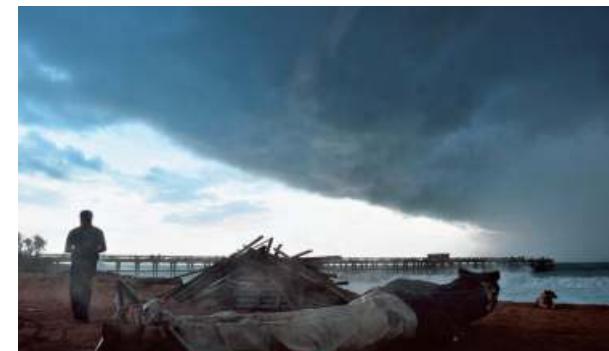
Among new cases linked to the market, Kurnool and Nellore districts reported nine each. Eight fresh cases in Chittoor, two of four fresh cases in Visakhapatnam, cases in Kadapa and West Godavari were similarly connected. Krishna district reported seven fresh cases. The tally had risen to 2,355 and the toll mounted to 49 with the death of a patient in Kurnool. Of total cases, 150 were migrant workers who had returned in the recent past.

District tallies (minus migrants) were: Kurnool (608), Guntur (413), Krishna (367), Chittoor (173), Nellore (149).

(With inputs from Bengaluru and Thiruvananthapuram Bureaus)

## Kerala to source weather inputs from private agencies

IMD's network of 15 stations found 'unreliable, inadequate'



**Getting ready:** A file photo of monsoon clouds looming over Valiyathura in Thiruvananthapuram. ■ S. MAHINSHA

**TIKI RAJWI**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala has decided to source weather inputs from four private agencies in addition to the India Meteorological Department (IMD) during the coming monsoon.

The Kerala State Disaster Management Authority has decided to access inputs from Skymet Weather Services, Windy, IBM Weather Company and Earth Networks "on a nomination basis as a pilot for one year", according to an order issued by the Disaster Management Department.

The government has granted permission to spend 10% of the funds from the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) for the services.

The KSDMA pointed out that the IMD had only 15 automated weather stations in the State. The KSDMA had transferred land for establishing 73 more and the

ISMD had promised to set up 15 stations before the 2020 monsoon. But they have not yet materialised. Moreover, "near-time data streaming is minimal to nil. Just about five stations are providing live data in the State." Due to this, the State will be unable to issue localised alerts. The IMD is not issuing alerts even at the taluk level, ac-

cording to the department.

In its latest order, the government asked the KSDMA to come up with a protocol for issuing warnings and alerts based on these inputs in consultation with the Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre, which has been utilising inputs from private weather services.

## Decks cleared for aid to lockdown-hit industries

Payments in 2 months, says A.P. govt.

STAFF REPORTER  
VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government issued a G.O. on Friday facilitating the delivery of financial incentives to lockdown-hit industries, especially Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The major component of this stimulus package is pending incentives amounting to ₹904.89 crore payable to 11,238 MSME manufacturing and allied units. These payments will be made in two months.

The other significant measures are waiver of fixed/demand charges (electricity) against contracted maximum demand (CMD) for three months (April-June), provision of working capital loans (₹2 lakh to ₹10 lakh at 6.8% interest rate repayable in three years, including the moratorium period of six months) and a mandate to all government entities to procure at least 25% of their annual require-

ment of goods and services from eligible Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs), comprising a sub-target of 4% from Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes-owned MSEs and another 3% from women-owned MSEs.

For large and mega units, fixed/demand charges (electricity) against the CMD are being deferred for three months (April-June) without interest or penal charges.

It was stated in the G.O. RT. No.103 dated May 15 that MSMEs have been contributing approximately 8% of the national GDP, 45% of manufacturing output and 40% of exports.

**Product range**  
The MSME sector in Andhra Pradesh manufactures a variety of products with a high concentration of MSEs in food, mineral, building materials, drugs and pharmaceuticals, fabricated materials, and trading and service sectors.

### WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

**Forecast for Sunday:** Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning likely at isolated places over Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, Muzaffarabad, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Maharashtra, Goa, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Lakshadweep, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

**CITY**

**RAIN**

**MAX**

**MIN**

**CITY**

**RAIN**

**MAX**

## FROM PAGE ONE

## Govt. throws open defence, coal sectors

Mr. Srivastava noted that the only direct budgetary cost in this tranche was the ₹8,100 crore to be provided as a hiked 30% viability gap funding to boost private investment in social sector infrastructure.

In a bid to enhance self-reliance in defence production, Ms. Sitharaman said the Centre would notify a list of weapons and platforms that could not be imported, and widen it every year as domestic capacities grew.

A separate budget provision for domestic capital procurement would help reduce the defence import bill, she said, adding that indigenisation of imported spare parts would also be given priority. The FDI limit in defence manufacturing under automatic route will be raised from 49% to 74%.

In another major policy change, the Minister announced that Ordnance Factory Boards would be corporatised and eventually listed on the stock market to improve autonomy, efficiency and accountability, emphasising, however, that they would not be privatised.

The government monopoly on coal would be removed with the introduction of commercial mining, said Ms. Sitharaman, allowing any private player to bid for a coal block and sell it in the open market. Earlier, only captive consumers with end-use ownership could bid for coal blocks. Almost 50 blocks will be offered immediately, with no eligibility conditions for bidding, apart from upfront payment with a ceiling.

With regard to civil aviation, Ms. Sitharaman said six more airports are up for auction on private public partnership mode, while additional private investment will be invited at 12 airports in a move expected to net ₹13,000 crore for the Airports Authority of India.

Ms. Sitharaman also promised to create a level playing field for private players in the space sector, allowing them to use ISRO facilities and participate in future projects on space travel and planetary exploration.

## Put money in the hands of people, says Rahul

"I would like to appeal to the Government of India that you can surely offer loans but Mother India cannot act like a *sahukar* to her children. Mother India should directly transfer money into the hands of her children. The migrant labourer walking on the street needs money, not debt. The farmer who is suffering needs money, not debt... If we do not, this will become a catastrophic problem," he observed.

Mr. Gandhi, who had conceived the *nyuntam aay yojana* (NYAY) or minimum income guarantee before the 2019 Lok Sabha election, once again pitched for it for helping the poor. "Do NYAY temporarily if you don't want to do it permanently. But please start putting money into the small businesses, farmers, migrants' bank accounts because if we do not, then we will have a catastrophic result." It would cost the government ₹65,000-₹70,000 crore.

He said that though they had suggested doubling of work days to 200 under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), it won't help the migrant workers in urban areas. So, he argued, the Congress had suggested a monthly cash transfer of ₹7,500 for these workers.

## 'Super-spreaders' from Gujarat spike tally

Health secretary Preeti Sudan held a high level review with the principal health secretaries, municipal commissioners and other officials from these areas.

These 30 municipal areas are from States/UTs including Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Odisha," a Health Ministry release said.

Maintaining high vigilance and monitoring areas of old cities, urban slums and other high density pockets along with the camps for migrant workers are crucial, the release said.

The Ministry noted that in densely populated urban areas further challenges need to be considered like poor socio-economic conditions, limited health infrastructure, lack of social distancing, issues faced by women among others fac-

## 24 migrants die in Uttar Pradesh road accident

ADGP Jai Narayan Singh said it would be investigated how so many people were on the truck.

Witnesses told local media that the trailer hit the supply truck in high speed, following which both fell into a nearby ditch. Many of the migrants were sleeping on the trailer.

Two station in charge officers under whose jurisdiction the accident took place have been suspended.

**Adityanath's directive**  
Chief Minister Yogi Aditya-

## Domestic defence procurement gets separate budget provision

Govt. to bring out negative import list for weapons and military platforms

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The government would make a separate budgetary provision for domestic defence procurements and bring out a negative import list for weapons and military platforms, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced on Saturday as part of efforts to promote indigenous manufacturing and reduce the defence import bill.

"We shall notify a list of weapons and platforms not allowed for import. They will have to be bought in India.

Every year, this list will be increased as the capacity to make weapons that meet the necessary standards grows. Indigenisation of some imported spares will also be given priority," she said, while stressing that 'Make in India' was absolutely necessary for self-reliance, especially in critical sectors such as defence production.

While some of the state-of-the-art weapons required by the Services would be met through imports, some that were produced in the country and met the standards have to be procured locally only. The negative list would be worked out in consultation with the Department of Military Affairs headed by the Chief of the Defence Staff.



Defence mode: Jaguar aircraft during the dress rehearsal for Republic day in New Delhi in January. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Ms. Sitharaman said the separate budget provision for domestic capital procurement would help reduce the defence import bill and encourage domestic manufacture.

The limit for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in defence through the automatic route had also been raised from 49% to 74%. Earlier, 100% FDI was allowed on a case by case basis.

However, two industry observers said the real impact of the increased FDI limit had to be analysed.

## Corporatisation of OFB

Ms. Sitharaman also announced a long pending proposal of corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) for autonomy, efficiency and accountability. While clarifying that it would not be privatised, she said the

ordnance factories would eventually be listed on the stock market to improve transparency.

Late last year, the Defence Ministry set up a high-level committee to examine the aspects of corporatisation of the OFB and work out the modalities. The Kolkata-headquartered OFB, with 41 factories spread across the country, functions as a department under the Department of Defence Production.

The Finance Minister said a time-bound defence procurement process and faster decision-making would be brought in by setting up a Project Management Unit (PMU) to support contract management, "realistic setting" of General Staff Qualitative Requirements (GSQRs) of weapons and platforms and overhauling the trial and testing procedures.

Stressing on realistic GSQRs, Ms. Sitharaman said "sometimes unrealistic quality requirements are established" and quite a lot of time was spent on searching for suppliers who met all those requirements and the whole process repeated after a single vendor situation, which was not allowed.

Separately, a revision of the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) was on and a draft put in public domain for feedback before finalisation.

## Much needed step

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) called the measures a much-needed step for reducing imports and building self-reliance in defence. "The stress laid on domestic manufacturing is very encouraging as India today is among the largest importers in the world of defence equipment. The list of non-importable items and corporatisation of OFB are some landmark steps and will boost the confidence of domestic manufacturers," CII Director General Chandradip Banerjee said in a statement.

The increase in FDI limit to 74% would attract foreign funds into this sector, along with technology infusion, he added.



ISRO scientists working on the orbiter vehicle of 'Chandrayaan-2'.

The thrust of the 2017 Bill was to evolve a mechanism by which companies or individuals who wanted to be involved in a wide-range of space development activities – satellite development, GIS, telemetry – could approach the government for a licence.

Legislation apart, Ms. Sitharaman in her July 2019 Budget speech had mentioned the creation of a public sector company by ISRO called New Space India Limited.

This was similar to its existing company, Antrix, and allows small satellite technology to be transferred to private industry and outsource the development of ISRO's workhorse Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle to the private sector.

Critics of the Bill have pointed out that it doesn't have provisions for the creation of an independent space regulator.

## Private sector in space was part of 2017 Bill

Announcement was mentioned in draft

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's announcement on Saturday of the government's intention to encourage greater participation of the private sector in a host of space activities already finds mention in a draft Bill by the Department of Space in 2017. This however hasn't yet made it to Parliament for discussion.

"...There is a need for national space legislation for supporting the overall growth of the space activities in India. This would encourage enhanced participation of non-governmental/private sector agencies in space activities in India, in compliance with international treaty obligations, which is becoming very relevant today," says the draft Space Activities Bill, 2017.

On Saturday, Ms. Sitharaman said: "The government will provide predictable policy and regulatory environment and allow private sector to use ISRO facilities. Future projects for travel in outer space or exploration of new planets will be open to the private sector. The government will ease geo-spatial data policy to make such remote-sensing data more widely available to tech entrepreneurs, with safeguards put in place."

## Talk of space exploration a cruel joke amid migrant crisis'

Cong. slams opening up of key sectors without consensus

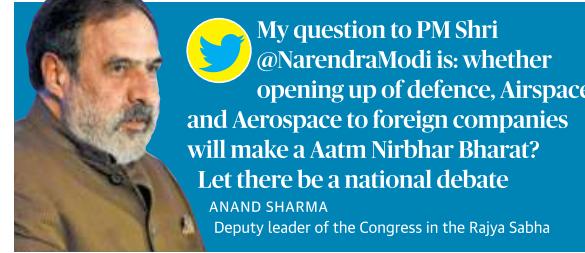
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday asked if opening up defence and aerospace to foreign companies is the Narendra Modi government's idea of *Amanirbhav Bharat* or self-reliant India.

It is a "cruel joke" to talk about space exploration ventures when millions of migrant workers are trying to reach their native places on foot, the party said in response to the fourth tranche of announcements made by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

**National debate**  
"My question to PM Shri @NarendraModi is: whether opening up of defence, Aerospace and Aerospace to foreign companies will make a *Aatm Nirbhav Bharat*? Let there be a national debate



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**IN BRIEF**



**Delhi toll rises to 129; 438 new cases emerge**

NEW DELHI  
The Delhi COVID-19 death toll rose to 129 and with the total number of cases climbing to 9,333, authorities said on Saturday. With 438 fresh cases, the total number of cases in Delhi has mounted to 9,333. Meanwhile, two more private hospitals, Batra Hospital and Research Centre in Tughlakabad and Cygnus Orthocare Hospital in Safdarjung, have been declared COVID hospitals for admitting cases of the infection on a payment basis, the health department said.

**51 found in container truck in Assam**

GUWAHATI  
The police in Bongaigaon district of western Assam on Saturday intercepted a container truck from West Bengal and detained 51 people, mostly migrant workers, who were travelling in it. They managed to elude the police and health officials at Srimampur, 80 km west on the Assam-West Bengal border, where every individual entering Assam has to undergo a mandatory test for COVID-19. The police said the people are from various districts of Assam, and it was not immediately known where they had come from.

**13 pregnant women among fresh cases in J&K**

SRINAGAR  
Jammu and Kashmir reported 108 COVID-19 cases on Saturday, the highest single-day increase. Among them were 13 pregnant women. With one death, the toll has increased to 12. Twelve pregnant women from Anantnag and one from Kulgam in south Kashmir tested positive. "It was the highest single-day increase in such cases, taking the total number to 24 in Kashmir," an official said. The government has made testing mandatory for all pregnant women.

**BSF battalions worst hit by COVID-19 in Tripura**

AGARTALA  
The total number of COVID-19 cases in Tripura rose to 165 on Saturday with the detection of 11 more cases, with seven of the new cases from 86th battalion of the BSF. The 86th and the 138th battalions are the worst hit by COVID-19. Of all the positive cases in Tripura, 159 are of BSF personnel and their family members.

**Odisha extends home quarantine period**

Bhubaneswar  
Odisha government on Saturday extended home quarantine period from 14 days to 28 days for people returning to urban areas from abroad and other States. Those having separate rooms and bathroom can stay in home quarantine, and standard operating procedure for monitoring in urban areas has been issued, the government said.

# 'Navy to aid Northern theatre command'

Naval fighter aircraft can be deployed in the Western desert areas: Gen. Rawat

DINAKAR PERI  
NEW DELHI

The proposed Northern theatre command along the border with China should also have a small Navy element in it as some of the naval systems are useful there, said Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Gen. Bipin Rawat. He also said the naval fighter aircraft can be deployed in the Western sector in the desert areas when not required at sea to effectively utilise existing resources.

Gen. Rawat had in the past said the capabilities of the Navy's P-8I long range maritime surveillance aircraft were used for observing the Chinese movements during the Doklam stand-off in 2017.

The first of the integrated commands in the works is the integrated Air Defence (AD) command headed by the IAF followed by a maritime command and then the land based theatre commands.

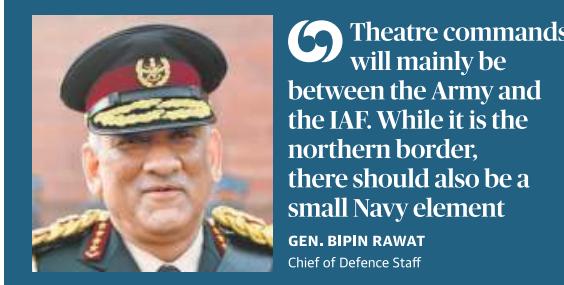
Separately, Army chief Gen. Manoj Naravane said at an event they have carried out a few brainstorming sessions but the specifics of the theatre commands have not been firmed up at – like

jets can operate in deserts and the IAF jets there can move to the other borders, Gen. Rawat said. "There is not much of difference between sea flying and desert flying."

Gen. Rawat had in the past said the capabilities of the Navy's P-8I long range maritime surveillance aircraft were used for observing the Chinese movements during the Doklam stand-off in 2017.

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**Theatre commands will mainly be between the Army and the IAF. While it is the northern border, there should also be a small Navy element**

GEN. BIPIN RAWAT  
Chief of Defence Staff

whether the entire western front can be one theatre or the northern front can be one theatre.

"Soon we will have a presentation by the IAF with the representatives from Army and Navy and we will flush out the contours of the AD command," Gen. Naravane said. "We will do it as per the Indian operational requirements and with Indian characteristics."

Gen. Rawat said the study on the AD command is under way and he already had the first presentation and the standing instructions should be issued by year end. In 2-3

years it should take shape, he said.

Gen. Rawat said the idea is that all air defence resources of the three Services should be under one Commander and ensure that there is no fratricide. "The command and control instructions should come from one person."

"In three years, operational instructions will be issued on the theatre commands," Gen. Rawat said adding it will take shape after that. The Navy has already started a study on the maritime command.

The next step in the inte-

gration is having common communications which presently the three Services have their respective set up and also common training establishments and equipment where possible. Basically with integration, maintenance and logistics elements go down and bring in a lot of savings, he said.

**NSS draft to be finalised**

Asked about the proposed National Security Strategy (NSS) that is being formulated by the Defence Planning Committee headed by the National Security Adviser (NSA), Gen. Rawat said the draft is being finalised but did not give a timeframe for its completion.

"The draft was ready. But with the CDS coming in, it needs some changes. That is being done," he said. He said without the NSS too, the three Services have their operational directives and India has a Union war book which integrates everything in terms of war or calamities.

## Maharashtra records 1,606 fresh cases, toll rises to 1,135

Mumbai records 884 new cases and 41 deaths

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Despite the lockdown, Maharashtra reported the highest number of deaths on Saturday. As many as 67 people lost their lives to the novel coronavirus taking the State's cumulative death toll to 1,135. It also recorded 1,606 new cases, the second-highest single-day jump, pushing the tally to 30,706.

However, State health officials said that only 22 of the 67 deaths were recorded in the last 24 hours while the remaining deaths were from April 14 to May 14.

Mumbai recorded 884 cases and 41 deaths on Saturday. The Mira-Bhayandar re-



**Need of the hour:** Shree Shiv Chhatrapati Sports Complex in Pune is now a quarantine facility. ■ JIGNESH MISTRY

gion recorded one death, Thane and Pune seven deaths each, Aurangabad five, Jalgaon three and Nashik and Solapur one each.

Health officials said that of the 67 patients who died, 47 were men and 20 were women, and 44 of them had suffered from such co-morbid conditions as diabetes, hypertension and heart disease. While four patients

were below the age of 40, 25 were in the age group of 40-59 and 38 were above 60.

Nearly 66% of the total number of cases in the State have been recorded this month alone. On Saturday, 524 patients were discharged. Health Minister Rakesh Tope said this was the third consecutive day when the State had discharged over 500 patients.

"I contacted Union Minister of State Dr. Jitendra Singh about the subject but he has not received the letter either in the form of a hard copy or through e-mail," Justice Reddy said in a

## CAT chief slams J&K CJ's public sharing of letter

Justice Reddy denies correspondence

PEERZADA ASHIQ  
SRINAGAR

statement issued in New Delhi.

"The letter happens to be the communication between its author and the addressee and it is not made public particularly when it is between highly placed dignitaries," he added.

In a statement issued through the J&K information department recently, Justice Mittal had revealed that she had written to Dr. Singh and sought the establishment of a CAT with multiple benches, with permanent seats at Jammu and Srinagar.

Justice Reddy said, "It appears that the Chief Justice expressed concern over the ability of the tribunal to handle the service matters of the Union Territory as and when transferred."

## India opposes rejoining RCEP over China concerns

MEA official flags 'overdependence'

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
NEW DELHI

As the deadline for a response to a fresh proposal of India rejoining negotiations on the ASEAN-led trade Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) ran out on Friday, a senior Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) official indicated that global post-COVID-19 concerns over China had strengthened India's opposition to the grouping.

"If anything the COVID-19 experience and the experience of countries that have been overly dependent on imports from China or one country would have reinforced and revaluated the decision to stay out of the RCEP," said Ashok Malik, policy adviser in the MEA.

The letter sent by the RCEP's Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC) Chairperson last month, had an offer to reconsider India's objections to giving market access for a "limited number of products", if it would rejoin the talks.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced India's decision to quit the grouping, which includes the 10 ASEAN nations, Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea in November, citing lack of protection for country's agricultural sector among others.

After pulling out of the grouping, India skipped at least two separate meetings it was invited to, including one in Bali in February, and a virtual meeting in April. At the April RCEP-TNC meeting, negotiators who ironed out legal issues with the pact committed to signing the agreement by the end of 2020.

"The RCEP will provide a more stable and predictable economic environment to support the much-needed recovery of trade and investment in the region, which has been adversely affected if India did want to rejoin the [RCEP] negotiations, there would be no better time than now, because it would send a signal to the world that not only is India an attractive place to invest, but also, its potential of being a global manufacturing hub as envisaged by the government's 'Make in India' policy was realisable" Mr. O'Farrell said.



Ashok Malik

by the COVID-19 pandemic," said a statement issued on April 30, which added that "Against this backdrop, the 15 [countries] reaffirmed their commitment to continue working with India to address its outstanding issues...[and] would welcome India's return to the RCEP negotiations."

However, Mr. Malik said India's experience of trade pacts in the past was that they had "hollowed out" manufacturing in the country, and would hamper the government's renewed commitment to the 'Make in India' policy. "At a time when our 'Make in India' programme is moving from Level 1 to Level 2, and it has to go to Level 10, I think it was a good decision [to leave RCEP]," he said, speaking at a web seminar organised by the Carnegie India Foundation.

Significantly, Australian High Commissioner-Designate Barry O'Farrell cited the 'Make in India' policy as the reason for India to join. Australia and Japan have been at the forefront of efforts to convince India to rejoin the RCEP as a possible counterweight to China in the grouping that would represent a third of global trade.

"If India did want to rejoin the [RCEP] negotiations, there would be no better time than now, because it would send a signal to the world that not only is India an attractive place to invest, but also, its potential of being a global manufacturing hub as envisaged by the government's 'Make in India' policy was realisable" Mr. O'Farrell said.

**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT TIRUCHIRAPPALLI**  
NOTICE INVITING TENDERS  
i) Catering Services on contract basis at Hostel Mess.  
ii) Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Medical Equipment.  
iii) Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Gym Equipment.  
iv) Comprehensive Services for Guest House, Canteen and Executive Dining.  
v) Expression of Interest for Campus Irrigation System.  
For further details, visit our website:  
<https://www.iitmtrichy.ac.in/tender-published>  
Chief Administrative Officer /C

**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER WATER RESOURCES (NORTH) HANUMANGARH**  
No.: F.2/Acctt/NIB/2020-21/6364 Dated:- 7/5/2020  
**NIB NO.01/2020-21**

This office invites bids from eligible bidders for work of supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning, operation and Maintenance of SCADA Based Canal monitoring for Bhakra & Ganga Canal System of Water Resources Department Rajasthan under National Hydrology Project (NHP) estimated 752.00 Lacs respectively. The other details can be seen per bid documents published on websites, www.djpr.rajasthan.gov.in, http://water.rajasthan.gov.in, http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in, http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in  
**UBN No.:- WRN2021WLOB0010**

Chief Engineer  
DIPR No. 3362

## BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE

Office of the Executive Engineer, Kengeri Division, R.R. Nagar Zone,

No. 144, 2nd Main, Jagajyothi Layout, Bangalore - 560 056.

Date : 15-05-2020

### INVITATION FOR SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION (IFT)

(Through GOK e-Procurement Portal only)

The Executive Engineer, Kengeri Division invites tenders on behalf of the Commissioner, BBMP, Bengaluru from eligible Tenderers for the Construction of works detailed in the table below.

#### SINGLE COVER SYSTEM - CALL - 1

SL. No.	Name of the Work	Approx. Value of Work (Rs. in Lakhs)	EMD (in Rs.)
1.	Supply of Drinking Water by Tankers in Ward No. 130. <b>Reservation of Works to : Others</b>	15.00	37,500/-

#### TWO COVER SYSTEM - CALL - 1

2.	Drilling of Borewell and Providing Water Supply in Ward No. 130.	99.00	2,00,000/-
3.	Improvements to Roads and Drains in Ward No. 130.	51.00	1,02,000/-
4.	Drilling of Borewell and Providing Water Supply in Varahasandra Colony SC-ST Area in Ward No. 198.	100.00	2,00,000/-
5.	Comprehensive Development Works in Ward No. 72.	150.00	2,25,000/-
6.	Improvements CC Drain, CC Roads and Culverts at Jnanabharathi Layout 1st Block Surrounding Areas in Ward No. 130, Ullal.	60.00	1,20,000/-

7.	Improvements to Roads and Providing Asphalt, Resurfacing Patch Repairs and Asphalt to Bad Reaches in Nagadevanahalli Limits at Ward No. 130.	90.00	1,80,000/-
8.	Improvements to Roads and Providing Asphalt, Resurfacing Patch Repairs and Asphalt to Bad Reaches in Ullal Ward Limits at Ward No. 130.	90.00	1,80,000/-
9.	Providing Rain Water Harvesting Ground Water Recharging and Allied Works in Kengeri Upanagar in Ward No. 159, Kengeri.	100.00	2,00,000/-

#### TWO COVER SYSTEM - CALL - 2

10.	Drilling of Borewells and Providing Water Supply in Ullal Upanagar and Maruthinagara Surrounding Area in Ward No. 130.	100.00	2,00,000/-


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## For these migrants, partition plays out on their never-ending journey back home

Borders are created within the country, people are moving like cattle, says a worker on his way home 1,300 km away

SIDHARTH YADAV  
JOHARIYA (DATIA DISTRICT)

Crossing three States, mostly plodding in the furious heat 13 days on, Vikramjeet Verma believes the longest journey of his life, to get back home, is more about never returning to Ahmedabad, some 1,300 km away.

With every step on the highway, hauling feet heavy with crushed dreams, his resolve only fortifies: "Ab kabhi vaaps nahi jana hai udhar [I don't have to go to there ever again]."

On Saturday, he reached the Madhya Pradesh-Uttar Pradesh border along with two friends. "This whole period feels like *Gadar* is play-

ing out," quipped Mr. Verma, 21, a carpenter who made ₹400 a day, referring to the film set in the 1947 Partition. "Borders are created within the country; people are moving like cattle; there are checkpoints everywhere. And all is uncertain now, like at the time of Independence."

For eight days at least, they reached the Ahmedabad railway station every morning. "We stood in the queue to board a train," said his friend Ajay Verma. As the lockdown kicked in – and has continued since – hunger and draining cash has felt like a curse for leaving home. And the government's tardy

response to their plea for returning home sapped all security. Now, only home, its warm embrace, could lend them succour. So they set out towards Gonda district of Uttar Pradesh. "We will work as agricultural labourers for ₹250 a day," he said.

With Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh finally agreeing to set aside differences over the passage of returning workers, an overwhelming wave has struck the Johariya border in Datia district of Madhya Pradesh, the busiest border point Uttar Pradesh is scrambling to manage. Around 50,000 workers returning from Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra are



**Arduous journey:** Migrant workers headed towards Uttar Pradesh huddled in a truck on Saturday. ■ A.M. FARQUI

crossing over every day, said Rahul Srivastav, Additional Superintendent of Police (City), Jhansi, overseeing arrangements at the border.

Faced with the uncertainty caused by the lockdown,

workers are making a desperate attempt to return home, packed inside lorries, riding two-wheelers, perched atop goods trucks and huddled up in buses.

Around 100 government

run buses from Madhya Pradesh's Bijasan border with Maharashtra are arriving at Johariya every day, from where workers are sent by the Uttar Pradesh government buses onward. Those on bicycles are loaded in trucks.

At the checkpoint of Madhya Pradesh, an official from the Education Department, requesting anonymity, said, "Given the volume of traffic, it's difficult to check for documents from each of them. So we are letting everyone pass. We have to ensure they reach home first."

Six car mechanics in Pune are riding on motorcycles arranged by their contractor.

"You don't know who's carrying the novel coronavirus in a truck when people are forced to travel like sheep

and goats. Then, they may take it to their villages. Why can't the government run all trains when the damage is already done," wondered Tanveer Ansari, 34, lying supine in an abandoned dhaba.

Adjusting a spare tyre around the handles of his motorcycle, Amin Ahmed, 22, the youngest in the group, points to a mini-bicycle strapped to its rear.

"That belongs to my nephew, who is six. He went along with my sister in a truck to Kanpur. He cried a lot, saying he wouldn't go anywhere without the bicycle," said Mr. Ahmed, listing the essentials he carried.

"We have left behind utensils and the LPG cylinder, and will return next year."

For those riding auto-rickshaws from Mumbai and Su-

rat and two wheelers, the searing heat along highways in the arid Gwalior-Chambal region became unbearable on Friday afternoon. Workers slumped in almost any patch of shade around trees, under flyovers, and next to bushes lining medians.

A group of 50 villagers from Mamoni Khurd in Shivpuri district, clutching red flags, took a break under the shade of shuttered shops along the highway on their 100-km pilgrimage to the temple of a local deity.

"I have been told by the Ratangarh Mata to bring all villagers to her abode so that the lockdown won't affect us," said Mallu Adivasi, who claimed she experiences the spirit, as trucks loaded with migrant workers whizzed past.

## Centre tells States to upload details of migrants online

The govt. has created a portal for speedy communication

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Centre has asked the States to upload the details of migrants on an online dashboard that would help in speedy communication among them and aid in contact tracing. A unique ID will be generated for the migrants and their mobile numbers could be used for "contact tracing and movement monitoring during COVID-19."

Other details such as Aadhaar card number, train or bus details will be collected and fed into the system. The dashboard – National Migrant Information System (NMIS) – has been developed by the National Disaster Management Authority



Central nodal Ministries can also monitor the movement through the portal.

(NDMA). Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla wrote to all the States on Saturday asking them to utilise the system as the "portal will maintain a central repository" and help the States and districts sending as well as re-

ceiving the migrants to seek and receive approval in an online format seamlessly. "This system will help in speedy communication between States without creating additional work at the level of the field officers," Mr. Bhalla said.

The letter said the Central nodal Ministries can also monitor the movement through this portal.

An explainer provided by the MHA said: "Further to provide facility of contact tracing, both individual particulars and spatial identifiers [origin, destination address] need to be captured ... many of the workers may undertake reverse journeys in the near future. A ready database can be of help..."

## M.P. overwhelmed by migrant rush

CM Chouhan asks his counterparts in other States to coordinate with him

NISTULA HEBBAR  
NEW DELHI

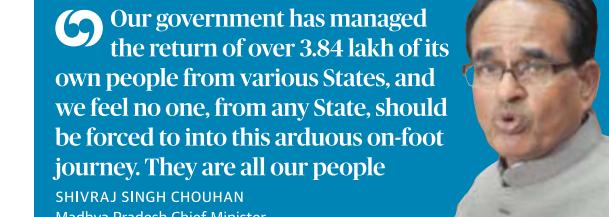
Apart from a late start in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic due to political developments, Madhya Pradesh is also besieged by lakhs of inter-State migrant labour, en route on foot from States such as Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, towards Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Responding to this, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has asked his counterparts of the States from where the labourers are starting and their home States, to coordinate with him in order to ensure that "nobody needs to go on foot."

"Madhya Pradesh is en route to anyone wishing to go from Maharashtra or

southeastern States to further north, and we have had a build-up of lakhs of people crossing over towards U.P. and Bihar. My government has deployed over 1,000 buses everyday to ferry them to the borders of the States ... We are also providing food, water, temporary shelter and even footwear for our brothers and sisters making this difficult journey," he said in a video presser from Bhopal on Saturday.

### 'Better arrangements'

"I have called up the Chief Ministers of both the States where these groups of people are walking from to the destination State as well. If the States can inform us in advance as to how many people to expect, we will be



SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN  
Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister

better prepared to help, and the States where they are headed will also be able to make arrangements when they reach their borders," he said. "Our government has managed the return of over 3.84 lakh of its own people from various States, and we feel no one, from any State, should be forced to into this arduous on-foot journey. They are all our people."

"Everyone wants to go home in times of trouble, we cannot hold it against our brothers and sisters," he said.

According to an estimate,

almost 70% of all inter-State labour from Maharashtra was headed towards M.P., with most of them to walk further to U.P., Bihar and other States.

Mr. Chouhan acknowledged that the State's finances were a worry but his government was trying to do some off-budget borrowing for specific projects. He added that like other States, he had also asked that suitable amendments be made to the Fiscal Responsibility and Budgetary Management Act, wherein the limit for borrowing for the States be raised

from 3.5% to 5.5%. "We will be able to raise ₹15,000-16,000 crore through this and it will give us some breathing space fiscally."

### Relief for farmers

The Chief Minister said he expected farmers to profit from the amendments made to the Mandi Act, where the farmers and private organisations have been allowed to directly deal with each other. He also expected the changes made to labour laws would help kick-start the economy and said he would announce a cash package for those engaged in professions such as washermen and barbers, who cannot hope to return to work very soon.

"Till now, Madhya Pradesh has seen an enrolment of upto 19 lakh people under the Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Act," he said.

## Informal settlements marked 'vulnerable' zones

Govt. issues guidelines to tackle challenges

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN  
NEW DELHI

Informal settlements within cities have been identified by the Union Health Ministry as among the vulnerable urban settlements for the spread of the COVID-19.

Stating that a substantial percentage of the population here are migrant workers employed in industrial and other informal sectors, the Ministry said these areas are characterised by poor structural quality of housing, inadequate access to safe water, poor sanitation and insecure residential status. There are gaps in health and healthcare services.

"In the context of COVID-19 or any other respiratory in-



**Close quarters:** The Ministry notes that such localities are often overcrowded, making social distancing difficult. ■ AP

tectious disease for that matter] implementing strategic interventions such as surveillance, physical distancing, isolation, quarantine and communicating the risk to the dwellers could be challenging," notes the Ministry.

In a note – Preparedness and response to COVID-19 in Urban Settlements – issued on Saturday evening, the Ministry notes that these locali-

ties are often overcrowded, with many people crammed into very small living spaces, thus posing a major challenge for following social distancing.

### Local bodies

It said in these areas local bodies should cover the management of COVID-19 and focus on challenges unique to such populations.

"An incident-response

system should be put in place depending upon the geographic extent of the settlements and its population size," says the Ministry.

It said enough quantity of hydroxychloroquine will be stocked in civil dispensaries, health posts, health & family welfare centres for chemoprophylaxis of healthcare workers and high-risk contacts of confirmed cases of the COVID-19.

It has directed for a contingency plan to be put in place to move the high-risk population to alternate or temporary sites.

The latest advisory also advocates for passive surveillance stating that in addition to the government health facilities serving these populations, surveillance network linkages need to be established with private medical practitioners working in such localities.

## More than virus, migrants back in Bihar fear rejection

Returning workers allege 'inhuman treatment' by officials

AMARNATH TEWARY  
PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar meets officials every day and directs them to help migrant workers returning to the State. But some workers

allege "inhuman treatment" by officials in their own State and others praise the Uttar Pradesh government for lending them a hand in their arduous journey back home.

Driven by desperation, thousands of migrants have been returning to their home districts, crossing inter-State highways, fleeing not only the virus but also poverty, hunger and death. "You fear the disease but we fear poverty and hunger more than

corona," said a young emaciated migrant in a video released on social media. "More than corona, the pain is of rejection by our own government," others chip in.

**Praise for U.P.** In the video, they say that after they entered Bihar, the government did not give them anything, not even a bottle of water. "The policemen and even villagers shooed us away as if they would contract the virus by speaking to us..." said one.

But they took out biscuit packets, snacks and water bottles from a bag and placed them on the road to say, "Look, these have been

provided by the Uttar Pradesh government... The Yogi Adityanath government has done a lot for us..., but we got only pain and rejection by our own government."

Asked whether they received ₹1,000 after the Bihar government said it had deposited the sum in 19 lakh bank accounts, they said, "Kuch nahi mila hai [Nothing has been received yet]." Whereas, they said, they had to pay ₹3,000-₹5,000 to truck owners. Stories of pain have come from quarantine centres, too. On Friday, migrants in Madhubani, Araria, Vaishali and Jamui complained about lack of amenities and worm-infested food.

## Eight migrants killed in road accidents

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BHOOPAL

Eight migrants, including four women, were killed in three separate road accidents in Madhya Pradesh on Saturday, the police said. At least 29 others were injured in these accidents.

Six persons were killed in an accident when a truck carrying them overturned near Sagar, said Superintendent of Police Amit Sanghi. In Guna district, a person was killed when the tempo in which he was travelling overturned near Bhadoda.

In another accident in Barwani, Aniket Thakur, 22, was killed when another vehicle rammed the truck he was travelling in.

## SUDOKU

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

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

# Stop suppression of Huawei, says China

U.S. government's actions destroy global manufacturing, supply and value chains, says Beijing

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BEIJING

Beijing has urged the U.S. to stop the "unreasonable suppression of Huawei and Chinese enterprises" after Washington announced new export controls to restrict the tech giant's access to semiconductor technology.

The latest restrictions on the world's second-largest smartphone manufacturer, which is at the centre of U.S. spying allegations, are a new escalation in the U.S.-China battle for global technological dominance. "The Chinese government will firmly uphold Chinese firms' legitimate and legal rights and interests," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement Saturday. "We urge the U.S. side to immediately stop its unreasonable suppression of Huawei and Chinese enterprises."

The Ministry said the Trump administration's actions "destroy global manufacturing, supply and value chains". The U.S. Commerce Department said on Friday the controls would "narrowly and strategically target Huawei's acquisition of semiconductors that are the direct product of certain U.S. software and technology."

#### Espionage efforts

U.S. officials have repeatedly accused the Chinese technology giant of stealing American trade secrets and aiding China's espionage efforts, ramping up tensions with the rival superpower while both sides were involved in a trade war. As a result, Huawei has increasingly relied on domestically manufactured technology, but the latest rules will also ban foreign firms that use U.S. technology from shipping semiconductors to Huawei without U.S. permission. The new



**Shoppers return:** People throng a pedestrian shopping street in Beijing on Saturday. ■ AP

## U.S. House passes \$3 trillion relief Bill

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON

Democrats have powered a massive \$3 trillion coronavirus relief Bill through the House, an election-year measure designed to brace a U.S. economy in free fall and a healthcare system struggling to contain a pandemic still plummeting the country.

Friday's 208-199 vote, with all but one Republican opposed, advances what boils down to a campaign-season display of Democratic economic and healthcare priorities. It has restrictions will cut off Huawei's access to one of its major suppliers, the Taiwanese chipmaker TSMC, which also manufactures chips for Apple and other tech firms.

The U.S. last year banned Huawei from using U.S.-manufactured semiconductors in their products. China has threatened retaliation

no chance of becoming law as written, but will likely spark difficult negotiations with the White House and Senate Republicans. Any product would probably be the last major COVID-19 response Bill before November's elections.

The enormous Democratic measure would cost more than the prior four coronavirus Bills combined. It would deliver almost \$1 trillion for State and local governments, another round of \$1,200 direct payments to individuals and help for the

unemployed, renters and homeowners, college debt holders and the struggling Postal Service.

"Not to act now is not only irresponsible in a humanitarian way, it is irresponsible because it's only going to cost more," warned Speaker Nancy Pelosi. "More in terms of lives, livelihood, cost to the budget, cost to our democracy." Republicans mocked the bill as a bloated Democratic wishlist that was dead on arrival in the Senate and faced a White House veto threat.

against the U.S., including through restrictions on U.S. firms and putting them on an "unreliable entity list", according to a *Global Times* report. U.S. giants Apple, Qualcomm and Boeing are among the firms that may be targeted, the report said.

U.S.-China relations are again on the rocks with

## U.S. could restore some funding to WHO

REUTERS  
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Saturday that his administration was considering numerous proposals about the World Health Organization (WHO), including one in which Washington would pay about 10% of its former level. Fox News, citing a draft letter, reported late on Friday that Mr. Trump was poised to restore partial funding to the WHO, matching China's assessed contribution. If the U.S. matches China's contribution, its new funding level will be about one-tenth its previous funding amount of about \$400 million per year.

## Record high in Russia daily toll

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
MOSCOW

Russia on Saturday recorded its highest daily death toll yet from COVID-19 while new cases fell to the lowest level in two weeks. Russia is in second place in the world to the U.S. with 2,72,043 cases, with 9,200 new cases announced on Saturday, the lowest number since May 2. But the number of deaths announced on Saturday for the last 24 hours was the highest yet in Russia, at 119. The total number of officially confirmed deaths is now 2,537, lower than a number of other countries with fewer cases.

# Trump hopeful of having COVID-19 vaccine by year-end

He says U.S. will 'donate ventilators to our friends in India'

SIRIRAM LAKSHMAN

U.S. President Donald Trump said he hopes there will be a COVID-19 vaccine by the end of the year while officially announcing a new effort to combat the pandemic, "Operation Warp Speed".

"Its [Operation Warp Speed's] objective is to finish developing and then to manufacture and distribute a proven coronavirus vaccine as fast as possible. Again, we'd love to see if we could do it prior to the end of the year," Mr. Trump said at a press conference in the Rose Garden on Friday, flanked by officials, including Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar and Defence Secretary Mark Esper.

Mr. Trump said former head of vaccines at pharma company GlaxoSmithKline, Moncef Slaoui, and General Gustave Perna, who heads the U.S. Army's Material Command, would lead the vaccine development and distribution effort.

Mr. Trump said that roughly 100 vaccine candidates from around the world were evaluated of which 14 were considered promising

and the list is being narrowed further.

Mr. Trump's claims around the coronavirus and the U.S.'s response to it have often been at odds with the facts on the ground. Experts, including current and former members of the administration, have cast doubt on how quickly a vaccine can be ready for large scale distribution. Rick Bright, a vaccine official turned whistleblower who had been removed from his role, recently told the U.S. Congress that even a 12-18 month framework for vaccines was optimistic.

#### Clinical trial data

However, the President's timescale for vaccine production was echoed by Mr. Slaoui.

"I have very recently seen early data from a clinical trial with a coronavirus vaccine. And this data made me feel even more confident that we will be able to deliver a few hundred million doses of vaccine by the end of 2020," Mr. Slaoui said.

Mr. Trump also said the U.S. was working with other countries on developing the vaccine. "We want to get to

the solution. We know exactly where the other countries are, and we'll be very happy if they are able to do it. We'll help them with delivery. We'll help them with – in every way we can. We have no ego when it comes to this. No ego whatsoever."

In response to a request for a message to Indian Americans, Mr. Trump said India and the U.S. were working together and that many Indian Americans were working on the vaccine. "And we're working very much with India too. And we have a tremendous Indian population in the U.S. And many of the people that you're talking about are working on the vaccine too. Great scientists and researchers," he said.

Mr. Trump also told reporters he was sending ventilators to India, a subject he also tweeted about. "I am proud to announce that the United States will donate ventilators to our friends in India. We stand with India and @narendramodi during this pandemic. We're also cooperating on vaccine development. Together we will beat the invisible enemy!"

## Key State Department watchdog fired

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump has fired the State Department's Inspector General, an Obama administration appointee whose office was critical of alleged political bias in the agency's management. The ouster is the latest in a series of moves against independent executive branch watchdogs.

A senior department official said Mr. Trump removed Steve Linick from his job on Friday but gave no reason. In a letter to Congress, Mr. Trump said Linick, who had held the job since 2013, no longer had his full confidence and that his removal would take effect in 30 days. Mr. Trump did not mention Mr. Linick by name. Democrats in Congress

immediately cried foul, with the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee suggesting that Mr. Linick was fired in part in retaliation for opening an investigation into Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Mr. Linick will be replaced by Stephen Akard, a former career foreign service officer who has close ties to Vice President Mike Pence, said the official.

## U.S. to file anti-trust charges against Google

Separate suits at federal, State levels

CECILIA KANG  
DAVID MCCABE  
WASHINGTON

The Justice Department is planning to file anti-trust charges against Google as early as this summer, said two people with knowledge of the situation, in what would be one of the biggest anti-trust actions by the U.S. since the late 1990s.

The Justice Department is still investigating the Internet company and has been making progress on its case, said the people, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The regulators are focused on Google's dominance in the online advertising industry, and the case will also involve allegations that the company abused its dominant position in online search to harm competitors,

the people said. State Attorneys General are likely to file their own anti-trust lawsuits against Google or join the Justice Department case sometime this year, said a person with knowledge of the state investigation.

The moves would also set a bench mark for how regulators and lawmakers proceed with investigations into other large tech companies such as Facebook and Amazon, which the Federal Trade Commission, State Attorneys General and Congress are scrutinising for their market power and corporate behaviour. ■ NY TIMES

American officials scrambled on Friday to keep Afghanistan's tenuous peace process from falling apart, blaming the Islamic State (IS) for horrific attacks that have recently killed dozens of people and further inflamed tensions between the Taliban and the government.

Zalmay Khalilzad, the chief U.S. negotiator for Afghan reconciliation talks, acknowledged "challenges and difficulties" in moving ahead with plans to create a power-sharing government that were outlined more than two months ago.

But he urged the Taliban and Afghan officials to resist returning to violence that could threaten efforts to strike a peace deal and to withdraw U.S. troops after more than 18 years of war. He blamed the IS's Afghan

## Stay the course on peace deal: Khalilzad

U.S. envoy blames IS for attacks; urges Afghan govt. not to return to violence



**No end to hostilities:** People fleeing a healthcare facility after an attack in Kabul, Afghanistan, on May 12. ■ NY TIMES

wing for stoking horrific attacks, including this week on a maternity hospital in Kabul, as the terrorist group seeks to inflame tensions.

#### Blame on Taliban

Afghan officials have blamed the Taliban for both the hospital attack that killed at least 15 on Tuesday and a bombing, the same day and about

100 miles away, against a funeral procession of a police commander that killed at least 25.

President Ashraf Ghani of Afghanistan has vowed to resume military offensives against the Taliban, while the Taliban has accused the Kabul government of falsely using the recent attacks as an excuse to abandon the peace

agreement.

Mr. Khalilzad maintained that the IS had targeted both the hospital and the funeral procession and said that he was eager to see any evidence that the Afghan government could provide that would indicate otherwise.

He acknowledged that the Taliban had not fully ended its attacks. But Mr. Khalilzad said the group had not explicitly violated an earlier agreement to ease hostilities that was a condition of opening direct peace talks with the government.

The U.S. military is still on track to draw down its forces in Afghanistan to roughly 8,600 troops, Jonathan Hoffman, a Pentagon spokesman, said on Friday. That benchmark was outlined in the deal with the Taliban.

The current U.S. troop number in the country is just under 12,000. ■ NY TIMES

## Rwanda genocide financier held

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
PARIS

French police on Saturday arrested one of the last key suspects in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, describing him as its "financier".

Felicien Kabuga was living under a false identity in the Paris suburbs, the prosecutor's office and police said in a joint statement.

The operation, carried out at dawn, resulted in the arrest of a fugitive "who has been sought by the judicial authorities for 25 years", the statement said.

Mr. Kabuga is accused of creating the notorious Interahamwe militia that carried out massacres in the 1994 genocide. He also helped create the equally notorious Radio-Television Libre des Mille Collines that incited people to carry out murder.

## INTERVIEW | PATRICIA SCOTLAND

# 'Commonwealth collaboration has never been more important'

India has acted swiftly to tackle the pandemic and the survival rate in the country is one of the best in the world, says Commonwealth Secretary General

NARAYAN LAKSHMAN

As the world continues to grapple with the debilitating human toll and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, multilateral organisations are doing what they can to coordinate policy responses worldwide. The Commonwealth Secretariat, whose administrative hub in London covers 54 countries encompassing over 30% of the world's population, has been at the forefront of this global institutional response. Its Secretary General, Baroness Patricia Scotland, spoke about the specific goals of its multi-country initiatives. Edited excerpts:

Government Meeting,

"Lives have been lost, economies are shrinking, and livelihoods have been shattered. It is difficult to predict what the new normal will look like." How can Commonwealth nations reach that new normal?

One of the things we must do is understand how we can collaborate even more trenchantly, because the tragedy that we are facing is that COVID-19 has touched every single part of our lives. There is going to be no turning back to how we were before. Our reality now is that this pandemic may be the first pandemic that we face and not the last.

It is putting enormous strain on each of our countries, because it is not just a health pandemic. We are going to be facing a climate crisis,

and those two [crises] intersect in such a way that we will potentially have to face an economic tsunami.

These three coming together means that Commonwealth collaboration has never been more important. If humanity is to survive, we must come up with a different construct. I believe this is going to be our new normal.

How will Commonwealth nations face up to the health aspect of this challenge? In India, for example, we may be facing a shortage of critical medical equipment, including PPEs, ventilators, and testing kits.

Four years ago, when I became Secretary General, the Commonwealth Health Ministers were already focusing on the reality that in order to

critical things that we had to have was a universal healthcare system. But the variance between the universal health systems was wide. Some were extremely expensive and were seen to be beyond the reach of a number of our small and developing states.

So, we asked a different question: How do we develop a Commonwealth-identifiable method which could be potentially applicable to all? How do we design the essence of what will deliver a cost-effective and cost-efficient mechanism that will enable us to have universal coverage, which would enable us to respond to epidemic and pandemic health issues?

The wonder of the Commonwealth is that each country was willing to say that it would give its brothers

and sisters within the Commonwealth everything it knew about how to work together. India has produced so many exciting new developments.

We are using the Indian ability for *jugaad* – to take things and make them better – as something that the whole Commonwealth can join into. This is an area of real challenge.

How can Commonwealth nations, including India, balance the trade-off between nationwide lockdown as a means to enforce social distancing, and their devastating economic impact especially on migrant workers?

In order to have long-term wealth, we have to have health. What is the price of a human life? I believe that In-

dia has been an exemplar because what Prime Minister Narendra Modi did was to act swiftly.

If you look at the 1.3 billion population of India, the cost to India in terms of loss of life, which might have been a similar percentage to what has happened in many European countries, would have been unbearable and, thankfully, unimaginable. The COVID-19 lockdown is estimated to cost India \$4.5 billion each day, but that price, which has been paid by India, has meant that the survival rate in India has been one of the best right the way across the world.

Yes, the COVID-19 pandemic is radically changing what we know to be our position, but it is producing innovative solutions for our young people – 60% of our Commonwealth is under 30 years of age – leading to new jobs, industries and futures.

#### how is that approach impacted by the pandemic?

The Commonwealth has always been at the forefront of the climate change agenda, not because of the rhetoric, but because our Member States were suffering the consequences of climate change.

Whether the U.S. will choose to wake up to our reality is not a matter that we can have undermine our understanding of the reality. We must do that which we can do in order to protect our Member States and the world.

Yes, the COVID-19 pandemic is radically changing what we know to be our position, but it is producing innovative solutions for our young people – 60% of our Commonwealth is under 30 years of age – leading to new jobs, industries and futures.

# Street vendor loans an uncharted turf for big banks

Commercial banks have no experience extending such loans; small finance banks, MFIs with speedy disbursal could help

**MANOJ SAHA**

MUMBAI

The recent announcement by the government to offer loans to street vendors has caught commercial banks of the country off guard. The reason is simple: hardly any such loans were extended by these banks in the past.

They have virtually no experience in extending loans of that size and to this sector, who are mostly in the urban clusters.

The scheme, which was announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday, proposes bank credit facility for initial working capital up to ₹10,000 for each vendor. There was no business for these street vendors for the last 50 days with the nationwide lockdown in place. This scheme will cover urban as well as rural vendors doing business in the adjoining urban areas.

Extending a loan of ₹10,000 does not excite a



**Tough call:** There's no time to build savings habit, as a vendor needs loan immediately, says an official. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

mainstream banker. It is expected that 50 lakh street vendors (data collected from state governments) will be benefited under this scheme and a credit of ₹5,000 crore would flow to these sectors, the finance ministry said adding that use of digital payments and timely repayments will be incentivised through monetary rewards.

Only a fraction of these 50 lakh may have a credit history. Some bankers suggested the self help group model

which are followed to extend loans in the rural areas. Under this model, a group comprising women borrowers mostly, is formed with 10-12 individuals of a neighbourhood in a rural area, where individuals of the group take responsibility for timely repayment by other members. These groups are required to show savings habit, for at least six months, before lending can start.

"The problem is that it may not be feasible to form such a group in urban areas as people there are apprehensive to be a guarantor of another borrower in the group," said another bank official. "Also, there is no time to build savings habit as the vendor requires the loan immediately," the official added.

The question is how to do the credit appraisal for an entity without a credit history. Some bankers suggested the self help group model

player to make the scheme a success. SFBs and micro-finance institutions have customers who belong to these community, and have expertise in extending small ticket loans.

For the scheme to become acceptable for lenders, certain key aspects should be kept in mind while formulating the scheme, bankers said.

"First is about the interest rate. Yes, there is a need for an interest cap for such loans, but that should be linked to the cost of funds. Ideally, it should be linked to the MCLR [marginal cost of funds based lending rate] rather than the government prescribing a particular rate," said the chief executive of a small finance bank.

In such a scenario, the micro-lenders and small finance banks that focus on lending to the urban poor could emerge as the key

tion short and simple.

"It should be a one-page document. The purpose of this loan is speed and the convenience at which it is delivered. If you make the borrower run around for a week, he will lose interest. Customer delight is key for the scheme to be a success" the chief executive said.

The other issue is with the credit guarantee part. Loans under this scheme are likely to be under the Mudra scheme. Mudra loans are guaranteed by Credit Guarantee Trust for Micro And Small Enterprises (CGTMS).

According to bankers, it is not easy to get claims for CGTMS in case there is a default. "So many questions are asked for settling claims. They want to see the loan appraisal report. Everyone is wiser in hindsight...it is easy to say the appraisal was not proper once a loan turns non-performing," said a banker.

# Ordnance Factories Board is a 'cautious bet'

'Lot depends on funding, govt. control'

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

MUMBAI

The government's decision to corporatise the Ordnance Factories Board (OFB) and look at listing it on the bourses will offer investors an opportunity to own shares in a niche company, but a lot would depend on how the government would act it in terms of funding, order flow and bureaucratic control, say market players.

On Saturday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the long-pending corporatisation of OFB had been approved and while the entity would not be privatised, the government would look at listing the entity to enhance the transparency in its operations.

"Defence is a lucrative niche segment, but has huge working capital requirements and government control," said Paras Bothra, president - Equity Research, Ashika Stock Broking. "Ordnance factory would enjoy limited competition due to licensing related entry barriers, but at the same time it would be dependent on a single customer, which is the government. It will have to deal with bureaucracy and order flow could be erratic due to slow decision making. So, there would be certain impediments as well," added Mr. Bothra.

"The government has many ordnance factories and in all probability, there would be some sort of reorganisation to classify them into different categories and then list them on the bourses with clear indication that these companies would not be privatised. Another advantage for the company could be that once it is listed, it could get exposure to overseas markets as well which may not be the case today," he added. A section of market participants, however, feel that investors would take a cautious approach.

"Defence is a lucrative niche segment, but has huge working capital requirements and government control," said Paras Bothra, president - Equity Research, Ashika Stock Broking.

"Ordnance factory would enjoy limited competition due to licensing related entry barriers, but at the same time it would be dependent on a single customer, which is the government. It will have to deal with bureaucracy and order flow could be erratic due to slow decision making. So, there would be certain impediments as well," added Mr. Bothra.

## Centre gives nod for export of masks

Coal sector will get a boost as private parties can now bid for 50 blocks: CARE Ratings

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

MUMBAI

The Centre on Saturday opened up export of non-medical, non-surgical masks, which was prohibited so far.

According to a notification from the Directorate General of Foreign Trade, dated May 16, all types of masks, made of cotton, silk, wool, or knitted fabric, is permitted for exports, except medical and surgical masks.

Textile exporters in Tirupur and Coimbatore, who recently ventured into production of masks and personal protection equipment on a large-scale, have welcomed the announcement.

Chairman of Apparel Export Promotion Council A. Sakthivel said India has the potential to export masks worth \$1 billion in the next one month. The exports were prohibited for almost two months now. Textile hubs such as Tirupur will benefit from this and the manufacturers will be able to meet the international standards.

Raja M. Shanmugham, president of Tirupur Exporters' Association, said countries such as Vietnam had already exported large quantities of cloth masks. "There is a surge in demand internationally for cloth masks and brands also want to sell it as an accessory. This is big opportunity for Indian exporters," he said. Convenor of Indian Textile Exporters Federation Prabhu Dhamodharan urged manufacturers in Tamil Nadu to tap the opportunity.

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

MUMBAI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's structural reform measures in the coal and mining sector are expected to give a boost to private investments in the sector and reduce India's reliance on imports.

"Our assessment is that if it is implemented at the earliest, these much needed reforms will double these sectors' contribution to the GDP," Ajay Kapur, CEO - Aluminium & Power Business, Vedanta Ltd., said.

Saurabh Bhatnagar, partner and national leader, Metals & Mining, EY India said, "The introduction of compe-



Introducing private sector participation in the coal sector is expected to build transparency of mine valuations. ■ REUTERS

tition, transparency and private sector participation in the coal sector will automatically build transparency of mine valuations, force rigorous mine planning and

compliance, and invite investments for enhancing operational efficiency to justify the bids made at the time of mine acquisition. These were much-needed reforms

in the mining sector as India is a mineral rich country and any sectoral reforms to attract investments which adds to India's GDP through this sector and save precious foreign exchange are welcome." According to CARE Ratings, the coal sector gets a boost as the private sector can now bid at the auctions for 50 blocks, enhancing supplies, reducing imports, which is good for the economy. The government also plans to auction Coal Bed Methane (CBM) blocks.

Tirtha Biswas, programme lead at Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) said, "The Government of India's big plan

to push coal gasification to replace natural gas in the fertiliser sector would help square energy and food security objectives. However, ammonia produced from coal gasification has a carbon footprint that is 1.8 times higher than that produced from the conventional process using natural gas. This could potentially offset the emissions intensity reductions achieved through investments in renewables."

"Elimination of distinction between captive mines and non-captive will ensure a level playing field for players in the integrated metals space," Mr. Bhatnagar said.

## Privatising discoms of UTs will improve finances

New tariff policy expected to remove cross-subsidies: CII

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

MUMBAI

The Centre's decision to privatise power distribution companies in union territories is seen as a move that will improve government finances and bring much more efficiency to the sector.

"The power sector reforms announced will bring greater sensitivity towards large outstanding dues to power gencos, thus improving the financial health of the industry," Ajay Kapur, CEO - Aluminium & Power Business, Vedanta Ltd., told *The Hindu*.

The government plans to introduce a tariff policy with

reforms focused on consumer rights, promotion of industry and sustainability of sector.

Anish De, partner and national head, Energy and Natural Resources, KPMG in India, said, "Our power, the past two decades of tepid results, despite corporatisation and regulation, have clearly indicated that the state owned enterprises have been unable to deliver efficiency, customer service and governance standards required from a modern power sector. Private ownership should bring in greater efficiency and better governance and help address some of the deep seated pro-

blems of the sector. UTs are a good place to start, though it should be propagated further into state owned discoms."

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) said that the new tariff policy for the power sector can be expected to remove cross-subsidies that are adding to manufacturing costs and make Indian goods more competitive in the global market.

"It is heartening that the government has taken another step on the path of distribution reforms by indicating early implementation of the National Tariff Policy," Sumant Sinha, CMD, ReNew Power, said.

## Aviation sector measures on expected lines'

MRO hub plan will help save forex and enable local overhauling of planes

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

MUMBAI

The three key announcements of Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman concerning the civil aviation sector have been viewed as those on expected lines, while the announcement on MRO (maintenance, repair and operations) needed more clarity on the tax incentives, industry experts said. They said the measures were a positive for the sector.

"The announcements are on expected lines. MROs, more airports through PPP mode, and flexible use of air-space have been on government agenda. We may expect better implementation and execution," said Kapil Kaul, CEO & Director, CAPA Advisory.

"There is no relief likely [for the airline industry] and medium to long term down-sizing of the industry is inevitable unless promoters are able to recapitalise signifi-

cantly. The industry was not promised anything by the government and they will now have to look within for outcomes," Mr. Kaul said.

Commenting on the announcements, GVK Reddy, founder and chairman, GVK Group said, "The move to invite PPP in six more airports will provide AAI the resources to develop smaller airports across the country and popularise the government's Udaan scheme."

"The biggest upside will be its ability to create new jobs and a strong global value chain with the civil-defence business interface, which remains constrained and under-leveraged," he said.

Sujoy Bhattacharya, partner and head, Corporate, Chandhok and Mahajan law firm said,

"Airport privatisation in India has a chequered history. Recently, India privatised six airports, all of which were awarded to the Adani Group via competitive bidding. The key concern in airport privatisation here is - in which cities? For an airport to be successfully privatised, it needs to have the kind of volumes necessary to ensure that the entity that wins the bid actually makes money."

"The only cities that could potentially fit the bill are Chennai and Kolkata. However, these cities were on the privatisation block back in 2014, and neither of them could move forward because of local resistance," he said.

Vishesh C. Chandhok, CEO, Grant Thornton India, said, "We need to see more details on the tax simplification, which will help in making India an MRO hub. I would have also liked to hear more relief measures for the civil aviation sector to keep it alive post-COVID-19."



The plans to make India a global MRO hub will ensure savings of precious foreign

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STAY HOME. STAY VIGILANT.

# WHO backs COVID-19 vaccine trials that deliberately infect participants

The guidelines say it would be 'substantially faster' as far fewer participants need to be exposed to candidate vaccines

R. PRASAD

In new guidelines issued on May 6, the World Health Organization has said that well-designed human challenge studies could not only accelerate COVID-19 vaccine development but also make it more likely that the vaccines ultimately deployed will be far more effective.

In human challenge studies, healthy participants are first administered the candidate vaccine and then deliberately exposed to novel coronavirus. In conventional clinical trials, healthy participants are administered the candidate vaccine, and the safety and efficacy of the vaccine is assessed through natural infection.

#### Compare and select

The guidelines say that it would be "substantially faster" to carry out vaccine field trials through human challenge studies as far fewer participants need to be exposed to candidate vaccines to "provide (preliminary) estimates of efficacy and safety". It says this approach will make it possible to compare the efficacy of multiple vaccine candidates and select the most promising vaccines for larger studies.

In addition to accelerating vaccine development, human challenge studies can help validate tests for immunity to the virus, identify correlates of immune pro-



**Long history:** Such studies have helped accelerate the development of vaccines against typhoid and cholera ■ GETTY IMAGES

tection, and investigate the risks of transmission by infected individuals, it says.

COVID-19 can kill millions (over 3,00,000 people have already died) and strain the healthcare system worldwide. While physical distancing can help to reduce virus spread, it can disproportionately affect the underprivileged groups.

#### Successes and risks

While human challenge studies are ethically controversial, such studies have been performed safely in tens of thousands of people in the last 50 years and helped accelerate the development of vaccines

against typhoid and cholera. Such a study for Zika virus was also conducted.

According to the guidelines, challenge studies would be least risky for young healthy adults aged 18-30 years, as the hospitalisation rates in this age group is about 1% and fatal infection rates around 0.03%. But a March 27 study in the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* found that 20.8% of patients aged 20-44 had severe disease which required hospitalisation, and 4.2% of patients developed critical disease, which required admission to an ICU.

Human challenge studies are to

be carried out only in specialised centres where close monitoring and ready access to early supportive treatment for participants, including critical care if required is available, the WHO says.

But what makes such studies for COVID-19 particularly risky and challenging is the fact that pathogenesis of the disease is poorly understood and there is no approved treatment available in case participants develop the disease.

Potential benefits and risks should be assessed, quantified and compared with other feasible study designs, and the expected benefits should be maximised and the risks minimised, the guidelines say. "Given the ethically sensitive nature of SARS-CoV-2 challenge studies, assessment of their potential benefits and risks should be especially rigorous," it says.

Meanwhile, the U.S. National Institutes of Health is also preparing the ground for human challenge trials for COVID-19 vaccines. The vaccines working group is preparing the scientific and practical considerations for COVID-19 human challenge trials, the *Financial Times* reports.

Michael Felberbaum, a spokesman for FDA told *WIRED* that challenge trials are one of the methods it is considering to speed up COVID-19 vaccine development.

Prof Andrew Pollard, who is

leading the trial of the vaccine developed by the team at the University of Oxford's Jenner Institute told *The Guardian* that there is "huge interest" in the possibility of challenge trials among those working on coronavirus vaccines. "At the moment, because we don't have a rescue therapy, we have to approach challenge studies extremely cautiously," Pollard said.

#### Ethical framework

"Recognizing the uncertainties, risks from SARS-CoV-2 human challenge studies appear comparable to the risks from some other research and activities similar to research," says Seema K. Shah, a medical ethicist from North Western University, in a paper in *Science* authored by her that lays out an ethical framework for conducting such studies. "Given the extraordinary nature of the pandemic, our framework and analysis support laying the groundwork for coronavirus challenge studies." Dr. Shah is also part of the WHO working group that developed the guidelines.

Meanwhile, *NBC News* reports that the multinational testing company SGS and London-based hVIVO are planning human challenge studies. Nearly 20,500 people from 102 countries have already volunteered to participate in such studies.

# Traditional belief and today's science

AYUSH can fight COVID-19, while Ganga Jal can only carry it



## SPEAKING OF SCIENCE

D. BALASUBRAMANIAN

A fortnight ago, the union minister in charge of the National Mission for Clean Ganga approached the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) to conduct research on the use of Ganga river water (Ganga Jal) as a cure to the COVID-19 virus infection. The ICMR pointed out that the data available on this work are not strong enough to start any clinical trials, and possibly decline – touché.

River Ganga is regarded by millions of people as the holiest and most sacred among all the rivers of the world. Starting from the Gangotri glacier at Gaumukh in the Himalayas (3.9 km or 13,000 feet above sea level), it gathers water from several streams on the way to become River Ganga at Devaprayag near Haridwar in the Uttarakhand state. It flows all the way to the Bay of Bengal 2,525 km, with river basins across all the northern Indian flatlands such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal. People (mostly Hindu, but some others too) all across its course worship it, bathe in it, take its water home for pooja and related purposes (I saw it being sold abroad as well, for example, in Indian shops in California). Such is the belief and reverence for Ganga Mata.

#### The Sacred and the profane

Unfortunately, in the Haridwar region itself, pollution of its water has been going on for centuries – largely through human waste disposal and some commercial pollution as well. R. Bhutania and colleagues have published a paper titled: "Assessment of Ganga River Ecosystem at Haridwar, Uttarakhand, India, with reference to Water Quality Index" in the journal *Applied Water Science*, 6, 107-118 (2016), [link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s13201-014-0206-6.pdf](https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s13201-014-0206-6.pdf), which is not at all a happy reading. And the most recent contamination study of river Ganga water has appeared in the December 23, 2019 issue of the *New York Times* ([nytimes.com/2019/12/23/health/ganges-drug-resistant-bacteria.html](https://nytimes.com/2019/12/23/health/ganges-drug-resistant-bacteria.html)). This study summarises the ongoing analysis (by a group of researchers at the IIT Delhi) of the pollution, and the presence of dangerous bacteria in the water, which are resistant to the currently used antibiotic drugs. In other words, right where it starts to flow into the country, *Ganga Jal* is harmful for human and animal health. As it flows downstream, industrial wastes from factories are further dumped, making its water quality and safety even worse. Indeed, a recent report from the holy city of Varanasi says that the current lockdown period has helped the river's water quality improve by 40-50% (*India Today*, April 6, 2020).

How have we allowed this profanity? Surely, a large number of humans who use Ganga water are believers; even many heads of the various industry groups still hold Ganga as sacred, and even offer pooja using its water from time to time, and yet go ahead and pollute it. [It is important to note here that the word 'profane' is not necessarily a denial of belief, but refers to mundane individual concerns, and not 'good versus evil', or 'God versus Satan']. It is a 'what is in there for me' attitude, which is ethically (perhaps even morally) wrong. Given this dichotomy, *Ganga Mata* does not appear to have a safe and clean future.

#### Learn from dolphins, gharials

Getting back to science, given this abundance of poisonous germs (and harmful chemical wastes), one wonders how the 140 fish species, 90 amphibians, reptiles, birds, and the famous Ganges river dolphins and the gharials (fish eating crocodiles) cope with the conditions in the water, particularly, since it is also polluted now by COVID-19. Do they have special immunity, and do they generate antibodies to fight against such pathogens? This is an issue that needs to be studied with care and adapted for human defence against coronaviruses.

Some interesting insights have come about from some recent immunity studies displayed by unusual animals such as llamas, camels and sharks. Mitch Leslie writes in the May 1, 2020 issue of *Science*: "Biologists invent a new way to fight viruses with llama blood and molecular superglue". Miniature antibodies are seen to be pumped out by the immune cells of llamas, camels and sharks, which are about half the size of standard antibodies. The main message here is that these animals generate mini-antibodies, which can be easily synthesised in biology labs and used as weapons to win over viral infection. A detailed paper on how this can be done has just been published in the journal *Cell* (see: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cell.2020.04.031>). More relevant to the dolphins is a paper by C. Celentello and coworkers, "Insights into dolphins' immunology: Immuno-phenotypic study on Mediterranean and Atlantic stranded cetaceans"; <https://doi.org/10.3389/2019.00888>. The Mediterranean Sea is highly polluted while the waters in Canary Islands are purer.

I believe we can take a lesson from these studies, research on the Ganges river dolphins and the gharials, identify their mini-antibodies, synthesise them in the lab, and adapt them for human use against COVID-19 and other such coronaviruses. The DBT laboratory, National Institute of Animal Biotechnology (NIAB) at Hyderabad might be a possible centre to initiate this.

#### Where the twain do meet

In stark contrast to the above minister, is a request from the minister in charge of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy) to conduct a randomised controlled clinical trial to assess the efficacy of Ashwagandha, Yashtimadhu, Giloy and a polyherbal formulation (called Ayush 64), as prophylactic interventions against COVID-19. This should be conducted since there is sufficient evidence that molecules in traditional herbs and plants have therapeutic properties, and their active molecules discovered, synthesised and used by drug companies. And the polymath M S Valiathan has spent the last two decades, collaborating with Ayurvedic practitioners, biochemists, cell biologists, geneticists and nanotechnologists to evaluate the effects of traditional formulations using today's scientific methods. (Read, for example, his medal lecture: "Ayurvedic Biology: The First Decade" published in *Proceedings of the Indian National Science Academy* 82, No. 1, March 2016, pp. 13-19, where he cites many experiments on Ayurveda using today's science, and their confirmatory results; available free on the web). One such example is: "In vivo effects of traditional Ayurvedic formulations in *Drosophila melanogaster* model relate with therapeutic applications", by V. Dwivedi et al., *PLoS One*, 2012; 7(5):23711-[doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0037113](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0037113). Here is how tradition and today's science meet and merge.

AYUSH can fight COVID-19, *Ganga Jal* can only carry it.

## Make masks at home with cotton and silk

ASWATHI PACHA

Across the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced governments into mandating the use of face masks. The general public has been advised to use cloth masks and not N95 and surgical masks which are reserved for the healthcare workers. But how do we make a good mask? Which material should we use? A new paper in *ACS Nano* shows that a combination of cotton and silk or chiffon is the answer.

Supratik Guha and team from the University of Chicago carried out various studies on commonly available fabrics such as cotton, silk, chiffon, flannel and their combinations. They used an aerosol generation and mixing chamber to produce particles ranging from 10 nanometre to 10 micrometre in diameter. Using a fan, the aerosols were blown through the cloths at two different air flows corresponding to a person's respiration at rest and moderate exertion.

**Cotton and chiffon**  
The number and size of particles in air were measured before and after passing through the fabric. One layer of cotton along with two layers of chiffon showed the highest filtration efficiency of 97%.

The researchers point out that the tightly woven cotton can act as a mechanical barrier to the aero-

sols and the chiffon serves as an electrostatic barrier. "As kids, we used to do this experiment where we would rub a comb on our dry hairs to lift small pieces of paper. Electrostatic filtration effectively works on the same principle. Some fabrics such as natural silk and chiffon can hold static charges. When small particles come in close proximity to these fabrics, they are attracted and trapped inside them, thus acting as filters," explains Abhinav Prakash, a post-doctoral researcher and one of the authors of the paper in an email to *The Hindu*.

However, even a small 1% gap in the mask drastically reduced its efficiency. "The importance of a good fit needs to be emphasised. Even for a mask as good as an N95 mask, the filtration efficiency can drop significantly if they are not properly worn," he adds.

The idea behind using cloth masks using common fabrics is that they can be made readily available to the general public in the current COVID-19 situation where there is a shortage of N95 and surgical masks," writes Dr. Prakash.

"Their reusability and best ways of treating them still need to be studied. Also, we haven't performed any tests on how long they can be used. We are currently working on studying the effect of different wash cycles on the filtration efficiencies."

**IISc develops antimicrobial composite material and testing protocols for PPEs**  
It stops particles over 0.3 micrometres in size with about 95% efficiency

SHUBHASHREE DESIKAN

A team from Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru (IISc) has developed a three-layered antimicrobial composite material of low-cost for making masks. And another team, including members from IISc, is involved in testing masks and developing a way of recycling them.

The mask material consists of three layers. The outermost layer is made of polyester fabric with polymeric nanofibre deposited on it to make it water-repellent. The middle layer is also a polyester fabric on both sides of which polymeric nanofibres containing antiviral and antibacterial agents are deposited. This layer inactivates both bacteria and virus when it comes into contact with it. The innermost layer is a comfort layer consisting of cotton fabric.

**Testing anti-virus action**  
"The middle layer also has positively charged polymer (polycations) which inactivate the microbes that come in contact with this layer," explains Suryasarthi Bose, from Department of Materials Engineering, who is a leader of the project along with Kaushik Chatterjee also from the same department.

The material was tested by Umesh Varshney's team in the Department of Microbiology and Cell

bacterial filtration efficiency, blood penetration, breathing resistance (difficulty in breathing), and how good a fit to the face the mask is.

**Physical parameters**  
According to Akshay Naik of Centre for Nanoscience and Engineering, IISc, right now, their team tests masks for two factors: efficiency of particle filtration and breathing resistance. For instance, N95 masks are supposed to filter out 95% of particles of size 0.3 micrometre and above.

"The entire system is built with components that we could source from our labs and some components that we could 3D-print," says Prof. Naik. "The idea was to help hospitals or other agencies check the quality of new masks received or to test decontaminated masks for possible reuse."

Prof. Naik is quick to reiterate, "We obviously make it clear that this is not a substitute for legal certification. We also prohibit people from using the data that we provide or test that we do for any commercial use."

The team is also working on ways to decontaminate the masks and the number of times it can be recycled. However, they are clear that masks, especially the N95, are meant to be used just once, and reusing them after decontamination is really the last option.

**Durability of response**  
Also, how long neutralising antibodies against the virus would last is currently not known, though one study found that they persist for up to 40 days from symptom onset. In the case of the 2002 SARS, levels of IgG remained high for nearly four-five months before declining during the next two-three years. For MERS, the antibodies persisted for up to 34 months.

"Detection of IgG and neutralising antibodies is not synonymous with durable immunity," they write. A small study posted in a preprint server *bioRxiv* found

that four rhesus macaques that were infected with coronavirus and recovered did not get reinfected when exposed to the virus 28 days after the first infection. Whether humans too will exhibit such protection is not known, though no cases have so far been reported of people getting reinfected. The detection of over 220 cases of "reinfection" in South Korea was found to be a case of virus remnants being detected and not reinfection or reactivation.

**Reinfections possible**  
Reinfection is mighty possible with at least three of the four coronaviruses which cause common cold. "The reasons for this reinfection are not fully known, but evidence suggests that possibilities include both short-lived protective immunity and re-exposure to genetically distinct forms of the same viral strain," they write.

But WHO cautions that "there is currently no evidence that people who have recovered from COVID-19

and have antibodies are protected from a second infection". Infected people may have some level of protection against the virus, but the level and duration of protection is still not known.

Finally, they caution about reading too much from antibody testing of the general population to know the extend of virus spread in the community. Antibody tests have been known to produce wrong results as the sensitivity and specificity of these tests is not known. "It is presently premature to use such assays to determine whether individuals are immune to reinfection" they say. "It remains to be determined whether a robust IgG response corresponds with immunity."

According to them, only well-designed longitudinal studies involving those who have recovered from COVID-19 for recurrent illness can help provide the much-needed information about reinfection and the duration of protection by the antibodies.

"We need to be careful while using terms in this way around natural infections in humans because it can lead to a very brutal arithmetic which does not put people, life and suffering at the centre of that equation," he said. "No one is safe until everyone is safe," Dr. Ryan added. The WHO director also warned about the dangerous assumption that as this disease was mistakenly assumed that as this disease

dbala@lpe.org



## Reforms and agriculture

What are the measures announced by the government to deal with the farm crisis across the country?

PRISCILLA JEBARAJA

**The story so far:** With *mandi* closures and supply chain disruptions causing havoc in agricultural marketing, the COVID-19 pandemic has put a spotlight on some of the critical infrastructure gaps and long-pending governance issues that plague the farm sector. The third tranche of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan listed measures to deal with those gaps, though there has been no announcement on an immediate economic stimulus for the sector.

### What are the reforms announced in the farm sector?

The third tranche announced on Friday focused on long-term issues in the agricultural sector, by promising financing to strengthen infrastructure, build better logistics and ramp up storage capacities, as well as proposing three major governance and administrative reforms that have been in the pipeline for many years.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's rationale for the third tranche was that improving farmers' income needed such long-term investments and changes, rather than a focus on short-term crop loans.

However, a number of farmers and activists said that in the light of the COVID-19 crisis, immediate support and relief in the form of cash transfers, loan waivers, and compensation for unsold produce should have come before long-term reforms.

### How will they change the agriculture sector?

Taking the opportunity of a crisis situation, the Finance Minister has pushed through reforms that the Centre has been trying to implement for years.

For instance, the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 came into being at a time of food scarcity and famine; last year's Economic Survey called it an "anachronistic legislation". It allows the government to control price rise and inflation by imposing stock limits and movement restrictions on commodities, giving States the power to regulate dealer licensing, confiscate stock and even jail traders who fail to comply with restrictions. Earlier this year, it was used to control soaring onion prices.

Traders have long complained of harassment under the Act on the suspicion of hoarding, black marketing and speculation, while food processors and exporters have also pointed out that they may need to stock commodities for longer periods of time. The Act has disincentivised construction of storage capacity and hindered farm exports.

Discussions about amending or repealing the Act have been going on for almost two decades. On Friday, the Finance Minister announced that the Act would be amended to deregulate six categories of agricultural foodstuffs: cereals, pulses, edible oils, oilseeds, potato and onion. Stock limits on these commodities will not be imposed except in times of a national calamity or a famine, and will not be imposed at all on food processors or value chain participants, which/who will be allowed to store as much as allowed by their installed capacity.

Exporters will also be exempted.

It is hoped that the amendment will bring more private investment into warehouses and post-harvest agricultural infrastructure, including processors, mills and cold chain storage. It could help farmers sell their produce at more competitive rates if there is no fear of government intervention to artificially suppress market prices, and is likely to give a boost to farm exports.

### What about the other planned reforms?

The Centre plans to bring in a new federal law to break the nearly half-century long monopoly of the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) *mandis*. It has already tried the route of trying to coax State governments into adopting its Model APMC Amendment Act which aims at developing unified State-level markets by offering a State-wide licence and single point levy of market fees while also allowing private markets, direct marketing, ad hoc wholesale buying and e-trading.

However, only a few large States ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party, including Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, have amended their Acts. Now, the Centre proposes to bypass States altogether by bringing in a federal law to abolish inter-State trade barriers.

The hope is that these reforms will bring in more options for the farmer, offering more competitive prices if there is a wider choice of buyers. The plan to bring in a legal framework for contract farming also aims to provide more certainty and choice for farmers, although some experts caution that recent drafts of contract farming law promote the interests of the large corporate player at the expense of safeguarding the small farmer.

### How are infrastructure investments expected to help?

Reforming governance structures is of no use unless there is infrastructure on the ground to enable farmers to take advantage of the wider choices with which they are being provided. A ₹1-lakh crore agriculture infrastructure fund run by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development will help create affordable and financially viable post-harvest management infrastructure at the farm gate and aggregation points.

The Finance Minister emphasises that her announcements would also bring better infrastructure and logistics support to fish workers, dairy and other livestock farmers, beekeepers and vegetable and medicinal plant growers.

She also offered support to lakhs of small informal food processors, mostly women, who need technical upgradation and marketing support in order to compete in a changing marketplace.

## How will the COVID-19 relief for MSMEs help?

Will micro, small and medium enterprises be able to kickstart their businesses? How do the proposals make it easier for banks to lend?

RAGHUVIR SRINIVASAN

**The story so far:** In his address to the nation on May 12, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a ₹20-lakh crore economic relief package titled Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. The relief package is being unveiled in tranches (from May 13) by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. The first tranche, aimed at micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and at some individuals was announced by her on Wednesday.

### What are the proposals aimed at offering relief to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)?

The government has proposed to offer collateral-free loans to MSMEs which will be fully guaranteed by the Centre. There will be a principal repayment moratorium for 12 months and the interest rate will be capped and there will be no guarantee fee.

All MSMEs with a turnover of up to ₹100 crore and with outstanding credit of up to ₹25 crore will be eligible to borrow up to 20% of their total outstanding credit as on February 29, 2020. These loans will have a four-year tenure and the scheme will be open until October 31. A total of ₹3-lakh crore has been allocated for this.

### How will this benefit MSMEs?

This will act as initial seed money for these small enterprises hit by zero cash flow due to the national lockdown. This loan will help them buy raw materials, pay initial bills and daily wages to employees. In short, this will be like working capital for cranking up their businesses again.

Banks, though flush with funds, have been unwilling to lend to this category of borrowers as they fear that the money will not be repaid. These small businesses have also pledged all their assets already for other loans and do not have any more assets to pledge.

It is to break this logjam that the government has said that it will backstop banks up to ₹3-lakh crore and said that these loans do not need collaterals. Banks are now expected to be more comfortable in assisting this category of borrowers because the risk is zero (since the loans are guaranteed by the central government).

This is the single biggest proposal in the last three tranches of announcements under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan and small businesses are expected to benefit from this in a big way. About 45 lakh MSMEs are expected to gain from this proposal.

### Are these the only proposals for MSMEs?

No. A partial credit guarantee scheme has been extended to enable promoters of these units to increase their equity. A total of ₹20,000 crore will be funnelled through the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) whereby banks will lend money to promoters which can be infused as equity in their businesses. About two lakh stressed MSMEs with non-performing assets (NPAs) are projected to benefit from this. The CGTMSE will offer a partial credit guarantee to banks.

There is also a proposal to infuse equity into MSMEs through a Fund of funds system where the government will provide ₹10,000 crore as initial corpus of the Fund. This will be leveraged to raise ₹50,000 crore which will be used to support MSMEs in desperate need of equity through 'daughter funds' of the main Fund of funds. The aim is to expand size and capacity of the MSMEs with equity and help them get listed on the stock exchanges.

### Was not a change in the definition of MSMEs also



About 45 lakh micro, small and medium enterprises are expected to gain from the government's measures. Banks are likely to feel more comfortable to help these borrowers as the loans will be fully guaranteed by the Centre

**announced?**  
Yes, henceforth MSMEs will be defined not based on their investment alone but also on their turnover. The definition has been tweaked and the existing distinction between manufacturing and services units has been eliminated.

Henceforth, a unit with up to ₹1 crore investment and ₹5 crore turnover will qualify as a micro unit, investment up to ₹10 crore and turnover up to

₹50 crore will qualify as a small unit, and investment up to ₹20 crore and turnover up to ₹100 crore will qualify as a medium enterprise. It has been a long-standing demand from industry to hike the investment limits, as with inflation, units often cross the threshold that will bring them benefits. To prevent this, they either run their operations at a reduced level or incorporate multiple units so that turnover is distributed in a way that they remain within the threshold that will give them the benefits. The decision to add turnover criteria to investment is seen as a good decision as there are units that leverage a small capital to post large revenues.

### What are the proposals for non-banking financial companies (NBFCs)?

NBFCs, housing finance companies and micro finance institutions are finding it difficult to raise debt capital due to a confidence crisis in the debt markets. The government has, therefore, announced a special liquidity scheme of ₹30,000 crore to pick up investment grade debt paper from both primary and secondary markets. Such paper will be fully guaranteed by the government. This is expected to break the low confidence cycle in the market for lending to the above category of borrowers.

In addition, to help low rated finance companies to raise debt, the existing partial credit guarantee scheme has been extended to cover primary market debt paper wherein the first 20% loss will be borne by the government.

A total of ₹45,000 crore has been set aside for this Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme 2.0 that will offer liquidity to paper rated AA and below and even unrated paper.

**Do electricity distribution companies (discoms) also feature in the first tranche announced?**  
Yes, discoms are in a huge liquidity crisis and unable to pay their dues to electricity generation companies. Their cash flow and revenues have been hit due to low demand from industrial consumers for power during the lockdown. The various State discoms together owe about ₹94,000 crore to their suppliers, the generation and transmission companies.

The government, through Power Finance Corporation-Rural Electrification Corporation, will infuse liquidity of ₹90,000 crore to discoms which will be securitised against their receivables from consumers. The loans given for the purpose of discharging their dues to generation companies will be against a guarantee from the respective State related to the discom. This emergency liquidity infusion will avert a crisis where generation and transmission companies stop supplies to discoms that are in default.

**What are the measures for the common man?**  
In March, when the first relief package called the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana was announced, the government offered to pay the 24% provident fund contribution (employer+employee) for those earning up to ₹15,000 a month as salary and working in units that employ less than 100 workers for three months. This has now been extended for another three months up to August. The statutory PF contribution for those employed in the private sector (and not in the category of establishments above) has been reduced to 10% (from 12% now) for the next three months in order to increase liquidity in their hands. This is expected to benefit 4.3 crore people and 6.5 lakh establishments and release a total of ₹6,750 crore liquidity.

In addition to the above, the rate of tax deducted at source (TDS) and tax collected at source (TCS) has been reduced by 25% for a whole range of receipts. Thus, in payments to contractors, professional fees, rent, interest, commission, brokerage, etc, the TDS will be 25% lower. The TCS paid while buying a car of over ₹10 lakh in value and TCS collected in property transactions will also be lower.

The lower TDS is not applicable on monthly salaries that employees receive.

In the cases where TDS/TCS has been reduced, the tax liability is not reduced. It will be payable while filing return or while paying advance tax. The idea is only to offer immediate cash relief to people. The lower TDS/TCS kicks in right away and will stay until March 31, 2021.

## Will migrants benefit from the Centre's measures?

What role will State governments play? How will the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme help?

SRINIVASAN RAMANI

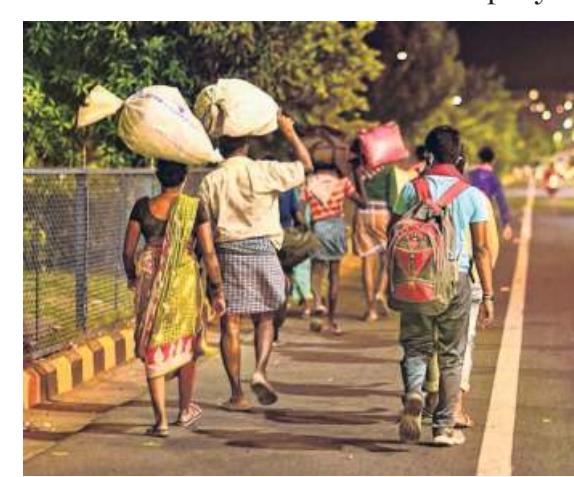
**The story so far:** In her second tranche of COVID-19 relief package announcements, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the steps taken by the government for migrants and farmers during the national lockdown, including free ration for stranded workers. Acknowledging the significance of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) during the pandemic, she said it had helped provide jobs to returning workers in rural areas and advised States to continue the process in the monsoon season as well. Migrant workers, the urban poor and small farmers are the targeted beneficiaries of these announcements.

### Why and how have migrant workers suffered during the lockdown?

One of the most severely affected sections of the population due to the extended lockdown has been migrant workers, especially those in urban areas across the country. The recent Periodic Labour Force Survey conducted in 2017 by the National Sample Survey Office of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, had estimated that there were around 14,953,750 urban workers who had vulnerable jobs. These workers included helpers in a household enterprise and who did not receive a regular salary and casual labourers who received daily wages; besides this, the number considers only those in the bottom 50% of the wealth pyramid in 2017-18, based on their monthly per capita expenditure. This number extended to an estimated 2.5 crore people if those who had salaried jobs but did not receive any paid leave and other benefits were included. Migrant workers numbered more than 81 lakh people among this segment.

Once the national lockdown was announced, it was this segment of the population which was hurt the most as many of them lost their jobs (the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, or CMIE, estimates unemployment to have reached 24.2%, with urban unemployment being 26%) and had barely any income to tide over the lockdown. Many migrant workers sought to return home to their home towns, but the absence of transport prevented them from doing so. State governments were supposed to set up relief camps and shelters providing food and other amenities for these workers, but implementation was skewed (69% of the overall shelters and camps were situated only in Kerala, according to an affidavit submitted by the Union government to the Supreme Court in early April).

With increasing distress, many migrant workers took



recourse to their own means of transport to go home – many had no other option but to walk long distances – before the central government finally notified the start of services of "Shramik trains" to transport them. Migrant workers have continued to travel to escape distress conditions at their places of work and in the absence of any social security net.

### What has been announced for migrant workers?

The Finance Minister acknowledged the significance of the MGNREGS in providing jobs to workers returning to rural areas. The government noted that work off-take increased in May. This followed instructions from the Centre to restart the scheme after work hours fell drastically in April. The Centre has now advised States/Union Territories to provide work through the scheme and to extend this to the monsoon season as well in providing jobs in plantations, horticulture, livestock-related work. The CMIE's latest unemployment survey report also found that while various segments (small traders, salaried employees, entrepreneurs, etc) have suffered significant job losses, the number of farmers in the survey had increased, indicating that farm work has been a source of livelihood during the lockdown.

The government has promised a free supply of 5 kg of foodgrain per person and 1 kg *channa* per family per month for two months, for those migrants who are neither beneficiaries of the National Food Security Act (2013), nor possess State cards. The government expects eight crore migrants to benefit from this scheme and the Centre will spend ₹3,500 crore on this. States will be in charge of implementation and distribution.

Distribution System coverage close to the level legally mandated by the NFSR of 67% of the population. Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan has said that if the number exceeds eight crore, the Centre is ready to provide additional foodgrain for free supply but it would leave it to States to identify genuine beneficiaries. "States can directly supply free ration at shelter camps, or issue distress coupons or adopt any suitable method for free distribution of the food grains and *channa*," Food Secretary Sudhanshu Pandey clarified at a briefing on Saturday.

### What about the One Nation One Ration Card scheme?

The Centre has also said that the One Nation One Ration Card scheme will be enhanced by assuring national portability of 83% by August 2020 and 100% by March 2021. The scheme should allow migrant workers to access food in States other than that of their permanent residence. But concerns remain about availability of ration in shops to allow for distribution to migrant workers as well. In places where the scheme has been implemented so far, the utilisation of the scheme has been very low (800 workers on an average in a month before the lockdown and an average of only 200 workers during the lockdown).

Besides these steps for immediate relief to the workers, the government has also announced that it will launch a scheme under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) to convert government funded housing in the cities into affordable rental housing complexes under PPP mode through a concessionaire.

A special credit facility with liquidity of up to ₹5,000 crore has been announced for street vendors through a special scheme that will facilitate easy credit and will be launched in a month.

### Will small farmers benefit?

Among steps announced to ease credit for small farmers, the government said that the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) will extend an additional refinancing support of ₹30,000 crore for crop loan requirement of rural cooperative banks and regional rural banks.

## Massacre in the maternity ward

The terrorist attack on a Kabul hospital that killed 24 is likely to delay the intra-Afghan peace talks

### KABUL



The journey from the cradle to the grave lasted only a few hours for some Afghan babies at the 100-bed Maternity Hospital in the Dasht-e-Barchi area of Kabul.

In one of the most brutal attacks in the recent past, the hospital, which is operated by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in a predominantly Hazara-Shia neighbourhood, was attacked by the Islamic State terrorists on Tuesday, killing 24, including newborns, mothers and medical staff. The group has previously also targeted areas populated by minority groups. In March, a gurdwara in Kabul came under attack, in which 25 people were killed.

"While pregnant women and ba-

bies, in one of life's most vulnerable states, were seeking healthcare, an unknown number of attackers stormed the maternity ward through a series of explosions and gunfire, lasting for hours," the MSF said in a statement issued after the attack.

"The first few hours after the attack started, were very very difficult," said Dr Bina Najeeb, head of department and paediatric cardiac surgeon at the French Medical Institute for Children (FMIC), one of the few hospitals specialising in childcare in Kabul. "This is not the first time a hospital has been attacked in Kabul. This is one of the worst conflict scenarios, but what was truly worse was that this was a maternity hospital with mothers and their children."

"When a lady delivers a baby, it is hard for her to move for 20-24 hours. She is physically exhausted. And here, we saw mothers in labour try-

ing to escape gunmen shooting at them and their babies," he said, the emotional toll of the previous 48 hours heavy in his voice.

MSF also shared that while the attack was under way "one woman gave birth to her baby, and both are doing well". The images of the aftermath shared by the medical non-profit organisation showed bloodied floors next to the hospital cribs for newborns. "I have been working in Afghanistan for nearly two decades, and this is definitely the most brutal attack I have seen," Dr. Najeeb said.

Many of the children injured during the attack and brought to the hospital are being treated by Dr. Najeeb and his team. Some of them were unidentifiable because they only had small tickets on their hands with the names of their mothers. "We had to launch an immediate campaign to help search for their parents and families within communities," the doctor said. As of Saturday afternoon, six of the 19 babies still remain unidentified in Kabul hospitals.



The sheer brutality of the attack shocked Afghans who had been expecting a reduction in violence during the sacred month of Ramzan, and owing to a deal signed between the U.S. and the Taliban in a bid to end the 19-year-long conflict. While

the Taliban has denied responsibility for the attack, the Afghan government has blamed the growing nexus between the IS and the Haqqani Network, a close ally to the Taliban, for the increasing violence.

"Evidence shows that the Taliban are in a celebratory mood for massacring 'Shias' in a maternity hospital in Kabul," Vice-President Amrullah Saleh tweeted. "We have the IS chief evil for South Asia Abu Omar & chief evil for Khorasan Aslam Faroqi in our custody. Dots are connected. Neither the Taliban hands nor their stained consciousness can be washed of the blood of women, babies & other innocent [people] in the latest senseless carnage."

For many Afghans, the mounting casualties have added to the growing frustration against the Taliban. "Whoever did this, I would say animals are better than them. They continuously prove that they are not following God's way, or the prophet's way," said Balqes Ehsan, a civil activist from Kabul. "Our religion is not

safe because they attack our Masjids and kill our religious scholars, our education is not safe because they attacked my university and I came close to losing my sister," said the young activist, a graduate of American University of Afghanistan, which was attacked by the Taliban in 2016. "And now, our children and mothers are not safe because now they attack our hospitals."

The attack is likely to throw a wedge into the much-delayed intra-Afghan peace talks. The Afghan President has already suspended the Taliban prisoner release, a trust-building gesture to start the talks, and announced that an offensive would be launched against the group.

"You cannot sign peace deals with those killing babies and their mothers. The two things cut each other like fire and water," Mr. Ehsan said. "We had put a heavy stone on our hearts to try and forgive the Taliban for their past and start to talk about peace for the future. But they don't seem to want to cooperate."

## Online hate and its offline costs

Facebook apologised for the rumours spread on its platform during the 2018 anti-Muslim riots

### COLOMBO



At a time when the world is feeling sorry for itself, amid a pandemic that is laying bare all that is wrong and unjust about it, an apology from Facebook made headlines in Sri Lanka.

Over two years after an ugly episode of anti-Muslim violence in the island's Central and Eastern provinces, Facebook has said it "deplores" the misuse of its platform then. The mob violence, unleashed by hardline Sinhala-Buddhist groups, led to at least two deaths and enormous loss to property. Perpetrators carried out planned arson attacks, targeting dozens of mosques, shops and homes of Muslims, even as rumours and hate speech spread like wildfire on Facebook. Then President Maith-

ripala Sirisena declared an emergency and briefly banned Facebook that was seen as a co-conspirator.

"We recognise, and apologise for, the very real human rights impacts that resulted," the tech giant told Bloomberg News. The admission came after human rights consultancy Article One, hired by Facebook to conduct an investigation, in its recent report noted that the hate speech and rumours shared on Facebook "may have led to offline violence".

Facebook has since hired "dozens more" Sinhala and Tamil-speaking moderators, to review and remove content violating what it calls its "community standards". "We deployed proactive hate speech detection technology in Sinhala to help us more quickly and effectively identify potentially violating content," according to a statement from Miranda



Sissons, director of human rights at Facebook. Further, the company said it launched a third-party fact check programme, partnering AFP Sri Lanka and Fact Crescendo to counter misinformation.

What does Facebook's apology

mean to social media users in Sri Lanka? It was both overdue and welcome, says Sanjana Hattotuwa, doctoral scholar at the University of Otago, New Zealand, researching social media and politics.

In his view, the recently released report acknowledges Facebook's failure to heed warnings from Sri Lanka for nearly a decade, around how the platform and other products were being used and abused to spread racism, Islamophobia, hate and violence against specific communities.

#### Not a passive observer

No one blames Facebook for the prevalent racism or discrimination in society, but incidents like the violence in Digana town in 2018 show the platform might be more than a passive observer. And even now, "they are not apologising for the company's inability and unwillingness to respond to user-generated reports and research noting the increasing risk of the digital spilling over to the physical and kinetic vio-

lence," Mr. Hattotuwa said.

While the company claims it has invested more resources to monitor content in all languages, the platform's "enduring unevenness" of making redress or reporting tools available in English, accessible in Sinhala and Tamil is a concern, given that inflammatory content goes viral in no time. Despite its attempts to automate detection of content that could incite hate crimes, the company lacks contextual awareness and grounding, said Mr. Hattotuwa.

Moreover, guidance, help, redress and reporting tools are all there on the platform, but many users are unaware of them. "It's hard enough in English. It's close to impossible in Sinhala. There are ways the company can make these more visible, at specific times, or to specific users and groups, in specific languages, over each product. It is the company's choice to do so, and not a technical inability."

Tamil pages too present the risk of highly polarised debates, according

to Jaffna-based journalist Benislos Thushan. "While you see some constructive pages, like the Jaffna Photography Society's, I see a lot more of arm-chair criticism or rant, especially from users among Sri Lankan diaspora who have strong views on developments here. The debates get risky because they are highly polarising," he told *The Hindu*.

Young Sri Lankan Tamils and Tamil-speaking Muslims are quite active on Facebook, according to Mr. Thushan. "There is a lot of cross-pollination in terms of content, but little accountability."

Of Sri Lanka's 21-million population, Facebook has 6.85 million monthly active users and 4.4 million daily active users, according to Article One. Like any company geared towards profits and a greater market share, Facebook too would count its users in numbers. Not dealing with hate might have offline costs for users, but dealing with it might, for the company. Will the tech giant see beyond numbers?

## Low-tech Japan struggles to move life online

From work from home to banking and schooling, Japanese find it tough to adapt to the new order

### TOKYO



In the popular imagination, Japan is a high-tech conurbation of robots and gadgets. In reality, living here can feel like being stuck in the 1980s, when fax machines were haute-tech and neon passed for cutting-edge. While in neighbouring countries like China, even beggars have begun to use QR codes for receiving alms, in Japan many transactions remain strictly cash-only.

Opening a bank account requires a mountain of paperwork to rival Mt. Fuji and making online payments involves physical trips to the bank every time a new payee has to be added. In 2018, Yoshitaka Sakurad, the deputy head of the government's cybersecurity panel, made headlines

when he admitted to never having used a computer in his professional life.

In normal times, it is just possible to rose-wash the requirement to fax in information requests to government offices as endearingly quaint.

But in the world of COVID-19, the deleterious impact of Japan's failure to embrace digital transformation is amplified.

When, following the declaration of a state of emergency, people were told to stay at home and work remotely, it became clear that most companies were ill-equipped to facilitate telework. In a March survey conducted by IT research group, ITR, 45% of corporations said they had no systems in place to allow staff to work from home. Only 28% said they were ready to make the switch.

Some employees did not have laptops at home (even though a third of

Japanese households have fax machines). Others found it difficult to do without the constant supervision and approval of superiors, given the strict hierarchies of the workplace that are the norm.

#### Obstacle to physical distancing

But it was the *hanko*, or personalised carved seal, that emerged as the greatest obstacle to physical distancing. Most official documents in Japan still require the physical stamp of a company *hanko*, which is expected to remain in the office. Consequently, the most commonly cited reason for people not following work-from-home edicts was the need to go into stamp documentation.

The government's emergency declaration-target was to reduce office attendance by 70%. But on April 8, the day after the emergency was called, Yahoo data showed only a 26% drop in user's movements.

Another lacuna exposed by the pandemic is Japan's backwardness in the field of telemedicine. For years,

the government had failed to approve measures like remote medical exams for first-time patients, in part due to opposition from lobbies like the Japan Medical Association. COVID-19 has finally prodded the authorities to lift some of these restrictions, but an array of hurdles remain. A large number of Japanese clinics don't even accept credit card payments, the most basic building block of telemedicine. According to an article in the *Nikkei Asian Review*, 65% of patient health records are still kept in hard copy.

But for many families, the most frustrating aspect of the current emergency measures has been the school closures. While internationally, schools have switched to online learning, in Japan, public schools have remained stubbornly offline.

Arisa Koyama, a mother of two boys, 8 and 12, recalled how her younger son's elementary school, which is located in a posh Tokyo suburb, had supplied families with hard copies of Math and Japanese lan-

guage worksheets. That was the totality of the school's involvement in their student's education since it closed in late February. Parents were given an answer-key and expected to correct the work themselves. Teachers occasionally telephoned parents



to check in on how they were coping, but had no direct contact with the children themselves.

In almost three months, the school has remained unable to figure out how to set up an online learning system that would allow teachers to post videos or enable any two-way communication between students and teachers. "It's really not that hard, but I think the problem is that they (the school administrators) only follow the commands of the government's education board and cannot take any initiative themselves," said Ms. Koyama.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a bugle call, alerting countries around the world of the need for change. In Japan, the imperative to heed the warning is perhaps more urgent than for most. Following decades of economic stagnation, the archipelago has flailed finding its feet in the 21st century world order. The post COVID-19 period will be a make-or-break one for the renaissance that remains Japan's goal.

## Trump first, Brazil next

Bolsonaro's foreign policy, focused on Trump's U.S., triggers outrage in Brazil's political circles

### SAO PAULO



In a sudden move on Thursday, the World Trade Organization (WTO)

Director-General Roberto Azevedo announced that he would leave his post in August. Mr. Azevedo (in picture) who became the first WTO chief in its 25-year-old history to quit the post, said he was leaving for "family reasons" and to "facilitate the reforms" at the global organisation. The decision by the veteran Brazilian diplomat to leave the WTO when the world is plagued with a pandemic and an economic turmoil in its wake sent shockwaves across the globe – from Beijing to Brasilia.

Even as a guessing game was going on why Mr. Azevedo quit, a hint came from Washington. "I am fine



vocal cheerleader of the far-right leader, international observers see it as a triumph for Mr. Trump. "I was astonished to see his argument about quitting the post to facilitate reforms at the WTO. By choosing to step down in August, he only em-

powers the Trump administration," said Rubens Ricupero, a former Brazilian Minister of Finance. "I don't see any prospect of reform of the WTO as long as Mr. Trump is in power. He wants to have a free hand to apply unilateral sanctions and to use and abuse the anti-dumping procedures," added Mr. Ricupero, who also served as a Brazilian Ambassador to Washington.

While Mr. Trump may now have his way at the WTO, Brazil has lost a major voice in a multilateral organisation. In fact, Brazilian diplomacy has been retreating since 2019 when Mr. Bolsonaro became President and decided to ally closely with Mr. Trump. This has raised such an alarm in all major political parties that a former President, five former Foreign Ministers, a former Finance Minister and a former senior diplomat, wrote an open letter last week to express their "concern with the way in which the country's foreign policy has systematically violated the principles of Brazil's interna-

tional relations" as defined in its Constitution. "The foreign policy of the current administration does not reflect the views of the majority of Brazilian people. Our intention is to tell our friends in the developing world that we have not turned our backs on them," said Mr. Ricupero, one of the signatories of the letter.

#### Concessions to U.S.

In his 16 months as President, Mr. Bolsonaro has granted major concessions, including the use of Brazil's rocket launching facilities, to the U.S. without getting much in return. Mr. Bolsonaro's much-flaunted proximity to Mr. Trump has caused frictions with Venezuela and an unease with its major trading partners like China and Iran. "What worries me the most about our foreign policy is that it is not only a total submission to the U.S. agenda but to President Trump's agenda and to the extreme right-wing in the U.S. Brazil never did anything like that before. In pursuing such policies, we are going

against our own interests," said Celso Amorim, who was Brazil's Foreign Minister between 2003 and 2010. "Brazil is abandoning the leadership we always had in the international arena," said Mr. Amorim, who also signed the open letter.

The COVID-19 crisis is now exposing the flaws in Brazil's foreign policy. As the virus goes out of control and the country struggles to get equipment to contain it, Brazil's top Ministers have been busy attacking China, with which the country has an annual trade of \$100 billion. "It is a complete disaster. In the short run, we are losing on the assistance from a country that has the most capacity to help in combating the pandemic with equipment we need. In the long run, when the world will reorder itself, China will have a crucial role. If there is any kind of Marshall Plan, it will be a Xi Jinping plan. We will be affected badly by this silly attitude," said Mr. Amorim, who served as Foreign Minister under two Presidents.

## IN BRIEF



## Afridi buys Mushfiqur's bat in online auction

DHAKA  
Former Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi has bought the bat put up for auction by Bangladeshi wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim in order to raise funds to fight COVID-19. Afridi bought the bat, with which Mushfiqur scored his first double hundred, against Sri Lanka at Galle in 2013, for \$20,000. Mushfiqur revealed that the auction had to be suspended following fake bids. IANS

## Balbir Sr 'stabilising' but still on ventilator

CHANDIGARH  
Hockey legend Balbir Singh Sr didn't suffer any more 'cardiac events' and his condition "is stabilising" though he is still on ventilator support, his grandson Kabir said on Saturday. He said his grandfather had not still regained consciousness.



KINGSTON  
Chris Gayle has said he "stands by" his comments against former teammate Rammnesh Sarwan but conceded that his actions were damaging to West Indies cricket, prompting the Caribbean Premier League (CPL) organisers to close the controversial issue. The 40-year-old Gayle had accused the Guyanese of plotting his exit from Jamaica Tallawahs. PTI

## Tata Open 2021: dates may change

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

Amidst the raging COVID-19 pandemic, Tata Open Maharashtra Tournament Director Prashant Sutar said that they will have to wait for the first draft of the ATP calendar, out in August, to get clarity on the dates for the 2021 edition.

The early February event is not under threat as of now, with the ATP having only suspended the Tour until early August this year. But the severity of the impact worldwide may necessitate a rejig.

During an Instagram live session with Indian player Arjun Kadhe, Sutar said the ATP was having frequent discussions with Tournament Directors around the world in an attempt to get action back on the courts. Kadhe rated Rohan Bopanna and Benoit Paire as the best doubles partners. The 26-year-old from Pune also suggested a pre-season for the players a couple of weeks before the tournament.

## Dortmund back in style

Steamrollers Schalke in Ruhr Derby; Leipzig held at home



**Breaking free:** Dortmund's Erling Haaland celebrates after scoring the opener against Schalke in the first game following resumption of the Bundesliga on Saturday. ■ AFP

## AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE BERLIN

Norwegian sensation Erling Braut Haaland stole the limelight on Saturday as the German Bundesliga became the first major European football league to return since the coronavirus lockdown, with teams playing in empty, echoing stadiums.

The 19-year-old striker claimed the first goal in Germany's top flight for over two months to set Borussia Dortmund on the way to a 4-0 win over its local rival

Schalke in the 'Ruhr Derby'. Portuguese international Raphael Guerreiro then added two goals either side of a Thorgan Hazard strike as second-placed Dortmund moved to within a point of leader Bayern Munich, which is chasing an eighth straight title and plays Union Berlin away on Sunday.

Elsewhere, third-placed RB Leipzig was held to a 1-1 draw at home to Freiburg, leaving it four points off top spot. Defender Manuel Guido

gave visitors Freiburg a shock lead and celebrated by elbow-bumping teammates, before Leipzig striker Yussuf Poulsen grabbed a late equaliser.

**The results:** Borussia Dortmund 4 (Haaland 29, Guerreiro 45, 63, Hazard 48) bt Schalke 0; RB Leipzig 1 (Poulsen 77) drew with Freiburg 1 (Gulde 34); Hoffenheim 0 lost to Hertha Berlin 3 (Akpolugma 58-09, Ibisic 60, Cunha 74); Fortuna Düsseldorf 0 drew with Paderborn 0; Augsburg 1 (Brooks 54-09) lost to VfL Wolfsburg 2 (Steffen 43, Ginczek 90+).

## Chess is attracting new audience during lockdown'

Thipsay thrilled at playing, watching tournaments online

## P.K. AJITH KUMAR KOZHIKODE

Praveen Thipsay hasn't stepped out of his apartment at Khar, Mumbai, since March 18. He doesn't intend to, for another month.

He says the situation is a bit frightening in the city, which has become COVID-19's epicentre in India. "From my flat I can watch the street, and it is empty, totally," Thipsay tells *The Hindu* over phone. "It is a very busy area normally, even at night there would be lot of noise."

Now all you could hear is silence.

## Difficult

"I think it would at least be August when Mumbai can hope to return to some normalcy," he says. "The government is doing the best it

could, but when eight or 10 people are living in a room and are using a single toilet – as is the case in Mumbai's worst-hit areas – it is not easy to contain this virus."

Chess, though, lifts Thipsay's spirits. India's third Grandmaster spends many hours on teaching chess online. For the first time in his life, he has also started playing tournaments online.

"I have enjoyed playing online," he says. "I have played five tournaments so far and it felt nice posting wins against some strong foreign Grandmasters."

He feels the lockdown should have been an ideal opportunity for the All India Chess Federation (AICF) to conduct online tournaments.

But, infighting has ensured that is for all the wrong reasons that it is making headlines these days.

## Anand of old

He has also been following a lot of online chess. "I was delighted to see Viswanathan Anand crushing Ian Nepomniachchi in the Nations Cup," he says. "His victory

against Teimour Radjabov was brilliant too. It was like watching Anand of the old."

With Anand, Carlsen and many other top players competing in online tournaments regularly, chess is probably the only sport that is covered regularly in the media during the lockdown.

"That, of course, helps chess reaching out to more people," says Thipsay.

"There is no doubt that chess has attracted a new audience. It is up to the officials to make use of it."

He feels the lockdown has been an ideal opportunity for the All India Chess Federation (AICF) to conduct online tournaments.

But, infighting has ensured that is for all the wrong reasons that it is making headlines these days.

**Right moves:** Chess couple Pravin and Bhagyashree Thipsay, confined to their home, doing what they are very adept at. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## Lovers reunite as fence is brought down

Border on Lake Constance had become a popular COVID-19 meet-up spot

## REUTERS

KREUZLINGEN (SWITZERLAND)  
He happens to live in Switzerland. She happens to live in Germany. Before the coronavirus, that didn't mean much for Lukas and Leonie, a cross-border couple. Then suddenly, a fence was built between them and they were ordered to stay apart.

On Friday, workers began taking down the fence between the German city of Constance and the Swiss city of Kreuzlingen, which had become a symbol of the division created by the global pandemic.

For weeks, couples have been gathering here to gaze at each other across no man's land. But after Switzerland and Germany agreed to open up, the fence came down by midnight.

Lukas, 34, and Leonie, 31, had expected the border to be opened earlier on Friday, and Lukas said Leonie was getting impatient.

**Finally, happy**  
She's "a bit annoyed, actually very annoyed. Now she's laughing across the border at me – her brothers just given

her a beer, I think that helped", he said.

In ordinary times, on a continent where borders have gradually faded into insignificance, people can walk, cycle or even swim between the neighbouring lakeside towns.

In mid-March, however, German police erected the

fence on their side of the border – roughly along the line where a barbed-wire barrier had separated the countries during World War Two.

When people started violating social distancing rules by hugging or kissing through the chain links, authorities erected a second fence, to keep them apart.

Married couples who could prove they had a spouse on the other side were permitted to cross. Lukas, who would not give his surname, confessed that, although he and Leonie are not married, he had occasionally been able to talk his way past the guards.

Still it had been a strain: "Just the constant not knowing from one day to another when you're next going to be able to see each other."

**Warm embrace:** Lukas and Leonie greet each other after the barrier on the German-Swiss border was dismantled. ■ REUTERS

## BCCI facing a challenging time

Lockdown delays payment to domestic players and officials

## AMOL KARHADKAR MUMBAI

The pandemic appears to have multiplied the woes of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), which has had to deal with a spate of resignations. This has resulted in key stakeholders in the domestic structure being left in the lurch during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Despite a new set of office-bearers – led by former India captain Sourav Ganguly as president and Jay Shah as secretary – taking charge in October last year, ending the three-year regime of the Supreme Court-appointed Committee of Administrators, the BCCI has been confronted by a variety of internal and external issues.

## Growing uncertainty

While the BCCI has filed an appeal in the Supreme Court to further dilute the administrative reforms recommended by the Lodha committee, this has resulted in growing uncertainty over the tenures of Ganguly and Shah.

High-profile resignations have added to the challenges the Board faces.

The IPL corruption scandal had resulted in the BCCI



Arun Dhumal. ■ FILE PHOTO: AFP

coincided with the lockdown, contributing to a perception of instability within the Board. They have also played a role – direct or indirect – in delaying payments to domestic players and officials.

BCCI treasurer Arun Dhumal stressed, however, that the Board was a stable organisation. "There is no instability as such. People come and go but an institution never stops running. It's not that we have been incapacitated by any of these factors," he told *The Hindu*.

"I have been given to understand that the delay in payments is primarily due to the lockdown. But payments are being released and whatever little backlog has been created will be cleared at the earliest."

While some domestic cricketers are yet to receive their match-fees for the recently concluded cricket season, many umpires and scorers have not been paid for their services since January. Vice-president Mahim Verma also resigned shortly after. Although he held a largely ceremonial post, his exit has reduced the apex council from nine to eight members. All these developments have

## It's Superkids vs Gurukul

## RAKESH RAO NEW DELHI

Superkids pipped top seed Chess Gurukul at the post to head the points table after the two rating favourites in the Sukoon Resorts Indian Chess.com League made Sunday's Superfinal on Saturday.

The suspense over the finalists virtually ended in the eighth round after Chess Pathshala stunned third seed and close contender Desi Boys 4.5-0.5.

**Important results:** Ninth round: Superkids bt Chess Gurukul 3.5-1.5; Chess Pathshala bt Five Fighters 3-2; Cheeky Cheetahs lost to Desi Boys 1.5-3.5; United India bt Undercover Agents 3-2; Chess Pathshala lost to Chess Thulir 1.5-3.5; Eighth round: Undercover Agents lost to Chess Gurukul 1.5-3.5; Five Fighters lost to Superkids 2-3; Desi Boys lost to Chess Pathshala 0.4-4.5; Chess Thulir lost to United India 1-4; Chess Gayan drew with Cheeky Cheetahs 2.5-2.5.

**Standings (after nine rounds):** 1. Superkids (29 game-points), 2. Chess Gurukul (28.5), 3. Desi Boys (25.5), 4. United India (22.5), 5-6. Undercover Agents (22 each), 7. Chess Gayan (21), 8. Chess Pathshala (19), 9. Cheeky Cheetahs (18), 10. Chess Thulir (17.5).

## I can win the most Slams'

Will also break record for maximum weeks at No. 1: Djokovic

## AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE PARIS

Novak Djokovic said he is confident he will end his career as the greatest Grand Slam title winner of all time and break the record for weeks in the World No. 1 spot.

The Serb has 17 Majors, three behind Roger Federer's record 20 and two behind Rafael Nadal.

"I think that I still have things to do in this sport. I

believe that I can win the most Slams and break the record for most weeks at No. 1. Those are definitely my clear goals," Djokovic told in a TV show.

## Play till 40

Djokovic, who will celebrate his 33rd birthday on May 22, sees himself still playing at 40. "I don't believe in limits. I definitely want to go for a long time," he said.

"I will not be able to play at this intensity, with this many tournaments and this much travelling, for a long time. There will probably be a focus on the biggest tournaments and the tournaments that mean the most to me."

Djokovic has been on top of the rankings for a combined total of 282 weeks.

Federer leads the way on 310 with the long-retired Pete Sampras on 286.



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