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No dispute over new road through Lipulekh pass: Gen. Naravane
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Trump threatens to cut China ties as COVID-19 death toll surges
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NEARBY



1,576 new cases take State tally to 29,000

PUNE
 COVID-19 cases continued to pile up in Maharashtra with the State reporting another massive surge of 1,576 new cases to take its total tally to 29,100, and of fatalities to 1,068 with 49 deaths on Friday. Of the total cases, 21,467 were active, said State health officials. "65% of the deaths reported today had high-risk co-morbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, asthma and heart disease," said Dr. Pradeep Awate, State Surveillance Officer.

DETAILS ▶ PAGE 12

Sharad Pawar seeks relief for sugar industry

MUMBAI
 Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar on Friday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding immediate relief to the sugar industry. He also expressed disappointment at the agricultural package announced by the Union Finance Minister and said it had no word on restricting agri loans, moratorium on loans and reduction in interest rates for farmers.

REGION ▶ PAGE 5

New law for contract farming

Centre to push through agri-marketing reforms as part of stimulus package

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ

NEW DELHI

Making long-pending agricultural marketing reforms the centrepiece of the third tranche of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan economic stimulus package, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday announced plans to enact a central law to permit barrier-free inter-State trade of farm commodities and ensure a legal framework to facilitate contract farming.

The third tranche also included plans to invest ₹1.5 lakh crore to build farm-gate infrastructure and support logistics needs for fishworkers, livestock farmers, vegetable growers, beekeepers and related activities, although this includes some previously budgeted money and extensions of existing schemes.

Deregulating produce

The Centre will deregulate the sale of six types of agricultural produce, including cereals, edible oils, oilseeds, pulses, onions and potatoes, by amending the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, Ms. Sitharaman said.

Several agricultural economists and farm activists welcomed the reform and investment announcements, but questioned the lack of immediate support to help farmers survive the current crisis.

Booster dose

The third tranche of the measures announced under the **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan** focuses on agriculture and allied activities

- Funds worth ₹1 lakh crore to be given to agricultural cooperative societies, farmer producer organisations and start-ups for boosting farm-gate infrastructure
- ₹10,000 crore for formalisation of micro-food enterprises; cluster-based farming approach to be followed
- ₹20,000 crore for fishermen under PM Matsya Sampada Yojana; expected to pave way for additional fish production of 70 lakh tonnes over 5 years
- ₹13,000 crore drive to achieve 100% vaccination of cattle, buffaloes, sheep, goats and pigs

A farmer carries strawberries after harvesting them in Srinagar on Friday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

we don't permit that. Because of a flip-flop sometimes, farmers don't get the benefit. Some other times, the consumers suffer. So there is a need to amend the Act," she said.

No stock limit

Stock limits will not be imposed on these commodities except in case of national calamity or famine or an extraordinary surge in prices, the Minister said, adding that even these stock limits would not apply to pro-

sors and exporters.

The Centre has been attempting to reform agricultural marketing through a model Act which it encourages States to adopt.

However, it now intends to enact a central law to allow farmers to sell produce at attractive prices beyond the current *mandi* system, facilitating barrier-free inter-State trade and e-trading.

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Lockdown likely to be extended till May 30

Considerable relaxations likely in green and orange zones

VIJAYITA SINGH

NEW DELHI

The lockdown is likely to be extended till May 30 with considerable relaxations in the green and orange zones. An announcement to this effect is likely to be made on Saturday, officials told *The Hindu*.

An official said lockdown 4.0 would be more about implementing its "spirit" than imposing restrictions.

The current third phase of the lockdown, which was imposed first on March 24 in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, ends on May 17.

Metro rail services in cities would continue to remain suspended as most routes fall in the containment zones, which would continue to be under "curfew-like" conditions.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had sought suggestions from the State governments and they were asked to convey their views by 5 p.m. on Friday. "The suggestions from most States have been received and they have advocated an extension of the lockdown. Every official is



Best practice: A vegetable seller using hand sanitiser in New Delhi before heading out on Friday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

concerned that if the lockdown is lifted in one go, the number of COVID-19 cases could spike. The medical infrastructure cannot deal with that kind of pressure," said the official.

Guidelines today

The guidelines to be followed during lockdown 4.0 would be finalised by the Prime Minister and released by the Ministry of Home Affairs on Saturday.

The Union government was in favour of opening select routes for air travel but several States were opposed to the idea. "Ultimately, the

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India surpasses China's COVID-19 tally

Death toll mounts to 2,674; Maharashtra, T.N. and Gujarat report most cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India's COVID-19 case tally shot past China, with a total of 85,761 cases, including 53,219 active ones, according to data from the State Health Departments. The death toll nationwide stood at 2,674.

The country has registered over 3,600 cases and over 100 deaths on average everyday since May 8.

According to the health ministry, India registered 3,967 more COVID-19 cases

Surging ahead

The confirmed COVID-19 case count in India crossed China's official tally on Friday. India also has the least doubling time* among the top 15 countries with the most cases

*Doubling time is the estimated number of days it takes for cases to double in a country.

CASES FOR INDIA ARE AS OF 10.15 P.M. ON FRIDAY; FOR OTHER COUNTRIES AS OF MAY 14

Country	Cases	Doubling time
U.S.	14,17,774	43.4
Russia	2,52,245	14
U.K.	2,34,440	42.7
Spain	2,29,540	129.3
Italy	2,23,096	155.1
Brazil	2,03,165	13.3
France	1,78,994	277.2
Germany	1,74,478	181
Turkey	1,44,749	64.2
Iran	1,14,533	46.5
India	85,761	13
China	82,933	7966.2
Peru	80,604	16.4
Canada	74,781	41.9
Belgium	54,288	100.3

and 100 deaths on Friday, taking the total number of cases to 81,970 and the nationwide toll to 2,649.

Stressing the need to focus on high load areas and case fatality management, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said while world-

wide the total number of cases stood at 42,48,389 with 2,94,046 deaths and the fatality rate pegged at 6.92%, India had managed to keep its fatality rate at 3.23%.

Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu

and Gujarat reported the highest number of cases, with the capital cities of Mumbai, Chennai and Ahmedabad accounting for the most patients.

With 933 persons testing

positive, the number of cases in Mumbai rose to 17,512 and the death toll increased to 655 with 34 more deaths, the Brihamumbai Municipal Corporation said.

With 261 new cases, Ahmedabad's tally rose to 7,171 while the death toll reached 479 with 14 more patients succumbing to the infection, officials said.

In a release issued by the Ministry, Mr. Vardhan said, "So far, a total of 27,920 people have been cured. And in the last 24 hours, 1,685 patients were cured. This takes the total recovery rate to 34.06%." It added that the impact of the lockdown was seen on the doubling rate, which improved from 3.4 days in the pre-lockdown week to 12.9 days last week.

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Cross-country ride



The long road home: Migrant labourers crossing Visakhapatnam on Friday, en route to their homes in Bihar. They bought the cycles with money sent by their families and set off from Chennai around 10 days ago. Hearing a petition on the risky trips undertaken by migrants, the Supreme Court said it was the States' responsibility to take action. ■ K.R. DEEPAK (REPORT ON PAGE 11)

Monsoon will arrive on June 5, says IMD; Skymet says it will come earlier

The time of the monsoon's arrival in Kerala does not influence its overall progress, distribution or quantum of rain over the ensuing monsoon months of June-September.

The discrepancy appears largely on the agencies' interpretation of the influence of a developing cyclone in the Bay of Bengal as well as the prevailing summer temperatures in north India.

This storm, which is a normal feature during May, is likely to burgeon into a cy-

clone by the weekend, and aid the advent of the monsoon into the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Hence, the monsoon typically takes 10-11 days to reach the Kerala coast. G.P. Sharma, vice president, meteorology, Skymet, said the cyclone will not hamper this routine progress and that the early onset of monsoon in the A&N Islands will therefore bring the monsoon early over Kerala.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

an entire year's business. Even though fishing has been exempted from the lockdown, unions and marine research institute scientists estimate only about 30% to 40% fishing has taken place in the State.

In Mumbai, Kolivadas in Worli, Juhu and Khar are under the grip of COVID-19. As monsoon approaches,

Mumbai cases cross 17,000; toll touches 655

City has lost one life every hour to COVID-19 in May; 60% of the dead are men; CM ropes in ministers

JYOTI SHELAR

MUMBAI

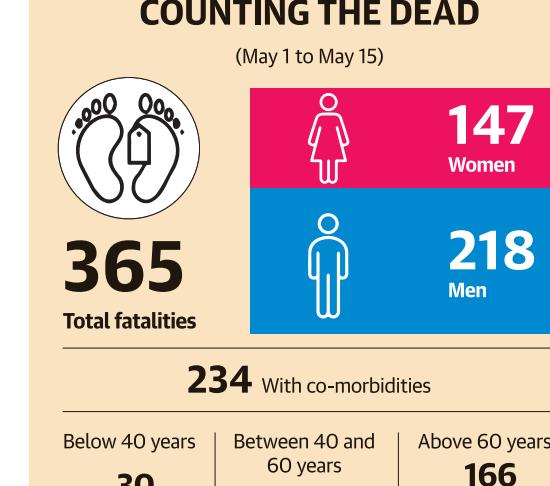
Mumbai recorded 933 new cases, the second-highest single-day jump, on Friday pushing the overall tally to 17,671. The financial capital also recorded 34 deaths, again the second-highest single jump, taking the death toll to 655. With the sharp rise in cases and deaths this month, Mumbai has lost an average of one life every hour due to COVID-19.

With the civic administration's capacity stretched, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Friday decided to task ministers with the responsibility of containing the virus at hotspots across the city. Mr. Thackeray also visited a quarantine facility at the Bombay Exhibition Centre in Goregaon.

An analysis by *The Hindu* of the data provided by Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) shows that more than half of the total deaths have occurred in the first fortnight of May. Of the

COUNTING THE DEAD

(May 1 to May 15)



365 people who succumbed due to the COVID-19 between May 1 to 15, nearly 60% were men. This trend has been common in the deaths across the State. Globally too, researchers are looking at why more men have died as compared to women. In a 2003 analysis carried out in

mone produced in males, has been linked to the worsening condition of men affected by COVID-19. Of the 34 deaths reported on Friday, 21 were men, and 13 women.

The virus has killed the highest number of 46% people in the age group of 40 to 60 years. Almost similar numbers (45%) have been recorded in the age group above 60 years. The lowest (8%) deaths have been recorded in the below 40 age group. Of the total number of deaths recorded in May, 64% of patients had co-morbid conditions like diabetes, hypertension, asthma or other underlying diseases.

There have been recoveries also. On Friday Worli legislator Aaditya Thackeray tweeted on Friday that till date, 647 patients have recovered from G South ward (Worli) Covid Care Centres. This includes 317 symptomatic and 330 asymptomatic patients between ages of five and 97.

Pandemic takes the wind out of fisherfolk's sails

Two cyclonic storms, a harsh winter, and now COVID-19 leave the community looking at an uncertain future and a prolonged struggle for survival

TANVI DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

Sarita Koli and her mother have been selling fish at Lalbaug market all their lives, each bringing in Rs. 200 to Rs. 300 a day. Ever since the COVID-19 lockdown began, their entire family in Worli Koliwada is at home with no income. Her son Sunil is worried about the uncertainty. "We don't even know if fishing will resume after the monsoon. If this goes on, some fisherfolk might commit suicide," he says.

Two cyclones ravaged the beginning of their season, followed by a slack winter, COVID-19, the economic slowdown. And now, with the approaching monsoon, Maharashtra's fishermen stare at the loss of an entire year's business.

Even though fishing has been exempted from the lockdown, unions and marine research institute scientists estimate only about 30% to 40% fishing has taken place in the State.

In Mumbai, Koliwadas in Worli, Juhu and Khar are under the grip of COVID-19. As the monsoon approaches, fisherfolk are staring at a period of another three months of no income.

Dry season

The fishing year typically starts in August. In October 2019, Maharashtra's fishermen could not venture into the sea due to Cyclone Kyarr and in November, due to Cyclone Maha. With the beginning of their season ruined, fisherfolk headed into the slack season of December and January when the catch diminishes due to the cold. They were hoping to salvage the year in the February to



Killing time: A fisherman at Badhwar Park preparing his net hoping for a good catch before closing of fishing season, while (right) a fisherman wearing a face mask walks on the deserted Worli jetty.



■ VIVEK BENDRE ■ AADESH CHAUDHARI

May period, when COVID-19 hit them harder than both these cyclones combined.

"My family has been in the fishing business for generations and I have never seen such a year," says Devendra Kale, member of Vesava Koli Nakhwa Machhimar Mandal. "In Versova, for every fishing boat, the owner has suffered losses of Rs. 15 lakh to Rs. 20 lakh this year."

In April, a month after the lockdown took effect, the Central government exempted the fishing and marine aquaculture industry, on condition that maintain physical distancing and hygiene norms.

Soon after, the Maharashtra government issued rules for fishing activities wherein roadside stalls were banned but home delivery was allowed. Despite the order, little to no fishing has taken place off the coast of Maha-

rashtra in April or May.

Soon after the lockdown, social media was abuzz with images of fishermen dumping their catch back into the sea. Hundreds of fisherfolk remained stranded at sea after the lockdown and had to be brought back to safety. Once that happened, a majority of fisherfolk have not ventured into the sea, be it in Mumbai or anywhere in the rest of the State.

Kiran Koli, secretary of the Maharashtra Machhimar Kruti Samiti (MMKS), pegged the losses at Rs. 1,000 crore in Mumbai alone. "Even though fishing has been exempted, where do we take the catch? The market, cold storage and export is shut," said Mr. Koli.

China, he said, imports 80% of the fish, and small fishermen have suffered the most as they live hand to mouth. "People have loans

from fishermen's societies and banks, why aren't these being waived? If farmers are given aid after a failed season, why doesn't anyone talk about fishermen? If this per-

iod has allowed fishing, "the 43 conditions" imposed on them are so stringent that nobody can follow them. "If we buy diesel on the open market, we will get no subsi-

bai was reported in Worli Koliwada in March, and the G South ward that consists of Worli, has more than 1,000 cases so far.

The fishing village's architecture and the congested shanties made containment of the virus impossible, resulting in the compounding of cases. The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation recently declared large portions of the fishing village de-contained, and even allowed fishing in small numbers.

"The new order to allow fishing is too little, too late. In Koliwada, most people are dependent entirely on fishing. People have rent, loans, pending fees to pay. And who is to say fishing will resume after the monsoon? Even if it does, will people come to fish markets?" asked Mr. Koli from Worli Koliwada.

Several COVID-19 cases have also emerged from Juhu

Koliwada, Versova, Khar Danda, Uttan, Gorai and Madh – all of them traditional fishing villages.

Narendra Patil, a fisherman from Satpati (Palghar) and President of National Fishworkers Forum said the government needs to at least waive interest on earlier loans, and give zero interest loans for the coming year.

"There has been no fishing this season. Among the last boats that came to Satpati, we had around 10-12 tonnes of fish, which we struggled to sell. This year, only 30% fishing has happened at best," he said.

A fishing drought, he said, can be declared only if there is less than 50% fishing for three years in a row.

There could be at least four lakh beneficiaries of relief in the State, said Rajendra Jadhav, joint commissioner (fisheries) in

Maharashtra. "Fishing is less than usual, but we don't have the exact loss figures. For the next season, we have started issuing the Kisan Credit Card and they will get loans through this."

Dr. Akhilesh K.V., a scientist from the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Mumbai pegged the reduction in fishing activities since January at more than 60%.

Generally speaking, he said, there has been a significant dip in fishing during the lockdown, which has impacted mainly small fisherfolk and women vendors.

"The sector's running depends not only on fishing but an entire chain of activities, and for this, there is need for labour, ice, transport and so on, which is limited during a lockdown. This is expected to be a tough year," he said.

For the fisherfolk, it looks like an uncertain future.

Surviving the LOCKDOWN

sists, fishermen might starve to death."

On May 14, the MMKS wrote the CM demanding the State compensate boat owners and workers for their losses, provide rations to all fishermen for the next few months, release the pending diesel subsidy and provide Rs. 5 lakh in loans to every boat owner for the next season as well.

Parshuram Meher, a fisherman from Cuffe Parade and the Mumbai unit head of MMKS said while the govern-

ment has allowed fishing, "we have a large outstanding in terms of the earlier diesel subsidy. Exporters have suffered terrible losses as well. Fishermen have taken loans from fishing societies or banks which they cannot repay this year. Besides, they also have no capital for the next season."

The COVID-19 scourge
In Mumbai, the problem has been compounded by the fact that most Koliwadas or fishing villages had COVID-19 cases. The first case in Mum-

bai was reported in Worli Koliwada in March, and the G South ward that consists of Worli, has more than 1,000 cases so far.

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Historical import, we will have to review the COVID-19 situation over the next fortnight before taking a decision. The matter will be discussed in the State Cabinet as well. Authorities in Solapur, Pandharpur and Satara would also be consulted," Mr. Pawar said.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Abhay Tilak of the Sant Dnyaneshwar Maharaj Sansthan in Alandi said that representatives of all temple committees are unanimous in their view that this ancient *wari* should not be disrupted.

Changes proposed
"We have presented detailed proposals on how a modified *wari* can be organised so that the palkhi procession does not lead to any spread of infection," he said.

As per the almanac, this year, the *wari* is scheduled to begin on June 13.

A meeting was held on Friday between Mr. Pawar, Pune district and police authorities, and various representatives of the Vitthal Rukmini Temple Trust committee in Pandharpur, and other organisations in Alandi and Dehu.

"While the *ashaadi wari* of saints Dnyaneshwar and Tukaram has tremendous

screened. At any given time, around 900 people are deputed at all these checkpoints, equipped with pulse oximeters and thermal guns," Mr. Prasad said.

At least seven new deaths and 138 new cases were reported in Pune district on Friday, to take the cumulative tally of cases – including deaths and recoveries – to 3,534, and the death toll to 185, of which 169 were from Pune city. However, the recovery rate also continued to increase steadily with 1,886 people being discharged so far, said authorities.

The total number of cases in Pune division (comprising Pune, Satara, Sangli, Kolhapur and Solapur districts) is now 4,064, of which 1,968 are active cases. Pune city currently has 1,647 active cases.

on the number of vehicles and persons entering and leaving the district.

"Inter-State vehicles will be registered by this method and the persons referred to home quarantine. Till date, 27,000 vehicles have been registered and one lakh

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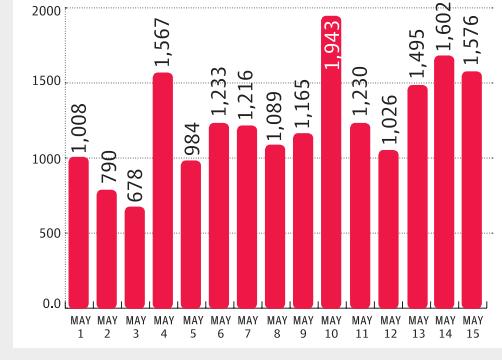
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Maharashtra COVID-19 tracker

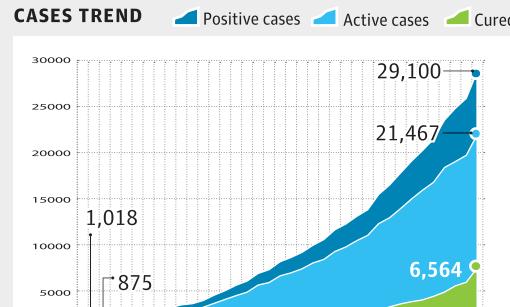
TOTAL CASES	NEW CASES	ACTIVE CASES	RECOVERED	DEATHS
29,100	1,576	21,467	6,564	1,068

DISTRICTS AFFECTED: 34

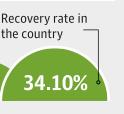
DISTRICT	CASES	DEATHS	DISTRICT	CASES	DEATHS
Mumbai	17,671	655	Sangli	44	1
Thane	3,499	38	Nanded	57	4
Pune	3,481	181	Latur	32	1
Nashik	825	34	Buldhana	26	1
Aurangabad	778	20	Nandurbar	22	2
Palghar	363	13	Kolhapur	25	1
Raigad	392	12	Ratnagiri	86	3
Nagpur	334	2	Jalna	21	0
Solapur	365	21	Sindhudurg	7	0
Akola	224	14	Chandrapur	5	0
Jalgaon	246	27	Osmannabad	4	0
Satara	126	2	Parbhani	6	1
Yavatmal	99	0	Washim	3	0
Amravati	98	13	Beed	1	0
Ahmednagar	71	3	Bhandara	1	0
Hingoli	66	0	Gondia	1	0
Dhule	74	8	Wardha	2	1

POSITIVE CASES OVER LAST 15 DAYS

933 (59.2%) of Friday's cases are from Mumbai

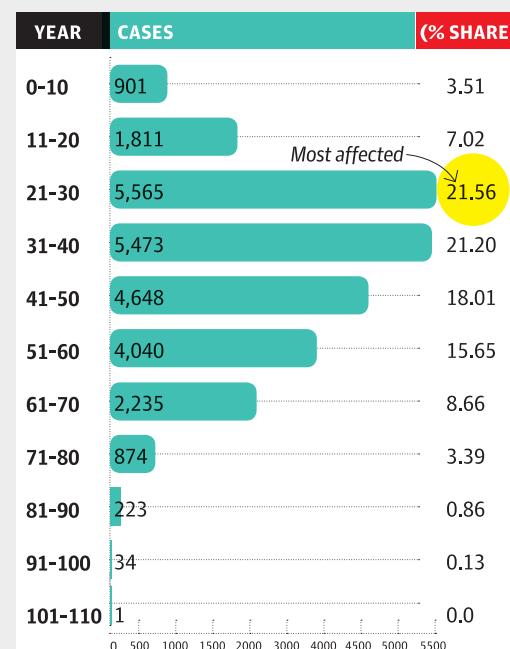


22% is the State recovery rate

**MORTALITY RATE**

Maharashtra 3.70%

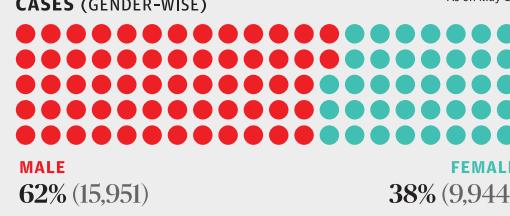
India 3.23%

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

3,29,302 Home quarantine



16,306 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: ssumaharashtra@gmail.com

CITY-WISE HELPLINE NUMBERS

Mumbai city: 022 22664232 Palghar: 02525 297474

Mumbai suburbs: 022 26556799/ 26556806 Raigad: 02141 222118

Thane: 022 25301740 Ratnagiri: 02352 226248

Sindhudurg: 02362 228847

Source: Public Health Department, Maharashtra, BMC

Wankhede Stadium to turn into quarantine centre

BMC writes to MCA seeking immediate handover of ground to accommodate high-risk contacts of positive patients

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has directed the Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) to hand over Wankhede Stadium to convert it into a quarantine facility for high-risk contacts of COVID-19 patients in the city.

In a letter issued to MCA officials on Friday, accessed by *The Hindu*, the BMC sought "immediate handover" of the stadium. The letter, issued by Chanda R. JadHAV, assistant commissioner of A ward, said, "The premises will be used for emergency staff of A ward and quarantining people who have come in contact with COVID-19 patients and are not symptomatic."

'Awaiting instructions'
Confirming the receipt of the letter, MCA secretary Sanjay Naik said the association will cooperate with the authorities. "We are awaiting further instructions from the assistant commissioner," he said.

With pre-monsoon showers expected in the city soon, the BMC is unlikely to use the ground now. However, closed-door facilities, including the press box, the president's box and a few corporate boxes, might be put to use.

Residents jittery
The stadium is located in a residential area near Marine Drive and the development has made residents jittery. "This is very worrying for us all. We were afraid that it might come to this. But our lane is completely residential and the BMC and the State government will have to ensure our safety," Mr. Purohit said.

The stadium, which hosted the 2011 cricket World Cup final, now joins a string of gymkhana on Marine Drive that have been acquired by the BMC to set up quarantine facilities. The BMC is expecting a spike in COVID-19 cases this month.

The BMC has already converted the National Sports Club of India in Worli and Mahalaxmi Racecourse into temporary healthcare facilities.



To be repurposed: Wankhede Stadium now joins a string of gymkhana on Marine Drive that have been acquired by the BMC to set up quarantine facilities. ■ FILE PHOTO

COVID-19 beds in Mumbai (as on May 12)

Facility	Capacity	Occupied	Vacant
DCH	3,663	3,496	167
DCH (ICU)	421	387	34
DCHC	772	652	120
DCHC (ICU)	17	17	0
CCC2	35,009	2,425	32,584
CCC1	22,701	9,455	13,246

*DCH- Dedicated COVID-19 Hospital
*DCHC- Dedicated COVID-19 Health Centre
*CCC2- COVID-19 Care Centre-2 for asymptomatic patients or those with mild symptoms
*CCC1- COVID-19 Care Centre-1 for suspected patients and contacts of positive patients
*On May 12, the city had 14,947 positive cases. The number rose to 17,671 on May 15
*45,68 patients have recovered and returned home till date

Positive man remains in quarantine for 30 hours

Son appeals to BMC on social media to shift 53-year-old to hospital

JYOTI SHELAR
MUMBAI

A 53-year-old high-risk contact, who was quarantined in a civic-run school in Vakola, was not shifted out of the facility over 30 hours after testing positive for COVID-19.

On Friday, his 24-year-old son put out an appeal on social media urging the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to shift him to a hospital and start his treatment. Delay in shifting positive patients from quarantine centres to isolation facilities puts other people in quarantine at risk of contracting the infection. It also could lead to the emergence of new clusters of the novel coronavirus from such centres.

Neighbour succumbs
The son said their neighbour had succumbed to COVID-19 two weeks ago. He then took his father for screening at a fever camp at the main street.

The BMC has already converted the National Sports Club of India in Worli and Mahalaxmi Racecourse into temporary healthcare facilities.



Speeding up: A civic worker arranges beds at an isolation facility being set up at Nehru Science Centre. ■ VIVEK BENDRE

Government Colony in Bandra on May 12. "We live in a chawl in Bharat Nagar in Bandra. Since my father developed a cough, I took him to the camp for a check-up," he said, adding that his father's swab samples were collected at the camp. The doctors then advised that he be placed in a quarantine centre immediately. "They sent him to the school in Vakola in an ambulance," the son said. The man's reports returned positive on Thursday.

The son said he has been carrying food for his father every day. He said each floor of the school has been locked with no caretaker or volunteer around to help.

"The school has a watchman, but he refuses to go upstairs. The toilets are very dirty too," he said.

Worli MLA Aaditya

Thackeray promptly responded to the son's tweet and asked the BMC's health committee member, Amey Ghole, to look into it.

Cases cross 1,000 mark
With 74 new COVID-19 cases being recorded on Friday, Navi Mumbai's tally has risen to 1,048. The Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) also reported four deaths, taking its death toll to 23. Of the positive cases, 753 are undergoing treatment, while 272 have recovered.

The Panvel Municipal Corporation recorded 15 new cases on Friday, taking its tally to 234. Of the positive cases, 100 have recovered, seven have died and 127 are being treated. Under Panvel Rural limits, 12 new cases were recorded, taking the tally to 93. Uran reported three new cases, pushing its tally to 107.

(With additional inputs from Raina Assainar)

4 constables quarantined after accused tests positive

CM ropes in ministers to contain virus

Political class to help with relief work to ease burden on civic administration

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

With the novel coronavirus continuing to spread rapidly in Mumbai and the civic administration's capacity being stretched, the Chief Minister has decided to task ministers with the responsibility of containing the virus in hotspots.

According to sources in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), the Central team that visited the State to take stock of the COVID-19 situation had suggested to the government to involve the political class in relief work to ease the burden on the civic administration and instil confidence in people.

Assigned specific zones
A Cabinet minister said, "It is clear that depending solely on the civic administration is not working. The number of cases is growing and it is important that political leaders take the lead in convincing people to take precautions against the virus."

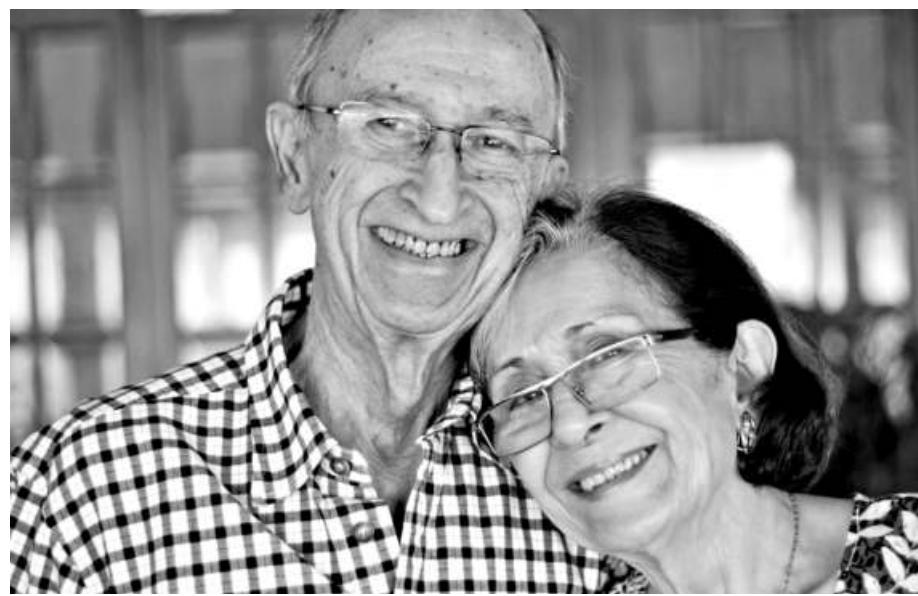
Minority Affairs Minister Nawab Malik has been entrusted with the responsibility of limiting the spread of

Ruby Patel, first lady of the Parsi Gujarati stage

A theatre veteran, she was equally at home with both popular light-hearted fare and characters with more gravitas

VIKRAM PHUKAN

The first lady of the Parsi Gujarati stage, Ruby Patel, passed away late Monday evening. She was 86, beginning her considerable innings on the stage as a 16-year-old in 1949, when Parsi theatre pioneer Adi Pherozeshah Marzban 'discovered' her at a school drama competition. The next three decades saw her hit her stride as one of the architects of twentieth-century Parsi theatre's post-Independence revival, and as an actress of note in both Gujarati and English plays. Her most successful creative partnerships were with husband Burjor Patel, her frequent co-star and director, and Hosi Vasunia, an actor with whom she delivered "15 consecutive hits", according to director Viveck Vaswani who led tributes to Patel on Twitter. After a long stint with Marzban, the Patels mounted such uproarious productions as *Gher Ghungro Ne Ghatalo, Tirangi Tehmul* and *Hello Inspector* with the Parsi wing of the In-



First lady: Ruby Patel with Burjor Patel; (right) Ruby Patel in one of her early stage performances.



• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

dian National Theatre. "We toured Gujarat by bus with plays for a month every year," she said in a 2015 interview. The couple founded Burjor Patel Productions circa 1978. It was an outfit that launched the stage careers of Rahul da Cunha, Rajit Kapur and daughter Shernaz,

the troika behind Rage Productions.

Luminous presence

Patel made her only appearance on film in Pervez Merwanji's *Percy* (1989), an underrated gem from the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) stable,

that occasionally surfaces on streaming platforms. As Banubai, the tirelessly minstering mother of a socially awkward man (Kurush Deboo played the title role, with Vasunia co-starring), Patel is a luminous presence on screen. Her astutely understated and authentically

detailed turn was a far cry from the long-suffering paragons of mainstream cinema or the Parsi stock characters inhabited by the likes of Ruby Myers or Piloo Wadia. She touchingly evoked the warmth of the familial hearth as well as the oppressiveness of filial co-dependence.

Merwanji died young in 1991, but not before *Percy* demonstrated what could be achieved when the NFDC strove for a cinema truly national in its scope, despite its ostensible focus on an old-world microcosm – with Patel as its flickering mascot.

In 1988, Burjor took up a

position with the *Khaleej Times*, the first English newspaper in the Emirates, which saw the Patels spend two decades in Dubai, returning to Mumbai only in 2009. "My two regrets [were] that I never learned Arabic, and even more grave, I deprived Ruby of 20 years of acting," Burjor reminisced in a 2012 interview. In a homecoming, the past decade has seen the Patels and several of their compatriots from Parsi theatre's golden era come together for two editions of Sam Kerawalla's *Laughter in the House*, a revue-style musical tribute to the imitable Marzban. Patel was in her element once again, in a revival of her hit skits from yore, including *Cricket With Parsi Women* from Bharat Dhabolkar's *Bottoms Up*, in which she cuts an irrepressible figure, at once refined and irreverent, mixing up cricketing jargon with topical Parsi references, to hilarious effect.

End of an era

In an almost impossibly

tragic turn of events over a span of just a week, two of Parsi theatre's resolute front-runners have departed the arc lights – 'King of Comedy' Bomi Kapadia on May 4, and now Patel. In the 1980s, Burjor's production of Frank D Gilroy's Pulitzer-winning *The Subject Was Roses* featured Kapadia and Patel as embattled parents to a traumatised World War II returnee, in what was a cauldron of familial tensions. Taken together with Tom Topor's *Nuts* – in which Patel played mother to daughter Shernaz – and Neil Simon's *Broadway Bound*; these were a set of meaningful English plays, suitably Indianised, with a sensibility that called for a kind of earnest staging that still sat pretty well with the deliciously popular light-hearted Gujarati fare that Patel also inhabited with equal felicity. Her unmatched elegance and gravitas, and flavorful delivery in several languages, will be missed.

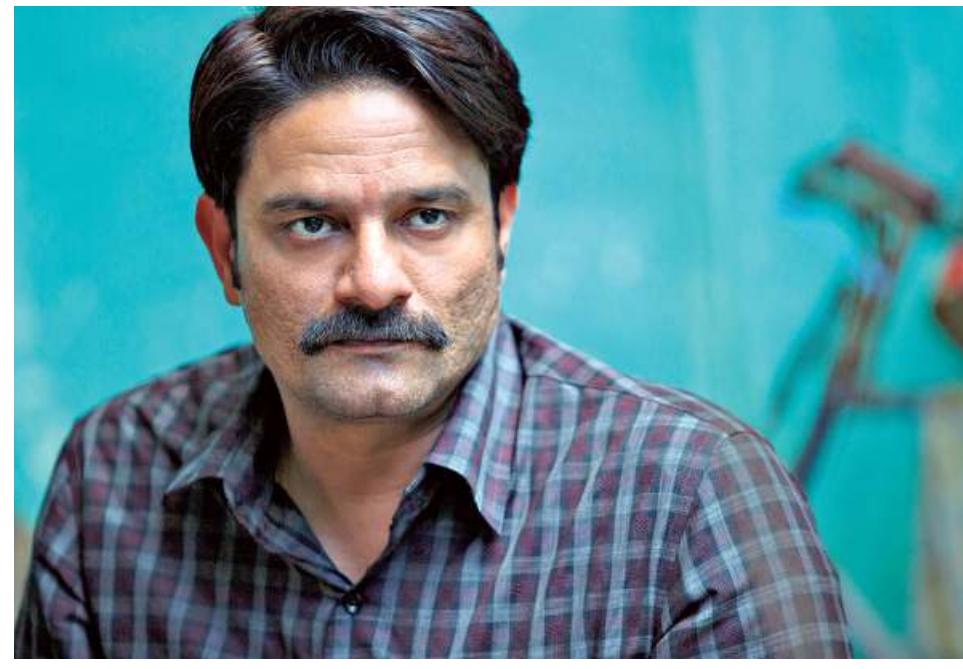
Heart of Darkness

Paatal Lok is a labyrinthine world in which everyone is violated even as they go about violating the other

NAMRATA JOSHI

The first episode itself cements the tone for *Paatal Lok* and promisingly at that. A fantastically shot chase on the Yamuna Bridge has the intelligence department nabbing four people on the conspiracy to murder high-profile journalist Sanjay Mehra (Neeraj Kabi). It's not the glamorous, adrenalin-pumping action with spectacular car collisions straight out of a Rohit Shetty universe. Instead, it's as grimy and real as it can get, underlined with a machismo and rage so uniquely Delhi. So too for the cynical cops and grubby police stations, the seedy hotels, the tips they work on in the police procedural. And most so the unbridgeable divides of class that throw the title of the episode -Bridges - itself into sharp relief. *Swarg* (heaven), *Dharti* (earth) and *Paatal* (netherworld), straight out of mythology, are part of the day-to-day reality; chasms that are unbridgeable. These disparities go the extent of infiltrating the cop universe as well with those assigned to Outer Yamuna far more lowly in the hierarchy and duty than the ones serving in Lutyen's Delhi.

The classic buddy cop trope is reinvented to some context: the world-weary Inspector Hathi Ram Chaudhury (Jaideep Ahlawat) languishing in the mediocrity of his job, partnering with the young and idealistic Imran Ansari (Ishwak Singh), who is deep into books, preparing for an IPS exam when not interrogating or chasing perpetrators. There



India today: Jaideep Ahlawat in *Paatal Lok* • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Paatal Lok

DIRECTOR: Avinash Arun and Prosit Roy

CREATED BY: Sudip Sharma

CAST: Jaideep Ahlawat, Neeraj Kabi, Gul Panag, Abhishek Banerjee

STORYLINE: A down-and-out Delhi cop is assigned the task of investigating an assassination attempt on a high-profile journalist.

are many brutal interrogations and breathless chases strewn all over, energising and elevating at the same time.

There is a steady momentum, an unmistakable sense of force underlining the craft in

breathe again for continuing with the onward journey into the heart of darkness.

From insecurities, power play and politics within the cop world to the media which is rapacious on the one hand and victimised on the other. In the guise of crime and investigation, the series packs in a lot, in a complex, intricate way, specially how it integrates social realities. It's a labyrinthine world in which everyone is violated even as they go about violating the other, everyone is a bully and getting bullied. The wheel of exploitation is inescapable, one in which everyone is caught. As more characters get added on, the unseemly network of

crime and corruption gets wider, layers of bitter truths keep emerging before plumbing to the depths.

At times it gets too bare and ugly for comfort, a mirror we'd rather not look ourselves in. The pent up prejudices against Muslims, the dehumanisation of lower castes and the rage and angst of the have-nots against the haves. At others, things feel frustrating and directionless because the series puts too much on its own plate, trying desperately to pack in every issue and concern possible. As a result, some get highlighted while others are given a short shrift. The innumerable characters and plot strands also get hemmed in by the unwieldiness.

What shoulders *Paatal Lok* are the performances, powerful all around, in consonance with the essential pulse of the series. Jaideep Ahlawat is magnificent in bringing a roundedness and gravitas to his cop, battling a teen at home to fighting unsympathetic seniors at work. In the middle of it all, he's trying to find a larger meaning and direction in life. His face and body language – both weighed down and worn out – say a lot. Abhishek Banerjee is equally strong as the sinister villain dealing with his own unresolved demons and despair. His steady, piercing gaze scares, disturbs, exasperates, frustrates and haunts. Quite like the ride through *Paatal Lok* itself.

Paatal Lok is streaming on Amazon Prime Video

ponders a screenplay scenario where a sex worker and her client decide to spend the quarantine together for practical reasons, including a discounted price for her services. In this diary too, Almodovar recommends films, this time about thwarted love. These include *Strangers When We Meet*, *The End Of The Affair*, *Letter From An Unknown Woman*, *Lift To The Scaffold*, *Bonjour Tristesse*, *La Notte*, *I Vitelloni*, *The Soft Skin*, and *In A Lonely Place*.

Elsewhere, the global lockdown has resulted in a flurry of creativity. The pandemic caused the Thessaloniki Film Festival to go online. Rather than sit on their laurels, they commissioned seven filmmakers to create quarantine shorts inspired by late French essayist Georges Perec's *Species of Spaces*, in which he contemplates how we occupy the space



A still from *Ash Is Purest White* • MK2 FILMS

es around us.

Among the filmmakers interpreting Perec is Chinese auteur Jia Zhang-ke, whose iPhone-shot short, *Visit*, features a visitor to his home and the sanitary measures with which he is greeted. In a letter published in Dutch magazine *De Filmkrant*, Jia writes evocatively from quarantine in Beijing. "I am hoping that we could go back to cinema early, sitting together, shoulder to shoulder," he writes. "This is the most beautiful gesture of mankind."

*Naman Ramachandran is a journalist and author of *Rajinikanth: The Definitive Biography*, and tweets @namansr*

Touched by Jia's letter, Thai

When truth is stranger than fiction

Samit Basu on why his new novel, *Chosen Spirits*, is "anti-dystopian"

• NEHA BHATT

As the coronavirus pandemic unfolds like a dystopian novel, writer Samit Basu has an odd balm for nerves: an "anti-dystopian" book. In his new release, *Chosen Spirits*, the author of the *Game-World Trilogy* fantasy novels and the *Turbulence* series of superhero books turns his attention to the near future. It is one of the few books to be released during the lockdown.

A world of possibilities

The novel is set in the late 2020s, when 'Smarttats' are tattooed on your wrist – to sense and control every movement and emotion. Smog masks have become essential accessories. News is a lie and no one can be trusted. Why does he call it anti-dystopian? "While I am trying to look at what happens in the near future, there is an attempt to find hope in it. It is the best case scenario," he explains.

It begins with Joey, a 25-year-old "reality controller" – a professional image-builder in charge of the livestream of celebrities – chancing upon a floral *kolam* with embedded hashtags. It is an invite to a protest against the evacuation of a slum. She is not new to protests: she has memories of the chants at Shaheen Bagh against the Citizenship Amendment Act. Since then, Delhi has settled into an eerie, tech-obsessed chamber of darkness.

Writing the book proved to be a massive exercise in restraint. Basu couldn't "go wild", unlike in his other fantasy writing, and reality often played spoilsport. "Something I had set three to



Author Samit Basu • REUBEN SINGH

four years into the future ended up happening the week after I wrote it! Current events also inspired new variations on the predictions. Basically, reality is badly plotted and poorly structured," he quips.

He is currently busy with another web project, a series based on one of his books (but he can't reveal more at the moment). Is a pandemic-inspired book on the cards? Not yet, he says. He is going to wait for this to pass before putting it on paper.

Chosen Spirits e-book (S&S India) is available for ₹246 on amazon.in. Read an extended version of this interview on weekend.thehindu.com.

Of laughter and libidos

Continuing Pedro Almodóvar's lockdown diaries, comedies and thwarted romances

• NAMAN RAMACHANDRAN

As the global coronavirus death tally mounts, some nations are back to normal, or, to use the current catchphrase, the 'new normal'. Others have achieved normalcy, while still others appear to have normalcy thrust upon them, as no doubt the Bard would have said if he were around today. Continuing with Spanish auteur Pedro Almodovar's lockdown diaries, serialised in *Sight & Sound* and *Indiewire*, the third part is one long list of book and film recommendations.

While I leave it to you to discover the literature recommendations, let us look at the films he endorses. Correctly deducing that the mood of his public is for comedy, Almodovar suggests several classics of the genre, mostly from Hollywood. These include *Monkey Business*, *The Philadelphia Story*,

CMYK

Midnight, To Be Or Not To Be (the Lubitsch version, not the Brooks one), *The Front Page*, *His Girl Friday*, *Some Like It Hot*, *Rich and Famous*, *I Was a Male War Bride*, *A Star Is Born* (the Cukor version) and *Design For Living*. To these, he adds Ramon Fernandez's Spanish comedy *Casa Flora*. "With this set of battery-charging gems, all you need to do is stay at home, walk up and down the corridors between films, speak to friends, family members and lovers on the phone and Skype," writes Almodovar.

In his fourth diary entry, he muses about the hunger for human contact and does a ring around his friends to see what lockdown had done to their libidos. Apart from one desperate friend who made arrangements for clandestine sex in toilets, most, like Almodovar himself, seemed to have vastly reduced erotic needs. He also



A still from *Ash Is Purest White* • MK2 FILMS

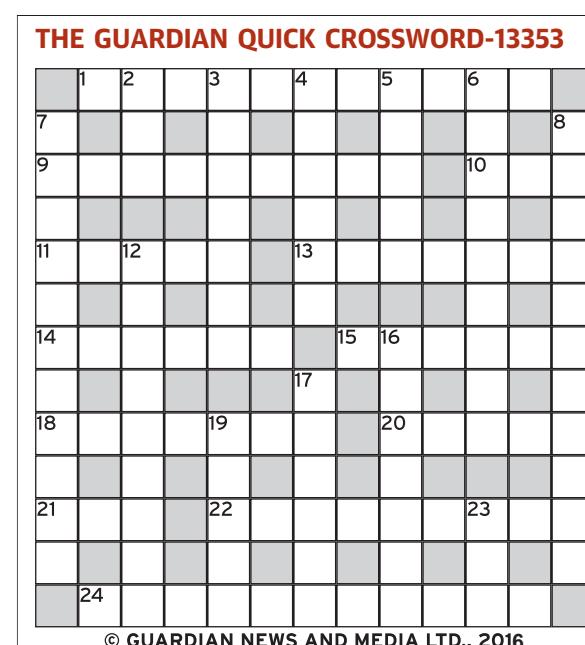
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Touched by Jia's letter, Thai

THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13353



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

(7)

4 Not subject to taxation

(6)

5 Perplexed (2,3)

6 French romantic

painter, d.1863 – coax

idler (anag) (9)

7 Hindering (11)

8 Admonished (11)

12 Make worse (9)

16 Bringing back to

prominence (7)

17 Cut capers (6)

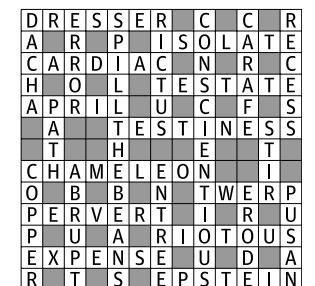
19 Let (5)

23 Beast of burden (3)

Solution will appear on

May 21, 2020.

Solution No. 13352



CMYK

A-BM-BE

After walking 30 km to catch train, migrant labourer dies near station

Jobless due to the lockdown, he was trying to board Shramik Special for Rajasthan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

A 45-year-old migrant worker from Rajasthan, who walked 30 km from his local residence to catch a Shramik Special train, collapsed and died near Vasai Road railway station, an official said on Friday.

The incident occurred on Thursday evening, and the deceased was identified as Harish Chander Shankarlal, a resident of Bhayander in Thane district.

Shankarlal, a carpenter by profession, was working at a construction site and was without a job due to the lockdown, he said.

He and some of his distant relatives had applied for approval to travel to their home towns in Shramik Special trains, being operated by the Railways to ferry migrant workers stranded due to the COVID-19 lockdown, the official said. On Wednesday, they got information that a special train would be leaving for Rajasthan on Thursday evening.

Left with no money

Shankarlal ran and walked on Thursday afternoon on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad Highway in sweltering heat to reach the station as he was left with no money to hire an autorickshaw or any other private vehicle, he said. The migrant labourer felt uneasy and collapsed near the station out of exhaustion, the official said, adding he also vomited.

The Manikpur police took him to a nearby hospital, where he was declared dead before admission. His train



Home run: Migrant workers and their families, most of them from Uttar Pradesh, waiting near Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus in Mumbai to board a train on Friday. ■ VIVEK BENDRE

was scheduled to leave at 6.30 p.m. An accidental death case has been registered at Manikpur police station and a probe is under way, the official said.

His body has been sent for post-mortem to the government hospital, another official said. Migrant workers staying in Bhayander said authorities had not made any arrangements to ferry them to the railway station.

When contracted, Vasai tehsildar Kiran Survase said they had arranged for travel to the station only for migrant workers living in Vasai.

Bhayander did not come in their jurisdiction, he said.

Mr. Survase said on Thursday, two trains left from Vasai Road – one for Jaunpur (Uttar Pradesh) and another for Sikar (Rajasthan) – with a total of 3,045 passengers.

Stones pelted at police

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BHARUCH/BOTAD (GUJARAT)

Desperate to return to their home States, a group of 150 migrant workers hurled stones at the police in Dahej industrial area of Gujarat's Bharuch district on Friday morning.

The police lobbed two tear gas shells to clear the mob that had gathered to demand a return passage, Bharuch Superintendent of Police Rajendrasinh Chudasama said.

Migrant workers, stranded in the district because of the lockdown, had staged several protests in the last two

days, he said.

"Even on Thursday, many of them took to the streets. But they went back after I personally appealed to them to be patient as their online registration was done and they only had to wait for confirmation from the authorities," Mr. Chudasama said.

However, 150 of them once again came out on Friday, voicing the same demand and pelted stones at police vehicles, he said.

Meanwhile, around 400 labourers from Bihar held a peaceful rally in Botad town on Friday.

Justice A.R. Borkar of the Nagpur Bench of the HC also directed the Union and the State to clarify on who will bear the ticket fare of persons travelling in these special trains.

The court was hearing a petition taken up suo motu on the plight of migrants, daily-wage labourers, and other stranded persons travelling back to their native States on foot.

Advocate Deven Chauhan, who was appointed by the court to assist it, on Friday told the court that the special trains run by the Railways are only till May 17.

The court then directed the Railways to file an affidavit submitting details of special trains run from various parts of the country.

"The affidavit shall also state up to what date the special trains will ferry migrants and other stranded persons back to their native states," Justice Borkar said.

State sets up 2 committees for coordination among hospitals

They will ensure decisions on pandemic reach all concerned

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government has set up two committees at the State and the district level for better coordination between public and private hospitals in tackling the spread of COVID-19. The decision was taken on Thursday after a meeting between representatives of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) and Chief Secretary Ajay Mehta, according to the government.

A government resolution (GR) issued on May 14 said the committees will ensure all government decisions regarding steps being taken to control the pandemic and medical protocols are made available to all concerned.

The panels will see that personal protective equipment kits, gloves and masks are made available to medical workers in private hospitals.

Social security

The committees will also work out steps to be taken to ensure medical workers have social security and are treated with respect and dignity, the GR said.

The State-level committee will be headed by the Chief Secretary and comprise principal secretary (public health), principal secretary (urban development), secretary (medical education), Mumbai Municipal Commissioner, and Director of Medical Education.

The director of health services will be the member-secretary, while president of the IMA (Maharashtra) and a representative of the association will be an invitee on the panel. The district-level



Getting ready: The under-construction COVID-19 hospital at MMRDAs grounds at BKC on Friday. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

committee will have the collector as chairman and members will include the CEO of the zilla parishad, police commissioner, municipal commissioners, and district police superinten-

sued by the IMA (Maharashtra) said a delegation led by its State unit president Avinash Bhondwe met Mr. Mehta and other senior officials on Thursday to discuss issues related to the pandemic.

Policy on fees

Apart from setting up of the two committees, the IMA suggested that there should be a uniform policy on fees and other charges for COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 patients treated by private hospitals. The IMA said that all acquired private hospitals should be included under the State's Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Jan Arogya Yojana.

The IMA said there should not be any medico-legal case against any doctor on ground that the treating doctor or hospital is cause of COVID-19 infection to a patient.

The renewal date of registration of hospitals under the Bombay Nursing Home Act should be postponed in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the release said.

Pawar writes to PM, seeks + relief for sugar industry

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar on Friday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding immediate relief for the sugar industry.

He, however, expressed disappointment over the 'Atmanirbhar Agricultural Package' announced on Friday, saying it had no word on restructuring agri loans, moratorium on loans, and reduction in interest rates for farmers.

"There is no clarity on financial aid for the ensuing kharif season and also no relief for losses incurred by horticultural crop growers. This announcement appears like a Five Year Plan and not a relief package as publicised," he said.

The former Union agriculture minister also sought provision of funds for clearing export incentives and buffer stock expenses pending since 2018-19 and 2019-20.

Other demands included increasing MSP of sugar

ranging from ₹3,450 to ₹3,750 with grade-wise increment; provision of one-time grant of ₹650 per tonne on average cane crushed during the last two years; conversion of outstanding working capital into short-term loan and rescheduling all term loans for 10 years with a moratorium of two years on the lines of the Mitra Committee recommendations; rating sugar mills' distilleries as strategic business units; and finance from banks, on standalone basis, for ethanol projects sanctioned under the interest subvention capex scheme announced by the Centre in 2018.

On Friday morning, Mr. Pawar also held a meeting with Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and senior ministers from the State Cabinet about the possible extension of the lockdown from May 17 to May 31. The meeting discussed possible relaxations to be offered, and how to impose restrictions in red and containment zones.

Goa scales up testing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PANAJI

Following the detection of eight COVID-19 cases in the State, the Goa government has scaled up its testing facility at Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMCH).

Health Minister Vishwajit Rane on Friday said a state-of-the-art machine has been installed at the GMCH that can test up to 480 swab samples in a day. Taking to Twitter, Mr. Rane said, "Grateful to CM @DrPramodPSawant for sanctioning latest Abbott m2000 PCR on our request to GMC, which can conduct up to 480 tests in 24 hours."

The coastal State, which was declared a green zone on May 1, recorded eight fresh cases in the last couple of days.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said ov-

Sweet and sweat



Earning their livelihood: Workers busy at a jaggery-making unit at Thorat Wasti in Saispur village on the Pune-Solapur Highway near Pune. As most of the big sugar factories are closed due to the lockdown, these units buy sugarcane at lower prices. ■ JIGNESH MISTRY

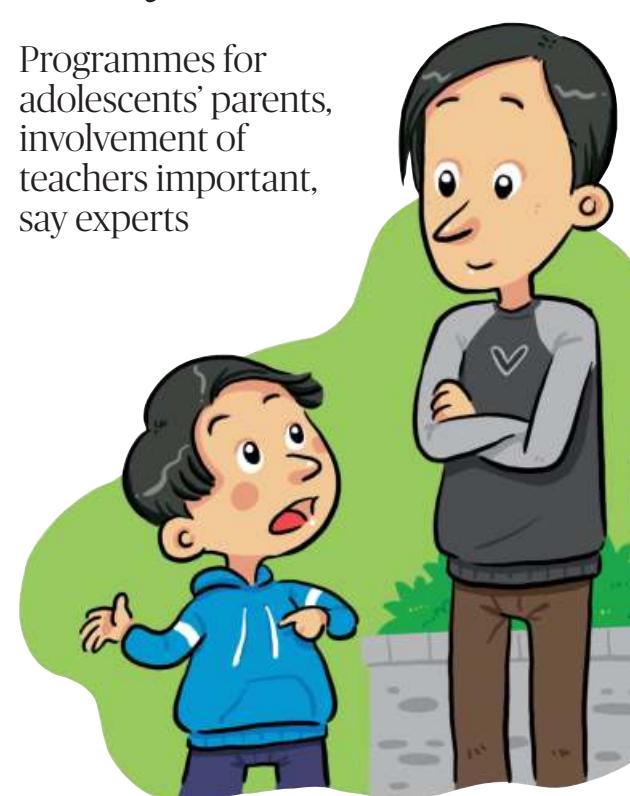
Early intervention at home, school can raise responsible adults'

Programmes for adolescents' parents, involvement of teachers important, say experts

Second batch

This is the second batch of Goans, who have arrived after working on different ships as crew members of a cruise ship had returned to the State last month.

"Today, 154 Goan seafarers have been brought to Goa by road directly after signing off at Mumbai Port. Our Govt is working continuously in coordination with central depts to ensure that Goans stranded in different parts of the country & world reach home safely," Mr. Sawant said in a tweet.



GAREEMA BANGAD
MUMBAI

The recent Bois Locker Room incident, where adolescent boys were found to be sharing pictures of girls along with lewd comments, has brought to the fore the need for early interventions at the school and parental level, to raise responsible youngsters.

"My first thought was that we need to educate our boys. All of us blame the girls, but we actually need to teach our boys to respect girls. All this needs to be taught right from primary school and not after they enter the fifth grade," said Dr. Zoya Rizvi, Deputy Commissioner (Adolescent Health), Ministry of

Health and Family Welfare.

Personal safety, health

Dr. Rizvi was speaking at a webinar on Thursday, on the personal safety and health of adolescents and the role of parents, teachers and society in helping them become responsible adults. The webinar was organised by the NGO Arpan, which works in the field of child health.

Soledad Herrero, Chief of Child Protection, UNICEF India, said the focus has been more on a legalistic and responsive approach, and less on prevention and changes in social behaviour.

"It is critical to provide the right protection programmes to adolescents as life skills are important for the children to become self-reliant and emotionally regulated humans who can make the right decisions," she said. Ms. Herrero said pro-

grammes for adolescents' parents are important to ensure the family is well equipped and prepared to deal with their needs and questions, energy and excitement.

Professor Saroj Yadav, Dean (Academic), National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), spoke of the role teachers play in shaping adolescents' lives. "Gone are the days when teachers thought they will be called out for discussing sensitive issues in schools. A matter might be sensitive for a teacher, but the child might not think so," she said.

While the adolescent period is full of opportunities, it is also associated with a lot of risk, said Ms. Herrero. "Sexual abuse is a worldwide issue and one out of five children faces it. The largest number of violent deaths happen in this age group."

According to the National Family Health Survey, at least 16% of adolescent girls have reportedly suffered violence, she said. "The main issue is the lack of a good support system."

13 new cases reported in Punjab

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Punjab recorded 13 fresh COVID-19 cases on Friday with six cases surfacing in Faridkot district, according to an official statement.

The Health department said till May 15, the total positive cases reported were 1,932.

Meanwhile, in the wake of the season of vector borne diseases starting in the State, Health Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu has instructed civil surgeons to intensify the measures to prevent and control dengue and other Vector Borne Diseases in collaboration with State Task Force.

"It is necessary to control dengue and other vector borne diseases, which will be the paramount target for State Task Force," he said.

Jharkhand CM takes on Goyal

'Railway Minister's statement that State was not giving NOC to run trains is not true'

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR



Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Friday took on Union Railway Minister Piyush Goyal saying his statement that Jharkhand was not giving permissions for running more trains for which migrants stranded outside were suffering was 'uninformed' one.

In a series of Tweets, Mr. Soren said, "what it seems, Union Railway Minister is not being fed with correct information by his own department. We have already given no objection certificates for running 110 trains. Around 60,000 migrant workers in 50 trains have already returned home."

"I request you (Mr. Goyal) to run more and more trains for Jharkhand. Now, only four to six trains are reaching the State every day. This is not sufficient to bring back about 7 lakh Jharkhandi migrant

Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren

workers. I hope you will give attention on this and help Jharkhandis," the Chief Minister said.

The statement of Mr. Goyal seems to have not gone down well with Mr. Soren. The Railway Minister had said 1,200 trains were exclusively reserved for transporting migrant workers stranded away from their homes and 300 trains can be run daily.

"But, there are many States like West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and

Jharkhand where very few NOCs are coming from. On the other hand, around 400 trains have departed for Uttar Pradesh and 200 for Bihar," he pointed out.

Mr. Goyal further said, "the Jharkhand CM had given a statement that he wants to bring back all migrants. But, he should first give permissions so that trains could be made available."

According to office of Jharkhand Chief Minister, "Mr. Soren had written letters to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and spoken to Home Minister and Railway Minister reiterating numerous times that necessary arrangements be made to bring back migrant workers by trains."

The first Shramik special train had travelled from Telangana to Jharkhand. As around seven lakh workers registered on the State portal expressing their desire to return, the Jharkhand CMO said

it was a herculean task – much bigger in scale and size than Vande Bharat mission – to bring all back home.

In another Tweeter message, Mr. Soren said, "time and again, I have reiterated our commitment to bring home all stranded workers of Jharkhand. On May 12, our Chief Secretary wrote Union Home Secretary, seeking necessary clearances to bring back 319 migrant workers stuck in Andaman and Nicobar Island by two chartered flights."

Awaiting clearances'

"It has been four days and we are still awaiting necessary clearances from Home Ministry to initiate the process. Jharkhand government will bear the costs of the flights to Ranchi, if Home Ministry permits us. We need a humane approach now and be sensitive to those who have faced the worst," he pointed out.

Gehlot flays Centre's package after third tranche of relief

'Nothing for the landless labourers and the urban poor'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR



The Rajasthan CM regretted that 90% of the Centre's rescue package was in the form of bank loans. ■ FILE PHOTO

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Friday criticised the Centre's economic package of ₹20 lakh crore to deal with the impact of COVID-19 pandemic after Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced its third tranche dedicated to agriculture and allied activities. Mr. Gehlot said there was nothing for the landless labourers and the urban poor in the package.

"It was the third day of the Finance Minister's announcements... The first thing the FM should have done was to give a complete break-up of the numbers, figures [and] details regarding the package. It is important for transparency, clarity and for understanding the impact," Mr. Gehlot tweeted.

people were living at near starvation level, he said.

Mr. Gehlot said the States had not been given any financial assistance even though the entire expenditure on fighting COVID-19, enforcing the lockdown and providing support to migrant labourers and relief to the poorest had had to be borne by the States.

Walk to reach home turns tragic

Migrant worker dies of exhaustion near Odisha border

STAFF REPORTER
BHUBANESWAR

A migrant labourer, who was walking back to his home in Odisha's Puri district, died at Laxmannath toll plaza near the State border on Friday.

The man identified as Dhubei Charan Mohanty was working in a company in Kolkata. He lost job following the nationwide lockdown.

Subsequently, he exhausted all savings on food during

past 50 days. The man decided to return home. As there was no easy mode of transport he could avail, walking back home was the only option left with him.

Mr. Mohanty collapsed near Laxmannath toll plaza, the border check gate, about 11.30 am. He was declared brought dead by doctors.

With people found miserably walking in blistering heat, the Odisha govern-

ment, meanwhile, announced a structured strategy to stop people from walking on road.

"We are working on a strategy of providing relief to those walking through Odisha. People will not walk on road to reach home from now. Chief Minister's Relief Fund will be used to ferry them from State's one end to another," said State Director General of Police Abhay.

It's been more than a week since Pankaj Kulshreshtha, a senior journalist working for a Hindi newspaper in Agra, lost his battle with COVID-19, but his family and colleagues are still waiting for the U.P. government to declare him a "corona warrior" and award compensation to his family.

In April, the U.P. government had declared a compensation of ₹50 lakh in case a "corona warrior" died while working during the pandemic. Corona warriors are health workers, staff of local bodies and police. Kulshreshtha, 50, was Deputy News Editor of *Dainik Jagran*'s Agra edition at the time of his death.

Recalling the chain of events, Gaurav, his cousin, said, "It rained in Agra on

April 24 and *bhaisahib* got wet while returning from office. The following morning, he developed a fever and I took him to SN Medical College OPD. The doctor gave him medicine and said if the fever didn't subside, he should get himself tested for COVID-19."

The fever kept coming back and Kulshreshtha started feeling weak. "On April 28, he got himself tested for COVID-19. But the report came out only on May 2 and he was admitted to SN Medical College on May 3. If the administration had responded in time, my brother might have been saved," he alleged.

Mr. Gaurav's version is at variance with what *Dainik Jagran* reported on May 8. It said Kulshreshtha's report came out on May 4 and the

same day he was admitted to the hospital.

Mr. Gaurav has demanded ₹50 lakh and a government job for his cousin's wife.

One of Kulshreshtha's colleagues, who chose anonymity, claimed that even after a rival newspaper implemented a policy of work from home, *Dainik Jagran* kept calling its staff to the office.

Hemant Tiwari, president of State Accredited Journalist Association, said he had been demanding that journalists be declared "corona warriors" even before Kulshreshtha's demise. "According to Central and State government notifications, print and electronic media have been part of essential services. But both the government and management are yet to respond." Ashutosh Shukla, State Ed-

itor of *Dainik Jagran*, maintained that there was no laxity on the part of the management or administration. "We are in touch with the government on the issue of compensation but before that the management will take care of the family. We will make an announcement within a few days."

'Delays' in response
On the issue of "delays" in response, Mr. Shukla said as soon as they got the information of infection in office, they allowed the desk to work from home and only skeletal staff was coming to the office. "I was personally involved in arranging the ambulance to shift him to Lucknow, but the doctors advised against it as he was already on ventilator support," he added.

Cyclone alert in Odisha

STAFF REPORTER
BHUBANESWAR

With a cyclone brewing over the Bay of Bengal, the Odisha government on Friday put 12 of its districts on high alert and advised them to make fresh assessment on temporary medical centres set up for COVID-19 pandemic.

The well-marked low pressure area over southeast Bay of Bengal is likely to concentrate into a depression over the same region during next 12 hours and further intensify into a cyclonic storm by the evening of May 16, a Meteorological Department bulletin said.

Apprehending that the cyclone could hit Odisha, a high level meeting was convened here to take stock of the situation.

READ
FRONTLINE
EVERY FORTNIGHT

Scribe's death triggers debate about 'warriors'

Kin waiting for U.P. govt. to declare him a 'corona warrior' and award compensation

ANUJ KUMAR
GAZIABAD

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IN BRIEF



905 reach State on train from Delhi

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM After a gap of 60 days, the Thiruvananthapuram Central railway station turned active on Friday to receive the passengers travelling by the special train – the first from Delhi to Kerala following the lockdown. The train arrived at the station with 329 passengers at 5.10 a.m., keeping health, railway, and police officers on their toes. The health screening of the passengers lasted for three hours. Of the 329 people, one with symptoms of COVID-19 was shifted to a hospital.

Jagan releases ₹2,800 cr. for Rythu Bharosa

VIJAYAWADA Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Friday released ₹2,800 crore for the implementation of the 'Rythu Bharosa-PM Kisan' scheme. It will benefit 49,43,590 farmer families. They will get ₹7,500 as first instalment of which ₹2,000, amounting to ₹3,675 crore, was credited in April. In the second instalment, ₹4,000 will be disbursed in October for rabi and ₹2,000 during Sankranti taking the total amount to ₹13,500 for five years.

Wild boar shot dead by forest officials in Ranni

PATHANAMTHITTA For the first time in Kerala, forest officials in Ranni shot dead a wild boar, invoking the provisions in a government order in March allowing them to gun down crop-raiding wild boars declaring them as vermin. Villagers have been complaining of large-scale destruction of crops by wild boars in many parts of Ranni. A squad led by range officer J. Selin Jose fired at a herd of wild boars that were found raiding crops. A female boar of around five years was killed while the other animals escaped.

Kerala updates monsoon preparedness document

It stresses on four types of relief camps

TIKI RAJWI

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM As part of the preparations for the 2020 southwest monsoon season, the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) is updating its monsoon preparedness document by incorporating guidelines for tackling natural-calamity-related exigencies amid the COVID-19 pandemic and also lessons learned from the 2019 floods.

The updated 'Monsoon preparedness and emergency response plan' will be published shortly. The KSDMA has shared the updated version with different government departments for their inputs. It will be discussed at a meeting to be convened by the State Relief Commissioner on May 20.

Four types of camps

Among other things, the revised version highlights the need to have four different types of relief camps/quarantine facilities under each local body and features a 101-point advisory on efficient management practices for relief camps.

As lockdown 3.0 nears exit, no respite from cases in the South

One patient dies in Karnataka; 102 new cases in Andhra Pradesh and 16 in Kerala

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Karnataka reported one more death from COVID-19 infection on Friday, taking the toll to 36.

The virus was spreading in Andhra Pradesh in spite of the lockdown, with 102 new cases confirmed in a 24-hours period ending Friday morning.

Kerala reported 16 more cases on Friday, 13 of which were imported cases and three involved local transmission.

Of the 16 new cases, seven were people who had returned from abroad and six were Keralites from other States. Three had contracted the disease through contact with known/unknown sources of infection.

Five cases were in Way-

Awaiting their turn

With the Railways running 'Shramik Specials', many migrant labourers have opted to return to their home States.

Relief soon: Workers being temporarily housed at the Bangalore International Exhibition Centre before their travel arrangements are finalised. ■ ADITYA BHARADWAJ

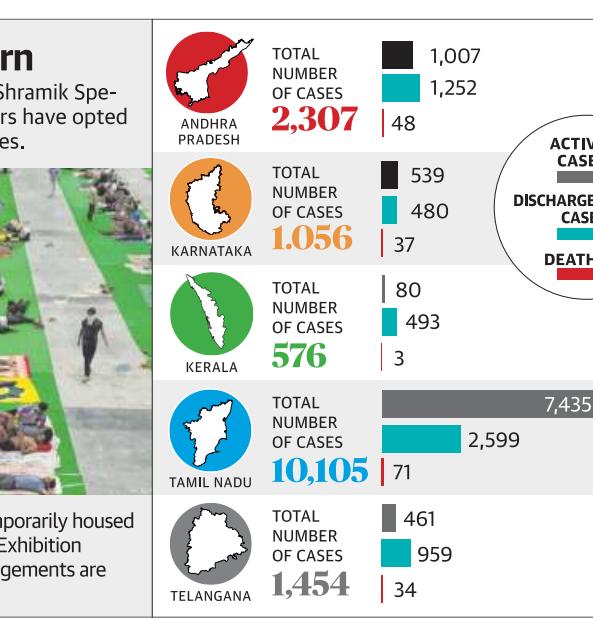
in spite of the lockdown, the 102 new cases included 57 persons who contracted the virus locally and through the Koyambedu market in Chennai and 45 were migrant workers (34 from Maharashtra and 11 from Rajasthan) who had returned recently.

The total number of positive cases stood at 2,307, including 150 migrant returnees. Also, 1,252 persons were discharged and the death toll was 48. Besides, 60 patients recovered in the past one day.

The Health Department's bulletin has included migrants' cases under 'out of the State' tally over the last two days. Among the 57 new cases, 14 each were from Chittoor and Nellore, 9 from Krishna, 8 from Kurnool, 4 from Anantapur, 3 from Vizianagaram, 2 each from Kadapa and Visakhapatnam, and one from East Godavari district.

Guntur, Prakasam, Srikrishna and West Godavari did not report any case in the 24-hour window.

The district-wise break-up



of the total cases was: Kurnool 599 (238 active); Guntur 404 (139); Krishna 360 (140); Chittoor 165 (88); Nellore 140 (56); Anantapur 122 (62); Kadapa 101 (38); West Godavari 69 (24); Visakhapatnam 68 (42); Prakasam 63 (3); East Godavari 52 (17); Sri-kakulam 7 (3) and Vizianagaram 7 (7).

Karnataka: 69 new cases

Just over two months and a week since Karnataka reported its first COVID-19 case, the State crossed the 1,000 mark on Friday, also recording the highest single-day spike of 69 cases. The total tally stood at 1,056.

In another fatality, a 52-year-old male resident of Chittaguppa town in Bidar, with travel history to Hyderabad presented with severe acute respiratory illness, and died on May 12 in Bidar. His samples returned positive on Friday.

Mysuru district, which was a cluster hotspot and in the red zone, became COVID-free with all patients recovering and being dis-

charged, and with no mortality. Medical Education Minister K. Sudhakar said Mysuru was an example of how the virus could be defeated if people strictly followed guidelines.

Among new cases reported on Friday, 20 were expatriates from Dubai as part of the first phase of Vande Bharat mission and 23 had a travel history to Mumbai. Among the 20 Dubai returnees, 15 were from Dakshina Kannada, five from Udupi and one from Uttara Kannada.

The surge in the number of COVID cases continued in Telangana with 40 more persons testing positive for the virus on Friday.

The number of positive cases is nearing the 1,500 mark with the number of cases touching 1,454.

However, there were no deaths during the day and the number of people succumbing to the virus stood at 34.

(With inputs from Vijayawada, Hyderabad and Bengaluru Bureaus)

Former underworld don Muthappa Rai no more

An associate of Dawood, he later became a philanthropist



N. Muthappa Rai

1996. Though it was Dawood Ibrahim who helped him escape, he slowly gravitated towards the "Hindi faction" in a communally divided underworld. "This put him in good stead to turn a new leaf," said a former city police official who did not wish to be named. He was soon associated with the real estate business, as the city saw a boom in the late 1990s and 2000s.

He was arrested and extradited to Bengaluru by Dubai authorities in 2002. Rai stood trial for a total of eight cases, including the sensa-

Key conspirator in naval espionage case held

National Investigation Agency arrests Lakdawala in Mumbai

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

VISAKHAPATNAM

An alleged key conspirator in the Visakhapatnam naval espionage case, Mohammed Haroon Haji Abdul Rehman Lakdawala, 49, was arrested in Mumbai by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday.

The case relates to an international espionage racket involving individuals based in Pakistan and at different locations in India.

According to an NIA release, Pakistani-based spies recruited agents in India for collecting sensitive and classified information on Indian naval ships, submarines and other defence establishments.

Investigation has revealed that a few naval personnel,

some based in Visakhapatnam, had come in contact with Pakistani nationals through various social media platforms and were allegedly involved in sharing classified information for monetary gains. The money was deposited into the bank accounts of the Navy personnel through Indian associates having business interests in Pakistan.

During his visits, he came in contact with two Pakistani spies – Akbar alias Ali, and Rizwan – who directed him to deposit money into the bank accounts of the Navy personnel at regular intervals through different means.

During searches at the house of Lakdawala, a number of digital devices and incriminating documents were seized by the NIA. Earlier, investigation had revealed that some Navy personnel were honey-trapped through social media.

Lakdawala was produced in a local court in Mumbai and was being brought to Vijayawada on a transit warrant.

Watermelons come to the rescue of migrant labourers

RAJULAPUDI SRINIVAS

NANDIGAMA

The watermelon has become the preferred food for hundreds of migrant labourers who are making a long, arduous trek back to their hometowns.



Cheap and filling: Migrant labourers eating watermelon at Ramavarappadu in Vijayawada on Friday. ■ K.V.S. GIRI

A group of workers, who were on their way to Tuni in East Godavari district from Pericharla in Guntur district, were seen eating the fruit under a tree at Eluru.

"It is cheap and filling, and also provides much-needed hydration," they said.

"With little money left, we have been eating only watermelons for the last few days," said Gali Sathibabu.

"Watermelons are available for just ₹30 each. Some people are offering the fruit free of cost. One watermelon

is enough for more than five people. As we walk long distances, we are not able to carry water and food for all of us. Watermelons are convenient," said Pasala Satyavathi of Anakapalle.

"Fearing that we could be infected with the COVID-19 virus, villagers are not even offering us water. We don't have money to buy bread and biscuits. We can only afford watermelons," said Sadali Nagaraju of Samalkot in East Godavari district.

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 Saturday: Thunderstorms accompanied with lightning likely at isolated places over Andaman & Nicobar island, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Sikkim, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, central Maharashtra, Goa, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Lakshadweep and Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

In 2008, Muthappa Rai started a Kannada organisation 'Jaya Karnataka', which became his public face. Though he had ambitions to convert this organisation into a political party, that never happened. Living in a heavily guarded palatial house in Bidadi, he called himself a businessman involved in the real estate sector. He subsequently turned a philanthropist and was also elected chairperson of the Karnataka Athletics Association in 2018.

The last rites were held at his residence in Bidadi on Friday. Due to restrictions imposed to curtail the spread of COVID-19, only his family members participated.

He is survived by wife and two sons.

CITIES RAIN MAX MIN CITY RAIN MAX MIN

Apartment 11.0 35.0 24.0 Kozhikode -35.0 28.0

Ahmedabad -42.0 29.0 Kurnool -42.0 28.0

Aizawl -32.0 18.0 Lucknow -39.0 26.0

Allahabad -43.0 27.0 Madurai -39.0 27.0

Bengaluru -35.0 23.0 Mangalore -35.0 25.0

Bhopal -41.0 26.0 Mumbai -32.0 26.0

Bhubaneswar -37.0 25.0 Mysuru -35.0 24.0

Chandigarh -35.0 22.0 New Delhi -39.0 24.0

Chennai -37.0 28.0 Patna 10.8 36.0 25.0

Coimbatore -37.0 26.0 Port Blair 18.0 31.0 26.0

Dehradun -36.0 20.0 Puducherry -37.0 27.0

Gangtok 15.2 19.0 14.0 Pune 21.8 35.0 21.0

Goa 0.3 35.0 27.0 Raipur -41.0 27.0

Guwahati -31.0 21.0 Ranchi -37.0 23.0

Hubballi -35.0 26.0 Shillong -24.0 14.0

Hyderabad -39.0 25.0 Shimla 2.8 28.0 14.0

Imphal 0.8 31.0 18.0 Srinagar -19.0 10.0

Jaipur -41.0 27.0 Thiruvananthapuram 3.2 33.0 25.0

Kochi 2.4 33.0 25.0 Tiruchi -40.0 28.0

Kohima -26.0 15.0 15.0 Vizianagaram -41.0 27.0

Kolkata -37.0 28.0 Visakhapatnam -35.0 28.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES SO. NO. CO PM2.5 PM10 CODE Yesterday

Ahmedabad -27.28 34 68 ...

Bengaluru -19.71 18 -

Chennai -30.44 61 -

Delhi -29.9 60 86 ...

Hyderabad -10.20 39 -

Kolkata -11.9 18 28 ...

Lucknow -21.26 239 -</p



A question of quarantine

The Centre and States must have uniform requirements for travellers

As tens of thousands of people move across States, many of them migrant workers and their families travelling as unorganised groups, the Centre finds itself facing a fresh front in the campaign to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. While it was possible to shut down optional public activity and travel early on during the lockdown, those who were stranded within the country and abroad have started returning home. Only some are travelling by trains and aircraft, and the system of quarantine in the States is not uniform. The Centre, as the lockdown regulator, now has the important task of creating a consensus with the States on the quarantine modalities. Confusion surrounding quarantine for passengers who took the first relief trains from New Delhi to various cities, leading to some of them returning to the national capital, underscores the need for agreement. The response so far has been flat-footed in several States. Train passengers arriving in Bengaluru protested that they received no advance notice of institutional quarantine, although they were given an option to stay in hotels for 14 days incurring considerable expenditure. Labourers compulsorily quarantined in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar escaped from the facilities after complaining of bad conditions. In Kerala, the Centre insists on a 14-day institutional quarantine for those arriving by air, rejecting the State's proposal for seven days in a public facility and another seven at home; train passengers were given a home quarantine option. Such a lack of certitude, even as the extended lockdown is set to expire, reflects failure at building consensus.

With further easing of the lockdown, if not full withdrawal, many more will want to move within and between States, by rail and road, besides those returning from abroad. All States have to prepare for this by agreeing on the period of quarantine, and provide, as a baseline, decent and free official accommodation to anyone who wants it. There could be options, including hotels and private accommodation, at non-exploitative tariffs. Such a stratified approach is inevitable, considering that many travellers from areas with high transmission have been testing positive. For thousands of workers moving in groups by road across States, there is both the risk of infection and transmission. This is a daunting scenario as India has crossed 85,000 cases of COVID-19 and slowing the spread depends vitally on joint action. It must be pointed out that the Health Ministry, in its updated advice issued on May 10, approved home isolation for even patients with the virus, if they are deemed to be very mild to pre-symptomatic cases. This indicates a recognition of both the growing case load, the rising pressure on public facilities and the limited scope for paid quarantine. Yet, institutional capacity will have to be ramped up in the coming weeks as part of a cohesive policy.

TASMAC tribulations

TN's zeal for resuming liquor sales amid rising infection reflects its desperation for revenue

The conflict between fiscal health and public health is quite real for the States. Faced with dwindling revenue due to the stagnation in economic activity since the national lockdown began, States are desperate to raise money to combat disease spread and to keep their public health services going. It is this desperation that led Tamil Nadu to rush to the Supreme Court to obtain a stay on a Madras High Court order barring the sale of liquor through its retail stores and mandating online sales alone. The top court seems to be mindful of the need to preserve the policy space of States, reflected in its various interim orders declining to stop liquor sales. In one case, it refused a blanket stay on opening liquor shops; in another it suggested online sale and home delivery, but did not want to impose the option on any government. In TN's case, it has stayed the HC order, paving the way for resumption of sales through outlets of the State-run TASMAC. The Madras High Court initially allowed the State government to open its vast network of liquor shops, subject to several conditions for maintaining physical distancing. However, the State witnessed appalling scenes of unmanageable crowds and serpentine queues when shops re-opened on May 7. As there was overwhelming evidence that physical distancing had been given the go-by, the HC banned across-the-counter sales, and directed that only online sale be permitted.

Popular opinion in TN does not seem to favour the resumption of liquor sales at a time when the number of people testing positive for the novel coronavirus is spiralling. Even those who have no moral objection to liquor consumption would endorse regulations on physical sale, given the great danger of the infection spreading fast. TN is reeling under the effect of a cluster traced to Chennai city's huge wholesale vegetable and fruit market, with the total infection count rising in thousands in recent days. The State government's argument that the HC ought not to have interfered in a policy matter may be sound, and obviously impressed the Supreme Court. However, its claim that online sale is not possible in a State like Tamil Nadu does not really ring true. The reality is that selling liquor online would cut into the unaccounted extra fee that TASMAC staff charge for every purchase. At ₹5 to ₹10 for each sale, this amount runs into crores of rupees annually and is believed to be shared among vested interests. None can realistically discount the possibility that reopening TASMAC outlets may lead to another infection spiral. Now that it has fought bitterly, even at the cost of making a highly contentious decision, to get liquor sales going, the State government has to live up to its promise of preventing overcrowding in the vicinity of its outlets.

NEET is not student-friendly, merit-promoting

In the case of education, over-centralisation is becoming a harsh and painful reality



FAIZAN MUSTAFA

Freedom of individual development is the basis of democracy," observed the Commission (1948-49) appointed by the Government of India "to report on Indian University Education and suggest improvements and extensions that may be desirable to suit present and future". It had among its members Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and was cited by then Chief Justice of India, B.N. Kirpal, in the judgment in *T.M.A. Pai Foundation & Ors vs State Of Karnataka & Ors* (2002).

The Commission added (also cited in the *T.M.A. Pai Foundation* judgment): "Exclusive control of education by the State has been an important factor in facilitating the maintenance of totalitarian tyrannies. In such States[,] institutions of higher learning controlled and managed by governmental agencies act like mercenaries, promote the political purposes of the State, make them acceptable to an increasing number of their populations and supply them with the weapons they need. We must resist, in the interests of our own democracy, the trend towards the governmental domination of the educational process."

But these observations do not seem to have been kept in mind in a judgment this April on the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET), by a three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court, headed by Justice Arun Mishra. NEET was initially struck down as unconstitutional in *Christian Medical College, Vellore* (2013) by a 2:1 majority. In 2016, not only was a review of this judgment allowed but the dissenting judge of the 2013 judgment made NEET compulsory even prior to a full hearing

by the constitution Bench. NEET is an assault on the autonomy of universities and higher education institutions, particularly private, unaided ones. It is ironic that while in all other areas including industrial relations, the government is talking about deregulation, in the case of education, over-centralisation is becoming a harsh and painful reality. Similarly in the name of NEET or the state's power to "regulate", the rights of unaided private institutions and minority institutions cannot be violated as regulation cannot annihilate minority character. Certainly minorities do not have right to "mal-administer" their institutions yet due to admission mal-practices practised by the few institutions, denial of Article 30 rights and Article 19(g) rights of private unaided institutions is absolutely wrong.

Students disadvantaged

Is NEET really student friendly? For example, Tamil Nadu has been opposing NEET. With NEET and similar other national tests such as the Joint Entrance Examination and Common Law Admission Test, coaching institutes are prospering; since most of them are in cities, poorer students from a rural background and who have studied in the vernacular medium face a disadvantage. There is also large-scale variation in the syllabus and standards of the Central Board of Secondary Education and State boards. We cannot overlook some of the advantages a student has if there are multiple tests: if he falls ill or has not done well in one test, he will still have a chance to qualify in another without losing a year. Second, it gives a student a right to select an institution of his choice. Third, the NEET paper was leaked twice in the last four years; therefore, there is not much confidence in NEET's fairness and transparency. Finally, there is the issue of wrong translation. In the 2018 NEET, as many as 49 questions had errors in Tamil translation leading to a Madras



High Court order to award four marks for each of the 49 wrongly translated questions, or 196 marks to all 1.07 lakh candidates of Tamil Nadu. The Supreme Court overruled this order as the High Court had arbitrarily ordered giving grace marks to everyone without examining whether the student even attempted such a question.

Element of class

NEET is considered the best option as our judges genuinely think it promotes merit. But is there a consensus on what merit really means? British sociologist Michael Dunlop Young's book, *The Rise of the Meritocracy* (1958), has popularised what is called "meritocracy" though the idea really goes back to earlier times. Meritocracy requires competition and equality of opportunity. Is it not a fact that the administrators of NEET and judges do believe that the multidimensional construct of merit can be adequately, if not accurately, measured? When NEET and other such admission tests do not meet this fundamental criteria, competition cannot be termed as fair and just, and the equality of opportunity becomes illusory. There is substantial scholarship in the West (Sacks, Freedle, Wells, Camara & Schmidt) that argues that common admission tests cannot measure abilities that are essential for learning such as imagination, curiosity and motivation. Justice Mishra did concede the point of a lack of commitment of doctors to serve in rural areas (that was a point in *Christian Medical College, Vellore*) but eventually decided in favour of NEET in the name of merit. Empirical research in the United States on standardised common tests has found that these tests are biased

against the poorer and underprivileged sections of population, women and minorities. Thus there is an element of class in NEET that the Indian judiciary has so far overlooked.

Differential treatment

Minority rights are not the violation of the equality provision in Article 14 as the Constitution does permit classification. In fact substantive equality as opposed to formal equality, mandates differential treatment. There are even hundreds of minority institutions of Hindus as linguistic minorities. The Supreme Court itself termed Article 30 as 'an article of faith' in *Lilly Kurian* (1978); a 'sacred obligation' in *Kerala Education Bill* (1957); 'the conscience of the nation' in *Ahmedabad St. Xavier's College* (1974); 'an absolute right' in *Rev. Sidhajbhai Sabhai And Others* (1962) and part of the 'basic structure' in *Kesavananda Bharati* (1973); thus minority rights were held as unamendable and inalienable.

The Court's opinion in *Kerala Education Bill*, on minority rights, has been religiously cited in all subsequent judgments (including the latest judgment on NEET) but without paying much attention to the crucial statement where there was the observation that the key words in Article 30 are 'of their own choice'. Holding 'choice' to be the dominant word, then Chief Justice Das said that 'the content of the article is as wide as the choice of the particular minority can make it'. If a minority institution wants additional qualifications over and above the NEET score, denial of such additional and superior qualifications undermines its choice. Even if one concedes the necessity of NEET, centralised counselling due to which several minority institutions and private medical colleges are unable to fill their seats is indeed an 'intolerable encroachment'. Moreover, every vacant seat is the national loss. COVID-19 has only demonstrated In-

dia's extremely poor doctor-population ratio.

Justice Mishra has rightly relied on *T.M.A. Pai Foundation*, where the Court had held that admission by the management can be by a common entrance test held by "itself or by the State/University". Moreover, it is important that here universities and state were treated on a par and an admission test by the university was considered as good as a test conducted by the State. What a 11-judge Bench really emphasised was that an admission process must be fair and transparent rather than just one test for all institutions. In *Islamic Academy of Education and Another* (2003), a five-judge Bench of the top court clarified the *T.M.A. Pai* judgment and held that institutions which have a special feature and which have been admitting only students of their own community but have a fair and transparent admission procedure for at least the last 25 years can seek an exemption from a common admission test. Certainly it is nobody's case that minority institutions can grant admission on their whims and fancies, but if such an institution follows an identifiable or reasonable methodology of admitting students, the imposition of NEET with mandatory centralised counselling is indeed an unreasonable restriction.

The Supreme Court has consistently held that Article 30 is not so absolute as to be above the law and regulations made in the true interests of efficiency of instruction, discipline, health, sanitation, morality and public order could be imposed. This is a small window and cannot be widened to take over the entire admission process as some of the smaller Benches (including the latest one) have inferred. After all, instruction, sanitation, health and discipline will come into play only after candidates are admitted.

Faizan Mustafa is an expert of constitutional law. The views expressed are personal

The pandemic and the challenge of behaviour change

A well-crafted social marketing campaign can help address the crisis and even prepare for future disease outbreaks



S.N. SRIKANTH

The COVID-19 crisis is far from over, but governments everywhere appear to have either relaxed lockdown parameters or will do so soon. The curve may have flattened, but there will be a greater risk now of being infected.

Containing COVID-19 and restoring our economies requires not just good policy decisions and medical advice; it also needs continued compliance with the recommended behavioural changes that in many ways go against social and cultural conventions. Daunting as they may seem, the drastic changes in behaviour being called for can indeed be brought about. The science of social marketing uses known marketing principles and behaviour change theory to influence people's behaviour for the benefit of both the target audience and of society. Public health, safety and environmental concerns are some of the areas where social marketing can have huge impact.

The Health Belief Model (HBM), developed by Irwin M. Rosenstock others suggests that a person's health-related behaviours ultimately stem from the desire to avoid illness. The two most important constructs of the model are: perceived benefits – the effectiveness of actions available to reduce the threat of the disease, and perceived barriers – the obstacles to

performing a recommended health action. The model also recognises the importance of "cues to action" or triggers which set in motion the process of adopting the desired behaviours. These cues, typically, are emotional, not just informative or educational. The HBM presumes that knowledge or education alone is grossly insufficient to change a person's behaviour. Cigarette sales, for example did not decline significantly for years despite the ills of smoking having been widely publicised.

The Indian example

India is one of the few countries that appears to have recognised the power of deliberately crafted emotive cues to action such as the Prime Minister's call for a voluntary "Janata Curfew", exhorting citizens to show that they care for themselves and their loved ones, and to display their patriotism. People were asked to stay indoors but, at 5 p.m., to also applaud health-care workers and others who are a part of the pandemic battle. The blend of fear, patriotism and gratitude extolled by the Prime Minister appeared to have been just the right buttons to push and people did stay indoors. Yet at 5 p.m., while many applauded from their balconies, hordes of others congregated in large groups, throwing social distancing to the winds. Fear, patriotism and gratitude, even if they were effective as "initiating" cues to action, were insufficient to sustain behaviour change and needed to be periodically rekindled. The Prime Minister later called upon citizens to switch off lights at 9 p.m. for 9 minutes on a chosen day and light



lamps to go "from darkness to hope". As is well known, the number 9 and lighting lamps are powerful positive symbols in India.

In Singapore, the government, perhaps taking a cue, supported an event, "Sing Together Singapore". People at home were encouraged to sing as well and wave a torchlight as gratitude for frontline and migrant workers.

Going back to the main constructs of the HBM, to be effective, the social marketing message would present the benefits as applying direct to the individual, not just indirectly to society at large. And, messaging about barriers should not make the change appear too difficult to engage in or make the cost of adopting the behaviours appear too high. Supportive measures should facilitate the adoption of the desired behaviour.

Here is an example to illustrate this. In the 1970s, Bangladesh undertook an ambitious family planning campaign keeping in mind the country's limited resources. Research showed that while the women were able to readily see the benefits, the men, who were the decision makers at home, could not.

The campaign became successful after social marketers decided to empower women by making female contraceptives available through women rural medical practitioners to switch off lights at 9 p.m. for 9 minutes on a chosen day and light

calls. The marketers also designed a communications programme directed at men highlighting benefits such as better health for their wives, thereby enabling them to look after their husbands and children better.

Gauging receptivity

This writer conducted informal interviews (not scientific by any means) in Chennai to gauge receptivity to recommended behaviours during the pandemic. Here are the findings in relation to some of the recommended behavioural actions and possible messaging and support measures.

Many were not quite convinced of the threat posed by asymptomatic others merely because they were close by. The perceived direct benefits of social distancing were thus moderate at best. Further, one does not have the luxury of observing physical distancing in many situations (especially in densely populated areas). Telling someone to stand away is also difficult because it could be considered rude. Hygiene instructors often ask an audience to colour their hands and then show the imprints they leave everywhere to demonstrate how germs can spread. Would a social marketing campaign that paints a picture of the virus "jumping" onto you if you are close to an infected person work? This needs to be supported by physical barriers wherever possible to promote social distancing.

The recommendation to hand wash often or use an alcohol-based hand rub was unrealistic for too many people even though they saw the merit in it. The two options have been presented as

equivalent, but from a behavioural change point of view they are not. Even those who had fairly easy access to soap and washing facilities found it rather inconvenient to interrupt whatever they were doing to frequently head to a hand wash station. If alcohol-based hand rubs were available within arm's reach, people had no need to interrupt their work and drying their hands was not a problem since they would swiftly dry on their own. This suggests high payoffs from a decision by governments to focus on increasing the supply of hand rubs and absorbing or highly subsidising the costs of making hand rub bottles readily available to supplement hand washing with soap and water.

We know that shame is a powerful disincentive to undesirable behaviour. This writer has considerable experience in projects to make villages open defecation free through the use of Community-led Total Sanitation, a technique that liberally and successfully uses "naming and shaming" to achieve its goals. It is not hard to visualise messaging that shows bystanders strongly disapproving of those who do not comply with the COVID-19 recommendations.

A well-crafted social marketing campaign would help address the COVID-19 crisis and set foundations that will help ameliorate the adverse consequences of future pandemics. Let us build policy from science in the effort to save lives and to put the local and global economies back on track.

S.N. Srikanth is Chairman and Managing Director of the Hauer-Diana Group of Companies of India

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Workers, the real India

Though the travails of migrant workers have been highlighted by the media time and again, their status remains unenviable. They went through the extreme rigours of staying away from home and suffered in silence, having been deprived of livelihoods during the lockdown period. The inhuman treatment meted out to them such as spraying disinfectants on them like cattle cannot be erased from memory. The

government needs to ensure that the free foodgrains scheme reaches bonafide beneficiaries – migrants who are still stationed in their work places. After all, they are the fulcrum of nation building, whose existential concerns should be addressed.

P.K. VARADARAJAN,
Chennai

■ The announcements for migrant workers and small farmers in the stimulus package are short on

complete succour, given the magnitude of the crisis. Many migrant workers have either reached their home towns or on their way home. They will be reluctant to go back to their workplaces out of fear of contracting infection and the great worry of an uncertain future. What they need badly apart from food security is job security. Unfortunately, some States are taking extreme steps such as diluting labour laws. The workers should be treated as equal players to

entrepreneurs in the running of the economy.

Ds. D.V.G. SANKARARAO,
Nellimarla, Andhra Pradesh

■ The ongoing crisis regarding migrant labour serves as an eye-opener to all. Walking on their own on never-ending roads, with family and belongings, shows that the real India which once used to reside in villages, has now migrated to towns and cities elsewhere. Ironically, it is not COVID-19 patients, but the journey of migrant workers that has

become the defining image of the novel coronavirus pandemic in India. The situation is powerful enough to shake our collective conscience – as a citizen and

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:
A sentence in the OpEd page article titled "It's time to give IRS officers their due" (May 14, 2020) that read – "Another [IRS officer], Sushil Chandra (in picture), became Election Commissioner and brought out a classic book on democracy in India after retirement." – is incorrect. Actually, the author of the book on democracy in India is T.S. Krishnamurthy, IRS, who became the Chief Election Commissioner.

The panel on top of the Business page (May 14, 2020), erroneously referred to Mr. Venu Srinivasan as TVS Group Chairman. It should have been Chairman, TVS Motor Company.

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as a consumer of goods made with their labour.

ANISH RANJAN,
Visakhapatnam

How a market turned into a COVID-19 hotspot

The Tamil Nadu government's decision to keep the crowded Koyambedu market open during the lockdown has proved costly. **K. Lakshmi** and **Serena Josephine M.** report on how panic buying at the market has created the State's largest COVID-19 cluster

The normally bustling Koyambedu market in Chennai, touted to be one of Asia's largest wholesale hubs for perishable goods, has come to a complete standstill. The never-ending rows of shops are empty, and an eerie silence has descended upon the sprawling area of 65 acres. The iron gates to the market are closed to prevent further spread of the novel coronavirus, but it is too little, too late. Keeping the market open till May 5 during a raging pandemic has proved costly for the Tamil Nadu government.

Instead of maintaining physical distancing, people thronged the market during the nationwide lockdown without wearing masks. As a result, the huge market complex is now the State's biggest COVID-19 cluster. With cases from the cluster spread over half of Tamil Nadu, Koyambedu has changed the State's COVID-19 trajectory. Other States too have begun to report COVID-19-positive people with a known presence at Koyambedu, or who had contact with those in the market.

Since the imposition of the nationwide lockdown, the Koyambedu wholesale complex comprising the vegetable, fruits, flowers and foodgrains market saw sudden surges in the number of visitors every time there was panic about an impending shortage of essential goods. The complex attracts about 1-2 lakh visitors on normal days. Though the number dropped by less than half during the lockdown, there was a steady flow of consumers. In addition, about 10,000 labourers involved in loading and unloading goods flocked to the market.

Rush during lockdown

T. Venkatesh (name changed), a 57-year-old merchant at Koyambedu, was among the hundreds of traders present at the market during the lockdown. "It is impossible not to mingle with people when you're at the market. I also attended meetings of traders' bodies until April-end. There was greater rush during a certain period of the lockdown," he said. A few days later, Venkatesh experienced a bout of fever and cold. "I thought it was normal sickness, but my family thought it would be better if I got tested for COVID-19. Little did I expect that I would test positive for the disease. After the result came on May 2, I was admitted to a private hospital for seven days," he said. A diabetic, Venkatesh is relieved that he recovered quickly and his family members tested negative for COVID-19.

Like him, many other traders described business during the lockdown period as abnormal. P. Sukumar settled for business on April 25 at the market after unloading produce from the vehicles. Crowds, he said, are not new to him. But what unfolded on that day, before the four-day complete lockdown in Chennai, is etched in his mind. "Normally, retail vendors from distant areas like Arakkonam, Tiruvallur and Gummidiyodipodi begin to arrive first between 2 a.m. and 3 a.m. to purchase vegetables and other goods. But on that day, people from nearby areas too started coming in early," he said. Crowds soon spilled over to the roads leading to the market. Generally, about 2,000 vehicles arrive to fetch goods from the market around 2 a.m., but on that day, it seemed like the number of vehicles had doubled, Sukumar said. Inside the market, hundreds of people without masks jostled for space to buy vegetables in bulk. Vendors estimated that the number of visitors was three or four times higher than on normal days.

For residents in the neighbourhood, the Koyambedu market is a popular choice. This is where they can purchase most of the essential goods under one roof at a nominal rate. Traders were not prepared for such an increase in the number of visitors. It is nearly impossible to control such a huge gathering in a market that is the centre of a large supply chain, they said.

Government agencies, including the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority, Greater Chennai Corporation and the Chennai police, formulated guidelines to decongest the market: they imposed restrictions on vehicle movement and visiting hours; launched mobile vegetable shops to issue passes to visitors; disallowed residents from entering the market; and roped in food aggregators to deliver vegetables and fruits. But none of these measures stopped the crowds from swelling.

Playing the blame game

Soon after the market was closed, and with the number of COVID-19 cases increasing in Tamil Nadu, the blame game for the chaos has started. Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami has blamed the vendors for not cooperating with the government. He said they refused to move to alternate sites citing business losses, despite several rounds of talks. The Opposition parties have blamed the State government for allowing the creation of this cluster.



The Koyambedu wholesale market in Chennai after it was closed on May 5 due to a sharp increase in COVID-19 cases from the cluster. (Below): People throng the market ahead of a complete four-day lockdown in the district on April 26. ■ K. PICHUMANI | M. VEDHAN



D. Rajasekaran, president of the Federation of Koyambedu Wholesale Vegetables Merchants Association, said: "Koyambedu is a large hub of perishable goods where about 90 different items are available. There are several options available now to people, but the market complex's easy access and affordable rates have always been a big draw. Selling vegetables became an alternative business for several people who were rendered jobless during the lockdown. They also started visiting the market during the early hours despite restrictions by the police."

Members of traders' associations said they cooperated with the authorities and spread awareness about COVID-19. They also distributed about 5,000 masks daily to labourers and retail vendors, they said.

Some people said lack of awareness among the labourers on COVID-19 could have caused the rapid spread of the virus. About 10,000 labourers, mainly from other districts such as Ariyalur, Cuddalore and Perambalur, were engaged for loading and unloading the produce. Many of them left the city to their native places in vegetable trucks.

Members of the traders' associations said they had been suggesting since April that the market be closed for a few days or operate on alternate days. They recalled that they withdrew the decision of closing the market on March 27 and 28 following the government's instructions. "It is disheartening to see Koyambedu vendors being solely blamed for the spread of COVID-19. We had kept the shops open to prevent shortage of essential goods and price rise. We are prepared to listen to the government's decisions in the future," said Rajasekaran.

The emergence of a cluster

By May 15, Tamil Nadu recorded 10,108 COVID-19 cases, a figure inflated by cases from the Koyambedu market cluster. The number of cases began to increase rapidly in the last week of April when vendors in Chennai started to test positive for COVID-19. Soon, the market turned into a hotspot for the virus.

By May 4, when the State's Health Department officially acknowledged the cluster in its daily bulletin, the cluster had started to grow in large propor-

tions. It spread silently but quickly to other districts of the State that were less affected by the virus. The majority of the northern districts – Chengalpattu, Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram, Cuddalore, Villupuram and Tiruvannamalai – took a hit. While western districts were spared, the central region – Ariyalur and Perambalur – that was less affected until then bore the brunt too, along with Chennai.

This was nothing like the State's first cluster. Those who attended the Tablighi Jamaat conference in New Delhi account for a little over 1,300 cases. Officials said the Koyambedu cluster could account for about 3,000 cases. The cluster's present case count is approximately 2,500-2,600.

Soon after the retail market was closed, market labourers, who until then had stayed and slept on platforms and in load vehicles, started to leave the city for their hometowns. J. Radhakrishnan, special nodal officer for COVID-19, Greater Chennai Corporation, said the government immediately began to identify and list those who went to the market. "With the cooperation of the market association, we identified 6,900 people who had gone to various districts from Koyambedu, and another 1,300 in Chennai. We quarantined all of them, checked them for symptoms, and tested them," he said.

Noting that contact tracing was very strong, T.S. Selvavinayagam, director of public health and preventive medicine, said they had tracked most of the people who had returned from Koyambedu. Most of them had gone to Ariyalur, Cuddalore and Villupuram. With targeted testing on, officials began to test the samples of all those linked to the Koyambedu market in Chennai and other districts.

However, all this dealt a heavy blow to the ongoing containment measures, and posed many challenges too. "We immediately knew that the Tablighi Jamaat cluster had a new replacement. The Koyambedu market was conducive for disease transmission," an official said. "The labourers, who until then had made the market their home, started to leave the city in groups and in whichever vehicle they managed to get. What we wanted to do is trace them and their contacts as early and as fast as possible. The aim was to track all of them

but the challenge was that the majority were asymptomatic. However, the response from the people was encouraging. They self-reported and gave details on how many days they had worked in the market," he said.

All districts that had business relations with Koyambedu were affected, said K.S. Kandasamy, Collector of Tiruvannamalai, a district that is 185-190 kilometres away from Koyambedu. "Earlier, 300-500 people used to arrive in Tiruvannamalai from Chennai. At the time we had about seven positive cases a day. Now, on an average, we receive 50 people and one-third of them test positive for the infection. Most of them are natives of Tiruvannamalai but reside in the city for work. They are from areas such as Pulanthope, Pallavaram and Tambaram and are somehow linked to the Koyambedu market. They worked in tea stalls near the market, or sold produce in pushcarts. With Chennai turning into a hotspot, many are returning to their hometowns," he said.

Along with Chennai, the neighbouring districts of Tiruvallur and Chengalpattu continue to report a significant number of cases linked to Koyambedu. Shopkeepers and vendors travelled in vehicles from these districts to Koyambedu and purchased vegetables. They got infected and so did their contacts.

In one area, a vendor who travelled in a share auto to purchase vegetables from Koyambedu spread the infection to 25-30 others. Such was the magnitude of the cluster, officials said.

Maintain distancing, wear masks

"The point is you have to imagine what can go wrong," said T. Jacob John, virologist and retired professor of virology, Christian Medical College, Vellore. "Only imagination can tell you what will happen if you keep the Koyambedu market open with the lockdown hanging over your head till May 17. People will tend to hoard. This should have been imagined ahead of time. This lack of imagination is helping the virus," he said. He added that if the government wanted the market to function, it should have organised it in a better way and insisted that everyone wear masks. "In other words, if everyone wears masks, that is equal to imposing a lockdown or is even better than a lockdown. The lockdown is to prevent the asymptomatic infected from infecting others.

The minimum distance between two persons should be six feet. If you expect people to assemble in spite of Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, then insist they wear a mask. Then it would be less of a problem. But they did not imagine that people would crowd like this. The damage is done, and there is hardly anything that they can do except contact tracing and quarantining," he said. "If you want to control the speed of infection, diagnose and test mild and moderate cases. If this is done regularly by RT-PCR, we will find more people than through contact tracing."

The lockdown, Professor John said, has not worked very well because it has not been taken seriously by a lot of people. "It has been extremely leaky. It is proven by the fact that the number of cases is going up by leaps and bounds despite the lockdown. People are not taking the lockdown seriously, nor are they wearing masks," he said.

Jayaprakash Mulyil, epidemiologist and former principal of Christian Medical College, Vellore, said one of the most important risk factors for the spread of COVID-19 is the average distance between two human beings. "This is the most important principle. The moment you have crowding, this principle is violated. Whatever you do, you should not allow crowding to happen," he said.

"When we have a complete lockdown in the middle of a lockdown, people will buy a lot. So decisions have to be carefully made. You can warn people in advance."

What can crowding do? "Reducing the duration of shopping for vegetables is not a good idea as people tend to rush to buy vegetables. Do everything to prevent crowding," Dr. Mulyil said. "With every decision you make, ask the question, can you increase or decrease crowding? The question is not how long a person spends inside the house. The question is, how often does a person have to get into a crowd?" For instance, a person can spend 23 and a half hours inside the house and then stand in a crowd for half an hour and get infected. "The idea to keep people at home is to avoid crowding. We have succeeded in keeping people at home but all of them come together in shops. Spacing individuals and allowing enough time for them to shop is important. Crowds gather in admitting an oversight," he said.

Even without a pandemic, having a market in one large unit is a problem in a rapidly expanding city. "Given the population distribution, a polycentric model is needed in the way we distribute urban amenities. Sanitary inspections were important in the early 20th century. In places like Doveton, market licences were cancelled if there was poor sanitation," he said. "We must come up with more locations for markets, and design and maintain them well post-pandemic. A well-designed market goes a long way in the maintenance of hygiene, irrespective of its size. It needs to be designed keeping in mind not just crowd movement and the convenience of people but also health and sanitation."

Can the concept of goods distribution be sustained in the post-COVID-19 scenario? Urban Design Collective, a Chennai-based collaborative platform of architects, urban designers and planners, has studied how Chennai's Koyambedu and Tirunelveli have coped with the pandemic. Vidhya Mohankumar, architect, urban designer and founder of Urban Design Collective, said, "Our team found that some new ways were adopted to get fresh produce. In Tirunelveli, residents grouped to buy produce on a rotational basis to reduce the number of individual trips to the market."

The team has come up with a model that can be followed post-COVID-19 for distribution in Tirunelveli. Cooperatives for neighbourhood shops and small food enterprises can be formed with a few business owners, they said. One of them can procure goods at the market for the cooperative and reduce crowding at the market.

However, in a major city like Chennai, intermediate delivery service providers would also be appropriate. Residents and vendors can sign up with aggregators who can pick up and deliver supplies. "We must think of multiple ways to become a food-smart city. We can have rooftop gardens in many buildings, including commercial ones. The State government can form 'community thottams (gardens)' at unused land parcels or open space reservation lands at the ward level to grow organic food," said Mohankumar.

Clearly, more than one solution has

to be employed with foresight and imagination, so that crises of this scale are avoided in future, even if the Koyambedu market were to get back to regular functioning.

er because we do not give enough time to people. This was the problem," Dr. Mulyil said.

"The word cluster came into the COVID-19 story when it was initially said that this virus is imported, and there were a few people around that imported case. That is a containable cluster. The meaning of the word cluster is lost when community transmission starts. That means there are clusters all over the place. Earlier clusters were named so that we can contain the area but we cannot contain 1,000 clusters. This virus is highly transmissible. And it does so without any clinical manifestation," he said.

Managing a market

Management of the Koyambedu market has been a big challenge during the pandemic, said officials of the Market Management Committee and Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority. It is a complex area as various segments are situated in the same place. Shops are closely located. When it was set up in 1996, no one would have designed the market keeping in mind physical distancing or a pandemic, said an official. "We had been talking to the representatives of traders associations about shifting the market for many days. But people continued to visit the market despite the police prohibiting them," the official added.

Since May 10, wholesale merchants are trading at the Thirumazhisai market where space has been allotted for about 200 shops. Individual consumers are not allowed. Business hours are restricted from early morning till 8.30 a.m.

D. Karthikeyan, Member Secretary, Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority, said creating a temporary market in a vacant space in a short time was a challenge. "We are taking a cautious approach so that people don't congregate. Entry to the market has been restricted and screening of vehicles is being done," he said.

The growing cluster points to the need for better planning. A. Srivathsan, Professor, CEPT University, Ahmedabad, said unlike shopping malls, there were compulsions to have the Koyambedu market opened to prevent shortage of essential commodities. However, the decision to shift the market to alternate spaces like Madhavarajam and build temporary markets like in Thirumazhisai could have been thought of earlier, he said. "Sometimes, there is a tendency to overlook some issues in an emergency response. There is nothing wrong in admitting an oversight," he said.

Along with Chennai, the neighbouring districts of Tiruvallur and Chengalpattu continue to report a significant number of cases linked to Koyambedu. Shopkeepers and vendors travelled in vehicles from these districts to Koyambedu and purchased vegetables. They got infected and so did their contacts.

In one area, a vendor who travelled in a share auto to purchase vegetables from Koyambedu spread the infection to 25-30 others. Such was the magnitude of the cluster, officials said.

What can crowding do? "Reducing the duration of shopping for vegetables is not a good idea as people tend to rush to buy vegetables. Do everything to prevent crowding," Dr. Mulyil said. "With every decision you make, ask the question, can you increase or decrease crowding? The question is not how long a person spends inside the house. The question is, how often does a person have to get into a crowd?" For instance, a person can spend 23 and a half hours inside the house and then stand in a crowd for half an hour and get infected. "The idea to keep people at home is to avoid crowding. We have succeeded in keeping people at home but all of them come together in shops. Spacing individuals and allowing enough time for them to shop is important. Crowds gather in admitting an oversight," he said.

The team has come up with a model that can be followed post-COVID-19 for distribution in Tirunelveli. Cooperatives for neighbourhood shops and small food enterprises can be formed with a few business owners, they said. One of them can procure goods at the market for the cooperative and reduce crowding at the market.

However, in a major city like Chennai, intermediate delivery service providers would also be appropriate. Residents and vendors can sign up with aggregators who can pick up and deliver supplies. "We must think of multiple ways to become a food-smart city. We can have rooftop gardens in many buildings, including commercial ones. The State government can form 'community thottams (gardens)' at unused land parcels or open space reservation lands at the ward level to grow organic food," said Mohankumar.

Clearly, more than one solution has to be employed with foresight and imagination, so that crises of this scale are avoided in future, even if the Koyambedu market were to get back to regular functioning.



FROM PAGE ONE

New law to push contract-farming

Asked how the Centre could enact a law on agricultural marketing, which remains on the State list, the Minister pointed out that inter-State trade falls in the central list.

She added that plans were underway to bring in a facilitative legal framework to oversee contract farming, which would provide farmers with assured sale prices and quantities even before the crop is sown and also allow private players to invest in inputs and technology in the agricultural sector.

Agricultural economist and ICRIER professor Ashok Gulati, who has been advocating these reforms for many years, was elated by the announcement. "These are big, bold steps in the right direction which will benefit both farmers and consumers. This is long overdue and should have been done in Modi's first term, but certainly the government deserves compliments for converting a crisis into an opportunity," he said, noting.

"This is the time for relief, which should have been prioritised over reform. Yes, reforms are important and we can learn lessons about them during the crisis, but they should not take the attention away from the impact of the crisis. There is an urgent need to map farmers' current needs and provide relief," she said.

Lockdown likely to be extended till May 30

Malls would continue to remain shut. "Trains will continue to operate on the current model, only allowed on special routes. It will not be a free for all," said the official.

"The issue of migrants walking on the road is a big issue. The States have been asked to utilise around ₹1,092 crore released to them under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) for their welfare," the official noted.

The green zones are districts with either zero confirmed cases till date, or no confirmed case in the last 21 days.

India surpasses China's COVID-19 tally

The 15th meeting of the high level Group of Ministers (GoM) on COVID-19 was held at Nirmal Bhawan on Friday and the group was informed that there are 30 municipal areas which account for 79% of India's case load.

It was also informed that domestic manufacturers has reached the production capacity of nearly 3 lakh PPEs per day and about 3 lakh N-95 masks per day, which is sufficient to meet the requirement of the country in the near future. "In addition, manufacturing of ventilators by domestic manufacturers has also started and orders have been placed," the release said.

Meanwhile, amid rising cases of COVID-19 and as

ing that some of these reforms have been under discussion for two decades.

"It is very smart to push these through at this time. At present, no one can say anything in a crisis," he added, pointing out that *mandi* closures during the lockdown had highlighted the urgent need for multiple channels to sell produce.

'Need-based relief'

Fellow agricultural economist Sudha Narayanan, who teaches at the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, was however, more sceptical of the government's reform push.

"These are good measures, but everything is in the future tense. In the present crisis, farmers are facing huge losses. What is desperately needed now is some immediate compensation rather than funds which will

The third tranche of the stimulus package also included plans to strengthen infrastructure in food processing, fisheries, animal husbandry, horticulture, herbal cultivation and bee-keeping with a total funding of ₹50,000 crore, including funds allocated earlier in the budget.

The ₹1 lakh crore Agriculture Infrastructure Fund will be financed and managed by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), the Finance Minister said. Financing will be provided

Farmers seek immediate relief for supply chain disruptions due to lockdown

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



Big plans: Nirmala Sitharaman and Anurag Thakur speaking in New Delhi on Friday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

to primary agriculture cooperative societies, farmer producer organisations, agriculture entrepreneurs and start-ups to develop cold chain storage and other post-harvest management infrastructure at the farm gate and aggregation points.

"These are good measures, but everything is in the future tense. In the present crisis, farmers are facing huge losses. What is desperately needed now is some immediate compensation rather than funds which will

only have future impact," said Ramandeep Singh Mann, a farmer and activist based in the Punjab-Haryana area.

"The government talks about supply chain disruptions and promises improvements. But they could have just taken over transport and storage facilities during the COVID-19 crisis to help farmers," said S. Kannaiyan, a Tamil Nadu-based farmer and activist who was forced to throw away a portion of his cabbage crop and sell the

rest at a loss due to the lockdown.

The focus hitherto has been on short term crop loans while investment in long term agriculture infrastructure has often not been enough, said Ms. Sitharaman. "The underlying principle is to empower the people, give them resources so that they can produce for themselves and have livelihoods for themselves rather than going for entitlements," she added.

This rationale drives the plan for a ₹10,000 crore scheme to support two lakh micro-food processing enterprises, providing technical support to reach FSSAI health and safety standards, build brands and marketing.

The National Medicinal Plants Board will spend ₹4,000 crore on herbal cultivation over 10 lakh hectares with a special focus on an 800 hectare corridor of medicinal plants on the banks of the Ganga.

Govt. insensitive to farmers, says Congress 'PM, Finance Minister must apologise'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



package what is the REVISIED expenditure figure for 2020/21? Everything else is dramabaazi," he added.

'Empty promise'

Addressing an online press conference, Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said the ₹20-lakh crore package had proved to be a *jumla* [empty rhetoric] package and reflected the 'voodoo economics' followed by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Surjewala claimed that farmers lost ₹21,000 crore through distress sale of wheat far below the minimum support price (MSP) and an equal amount through other crops like chana, mustard and lentils, while another ₹10,000 crore was lost through distress sale of vegetables and fruits. "Neither farmers nor farm labourers will benefit from these *jumla* announcements of the Finance Minister. Today, farmers and farm workers are frustrated and disappointed," he said.

"Madam Finance Minister, One simple question. What is the ADDITIONAL cash you are putting into the system over the next 6 months? The announcements you made today are mostly contained in your budget presented on Feb 1. Another case of repackaging and marketing," Mr. Rajesh tweeted.

"Will FM please shed light on basics of 'atmanirbhavar arthastra'? On Feb 1 2020 she projected Centre's expenditure at ₹30.42 lakh crore for year 2020/21. Now with 'atmanirbhavar bharat'

IPI condemns 'intimidation' of journalists

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The International Press Institute (IPI) has condemned the recent turn of events in India, expressing "grave concern over the misuse of the law by authorities... to intimidate journalists and curtail press freedom".

The statement comes in the backdrop of sedition charges filed by the Gujarat government against Dhaval Patel for writing an article about the possibility of a leadership change in the State owing to the increase in COVID-19 cases.

In Delhi, Mahender Singh Manral, a correspondent of *The Indian Express*, was summoned for questioning by the police for a report on the police investigation into the possibility that an audio clip of Tablighi Jamaat leader Maulana Saad Khan had been doctored. In Himachal Pradesh, 10 cases have been registered against 6 journalists for reporting on the misery caused by the lockdown.

'Stifling freedom'

"The Indian government has resorted to various tactics to prevent independent media from criticising the government and reporting about the pandemic. In a blatant attempt to stifle press freedom, on March 31 the government unsuccessfully petitioned the country's Supreme Court to bar the media from publishing information about COVID-19 that had not been cleared by the government," the IPI said.

The Press Club of India has sought the intervention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP president J.P. Nadda in some of these cases. The club said an example was sought to be made of Mr. Patel. Other newspapers in Ahmedabad that followed up on the same news had not been threatened.

₹1 lakh crore farm infra fund to be financed by NABARD: FM

Farmers seek immediate relief for supply chain disruptions due to lockdown

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



Big plans: Nirmala Sitharaman and Anurag Thakur speaking in New Delhi on Friday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

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'Cash transfers may not be adequate'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

han Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana was to give cash, food and cooking gas to vulnerable people.

"This may not be adequate, I grant that. Nothing can be adequate at this time... when people don't have their money earned given to them," the Minister said, during the third in her series of press conferences on the Centre's ₹20 lakh crore stimulus package.

The Finance Minister

side-stepped queries on exactly how much of the stimulus package was actual expenditure from the government as opposed to liquidity financing measures, asking journalists to wait till the remainder of the package was announced.

Ms. Sitharaman and officials also countered rising criticism that the Atmanirbhavar Bharat Abhiyan is too heavy on credit and low on actual budgetary

expenditure.

"The important thing to understand is that liquidity is also helping the stressed sector in trying to come out of that stress," said Economic Affairs Secretary Tarun Bajaj.

"What is the objective of doing that? One way could be to give the money from the budget, the other is to do it through a process that is different. So the objective also needs to be kept in mind."

Centre's nod to defence test facilities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A ship and two interceptor boats (IB) were commissioned into the Coast Guard in Goa via videoconference from the national capital by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday. This marks a landmark for the force; it now has 150 ships and boats and 62 aircraft.

"The Scheme would run for the duration of five years and envisages to set up six to eight new test facilities in partnership with private industry. This will facilitate indigenous defence production, consequently reduce imports of military equipment," the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

The projects under the scheme will be provided with up to 75% government funding in the form of 'Grant-in-Aid'.

"Countries in the region must continue to take evidence-informed action and conduct careful risk assessments while winding back public health and social measures. The focus should be on local epidemiology of COVID-19, to identify hotspots and clusters, and the capacity of systems and responders to find, isolate and care for cases, and quarantine contacts," said Poonam Khetrapal Singh, regional director, WHO South-East Asia.

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"The ships, on joining the fleet, will be deployed extensively for Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surveillance, coastal security and other duties as enshrined in the Coast Guard charter of duties, to safeguard the maritime interests of the nation," the Coast Guard said.

Ship ICGS Sachet is the first in a series of five offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) being built by the Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL). The IBs, C-450 and C-451, are de-

signed & built by the Larsen & Toubro Shipyard, Hazira.

The 30-metre long boats are capable of achieving speeds in excess of 45 knots and designed for high-speed interception, close patrol and low intensity operations.

The 105-metre long ICGS Sachet displaces approxi-

mately 2,350 tons and is propelled by two 9,100 kW diesel engines designed to attain a maximum speed of 26 knots, with an endurance of 6,000 nautical miles. It is designed to carry a twin-engine helicopter and four high-speed boats and one inflatable boat for swift board-

Coast Guard ship count hits 150

Defence Minister commissions ICGS Sachet and two interceptor boats



ICGS Sachet is the first in a series of five patrol vessels being built by the Goa Shipyard Ltd. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Srinagar tops with 153 cases; Anantnag follows with 145

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

The Supreme Court on Friday stayed a decision of the Gujarat High Court which nullified the 2017 election of law and education minister Bhupendrasinh Chudasama on grounds of malpractice and manipulation.

The High Court had held that the Returning Officer "illegally rejected" 429 postal ballots during the counting of votes, while the victory margin was only 327. Congress candidate Ashwin Rathod had challenged his Bharatiya Janata Party rival's victory from Dholakia constituency by a margin of mere 327 votes in the 2017 Gujarat Assembly polls.

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Eyewitnesses said a group of youth clashed with the forces manning the streets in the Rohimoo area after an attempt to offer prayers at the mosque was foiled.

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Unions to protest against changes to labour laws

Representation to be sent to ILO

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Ten central trade unions said on Friday that it would stage a nationwide protest on May 22 against the changes in labour laws in several States.

In a joint statement, the unions said they would also send a representation to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on the "violations being committed by the Government of India in regard to all the international commitments to labour standards and human rights".

"Taking shelter under the umbrella of the COVID-19 pandemic, every day the government is taking one or the other decision to attack the working class and the common people... who are already in deep distress and miseries in the midst of the lockdown...", it said.

Universal screening began on March 4

RTI reply says screening for passengers from China, Hong Kong started on Jan. 17

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Universal screening for all international passengers at 30 airports across India started on March 4. Over 15.24 lakh passengers were screened for Covid-19 symptoms between January 15 and March 23, according to an RTI reply from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

On March 15, the Prime Minister's Office had said in a tweet: "We started screening entry into India from mid-January itself, while also gradually increasing restrictions on travel. The step-by-step approach has helped avoid panic: PM @narendramodi



Early action: Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata airports had started screening of travellers by January 17. ■ B. VELANKANNI RAJ

#SAARCfightsCorona."

Air travel in India was suspended on March 23, two days before the first phase of lockdown started in the country.

Initially, scheduled inter-

'Small, private entities in danger'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday asked the government not to resort to any coercive action against private companies who had not paid their workers full wages during the lockdown in accordance with a government order in March.

A three-judge Bench led by Justice L. Nageswara Rao indicated that payment of full wages, as directed by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in an order on March 29, may not be viable for small and private enterprises, which are tottering on the brink of insolvency due to the lockdown. The court remarked that the March 29 order was an omnibus one



Bid for survival: The petitions said the direction to pay full salaries against no work was violative of Article 14. ■ AFP

and there were several issues involved that required careful reconsideration from the government.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta sought time to file a detailed response. The court scheduled a hearing for next week.

The hearing was based on a batch of petitions filed by several companies challenging the constitutional validity of the March 29 order

which mandates that industry, shops and commercial establishments, without exception, pay their workers without any deductions in the name of COVID-19.

The petitions said a blanket direction from the government to private establishments to pay full salaries against no work was arbitrary and violative of Article 14 (Right to Equality) of the Constitution.

"It is implicit in the fundamental right of an employer to trade or business that there is an obligation to pay when work is actually done and there is no obligation if no work is done. An employer and employee have reciprocal promises whereby the right of an employee to demand salary is reciprocal to performance of work by such employee. The employer has a right to not pay if no work is done," petitions filed by private firms like Nagreeka Exports Limited and Ficus Pax Pvt. Ltd. said.

Nagreeka, engaged in manufacture and export of cotton yarns, fabric and textiles, said stoppage of operations had led to losses to the tune of ₹1.50 crore.

Separate petitions have also been filed by MSMEs, saying that they are forced into insolvency.

Can't stop migrants from walking home, says SC

The onus is on the government: Bench

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday said it could not be expected to stop migrants from taking the hard and, for many, life-threatening option of trekking thousands of miles to their villages amid the lockdown.

The application has been forwarded to the Ministry of Civil Aviation for providing details to the applicant.

The RTI reply said that on January 17, the screening of passengers coming from China and Hong Kong had started at the airports in Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata, while January 21 onwards, it was done at four more airports in Chennai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Cochin.

The court said the onus was on the government to draw migrants away from the long walk home and wait for government-arranged inter-State transport. "There are people walking and not stopping. How can we stop it," a three-judge Bench, led by Justice L. Nageswara Rao, asked at a

hearing through video conference.

The hearing was based on a petition by advocate Alakh Alok Srivastava, who referred to recent incidents of migrants journeying home on their own getting killed on highways. He also referred to the incident where 16 migrants, sleeping on a railway track, were mowed down by a train. The court said it could not pass orders on applications based on news reports; the States ought to act.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta said transport would be provided to all so that they can reach their homes.

Supreme Court cuts summer vacation short

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday decided to cut short its summer vacation and work till June 19 for now.

Further plans on whether to continue functioning or go for a short break would be taken after June 19. "Usually, summer vacation is the time when judges can go to their native places and spend time with their family. However, they have decided to work and clear pendency this time," a source said. The decision came on the last working day of the court - May 15.

Sources said it was taken by consensus among judges through circulation. They would continue to function through video conferencing and have staggered timings for the Benches to ease the load on the available facilities.

Tablighis to be released from quarantine

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Friday informed the Delhi High Court that it has decided to release Tablighi Jamaat members who have completed the mandatory quarantine and show no symptoms of SARS-CoV-2 infection.

The submission was in response to a petition for the release of nearly 3,300 Tablighi Jamaat members who had been kept at quarantine centres for nearly 40 days and not been released even after they tested negative for the virus.

Following the submission, counsel for the petitioner decided to withdraw the plea. The court allowed petitioner Sabitha Quadri, a social worker, to do so.

Aarogya Setu app must for Srinagar govt. staff

'Move aimed at stopping transmission'

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Deputy Commissioner-Srinagar Dr. Shahid Iqbal Chowdhary has directed Drawing and Disbursing Officers (DDOs) to obtain a certificate that they had downloaded the Aarogya Setu app before the release of salary to all employees, with the effect that all government employees working under his administrative control have installed the app on their mobile phones.

J&K Chief Secretary B.V.R. Subrahmanyam had on April 14 issued guidelines for all red zones in the Union Territory and called for their mapping, including on the size of habitations, geographic distribution of COVID-19 cases, proximity to other habitations, accessibility, geographical barriers and mobility. He also called for "intelligent demarcation of the boundaries of red zones".

"There will be a 100% survey and screening of all persons in the red zone. The results of survey shall be integrated with 'Aarogya Setu' as much as possible. A detailed health screening of the contacts and the survey results would be geo-mapped," the order read.

The application recently came under criticism for reasons of data security. Several employees have raised a red flag over being

forced to download the application.

"The curve is already flattening in Srinagar. The detection of COVID-19 cases is showing a downward trend because of the efforts of the disaster management team. Forcing employees to download the app is a violation of privacy rights. There are genuine fears that the app can access mobile data too," a senior employee said.

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'A self-reliant India will not be isolationist'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A self-reliant India will automatically be a more "internationalist" India as it does not seek self-centred or "isolationist" arrangements, Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said on Friday.

His comments came days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi pitched to make India self-reliant by sustained focus on making the nation's economy globally competitive.

In an address at the National Defence College, Mr. Shringla said all crises alter geopolitics, and there will be significant changes too after COVID-19 blows over, such as re-balancing of hard and soft power, emergence of new multilateral conversations and change in strength of "players".

"As we remain engaged globally, we also need to become 'Atma Nirbhar' or self-reliant, to recover from the crisis," he said, adding, "We do not, however, seek self-centred or isolationist arrangements when we speak of self-reliance. A self-reliant India will automatically be a more internationalist India."

ALL INDIA COUNCIL FOR TECHNICAL EDUCATION

(A STATUTORY BODY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA)
Nelson Mandela Marg, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi - 110070
Ph. No.: 011-26131578, 011-26131580, 011-29581000
Website: www.aicte-india.org

PUBLIC NOTICE FOR CATEGORIZATION OF STANDALONE INSTITUTIONS FOR GRANT OF GRADED AUTONOMY

AICTE invites applications from Standalone Institutions offering PG Diploma courses in Management for the grant of Graded Autonomy from the Academic Year 2020-21. The Institutions who are eligible as per the Gazette Notifications, F.No. AICTE/P&AP/Sls/2019 shall apply in the format available on www.aicte-india.org/approval/graded_autonomy.

The last date for submission of online application is 30-05-2020.

All applicants are requested to read carefully and thoroughly the All India Council for Technical Education (Categorization of Standalone Institutions for Grant of Graded Autonomy) Guidelines, 2019 before submitting online application on AICTE Web Portal.

Advt. No: Approval/05(01)/2020 Member Secretary, AICTE

Corrigendum to Advertisement for the Post of Director

The Last date for receipt of applications through e-mail / post for the post of Director, Raman Research Institute, against the Advertisement Dtd. 08th April 2020 is extended upto 10th June 2020 due to Administrative reasons.

रामन अनुसंधान संस्थान / RAMAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE

बेंगलुरु - 560 080. / Bangalore - 560 080.

Date : 13th May 2020

निदेशक पद के विज्ञापन के लिए शुद्धिपत्र

Corrigendum to Advertisement for the Post of Director

प्रशासनिक कारोबारों से रामन अनुसंधान संस्थान के निदेशक पद के लिए दिनांक 8 अप्रैल 2020 के विज्ञापन के संदर्भ में ईमेल / ड्राफ्ट के माध्यम से आवेदन प्राप्त करने की अंतिम तिथि 10 जून 2020 तक बढ़ाया जाता है।

The Executive Engineer (Project-East), Nethaji Subhash Chandra Bose Building, 21st Floor, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bengaluru-560001

The Last date for receipt of applications through e-mail / post for the post of Director, Raman Research Institute, against the Advertisement Dtd. 08th April 2020 is extended upto 10th June 2020 due to Administrative reasons.

प्रशासनिक अधिकारी (प्रभारी) / Administrative Officer (I/C)

IISER Indian Institute of Science Education and Research Berhampur Established by the Ministry of HRD, Govt. of India

Date: May 16, 2020

Advt. No. NT-01/20 Recruitment Notice- Non-Teaching Positions

IISER Berhampur, an institute of national importance established by the MHRD Govt. of India is looking for dedicated and committed candidates to fill up the following vacancies through Direct Recruitment/Deputation.

S. No. Name of the Post Pay Level Number of Post Mode of recruitment

 1. Superintending Engineer (Group A) 13 01 Direct Recruitment/ Deputation basis as per annual performance-based assessment process. |

2. Junior Translator (Group B) 06 01 Un-reserved Direct Recruitment

3. Office Assistant (Multi Skill) Group C) 05 01 Un-reserved Direct Recruitment

Commencement of Online application is on May 22, 2020 at 09.00 AM. Last date for submission of online application will be till 05.30 pm on June 11, 2020. Last date for receipt of hard copy of online-submitted application form by 05.30 pm on June 22, 2020. For details visit <https://www.iiserprb.ac.in/Careers>> Staff Positions.

भारतीय विज्ञान शिक्षा एवं अनुसंधान संस्थान बरहमपुर

Office of the Executive Engineer (Project-East), Nethaji Subhash Chandra Bose Building, 21st Floor, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bengaluru-560001

No.: EE(P-E)/TEND/1/2020-21 Date: 15.05.2020

INVITATION FOR TENDER (IFT)

(TWO COVER SYSTEM) (Short Term Tender Notification)

(Standard Tender Documents-KW-3)

(Through GOK e-Procurement Portal Only)

The Executive Engineer, Project East, BBMP invites tenders on behalf of the Commissioner, BBMP, Bengaluru from eligible tenderers for the construction of works detailed in the table below.

SL. No.	Name of the Work	Approx. Amt. Put to tender (Rs. in Lakh)	EMD (Rs. in Lakh)
1	Improvements and Developments of Raghuvana Park and other development works in Ward No. 19, Sanjaynagar.	100.00	2.00
2	Improvements and Developments of Central Exchange Layout Park and other development works in Ward No. 19, Sajaynagar.	100.00	2.00
3	Improvements and Developments of Parks and other works in Hebbal in Ward No. 21.	100.00	2.00

Calendar of Events : (1) Tender documents may be downloaded from the e-procurement portal of the Government of Karnataka from 20.05.2020. (2) Tenders must be submitted online through e-procurement portal on or before 4:00 p.m. on 28.05.2020. (3) Technical bids will be opened on the website <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in> in the office of the Executive Engineer (East) Project on 29.05.2020 at 4:3

U.S. envoy calls out COVID-19-related rhetoric in India

Prime Minister Modi's messages for unity come in for praise

SIRIRAM LAKSHMAN

The U.S. envoy for 'International Religious Freedom', Sam Brownback, called out COVID-19 related rhetoric and harassment in India – especially against Muslims, while also praising Prime Minister Modi's messages for unity.

"In India, we've seen reports of unfortunate COVID-related rhetoric and harassment, particularly against the Muslim community. This has been exacerbated by fake news reports, misinformation being shared via social media. There have also been instances of Muslims being attacked for allegedly spreading the coronavirus," Mr. Brownback said to reporters on Thursday during a telephone briefing about COVID-19's impact on religious

minorities. "Now, I've been encouraged and we've been encouraged by statements from senior Indian officials really urging a unity, and noting the Prime Minister stated even that COVID does not see religion, language, or borders, which is certainly true," he said.

USCIRF classification

Mr. Brownback's comments come weeks after the U.S. International Commission for Religious Freedom (USCIRF), an independent bipartisan commission set up by the U.S. Congress, downgraded India's religious freedom rating to the lowest grade.

Taking note of India's Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register for Citizens, USCIRF had recommended to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo



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that India be classified as a "country of particular concern."

Asked if he believed the Indian leadership's language calling for unity was a reaction to the USCIRF designation, Mr. Brownback, on Thursday, said he did not know.

"I don't have anything particular that I'm attributing the language to, I just noted that it's positive and that's good. And I don't want to always just point to everything negative," he said.

"...the fact that the leader-

ship would say this, great USCIRF did put them out, as you noted, in that light and that got a lot of interest both here and in India, as you might guess. We will be putting our report out -- Secretary [Pompeo] will put out the report from State Department fairly soon, and then we'll -- that'll start the time clock on the Secretary's ultimate determinations on Countries of Particular Concern or watch list countries, and the USCIRF recommendation will be noted and has been noted as well. But I

don't know why they did that, but I'm glad they did," Mr. Brownback said.

Call for release

Significantly, the USCIRF also called for the release of those protesting the CAA, on Thursday.

"During #COVID19 crisis, there are reports #India govt is arresting Muslim activists protesting the #CAA, including Safoora Zargar who is pregnant," the Commission tweeted on May 14. "At this time, #India should be releasing prisoners of conscience, not targeting those practicing their democratic right to protest."

While there was no specific India reference in this context – the briefing discussed a number of countries and minorities – Mr. Brownback's remarks on Thursday began by saying that a number of countries had released prisoners of conscience, and that "some people's lives

were possibly saved by this".

Mr. Brownback also said Sikhs in Afghanistan are seeking to immigrate to safer countries, including India, in response to a question on Sikhs in Afghanistan seeking asylum in the U.S.

Appeal for asylum

Following a May 25 attack on a gurdwara in Kabul, there have been calls, including from Indian American Congressman Ro Khanna, to grant Afghan Sikhs and Hindus asylum in the U.S.

Sikh and Hindu groups in Afghanistan have also appealed to the Trump administration for asylum, *The Wall Street Journal* had reported in April.

Following a March 25 at-

Delhi sees 425 fresh cases, no new deaths



Major chaos: Migrant workers climbing on a vehicle in New Delhi on Friday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The national capital on Friday recorded 425 new COVID-19 cases and no deaths, taking the total number of cases to 8,895.

The government, however, revised the cumulative death toll from 115 to 123, after adding cases in which the primary cause of death was found to be the virus, according to the reports of the Death Audit Committee, based on case sheets received from hospitals.

The government added that a total of 463 patients have recovered from the virus so far, leaving 5,254 active cases in the city, out of which 1,643 patients are in home isolation.

Speaking after a meeting on the COVID-19 situation in Delhi, Health Minister Satyendar Jain said the government was making all efforts to fight the outbreak but it was now time to restart economic activities.

Commenting on the impact of the change of season on the virus, Mr. Jain said: "There was a time when we all thought that this pandemic will be over by May due to summer. But now we have seen that in the Latin American countries, the pandemic is increasing. The temperature in these countries rises very high. This shows that we have to learn to live with COVID-19."

now we have prepared ourselves to fight this virus," the Minister said.

Mr. Jain added that based on feedback received from Delhites, the government has written to the Centre regarding relaxation of lockdown restrictions.

Key suggestions

The key suggestions from the people are that every person should wear a mask at public places, social distancing should be maintained at all times, and that public transportation should start with limited capacity, he added.

"In the last two months we have learned many lessons. If we wear a mask, maintain social distancing and wash hands regularly then people will be 90%-95% safer," the Minister said.

The highest single-day tally for Dharavi has been 95 cases. Of the new cases reported on Friday, several are from Matunga Labour Camp, transit camp, 90-Feet Road that are part of the five COVID-19 hotspots.

Dharavi registers 84 new cases

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Dharavi reported another spike of 84 new cases on Friday, taking the tally to 1,495 cases.

Akola reported a rise in 18 new cases to take its tally to 226.

bai reported 64 new cases to reach a total 1,177.

Malegaon in Nashik district, the major virus hotbed in north Maharashtra, reported 14 new cases as the city's total tally reached 663 cases.

Akola reported a rise in 18 new cases to take its tally to 226.

Till date, 2,50,436 samples have been tested in Maharashtra, of which 2,21,336 (more than 90%) have returned negative, while 29,100 have tested positive. "There are 1,473 active containment zones in the State currently. Presently, 3,29,302 people across the State were in home quarantine and 16,306 persons were in institutional quarantine facilities," said Dr. Awate.

Among the new cases is an 11-year-old girl from Kumbharwada and a 12-year-old girl from Mohammad Chawl.

Four deaths were added to Dharavi's tally, bringing the total to 53. Dadar reported 11 new cases.

Cases in Maharashtra cross the 29,000-mark

State reported another massive surge of 1,576 new cases on Friday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUNE

Fresh COVID-19 cases continued to pile up in Maharashtra with the State reporting another massive surge of 1,576 new cases on Friday to take its total tally to 29,100, while 49 new fatalities have taken the death toll to 1,068.

Of the total cases, 21,467 were active, said State health officials.

State Health Department officials said that as many as 505 persons were discharged today, taking the cumulative number of discharged persons till date to 6,564.

As per figures, 34 of the fatalities were reported from Mumbai city to take the city's



Tough times: An isolation facility with 100 beds being readied at the Nehru Science Centre in Mumbai. ■ VIVEK BENDRE

High-risk cases

One death each was reported from Panvel, Jalgaon and Aurangabad city.

"65% of the deaths reported today had high-risk comorbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, asthma and heart disease," said Dr. Pra-

deep Awate, State Surveillance Officer.

Of the new cases, Mumbai city reported 933 new cases as the city's cumulative tally crossed the 17,000-case mark to touch 17,671.

Pune district's case tally, as per State health department figures, has risen to 3,482, with the district reporting more than 130 new cases today.

Besides Mumbai and Pune, the other sharp spike in cases came from parts of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), with Thane reporting 110 new cases to touch 1,491, while Navi Mum-

bai reported 64 new cases to reach a total 1,177.

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Gujarat's trend of an unabated spike in cases continues with around 10% of samples testing positive. On Friday, a total 3,150 samples were tested, out of which 340 were positive. The State has so far tested 1,27,859 samples.

"Effective quarantine was a major factor which helped contain the spread of novel coronavirus in Bhilwara, Jhunjhunu and other districts," Mr. Gehlot said.

Quarantine management have since been appointed from the State to the village panchayat levels.

About 19.84 lakh migrants in the State have registered for inter-State movement, and 11.14 lakh will be returning to Rajasthan.

As many as 3.62 lakh migrants have returned home, posing a big challenge of screening, sampling and enforcing quarantine.

Meanwhile, Health Department figures show that there are 43 critically ill patients on ventilator support, while 5,248 are stable and under treatment.

On Friday, Ahmedabad crossed the 7,000 mark in the number of cases, with 261 new cases. Now, its total number of cases is 7,171, while with 14 new deaths, the total death count has risen to 479.

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Meanwhile, Health Department figures show that

Back home in Uttar Pradesh, migrant workers find meagre solace in shovels

Having left behind better paying jobs, they are turning to MGNREGA works

OMAR RASHID
SITAPUR

"Chaya wala admi dhoop mein aa jaye to dikkat ho ti hai [a man used to working in the shade will feel uncomfortable under the sun]," says Nizamuddin.

Till mid-March, Mr. Nizamuddin earned his living as a tailor in Delhi's Seelampur. Depending on contracts, he could muster anything between ₹5,000 and ₹10,000 a month. However, the lockdown forced his employer to shut business, consequently leading him back home, Muda Kala village in Sitapur.

After serving the mandatory quarantine period, Mr. Nizamuddin, skilled in the

art of scissors and fine measurements, is now out with a shovel under the May sun, digging to build a pucca road. He is one of the many desperate migrant workers in Uttar Pradesh, who have taken to labour work under the MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) scheme since returning home.

'Must toil'

"When there is no work, one must learn to toil as a labourer. What will I eat otherwise?" he responded, when asked if the new job was proving tough for a tailor. With the aim of providing employment in rural

areas during the lockdown, the U.P. government is engaging labourers at a fast pace. Among these are migrant workers who have lost their livelihoods and made the perilous journey back home.

Mukesh Kumar of Jamuniya has also made the shift from packing bags in a company in Rudrapur, Uttarakhand, to digging a pond in his native village. In Uttarakhand, he took home a fixed monthly salary of ₹9,000 but the lockdown forced the unit to shut. His employer stopped paying him but offered to provide him ration, but it proved too cumbersome amid restrictions so he decided to head back home, and work with a shovel, something which the Intermediate-pass Mr. Mukesh was not accustomed to.



Field change: Labourers digging ponds in a village in Sitapur district. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

As per government sources, the State has so far engaged 27.68 lakh unskilled labourers under the MGNREGA in 46,823 gram panchayats since April 21. Of these, just 2.35 lakh persons are migrants who have recently returned to their home State.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has set officials a target of 50 lakh jobs under the MGNREGA. As the low percentage of migrants engaged in MGNREGA show, they have not really jumped into the work as of now. Officials say this is because many are still under quarantine or perhaps too exhausted from the journey to start any

gruelling physical work right away.

In Neri village, Mevalal and 90 others were busy digging a pond near an uneven patch of land surrounded by mango trees. After months without work, Mr. Mevalal, a landless Dalit who has never left his village, is relieved to be employed again. "I can at least run my house with these earnings," he said.

Slow pace

However, no migrant worker in Neri has yet joined the MGNREGA scheme. Panchayat Mitr Sunil Sharma says he is yet to receive demand for work from them. "They are not interested in working. They have just returned and probably want to rest at home with their kids," he said.

only ₹201. In his village, most young and middle-aged men are idle or doing farm work after having returned from other cities.

"When the situation is drastic, something must be done. Besides, there is a lot of work in the village. You just need to be willing," said Mr. Pal.

Many workers feel that they would eventually have to return to the cities as farm and rural labour might not be sustainable. But some like Jai Prakash Singh, who worked as a tailor in Gurugram and is serving his quarantine period at a school in Chadda, don't want to return.

"I was already working hard in Gurugram. Now I will do labour work here. What difference does it make?" he asked.

Mizoram man clears loans of four strangers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

A Mizoram man seeking the satisfaction of helping others has cleared the loans of four strangers who were struggling to repay because of the COVID-19 lockdown.

The man, said to have undergone the "pangs of bankruptcy once upon a time", wanted no publicity for transferring ₹9,96,365 to the State Bank of India's Aizawl branch for closing the loan accounts of the beneficiaries. "He came a few days ago and told us to select a few genuine loanees who had mortgaged their property for any business to be self-reliant. He said he wanted to help such people and had a budget of ₹10 lakh," Sheryl Vanchong, the branch's assistant general manager, said.

Centre, States spar over trains

Goyal accuses States of showing reluctance to requisition 'Shramik Specials'

SOBHANA K NAIR
YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
NEW DELHI

The 'Shramik Special' trains started by the Indian Railways to ferry stranded migrant workers are turning out to be the flashpoint between the BJP-led Union Government and Opposition-run State governments.

On Friday, Union Railway Minister Piyush Goyal accused the State governments of showing reluctance to requisition the trains, naming only the Opposition-ruled States.

"The Railways is ready to run 300 'Shramik Special' trains daily to help workers reach their homes, but I am sad that governments of some States like West Bengal, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, are not giving permissions to run these trains due to which workers have to suffer



Happy lot: Migrants going home in a special train to Howrah near the Amritsar railway station on Friday. ■ AFP

away from home," he tweeted. Till Friday morning, the Railways had run 1,000 such special trains.

All the four States immediately countered Mr. Goyal's statement.

Responding to Mr. Goyal, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said there was no permission pending for

any train with the government of Rajasthan and he had been a strong votary for running trains to allow the workers to commute. "But I am not surprised to see the statement by the Railways Minister, they are skilled in passing their failure on to the State government," he tweeted.

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren also rejected Mr. Goyal's claim, saying his government has given NOC for running 110 trains whereas only 50 trains, carrying around 60,000 migrant workers had arrived in the State.

Chattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel said the State had asked for 30 trains but had, so far, only got 14 trains. He also pointed out that the State had already paid ₹1.17 crore for the approved trains and that no other proposal was pending.

Mr. Baghel called the Railway Minister's statement "baseless and factually incorrect". He said once the 30 trains carrying the migrant workers reach, Chattisgarh will take stock of how many more persons from the State are stranded and will then ask for more trains.

Obstacle course



Safety net: A resident receiving essential items from a delivery man outside Fancy Bazar, which was sealed off for containment of COVID-19 cases, in Guwahati on Friday. ■ PTI

We have sought extension of lockdown by 2 weeks: Sonowal

Assam goes for containment, not colour-coded zones

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Assam government has sought extension of the lockdown by two more weeks, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said on Friday.

The government has also decided to mark areas where cases are detected as containment and buffer zones while continuing to regard the districts concerned as green zones. So far, 86 persons have tested positive, with 41 having recovered and two having died. One has migrated to Bihar.

"We have conveyed our stand on the need to extend the lockdown to the Centre, which had sought feedback from all the States by Friday," he told journalists.

He said the government's



Sarbananda Sonowal

cards, he said.

Mr. Sonowal said 6.5 lakh people studying, living or working outside the State had expressed their willingness to return to Assam. He said migrant workers returning to Assam would be considered a skilled force and treated as assets, not liabilities, for absorption in various sectors.

The government allowed trucks carrying livestock into the State while maintaining physical distancing. Transport of pigs remained banned because of the African swine fever that has so far killed almost 15,000 domestic pigs. A notification said the containment zones had been kept out of the purview of the permission for trucks carrying livestock.

Assam's maligned district gives humane touch to lockdown

Hindu man shelters 13 stranded Muslims from Bihar; Muslims cremate lonely Hindu woman

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

The COVID-19 lockdown has revealed the humane face of western Assam's Dhubri, a much-maligned district because of its large population of Bengali-speaking Muslims.

On Friday, Dev Kumar heaved a sigh of relief when he saw off 13 Muslim toymakers on a bus to Bihar. From Khagaria and Saharsa districts of Bihar, these 13 had been his guests since the lockdown began past March 24 midnight.

"They got permission to travel after spending all these days with us. We tried our best to make them comfortable, but they were long-



Exemplary conduct: Dev Kumar, at centre, with some Muslim toymakers from Bihar at his home in Dhubri town.

ing to return to their families especially with the Ramzan month on. I wish they reach home safely," Mr. Kumar, 55, told *The Hindu* from Dhubri town.

Mr. Kumar's great-grandfather had settled in the Nuniyapara area of Dhubri town from Jaunpur in Uttar Pradesh. He has continued with the pottery business

passed down the generations, sustaining his family of eight, including three brothers.

The Muslim toymakers come to Dhubri every year around March and stay temporarily to sell their wares at fairs across the district. Mr. Kumar provides them with raw materials such as bamboo and pottery items.

"We would have had a tough time finding for ourselves had Devji not let us stay at his house and provided us with food as well as facilitated our Ramzan prayers and Iftar," Md. Ajmal, one of the toymakers from Khagaria district, said after the bus with 19 people left for Bihar.

The other six with a different skill set stayed with another Hindu family.

A few days ago, 25 Muslim men had performed the last rites of Shanti Choudhury, a 75-year-old widow of Panbari village. There are three Hindu families in the Muslim-dominated village 20 km from Dhubri town.

"Members of her family were stranded outside Assam and could not come because of the lockdown. As neighbours, it was our responsibility to call a Hindu priest and carry her body for the ritualistic cremation," said Dilower Hussain, a local member of the All Assam Minority Students' Union.

"We have conveyed our stand on the need to extend the lockdown to the Centre, which had sought feedback from all the States by Friday," he told journalists.

He said the government's

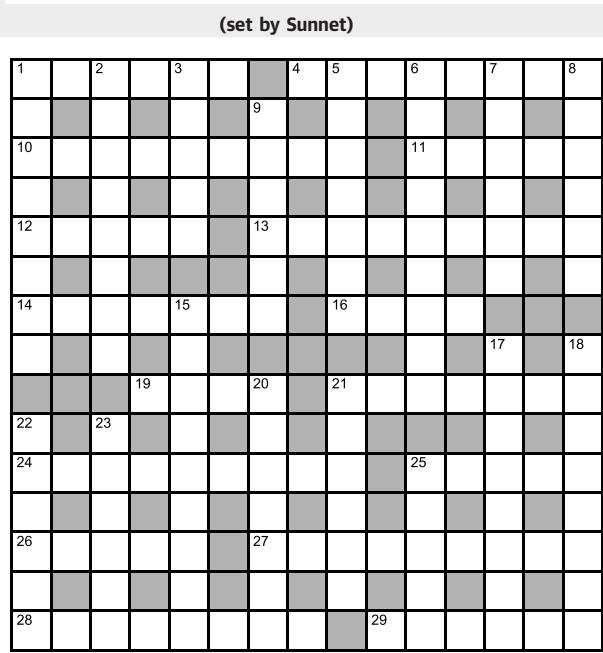
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TH CROSSWORD + 12937

(set by Sunnet)



ACROSS
1 Keep the French actors in front (6)
4 Perhaps Jack's mother inhaled a spice (8)
10 Cleaner city strip (9)
11 Say sick and tired of panel (5)
12 Uproar in the first quarter (5)
13 Heavy toll obtained from Bronte's new measure (5,4)

CM YK

Are you a cryptic lover or a quick solver? Find out Now! @ <https://crossword.thehindu.com>



SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12936

F	I	O	W	E	R	S	C	A	R	C	E	S	T
E	X	Q	S	A	E	Y	E						
S	K	I	J	U	P	R	A	T	E	A	M		
T	D	A	V	L	F	P							
I	N	A	L	S	I	T							
V	I	N	M	N	S	L							
A	C	T	R	E	S	G	A	T	E				
L	S	L	I	U	A								
B	V	P	I	O	F								
A	C	I	D	H	E	A	D	S	M	A	I	Z	E
S	I	S	A	I	T	U	L	N					
A	S	H	E	N	T	O	Y	A					
L	E	N	T	O	Y	A							
T	R	U	S	I	N	G	P	I	L	L	A	R	R

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

U.S. could cut ties with China over pandemic, warns Trump

Washington imposes additional punitive measures against Huawei

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON U.S. President Donald Trump on Thursday threatened to cut ties with China over its role in the spread of the coronavirus, as the global death toll from the disease topped 3,00,000.

The Trump administration also said on Friday that it would restrict the ability of Chinese telecoms giant Huawei, which it considers a national security risk, to develop semiconductors abroad with U.S. technology. "This announcement cuts off Huawei's efforts to undermine U.S. export controls," the Commerce Department said in a statement. The department said it would "narrowly and strategically target Huawei's acquisition of semiconductors that are the direct product of certain U.S. software and technology".

COVID-19

Huawei has been under relentless pressure from the Washington, which has lobbied allies worldwide to avoid the company's telecom gear over security concerns. Washington last year said it would blacklist Huawei from the U.S. market and from buying crucial American components, though it has extended a series of reprieves to allow U.S. businesses that work with Huawei time to adjust. On Friday it extended this reprieve by another 90 days.

Refugees at risk

Despite fears of a second wave of infections, national and local governments around the world are easing



Mass testing: A medical worker taking a swab sample from a staff member at a computer factory in Wuhan, China, on Friday. ■ AFP

lockdown orders as they try to get stalled economies moving again. But there were warnings on Friday that some of the world's poorest people remain the most vulnerable.

The nexus of poverty and risk was highlighted by the discovery of cases in the world's biggest refugee camp, where upwards of a million Rohingya live in squalor. "We are looking at the very real prospect that thousands of people may die from COVID-19" in these camps, Save The Children's Bangladeshi health director Shamim Jahan said.

In the U.S., the man formerly charged with developing a vaccine told lawmakers the government in Washington has no "master plan" to fight the pandemic and is unprepared to distribute enough vaccines to immunise millions of Americans. "We don't have a single point

of leadership right now for this response," said Rick Bright, who was removed from his job last month. The U.S. has registered almost 86,000 deaths linked to COVID-19 – the highest toll of any nation, with a third of all known global infections.

'Very disappointed'

In an interview aired on Thursday, Mr. Trump again accused Beijing of concealing the true scale of the problem after the virus emerged in Wuhan late last year.

"I'm very disappointed in China. I will tell you that right now," he said. Asked how the United States might choose to retaliate, Mr. Trump said: "We could cut off the whole relationship".

The U.S. and China are the world's two largest economies, doing hundreds of billions of dollars of mutually beneficial trade every year.

Nevertheless, the U.S. Pre-

sident is keen to make Beijing the bogeyman in an election year. New figures showed a further three million job losses, taking the newly unemployed to 36.5 million – more than 10% of the U.S. population.

Germany's treasury is also expecting a big hole in its budget, with around €100 billion euros wiped off the tax take in 2020. Europe's biggest economy has already slipped into a recession, with GDP expected to shrink by 6.3% this year – the biggest contraction since 1949.

Much of Europe appears to be over the worst, with more parts of the continent opening up. Austria and Germany were expected to open their border on Friday, while Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were set to create their own "mini-Schengen on the Baltic", allowing free movement among the three countries.

Hong Kong history exam question sparks rebuke from Beijing

Students were asked about Japanese occupation of China

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

HONG KONG

A history exam question asking Hong Kong students to assess colonial Japan's occupation of China sparked a rebuke by Beijing on Friday and reignited a row over academic freedoms in the semi-autonomous city.

The criticism comes as Hong Kong's schools and universities – some of the best in Asia – become the latest ideological battleground in a city convulsed by political unrest since last year.

Chicken coop metaphor
China's Foreign Ministry and state media roundly condemned a university entrance exam question that asked students whether they agreed Japan "did more good than harm" to China from 1900 to 1945. "Hong Kong's education sec-



Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam. ■ AP

tionalist Global Times newspaper on Friday.

After the criticism from the mainland, Hong Kong's Education Secretary Kevin Yeung announced the question would not be marked by examiners because it was "biased" and had "seriously hurt the feelings and dignity of the Chinese people". He also ordered the city's exam board to report to him on how it was included in the test. Japan's colonial occupation of parts of China between 1900-1945 was brutal and led to millions of deaths.

The "chicken coop" metaphor was used by Hong Kong's pro-Beijing Chief Executive Carrie Lam last week as she warned that liberal studies, a secondary school class that teaches critical thinking, helped fuel last year's unrest.

tor must not become a chicken coop without a roof," the Foreign Ministry wrote on the Facebook page of its Hong Kong office, using a metaphor referring to the idea that students should be protected from negative influences or ideas. "Hong Kong's (university exam) question leads students to be traitors," wrote the na-

Lula fears 'genocide' in Brazil under Bolsonaro

President has attacked democracy

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

SAO PAULO

Former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva says he fears a "genocide" in Brazil because of fierce opposition to coronavirus containment measures by current President Jair Bolsonaro, whom he said should be impeached.

In an interview with AFP by video conference from his home near Sao Paulo, Lula – a hero of the Brazilian left who served as President from 2003 to 2010 – attacked the far-right leader who now holds the office.

He accused Mr. Bolsonaro of steering Brazil toward "chaos" with his calls to reopen the economy despite the country emerging as one of those hardest hit by the new coronavirus worldwide, with nearly 14,000 deaths so far.

Bolsonaro has attacked democracy, democratic institutions and the people."

More than 12,500 care home deaths linked to virus in U.K.

Britain has the second highest death toll after the U.S.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON

More than 12,500 deaths of care home residents in Britain were linked to the coronavirus, according to figures released on Friday, heaping further pressure on the government over its handling of the pandemic.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said 12,526 care home residents in England and Wales had died from the virus in March and April, with nearly three-quarters occurring within homes and the rest in hospitals. However, the ONS suggested the actual death toll of care home residents could be far higher, noting it had recorded 23,136 more fatalities in the first four months of the year than in the same period in 2019.



NHS workers participating in a national 'Clap for carers' in London on Thursday. ■ AFP

earlier this week they had registered 36,473 deaths from or mentioning the virus up until May 1 – a tally second only to the U.S. The figures also indicated that Britain's excess mortality, which experts have said is the truest indicator of the virus' impact, was close to 50,000.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government has been criticised for its response to the outbreak, particularly in relation to care homes, with accusations they have been abandoned during the pandemic.

Opposition parties and whistleblowers in the care sector have said hospitals allowed patients to be discharged from hospital into homes without adequate testing to determine if they had the virus.

Virus could kill 1,50,000 in Africa: WHO

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

PARIS

The new coronavirus could kill 1,50,000 people in Africa in a year unless urgent action is taken, according to a WHO modelling study that says nearly a quarter of a billion people will be infected.

Authors of the research, published on Friday in the journal *BMJ Global Health*, predicted a lower infection rate than in other parts of the world like Europe and the U.S., with fewer severe cases and deaths.

Experts at the World Health Organization's Africa office modelled likely rates of exposure to the virus and infection in the 47 countries under its regional remit, which excludes Djibouti, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan and Tunisia.

Russian travel. Many richer Russians caught the virus during their annual ski holiday at the French ski resort of Courchevel in March, six Russians familiar with the matter said, three of whom fell ill after their own trip there. One of them, Alexander Sorkin, a restaurateur, flew back via Geneva on March 9 and was diagnosed with the virus several days later. He said he knew of at least 60 others with virus symptoms after the trip.

One Russian banker said he knew a number of people who returned on the March 9 flight from Geneva but then ignored an order from Moscow authorities to self-isolate for two weeks.

Moscow begins free antibody tests

Number of cases in Russia crosses 2,60,000, the second-highest in world

REUTERS

MOSCOW

Russia's COVID-19 case tally rose above 2,60,000 on Friday, cementing its status as the country with the second highest number of infections after the United States, as the city of Moscow began offering free antibody tests.



Fit and active: A 100-year-old patient leaving the recovery ward of a hospital in Moscow on Friday. ■ AP

Russia's death toll rose by 113 overnight to reach 2,418, Russia's coronavirus task force said, while the case tally jumped by 10,598 to hit 2,62,843. Moscow, the epicentre of Russia's outbreak, started mass antibody testing of residents on Friday to try to work out what portion of the population has already been infected and to identify infected people with no

symptoms. Sergei Sobyanin, Moscow's Mayor, has promised over 2,00,000 such tests a day by the end of May, and said the programme will help him decide how and when to ease lockdown mea-

sures which have forced many businesses to close.

Though Russia was quick to seal off much of its border with China to try to reduce the spread of the virus, it was slower to close down Euro-

Afghan hospital attackers came to kill mothers, says MSF

U.S. says IS was behind attack; Afghan VP blames the Taliban

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KABUL

Gunmen who stormed a hospital in the Afghan capital this week had come to "kill the mothers", a medical charity said, as survivors expressed shock and horror at the gruesome attack.

At least 24 people were killed – including newborns, mothers and nurses – when three armed men rampaged through the maternity ward of the Barchi National Hospital in Kabul on Tuesday, in an attack that sparked international outrage.

The U.S. later said the deadly assault was carried out by the Islamic State group.

"The administration is turning anyone who's worried about coronavirus into an enemy, and that's not the right path. I'm Catholic, so I've been praying for the Brazilian people to escape this genocide Bolsonaro is causing."

"Bolsonaro has attacked democracy, democratic institutions and the people."

Doctors Without Borders (MSF) head in Afghanistan, who visited the facility a day after the attack.

A methodical attack
"They went through the rooms in the maternity, shooting women in their beds. It was methodical."

"Walls sprayed with bullets, blood on the floors in

the rooms, vehicles burnt out and windows shot through," he said in a statement. MSF, which runs the maternity ward at the hospital, said at the time of the attack 26 mothers were being cared for at the Barchi National Hospital in west Kabul.

When the attack began, shooting and explosions could be heard from the safe room where several had taken refuge, said Mr. Bonnot. "They came to kill the mothers," he added.

Afghan officials in Kabul blamed the Taliban. "Neither the Taliban hands nor their stained consciousness can be washed of the blood of women, babies & other innocent in the latest senseless carnage," Afghan Vice-President Amrullah Saleh tweeted.

Can Iran weather the economic storm?

Tehran seeks to strike a balance between protecting the economy, combating the coronavirus and deepening its strategic interests

ELSEWHERE



Taiwan rejects China's condition on WHO meet

TAIPEI

Taiwan's Health Minister Chen Shih-chung rejected on Friday China's main condition for the island to be able to take part in the World Health Organization – acceptance that it is part of China – before a WHO meeting to be held next week. ■ AP

Little progress made in Brexit talks: U.K. official

BRUSSELS/LONDON

Britain and the European Union traded threats on Friday over a Brexit free trade deal, warning that unless the other side gave ground there would be no deal. "We made very little progress towards agreement on the... outstanding issues," U.K. negotiator David Frost said after a week of talks. ■ Reuters



Sanctions and coronavirus: An employee of an Iranian stock brokerage firm in Tehran. ■ REUTERS

adding to the existing burdens on the country's economy, which last year saw the GDP shrink by 7.6% as U.S. sanctions cut into its crude exports and trade," said Nayan Rafati, Senior Iran Analyst at the International Crisis Group. "The recent drop in oil prices and demand, combined with a slowdown in domestic and regional commerce as a result of the coronavirus, means that Tehran will have to grapple with significant financial challenges at a time when the nuclear agreement is hanging by a thread and regional tensions with the U.S. and its allies remain significant," Mr. Rafati told *The Hindu*.

Price of Brent crude, the international benchmark, crashed by 50% in March. Brent crude price was hovering around \$27 a barrel on Friday afternoon in London. The pandemic crisis "is

recast that Iran's economy will contract by 6% this year. Inflation, which hit 41% last year, is expected to be around 34.2% this year.

Reduced oil dependency
Grappled with hyperinflation, Iran has already introduced a new currency, toman – 1 toman will be worth 10,000 riyals. The Iranian

government has claimed that the impact of the oil crisis on the economy would be minimum compared to other oil exporters as the Islamic Republic has reduced its dependence on petroleum.

In 2019, oil sales made up only 29% government revenues. For Saudi Arabia, the share stands at about 87%. In 2020, the Iranian government has accounted for a further fall in the share of oil in revenues to 9%, according to the New York-based Eurasia Group. But achieving even this number is doubtful as the budget for the current year expected Iran to export 1 million barrels of crude a day at \$50 a barrel. Sales have since fallen to less than 5,00,000 barrels a day, while prices have plunged to just \$27 a barrel. To prevent a total economic collapse, the government decided to ease

the virus restrictions on businesses and the public in late April even as infections were spreading fast.

Aggressive foreign policy

The plan, as Iran's actions suggests, is to strike a balance between the economy and the fight against COVID-19, while at the same time pushing for expanding the country's strategic interests in the region. And as the Iranian economy is used to prolonging crises in the past, mainly due to the international sanctions, its leaders are trying to turn the crisis into an opportunity to mobilise power by attacking their favourite rival – the U.S.

The Iranian government has blamed the U.S. sanctions for the severity of the virus attack on its people.

Iran's proxies in Iraq continued to target U.S. forces,

killing two Americans on March 11. In the Gulf, the Revolutionary Guard Corps carried out operations, harassing the American Navy, which prompted Mr. Trump to authorise the Navy to shoot down Iranian boats. Last month, Iran said it launched a military satellite into the orbit.

This fits well into a time-tested strategy of taking a more aggressive foreign policy and whipping up nationalist sentiments whenever the domestic crisis worsens.

"Iran's resilience should not be underestimated," said K.P. Fabian, a former Indian diplomat, and an expert on West Asia. "Iran cannot be sanctioned further and it hopes to see Trump out," Mr. Fabian, who was posted in Tehran during the Iranian revolution in 1979, told *The Hindu*.

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	31,098	-0.08
US Dollar	75.58	-0.03
Brent oil	31.55	-0.45

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	309.25	0.85
Asian Paints	1552.95	30.55
Axis Bank	388.55	-13.40
Bajaj Auto	2663.60	-39.05
Bajaj Finserv	4723.25	-67.00
Bajaj Finance	2086.45	-25.55
Bharti Airtel	554.10	14.25
BPCL	123.80	8.50
Britannia Ind	3125.65	6.95
Cipla	570.30	0.55
Coal India	129.60	0.95
Dr Reddys Lab	3735.10	3.10
Eicher Motors	14099.60	67.75
GAIL (India)	85.80	0.35
Grasim Ind	517.85	6.45
HCL Tech	511.25	-6.20
HDFC	1633.80	1.40
HDPC Bank	888.15	-5.55
Hero MotoCorp	2193.55	-47.80
Hindalco	119.25	2.05
Hind Unilever	2032.10	26.05
ICICI Bank	322.70	-4.70
IndusInd Bank	418.70	-9.30
Bharti Infratech	202.50	-7.15
Infosys	652.30	-5.85
Indian Oil Corp	75.50	0.35
ITC	164.65	0.85
JSW Steel	174.30	-0.90
Kotak Bank	1178.30	5.20
L&T	864.40	-7.25
M&M	381.30	-19.15
Maruti Suzuki	5100.40	-13.65
Nestle India Ltd.	16443.80	201.30
NTPC	90.85	1.50
ONGC	76.15	0.00
PowerGrid Corp	159.80	-1.00
Reliance Ind	1459.40	23.45
State Bank	166.40	-1.55
Shree Cement	19180.50	-130.30
Sun Pharma	448.60	-7.35
Tata Motors	84.35	0.55
Tata Steel	273.45	4.90
TCS	1892.90	-9.45
Tech Mahindra	510.55	-5.15
Titan	845.60	-0.40
UltraTech Cement	3583.15	-26.35
UPL	378.90	-12.95
Vedanta	92.95	3.80
Wipro	183.80	-2.20
Zee Entertainment	164.20	-5.45

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	75.37	75.69
Euro	81.50	81.86
British Pound	91.95	92.36
Japanese Yen (100)	70.38	70.69
Chinese Yuan	10.62	10.66
Swiss Franc	77.49	77.82
Singapore Dollar	52.96	53.19
Canadian Dollar	53.63	53.87
Malaysian Ringgit	17.33	17.41
Australian Dollar	48.67	48.92

Source: Indian Bank

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Online food-delivery platform Zomato on Friday said it will reduce its workforce by 13%, while also implementing a temporary pay cut of up to 50% for the remaining employees as nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19 severely affected its business.

In an e-mail to employees, Zomato founder and CEO Deepinder Goyal said the workers affected by the lay-offs will continue to get half their salaries, in addition to health insurance and outplacement support, for the next six months or till they find another job, whichever is earlier.

The company employs about 4,000 people.

The company is also looking at making 'partial or full

IndiGlobe eyes Virgin Australia

IndiGo Airlines, till recently, had denied any role in bid for grounded carrier

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

InterGlobe Enterprises Ltd., which owns over 37% stake in IndiGo Airlines, has submitted a bid to acquire Virgin Australia airlines, which had filed for bankruptcy protection on April 21, 2020 after going down with an over \$7 billion debt and a very little amount of cash.

"As regards Virgin Australia, InterGlobe Enterprises has signed an agreement to participate in the sale process, and is bound by the confidentiality requirements of that agreement," an InterGlobe Enterprise spokesperson said.

"We are unable to say anything further at this stage," the spokesperson added.

Virgin Australia, founded as Virgin Blue in 2000 by

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

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Virgin Australia, founded as Virgin Blue in 2000 by

Deloitte is conducting the

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India (HMSI) on Friday said it has retailed over 21,000 two-wheelers since resuming operations this week.

Besides, almost 2.5 lakh customers have got their two-wheelers serviced at the company's dealerships and authorised service outlets across India, HMSI said.

"With ready availability of six of India's favourite BS-VI products, we are seeing increasing take off in retail by the day," according to HMSI director – sales and marketing Yadvinder Singh Guleria. HMSI has also introduced retail finance schemes, he said.

NBFCs appropriate pro-

statutory and other reserves,

and utilisation of these re-

serves is governed by the sta-

tute requiring its creation.

"We urge the RBI to con-

sider, as a one-time measure,

to allow NBFCs to draw-

down from their re-

serves for making additional

provision for expected los-

ses (ECL) provision require-

ment, in excess of provision

calculated as per normal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

British billionaire Sir Richard Branson, was one of the first casualties of COVID-19 that caused large scale grounding of aircraft as different countries imposed travel restrictions.

The rest include Brookfield, Queensland's investment firm QIC, private equity firm BGH Capital, Bain

bids and reportedly eight bidders, including Inter-

Globe, have submitted bids by Friday.

The rest include Brookfield, Queensland's investment firm QIC, private equity firm BGH Capital, Bain

Capital, and mining baron Andrew Forrest. The three top bidders will be short-listed next week. The airline, Australia's second largest, has a fleet of 98 aircraft and used to operate to 56 destinations before it went down.

Existing shareholders

Its existing shareholders include China's Nanshan Group, HNA Group, Singapore Airlines, Etihad Airways and Sir Branson's Virgin Group with 10% equity stake.

IndiGo started commer-

cial operations in 2007, and

since then has emerged as

India's biggest airline with

nearly 50% domestic market

share. IndiGo is one the

world's best run low-cost

profitable airlines. It had re-

cently denied any role in the

bid.

As per Indias norms ap-

plicable in respect of ECL

measurement and disclo-

sure in the financial state-

ments, the NBFCs are re-

quired to make additional

provisioning in terms of ICAI

advisory, which will surely

make a severe dent on the

profitability and networth of

probability of default (PD)

and loss given default (LGD),

the Finance Industry

Development Council

(FIDC), a representative bo-

dy of assets and loan-financ-

ing NBFCs, wrote to RBI Go-

vernor Shaktikanta Das.

NBFCs are required to

comply with Indian Account-

ing Standards (IndAS).

The Institute of Chartered

Accountants of India (ICAI)

has advised the NBFCs to

measure the impact of CO-

VID-19 on the portfolio qual-

ity in the form of PD and

LGD with adverse impact on

the business of the borrow-

ers or debtors due to CO-

VID-19 on one hand, and

prudential regulatory ac-

tions to sustain the economy

such as loan repayment hol-

idays.

As per IndAs norms ap-

plicable in respect of ECL

measurement and disclo-

sure in the financial state-

ments, the NBFCs are re-

quired to make additional

provisioning in terms of ICAI

advisory, which will surely

make a severe dent on the

profitability and networth of

probability of default (PD)

IN BRIEF

**Belgian GP likely behind closed doors in August**

BRUSSELS Formula One's Belgian Grand Prix could be held behind closed doors at Spa-Francorchamps on August 30, despite a ban on mass gatherings in the country until August 31, Wallonia's minister-president Elio Di Rupo has said. AFP

**'Women's IPL with 5-6 teams will be great'**

NEW DELHI Swashbuckling India opener Smriti Mandhana feels a full-fledged women's Indian Premier League (IPL) can make a difference in tapping the talent which would help India do well at the global level. "A five or six-team IPL for women will be great for Indian women's cricket, especially for the World Cups," she said. PTI

ATP and ITF extend suspensions till July-end

LONDON The ATP Tour and ITF have extended their suspensions of professional tennis until July 31 due to the pandemic, they said on Friday. The WTA said it will next month provide an update on events scheduled for the latter half of July. REUTERS

Athletes' Commission election postponed

LAUSANNE The International Olympics Committee has postponed the Athletes' Commission election by a year. The election was initially due to be held in Tokyo, with 30 candidates from 30 National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and 19 summer sports running for four positions. IANS

Dortmund ready to restart season

Club's MD Cramer says players will have to get used to playing in empty stadiums

SHYAM VASUDEVAN

Bundesliga – Germany's top flight football – will be the first major European League to restart its season which had come to a halt because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Second-placed Borussia Dortmund will kick-start proceedings when it takes on FC Schalke in the Revierderby on Saturday at 7 p.m. IST.

Must get used quickly

The players will have to get used to playing in empty stadiums and Dortmund managing director Carsten Cramer told *Sportstar* that it will take time for everyone to get accustomed to this new normal.

"It is unimaginable, but I am glad that we start at home. Although we will miss the Yellow Wall and our supporters, I am glad we are starting at home where we are unbeaten this season. It is always a big game when we play Schalke and it will be challenging," Cramer said.

**It's play time:** FC Schalke squad trains ahead of Saturday's clash against Dortmund. ■ AP

"We have two advantages – one is that we practised in an empty stadium three times, so I think we got some interaction with the empty stadium."

"The second advantage is that we had an experience of playing behind closed doors when we played our last game against PSG in the Champions League. The players are focused

on the game, they want to win and are happy they can start playing again."

The returning clubs have to follow a host of protocols to ensure safety of everyone involved. "We have a booklet of rules to follow. We will have the longest bench ever in our stadium – it is almost 50m long. The distance between two players is close to 2.50m and all players must

wear masks. We can have four ball boys and they must wear gloves. On the stands, we have eight representatives of our club and four of the away team. We share a stand usually visited by 8,000 people with 12 guys," Cramer said.

■ Live telecast on Star Sports Select 1 & 2, 7 p.m.

BFC wants early clarity on foreign player rule

CEO Tamhane says it will influence decision-making on picking new talent

ISLSPORTS REPORTER
BENGALURU

With the FSDL and AIFF set to announce in the coming months their plan to reduce the number of foreign players in the ISL from the 2021-2022 season, Bengaluru FC (BFC) CEO Mandar Tamhane called on the governing bodies to chart out the plan early.

I-League will implement the AFC standard '3 (foreigners) + 1 (Asian) recruit rule' from the coming season itself, but the move has been deferred for the ISL until

We at BFC support the rule as it is good for Indian football. It will allow more Indian players to play

For the 2020-21 edition, ISL will continue with the five-foreigner rule (in the playing XI) with a maximum of seven in the squad. The only change will be the mandatory inclusion of an AFC player.

Foreign roster BFC currently has five foreigners on contract for the next season – Dimas Delgado, Eric Paartalu (AFC), Juan

nan, Raphael Augusto and Deshorn Brown. Defensive mainstay Albert Serran will be a free agent by May-end.

"We need to take a call on Serran's contract. [But] we already have five players for the next season. So we will wait and watch."

"Normally we need to register foreign players by August 31. But with COVID, we expect it to be extended. Also we still don't know when the league is going to start."

"But going forward, with the number of foreigners set to be limited, we need to see how we are progressing with our youth teams; whether we can promote somebody

Athletics in for a major change

Dope cheats being monitored closely, says WA chief Coe

STAN RAYAN
KOCHI

The middle-distance runners taking off a few seconds apart, relay runners with gloves and probably even a lane's gap between 100m runners. The World Athletics is considering a lot of options as it works on finding ways out of the mess created by the coronavirus pandemic and resume competition in August.

But clearly, athletics is in for a major change.

Not identical

"It's not going to look identical to traditional track and field for a few months," said Sebastian Coe, the president of World Athletics, in a video interaction, from London on Friday.

"If we have to bring back competition in the relays, we have to think about the baton going hand to hand, this could clearly be a source of infection. Would it not be possible to wear very light skin-tight gloves. I'm sure

there are ways around this.

"The Italian federation



Sebastian Coe. ■ AP

sent me some very interesting ideas about how you could maintain distance in the 800 and 1500m, not necessarily by starting together but by starting maybe five seconds apart and starting individually," said Coe.

"We also recognise that the first few competitions may be held behind closed doors."

Coe was also clear that despite the lockdown, dope cheats should not feel safe.

"Clearly, our testing procedures now are not what they were earlier. But I want to be clear: No athlete should assume that they are in lockdown and are free

No Indians for Diamond League

KOCHI: The AFI will not be sending its stars for the Diamond League series scheduled to start in August. "We are clear that they are not travelling out of India, preferably not even out of Patiala," said AFI president Adille Sumariwalla on Friday. "They will do the Indian circuit, get into an off-season again by October and go to Europe by 2021, if the situation permits, and then peak for the Olympics."

from it. So, continue to fill in your whereabouts. The days of adding up a number of tests is long gone. Intelligent testing and intelligent analysis are more important now than they have ever been and we're able to do that."

Chess Gurukul too good for Superkids

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Fancied Chess Gurukul overcame a slow start and eventually ended the first day as the worthy leader, with 16 game-points, in the inaugural Indian Chess.com League (ICL) on Friday.

In the fifth and last round of the day, Gurukul comprising Aravindh Chithambaram, R. Praggnanandhaa, M. Karthikeyan, Aditya Mittal and R. Vaishali, outplayed second seed Superkids 3.5-1.5.

Even as Gurukul lived up to its reputation, last seed Undercover Agents proved

to be the surprise packet of the day. The side captained by Padmima Rout, and consisting of Arjun Kalyan, Girish Kaushik, Koustav Chatterjee and Ajay Karthikeyan, stunned third seed Desi Boys 3-2 and, like Gurukul, stayed unbeaten.

The results: Standings (after five rounds): 1. Chess Gurukul (16 game-points), 2. Desi Boys (14.5), 3-4. Undercover Agents, Superkids (14 each), 5. United India (13.5).

6. Five Fighters (11.5), 7-8. Chess Thulir, Cheeky Cheetahs (11 each), 9. Chess Gyan (10.5), 10. Chess Pathshala (9).

Seven films to premiere on Amazon Prime

Straight-to-digital release triggers opposition from exhibitors

NAMRATA JOSHI
MUMBAI

A day after announcing the premiere of Shoojit Sircar's *Gulabo Sitabo*, Amazon Prime Video released the list of an additional six films that will be premiering directly on the streaming service. The straight-to-digital slate of films spans five Indian languages and the titles are scheduled to premiere between May and August.

First off the mark, even before *Gulabo Sitabo*, will be J.J. Fredrick's legal drama *Ponmagal Vandhal* (Tamil), starring Jyothika, that begins playing from May 29. It also stars Parthiban, Bhagyraj, Prathap Pothen and Pandiarajan and is produced by Suriya and Rajsekhar Karpoorasanendarapandian.

Another much anticipated title is Anu Menon's *Shakuntala Devi* with Vidya Balan in lead. A biographical drama on the extraordinary life of Shakuntala Devi, mathematics genius, writer and astrologer, who was popularly known as a human compu-

A still from *Gulabo Sitabo*.

ter, it also features Sanya Malhotra and is produced by Sony Pictures Networks Productions and Vikram Malhotra. The date for its release, however, is yet to be announced.

Penguin (Tamil and Telugu) begins streaming from June 19. Starring Keerthy Suresh, it is written and directed by Eshavar Karthic and is produced by Stone Bench Films and Karthik Subbaraj.

Law (Kannada) begins playing from June 26. Starring Ragini Chandran, Siri Prahlad and veteran actor Mukhyamantri Chandru, it is written and directed by Naranipuzha Shanavas, it is produced by

Vijay Babu's Friday Film House.

"At Prime Video, we believe in listening to what our consumers want and working backwards from there. This belief is the genesis of our latest offering," said Vijay Subramanian, director and head of content, Amazon Prime Video, India, adding, "Over the last two years, Prime Video has become the destination of choice for our customers to watch new releases."

Exhibitors displeased

The decision to skip a theatrical release for *Gulabo Sitabo* has met with criticism from theatre owners. A statement from INOX on Thursday stated: "The decision of the production house to deviate from the globally prevalent content windowing practice is alarming and disconcerting." Meanwhile, the Producers Guild of India slammed INOX and said: "It is disappointing to see abrasive messaging from the exhibition sector."

Meghalaya village Quinine Nongladew latches on to its past in search for COVID-19 cure

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

Hydroxychloroquine may not be the answer to SARS-CoV-2 or the COVID-19 pandemic. But quinine, its most primitive antimalarial avatar, has made village in Meghalaya latch on to its past for a curative future.

Welcome to Quinine Nongladew, a village named after the alkaloid quinine extracted from the bark of cinchona, a plant belonging to the *Rubiaceae* family and classified as either a large shrub or a small tree.

The village, about 70 km south of Guwahati, is on the highway to Meghalaya's capital Shillong.

Meghalaya's Forests and

Environment Department has no records on the Quinine Garden. The villagers are clueless too.

"I was a boy when our parents settled here from other parts of Meghalaya about 50 years ago.

"There was no village before us and the place was called Quinine because of the plantation. We added Nongladew later," said Bhasistar Lyngdoh Tongkhar, the headman of the village of about 400 people.

Basdok Nongmalieh, an entrepreneur who documents local histories, said the cinchona nursery was raised in the 19th century, probably around 1874, when Shillong became the British

administrative headquarters for Assam Province.

"Large swathes of Meghalaya used to be, and still are, malaria-prone.

"The British had the foresight to start the plantation to combat malaria and other diseases caused by mosquitoes," Mr. Nongmalieh said from Mawtnum village near Quinine Nongladew. The nursery on an unknown area fell into disuse by the mid-1950s, Mr. Nongmalieh added.

One of the reasons is that the Forest Department has no control over the area where a few cinchonas grow uncared for.

"We have no jurisdiction over Quinine Garden or wha-

tever is left of it. But our predecessors said the plantation was not much of a success as it involved an exotic species brought from South America," B.S. Kharmaophlang, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Research and Training), told *The Hindu* from Shillong.

The villagers, however, said people in the olden days collected the bark of the plant and ground it to administer to malaria patients.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has generated interest among locals in the cinchona tree.

"The government should enlighten us about the curative properties of this tree," Mr. Tongkhar said.

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?

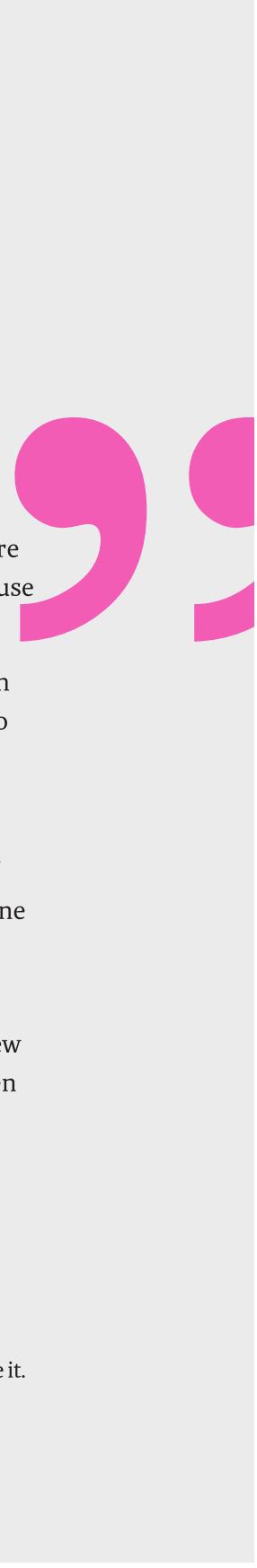
THE HINDU

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

#KeepTheHabit



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