FOLLOW US:
thehindu.com
facebook.com/thehindu
twitter.com/the_hindu

THE HINDU

FRIDAY, APRIL 3, 2020

INDIA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1878

DELHI
CITY EDITION
16 pages • ₹10.00

Hurriyat opposes Jammu and Kashmir's new domicile laws
page 8

Four countries charter Air India flights to repatriate their citizens
page 10

Aurobindo Pharma and Novartis call off $1-billion Sandoz deal
page 14

Amid pandemic, Joe Biden sidelined by omnipresent Trump
page 11

PRINTED AT · CHENNAI · COIMBATORE · BENGALURU · HYDERABAD · MADURAI · NOIDA · VISAKHAPATNAM · THIRUVANANTHAPURAM · KOCHI · VIJAYAWADA · MANGALURU · TIRUCHIRAPALLI · KOLKATA · HUBBALLI · MOHALI · MALAPPURAM · MUMBAI · TIRUPATI · LUCKNOW · CUTTACK · PATNA

NEARBY

Capital sees biggest single-day jump in cases

NEW DELHI

Two deaths and 141 new COVID-19 cases were reported in Delhi on Thursday, taking the total number of deaths to four and total cases to 293, an increase of 92.7% from Wednesday, said the city government.

CITY ▸ PAGE 3

M.P. breaches 100 mark, two deaths reported

BHOPAL

A man and a woman from Indore died of COVID-19 on Thursday, taking the toll owing to the illness to five in the city. Madhya Pradesh reported nine new cases during the day, said Principal Secretary, Health, Pallavi Jain Govil. Bhopal reported four new cases. The State count stands at 111.

NORTH & EAST ▸ PAGE 4

Bus driver allegedly beaten by U.P. police

LUCKNOW

A Haryana Roadways bus driver, who was asked to drop migrants returning home during the lockdown, was allegedly thrashed by Uttar Pradesh police on the outskirts of Lucknow for merely asking for directions. Khurshid Ahmed was taking the migrants to Gorakhpur from Ghaziabad.

NORTH & EAST ▸ PAGE 4

PM asks States to suggest plan for staggered end to lockdown

'Appoint disease surveillance officers in all districts, collate data from private labs'

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at his second video-conference with Chief Ministers, on Thursday told them that it was "important to formulate a common exit strategy to ensure staggered re-emergence of the population once the lockdown ends".

Mr. Modi emphasised that the collective goal of all should be to "save every Indian". He asked the States to brainstorm and send suggestions for the exit strategy.

He listed certain "must do steps" that need to be taken as the nation entered the second week of the total lockdown. "Our first priority for the next few weeks should be testing, tracing, isolating and quarantine. For this, all State to district level efforts must be coordinated," he pointed out.

Mr. Modi urged that district-level disease surveillance officers should be appointed as soon as possible to make sure that penetration of this strategy is optimum. Data collected from private laboratories allowed to test should be collated district-wise to be utilised for further strategising on tackling the pandemic.

In his opening remarks, he emphasised that the supply lines for medical equipment and drugs and raw materials needed for the manufacture of these products need to be kept seamless, even more than supplies of other products.

The way forward: Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacting with Chief Ministers via video conference on Thursday. ▪ PTI

Separate hospitals

"Every State should ensure that there are separate hospitals for COVID-19 patients, and the doctors attending to them need to be protected. I would also urge you to step up online training of doctors in the treatment of COVID-19," he said.

This being the harvest season in many parts of the country, farmers and labourers, exempted from the lockdown, were engaged in harvest operations and they should maintain some physical distancing even on fields. "As for procurement, we must find ways to do it beyond the route of Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMC). A truck pooling scheme should also be worked out with farmers for ferrying produce to the market. Harvesting will possibly need to be done in a staggered manner," he is reported to have said.

The Centre would release ₹11,000 crore from the State Disaster Relief Fund by this month, and it should be used for efforts to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

CONTINUED ON ▸ PAGE 8

Cong. seeks more relief

The Congress Working Committee (CWC) held its first-ever virtual meeting on Thursday to discuss the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, where party president Sonia Gandhi asked the Union government to come out with a "common minimum relief programme". The unplanned lockdown caused "chaos and pain for migrant workers", she said. ▸ PAGE 8

'Supply of essentials hit'

With transportation and supply woes continuing, there is concern over depleting reserves of essentials. "Demand for movement of essential goods is increasing. But supply is not even close to matching it," Abhishek Gupta, managing director, Prakash Parcel Services Ltd said. "Instructions of the Ministry of Home Affairs to allow trucks to operate has not gone down yet in many places," he said. ▸ PAGE 12

Release ₹1 lakh crore to States, Gehlot suggests to Modi

Many CMs asked PM about possibility of lockdown extension

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot suggested to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday that the Centre release ₹1 lakh crore to States to enable them to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic and the ramifications of the nationwide lockdown.

The grant could be based on the number of patients in each State, its population or the GST Council's guidelines, Mr. Gehlot said during Mr. Modi's videoconference with Chief Ministers.

Mr. Gehlot proposed that the borrowing limit of States should be increased by 2% so that the people felt comfortable. "The States also expect a moratorium on the payment of their dues to the financial institutions under RBI. These should be deferred," he said.

The Rajasthan CM also raised the issue of MGNREGA workers with the Prime Minister, saying that the government must consider giving these workers an advance payment during the lockdown period.

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot

'Bihar short of PPE'

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said the State had asked for 10 lakh N95 masks but received only 50,000. After seeking five lakh PPE kits, Bihar has received 4,000; and against a demand for 100 ventilators, the State is yet to get a single one, he said. "Whatever decision the Prime Minister has taken to fight coronavirus, we're following it," Mr. Kumar was quoted as saying in a release. "Though some problem had cropped up earlier as people were sent from Delhi during lockdown, all those who came here were taken to their homes and are being provided medicine, food and being quarantined," the statement said.

A total of 1,70,470 people had come to Bihar from outside the State, of whom 12,051 had travelled from overseas. All are being kept under home quarantine, the statement said.

On his part, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal said that his government had decided to roll out telemedicine services in the State immediately since people are unable to visit hospitals.

Apprising Mr. Modi of the situation in Indore, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said the city had a dedicated hospital to help combat the disease. Similar arrangements were in place in Bhopal too.

Mr. Chouhan informed the Prime Minister that in the form of "alternative treatment", AYUSH medicines were also being given in Madhya Pradesh. Around six lakh persons had been administered such medicines. In addition, to boost immunity, homoeopathy medicines were given to 17,50,000 individuals.

Sources in the Odisha Chief Minister's Office said several queries during the interaction pertained to the possibility of the lockdown being extended, with many Chief Ministers stating that it was affecting the economy.

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh and his West Bengal counterpart Mamata Banerjee skipped the interaction, deputing their Chief Secretaries instead.

Virus cases double in India in five days

Testing protocol to be tweaked

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The number of COVID-19 cases in India has doubled in the past week, with 328 more cases and 12 deaths reported on Thursday. The tally now stands at 2,069 cases, with 53 deaths and 155 cured of the novel coronavirus infection.

The Health Ministry said there were reports of several doctors, nurses and paramedics testing positive.

COVID-19

The number of cases increased sharply from 909 this weekend, and the Health Ministry confirmed that it was looking at tweaking the testing protocol, with a rapid anti-body test in hot-spots, where those indicating a positive would be sent for confirmation and the others would be quarantined.

"We will be releasing the details soon," R. Gangakhedkar, head of Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases-I, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), said at a press conference.

The Health Ministry said extensive action was being taken in Asia's largest slum, Dharavi in Mumbai, after a death due to COVID-19 was reported there.

CONTINUED ON ▸ PAGE 8
MORE REPORTS ON ▸ PAGES 5, 6, 9, 10, 12

9,000 with Tablighi Jamaat link sent into quarantine

Far and wide: A locality at Tondiarpet in Chennai was quarantined after a few residents who reportedly attended the Nizamuddin conference were taken away for testing by the authorities on Thursday. ▪ B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

129 more from the sect's headquarters test positive; 2 died on Thursday

NIKHIL M. BABU
SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

At least 9,000 Tablighi Jamaat workers and their primary contacts have been quarantined across the country after the sect's headquarters in Nizamuddin, New Delhi, emerged as a hotspot of novel coronavirus, the government said on Thursday.

Around 500 COVID-19 cases in the country are linked to a gathering of Indian and foreign members of the organisation last month. The number in Delhi alone stood at 182 on Thursday, when 129 more people from the centre tested positive and two died.

The government has cancelled the visas of 960 foreigners who participated in the meeting. They have been blacklisted, and legal action under the Foreigners Act and the Disaster Management Act against them will follow, a tweet from the office of the Union Home Minister said.

There are 1,306 foreigners among the 9,000 in quarantine, Punya Salila Srivastava, Joint Secretary in the Ministry, told reporters. Around 250 of them were at the Delhi centre when the authorities evacuated it this week, but the rest had fanned out to other parts of the country.

A total of 2,346 people were evacuated and 536 were sent to hospitals and 1,810 were quarantined in an operation on Wednesday, the Delhi government said.

CONTINUED ON ▸ PAGE 8
ANOTHER REPORT ▸ PAGE 8

Geo-fencing app will be used to locate quarantine violators

It triggers alerts to govt. agency if anyone jumps quarantine

VIJAITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

The Centre is using powers under the Indian Telegraph Act to "fetch information" from telecom companies every 15 minutes to track COVID-19 cases across the country.

The government has tested an application that triggers e-mails and SMS alerts to an authorised government agency if a person has jumped quarantine or escaped from isolation, based on the person's mobile phone's cell tower location. The "geo-fencing" is accurate by up to 300 m, a government communication said.

Used by Kerala

Kerala was one of the first States to use geo-fencing to track COVID-19 cases.

On March 29, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) shared a standard operating procedure (SOP) with all telecom service providers regarding the application called COVID-19 Quarantine Alert System (CQAS).

The system will collate phone data, including the device's location, on a common secured platform and alert the local agencies in case of a violation by COVID-19 patients under watch or in isolation.

Secure network

The SOP says that the DoT and C-DOT, in coordination with telecom service providers, have developed and tested the application. It said the location information is received periodically over a secure network for the authorised cases with "due protection of the data received".

The States have been asked to seek the approval of their Home Secretaries under the provisions of Section 5(2) of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, for the specified mobile phone numbers to request the DoT to provide information by email or SMS in case of violation of "geo-fencing".

CONTINUED ON ▸ PAGE 8

AIIMS doctor and wife test positive for COVID-19

CMO of CRPF hospital also infected

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

A resident doctor of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, and his nine-month pregnant wife have tested positive for COVID-19, according to a source at the hospital.

"The doctor posted at the Physiology Department of AIIMS was the first to show symptoms and later his wife was also brought in and both have tested positive," said the source. The other family/close work contacts of the couple have been isolated and screened, the source added. The AIIMS administration noted that contact tracing protocol has been started in the cases.

In another development, a senior CRPF doctor, working as the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) at a Delhi-based hospital of the force, has tested positive for COVID-19, officials said on Thursday.

The doctor has been admitted to AIIMS in Haryana's Jhajjar. He was currently posted at the office of the Additional Director General (medical) of the Central Armed Police Forces.

Infection source unclear

The medical officer reported cough, fever and breathing problems on March 30 and his samples came positive on Thursday, a senior official said. It was not immediately clear how the doctor contracted the infection.

He was staying at a transit officers' mess of the CRPF in south Delhi's Saket area, the officials said. The mess has since been sanitised and orders issued to immediately quarantine the staff and guests/officers living there.

(With inputs from PTI)

MORE REPORTS ▸ PAGES 2,3 & 4

Conviction of four accused in Daniel Pearl case overturned

No evidence to link them to murder, says Sindh court

MEHMAL SARFRAZ
LAHORE

The Sindh High Court on Thursday overturned the conviction of four persons accused of kidnapping and killing Daniel Pearl, a reporter of *Wall Street Journal*, in Pakistan for lack of evidence.

"No evidence has been brought on record by the prosecution to link any of the appellants to the murder of Pearl, and as such, all the appellants are acquitted of murder u/s 302 PPC," said the court in its judgment.

The main accused, British-Pakistani Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh who was on death row for the murder, was found guilty of a lesser charge of kidnapping and sentenced to seven years in prison and a fine of ₹2 million to be paid to Pearl's widow and his orphaned son, who was born after the murder.

Omar Saeed Sheikh, the main accused, was among the three released by India after the Kandahar hijacking. ▪ AP

Sheikh has been in custody since 2002. The seven-year prison sentence will be counted as served as he has been in prison for 18 years.

The incident came three years after Sheikh, along with Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar and Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar, was released by India in 1999 and given safe passage to Afghanistan in exchange for the nearly 150 passengers of hijacked Indian Airlines Flight 814. He was serving a prison term in India for kidnappings of Western tourists in the country.

Pearl was *Wall Street Journal*'s South Asia Bureau Chief. He was working on a story about links between religious extremists in Karachi and 'show-bomber' Richard Reid, who tried to blow up a passenger plane.

Pearl went missing in January 2002 from Karachi. A month later, a video of his beheading was delivered to the U.S. Consulate in Karachi.

(With PTI inputs)

CONTINUED ON ▸ PAGE 8
INDIA TO RAISE ISSUE AT FATF ▸ PAGE 10

Timings
DELHI

FRIDAY, APR. 03		
RISE	06:09	SET 18:41
RISE	13:29	SET 02:43
SATURDAY, APR. 04		
RISE	06:08	SET 18:41
RISE	14:35	SET 03:33
SUNDAY, APR. 05		
RISE	06:07	SET 18:42
RISE	15:43	SET 04:18

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	30	13
Safdarjang	30	13
Palam	30	14

Delhi Palam Today
30ºC Pleasant and hazy morning with a warm day is likely. Mainly clear sky is likely.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
32ºC Warm day with partly cloudy to cloudy sky is likely. Dry weather with light winds are expected.

© Copyright Skymet Weather 2019
All rights reserved.

THE HINDU
DISCLAIMER: Readers are requested to verify and make appropriate enquiries to satisfy themselves about the veracity of an advertisement before responding to any published in this newspaper. THG PUBLISHING PVT LTD., the Publisher & Owner of this newspaper, does not vouch for the authenticity of any advertisement or advertiser or for any of the advertiser's products and/or services. In no event can the Owner, Publisher, Printer, Editor, Director/s, Employees of this newspaper/ company be held responsible/liable in any manner whatsoever for any claims and/or damages for advertisements in this newspaper.

Air quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi	69	Gurugram	72
Ghaziabad	63	Faridabad	63
Noida	62	Greater Noida	88

Good 0-50 | Satisfactory 51-100 | Moderate 101-200 | Poor 201-300 | Very poor 301-400 | Severe >401

AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) | SOURCE: CPCB

IN BRIEF

Sanitisation drive carried out in Nizamuddin area

NEW DELHI

An intensive mass sanitisation drive was carried out in Nizamuddin area by the South Delhi Municipal Corporation on Thursday. A team was deployed to disinfect the Markaz centre here, from where a large number of COVID-19 cases have been traced.

No money, hundreds of jobless migrants find shelter at govt. school

Unable to go home to families, they are now dependent on food, shelter given by the authorities; many shifted here from Majnu Ka Tilla gurdwara

SHINJINI GHOSH
NEW DELHI

Hundreds of migrant workers and some people, who were shifted from the Majnu Ka Tilla gurdwara, are now lodged at a government school in north Delhi's Nehru Vihar. Due to the lockdown after the COVID-19 outbreak, many of them have lost their jobs and are unable to return to their hometowns.

"Our hands are tied," they said, adding that they are solely dependent on the food and shelter provided by the authorities.

Ramkaran Das, a migrant worker from Bihar, said: "It has been months since we visited home. Ideally, during such difficult times, one would want to stay closer to their families. Even if we want to go, we can't. For us, there is no option other than to continue living here and take whatever help we get."

Circles drawn for people to maintain social distancing outside Sisganj Gurdwara. • SHINJINI GHOSH

Another worker Charan Kumar said it is the beginning of a new month and "there is depreciated cash in hand, as a result of which buying groceries is not an option".

Out of jobs

"On usual days, we cooked for ourselves in our rented accommodations. Now, we have no money to spend. We have come to this school so that we do not have to worry about our meals and there is a roof over our heads," he added.

Sunil Saha, a 28-year-old migrant worker from Bhagalpur, added that even if there is a will, there are no resources" for the workers to be with their families.

COVID-19

"We have heard about how a lot of workers were walking back to their homes but ours are 1,200-1,300 km away. There are no means of transportation available because of the lockdown and it is impossible for us to even think of such a journey on foot. Even though I have lived in this city for almost 16 years now, the virus has made things so much more difficult. What other option do we have other than depending on others for help?" asked Mr. Saha.

The food served inside the school is the *langar* that is prepared at the nearby Majnu Ka Tilla gurdwara.

Similarly, several gurudwaras across the city under the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee are preparing *langar*, which is then taken to different locations for distribution.

Entry to gurdwaras shut

Even though entry to gurdwaras is currently closed, outside the Sisganj Gurdwara at Chandni Chowk, authorities have made marked areas to ensure enforcement of social distancing when the *langar* is distributed. Sitting on a sidewalk, next to a newly-tiled path under the Chandni Chowk redevelopment project, Suresh Sahni, a differently abled person said: "I have been here all my life and have never seen this area empty. Everyone is scared of stepping out because of government order. For people like me, who used to depend on small mercies from passers-by, even that is lost now. The food provided by the gurdwara is all we depend on now. Sometimes we take it from the nearby mandir but majorly from the gurdwara."

"What can we say? Our lives have always been like this. The only difference is that earlier help would usually come from people and now it comes directly from the Almighty's place," the 58-year-old added.

After Noida DM, U.P. govt. replaces CMO

11 held for praying in group in Sector 16

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

The Uttar Pradesh government has transferred Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Anurag Bhargav a day after COVID-19-positive persons in the district touched 48 – the highest in the State. The move came days after Noida District Magistrate B.N. Singh was replaced by the government.

Dr. Bhargav has been replaced by A.P. Chaturvedi, Joint Director, Directorate of Family Welfare. On March 30, *The Hindu* reported that the decision was on the cards as the CMO was taken to task by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath when he visited the district to take stock of the situation.

On Wednesday, 10 more people were tested positive for COVID-19. Out of the total number of cases in the district, many have been linked to one fire safety firm. Dr. Bhargav has been attached to the office of CEO of Greater Noida Narendra Bhooshan, who has been appointed the nodal officer to address the COVID-19 outbreak.

Meanwhile, 11 persons were arrested on Thursday for allegedly praying in a group on a rooftop in JJ Cluster Sector 16, violating the restrictions imposed during the lockdown. The police arrested Sadiq, who led the prayer, and 10 others, said Deputy Commissioner (Zone-1 Noida) Sankalp Sharma confirmed.

Migrants in distress seek help from Union Minister on Twitter

Gurugram MP calls up worker within minutes after being tagged on networking site

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

Fast running out of cash and ration, more than two dozen migrant workers of a furniture exporter company at Industrial Model Township in Manesar here, reached out to local Lok Sabha MP and Union Minister Rao Inderjit Singh, on Twitter seeking help.

Money and ration

Sanjay, a migrant worker from Bihar, said he along with fellow workers, at "Heritage Furniture", were "trapped" in their rented accommodation because of the nationwide lockdown without any help from outside and were fast running out of supplies and money.

> **The aim of the lockdown was to avoid crowds. Had we stepped out to go to our home village in Bihar, the purpose would have been defeated**
>
> SANJAY
> Migrant worker

Searching online for any possible contact for help, they stumbled upon the mobile number of one Sunil Yadav, who had shared his contact details on Facebook, offering to help the needy migrant workers.

They called him to narrate their ordeal. Later, a tweet was posted from the official handle of Rashtriya Janata Dal tagging the Minister on Thursday afternoon seeking help for the workers. The tweet also carried a photo of a paper with the names and contact numbers of the workers.

Ashok, one of the workers, said that he received a call on his mobile number from the Minister himself within minutes after the tweet with the promise to help.

Fear of police

Another worker, Santosh, said they were managing with the little cash they had, but were running out of essentials fast. "We did not venture out to walk to the relief centre fearing that the police might beat us," said Santosh.

Sanjay said, "Though a large number of migrant workers had left after the lockdown was announced, they preferred to stay back to avoid the crowd. The aim of the lockdown was to avoid crowds. Had we stepped out to go to our home village in Bihar, the purpose would have been defeated," said Sanjay, a migrant worker. He also said they did not have money to pay the room rent.

Case filed against gurdwara

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has registered a case against Majnu Ka Tilla gurdwara, where over 200 people were stranded during the nationwide lockdown amid the COVID-19 outbreak, officials said on Thursday.

A total of 225 people, who wanted to travel to Punjab, were residing in the gurdwara. Most of them were Punjab-based labourers employed at various places in Delhi-NCR.

The case was registered under IPC Sections 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) and Sec.270, a senior police officer said.

Published by N. Ravi at Kasturi Buildings, 859 & 860, Anna Salai, Chennai-600002 and Printed by S. Ramanujam at HT Media Ltd. Plot No. 8, Udyog Vihar, Greater Noida Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. 201306, on behalf of THG PUBLISHING PVT LTD., Chennai-600002. Editor: Suresh Nambath (Responsible for selection of news under the PRB Act).
Regd. DL(ND)-11/6110/2006-07-08 • RNI No. UPENG/2012/49940 • ISSN 0971 - 751X • Vol. 10 • No. 80

Delhi Police stops buses with foreign tourists amid lockdown

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Two buses carrying "foreign tourists" were stopped by the Delhi traffic police at the India Gate traffic signal on Thursday afternoon amid the ongoing nationwide lockdown, Swaraj Express television news channel reported.

An official of the Delhi Police told *The Hindu* that the movement of the buses ferrying foreign tourists had "special permission" from the Ministry of External Affairs to "evacuate" tourists stranded in different parts of the country by the lockdown enforced by authorities to combat the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The buses were stopped but allowed to go after the driver and tour manager produced requisite permission from MEA and other concerned authorities," added the police official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The buses were reportedly heading towards Indira Gandhi International Airport from Dehradun, the news channel reported.

IN BRIEF

AAP MLA hits out at Naqvi, Kerala Guv.

NEW DELHI

AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan on Thursday attacked Union Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi and Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan, saying "people like them have made even COVID-19 a Muslim". "Brokers like Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi a nd Arif Mohammad Khan explain what happens in Markaz Nizamuddin [a centre run by Tablighi Jamaat] and who is maulana Saad Saheb, a senior citizen, who works as a prophet of peace and love all over the world. People like these have made even corona a Muslim," Mr. Khan said in a tweet in Hindi.

DMC issues notice to DU V-C over hate post

NEW DELHI

Taking note of a 'hate post' on Facebook by a group, "Delhi University Teachers", the Delhi Minorities Commission on Thursday issued a notice to the university's Vice-Chancellor. The notice stated that it was surprised that some teachers were "spewing venom against the Muslim community saying that they should be put in gas chambers and that doctors should not treat them".

DUTA criticises online education move

NEW DELHI

The Delhi University Teachers' Association on Thursday hit out at the online education move, calling it "insensitive". Colleges had been asked to give details over online education during the lockdown. They alleged that some teachers had been told to provide such information, through threats and coercive methods.

Two succumb to COVID-19 in city

108 out of the 2,346 people evacuated from Tabligh centre test positive: CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday said that two people who had tested positive for COVID-19 after being evacuated from the Tablighi Jamaat headquarters in Nizamuddin died. This takes the count of people who have died due to the disease in the Capital to four.

Mr. Kejriwal said that out of the 2,346 people evacuated from the Tablighi Jamaat centre, 108 have tested positive for COVID-19 and warned that the numbers may shoot up in the Capital in the coming days as the government has decided to test 536 more people who were evacuated and admitted in the hospital.

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

The Chief Minister added that a total of 2,943 people have been quarantined by the government out of which 1,810 are from the markaz (centre) at Nizamuddin and 1,133 are travellers. As many as 21,307 people, he said, have been advised home quarantine, he said.

Speaking about the government's plans to ensure that nobody is hungry in the city due to the shutdown of non-essential services, Mr. Kejriwal said, over six lakh people were provided lunch and dinner for free on Wednesday at various hunger relief centres set up by the government. He said that the government has the capacity to scale it up to 10 lakh meals, if the need arises. He added that efforts are being made to open more camps so that people do not have to walk too far to get food.

Mr. Kejriwal said that for the past couple of days, he had been receiving requests from drivers of public transport vehicles to provide some assistance to them to deal with the lockdown.

Financial assistance

The Chief Minister announced that the government would provide a financial assistance of ₹5,000 to each driver of public service vehicles like autorickshaws, taxis, e-rickshaws, Gramin Sewa vehicles, RTVs and other such vehicles that could not ply due to the lockdown. However, He added that it would take a while for the money to reach them as the government did not have their bank account numbers on record and was trying to work out a solution.

Delhi sees biggest single-day jump in COVID-19 patients

As many as 141 test positive; 129 are from Nizamuddin centre

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Two deaths and 141 new COVID-19 cases were reported in Delhi on Thursday, taking the total number of deaths to four and total cases to 293, an increase of 92.7% compared to Wednesday, according to the Delhi government.

COVID-19

This is the biggest single-day jump in the city so far. Of the 141 new COVID-19 positive cases on Thursday, 129 are from a centre run by Tablighi Jamaat in Nizamuddin, which was evacuated by the authorities. A total of 182 people from the centre tested positive for COVID-19 in Delhi alone. Till Wednesday, which had recorded the previous biggest single-day leap, Delhi had only 152 cases.

Steeper graph

According to officials, the number of single-day cases is expected to surge as a majority of the people evacuated from the centre, who are admitted in hospitals, are testing positive.

As many as 2,346 people were evacuated and 536 of them sent to hospitals and 1,810 to quarantine facilities in an operation which concluded in the early hours of Wednesday, as per Delhi government's statistics. Of the total 293 cases, eight people have been discharged from the hospitals. Also, a total of 3,075 people are in various quarantine facilities across the city.

Isolation ward

Meanwhile, New Delhi Municipal Council has set aside six beds in an isolation ward specially created for any emergency at Charak Palika Hospital in Moti Bagh.

Person evacuated from Nizamuddin attempts to kill self

Delhi govt. asks for adequate police force in hospitals, quarantine facilities

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Thursday informed the Delhi Police that one person evacuated from the Tabligh centre in Nizamuddin attempted to take own life at a city hospital on Wednesday.

"Medical Superintendents of designated COVID-19 hospitals reported that patients, particularly those transferred from Markaz (centre), are creating law and order problem and commotion in hospitals which is becoming difficult for the hospital staff to handle," Secretary of Health and Family Welfare Department of the Delhi government, Padmini Singla, said in a letter to Delhi Police Commissioner, S.N. Shrivastava.

"In another incident two inmates quarantined in Narela DDA quarantine facility escaped and were later tracked down in Patparganj," the letter said.

She also requested Mr. Shrivastava to deploy adequate police force in all quarantine facilities and hospitals.

A total of 2,346 people were evacuated from the centre and 536 of them were sent to hospitals and 1,810 were sent to quarantine facilities, according to the Delhi government.

A large number of people had attended a religious congregation at the centre in mid-March and till now 108 people from the centre have been tested positive for COVID-19 and two of them have died so far just in Delhi alone.

Tablighi Jamaat office-bearers wilfully allowed gathering: FIR

Seven persons mentioned in the FIR told to join investigation

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

The FIR against the Delhi head of the Tablighi Jamaat centre, Maulana Mohammed Saad, and six other office-bearers charges them with "deliberately and wilfully" allowing a huge gathering on the premises that threatened the lives of inmates.

The FIR, registered on March 31 at the Crime Branch police station in Pushp Vihar on the complaint of the SHO of Nizamuddin police station, states that the centre violated lockdown orders and did not maintain social distancing during the COVID-19 outbreak in the city.

It states that the building was inspected by the Defence Colony Sub-Divisional Magistrate from March 26 to 30 and the occupants in the building were found violating social distancing rules and not using hand sanitisers and face masks to protect themselves and others from infection. The SDM found around 1,300 people, including foreign nationals, residing in it.

In his complaint, the SHO of Nizamuddin police station mentioned that on March 21, the authorities of Jamaat centre were contacted by Delhi Police and reminded about the March 16 Delhi government order prohibiting any political or religious gathering of more than 50 people.

The Jamaat was directed to send the foreign delegates to their congregation back to their respective countries and Indians to their respective cities. However, the FIR states, no one paid any heed to the direction of Delhi Police.

"On March 24 a meeting was held at Hazrat Nizamuddin police station between the SHO and officer-bearers of Tablighi Jamaat," the FIR also states.

The FIR also refers to an audio recording purportedly of Maulana Saad in circulation on WhatsApp on March 21, in which the speaker is heard asking his followers to defy the lockdown and social distancing and to attend religious gatherings of the organisation.

Data mining

A Delhi Police officer said extensive data mining has been carried out to identify each individual who attended the religious congregation or stayed in the building.

"We are preparing the list of their contacts and of those they met. We are preparing the profile of each individual and sharing it with the State police concerned. Most of the people who attended the congregation went back either by bus or train," said the officer.

Notices served

He added that they have served notices to all seven persons mentioned in the FIR to join the investigation.

In a press release issued on Tuesday, the Tablighi Jamaat said that the ongoing programme at Nizamuddin markaz (centre) was discontinued immediately when the Prime Minister announced the 'Janata Curfew' for March 22.

"However, due to the sudden cancellation of rail services across the country on March 21, 2020, a large group of visitors who had to depart by way of railways got stuck on the markaz premises," it said.

DCW seeks details on lockdown in brothels

It cites poor living conditions in the area

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) on Thursday issued notice to the Delhi Police seeking information pertaining to the condition of women residing in GB Road. Citing lack of hygiene and poor living conditions in the area, the panel also sought details of whether social distancing was being practised there and the steps taken by the police to enforce the lockdown.

In a statement issued, the DCW said, "The police administration has been questioned regarding the adherence of social distancing norms in G.B. Road during the lockdown and the provision of food and personal hygiene items to these women. The Delhi Police has also been asked specifically to inform the commission, about detailed steps taken to enforce the lockdown."

The DCW has asked the force to respond by April 6.

JNU students allege assault by guards

'Teachers, students violating guidelines'

SPECIAL CORESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The students and teachers of JNU on Thursday alleged that the university's guards, in the guise of providing security during the lockdown, resorted to beating up students who were facing "genuine grievances".

The JNUSU said on March 31 and April 1, the guards assaulted students. "In the first case, the administration refused to provide shelter to a stranded woman student who pleaded that she was ready to go into isolation and have medical check-ups. In the second one, a student, who had complied with notified requirement of obtaining written permission of the warden to leave campus, was assaulted by guards at the main gate and is admitted at AIIMS," the students said. JNU Registrar said: "It is highly unsafe that a handful of JNU students and teachers are violating the guidelines issued by the government..."

3 foreigners who visited Nizamuddin centre test positive for COVID-19

Administration declares five villages as 'containment zone'; sarpanches have been suspended for concealing information

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

Three Bangladeshi nationals, who had visited the Nizamuddin Tabligh centre this past month, tested positive for COVID-19 in Palwal here on Thursday. The district administration has declared five villages as "containment zone" following the test results and suspended the sarpanches for concealing information about them.

The Delhi police have put barricades at Nizamuddin.
▪ R.V. MOORTHY

Besides, 109 more people who visited the Nizamuddin Tabligh centre were traced from different parts of the district late on Wednesday. The samples of 43 of them have been taken and they have been kept at isolation wards. The rest have been sent to quarantine centres.

Chief Medical Officer, Palwal, Brahmdeep Singh, told *The Hindu* that 12 people, 10 of them Bangladeshi nationals, were brought to hospital by the local police from a mosque in a village on March 31. They all had participated at a programme at Nizamuddin Tabligah centre and their samples were taken. "Three of them have tested positive. They are kept at isolation ward," said Mr. Singh. He said these people had visited as many as 201 houses in five different villages. "The residents of these houses have been told to practice home quarantine and their houses stamped," said Mr. Singh.

An FIR under different IPC sections has also been registered against the 12 people at Hathin police station for not informing the local administration about their visit.

Deputy Commissioner Naresh Narwal declared the five villages, falling in Hathin block, as "containment zone" and the six adjoining districts as "buffer zone". The Sarpanches of these villages have been suspended and show-cause notices served to the nambardars and chowkidars for hiding the information about the visit of the foreigners. Also, the Duty Magistrate of Hatin block has been asked to explain the failure on his part.

In neighbouring Nuh, as many as 191 people from Nizamuddin Tabligh centre have been traced and the samples of nine of them taken.

Meanwhile, a 67-year-old resident of Ambala, a COVID-19 patient, died at a hospital in Chandigarh. However, the result of his test was received after his death. CMO, Ambala, Kuldeep Singh, said the elderly was admitted to Chandigarh after severe respiratory infection and had a history of diabetes and cardiac surgery. He had organised a function at his house on March 20 inviting several NRI friends.

Mr. Singh said samples of ten people, including the family of the deceased, were taken.

TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT
Mr. N SELVA KUMAR
PH: 9820350726
selvakumar.n@thehindu.co.in
Mr. MANOJ KUMAR KUSHWAHA
PH: 9999490055
manoj.kushwaha@thehindu.co.in
THE HINDU
India's National Newspaper

Trapped migrants in Capital long to be back with their families

Workers forced to stay in cramped rooms with little ration

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

Seven to eight people cramped in a small room with little or no ventilation, nor proper space to cook and nowhere to go for 21 days, the migrant workers in Delhi, who missed the first wave of exodus to their home town and villages, yearns to be back with their families.

The countrywide restrictions imposed on movement of people due to the COVID-19 pandemic also meant that the migrant workers in Delhi are forced to stay indoors in debilitating conditions.

Mr. Sunil Kumar, who hails from Purnia district in Bihar, said he has been staying with seven other fellow migrant workers in a small room in a multistorey building in west Delhi's Tilak Nagar area. "I don't know what is happening. I just want to go home, where at least I can be with my family and have some freedom of movement," Kumar said.

No work, no income

A construction worker, Kumar is one of the hundreds migrant workers in the area who leads a hand-to-mouth life. For us 'no work mean no income', he said, stressing that they have very little money left to even go back home. "The moment, the lockdown restriction are lifted, I am heading back to my village," he said.

In east Delhi Mandawali, Biju Rai has similar stories of overcrowded rooms filled with migrants workers. Rai, born in Vaishali district in Bihar, said he himself was sharing a small room with six other people.

"We don't have any work. Everything is closed. There is no ration left. Even for food we have to go to a local dharmshala or school and wait in line with 400 other people," Rai said.

Many workers in Mayapuri stay back for salaries

They hope to resume work on April 14

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

While many factory workers, who were staying in the jhuggis of Mayapuri Industrial Area, have already left for their hometowns, the others who stayed back are awaiting their salaries and hope to resume work once the lockdown ends on April 14.

Shankar Ram from Bihar's Muzaffarpur, who works at an idol-making factory, said he did not get his monthly salary of ₹8,000.

"I got ₹1,000 advance after which there was no word from the employer. On Wednesday, we were informed that we should go outside the factory on April 8 to collect the money," he said.

"I am not going to the village because the word around is that the factories will reopen on April 15," he added.

The jhuggi residents said since they don't have any toilets nearby, they go to a park for the same but now that too has become a problem.

"Civil Defence Officials with sticks in their hands are taking tours on bikes. They start harassing even when we go to the toilets. They don't believe us," said Prakash from Azamgarh, another worker.

CORRIGENDUM

In view of the prevailing situation arising due to outbreak of novel coronavirus (COVID-19), the process regarding appointment to the one post of Peon in Ambala Sessions Division is hereby postponed. Further information will be published through the same mode.

Sd/-
District and Sessions Judge,
Ambala.

एसजेवीएन लिमिटेड
(भारत सरकार और हिमाचल प्रदेश सरकार का एक संयुक्त उपक्रम)
SJVN LIMITED
(A Joint Venture of Govt. of India & Govt. of H.P.)
A MINI RATNA and Schedule 'A' PSU
CIN - L40101HP1988 GOI 008409

PCD-2616 CORRIGENDUM-I

The last date of uploading, downloading and opening of e-tender No. PCD-2616 for **"General Routine Repair and Maintenance including Addition, Alteration & new works of 22 KV Overhead H.T. lines, 415V L.T. lines, street lights, 22/0.4KV Sub-stations, DG Sets, E.I. of residential and non-residential buildings, EPABX/P&T lines & OFC communication network Rampur to Jhakri & other places and Electrical commercial & Billing work at NJHPS, Jhakri, Jeori & Kotla for one (01) year"** is hereby extended as under:-

Last date and time of downloading of bids	: 21.04.2020 upto 12:00 hrs.(IST)
Last date and time of uploading of duly filled bids	: 22.04.2020 upto 13:00 hrs.(IST)
Date and time of opening of bids	: on 22.04.2020 at 14:00 hrs.(IST).

All other terms and conditions shall remain unchanged.
Amendment(s), if any, shall be issued on **www.sjvn.nic.in, https://sjvn.abcprocure.com** & **www.eprocure.gov.in** only.

Dy. General Manager(P&C),
NJHPS Jhakri, Distt. Shimla (HP).

SAVE ENERGY FOR THE BENEFIT OF SELF & NATION

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY
E-Tendering Tender Notice

Opened E-tender based on two Packet system (Technical & Financial bid) (Tender Notice No. **M/C&W/43/2019-20 dt. 30.03.2020**) are invited by Divisional Rail Manager/Mech./C&W/Varanasi/N.E. Railway for and on behalf of President of India for following work:–**Description of works:** Out sourcing of comprehensive Housekeeping and mechanized cleaning at Ballia (BUI) station including platforms, yard, washable aprons, tracks, office buildings, reservation office, concourse area, circulating area, waiting halls, washing pit and depot premises, Drains Cleaning, Garbage disposal and Rag Picking etc. and Mechanized Cleaning (Interior & Exterior), watering and padlocking in 19 coaches along with upper gear passenger amenity maintenance work on pit lines and mechanized cleaning (interior Clg.) watering padlocking in approx 21 coaches daily of platform return/RBPC trains (M/Exp.) Trains along with dry sweeping, watering, padlocking in approx. 33 coaches daily of platform return/RBPC passenger trains at BUI station for the period of four years. **Approx. Value:** ₹ 6,77,82,928.56, **EMD Money:** ₹ 4,88,900/-, **Cost of tender forms:** ₹ 10,000/-, **Completion period from the date of commencement of work:** 04 Years, **Validity of offer:** 180 days. Date and time of closing of E-Tender: **08.05.2020** at **14.30 Hrs.** Date and time of opening of E-Tender: **08.05.2020** at **15.00 Hrs.**
• Tenderers may submit their offers online up to **08.05.2020** at **14.30 Hrs.**
• Pl. go to the website **www.ireps.gov.in** to see the complete details and upload the tender.

Sr. DME/C&W
CPRO/Mech-4 Varanasi

About any passenger amenity complain SMS on Mobile No. 09794845955

"DO NOT TRAVEL WITH INFLAMMABLE ARTICLE IN TRAIN"

AMU circular over Tablighi Jamaat issue

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

As a countrywide search for persons who participated in the congregation of Tablighi Jamaat in Delhi is on, Aligarh Muslim University has issued a circular advising those who participated in the Ijtima to present themselves for testing.

In a separate incident, a rumour spread that a person was found infected with COVID-19 in Aligarh.

Sources in Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College and Hospital said a person from Akrabad area of the district who participated in the congregation of Tablighi Jamaat in Delhi was tested.

"The cumulative report of Aligarh man is negative, it will be tested again after 24 hours," a university spokesman said.

COVID-19 count in M.P. breaches 100 mark, two deaths reported

Three more from same house in Indore test positive, toll goes up to 8 in the State

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

A man and a woman from Indore died of COVID-19 on Thursday morning, taking the toll owing to the illness to five in the city. Whereas the State reported nine new cases during the day, said Health Principal Secretary Pallavi Jain Govil.

Late night, Bhopal reported four new cases. The State count stands at 111.

Among the new cases reported on Thursday, seven are from Indore and two from Morena, according to the State Health bulletin. This takes the count in Indore to 82.

"There has been an improvement in the condition of 30 patients, and they'll be in a condition to be discharged within a day or two when their second test turns out to be negative," she said, adding that one patient was in a critical condition and under observation.

A fruit-seller on a deserted street in Bhopal. • A.M. FARUQUI

The Bhopal administration said four members of the Tablighi Jamaat tested positive. While one person is from the Ivory Coast, two are from Myanmar and one from Odisha.

Indore reported 12 new cases on Wednesday night, according to the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Medical College, Indore.

No travel history

Among the deceased, the man, aged 54, and the woman, 65, didn't have a contact or a travel history. While no new patient from Indore has a travel history, just one case has had a confirmed contact with an infected person even as health officials scramble to zero in on the source in Indore.

Eight patients in the State have succumbed to the illness so far.

Among the new cases, three men aged 21, 22 and 44 live at the same address in Tanzim Nagar as the nine persons, including two toddlers, who tested positive for the disease on Tuesday night.

"The deceased woman had co morbidities of diabetes and hypothyroidism. She had a clinical history of cough, fever and weakness," said Rahul Rokade of the college.

A resident of Moti Tabela, the man died at 10 a.m. on Thursday and had breathlessness for the past two and fever for 15 days.

One virus death in Rajasthan

13 new cases, including two who attended Tabligh meet

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

An 85-year-old man from Alwar, who had tested COVID-19 positive and was admitted to Sawai Man Singh Government Hospital here two days ago, died on Thursday. Thirteen more cases of patients infected with COVID-19, including three who attended a Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Delhi, were detected, taking the tally in Rajasthan to 115.

Additional Chief Secretary (Medical & Health) Rohit Kumar Singh said the octogenarian man from Alwar was suffering from brain haemorrhage when he was admitted to S.M.S. Hospital on Tuesday evening. "He was a known case of brain stroke paralysis," he said.

This is the third death related to the virus infection in the State, though the heath officials maintain that the deceased had succumbed to complicated medical conditions caused by other illnesses. Two COVID-19 positive persons earlier died in Bhilwara, while one of them was in a state of coma even when he tested positive.

Women police squad in action in Jaipur on Thursday. • PTI

Earlier, an Italian tourist – who was the first confirmed COVID-19 patient in the State – died of heart failure in a private hospital here after he had recovered from the infection with treatment.

Seven of the cases reported on Thursday were from the Ramganj area in the curfew-bound Walled City of Jaipur, which has become a hotspot for the COVID-19 cases. Two were from Jodhpur and one each was from Jhunjhunu, Dholpur, Bharatpur and Udaipur, according to the Health Department.

The Walled City in Jaipur remained completely sealed for the second consecutive day, as the administration announced that it was an important measure to break the chain of virus transmission.

No migrants issue in Punjab: CM

'Industry directed to absorb stranded labourers in the State'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Thursday said that the State did not have a migrants issue in the light of the COVID-19 lockdown, as he had directed the industry to absorb all such labourers stranded in the State.

"Extensive arrangements had been made by the State government to provide shelter and food to the migrant labourers, who could not leave the State in view the nationwide restrictions and sealing of borders," said Capt. Amarinder during a Congress Working Committee meeting, presided by party president Sonia Gandhi and held through videoconferencing.

CM Amarinder Singh

In response to the concern expressed by Ms. Gandhi on the arrangements for farmers in view of the onset of the harvesting season, the Chief Minister said all arrangements were being made to ensure smooth operations, with strict maintenance of social distancing protocols in the Mandis. The State had also urged the central government to incentivise farmers to go in for staggered transportation of the grain to the mandis.

Briefing the party chief about the current situation in Punjab, which has a large NRI population, the Chief Minister said the State had so far been able to contain the spread of the disease through intensive tracing and surveillance.The Punjab government was also preparing to deal with the eventuality of the disease acquiring larger epidemic proportions by May or June.

The Chief Minister also told the CWC that it was not receiving its GST share from the Centre, which was causing serious financial problems.

Pandemic may be last nail in Assam industrial town's coffin

Confusion with Bangladesh's Noakhali made British rename Naukhola as Jagiroad, 60 km from Guwahati

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

The COVID-19 pandemic could be the last nail in the coffin of an Assam industrial town the British had renamed nine decades ago because of confusion with Noakhali in Bangladesh.

Residents fear Jagiroad, hit by a "business-stealing highway" and death of the industrial units, could soon become a ghost town after three locals out of 16 in Assam tested COVID-19 positive, forcing the local authorities to seal the town and adjoining the villages.

Jagiroad, about 60 km east of Guwahati, grew up as an industrial centre after the public-sector Assam Spun Silk Mill was set up in 1962. A cooperative jute mill, a polyester spinning mill and a cooperative sugar mill followed before Hindustan Paper Corporation's Nagaon Paper Mill became the town's marque plant in 1985.

The closed Nagaon Paper Mill in Jagiroad. • RITURAJ KONWAR

The industrial clout made Jagiroad a popular pit stop for travellers between Guwahati and Kaziranga National Park and beyond in the Northeast. Rows of restaurants and dhabas along National Highway 37 barely managed to cater to the demand.

The scenario began changing as the industrial units closed one after the other because of poor management, issues of raw material and marketing. The transformation of the highway into a expressway enabling high-speed travel to next destination Nagaon made many eateries close shop.

"Jagiroad derived its name from Jagi village about 9 km away, where the first school of Morigaon district was established in 1933. But the place used to be called Naukhola until the British rulers changed the name to Jagiroad in the 1930s because of confusion," said Tarun Talukdar, a cultural activist and retired principal of Jagi Higher Secondary College.

The British, he added, were forced to rename the place as cargo destined for Noakhali, now in Bangladesh, would at times reach Naukhola and vice versa.

Jagiroad had earned the tag of Northeast's dried fish hub before the industries came. Munin Borthakur, who set up the first wholesale dried fish business in the mid-1950s, said long-term shutdowns including those during the Assam Agitation of 1979-1985 hardly impacted the market.

'Backbone broken'

"We understand this lockdown is to keep the deadly virus from infecting us. But it has already come closer home, and getting over the stigma would take a long time for traders, many of whose backbones had already been broken by dipping commercial graph of the town," Mr Borthakur told *The Hindu*.

Market Info | A Business Initiative

NALCO CLOCKS ALL TIME HIGH PRODUCTION OF BAUXITE AND ALUMINA

Nalco has recorded an all-round success in bauxite and alumina productions in the Fiscal 2019-20. With more than 100% capacity utilisation, NALCO's Panchpatmali mines achieved bauxite production of 73.02 lakh MT, which is highest ever since company's inception. Bauxite transportation has gone up to 73.02 lakh MT, which is also highest ever so far. The company's Alumina Refinery has produced highest-ever 21.61 lakh MT of Alumina Hydrate and set a new record. Steam & Power Plant (SPP) of Alumina Refinery has also achieved highest ever net power generation. Attributing this record performance to the teamwork and dedication of employees, Shri Sridhar Patra, CMD, NALCO said, "In the on-going sluggish metal market, we would be able to tide over the downturn by continuing to keep our focus on overall performance".

ECOR SETS RECORD IN FREIGHT LOADING

East Coast Railway has set a new record by loading 200 MT of freight from its jurisdiction in 2019-20 as against 191.76 MT loaded in previous financial year. ECoR has achieved the number one position in freight loading, freight earning and overall earnings in Indian Railways in 2019-20 financial year. From earning, ECoR has earned rupees 20125 Crores from freight in 2019-20 financial year as against rupees 18180 crores carried in last financial year with an increase of 11%. ECoR attributes this credit to the hardworking and dedicated staff in all the three divisions.

COVID-19 HOSPITAL BECOMES OPERATIONAL IN KIMS

A 500-bedded Odisha COVID-19 Hospital managed and run by Kalinga Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS), Bhubaneswar has become operational from 2nd April 2020. The Govt. of Odisha is financing the equipment and operational costs through the CSR policy of OMC. Odisha COVID-19 Hospital has been set up under a tripartite agreement among Govt. of Odisha, KIMS and OMC. Shri Naveen Patnaik, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Odisha declared the hospital operational in the presence of Dr. Achyuta Samanta, Founder, KIIT & KISS; Dr. Subrat Acharya, Pro-Chancellor, KIIT Deemed to University and Dr. Bishnu Prasad Panigrahi, CEO, KIMS. The Odisha COVID Hospital has 500-bed infrastructure, including 50 critical care beds. It is well-equipped with latest instruments and other facilities.

ECOR ENSURES UNINTERRUPTED SUPPLY OF ESSENTIALS

Keeping in view the essential of food grains, coal and petroleum products, East Coast Railway has taken a 21-day challenge ensuring uninterrupted supply of coal to different power houses across the country along with food grains, petroleum products and other essential commodities. In the first eight days of the lockdown period, i.e. from 22nd to 29th March, 2020; altogether 1012 trains of essential commodities have been transported from East Coast Railway jurisdiction.

Policemen assaulted in U.P. village

They had gone to enforce lockdown; five persons arrested

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

Two policemen, including a sub-inspector, were injured in Morna village of Muzaffarnagar on Wednesday evening when they went to enforce the lockdown. The injured have been admitted to a Meerut hospital, police said.

Five persons, including two women and a former pradhan, have been arrested.

According to official sources, a team from the Bhopa police station went to Karhera road near Morna village where some villagers had assembled.

Stone-pelting

When the police tried to disperse them, they pelted stones at the policemen in which Sub-Inspector Lekhraj Singh and constable Ravi Kumar were injured.

A local source said it has been difficult to enforce lockdown in rural areas of Muzaffarnagar.

"The incident happened near the residence of former pradhan Nahar Singh. His family members were standing on the road. When the police to enforce the lockdown, an argument ensued, leading to the attack on the policemen," said the source.

Haryana Roadways bus driver allegedly beaten by U.P. police

He was taking migrants to Gorakhpur on govt. orders

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

A Haryana Roadways bus driver, who was asked to drop migrants returning home during the lockdown against COVID-19, was allegedly thrashed by Uttar Pradesh police on the outskirts of Lucknow for merely asking directions.

Khurshid Ahmed was taking the migrants to the eastern district of Gorakhpur after picking them up in Ghaziabad, where they had assembled in large numbers. He had driven to Ghaziabad and to Gorakhpur from the Palwal bus depot in Haryana on the instructions of the local administration.

After reaching Lucknow via Bareilly around midnight on March 30, Mr. Ahmed stopped near the Barabanki Chowk to confirm from the policemen stationed there if he was on the correct route to Gorakhpur.

"I didn't know the way, so I had to ask around. This is not our usual route," he told *The Hindu* on phone.

'Hit with lathis'

Mr. Ahmed said that when he asked the policemen about the route to Gorakhpur, he was abused and accused of violating the lockdown. When he raised an objection and pointed out that he had driven on the orders of the government, he alleged, a policeman asked him to step down and started hitting him, while another policemen who was behind him hit him on his back with a lathi.

Mr. Ahmed said he was kicked and hit with lathis by several policemen, including an inspector. "After that, the Inspector asked me to get lost and when I started climbing into the bus, they hit me again from behind. I fell on the ground. They kicked me while I was lying on the ground and one of them hit me once again when I tried to climb back into the bus."

The driver stated that he struggled to sit properly while driving to Gorakhpur and then back to Palwal due to the pain and swelling, mostly in the lower part of his body especially hamstrings.

PMGSY

Chief Engineer (Shimla Zone),
HPPWD Nirman Bhawan Nigam Vihar,
Shimla H.P. 171002

UNDER PRADHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJANA (PMGSY)
e-Procurement Notice

The Government of India has received a loan/ credit number "IBRD-88640" under PMGSY-II (Rural Road Project-II) under World Bank Funding (Additional Financing & Green & Climate Resilience) Rural Roads Financing towards the cost of Rural Roads Project (Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana-II) and intends to apply a part of the funds to cover eligible payments under the contracts for construction of RRP-II works. Bidding is open to all bidders from eligible source countries as defined in the bidding document.

The Superintending Engineer 11th Circle HPPWD Rampur District Shimla HP -172001 on behalf of Governor Himachal Pradesh invites the item rate bids in electronic tendering system for construction of roads under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana-II (Batch-I) of 2019-20 in the district of Shimla and Kinnaur as detailed in the Table below from the eligible contractors registered with HPPWD/ CPWD/P&T, Railways/ other State Govt./ Central Govt. agencies. Non-registered bidders may submit bids; however, the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authorities before signing the contract.

Sr. No	Name of Distt.	Package No.	Name of work	Period of construction in Days	Estimated Cost		Total Cont	Bid security	Cost of form
					Const. part Rs.	Maint. part Rs.			
1.	Shimla	HP-09-665	Up-gradation of road Baragaon to Machinekhad road Km 0/000 to 21/500 (Portion Km 0/000 to 5/000 and 18/000 to 21/500	365	60065426	4817601	64883627	1298000	5000
2.	Shimla	HP-05-59	Upgradation of link road from Karcham to Reckong Peo Km 0/000 to 11/635	365	82704360	7744114	90448474	1809000	5000

Other details can be seen in the bidding documents. The Employer shall not be held liable for any delays due to system failure beyond its control. Even though the system will attempt to notify the bidders of any bid updates, the Employer shall not be liable for any information not received by the bidder. It is the bidders' responsibility to verify the website for the latest information related to the tender.

Date of release of Invitation for Bids through e-procurement: 07th April 2020.

The technical bid shall be opened in the office of Superintending Engineer, 11th Circle, HPPWD, Rampur Bushahr on 04.05.2020. The bidders are required to submit (a) original demand draft towards the cost of bid document and (b) original bid security in approved form and (c) original affidavit regarding correctness of information furnished with bid document as per provisions of Clause 4.4 B (ii) of ITB with Concerned Executive Engineer, HPPWD, on a date not later than two working days after the opening of technical qualification part of the Bid, either by registered post or by hand, failing which the technical bids shall be declared non-responsive.

Last Date/ Time for receipt of bids through e-procurement: 02nd May 2020 upto 1700 Hours and will be opened on 04th May 2020 at 1100 hours.

The Financial bids shall be opened in the office of Chief Engineer (Shimla Zone) HPPWD Shimla (Date and Time shall be intimated).

For further details please log on to http://pmgsytenders.gov.in.

The Government has enhanced the tendering limit of Class-B contractors from Rs. 2.00 crore (Two crore) to Rs. 5.00 crore (Five crore) only for PMGSY works.

The undersigned has right to extend or cancel the tender without declaring any reasons thereof.

Superintending Engineer
11th Circle HPPWD.,
Rampur Bushahr
Distt. Shimla (HP)
Fax: 01782-233167
Tel: 01782-233044

HP/0009/20-21

Himachal Pradesh
Public Works Department

"CORRIGENDUM"

The following amendments are hereby made in respect of the online bid for the following works as advertised vide this office letter No.PW/KD/EA-I/Tender/2019-2020-20156-62 dated 27.02.2020 is hereby extended due to spread of COVID-19 (Corona virus).

1.	Name of work	Construction of Multi Purpose Bhawan of Deputy Commissioner office Kullu, District Kullu (H.P.) (SH:- Construction of Civil work, WS&SI and rain water harvesting system).
2.	Name of Division	Executive Engineer, Kullu Division HP.PWD, Kullu.
3.	Estimated Cost	Rs.1,65,60,626/-
4.	Bid Security/EDM	Rs.2,00,000/-
5.	Cost of Document	Rs.5,000/-
6.	Period of Completion	Two Years
7.	Starting date of downloading Bid.	13.04.2020
8.	Deadline for submission of Bid.	27.04.2020
9.	Eligible Class	A & B

Bidders documents can be downloaded from the website http:/…hptenders.gov.in. The documents downloaded from the site should not be tempered, and if any such tempering is detected before or after the opening of bids, the bidder shall be penalized and black listed.

Other terms and condition shall remain same as given in the bid document.

Terms & Conditions:-

Scanned copy of Registration/Enlistment with H.P.P.W.D. Deptt.
Scanned copy of PAN/TIN & Income Tax clearance certificate .
Scanned copy of Earnest Money and Cost of Form.
Scanned copy of work done certificate of similar nature of work.
Scanned copy of Affidavit regarding genuineness and correctness of document be attached.

DA/Nil.

Executive Engineer,
Kullu Division, HP.PWD,Kullu.
On behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh

HP/0015/20-21

Bail pleas not urgent during lockdown: HC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

The bail applications, appeals under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and the revisions and appeals with applications for suspension of sentence cannot be considered as the matters of extreme urgency when a lockdown was operative in the country to control the COVID-19 pandemic, the Rajasthan High Court has ruled.

The court directed the Registry to not list these applications in the category of "extremely urgent matters" during the lockdown period, while hearing the second bail application of an accused in a criminal matter. All such applications should be listed after the withdrawal of lockdown order , the court said.

Kerala seeks urgent import of testing kits

Pinarayi Vijayan draws PM's attention to workers in the Gulf; Jagan says salaries deferred in A.P.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/VIJAYAWADA

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday sought the help of the Centre to rush COVID-19 rapid testing kits from Hong Kong to Kerala.

During the video conference with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other State Chief Ministers, Mr. Vijayan said he had asked the Centre to ensure free movement of freight across States. He made an appeal for the country to stand united in the face of adversity and urged everyone to rise above partisan politics and parochial interests.

COVID-19

Mr. Vijayan drew the attention of the Centre to the situation of lakhs of Keralites in West Asia. A significant number lived in camp-like conditions there. The Indian embassies in the Gulf should secure space to quarantine and treat them if necessary. In response, Mr. Modi told the CM that he had conveyed the requirement to Indian embassies and also broached the matter with the regional heads of states.

Mr. Vijayan also urged the Centre to ensure the welfare of the large number of Malayali nurses abroad. The Centre should operate special trains for migrant workers in Kerala who wished to go to their home States after the lockdown ended. The State needed more funds to open COVID-19 hospitals and the Centre should raise its debt ceiling from 3% to 5%.

Mr. Vijayan said Mr. Modi was appreciative of the steps taken by Kerala.

The Centre had allotted ₹157 crore as disaster relief for the State.

He also called for online pooling of resources, including trucks, to harvest and move agricultural produce to processing centres, warehouses and markets.

'A.P. waging all-out war'

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy informed Mr. Modi during the videoconference that the State government had set up hospitals in Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada, Tirupati and Nellore with a total ICU bed strength of 444 and 2,012 non-ICU beds, exclusively for COVID-19 patients.

Besides, special arrangements were made in district hospitals with 622 ICU beds, 10,933 non-ICU beds and 20,000 beds kept ready to put people in isolation.

Mr. Jagan said a total of 27,876 returnees from abroad had been identified since February 10. Of them, 10,540 were from urban areas and 17,336 from villages. They had 80,896 contacts and all were being monitored.

Those who participated in the religious congregation at Nizamuddin were sent to quarantine and their contacts were being traced. About 1,085 persons had made the visit to the event.

The CM put the total number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 at 135 in Andhra Pradesh, including 91 persons who went to Nizamuddin and 20 who had contacts with them.

The government was following a cluster containment strategy and needed additional supplies of test kits and personal protection equipment, he said.

The State's finances had been severely hit due to the lockdown, as a result of which the government ordered deferment of salaries and other payments, Mr. Jagan said, urging Mr. Modi to note the tremendous pressure on revenue streams.

Karnataka moves SC against HC order to lift border curbs

Kerala High Court had told the State to lift road blockade

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Karnataka on Thursday challenged in the Supreme Court a Kerala High Court order on April 1 to remove the road blockade at the inter-State border to facilitate flow of vehicles carrying essential items and patients in the midst of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The special leave petition filed by Karnataka, represented by advocate Shubhranshu Padhi, said the border had been sealed to "combat the spread of the pandemic by preventing the movement of people from the bordering districts of Kerala to Karnataka."

The situation regarding coronavirus is "really dire," Karnataka said.

Opening the blockade now would cause a law and order issue within Karnataka as the local population wants the border sealed.

No entry: Karnataka said the restrictions were imposed to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The petition, seeking the immediate stay of the HC order, said Kerala is the "worst affected" State in the country with coronavirus cases. In this, Kasaragod, adjoining Karnataka, is the "worst -affected" district of Kerala with over a 100 positive cases.

"It is of grave importance that the affected districts be sealed and the pandemic be stopped from spreading to newer areas...," the petition said. This appeal has been filed even as the Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on April 3 a writ petition filed by Kasaragod MP Rajmohan Unnithan for an order to open the State border.

Mr. Unnithan said Karnataka's blockade is "ill-planned and dangerous" and has already led to the loss of lives. Two patients from Kerala, in need of urgent medical care, died after their ambulances were denied entry at the border by the Karnataka authorities.

Dishing out

Special offers: Policemen creating awareness on the impact of COVID-19 in Bengaluru; and, right, Kerala Civil Supplies Corporation staff members preparing special kits comprising 17 essential items to be distributed through its outlets in Kochi on Thursday. ▪V. SREENIVASA MURTHY & THULASI KAKKAT

HC stays Kerala govt. order on supply of liquor

'Unethical' move, contend petitioners

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court on Thursday stayed for three weeks a Government Order allowing sale of liquor to those suffering from withdrawal symptoms on the basis of a government doctor's prescription.

The Bench comprising Justice A.K. Jayasankaran Nambiar and Justice Shaji P. Chaly issued the stay order while admitting writ petitions filed by G.S. Vijayakrishnan, general secretary, Kerala Government Medical Officers' Association (KGMOA), and Congress leader T.N. Prathapan, MP, challenging the order.

When the petitions came up for hearing, counsel for the petitioners contended that the order was unethical and doctors could not be forced to prescribe alcohol for treating alcoholism.

State Attorney K.V. Sohan submitted that in States where liquor was banned, similar orders had been issued.

In fact, allowing those suffering from withdrawal symptoms to take liquor on a moderate scale was part of de-addiction treatment protocol. During the hearing, the court orally observed that the order was a recipe for disaster.

IN BRIEF

Tirumala priest complains against 'fake FB' account

TIRUMALA

Tirumala temple priest A.V. Ramana Dikshitulu has lodged a complaint with the police against a "fake Facebook account" created in his name. Mr. Dikshitulu said those involved in such acts were hurting the religious sentiments of the devout.

Karnataka govt. cancels exams for Classes 7 to 9

BENGALURU

The Karnataka government has announced that the final examinations for Classes 7, 8, and 9, which were scheduled to be held after April 14, have been cancelled. While State Board students in Classes 7 and 8 will be promoted without any condition, those in Class 9 will be evaluated based on their summative and formative assessments.

Russian, French nationals to be evacuated tomorrow

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Russian and French governments have stepped in to evacuate their nationals stranded in Kerala and Tamil Nadu following the ban on international flights to contain COVID-19 by operating chartered flights to Moscow and Paris on Saturday. The 210 Russians stranded in Kerala will be evacuated by a Ural Airline flight to Moscow from Thiruvananthapuram at 2 p.m.

Ramanavami rituals performed at Tirumala

TIRUMALA

Special rituals were performed for Sri Ramanavami inside the temple of Lord Venkateswara here on Thursday. After the completion of the daily rituals, the priests ceremoniously carried out 'Snapana Thirumanjanam' to the presiding deities.

Kerala govt. firm on 'salary challenge' for its employees

They have the option to pay it in 12 instalments

Congress flays move

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Curbs on salaries will become imperative if government employees refuse to cooperate with Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's call for a 'salary challenge', Finance Minister T.M. Thomas Isaac has said.

Dr. Isaac told reporters here on Thursday that disbursal of the salary for March had commenced as scheduled, but things may go awry in April if employees stonewalled the call for the 'salary challenge'. Priority is being accorded to distributing the salaries of health workers. Arrears due for various sections will be cleared as planned, but employees should compulsorily cooperate with the 'salary challenge', he said.

A contribution at their will would not suffice, he said, and clarified that his observation was based on previous experiences.

Unlike Maharashtra and Telangana, which are "revenue surplus" States, Kerala has not imposed any cut in salary, Dr. Isaac said, but in the current situation, when the State's revenue collection has dwindled, it will have to impose curbs if employees do not voluntarily contribute a month's salary, he said. As done earlier during floods, the employees could donate the salary in one tranche or could split it into 12 instalments, he said.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee president Mullappally Ramachandran on Thursday took strong exception to Finance Minister T.M. Thomas Isaac's announcement to impose curbs on the salary of government employees.

Mr. Ramachandran said financial indiscipline and splurge were the prime cause for the crisis for which Dr. Isaac and Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan should be blamed. The decision to collect a month's salary from employees facing hardships was unjustified, he said.

Nearly 1,000 people screened in Karnataka

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BENGALURU

Nearly 1,000 people from Karnataka, who are linked to Tablighi-Jamaat congregation in Delhi, have been screened following the inputs provided by the Centre and the police, and 11 have tested positive for COVID-19.

"Based on inputs given by the police and the Centre, nearly 1,000 people linked to Tablighi Jamat, Nizamuddin, have been screened by health department. Out of them six have been found symptomatic," Karnataka Health Commissioner Pankaj Kumar Pandey said in a statement.

"More than 200 swab samples have been drawn from them," he said.

"Tests are going on in labs, and out of nearly 100 preliminary test results, 11 from Bidar district have tested positive. Contact tracing and isolation works are already on," he said, adding that out of all identified Tablighi Jamaat members, 19 are foreigners.

Medical Education Minister K. Sudhakar said 31 persons were tested in Bengaluru and all results have come out negative.

77 Nizamuddin returnees identified in Anantapur

ANANTAPUR

More persons from Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh who attended the Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Hazrat Nizamuddin have been identified, taking the number to 77, the district administration said on Thursday. It said all of them have been brought to quarantine centres. Samples of 137 persons have been taken so far — 77 Nizamuddin returnees and 60 others.

Forest department comes to the rescue of tribals

It bought their products as part of a market intervention initiative to soften the lockdown impact

SARATH BABU GEORGE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

At a time when local economies have been reeling under the lockdown necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, tribal communities residing in forests and on its fringes in Thiruvananthapuram are a relieved lot.

Embarking on a market intervention initiative to cushion the impact of the slowdown, the Forest Department has begun to procure forest produce collected by the tribespeople of the Agasthyavanam Biological Park (ABP) and the Neyyar and Peppara forest ranges to be sold to commercial establishments and various collectives.

A centralised collection centre has been operationalised at Kottoor to segregate the produce prior to being transported to various places.

Helping hand: Agricultural produce gathered at a collection centre in Kottoor, Thiruvananthapuram. ▪SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The endeavour has come as a blessing to several families that stared at an uncertain future following the suspension of village markets, particularly at Kottoor, which functioned as a local commercial hub in the region.

Above market rates

The ambitious project, Vanika, formally launched by Chief Wildlife Warden Surendrakumar a day ago, is being undertaken by procuring perishables above the prevailing market rates.

The produce on offer during the initial days included various plantain varieties such as nendran, rasakadali and chenkadali (kappa pazham in local parlance), tapioca, long beans, wild honey, wild turmeric, areca nut, Malabar tamarind (kudampuli), cashew nut and coconut. The produce are being marketed through a WhatsApp group that includes entrepreneurs, social activists as well as techies' collectives who can place bulk orders online.

Scheme may be extended

Buoyed by the initial response, the department is toying with the idea of extending the scheme to other tribal regions in the State. "While we have envisaged the scheme as one for the lockdown period, the outcome could pave way for a long-term arrangement with an institutional mechanism," Mr. Surendrakumar said.

Thiruvananthapuram Wildlife Warden J.R. Ani said forest officers have been entrusted with collecting the produce, even from far-flung areas on jeeps and boats.

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 Friday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning and gusty winds likely at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura and with lightning at isolated places over south Chhattisgarh, Odisha and West Bengal.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	–	37.6	23.6
Ahmedabad	–	37.5	23.4
Aizawl	–	30.2	–
Allahabad	–	37.8	20.7
Bengaluru	–	35.8	22.0
Bhopal	–	–	19.0
Bhubaneswar	–	39.3	25.9
Chandigarh	–	29.0	15.7
Chennai	–	34.9	26.5
Coimbatore	–	37.8	23.8
Dehradun	–	29.0	14.6
Gangtok	47.0	19.6	9.5
Goa	–	33.5	24.8
Guwahati	–	35.9	17.4
Hubballi	–	38.0	24.0
Hyderabad	–	39.4	24.1
Imphal	–	31.0	12.8
Jaipur	–	33.2	18.0
Kochi	–	33.2	27.0
Kohima	–	23.5	12.2
Kolkata	–	36.7	24.5
Kozhikode	–	36.2	27.6
Kurnool	–	41.1	28.2
Lucknow	–	34.3	20.6
Madurai	–	38.2	25.1
Mangaluru	–	36.0	27.0
Mumbai	–	34.5	21.7
Mysuru	–	–	20.0
New Delhi	–	32.6	17.2
Patna	–	35.8	20.6
Port Blair	–	31.4	23.9
Puducherry	–	34.0	25.4
Pune	–	38.3	21.2
Raipur	–	38.7	24.6
Ranchi	–	35.7	19.8
Shillong	–	24.3	19.0
Shimla	–	20.6	8.2
Srinagar	–	15.7	4.2
Thiruvananthapuram	–	35.1	24.6
Tiruchi	–	38.5	24.4
Vijayawada	–	–	–
Visakhapatnam	–	33.1	27.6

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	23	.26	13	40	88	Good
Bengaluru	04	.20	23	65	–	Good
Chennai	03	.23	38	99	–	Good
Delhi	–	102	23	–	48	Moderate
Hyderabad	01	.26	22	118	96	Moderate
Kolkata	09	.19	22	83	63	Good
Lucknow	04	.12	45	155	–	Moderate
Mumbai	04	.17	13	42	92	Good
Pune	25	.09	50	31	30	Good
Visakhapatnam	08	.42	06	43	71	Good

Yesterday

In observation made at 6.00 p.m., Guwahati, Assam recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 288 indicating a moderate level of pollution. In contrast, Patiala, Punjab recorded a healthy AQI score of 26.

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

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

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

Safe forests, safe people

Destruction of forests sends wild animals, and the deadly viruses they carry, closer to humans

The rapid spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus across the world has focused attention on the seemingly invisible processes that help pathogens originally found in wild animals make the leap to humans. Diseases of animal origin such as Ebola, HIV, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, bird flu and swine flu have raised alarm over potential pandemics in recent years, and the COVID-19 pandemic has confirmed the worst fears of scientists. The contagion, thought to have originated in a wet market that kept live animals in Wuhan, China, points to many underlying factors: the destruction of forests and trapping or farming of wild species has brought these animals closer to humans, and the viruses they harbour find ready hosts in domestic animals, moving to humans. There is concern also about rising economic activity, such as road building and mining cutting through forests, bringing more people in close contact with animals. Another dimension is the global trade in wild species – in Wuhan, they reportedly ranged from wolf pups to rats, civets and foxes, among others – and their sale in markets along with domestic animals. The well-documented histories of the lethal Nipah and Hendra viruses, involving transfer from bats to pigs in the former, and bats to horses in the latter, underscore the value of maintaining viable ecosystems, and eliminating the need for wild bats to colonise human surroundings.

Biodiversity in forests harmlessly retains dangerous viruses and other pathogens among a vast pool of wild animals, away from people. What this phenomenon makes clear is that governments should stop viewing undisturbed landscapes as an impediment to economic growth. As COVID-19 has proved, these short-term high growth trajectories can come to an abrupt halt with a pandemic. Such a terrible outcome could be witnessed again, potentially caused by reckless exploitation of the environment. In spite of repeated warnings of crippling pandemics waiting in the wings, governments paid little attention. Now, a novel virus that can move effortlessly from human to human has found a large reservoir of hosts in a globalised world. Unlike previous epidemics, the latest one has extracted a staggering toll, killing people, forcing a lockdown and causing economic devastation. This should serve as a dire warning to the government that hasty permissions granted for new roads, dams, mines and power projects in already enfeebled forests can unleash more scourges. It would do well to roll back its dilution of the environmental clearance system, strengthen it with a mandate to the States, and leave protected areas to scientific experts. There is mounting evidence that environmental protection confers health protection. Pristine forests with diverse species keep viruses virtually bottled up, out of man's way. They should be left undisturbed.

Break from tradition

The cancellation of Wimbledon was inevitable, but fans and players will feel a void

A yellow ball glides past the net, the players grunt, the grass twitches and under azure blue skies, the applause from the stands ranges from the muted to the ecstatic. Wimbledon is tennis at its best, and it remains the sport's holy grail, blending history and nostalgia with a massive global fan base. There are the other Grand Slam Opens – French, U.S. and Australian – but Wimbledon towers above all. Geographically fused to London, Wimbledon's appeal is truly universal. It is a feel-good genie let loose every year during the British summer, while cricket provides an echo from Lord's and other grounds across England. Last year, while Wimbledon uncorked its magic at The Championships as it is formally called, the cricket World Cup raced towards its climax. It was a sporting high and life was good. But since then, much water has flowed down the Thames and humankind is at another point, struggling to cope with the coronavirus pandemic that brooks no borders, weakening bodies and even pausing the most elementary of courtesies – the good old handshake, as social distancing is the preventive norm. When life is in peril, indulgences vanish, albeit for a while, and close on the heels of the postponement of the Tokyo Olympics to next year, Wimbledon too bit the dust. The announcement on Wednesday evoked one word from Roger Federer: "devastated!"

The denouement wasn't a surprise and this perhaps is the new-normal where what is often taken for granted can no longer be presumed permanent. Still, this is heartbreak for the die-hards, who will be forced to discard their annual rituals specific to Wimbledon. The debates, about who is greater among Martina Navratilova, Steffi Graf and Serena Williams or reliving the fabled rivalries: Bjorn Borg and John McEnroe; Stefan Edberg and Boris Becker; Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi; and the current one among Federer, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic, can wait. Wimbledon had even elevated strawberries and cream into a rarefied zone and those pink-paper reports on how many kilograms were consumed near the courts, will also have to wait for another year. This might sound trivial, but to the centre court faithful, this was tradition not to be messed with, just like the all-white attire that players donned and the courtesy of taking a bow when royalty turned up in the audience. With the French Open rescheduled from May to September and the US Open authorities insisting that the event will stick to its August start, tennis fans have some room for hope. Still, Federer will be on the cusp of 40 when Wimbledon resumes next year and Serena would be 39. Will the legends last till then? Only time will tell.

Quarantine and the law

Courts have the power to review movement curbs during disease outbreaks, but have upheld them in public interest

L.S. SATHIYAMURTHY

It was about 196 years ago (1824) that the U.S. Supreme Court, in an *en banc* sitting led by Chief Justice John Marshall, affirmed the powers of the state to enact quarantine laws and impose health regulations. The world has since faced many health emergencies caused by dangerous diseases. This virus crisis is also not new.

Quarantine is considered the oldest mechanism to reduce the rapid spread of bacterial infections and viral onslaughts. It has been legally sanctioned by all jurisdictions in the world for the maintenance of public health and to control the transmission of diseases. Since ancient times, societies have practised isolation, and imposed a ban on travel or transport and resorted to maritime quarantine of persons.

These measures were often forcibly enforced to prevent or reduce the wider spread of disease and to safeguard the health of citizens not yet exposed to such diseases. In the list of diseases that may require quarantine, issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome that can go on to become pandemic has been recently added to the existing ones – cholera, diphtheria, infectious tuberculosis, plague, smallpox, yellow fever and viral hemorrhagic fever. It shows that quarantine is a medically accepted mode to reduce community transmission. However, a constructive alternative method of treating patients exposed to infectious diseases is the imperative need in the arena of public health.

'Trentino' to quarantine

The first law on medical isolation was passed by the Great Council in 1377, when the plague was rapidly ruining European countries. Detention for medical reasons was justified and disobedience made a punishable offence. The law prescribed isolation for 30 days, called a '*trentino*'. Subsequently, many countries adopted similar laws to protect the people. When the duration of isolation was enhanced to 40 days, the name also changed to 'quarantine' by adopting the Latin *quadraginta*, which referred to a 40-day detention placed on ships.

In common parlance, 'quarantine' and 'isolation' are used interchangeably, but they convey two different meanings and are two different mechanisms in public health practice. Quarantine is imposed to separate and restrict the movement of persons, who may have been exposed to infectious disease, but not yet known to be ill. But, isolation is a complete separation from others of a person known or reasonably believed to be infected with communicable diseases.

The current COVID-19 crisis, with its closure of shops, academic institutions and postponement of public examinations, has put the people in a *de facto* quarantine. Nonetheless, the question whether a public authority or state can promulgate an order for quarantine is a legal issue.

When an employee of the World Wildlife Federation was diagnosed with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) in 1990, he was terminated from service and detained for 64 days in quarantine-like isolation under Goa Public Health

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

(Amendment) Act, 1957 (GPH). The Bombay High Court (1990) felt that solitary detention was a serious infringement of basic human rights guaranteed to the individual, but held that under unusual situations and exceptional exigencies, such isolated detentions are justifiable for the cause of public health. Such isolation, undoubtedly, has several serious consequences. It is an invasion upon the liberty of a person. It can affect a person very adversely in many matters, including economic condition.

But in matters involving a threat to the health of the community, individual rights have to be balanced with public interest. In fact, individual liberty and public health are not opposed to each other but are well in accord. The reason assigned by the High Court to uphold the quarantine was that even if there was a conflict between the right of an individual and public interest, the former must yield to the latter.

In 2014, Kaci Hickox, a nurse and health worker who voluntarily rendered service to Ebola patients and returned to New Jersey, was quarantined in the U.S.. It was opposed by her peers serving in public health. But the dreadful consequences of the disease, and the possibility of its spreading at an alarming rate, made the forcible isolation rational and reasonable.

In India, the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, a law of colonial vintage, empowers the state to take special measures, including inspection of passengers, segregation of people and other special steps for the better prevention of the spread of dangerous diseases. It was amended in 1956 to confer powers upon the Central government to prescribe regulations or impose restrictions in the whole or any parts of India to control and prevent the outbreak of hazardous diseases. Quarantine is not an alien concept or strange action and it has been invoked several times during the bizarre situations caused by the cholera, smallpox, plague and other diseases in India.

Judicial review

The Director of World Health Organization (WHO) on March 30 determined that the outbreak of COVID-19 constitutes a public health emergency of international concern and issued interim guidance for quarantines of individuals. The guidance permitted the restriction of activities by separation of persons who are not ill, but who may have been exposed to an infectious disease within the legal framework of the International Health Regulations (2005). It also distinguished quarantine from isolation, which is the separation of ill or infected persons from others, so as to prevent this spread of infection or contamination. As per the WHO guidelines, possible quarantine settings are: hotels or dormitories and well-ventilated single rooms or homes, where a distance of at least one metre can be maintained from other members.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S., in its order on quarantine, expressly made it clear (Rule 9) that the people whose right is affected by an order of quarantine by a public health authority have the right to seek judicial review including the right to habeas corpus. Previously, it was in 1900, in response to an outbreak of bubonic plague, that an order of quarantine imposed on a Chinese citizen was struck down by the Federal Court in the U.S. because it was racially motivated and ill-suited to stop the outbreak. Therefore, courts have exercised their jurisdiction and powers to review and reverse quarantine orders.

The Supreme Court suo motu took cognisance of fears over the COVID-19 pandemic affecting overcrowded prisons in India, on March 16. The difficulties in observing social distancing among prison inmates, where the occupancy rate is at 117.6%, were highlighted and directions issued to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in prisons in India.

The setting up of isolation cells within prisons across Kerala, and the decision of the Tihar Jail authorities to screen new inmates and put them in different wards for three days are appreciated as reasonable preventive measures. Further, notices were issued to all States to deal with the present health crisis in prisons and juvenile observation homes.

Quarantine rooms may have strong closed doors or may be water and air tight compartments, but the rays of justice from the courtrooms have the powers to intrude in them. Of course, under the sun every object is subject to judicial review and quarantine orders are not exempted from it.

The author is the District Judge, serving in the special court for CBI cases in Chennai

Making the private sector care for public health

India needs a national policy providing for free testing and treatment of COVID-19 patients in private hospitals

RAMA V. BARU

As India enters the second week of a national lockdown imposed in response to COVID-19, it is still unclear how well prepared the healthcare system is in dealing with the pandemic. Given the resource constraints of both the Central and State governments, it is clear that government hospitals alone will not be able to manage the fallout. Moreover, even within the government system, tertiary care and public health are the weakest links.

A preparedness plan has to address all levels of care in terms of infrastructure, equipment, testing facilities and human resources in both the public and private sectors. However, so far, the Central and State governments have given little indication of bringing an increase in public expenditure on health. So, an already overburdened public health system will be unable to meet the increase in moderate and severe cases of COVID-19 that would require hospitalisation. While some individual private sector companies have come forward with offers of creating capacity and making it available to COVID-19 patients, there is a need for a comprehensive national policy to ensure that private healthcare capacity is made available to the public. Some States like Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh have already roped in the private sector to provide free treatment.

The government's silence

The governments at the Centre and in States have to take responsibility for providing universal health services free of charge and accessible to all. This will require governments to not just expand the capacity within the public sector, but also to tap into the available capacity in the private sector. Faced with a serious health emergency, the silence of the government on the expected role of the private sector is intriguing.

The National Health Authority has recommended that the testing and treatment of COVID-19 be included in the PM-Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) but this proposal is still awaiting clearance. The governance of the health service system is clearly fragmented and has created anxiety among the public. There is lack of a visible central command, which should be created under the supervision of the Union Health Minister, aided by a team of experts. They should be tasked to make policies as and when required and communicate them to State governments, taking

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

into account an evolving situation.

There have been some tentative measures taken by States to allow individuals seeking testing for COVID-19 to access private laboratories at subsidised rates. At present, the government has put a cap on the cost at ₹4,500 per test, which is a burden for even a middle class patient. The poor will clearly have no access to this and the government itself does not have adequate facilities to meet the increasing demand. It is here that the government needs to ensure that there is no cost to the patient.

At this point, and certainly before the lockdown is lifted, it is absolutely essential that adequate testing and quarantine facilities are created. The Central government has already taken over some private hotels to accommodate persons quarantined for COVID-19. One way of expanding such facilities would be for the government to 'take over' private corporate laboratories and hospitals for a limited period. A graduated approach to this is possible by asking tertiary private hospitals to create ICU facilities and isolation wards to care for the moderate and severe cases under the supervision of the government. The political directive for such a move needs to come from the Central government while ensuring that the Ministry of Health provides standard treatment protocols for health personnel.

The Spanish parallel

This may not be as impossible as it sounds. Consider the experience in Spain. The Spanish government issued an order bringing hospitals in the large private corporate sector under public control for a limited period. This tough decision was taken with the understanding that existing public healthcare facilities would not be able to cope with the sudden, if short-term, rise in COVID-19 cases.

In Britain, given the rise in the number of COVID-19 cases, the health workforce in the National Health Service has been under a lot of pressure. British trade unions have demanded that the government make the 8,000 beds in 570 private hospitals in the country available. They have argued that while beds in private hospitals are lying empty, there is severe shortage of beds in the public hospitals. The unions have also been critical of the U.K. government decision to rent these beds at an exorbitant cost to the exchequer.

In India, private corporate hospitals have, in the past, received government subsidies in various forms and it is now time to seek repayment from them. They are also well poised to provide specialised care and have the expertise and infrastructure to do so. So, why is it that the government does not deem it fit to bring them under public control? Does less government mean no accountability even amidst this humanitarian crisis? Is it that the overburdened public health service should be made to care for the rising number of needy patients, while most private hospitals remain reserved only those who can afford to pay?

The government may argue that treatment for COVID-19 has been included under Ayushman Bharat, and this will take care of the poor. But, what about the large, differentiated middle class, many of whom are employees in the services sector? They do not have secure employment, nor do they have insurance cover. Crisis situations help reveal deeper realities to societies. Universal public healthcare is essential not only to curb outbreaks, but also to ensure crisis preparedness and the realisation of the promise of right to health.

Rama V. Baru is Professor, Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health, Jawaharlal Nehru University

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.

To read more letters online, scan the QR code

Full disclosure

Indeed, the community leaders who organised the Nizamuddin event were irresponsible. It may even appear that it contributed significantly to increasing the total number of cases in India. However, it is far too early to jump to any far-reaching conclusions from these numbers, given the low testing rate in our country. Worse still is the tendency of a few to add communal flavour to the virus spread. In this context, the editorial rightly highlights the possibility of many other similar mass gatherings seeding the virus into the population (Editorial, "Beyond the blame game," April 2). Indeed the infection is irreligious and apolitical; it can, and it will spread under the right circumstances dictated by laws of science. But what can be done at the time of a fast-spreading pandemic? It is better to publish all such significant events that happened before the lockdown and ask people who attended such events, even if they are asymptomatic, to come forward and inform the authorities. It won't hurt if screening and testing are carried out on those people who attended the mass gathering, including migrants gathering in a few cities during the lockdown.

A. VENKATASUBRAMANIAN,
Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu

At a time when the country is mobilising all its energies and resources to fight the dreaded SARS-CoV-2 virus, it is unfortunate that a religious congregation has become a potential tool in the hands of some unscrupulous politicians to promote communal hatred among the people to derive political mileage. We all know that places of worship of all religions remained open beyond the dates of Nizamuddin congregation and thousands of devotees flocked in to these temples. The ruling establishments are more culpable than anybody else for these religious gatherings which could have been avoided had there been effective political and administrative measures. Attempts to target a particular community because of the Nizamuddin religious congregation and holding it responsible for spreading the virus alarmingly are deplorable. More importantly, painting the incident with communal colours can't hide the inexcusable lapses on the part of the governments. Let the communal virus not be set free among the people at this time.

N. RAVEENDRA BABU,
Hyderabad

The right to question

Apropos the editorial, "Uncritical endorsement" (April 2), in times of crisis, especially a health crisis without prophylactic or cure, clear messaging by those in charge is imperative. So is creating a space where questions can be asked and addressed. The Supreme Court has rightly directed the government to activate a mechanism for delivering official updates on the crisis and measures to contain it. As the WHO chief has said, humanity is fighting two foes – a pandemic and an "infodemic". But the antidote is not to rely on an authorised version. The media is the enabler of that choice. It was put on the list of essential services so that it could bring credible news of the pandemic both to the people and the state.

S.S. PAUL,
Chakdaha, Nadia, West Bengal

Speaking of experts

It presumptuous and condescending to theorise that the uninformed masses should always defer to the superior knowledge of the experts. It is not expertise for which there has never been a lack of respect, but experts who fell from public favour because of their conflation of professional knowledge as infallible wisdom (Editorial page, "The return of the expert," April 2). When experts proffer the prevailing expert opinion as a settled truth and refuse to review their conclusions in the face of new facts, they shut themselves in cocoons of dogmatism. Instead of celebrating the so-called "return of the expert" in the public sphere, professionals should articulate their knowledge with humility and desist from viewing themselves as an anointed class.

V.N. MUKUNDARAJAN,
Thiruvananthapuram

Do OTT platforms provide more space for sociopolitical content?

PARLEY

With no censorship and fewer budget constraints, they provide more opportunities

With India under a lockdown, and with museums, movie theaters, malls, restaurants and bars closed, people now spend a lot of time watching films and shows on OTT (Over The Top) platforms such as Hotstar, Netflix, and Amazon Prime Video. Over the last few years, with OTT platforms providing an opportunity to filmmakers and screenwriters to think and write differently, there has been a significant rise in content on these platforms. Anurag Kashyap and Vetrimaaran speak of why these platforms are liberating, and what the digital future looks like, in a conversation moderated by **Radhika Santhanam**. *Edited excerpts:*

Anurag Kashyap *is a director, writer, editor and producer working in the Hindi film industry*

Vetrimaaran *is a National Award-winning director, screenwriter, and producer working in the Tamil film industry*

Mr. Kashyap, you said once, "Digital platforms are giving me the freedom and the budget that they won't give anyone else." What kind of freedom do these platforms give you? Are you referring to the fact that there is no censorship on these platforms or do you mean freedom even in terms of the subjects you can explore?

Anurag Kashyap: The kind of freedom I'm getting on OTT platforms is the kind of freedom that Vetri demands and takes [even otherwise] – he brings sociopolitical content into every film, which is alien to Hindi films. For the [theatre-going] audience, the moment anything becomes sociopolitical, they stay away from it. And it becomes increasingly difficult to find money for such films. For example, when I made *Mukkabaaz*, I could not find money for it for two years because of the subject and because of the rural... The actor was also [not mainstream]. But now I'm doing a new film for Netflix, *Choked*, which deals with sociopolitical content and has Roshan Mathew and Saiyami Kher. I am getting the right amount of money for it and I can say what I want to say. So, it's not just about censorship; it's about the multi-fold pressures [that come with theatrical films and don't come with OTT]. First, there's the producer who says there is no audience. Stars don't want to do anything political because they want to keep safe. Your budget is cut down. Then because the film is not high-profile, I generally try to send it to some festival so that it gets some kind of a profile. With OTT platforms I don't feel like I'm making something for TV, I'm just making my film. People are choosing to watch it on an OTT platform and I have the budget and freedom to do what I like.

Mr. Vetrimaaran, you've often said that cinema is a dying art. Today, more people are watching cinema than ever before because of digital platforms. They also watch different kinds of cinema – Tamil, Malayalam, Korean, etc. These platforms also provide an opportunity to create different content. So, isn't cinema thriving more than ever before and haven't digital platforms, as a medium, been one of the reasons for that?

Vetrimaaran: When I said cinema, I mentioned cinema in the theatre, experience-giving cinema. I did not mean cinema as a language or medium. That medium that you go and watch on, the big screen, that is a dying art. Because, if you see the last six-seven years, whatever made headlines in terms of big money in Hollywood was a superhero film. I don't find any art in these films. Also, in the Indian scenario, you have a *Baahubali* doing big numbers, but how does it matter to a common man or his problems? So, the representation of the common man has been taken out of the theatre-going experience. You need a superstar or a superhero film to make people go to the theatres.

But today a lot of people do go and watch films like *Vada Chennai* and *Kaaka Muttai* or *Badhaai Ho* and *Article 15*. And *Asuran* was Dhanush's top-grossing film.

VM: Sometimes it happens. But predominantly it is more hero-driven. Also, for the kinds of films that I make, I have an actor like Dhanush to support me, which makes it easier for me. At any point, when I say, I have a story to say, he says, okay, I will back you, you do the film you want to do. And he has a considerably good market. I can have a good budget. And I'm able to do the film.

DELHI CRIME. - SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Asuran, I feel, if you take out all the sociopolitical factors in it, deep down you see a *Baashha*-like idea. So, that way after my first film, *Asuran* was the next film I made that centred on one particular character and the journey of that character. So, it was a hero film. All the other films are not typically hero films. So, I feel, the more the star value of the film or the more visually exciting the film, those are the films that predominantly make money and are backed by investors. If you want to make serious films, they have questions to ask you such as, how will I get back the money?

Now, with the advent of OTT platforms, it is the golden era of the screenwriter. We have always been curtailed by writing for a two-and-a-half-hour film. I had five-and-a-half-hours of [script] for *Vada Chennai*. But I could only show 2 hours and 39 minutes. That is a major limitation. When it comes to OTT, you have the liberty to write as much as you can imagine and as much as the budget you can get allows. I've done a 30-minute film for Netflix; it's part of an anthology. And when I made it, I realised how liberated Anurag must be feeling. I did not have any kind of pressure. When I'm editing for a theatrical film, I think every minute, how will the audience react to this scene, is the length enough, should I reduce it, add some more? I keep someone else in mind when I'm making a theatrical film. For this one I didn't have anyone in mind; I just wanted to make a film. I wanted to bring out something and I did that without any pressure. I have never been as relaxed in an edit room as I was while making this.

> **For theatrical films, mostly you end up writing for men. On OTT platforms I would like to write stories with more women characters.**
>
> VETRIMAARAN

You spoke of investors. Is there any interference from these platforms when you pitch an idea to them?

AK: I have never faced any interference. They always give you feedback, but they always leave it to you. It's also something you earn over a period of time. So far, I have had a very good time. [For theatrical films], I have always faced prejudice from the distributors. They say people don't want to watch what you're doing. But I know that people do watch my films. The only difference is that people watch it later, whereas for a distributor, the first three days are what matter at the box office. Most of my audience is an educated, working audience and not those who line up on Fridays and Saturdays to watch a film the way people line up to watch a Salman Khan or Shah Rukh Khan film. My audience watches my films at their own time.

What has happened with OTT is that my old films, like *That Girl in Yellow Boots*, got an audience much after they were released. It translates very well for me because I get direct feedback, which puts me in a much better space... Platforms let me be because they know that whether it's my politics or it's what I'm trying to say, people are responding to it, reacting to it and engaging with it. So, they let me be because they have data and all that.

What kind of feedback do you get from people?

AK: For example, with *Ghost Stories*, there was a bad backlash in India, but I had the freedom to do something I had never done before. The feedback that I got from the genre audience from around the world was very encouraging, constructive. This makes you better and sharper as a filmmaker.

Mr. Vetrimaaran, why do you think the Tamil film industry's foray into this has been slow?

VM: When it comes to Tamil, the problem is marketing. The kind of stories I want to tell on OTT require a certain budget. But OTT platforms have a limited budget for a limited market like Tamil. The primary target for a Tamil original film or a series would be the Tamil audiences worldwide. And then they would be looking at other international viewership, so they have limited investments. Now they are opening up, coming up with some good budgets. I have been wanting to do the prequel to *Vada Chennai* as a series. I've been talking to a lot of people... they felt the budget was too much, now they're able to give it.

Are well-known actors more willing now to do digital content?

AK: A lot of them are, not everyone. Actors who are having a good run in the box office are not ready to act in films or a series made for digital platforms. They are willing to produce it, but not willing to act in these yet.

VM: This space is for women actors who have the potential to be stars in the box office industry as well, but they're given more space here. For theatrical films, mostly you end up writing for men. Here I would like to write stories with more women characters – women with proper representation. Not every star wants to be in an original. They want to have a theatrical release and then they want to be in digital.

Mr. Kashyap, what do you find fulfilling on these platforms in a way that the theatre experience doesn't give you? And what do you find challenging?

AK: The biggest problem I have faced as a filmmaker is that they don't let me explore subjects that matter to me: sexuality, religion and politics. These are the three big nos for the cinema experience. But Netflix doesn't shy away from that. Second, I can tell the whole story. I don't have to censor it. I can tell a story for seven hours. If *Sacred Games* was a movie, it would have been about Nawaz [Nawazuddin Siddiqui] and Saif [Ali Khan], but on Netflix, I could flesh out characters like Bunty, Kukkoo and Subhadra.

There is no difficulty, but the only aspiration it doesn't cater to is that we all want to see things on the big screen. But that's a choice we make.

VM: For the liberty that's given there, this is a small compromise.

AK: In the U.S., Netflix films get a limited theatrical release. It doesn't happen here – not because Netflix doesn't want to do it but because exhibitors don't want to support it.

VM: If you have a bigger star in it, it may happen. Regarding subjects, I would like to explore the same topics, especially politics and policies. The anti-people policies, like what's happening in Tamil Nadu, and how they affect the common man.

What is the immediate future like in terms of content?

VM: The theatrical experience is going to become more and more shallow and momentary [in terms of Tamil]: there will be 10 heroes and 25 directors to cater to the audience. And all the others will have to move to these platforms and start making films with the content that we want to discuss. The only problem is when you put it out in the theatre, the common man comes face-to-face with it. With OTT it's a choice. It's like going to a library and reading a book instead of reading a daily that gets delivered at home. We make films that we want the common man to watch, but it'll take time to take it to him. That's a small setback. He has to watch it on his mobile phone where he'd rather watch YouTube than Amazon or Netflix.

Looking east to contain COVID-19

The strategies employed by S. Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and China are instructive for India

SOURABH GUPTA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's extraordinary decision to impose a nationwide lockdown for three weeks to contain COVID-19 is without precedent. Even at the peak of the outbreak – and lockdowns – in China, 600 million *fewer* people were confined to their homes. Overall, the decision is a welcome one, but it should have almost certainly been taken much earlier – even if the true fatality rate of SARS-CoV-2 turns out to be orders of magnitude smaller.

An extreme restriction on population movement is not a silver bullet, however. Like border shutdowns, it can buy time to slow down the spread of the virus but not eliminate it altogether. To eliminate the virus, community transmission must be prevented. Key to such transmission prevention is (early) detection and, thereafter, aggressive and systematic quarantining. Given India's slow start on the diagnostic and detection front, it is all the more urgent that the government ramp up its act on the isolation and quarantining front.

Lessons from the successful prevention and containment strategies employed by South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and China are instructive here. Following the outbreak, each of the first four went their own way on border controls. While Singapore barred the entry of all visitors from mainland China, South Korea continued to receive 20,000 visitors from China even at the peak of the outbreak, limiting arrivals only from Hubei province and its capital Wuhan.

Breaking the chain

Yet all four countries did two things that were key to breaking the chain of transmission. First, each instituted a widespread and rigorous regime of early testing and contact tracing. South Korea has conducted 4,31,743 diagnostic tests. Each confirmed patient's contacts were then exhaustively traced and offered free testing. This has been reflected in unusually low fatality rates. Second, all four deployed information and communication technology to trace contacts, keep track of aggregations of movement, and provide real-time notifications on virus spread. Taiwan set the bar here. After integrating its public health databases with border controls, household registry and the national identification system, it linked private mobile phones to the government's epidemic control centre, enabling enforcement of quarantine. As a result, the rate of local transmission cases to imported infections is among the lowest in the world.

The case of China may be more relevant to India given the somewhat similar capacity shortfalls, its forthwith sealing off of whole population centres and, most importantly, the fact that community transmission had already exploded before authorities had a firm handle on the spread. Quarantining was key in China. Makeshift hospitals, schools, hotels, etc. were re-purposed as quarantine centres on an industrial scale to house all but the most severe and critical cases (who were hospitalised). Suspected patients and close contacts were kept separately within these makeshift quarantine centres too. As a 'Chinese wall' was constructed between the infected and the uninfected, the chain of transmission began to be cut. A comparable patient classification system, with mild and asymptomatic cases confined to 'residential treatment facilities' was also employed by South Korea.

Three lessons

As India looks ahead, three lessons are key. First, the government must stay prepared to re-purpose existing facilities and massively scale up its quarantine square footage. Next, without detection and patient classification, there can be no intelligent quarantining; the government must use the interval to get its act together on testing. The tide in Wuhan was only turned after testing was expanded from the low hundreds in end-January to the several thousand by mid-February. Finally, it is time for India to avert its perennial Westward gaze. Many of the most innovative deployment of ideas and systems are being birthed right here to India's east.

Sourabh Gupta is a senior fellow at the Institute for China-America Studies in Washington, D.C.

NOTEBOOK

Limits to rugged individualism

By the time the U.S. adopts tough measures to fight COVID-19, it might be too late

NARAYAN LAKSHMAN

As the global battle against COVID-19 progresses, it is beginning to reveal deep fault lines in the national psyches of countries that are facing the prospect of high infection rates. India has acted aggressively by shutting down international travel routes and imposing a nationwide lockdown, even if it has failed to contain the economic fallout of the it for millions of poor. China also implemented a harsh shutdown, initially of Wuhan and other areas of Hubei province and then more broadly. Italy, Spain and France, countries that have seen surges in infection cases that have not been witnessed anywhere else outside China, also implemented lockdown measures that were perceived as unavoidable even if draconian.

Along with the U.K. to a certain extent, Brazil and Mexico, it is the U.S. that has most been an outlier to this global willingness of governments to undertake a forced implementation of social distancing norms through a lockdown on all but essential economic activities. Since COVID-19 started impacting the U.S. in January, President Donald Trump has swung between two contradictory messages: downplaying the risks of the virus hitting the American people and economy badly and hinting that they ought to self-regulate their collective and individual behaviour to slow its spread.

To understand the possible rationale of an approach that seems to defy the logic of flattening the COVID-19 curve, it may be necessary to understand better the spirit of the rugged individualism that deeply underpins American society, economy and broader national psyche. It is that spirit that animates the visceral debates over the U.S. Constitution's Second Amendment regarding the right to bear arms, to let people protect themselves against the tyranny of government.

When, as the U.S. correspondent of this newspaper, I covered the intensely partisan 2010 debates over former President Barack Obama's landmark healthcare reform policy, the Affordable Care Act (ACA), I saw how it was for many Americans the idea that the government could "mandate" anything, even enrolment in an insurance programme, that was more galling, even more than the idea that it was one political party or the other that was scoring points in Congress over the ensuing nastiness around the bill.

Part of the problem that hobbled and seemed to prematurely age Mr. Obama through the struggle to get the ACA passed remains today – under the federalist system of the U.S., states still enjoy disproportionate powers that could, especially over local enforcement questions such as a lockdown, limit Washington's options. The most worrying aspect, in terms of the U.S.'s ability to gain a measure of control over the proliferation of new COVID-19 cases, is that the limits to the power of the federal government to impose quarantines has been deeply institutionalised, including in law. For example, the President is not permitted to force any state Governor to order people to stay at home or to close non-essential businesses where multitudes might gather, including bars, restaurants, and theatres. Similarly, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does not have the authority to ban interstate travel.

In this backdrop it is possible that each U.S. state will only contemplate lockdown measures when its local administration deems the infection to have spiralled to a level where free choice over movement of persons can no longer be tolerated. For many across the country, that may be too late.

The Hindu.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 3, 1970

PM inaugurates State of Meghalaya

The autonomous hill State of Meghalaya was inaugurated by the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, here [Shillong]. The new State comprises Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills – with an area of 22,549 square kms. The population, according to the 1961 census, is about 7.69 lakhs. Meghalaya is the second hill State to be carved out of Assam, the first being Nagaland which came into being in December, 1963. Inaugurating the new State at a function before a gathering of about one lakh, the Prime Minister conveyed to the tribal people the greetings from the entire nation. The creation of the border State of Meghalaya, Mrs. Gandhi said, was a new constitutional experiment. She assured the people that whatever help the Centre could give would be forthcoming for their well-being. Making a particular reference to Shillong, Mrs. Gandhi said that "even if it costs more in terms of money and effort", the planning and architecture of Shillong, as a joint capital of the two States, must be in harmony with its surroundings.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 6, 1920. (GIVEN THAT THE EDITION OF APRIL 3 IS NOT AVAILABLE)

Educational facilities.

(From an editorial)

It is a well-known fact that the existing facilities for education in India are very deficient in helping our young men to take to independent lines of employment, which while enabling them to earn a decent living will also serve to promote the welfare of the nation. Our schools and colleges, instead of drawing out the latent capacities of the young mind and training it efficiently for the work it is best fitted to do, tend only to create a wooden type of mentality unconscious of its inner powers and unmindful of its real interests. And the root-cause for the sheepish tendency of our graduates and under-graduates into the avenues of Law and Government services lies in the failure of these institutions to inspire into the mind of their alumni that patriotic vision and daring initiative befitting the youth of a New Renaissance. So long as the necessary facilities are not provided by the Government and the public on a sufficiently large scale, a sense of responsibility to the real interests of the country and its youth must demand from all alike the duty of utilising the educational facilities of foreign lands to the best advantage of our young men and national interests.

FROM PAGE ONE

PM asks for plan to stagger lockdown end

"The monies and grains released under the Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Yojana should be disbursed speedily," he said.

Significantly, he also told the Chief Ministers that volunteers of the National Cadet Corps and the National Service Scheme would also be recruited in the effort to combat COVID-19. "Other than this, crisis management groups should coordinate with as many NGOs as possible and strategies should be shared with all stakeholders as we need everyone's help at this time," he said.

Mr. Modi also urged the States that immunity boosting methods used by traditional systems of medicines in India such as Ayurveda should be promoted as fatalities were high among those with compromised immunity. "These are our traditional ways of boosting immunity," he said pointing to the fact that an advisory by the AYUSH Ministry had been issued in this regard.

9,000 with Tablighi link sent into quarantine

"We have also been checking and evacuating people from other mosques in the city, who had visited the Markaz (centre) last month. Till now, we have evacuated about 400 people from other mosques, and they have been moved to hospital and quarantine facilities. There are a lot of mosques, and it is an ongoing process," a Delhi official said. The people evacuated from these mosques are not yet tested, the official said. "Where will we go for these many testing kits? There is some delay in testing kits reaching us due to the lockdown," the official added.

Three Bangladeshi nationals, who had visited the Tablighi centre, tested positive for COVID-19 at Palwal, Haryana. The district administration has declared five villages as "containment zone" following the test results and suspended the Sarpanches for concealing information about them. Besides, 109 more visitors to the centre were traced from different parts of the district late on Wednesday night. Ms. Srivastava said the Home Ministry was coordinating a "massive effort" to trace all contacts linked to the gathering.

Meanwhile, the chief of the centre, Maulana Saad, has asked all members to cooperate with local authorities. In a new audio clip, he can be heard saying, "People should follow the guidelines and advice of doctors. I myself am in isolation and people should follow the instructions."

COVID-19 cases double in five days

"In this area, we have sealed the building from where the case has been reported, and the collection of samples from all residents of the building is under way. As per the protocol, contact-tracing is also under way," said Lav Agrawal, Joint Secretary, Health Ministry.

Mr. Agrawal condemned the attack on medical workers and said the Union government, along with the States and Union Territories, had been working to prevent, contain and manage COVID-19. "These efforts are being regularly monitored at the highest level," he said.

"Prime Minister Modi chaired a high-level meeting with the Chief Ministers through videoconference and urged them to manage the crisis at the district level and focus on testing, isolation and quarantine. The States were also told to upgrade the healthcare human resource and conduct online training for front-line workers," Mr. Agrawal said.

Geo-fencing app to locate quarantine violators

The particular provision under the Act, amended multiple times since 1885, authorises the State or the Centre to access information of a user's phone data in case of "occurrence of any public emergency or in the interest of the public safety."

The CQAS will prepare a list of mobile numbers, segregating them on the basis of telecom service providers, and the location data provided by the companies will be run on the application to create geo-fencing, the SOP said.

Data will be deleted

It said that the phone number should be deleted from the system after the period for which location monitoring is required is over and the data would be deleted four weeks from thereon.

"The data collected shall be used only for the purpose of Health Management in the context of COVID-19 and is strictly not for any other purposes. Any violation in this regard would attract penal provisions under the relevant laws," the SOP said.

The SOP said that geo-fencing will only work if the quarantined person has a mobile phone from Airtel, Vodafone-Idea or Reliance Jio, as "BSNL/MTNL" do not support location based services. BSNL and MTNL are government owned.

Conviction in Daniel Pearl case overturned

The other accused – Fahad Nasim Ahmed, Sheikh Muhammad Adil, and Syed Salman Saqib – have been cleared of all charges. They were earlier given life sentence, which has been overturned.

Talking to *The Hindu*, Pakistan Bar Council vice-chairman Abid Saqi said the benefit of the doubt must go to the accused in murder trials.

Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh's lawyer Mahmood A Sheikh said he was "disappointed" with the judgment, though it was a "welcome decision that Omar Saeed Sheikh has been acquitted of all charges, except kidnapping". "...there was no evidence of kidnapping either. Observations regarding all charges in the court went in the direction that the prosecution has failed to establish any case against my client." The prosecution tried to link Pearl's kidnapping with the identification parade, which the court said was faulty.

Congress demands relief plan

Unplanned lockdown caused 'chaos and pain for migrant workers': Sonia

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress Working Committee (CWC) on Thursday had its first-ever virtual meeting to discuss the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, where party chief Sonia Gandhi asked the Union government to come out with a "common minimum relief programme", and asserted that the unplanned lockdown caused "chaos and pain for migrant workers".

A statement from the CWC said "the Congress pledges to continue its unstinted support", but pointed out the "grave shortcomings in the spirit of cooperation and constructive criticism".

"The CWC demands that the government should immediately appoint an economic task force consisting of world-renowned economists to suggest three plans: an emergency plan within one week; a short to medium-term plan within one month; and a medium to long-term plan within three months in order to protect and revive the economy," All India Congress Committee general secretary K.C. Venugopal and party spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said at an online media interaction.

In her opening remarks to the CWC, Ms. Gandhi said, "The 21-day national lockdown may have been necessary but the unplanned manner in which it has been implemented has caused chaos and pain in the lives of millions of migrant workers all over India. It has been heartbreaking to see lakhs of people walking for hundreds of kilometres towards their villages without food or shelter."

The CWC stressed the urgent need to provide personal protection equipment (PPE) for health workers, relief to farmers, income support to informal workers and protection to middle class people from wage cuts and job losses.

"I urge the Central government to prepare and publish a common minimum relief programme," she said.

While former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh talked about the nation rallying as one to fight COVID-19, former party chief leader Rahul Gandhi, who had so far kept away from CWC meetings, talked about an Indian model to deal with the crisis.

"At the Congress CWC meeting today I emphasised the urgent need to devise an India specific strategy to combat the #COVID19 Pandemic & for Congress workers & leaders to help soften the blow by assisting the poor & the most vulnerable sections of our society," Mr. Gandhi tweeted.

Former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram talked about the inadequacy of the government's financial action plan. "The government must shed its inhibitions and announce that it will fund the battle with ₹5-6 lakh crore," he said.

BJP terms Sonia Gandhi's statement 'petty politics'

'India's efforts being lauded globally'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday reacted sharply to Congress president Sonia Gandhi's statement that the all-India lockdown by the Centre to arrest the spread of COVID-19 was ill planned.

Leaders including Union Home Minister Amit Shah and party president J.P. Nadda termed it "petty politics" at a time when the crisis called for a unified response. Ms. Gandhi's statement made at a video meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) termed the lockdown necessary but ill planned.

"Under PM Narendra Modi's leadership, India's efforts to fight the coronavirus are being lauded domestically and globally. 130 crore Indians are united to defeat COVID-19. Yet the Congress is playing petty politics. High time they think of national interest and stop misleading people," Mr. Shah retorted.

He said it had been an "old habit" of the Congress that it had always walked a different path in the matters of national interest, and that it had sought to divide the country for its "selfish interests".

"When will the Congress put national interest above its selfish politics," Mr. Shah asked.

Mr. Nadda pointed out that while the Centre was taking along all Chief Ministers, Ms. Gandhi's comments were "insensitive and indecent".

"I want to ask Sonia Gandhiji, if her statement was meant for Punjab and Rajasthan governments, who had imposed lockdown prior to the 21-day lockdown announced by Prime Minister Modi? Did these State governments impose lockdown without preparation?" he asked.

960 foreigners blacklisted for Tablighi ties

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has blacklisted 960 foreigners, present in India on tourist visas, for their involvement in Tablighi Jamaat activities, Union Home Minister Amit Shah tweeted on Thursday.

It has also directed the Directors General of Police of all the concerned States and Union Territories including Delhi Police to take necessary action against all such violators, on priority, under relevant sections of the Foreigners Act, 1946, and Disaster Management Act, 2005, Mr. Shah said in his tweet. The visas issued to these foreigners had also been cancelled, he added.

A blacklisted foreigner cannot get a visa from any of the missions abroad to come to India.

About 9,000 people linked to the Nizamuddin event have been traced in different parts of the country.

Tablighi Jamaat: on a mission to 'purify' Islam

The group has a presence in 150 countries and millions of followers; largest national wing in Bangladesh

STANLY JOHNY
CHENNAI

The Tablighi Jamaat, a little known Islamic organisation, has been at the centre of a controversy after dozens of people who attended a religious congregation held by it at its headquarters in Delhi in March tested positive for COVID-19. At least 2,000 people, both from across the country and foreign nations such as Indonesia and Malaysia, had attended the gathering in Nizamuddin that started in early March and went on for a couple of weeks. Maulana Saad Kandhalvi, leader of the group, has been booked by the Delhi police under the Epidemic Disease Act. Who and what exactly is this group?

Jamaat's Origins

The Tablighi Jamaat (Society of Preachers) was founded by a Deobandi Islamic scholar Muhammad Ilyas al-Kandhlawi in Mewat, India, in 1926. As its name suggests, Al-Kandhlawi's goal was to establish a group of dedicated preachers as a Muslim revivalist society, who could revive "true" Islam, which he saw was not being practised by many Muslims. The slogan Al-Kandhlawi coined for his new organisation captured the essence of its activities – "Oh Muslims, become true Muslims".

Al-Kandhlawi called upon his fellow Muslims to "enjoin the good and forbid the evil".

Al-Kandhlawi's mission was also to revive his faith, but based on its core teachings and lifestyle of its early leaders. Also in Mewat where the Tablighi was founded, the Meos Muslims, a Rajput ethnic group, had followed syncretic traditions. Al-Kandhlawi wanted to end it all through *dawa* (proselytising). He sent his volunteers to villages to spread "the message of Allah".

The organisation grew fast in British India. In its annual conference held in November 1941, some 25,000 people attended. After Partition, it grew stronger in Pakistan and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Now, Tablighi's largest national wing is in Bangladesh. The group has presence in 150 countries and millions of followers.

The Tablighi members have declared they are apolitical and decried violence in the name of religion. • PTI

BACKGROUNDER

'Purify the faith'

Inspired by the Deobandi creed, the Tablighis urge fellow Muslims to live like the Prophet did. They are theologically opposed to the syncretic nature of Sufi Islam and insist on its members to dress like the Prophet did (trouser or robe should be above the ankle). Men usually shave their upper lip and keep long beard. The focus of the organisation was on 'purifying' the Muslim faith. The organisation has a loose structure. The Emir is the leader of the international movement and is always related to the group's founder Muhammad Ilyas al-Kandhlawi. The current leader, Maulana Saad Kandhalvi, is the grandson of the founder. The group also has a Shura Council, which is largely an advisory council with different national units and national headquarters.

Key Activities

The Tablighi Jamaat members have declared they are not political. They have also decried violence in the name of religion. They say the Prophet Mohammed has commanded all Muslims to convey the message of Allah, and the Tablighis take this as their duty. They divide themselves into small Jamaats (societies) and travel frequently across the world to spread the message of Islam to Muslim houses. The group's *modus operandi* is peaceful and it is focused entirely on the Muslim community worldwide. "There is a culture of secretism in the organisation, which develops suspicion," Ajit Doval, now India's National Security Adviser and a former intelligence boss, said in 2013.

'Restore 4G in J&K for virus updates'

Plea says it's needed to fight pandemic

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

A petition has urged the Supreme Court to restore 4G mobile Internet service in Jammu and Kashmir as, it said, doctors, patients and the general public were unable to access the latest information, guidelines, advisories, daily updates and restrictions on the COVID-19 pandemic.

The petition filed by the Foundation for Media Professionals through its president and journalist Paranjoy Guha Thakurta and represented by advocate Shadan Farasat said,"Citizens in Jammu & Kashmir should not be deprived of facilities that are already available to Indians across the country, i.e., effective and speedy Internet, an indispensable tool in the struggle against COVID-19. The restriction in respect of mobile Internet speeds effectively amounts to a targeted rollback of such rights in respects of the residents of Jammu & Kashmir."

The plea stated that Internet in J&K had been restricted for over seven months following the abrogation of its special status under Article 370. It was illegal to do so.

The petition, which specifically challenged a restricting order issued on March 26, said the right to Internet connectivity had repeatedly been recognised by the Centre as a "basic necessity or an essential service to ensure the right to health".

The petition said it was an indispensable tool in the struggle against COVID-19.

The Centre's 21-day lockdown guidelines on March 24 exempted "telecommunications, Internet services, broadcasting and cable services. IT and IT enabled services only [for essential services] and as far as possible to work from home," it noted.

There was need for real-time information, which the restricted services running on the outdated 2G speed and largely used to receive and send text messages, could not provide. 4G speed was necessary in various critical fields, from telemedicine to supply of medical supplies to academics to online video consultations to professions, it said.

"Restriction of mobile Internet to 2G fails the proportionality test. It is a disproportionate restriction on fundamental rights, and fails to take into consideration the reality of the current lockdown," the petition said.

Nine held by Sri Lanka Navy, huge drug consignment seized

Indian agencies allege involvement of Pak.-based cartels

DEVESH K. PANDEY
NEW DELHI

Yet another major drug seizure by the Sri Lanka Navy over 800 km off the country's southern coast, in which nine Pakistani nationals have been arrested, has reinforced the contention of the Indian agencies that Pak-based cartels have been indulging in large-scale drug trafficking via sea routes in the region.

Confirming the seizure, the Sri Lanka Navy on Wednesday tweeted: "Navy brought the seized foreign vessel ashore along with 605 kg of cyrstal meth (methaphetamine) and 579 kg of ketamine. The 09 crew members were found to be Pakistanis."

On March 5, in a similar operation, the Sri Lanka Navy had seized 500 kg of heroin and 100 kg of methaphetamine and arrested 16 persons, including eight from Pakistan. The contraband's origin was traced to Pakistan's Makran coast.

"The seizures in the high seas are usually very less than the actual amount being smuggled in fishing boats, as the carriers start disposing of the drugs the moment they spot patrol parties from far away," said an Indian Customs official on condition of anonymity.

While smuggling of methaphetamine by sea in this region is an emerging trend, investigations into the seizures in the recent past have revealed that large consignments of heroin, processed mostly in laboratories located in Pakistan using the opium sourced from Afghanistan, are lately being transported via sea route.

Since 2015, about four dozen Pakistani nationals have been arrested in connection with various seizures in the high seas off the coasts of India, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Mozambique.

"Several gangs based in Lahore and Faislabad are involved in the trade. The consignments are sent to Karachi or Gwadar for further transport in fishing vessels," said another official.

Through the sea route, the drugs are also sent to Seychelles, Tanzania and Kenya for supply to Europe and other destinations.

"Also, most of the drugs produced in Afghanistan are routed through Pakistan," said the official.

Grand mufti, Hurriyat, Panthers Party oppose domicile laws

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Kashmir's grand mufti (head priest), separatist Hurriyat Conference and the Jammu-based Panthers Party (NPP) on Thursday said the Centre's domicile laws were "against the interest of the people" of J&K and demanded its rollback.

"Domicile law is totally unacceptable to the people of Kashmir. It comes at a time when a pandemic has engulfed the entire world. Keeping top jobs for outsiders and Class IV jobs for J&K is a sheer injustice. We totally oppose it," said Kashmir's grand mufti Nasir-ul-Islam.

The Hurriyat appealed to the "global community and people with conscience in India" to wake up. "They should respond to our situation in the light of ethics and principles of justice," a Mirwaiz spokesman said.

NPP leader Harsh Dev Singh held a street protest in Jammu against the domicile laws and demanded its rollback. "The new law is devious, totalitarian and sinister," he said.

IN BRIEF

ECI extends deadline for poll reform suggestions

NEW DELHI

The Election Commission of India on Thursday extended its deadline for submission of comments and suggestions by the public on the proposed changes in electoral management from March 31 to April 30. It had set up nine working groups after the 2019 elections to give recommendations on various aspects of elections.

Don't communalise COVID-19 fight: CPI(M)

NEW DELHI

The CPI(M) condemned the campaign in social media to communalise the fight against COVID-19. Its Polit Bureau said in a statement here that it was irresponsible on the part of the Tablighi Jamaat to have organised a meeting in mid-March when restrictions had already been imposed on gatherings. But how the authorities allowed a second gathering on March 20 and 21 was inexplicable.

Opposition slams FIR against *The Wire*

NEW DELHI

The Opposition criticised the filing of an FIR against *The Wire*, a news portal, by the UP police on the charge of wrongly attributing a quote to CM Yogi Adityanath on the Ram Navami festival controversy. Congress leader P. Chidambaram asked that the FIR be immediately withdrawn.

CPI general secretary D. Raja called it a brazen attack on the freedom of the press.

Retirement didn't stop them from living a full life; neither will the lockdown

Still a part of the workforce, several retirees lean on technology, planned schedules to help them cope with the forced stay in their homes

SURYA PRAPHULLA KUMAR
CHENNAI

N.S. Parthasarathy normally plays golf at least three times a week. Most afternoons would see him striding across the greens at the Madras Gymkhana Golf Annexe or the Tamil Nadu Golf Federation, a caddie in tow with his Callaway irons. He is 88. "I am probably the oldest active golfer in Chennai. I'll brag and make that claim till somebody challenges me," he said with a laugh, during a telephone conversation.

Before COVID-19 and the lockdown, the Thiruvanmiyur resident led a busy life, dividing his time between walks in the morning, perfecting his putt, his job as a consultant at Power Centre, a city-based software solutions company run by his son-in-law, and writing fortnightly for Madras Musings. But now he has had to adapt to staying indoors 24x7.

"For anyone prepared for a semi-retirement phase, this is easy. You just have to be inventive and widen your interests," he said, adding how the hours are taken up with researching articles, work calls and catching up with friends on WhatsApp. "I'm reading a book on the life of Guru Nanak now, and my wife and I chant in the afternoons [a new pastime that brings them a sense of peace]," he said. "The main challenge is the change of physical environment. My wife has to deal with me being at home all the time. Tact and humour are my tools," he added.

Zoom gatherings

At a time when a lot of what's being written about the COVID-19 pandemic puts the focus on the most vulnerable 'greying generation' many retirees in Chennai are calmly going about their lives, adapting to the changes and not letting anxiety get the better of them. S.J. Stephen, 73, and his wife Hephzibah, 66, share that while they miss meeting their friends and being a part of church activities, life during the lockdown isn't too bad. "We now use Zoom to meet up and pray. We also have more time to work in our terrace garden [where they grow vegetables like ladies finger, ridge gourd, brinjal and tomatoes] and tend to our chickens," said Ms. Hephzibah. The couple, who used to be early morning fixtures on Anna Nagar's roads, getting in their 10,000 steps a day, have adapted by shifting their attention to their terrace and treadmill. They also allot hours daily to connect with family and friends. "One day, I'll talk to all my four siblings, another day I'll video call my 12 nieces and nephews, or my senior friends," said Mr. Stephen.

Taking it in stride: S.J. Stephen and his wife, Hephzibah, say life during the lockdown isn't too bad. ▪ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Then there are those who are filling their days by embracing technology to contribute wherever possible. Alamelu Nagarajan, honorary educational director of AIM for Seva, a service organisation that gives underprivileged children access to quality education, is studying Vedanta via Zoom classes and organises online meditation sessions. The feisty 70-year-old with a playful side – she can whistle with two fingers, much to the amusement of friends and the neighbourhood kids – has been living with her daughter in Thiruvanmiyur for the last three months. "I'm not someone who can sit quietly. So now, I'm looking up forgotten recipes – like a Thooyamalli vegetable rice ball dish that I made the other day – and sharing it with friends. I'm also video chatting with the parents in our complex on ways to keep their kids engaged: through fun maths classes [she teaches Vedic maths], traditional board games, etc," she said.

The tough get going

But this is not to say there aren't challenges. For Mr. Stephen, it is the prospect of not being able to see his children, who are settled in the U.S., any time soon. "There's nothing like meeting family and friends face to face, especially the elderly. It means a lot to them," he said. Others are concerned that their children worry too much about them. "My daughter, who lives in Bengaluru, is worried about my husband and I living alone in Neelankarai," said the soft-spoken Ritha Rajan, 71, whose job as the Academic coordinator of Music Academy's Advanced School of Carnatic Music is on pause. "She's already called all our neighbours and made sure they check up on us often," she added, explaining that she was currently spending her days immersing herself in Carnatic, Hindustani, western classical and old film songs.

The uncertain times are proving stressful for some. S. Parameswaran, chartered accountant and managing partner of S. Parameswaran & Co. in Kilpauk, said while it was a cause for concern that nobody can predict anything about the coronavirus , he was not letting the uncertainty affect him. "Social distancing will help us," he emphasised. "But after the lockdown, I'm looking forward to going back to work. My clients' turnover and volume of business may be lower [because of the shaky economy], but I won't let it affect me. I will file returns and prepare financial statements."

The retired are banking on their experience to retain a positive outlook. "We've been through difficulties in life, so these troubled times aren't too much to bear," said D. Chandrasekhar, 72, founder of the Madras Dyslexia Association. "As a workaholic, it has helped me take a break," he added. His only worry: that he may not have time enough to finish all the goals he set himself for the lockdown, including reading the complete collection of short stories by Raghavan Chudamani.

IN BRIEF

Home Secretary writes to States to take action

NEW DELHI

Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla on Thursday wrote to the Chief Secretaries of all States asking them to book people under relevant provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, and the IPC for false claims, obstruction, false warning and disobedience, among others. Mr. Bhalla wrote another letter to the States asking them to make proper arrangements for the disbursal of money from banks under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana that will start by April 3.

7 held for throwing stones at workers

BHOPAL

The Indore police on Thursday arrested seven persons for allegedly chasing away and pelting healthcare workers with stones on Wednesday when they were trying to trace the contacts of a man in a locality who had tested positive for COVID-19 earlier. "A case against unidentified persons was lodged on Wednesday," Vivek Sharma, Inspector General of Police, Indore Zone, told *The Hindu*. "We have received videos and some local inputs, based on which we are identifying the accused."

Odisha readies 650 beds for COVID-19 patients

BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government on Thursday readied two hospitals at Bhubaneswar and Cuttack with a combined capacity of 650 beds for treatment of COVID-19 patients. One of the COVID-19 hospitals has been set up near Kalinga Institute of Medical Sciences in Bhubaneswar, while the second hospital has been made functional at Ashwini Hospital in Cuttack. The two facilities were completed in record time of one week.

Doctors wary of BCG vaccine study

Analysis shows COVID death rate low in nations with universal BCG policy

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

Doctors and scientists in India have expressed caution on a study which argues that countries that have deployed the BCG-tuberculosis vaccine in their immunisation programmes have seen fewer deaths from COVID-19.

COVID-19

The study argues that 55 middle and high-income countries chosen for the analysis that have a current universal BCG policy had 0.78 deaths per million people, whereas middle and high income countries that never had a universal BCG policy (five countries) had a larger mortality rate, with 16.39 deaths per million people, a significant variation.

Low and middle-income countries, even if they had universal immunisation policies, were excluded from the analysis because they were also likely to have low testing rates for COVID-19 infection and therefore fewer reported deaths. India wasn't included in the analysis.

The BCG vaccine is known to confer a strong immune response that have protective effects beyond just staving off a tuberculosis infection and because COVID-19 was particularly lethal to the elderly, those countries where the elderly were likely to have had a BCG shot in their childhood were likely to be better protected against the coronavirus, the authors argue.

"Italy, where the COVID-19 mortality is very high, never implemented universal BCG vaccination. On the other hand, Japan [and which has a BCG policy since 1947] has maintained a low mortality rate despite not implementing the most strict forms of social isolation," Aaron Miller, Mac Josh Reandelar, Kimberly Fasciglione, Violeta Roumenova, Yan Li, and Gonzalo H. Otazu, from the New York Institute of Technology, argue.

However it was premature for India – that has had a consistent TB vaccination policy since 1968 – to take comfort. Gagandeep Kang, microbiologist and executive director, Translational Health Science and Technology Institute, said only data that showed people who'd been immunised and showed less disease would be convincing."

Self-quarantine must for those leaving govt. centres

This should be done for 14 days for abundant precaution, says Home Ministry

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry said on Thursday that persons being released from government-run quarantine centres were to further quarantine themselves at home for 14 days as a "measure of abundant precaution".

The Ministry issued another set of guidelines to be followed by the States during the lockdown. The guidelines detailed the standard operating procedure (SOP) for making transit arrangements for stranded foreigners.

The SOP said requests received by foreign governments for evacuation would be examined by the External Affairs Ministry on a "case to case" basis.

"The chartered flight would be arranged by the concerned foreign government in consultation with the Ministry of Civil Aviation," the Home Ministry said.

It said each foreign national would be screened for COVID-19 symptoms prior to departure and those asymptomatic would be allowed to leave.

Local transport was to be arranged by the embassy or consulate and the transit pass for movement of vehicles would be issued by the State government.

The SOP for those completing the quarantine period in government facilities said that "persons testing negative for COVID-19 would be released... However, this will not apply to a group where even one person tests positive". These persons are to return to their homes by making their own transport arrangements.

"The transit pass will be issued for fixed route and specified validity," the Home Ministry said.

Health Ministry issues advisory to elderly

Govt. asks them to stay at home, avoid meeting visitors

An eye out for seniors

The Union Health Ministry on Thursday issued an advisory, warning that COVID-19 tends to be more severe among the elderly

What it says

- Elderly people are at a higher risk of COVID-19 infection due to their decreased immunity and body reserves, as well as multiple associated co-morbidities
- The elderly should stay at home, avoid meeting visitors at home and if a meeting is essential, maintain a distance of one metre
- Washing hands and face at regular intervals with soap and water, sneezing and coughing either into the elbow or into a tissue paper or handkerchief, disposing of the tissue paper after coughing or sneezing, washing the handkerchief after use and ensuring proper nutrition through home-cooked fresh hot meals, hydrating frequently and taking fresh juices to boost immunity
- The elderly should postpone elective surgeries like cataract surgery or knee replacement and make tele-consultations with their healthcare providers. They should not go to crowded places such as parks, markets and religious places

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry on Thursday issued an advisory to the elderly in the wake of the novel coronavirus pandemic, warning that the disease tends to be more severe among the elderly, resulting in higher mortality. The number of COVID-19 cases so far has risen to 1,764 and 50 deaths, as per the official database.

Higher risk

"Elderly people are at a higher risk of COVID-19 infection due to their decreased immunity and body reserves, as well as multiple associated co-morbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, chronic kidney disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease," said the Ministry in its guidelines. It asked the elderly to stay at home, avoid meeting visitors at home and if a meeting is essential, maintain a distance of one metre.

The instructions include washing hands and face at regular intervals with soap and water, sneezing and coughing either into the elbow or into a tissue paper or handkerchief, disposing of the tissue paper after coughing or sneezing, washing the handkerchief after use and ensuring proper nutrition through home-cooked fresh hot meals, drinking water frequently and taking fresh juices to boost immunity.

Elective surgery

The elderly population has also been advised to postpone elective surgeries (if any) such as cataract surgery or total knee replacement as far as possible, do tele-consultation with their healthcare provider and not to go to crowded places such as parks, markets and religious places.

Ministry advises alcohol addicts to get treatment

'Those facing withdrawal symptoms during lockdown should visit their nearest healthcare facility'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

People with alcohol dependence who are facing withdrawal symptoms during the lockdown period should visit their nearest healthcare facility for prescription medicines if they have mild symptoms such as headaches and difficulty in sleeping, according to a Social Justice and Empowerment (SJ&E) Ministry's advisory issued on Thursday.

If the symptoms are severe, including seizures and hallucinations, the patients should be rushed to hospital, said the advisory, which comes just over a week into the 21-day lockdown imposed by the Centre to control the spread of COVID-19.

"During the lockdown period, alcohol-dependent persons face mild to serious withdrawal symptoms. An advisory in this regard has been issued today," SJ&E Secretary R. Subrahmanyam said in a tweet.

"A lockdown situation, which entails non-availability of alcohol, may be a blessing in disguise for some people who may utilise this opportunity to quit drinking altogether. However, it is also a significant challenge for a certain proportion of people with alcohol dependence who are at risk of experiencing severe alcohol withdrawal and its consequences," the advisory said.

Those experiencing mild or moderate symptoms were advised to visit the nearest health facility for prescription of medicines of the benzodiazepine group.

Those experiencing severe symptoms would require emergency medical care and hospitalisation, it said.

COCHIN SHIPYARD LIMITED
(A GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ENTERPRISE)

No.P&A/Misc/2020 31 March 2020

CORRIGENDUM
FOR THE INFORMATION OF ALL APPLICANTS

Refer Vacancy notifications:-

a) No.P&A/18(204)/2018 Vol II (A) dtd 17 February 2020 for the posts of Assistant General Manager (Mechanical) and Deputy Manager (Safety) for CMSRU,

b) No. P&A/18(220)/2020 dtd 28 February 2020 for the post of Executive Trainee (Information Technology) in CSL.

Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and current situation prevailing in the country, it has been decided to extend the last date of submission of Application Online for the posts as per the notifications referred above to **15 April 2020**.

For details, please visit website **www.cochinshipyard.com**.

Sd/-
CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER (HR & TRAINING)

Maharashtra denied permission for Jamaat event in March

45,000 delegates were to attend the meet in Vasai

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

Maharashtra narrowly escaped a situation similar to the one arising out of the mid-March Tablighi Jamaat event in Delhi's Nizamuddin area.

A much bigger Tablighi Ijtema, with an estimated attendance of around 45,000 delegates, was to be organised in Vasai, neighbouring Mumbai, on March 14 and 15.

However, the Home Department moved swiftly in the first week of March and convinced the organisers to call off the event. Confirming this, Home Minister Anil Deshmukh, in an exclusive interview, explained how the government negotiated with the organisers to cancel the programme.

"When we realised that a gathering of over 45,000 people at one place for two days could be a great health risk, we decided to take firm action," Mr. Deshmukh said.

Referring to the Tablighi Jamaat in Delhi, Mr. Deshmukh said the event should not have taken place. "When the Maharashtra police can cancel permission, why couldn't the Delhi police do so?" he asked.

On January 22, one Abdulkayyum Abdulahad Azmi, representing Shamim Education and Welfare Society, had applied to the Manikpur police station in Palghar district for permission to hold the Tablighi Ijtema on March 14 and 15.

On March 6, the Manikpur police station cancelled permission for the Ijtema, citing the spread of the virus as the reason.

Virus hotspot: Health workers sanitising a stretcher before moving a suspected patient from Dharavi on Thursday. ▪ PRASHANT NAKWE

Dharavi turns into a hotspot

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

With the novel coronavirus claiming its first victim in Dharavi on Wednesday and a conservancy worker testing positive, Asia's largest slum is a hotspot. On Wednesday, Dharavi reported its first case, a 56 year-old garment shop owner from Baliga Nagar, and the person died on the same day. He had no history of foreign travel. Besides, a 52 year-old conservancy worker from Worli also tested positive for COVID-19 on Wednesday. He is a resident of Worli's Jijamata Nagar, another hotspot. The man was on duty in Dharavi until Monday when he developed symptoms.

He was immediately relieved and sent for testing. His test came positive on Thursday. He is now admitted to Seven Hills hospital.

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU
DHARMAPURI MUNICIPALITY
Roc No : 645/2018/E1 Dated : 31.03.2020
CORRIGENDUM ON NOTICE INVITING REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION

Notice inviting RFQ for Construction of a New Bus Stand Infrastructure Project for Dharmapuri Municipality, Tamil Nadu, on a PPP Mode (DBFOT Basis) including financial management and maintenance for a period of 25 years published in the official website **https://tntenders.gov.in** on **27.01.2020** and also in Hindu. English daily & Dinakaran Tamil daily papers on **29.01.2020** Due to the Administrative reasons , the last date of receipt of RFQ has been postponed to the following dates.

	RFQ already invited on	RFQ postponed to
1. Last date for submission of Application addressed to The Commissioner Dharmapuri Municipality, Dharmapuri	Online : 08.04.2020 upto 14.00 hrs Offline : 09.04.2020 upto 15.00 hrs	**Online : 07.05.2020 upto 14.00 hrs** **Offline : 08.05.2020 upto 15.00 hrs**
2. Date and time of Opening of the Application	09.04.2020 - 15.30 hrs at Municipal Office. Dharmapuri	**08.05 2020 - 15.30 hrs at Municipal Office. Dharmapuri**

The RFQ may be downloaded from the Official Website **https://tntenders.gov.in** upto **07.05.2020**, **14.00 hrs.**
The all other terms and conditions stands unaltered

DIPR/ 1590 /TENDER/2020 **Commissioner, Dharmapuri Municipality**

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU - THIRUTHANI MUNICIPALITY
Tender Notice No : 925/2017/E1 Dated : 31.01.2020

NOTICE INVITING REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION (RFQ) FOR Construction of New Bus Stand in Thiruthani Municipality on Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer (DBFOT) basis

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION (RFQ) –
EXTENSION OF SUBMISSION DATE upto 13.05.2020

Thiruthani town is a famous religious center and also known for its trading activities. The existing Bus Stand of the Thiruthani Municipality was constructed around 25 years back with 13 bus bays as "B" class bus stand being operated at present to connect surrounding villages and towns. Considering the future growth of the town, Thiruthani Municipal Council approved the proposal to construct a new bus stand with all required amenities in Municipality land situated at New Survey No.265/11 Thiruthani Village along with SH 58 (SCKAT ROAD) in Thiruthani.

"**Request for Qualification (RFQ)**" is invited from Developers for construction of Bus Stand on Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer (DBFOT) basis for a period of 22 years. Interested Developers may apply for the project based on their eligibility as per eligibility criteria mentioned in the RFQ document (para 34 to 38). The bidders should be single be single Business Entity incorporated as a Public / Private Limited Company, incorporated under the Companies Act, 1956/2013. More details are provided in the RFQ document.

The eligible bidders shall be evaluated as per the qualifying criteria and become eligible to participate in the Request for Proposal (RFP).

The RFQ document can be obtained on payment of Rs.10,000/- (Non refundable) from the Thiruthani Municipality office from **10.04.2020** to **12.05.2020** upto **3.00 p.m.** RFQ document can also be downloaded from the following websites : **http://tntenders.gov.in** and Thiruthani Municipality website: **https://tnurbantree.tn.gov.in/thiruthani/** from **10.04.2020** to **12.05.2020** upto **3.00 pm.**

The pre-proposal meeting shall be conducted on **29.04.2020** at **11.00 hrs**. at the address noted below to clarify the queries that may be raised by the bidders.

The duly filled-in and wax sealed tender documents shall be submitted online or offline method on or before **12.05.2020** upto **15.00 Hrs.**

Proposal will be opened on **13.05.2020** at **15.30 Hrs**. at the address indicated below.

Commissioner, Thiruthani Municipality, Thiruthani - 631209. Tamilnadu

DIPR/ 1592 /TENDER/2020

DRDO develops bio suit, sealant for safety gear

Mass manufacture of the glue to help PPE production

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In a major breakthrough, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has developed a special sealant as an alternative to seam sealing tape which is critical in personal protective equipment (PPE).

A bio suit was also developed to keep medical and other personnel engaged in combating COVID-19 safe from the deadly virus, the Defence Ministry said on Thursday.

"The DRDO has prepared a special sealant as an alternative to seam sealing tape based on the sealant used in submarine applications. Presently, bio suits prepared using this glue for seam sealing by an industry partner has cleared test at the Southern India Textile Research Association (SITRA), Coimbatore," the Ministry said in a statement.

It said bio suit production in the country by DRDO industry partners and other industries was being hampered due to non-availability of seam sealing tapes. The DRDO can mass produce this glue through the industry to support the seam sealing activity by suit manufacturers.

The bio suit with seam sealing glue. ▪SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Technology transfer

At present, Kusumgarh Industries, with technology transfer from the DRDO, is producing the raw material, coating material, and the complete suit is being manufactured with the help of another vendor, the statement said. "The current production capacity is 7,000 suits per day," the Ministry said.

Another vendor with experience in garment technology is being brought in and efforts are on to ramp up the capacity to 15,000 suits a day, the Ministry stated.

The bio suit has been subjected to rigorous testing for textile parameters as well as protection against infection from synthetic blood. "The protection against synthetic blood exceeds the criteria defined for body suits by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare," the statement said.

Separately, Naval Dockyard, Mumbai, has designed and developed its own hand-held Infra Red (IR) based temperature sensor for screening at its entry gates, which have an average influx of around 20,000 personnel every day. The instrument has been manufactured through in-house resources at a cost of under ₹1000, a fraction of the cost of the temperature guns in the market, the Navy said.

Railways to make protective suits

S. VIJAY KUMAR
CHENNAI

After converting coaches into isolation/quarantine facilities, the Railways has now decided to manufacture Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) garment for medical professionals, service personnel and other care-givers involved in the COVID19 pandemic.

In a note to all Principal Chief Mechanical Engineers of the zonal railways and production units, the Railway Board said there was a huge requirement of PPE garments and the production/maintenance infrastructure could be used for their production.

The Jagadhari workshop in the Northern Railway had already developed a sample PPE garment which was in the process of approval by the appropriate authority.

The PPE should conform to the approved design for standardisation.

The board said absolute cleanliness should be maintained in the manufacture and the staff should wear the garment to prevent cross contamination.

The goal is to produce three sets per sewing machine in one hour for 15 days across the network.

₹50 lakh meant for PPE diverted, allege doctors

'Money redirected to PM-CARES fund'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Resident Doctors' Association (RDA) has alleged that the administration and corporate social responsibility (CSR) section had redirected ₹50 lakh from Bharat Dynamics under the Ministry of Defence to PM-CARES fund rather than the originally assigned purpose of buying personal protection equipment (PPE).

The Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM-CARES) Fund, a public charitable trust, was set up in response to the emerging requirement for resources to defeat the novel coronavirus pandemic.

"We met with the administration on Wednesday and told them about our concerns and requested that all personal protection equipment will have to meet the safety standards prescribed by the Health Ministry and that neither doctors nor other patients should be put at risk of catching the infection. "Jugaad" PPE will not work," said AIIMS RDA general secretary T. Srinivas Rajkumar on Thursday. He said the funds being re-directed was a serious issue.

Baseless, says AIIMS

Responding to the allegation, AIIMS has said that the statement is baseless. It said that no funds have been released by Bharat Dynamics to AIIMS. The AIIMS RDA had informed the administration that Bharat Dynamics was interested in helping to procure PPE. After talks with the firm, the funds were not released.

IN BRIEF

NCC cadets mobilised to augment relief efforts

NEW DELHI

The National Cadet Corps has issued guidelines for temporary employment of its cadets to augment relief efforts and functioning of various agencies involved in battling COVID-19, the Defence Ministry said on Thursday. The Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare too will join the efforts.

Doctor who wanted to rope in quacks suspended

PATNA

Siwan civil surgeon Ashesh Kumar was suspended for issuing an official letter to rope in services of *Jhola Chhap* doctors (quacks) to combat COVID-19 pandemic in the district. The screenshot of his controversial letter had gone viral on social media. The State's Health department suspended him with immediate effect.

11 Bangladeshi nationals allowed to go home

GUWAHATI

Eleven Bangladeshi nationals, who had returned from New Delhi more than a week ago, have been sent to their country through a land customs station on the India-Bangladesh border in Meghalaya. Officials of the Assistant High Commission of Bangladesh in Guwahati said the 11 were sent home after medical examination and ascertaining that they had not attended the congregation at the Tablighi Jamaat centre.

Decongest jails temporarily, say activists

NEW DELHI

The People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) on Thursday asked the government to decongest jails temporarily in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In a statement, the PUDR said jails should be decongested to not more than 60% of their capacity to allow segregation of inmates and maintenance of hygiene.

IAF airlifts 6.2 tonnes of essential drugs to Maldives

The Army assisted in moving the cargo to airports

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

An Indian Air Force (IAF) C-130J transport aircraft on Thursday delivered 6.2 tonne of essential medicines and hospital consumables to Maldives under Operation Sanjeevani. These medicines and consumables were procured from eight suppliers in India but couldn't be transported through any other means due to the 21-day lockdown imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19, an official statement said.

"At the request of the government of Maldives, the IAF aircraft activated Operation Sanjeevani and lifted these medicines from airports in New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Madurai before flying to the Maldives," the statement said, adding the Army facilitated the transport of these medicines and consumables from warehouses across India to the respective airports.

Hand of friendship: Essential supplies ordered by Maldives were transported by the Indian Air Force on Thursday. ▪SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Among other things, these medicines include influenza vaccines, anti-viral drugs such as lopinavir and ritonavir – which have been used to treat patients with COVID-19 in other countries –medicines for cardiac conditions, kidney ailments, hypertension, high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, allergies and cancer treatment, anticonvulsants, as well as as catheters, nebulisers, urine bags and infant feeding tubes, the statement added. Last month, India had dispatched a 14-member Army medical team to Maldives to set up a viral testing lab there.

COVID-19

Cargo from China

Air India has received China's clearance to operate cargo flights to Shanghai and Hong Kong to help Indian pharmaceutical companies import personal protective equipment for frontline health workers.

"We have secured requisite approvals from Shanghai for our flights on April 4 and 5 and await clearances for flights on April 6,7 and 8. Permissions have also been obtained for operations to Hong Kong," said Air India Chairman and Managing Director Rajiv Bansal. The flights are being operated on a commercial basis following requests from pharma firms.

4 nations to use Air India to repatriate their citizens

But flights won't bring back Indians

JAGRITI CHANDRA
SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Four countries – France, Germany, Ireland and Canada – have chartered Air India's services to repatriate their citizens from India.

However, none of the flights will bring any Indians or other passengers stranded in these places back with them due to the continuing travel restrictions, officials clarified.

Air India will be mounting 18 flights to Paris and Frankfurt and will fly Canadian and Irish citizens to London, Air India Chairman and Managing Director, Rajeev Bansal, said at a press conference on Thursday.

A flight to London Heathrow will depart daily from Delhi from April 4 to 7 and from Mumbai on April 5 and 7. Flights to Frankfurt have commenced. "This is a commercial contract between different countries and Air India," Minister of State for Civil Aviation Hardeep Puri said.

However, India has no plans to mount any special flights to bring back its citizens until the lockdown is over. "Resumption of flights from different countries will be decided on a case-by-case basis," Mr. Puri said.

It is reliably learnt that a few international airlines, including Gulf carriers, have written to Indian missions in different countries seeking permission to fly Indians stranded there back to their home country, but their requests have been turned down. "We have been approached by several Indians, including those from Kuwait," an executive of an international airline said.

₹500 in Jan Dhan accounts

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Indian Banks' Association (IBA) has said that women beneficiaries of the Jan Dhan account can start withdrawing ₹500 from April 3, in the first of the three instalments of a sum of ₹1,500 relief announced by the Centre as part of the fight against COVID-19.

"Under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan package, ₹500 per month is being deposited into the accounts of women Jan Dhan Yojana beneficiaries by all banks. This is first of the 3 monthly instalments," IBA said in a statement.

To maintain physical distancing and ensure efficient service, a schedule has been announced for the withdrawals.

Na Corona Karo song goes viral on social media

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

A song to make people aware about taking precautions against COVID-19, composed by Pune-based classical khayal vocalist Sandeep Ranade, has mesmerised celebrities and social media users.

The song was shared by A.R. Rahman on his Instagram account.

Mr. Ranade said, "When I created *Na Corona Karo* in Raga Basant, we were yet to go into lockdown... I wanted to feel hope and optimism and the song was simply an expression of this sentiment. After I shared the song on social media and it went viral, I got messages from people all over the world, saying they felt uplifted, optimistic, and motivated to fight the virus as a community."

Sandeep Ranade

Pandit Ajay Pohankar, Pandit Suresh Talwalkar, Daler Mehndi, Adnan Sami, Shubha Mudgal and Nana Patekar have hailed Mr. Ranade's effort.

Reveal post-lockdown plan, say scientists

In a statement, 800 signatories ask the Centre to go beyond a 'temporary solution'

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN
CHENNAI

Over 800 scientists, academicians and public health professionals issued a statement on April 1, urging the government to reveal a post-lockdown plan to fight COVID-19.

The signatories include scientists from TIFR, Mumbai; NCBS, Bengaluru; IISc, Bengaluru; the IITs and IISERs, and doctors, including members of Indian Doctors for Peace and Development.

"The lockdown is only a temporary solution. Unless this period of time is used to prepare the healthcare system, the country may end up paying the lockdown's social costs without even seeing any long-term epidemiological benefits," says Suvrat Raju from ICTS, Bengaluru, who is one of the persons coordinating this effort.

While emphasising that that the lockdown itself is not a cure, the statement says: "... models [of disease progression] consistently suggest that, in the absence of other factors, the epidemic could bounce back once the lockdown is lifted. If this were to happen at the end of India's lockdown, the epidemic would hit a society already under severe economic distress, with potentially devastating consequences."

The scientists have asked the government to boost its testing regimen.

The scientists urged the government to ensure that the rate of new infections is kept low in a sustainable manner when the lockdown ends. "While social distancing and better hygiene can help, these measures are insufficient by themselves. We are deeply concerned that the government of India has not released a roadmap, detailing how it plans to deal with the epidemic, once the lockdown is eased," reads the statement.

Expressing concern that the government is not using this precious interval of time to actually identify as many cases of COVID-19 as possible, the statement draws attention to a possible bounce-back effect: "In particular, the current restricted testing-policy creates the risk that a large number of mildly symptomatic or asymptomatic cases – which constitute the majority of infections – will remain undetected even at the end of the lockdown period. So, we urge the ICMR and the Government of India to take immediate steps to expand India's testing regimen."

The statement also addresses the problem of reverse migration. The statement said, "Rather than attempting to prevent the reverse migration, we urge the government to use its stocks of food-grains and use urgent cash transfers to ensure the food-security and welfare of workers" so that they do not have to travel.

India to raise Sheikh Saeed case at FATF if he walks free

The accused in the murder of a U.S. journalist had been released by India in 1999 in exchange for 155 hostages

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

The decision by a Pakistani court in Sindh to acquit Ahmed Omar Sheikh Saeed of murdering journalist Daniel Pearl will be raised by India at the next meeting of the Financial Action Task Force, where Pakistan's greylist status will come up for discussion, officials said. The British-born Saeed has been in a Pakistani prison since he was arrested for the kidnapping and killing of the *Wall Street Journal*'s correspondent in Pakistan in 2002, but was in Indian prisons from 1994-1999. In December 1999, Saeed was released along with Masood Azhar and another alleged terrorist Mushtaq Zargar by the Indian government in exchange for 155 hostages aboard the hijacked IC-814.

The next FATF meeting is expected in June, but may be postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, it wasn't just Saeed's history with terrorism in India that would be raised, but his links with Al-Qaeda and, more specifically, his role in the 9/11 attacks in the U.S. Saeed has not yet been tried in that case and the Pakistani government's actions in the next few days would be closely watched.

If Pakistan's federal government doesn't file a strong appeal against the acquittal and Saeed walks free, as some Pakistani reports suggest, it would also show how transnational norms against "terror financing" were being flouted by Islamabad, the officials indicated.

Daniel Pearl

Saeed is reported to have spent time in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya, after he was recruited by the Hizbut Tahrir from the London School of Economics, where he studied. He is then believed to have trained with the Harkat ul Mujahideen, and was allegedly sent to India in 1994 as part of a plan to have Masood Azhar released.

While in Delhi he is alleged to have befriended, and then kidnapped four British tourists and held them at a hideout in Ghaziabad. The police arrested him after he delivered a ransom message calling for Azhar's release to the BBC office in Delhi, when he returned to the hideout.

Once he was released along with Azhar at Kandahar, Saeed is believed to have become a key aide to Osama Bin Laden and was allegedly a part of Bin Laden's plans for the Al-Qaeda's attacks in the U.S.

Another twist in the Saeed tale came in 2008 on the night of the November 26 attacks in Mumbai.

Pakistani investigators claimed Saeed used a cellphone from prison to call then Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari and allegedly impersonated then India's Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee, threatening a major Indian attack. The call had led to considerable panic in the Pakistani establishment, and President Zardari had sent a special plane to order back the Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, who happened to be in Delhi for a bilateral meeting at the time.

Today, the narrative is moving from the hands of the marketers to the consumers

What makes customer experiences the differentiator of the future?

Again, this goes back to the audience. What used to work well for marketers earlier, which was a push strategy, no longer works. When you are talking about predominantly pull strategies, customer services are at the heart of that. The kind of word-of-mouth that goes around, the kind of experiences that they have got from your brands, whether they are willing to talk about it, whether they are willing to become advocates for your brand, all these factors become super-critical to achieving success with this audience.

Aparna Mahesh
Chief Marketing Officer at BankBazaar

BusinessLine MIND YOUR MARKETING
#BLMindYourMarketing

To watch the video or read the full interview, scan the QR Code.

This article is part of a brand initiative by The Hindu BusinessLine to profile marketing professionals from across India.

Global virus cases near a million as Spain sees record deaths

Europe is at the centre of the crisis, with 34,000 dead; U.S. toll crosses 5,000

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MADRID

Confirmed coronavirus cases approached 1 million around the world on Thursday as Europe reeled from the pandemic and the U.S. reported record numbers of people out of work.

The virus claimed thousands more lives in its relentless march across the globe, including nearly 1,000 new deaths in Spain, despite more than half of the planet being subjected to some form of lockdown.

And it continued to wreak havoc on the global economy, with the U.S. announcing that another 6.65 million workers filed for unemployment benefits last week and Spain reporting its biggest monthly increase in jobless claims on record.

Since emerging in China in December, COVID-19 has infected 9,81,221 people – including at least 5,00,000 in Europe – and claimed more than 50,000 lives.

COVID-19

Europe has been at the centre of the crisis, with at least 34,000 now dead, but there have been signs the epidemic could be approaching its peak.

Spain said on Thursday it had suffered a record 950 deaths in 24 hours, bringing its total number of fatalities to 10,003.

The number of confirmed Spanish cases passed the 1,10,000 mark, the government said, although the rates of both new infections and deaths continued a downward trend.

"The data show the curve has stabilised" and the epidemic has entered a "slowdown" phase, Health Minister Salvador Illa said.

Italy has also seen its infection rates slow and eyes will now be on Britain and France, which both reported their highest daily death tolls on Wednesday.

The U.S., which now accounts for almost a quarter of reported global infections, saw its death toll pass 5,000 by the early hours of Thursday, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. Among the latest known fatalities was a six-week-old baby who was taken to a Connecticut hospital late last week.

Gloom and doom: Members of the Spanish Red Cross transferring a COVID-19 patient to a nursing home in Huesca. ▪ GETTY IMAGES

Netanyahu in quarantine

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
JERUSALEM

Israeli Health Minister Yaakov Litzman, a leading member of the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community, has tested positive for COVID-19, forcing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to enter precautionary quarantine, officials said.

Iran death toll rises to 3,160

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TEHRAN

Iran on Thursday reported 124 new deaths, raising its total to 3,160. At least 3,111 new infections were reported over the past 24 hours, taking the country's tally to 50,468. Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani tested positive for COVID-19, state television reported.

Indonesia frees 18,000 inmates

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MAJENE

Indonesia has released 18,000 inmates in a bid to stop the novel coronavirus from rampaging through its notoriously overcrowded prison system. The mass release comes days after the country announced that it would free more than 30,000 inmates.

INTERVIEW | DALI YANG

'Wuhan initially downplayed crisis'

Prof. Dali Yang explains how the outbreak slipped through China's system

ANANTH KRISHNAN

On December 31, Wuhan announced an outbreak of viral pneumonia. Until January 19, authorities would maintain there was no proof of human-to-human transmission but the following day, China's government would reveal otherwise. Decisions taken during those vital 21 days would come to affect the lives of millions. Studies suggest while China's January 23 lockdown of 50 million people averted an additional 7,00,000 cases outside Wuhan, interventions one week and three weeks earlier may have brought down the number by 66% and 95%, respectively. In an interview, Dali Yang, Professor of political science at the University of Chicago and a leading expert on China's political system, explains how the epidemic slipped through the many layers of China's system during those 21 days. Edited excerpts:

We now know by end-December, many doctors in Wuhan were aware of a serious outbreak which some suspected was contagious, and by December 31, they had alerted the Wuhan Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). What should have happened next?

▪ First, we should understand the structure of the system. Every province, city and even district has its own CDC, but these are subordinate to the health commission at every level so they do not directly report to the national level. They belong to the municipal or provincial health administrations. The Wuhan CDC's December 31 statement [saying no proof of human-to-human transmission] was clearly a massive error. The biggest error, however, was the crackdown from that day telling doctors they could not speak about what was happening. It appears from the start, everything was done to downplay the severity of the situation rather than say, lets err on the side of caution in terms of the contagiousness.

At what level would the decision have been made to play it down?

▪ The [national] CDC people suspected something was much worse and reported it to the WHO the same day through the National Health Commission, which was the right protocol. They also shared the genetic sequence with the world relatively soon [by January 12]. But at the same time in Wuhan, consistently for so many days, they were saying this is not a serious issue. There were zero cases reported all the way until January 16. The Wuhan municipal leadership instituted the new criteria to keep the numbers down.

How relevant was the fact that Wuhan was hosting its annual Party Congress sessions from January 6 to 17?

▪ This was crucially important. This system has gotten used to the idea that you cannot allow anything to upset the political atmosphere during those times.

If China had acted earlier, say by January 7, it may have been an entirely different equation

What would have been the role of the national leadership in this time?

▪ We know the national authorities sent a team to Wuhan on December 31, which stayed for several days. I think they have emphasised the local authorities are the primary unit of responsibility, so they claim they deferred to the provincial leadership. There is also an issue in terms of ranking. Even if you send the Health Minister, he cannot simply order the provincial leader. The nature of the Chinese system is you tend to have shirking of responsibility, but when things get big, it's capable of decisive action, as in this case they did by locking down a city with 9 million people. That's not a decision that most other countries could have taken, which is why the Chinese are actually congratulating themselves, but the problem is by the time they locked it down 5 million people had left.

Does the fact that President Xi went to Myanmar on January 17 and 18 tell us something about how aware Beijing was?

▪ Until the middle of January, there were eminent people in the public health community who were looking at zero new cases being reported and thinking that with another wave of zero cases, we would be done! I do think people fell for what was being reported out of Wuhan.

China's CDC has internationally respected scientists. What explains why they were unable to react earlier?

▪ When China did respond nationally [after January 20], they were able to get a lot of people who dealt with SARS involved and that mattered hugely in their response. Only it was too late for the world. If they had acted earlier, say by January 7, it may have been an entirely different equation. The most important lesson is there has to be more transparency and an open environment for sharing and discussion. It was remarkable how you saw doctors were cowed into not speaking. It became almost like a group-think situation where even when everyone saw it was contagious, yet there was no public airing. No one was willing to shout this was contagious, we have to take action in Wuhan. And that, to me, is just tragic.

'No foreign-backed terror in Afghanistan'

Taliban says it's fighting occupation, asks India to take care of its Muslim minority

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI

Externally supported terrorism does not exist in Afghanistan, the Taliban said on Wednesday and urged India to ensure welfare of its Muslim community. Spokesman of the Taliban's Political Office, Suhail Shaheen, said the main problem of Afghanistan is foreign occupation and suggested India should not be at "loggerheads" with real Afghan aspirations.

"There is no externally sponsored terrorism. There are, on the one side, the Afghan people, a liberation force in the shape of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), struggling for liberation of the country. On the other side, there are the invading forces. It is more appropriate for India, whose people also have a shining history of struggle from Britain, not to give the name of terrorism to indigenous liberation movements," said Mr. Shaheen in an online interaction with *The Hindu*. Following the February 29 peace agreement with the U.S., the Taliban has been referring to itself as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen

Taliban's pronouncements on a set of long held Indian positions came a day after the Ministry of External Affairs reiterated and hinted at Pakistan's hand in fomenting terrorism inside Afghanistan and approved the choice of the team from the side of President Ashraf Ghani's government for the intra-Afghan negotiation.

"India has consistently supported an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled process for enduring peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan... which would lead to a peaceful and stable future for Afghanistan free from the scourge of externally sponsored terrorism," the Ministry of External Affairs said on April 1.

We are committed to minorities' rights and have condemned the attack on a Sikh temple

New starting point

The Taliban, however, clarified that it disagrees with some points in the Indian statement especially with the notion of "Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled peace process" that India has supported since the 1980s.

"There are sentences in this statement, we do not agree with. Afghan-led and Afghan-owned which in your opinion means Kabul administration-led and owned. On the basis of the agreement signed with the U.S., we talk to all Afghan sides and will hold intra-Afghan negotiations. In principle, they (talks) are not led or owned by Kabul," said Mr. Shaheen.

Mr. Shaheen pointed out that the new starting point of the intra-Afghan peace talk is the U.S.-Taliban peace agreement. "I think it is neither in India's interest to remain at loggerheads with the genuine aspirations of Afghan people."

The comments from the Taliban came after at least 25 persons, mostly Sikh citizens of Afghanistan including an Indian, were killed in a terror attack in Kabul on March 25 which was claimed by the Islamic State.

Mr. Shaheen said the Afghan Taliban disapproves of such attacks and will protect all communities of Afghanistan and urged the government of India to treat the Indian Muslim community without discrimination. "We are committed to minorities' rights and have strongly condemned the recent attack by Daesh (IS) on a Sikh minority temple. We also urge India to protect the rights of its Muslim minority. They are Indian citizens and your people."

Trump resists national shutdown

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump is resisting calls to issue a national stay-at-home order to stem the spread of the new coronavirus despite his administration's projections that tens of thousands of Americans are likely to be killed by the disease. One by one, though, States are increasingly pushing shutdown orders of their own.

Mr. Trump said on Wednesday he wants to give Governors' "flexibility" on whether a stay-at-home policy is the best option for their constituents but acknowledged that he's looking at limiting air and rail travel between hot spots within the U.S. "There are some states that are different," he said. "There are some states that don't have much of a problem."

Surgeon General Jerome Adams said the nation's federalist system leaves much of the authority on how to properly respond to catastrophes to State governors and local officials.

Wealthy, young, educated more likely to use Net during lockdown

In India, 57% of 18-29 year-olds use the Net or a smartphone

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
CHENNAI

Those who are wealthier, younger, and more educated are likely to stay more connected during the pandemic as countries institute various degrees of lockdown, new analysis released by the Pew Research Centre suggest.

The results are particularly significant as Internet and smartphone usage is more important than ever now. Surprisingly, India is an outlier compared to other emerging economies for its low proportion of Internet usage/smartphone ownership – 38% relative to, say, Kenya (48%) and Lebanon (89%). China and the countries in India's South Asian neighbourhood are not included in the list of 34 surveyed countries.

In more than 32 of the surveyed countries, at least half the population reported using the Internet occasionally or owning a smartphone. South Korea had the highest percentage of Internet users at 98%, while eight in 10 in Italy had access.

Age divide

Unsurprisingly, younger people in all 34 countries reported greater Internet usage than older people. Indonesia showed the biggest age-wise variation, with 89% of 18-29 year-olds reporting Internet usage or smartphone ownership compared to 24% of 50+ year-olds. Disparities are greater in emerging economies. For many countries, the differences in usage are negligible, if existent, between the 30-49 age group and the 18-29 age group. In India, 57% of 18-29 year-olds use the Internet or a smartphone compared to just 18% of 50+ year-olds.

Twenty-three percent of those with 'lower education' used the Internet in India compared to 69% of those with 'higher education'. In Israel, Canada, the U.K., Australia, Sweden, the Netherlands and South Korea, the difference in usage between the two demographics was less than 10%.

Across the set of 34 countries, those with incomes higher than the national median are more likely to report that they use the Internet than those with incomes below the median. For India these numbers are 51% and 27% respectively. There is a less than 10 point difference between the two income groups in only Australia, Spain, the Netherlands and South Korea.

Phone ownership

In India, 32% reported owing any mobile phone, 35% reported owning a mobile phone that isn't a smartphone, while 32% reported owning a smartphone. South Korea had 100% mobile phone penetration, with 97% saying they owned a smartphone. The extent of smartphone ownership in a country is positively correlated with higher GDP per capita as per the data.

ELSEWHERE

Jazz great Ellis Marsalis passes away aged 85

NEW YORK

Jazz great Ellis Marsalis died on Wednesday at the age of 85 after contracting the coronavirus, his son Branford said. The acclaimed American pianist and teacher — who featured on dozens of records over a musical career spanning several decades — was the father of trumpeter Wynton and saxophonist Branford. Born in New Orleans —the epicenter of the jazz world — in November 1934, Mr. Ellis recorded with heavyweights such as Cannonball and Nat Adderley, Marcus Roberts and Courtney Pine. Mr. Ellis was inducted into The Louisiana Music Hall of Fame in 2018. AFP

Amid virus threat, Biden sidelined by omnipresent Trump

The Democratic frontrunner is struggling for attention as the President dominates the airwaves

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

One month on from historically reclaiming Democratic presidential frontrunner status, Joe Biden is in physical and political isolation, basement-bound and largely unheard as Donald Trump commands Americans' attention with his coronavirus response.

It has been an awkward sidelining of an extraordinary comeback story.

After nearly self-imploding in the first three state contests in February, former Vice-President Biden turned his campaign around, winning the lion's share of the next 25 primaries to become the presumptive nominee over his rival Bernie Sanders.

Suddenly, Mr. Biden is struggling for attention during what would normally be a critical, high-profile point in a campaign.

In a situation unheard of in modern American politics, several States have postponed their primaries, mass rallies are paused and all in-person campaigning has ground to a halt.

Coronavirus is the inescapable news headline, and the President's megaphone during this ongoing tragedy is impossible to eclipse.

"Crises are fundamentally presidential moments, and given that, Biden just doesn't have the capacity to truly break in," Josh Pacek, a University of Michigan Professor and expert on political communication, told AFP by phone about the campaign ahead.

Mr. Trump, of course, is taking full advantage.

Daily White House briefings with him and his coronavirus task force now often roll past 90 minutes, with Mr. Trump spending significant chunks of time on his personal and administrative achievements.

Joe Biden

Basement broadcast

Mr. Biden, by contrast, is broadcasting from his basement, clamouring for air time even while acknowledging he is a former insider with no knowledge of current operations or access to internal administration reports. He accuses Mr. Trump of being "very slow to act" and downplaying the gravity of the crisis for weeks.

U.S. networks are giving Mr.Biden, 77, some exposure, and he strives to present himself as a leader with greater presidential bearing than Mr. Trump.

But even if Wisconsin defies mounting criticism and holds its primary on April 7 as scheduled, Mr. Biden would be deprived of his greatest political assets: his warm, empathetic manner and a blue-collar "here's-the-deal" delivery during face-to-face contact with voters.

"It doesn't worry me," Mr. Biden told CNN on Tuesday about the campaign moving online. "I'm sitting in my basement, there's a television studio set up down here," he said. "That's just going to have to do."

Mr. Trump, meanwhile, has dominated the airwaves. His job approval rating, underwater for years, has ticked up in the past 10 days, a common phenomenon for U.S. Presidents in the grips of a crisis.

But Mr. Pacek said the "rally 'round the flag effect" for Mr. Trump will be fleeting. He pointed to George Bush's job approval skyrocketing to 89% in early 1991 during the Gulf War. The Republican lost re-election 20 months later. By comparison, Mr. Trump's approval climbing only past 50% during an all-hands-on-deck emergency "portends somewhat poorly" for the President.

Iran, U.S. heat up war of words despite pandemic

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TEHRAN

Iran said on Thursday it "only acts in self-defence" after President Donald Trump warned it against attacks on U.S. troops in Iraq, as a new war of words heated up despite the pandemic.

Tensions between the arch-foes flared in Iraq where the U.S. deployed Patriot air defence missiles, prompting Iran to demand a withdrawal.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif tweeted that "unlike the U.S. –which surreptitiously lies, cheats & assassinates – Iran only acts in self-defence".

"Don't be misled by usual warmongers, AGAIN," he said, addressing Mr. Trump.

"Iran starts no wars but teaches lessons to those who do," he added.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif

Mr. Trump warned Iran on Wednesday that it would pay a "heavy price" in the event of further attacks on U.S. troops. He tweeted that "upon information and belief, Iran or its proxies are planning a sneak attack on U.S. troops and/or assets in Iraq".

In response, Mr. Zarif tweeted that "Iran has FRIENDS: No one can have MILLIONS of 'proxies'"

Screen is all I need Don't let physical distancing turn into social distancing
▪ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

Saturday night party

In the absence of pub-hopping, we go app-hopping, socialising with strangers in remote corners of the world

SWETA AKUNDI

"Hi, where are you from?" A man breathes into my ear. But he isn't talking to me, he is talking to another woman on this public group chat that I have entered on Rave. It is a multimedia messenger app that allows users to watch videos in sync, while also texting and speaking via VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol).

"Argentina," the woman breathes back while 14 of us are trying to watch *Annabelle: Creation* on Netflix. My phone pings, announcing that standup comic Aaquib Jaleel is live with House of T, hosting a quiz on Instagram. I discreetly leave the ASMR conversation at Rave to wash my ears and switch to the 'Gram.

Weekend pub-hopping has never really been my scene. But given that the world is currently practising physical distancing, the desperation for friends, acquaintances, or strangers to fill the silences in our homes is reaching a crescendo.

So, pub-hopping has today mutated into app-hopping. And that is something I can get behind. I've been cruising the dirty lanes of Craigslist since I was 17.

***

The Instagram live quiz is going well: I learnt that *Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs* is the first feature length animation, and Leo Fender, inventor of Fender guitars, couldn't actually play one.

Unexpectedly though, I get a call via the Dialup app, from QuarantineChat. This app arbitrarily connects you to any of its over-1,000 users across the globe. That is how I met Andrei, a Romanian warehouse worker who has been living near Yorkshire, UK, for the past three years.

We take five minutes to adjust to each others' accents, but in the next 30 minutes, the 49-year-old describes his life in Yorkshire, how he met his wife, and why he loves that she is as good at fixing things as he is. I tell him about all the cats and dogs I've known and how my parents live up in the hills, while I'm spending my years near the sea. "If I could give my 20-year-old self some advice, I'd tell him to live without fear, without worrying about what other people think of you," he says in his gruff, slow voice.

I am reminded of what Nishad, a 25-year-old from Mumbai I met through QuarantineChat, had told me about his experience speaking to a woman in her 50s, "There was so much warmth in her voice. You know she didn't spend her time texting people on screens, like people of our generation."

***

I can't dwell too much on philosophical discussions, however. Because I am super popular, I have a House Party scheduled in half an hour, and I have to slap on some lipstick for it. This is one of the precious few times I (virtually) meet fellow humans, and I'm not doing it in pyjamas. Not even if it is to play yet another game while facetiming with five buddies. We can get competitive.

I consider heading back to Rave after the House Party. But the scene there is dead: the *Shrek* watch party speaks a different language, with zero Eddie Murphy references, and the only person talking to me is a certain Diego asking if I'm on Snapchat.

Instead, I convince one of my friends to download Squad. I'm constantly on the lookout for new places to meet the same eight friends I have, and this particular app allows screen sharing. Which means no more screenshots, you can spill tea in real time as your friend's screen movements and videos come alive in yours.

Mind you, downloading these apps, including House Party and Zoom, among others, means giving over a whole lot of personal information to third parties. So you might want to rethink who's really spilling the tea here.

The moon is rising, and I open up a bottle of wine to drink with my college friends living in Italy, US, and Germany, over Google Hangouts. We might dim the lights and turn it into a dance party – we have already made a joint Spotify playlist. I need to sleep soon though; I have RSVP'd "yes" to a Brooklyn 99 Netflix Party with my sister for brunch.

HOMING IN

Staying indoors for a while? We have you covered. For your weekly **Watching List,** we have the National Award-winning filmmaker **Chezhiyan** sharing the list of movies and TV shows that he would recommend for readers

SRIVATSAN S

The Two Popes

Like its title, the movie is about the conflict between two popes, who are separated by ideologies. One is too conservative and the other is liberal. There are implications on the politics of Vatican City. But the movie is visually beautiful even though it is dialogue-heavy. The director Fernando Meirelles has done a fantastic job in retaining the emotional core of the movie.

A Twelve-Year Night

I loved this movie and was reminded of Vaikom Muhammad Basheer's *Mathilukal* novel. *A Twelve-Year Night* is both political and a survival drama. What was striking for me was the way sound was used as a character. It is based on the real-life story of the former Uruguayan President Jose Mujica.

Abstract: The Art of Design

The show is about reputed designers from all over the world. It offers a peek into the life of designers and their design concepts. For example, there is an episode about how the Instagram logo was designed. It is very interesting and I would strongly suggest this. I am also using this time to revisit *Breaking Bad*.

Tales by Light

I really liked *Tales by Light*, which is an insight into the world of photography. The series follows the life of sought-after photographers from Australia and the other countries. It is pensive and beautifully-shot. *Wild Wild Country* is another TV show I would recommend.

We would love to know how you are keeping busy at home. Tell us what you are watching at delhimetro@thehindu.co.in

FOOD SPOT

Comfort food in uncomfortable times

When Oriental style hot garlic sauce takes us back to better times

Feel good food (From above) Lamb in spicy mustar, Thai Green Chicken, Diced chicken in Soy and Ginger, Asian greens
▪ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

RAHUL VERMA

In these difficult times, it's nice to turn to something that can be called comfort food. My lunch-time favourite meal consists of *dal*, *chawal*, and crispy fried potatoes. And while the comfort food takes different forms in the evenings, one constant favourite of mine is shredded lamb, cooked in the Oriental style.

There was a time when I wouldn't have a Chinese meal if it didn't include shredded lamb in hot garlic sauce. We had it so often that the family finally revolted. I was forced to try out other kinds of lamb dishes, which I did - but the heart remained lost in my memories of lamb in hot garlic sauce.

After all these years, I think I have found a new object of worship. It's a dish called stir-fried sliced lamb spicy mustard. Last week, I was surfing the Net to see if I could order food from somewhere. We all wanted Oriental, after having feasted on *biryanis* and *qormas*, so I looked up some places, and zeroed in one when I saw that it had garnered several stars on Swiggy.

The place is called Oriental Mom (Ph no: 011-45552728) and has six delivery outlets. It does its own delivery but also goes through food apps. The base kitchen is in Pitampura. Most popular on their menu are the dimsums, which come with various kinds of fillings such as Crystal Vegetables, Kaffir Lime and Greens, Hunan Mushroom, Prawn with Truffle Oil, and Chicken with Scallion, Garlic and Shallots. The most popular of all is something called the Original Juicy Chicken.

I had ordered Diced Chicken, Soya, Ginger and Wine (₹ 345), Green Thai Chicken Curry (₹ 375), Asian Greens (₹ 295) and, to get back to my lamb saga, Stir Fried Sliced Lamb Spicy Mustard (₹ 365).

Before I tell you about the lamb, let me describe the other dishes. The greens were excellent -crispy pak choy, Chinese cabbage, broccoli and baby corn sautéed in light soya and garlic. I am very fond of Thai green curry, and this was rather nice, with pieces of ginger, a mildly sweet and aromatic sauce, and chunks of chicken which had soaked in the flavours. The diced chicken, nicely succulent, came in a strong soya-led sauce that I quite enjoyed.

But the dish that stole my heart was the lamb. I have never had Chinese lamb in a mustard sauce. But this worked really well. The sauce was so good that I actually lapped it up with a bit of plain rice at the end of the meal. It was sharp, without being pungent, and had a delicious aftertaste of heady mustard and chillies. The dishes were all a bit hot, but I am not complaining.

I see that the menu includes Pan-fried Fish with Spicy Garlic (₹ 395), Stir-fried Prawns in Black Pepper (₹ 495), Garlic Tofu (₹ 350), Crispy Lamb Hunan Style (₹ 455), Vegetarian Nasi Goring with Satay (₹ 290), Tangy Black Pepper Noodles (₹ 260 with chicken), and Chicken Fried Rice (₹ 240). The outfit has four main sauces -- soya-ginger, fragrant black bean, spicy garlic and spicy mustard. And the noodles are made from scratch, Oriental Mom tells us.

When the world is locked in, it's nice to find an open window. It's nicer still to find a new version of an old favourite. Comfort food, after all, can always move with the times.

The writer is a seasoned food critic

5 ONLINE EVENTS WORTH YOUR WHILE

ONLINE YOGA CLASSES

Mumbai-based fitness trainer Abhishek Sharma is conducting free online live yoga classes every morning. Each session includes elements of classical yoga and holistic fitness exercise, workshops and retreats. If you are not able to join the live session, you can replay it later and do it at your own time.
VENUE: Facebook.com/AbhishekSharmaYogaFitness
TIME: Weekdays 8:30 a.m.; Weekends 10 a.m.

READ AT HOME

Publishers Hachette India presents #IndiaReadsAtHome, a series of activities across their social media channels for the next few weeks. In addition to virtual author sessions that include book readings, essential exercises and cooking tutorials, there will also be book recommendations and a bookstagram challenge. Today's is to post a book set in the future.
VENUE: Facebook.com/HachetteIndia
TIME: 10 a.m. - 7:30 p.m.

FILM FEST

Purnam, a family of friends inspired by the praxis of purna yoga, along with Ritambhara, a space for contemplative conversations fostered by a community of seekers, is jointly hosting The New Emergence Film Festival. The fest will feature a film that is already available online and later the registered participants will discuss it on Zoom on Saturdays.
VENUE: Bit.ly/NewEmergenceREG
TIME: 8 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

AT HOME ACTIVITIES

Chennai-based children's publishing house Tulika Books has started free online activities around their books during this lockdown period. This will feature digital book reading and worksheet assignments by educators every day. Other activities include quiz programmes, simple maths, games and colouring. You can also post your imaginative creations on their social media.
VENUE: Tulikabooks.com
TIME: All day

ONLINE COMIC ACT

That Comedy Club is producing stand-up comedy shows on Instagram every night. Started on the first day of the nation-wide lockdown, they have a line-up of comedians who present jokes from their homes. It is a pay-as-you-like event and will feature the likes of Shamik Chakrabarti, Sumaira Shaikh and Neville Shah.
VENUE: Instagram.com/thatcomedyclub; register at Bookmyshow,com
TIME: 10 p.m.

TIME to start your sourdough

With minimal ingredients and a free schedule, bakers around the country are warming up to this bread and its intriguing starter

SHILPA NAIR ANAND

On the sourdough starter – a fermented mixture of water and flour used as a leavening agent – rests the fate of a boule of sourdough bread. Patience is a key ingredient. The starter demands feeding and attention till it is ready in five to seven days. With the COVID-19 lockdown, packed schedules have been cleared, and with the kind of time available, there is a surge of interest in making sourdough.

Bakers together

"Those who have wanted to bake now have the time for it," says Sujit Sumitran, the 'bread whisperer' from Goa. Over the past few years, Sujit has travelled across the country taking intensive, day-long classes on how to make this fermented bread, as well as hosted classes at his home in Goa.

Now, he has had many enquiries for online classes but so far he has demurred. "I can't ship the starter, then how?" he wonders, since he uses his own starter for his sessions, and then gives some to participants, so they can start making sourdough with it. He also has starters of varying vintages and geography.

A starter is the cultivation of wild yeast in a form that can be used for baking; wild yeast is present in all flour. It is used instead of yeast, for fermentation. Selvan Thandapani of Bengaluru's Sour House (sourhouse.in) has been, for the last one week, posting short tutorial videos of how to make a starter. In each video he shows how the starter should look, grow, be discarded and 'fed'.

Thandapani conducts workshops and retails too. He uses 20 gm of all-purpose flour mixed with an equal amount of water, stored in a 150-200 ml transparent container at room temperature in warm cities. The container should be loosely covered – either a cap or cheesecloth. Each day, after the first 24 hours, around three-fourths of it is discarded and more flour and water added to remaining mixture to 'feed' it. This is done for five to seven days.

Delhi-based expert Anita Tikoo, who conducts sourdough workshops, says the current shortage of bread in supermarkets and more time at hand are reasons for the surge in interest. "People need something to keep them occupied; they would have thought about baking earlier, but didn't have the time to follow up. Now there is time," she says.

She recently conducted a live sourdough starter session via her Instagram handle (a_madteaparty). When Tikoo announced it, she had more than 250 requests to participate. She has since been getting regular updates on the starters.

"There is a lot of excitement about it on Instagram, especially about making the starter from scratch. It is a great distraction and one can get very involved in the process," she continues, "I want to remove the air of mystery around it. It is not intimidating and everybody can do it."

Side treats

Sourdough bread is said to have many benefits as opposed to yeast-made bread, especially due to the use of the starter, making it easy to digest. Tikoo recently conducted a live session of how to make crumpets using the discard, "The discard is the leftover starter. You take a small amount of starter to make a fresh batch. The rest is called discard but can be used to cook a host of leavened breads from waffles and pancakes to pita and parathas." The starter or discard can be added to the flour and mixed, depending on the bread one intends to bake. Dough for traditional Indian breads such as parathas are not fermented, but adding starter leavens it.

This is Bengaluru-based Sufiya D's first tryst with sourdough. "I have wanted to do this for sometime but never had the time. Now with the lockdown, I finally got down to it," she says. She follows Tikoo and a few YouTubers for tips. It has been a week now and her starter is ready; she is excited about how it is turning out.

The approach of bakers is cautious; they don't want to waste ingredients and stretch resources. Like Anita Singh (whose Instagram handle is sourdoughbakesandfermentation) of Mumbai, who conducts workshops and bakes commercially. Singh says, "I have not been baking more as I have to be careful with the ingredients, since the lockdown is complete here. I use things that we have at home – wheat, millet, semolina – luckily we have a stock of whole wheat flour at home. I bake when we are done with our bread at home."

Adds Tikoo says, "It is also about mindfulness. Watching the starter grow is meditative and calming. You have to pay attention to it and be very involved with it. It also gives people a sense of community, of belonging, while inherently being a process suited to being on your own, being alone." She, and others like Thandapani, suggest naming the starter; Sufiya calls hers 'Bubbly' while Thandapani called one of his 'Gloopy'. As Tikoo says, "You think of it as your own, as something living – a pet. It occupies the mind positively."

GIVE THY NEIGHBOUR

Although Sujit Sumitran is not conducting online classes for the time being, he has his hands full with baking — for his neighbours. "Here, in Goa, people eat a lot of bread — in the morning and evening. Only lunch would be something else like rice. Bread is important and there is not too much of it available now," he says. One of the first batches of enriched loaves, he says on his Instagram handle, "has Goan jaggery, eggs, butter and milk instead of water." The inclusions on some are blue poppy seeds and lemon pepper.

Crust story Experiments with fermented foods like kombucha and sourdough are on a rise

▪ ANITA TIKOO, SELVAN THANDAPANI AND ALISON MURPHY

Now, 3D-printed face shields

The design for manufacturing the shield can be openly sourced, free of cost

▪ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SUSAN JOE PHILIP

It was the morning of the Janata Curfew. Ebin Ephrem Elavathingal, senior manager of AIC RAISE (an incubator backed by the Government of India under the NITI Aayog Programme); Hari Vigneshwaran, founder of Augment 3Di; and Vigneshwaran S, founder of Virtual Frontier Robotics were watching the news on television. "All of us are engineers and wanted to do something to help. Vigneshwaran told us about face shields being 3D-printed in a lab in Italy," says Ebin.

Over the next three hours, the team researched face shields and designs. "We could not find any open-source design and so we decided to develop one ourselves. Vigneshwaran and Hari have 3D printers and we put them to work. We did the entire discussion and designing over video calls," he adds.

Their first shield was ready on the same day, but the process took four hours. "So we reworked the design till each mask took an hour to make. We developed 350 masks and donated them to sanitation workers in Coimbatore. It covers the entire face and can be reused after cleaning with soap," Ebin says. Of the 350 shields, 250 were directly given to Coimbatore Medical College Hospital and ESI Hospital. "The rest was donated to Coimbatore Corporation-South Zone in association with Rathinam Group of Institutions," he says.

Soon after the group posted photographs of the product on their social media, requests flooded in from across the country. "Our production capacity was limited. So we decided to open-source our design. Now anyone can use it free of cost. All one has to do is feed the memory card with the design into the 3D printing press," Ebin explains.

The team now plans to move into mass production. "We hope to make 1000 masks a day. We are looking for donors who can support us. Each mask costs ₹90 to make." They are now working on a design to 3D-print ventilators. "It is a complex design. We have designed 60% of it. We should be done in the next few days. We hope to get a working model soon," Ebin concludes.

Call 7708019222 for details; visit Aicraise.com/facemask3dprint to download the design

POOCH CAFE

PEANUTS

HAGAR THE HORRIBLE

CALVIN AND HOBBES

TIGER

GRAFFITI

WUMO

HEALTH CAPSULES

by Brian Smith

PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13340

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

Across

1 Spiritedness (8)
5 50% (4)
9 Melodic (5)
10 Packed crowd of people (7)
11 Sea south of Texas (4,2,6)
13 Sharp vibrating sounds (6)
14 Butt of jokes (6)
17 No! – get out with you! (1,4,5,2)
20 Seafarer (7)
21 Sieved food reduced to pulp (5)
22 Support for putting things on (4)
23 In perfect health (4,4)

Down

1 Long depression containing a river (4)
2 Wart on the foot (7)
3 Illicit blood sport involving birds (12)
4 Inside information (3-3)
6 Old calculators (5)
7 Small dugouts for protection from hostile fire (8)
8 Get a move on! (4,2,6)
12 Hand-held grass cutter (8)
15 See (7)
16 Price for a service (6)
18 Monsters (5)
19 Lock-up room (4)

© GUARDIAN NEWS AND MEDIA LTD., 2016

The solution will appear on April 4, 2020.

Solution No. 13339

Movement of essential goods hit by disruptions

Fewer trucks plying with supplies, demand rising quickly; Ministry order to allow movement not percolating down

LALATENDU MISHRA
MUMBAI

With the country witnessing largescale disruptions in transportation network and supply chain on account of the COVID-19 spurred lockdown, the logistics sector is likely to face more hardships as current reserves are depleting and manufacturing is yet to pick up.

"The situation does not seem to be improving. Demand for movement of essentials goods is increasing frantically, but supply is not even close to matching it," said Abhishek Gupta, MD, Prakash Parcel Services Ltd.

"We are most likely entering a phase where supply will be disrupted very soon. Instructions from the Ministry of Home Affairs to allow trucks to operate has not percolated down yet in many places. Warehouses and factories, to unload trucks, have not been asked to open," he said. "The driver count per 100 trucks is now below 15 as compared to 58 before the virus outbreak. Not more than 10% of trucks are running and drivers are finding ways to return home," he said.

Given the shortage of labour, packing material and trucks, officials urge the Centre to resolve this quickly. ▪ M. GOVARTHAN

"In the short term, there is significant disruption to supply of all essential commodities and medicines, visible from the depleting stocks at various shops across India," said Pankaj Poddar, CEO, Cosmo Films, which supplies packaging materials to all top FMCG firms. "But there is always inventory lying at various stages, which is getting consumed. The government has allowed food processing and pharma firms to operate, though they, in turn, are dependent on their raw material and packaging material suppliers. Their suppliers too are dependent on their supply chain," he said.

He said this entire supply chain is broken with shortage of labour, packing material and trucks, and that the Centre must react quickly to this situation. "Or else we may have serious supply shortages by the third or fourth week of April," he added. Analysts said if the lockdown persists, the supply chain would be disrupted owing to low capacity utilisation due to lack of labour and restriction on people and material movement, running down of inventory and profiteering by unscrupulous firms and middlemen since they have the first-hand information on supplies.

COVID-19

Rohit Chaturvedi, CEO, Transport Hub, an IOT-based logistics firm, said, "Even a temporary disruption may be amplified due to middlemen's behaviour. To deal with this, the authorities must identify categories for which supply restriction may matter." He said the authorities have to deploy predictive analytics to forecast demand pattern in the current scenario and identify supply clusters to fulfil demand.

"They should connect consumers with producers directly with the help of technology and take help from e-commerce players like Amazon to understand the demand pattern and use their supply expertise," he said. Some experts have called for the need of deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other technologies to deal with the situation.

"Inventories of essentials already in the chain need to be unlocked immediately so while manufacturing and transport (inter-State) get back on track, local inventories with distributors are made available to retailers as required," a report by LogisticsNow said. As transport capacities have been disrupted by stranded trucks, there is likely to be a need for thousands of trained drivers to move essential supplies.

"Options, including the Army Supply Corps, the Railways, Concor, Freight Marketplaces and Freight Intelligence networks, along with large fleet owners / truckers who can provide transport capacity from long haul to last mile will enable an effective response," it said.

N95 and similar masks have seen production rising from 15 lakh a month to about 25 lakh now. ▪ S. SUDARSHAN

Production of masks, coveralls see increase

Sector's investments rise with demand

M. SOUNDARIYA PREETHA
COIMBATORE

With the spread of COVID-19 in the country, demand for protective gear such as masks and coveralls has shot up. These products, now made by a handful of manufacturers, are attracting investments because of increasing demand.

According to government sources, the current production of N95 masks in the country is about 75,000 to one lakh pieces a day and coverall suits 5,000.

The production of N95 and other types of similar versions of industrial masks was 10-15 lakh a month and it is now about 25 lakh a month (average). There are limitations in increasing production of these masks as the machinery needs to be imported.

There are 16 main producers of coveralls at present. Some major suppliers are expected to get into production shortly for coveralls and its numbers will increase. Against an annual consumption of 50,000 body coveralls a month before the outbreak, now, the demand is projected at almost one lakh a day. It is estimated that production will scale up to 50,000 a day in May.

Imports have started and more are in the pipeline and a clear position will be available by next week.

The Ministry of Textiles is taking steps to bring in new manufacturers and is facilitating logistics for supply of the gear. The products are tested by South India Textile Research Association for standards.

S.K. Sundararaman, MD, Shiva Texyarn and chairman, Indian Technical Textile Association, said an approximate estimate of the requirement of coveralls is 20 lakh pieces. Some manufacturers now produce reusable coverall suits.

"The Class III coveralls recommended was not generally made in India. Now, even for those who are getting into it, there is shortage in availability of fabric and seam sealing facility. We (Shiva Texyarn) started making coveralls a week ago and produce 2,000 pieces a day. In the case of masks too, there were just five N 95 suppliers. The existing textile manufacturers are trying to get into these segments now. But, there are challenges such as availability of fabric," he said.

Assocham for $120-bn stimulus

RBI rate cut, liquidity infusion only a 'short-term fix,' it says

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Industry body Assocham on Thursday urged the government to roll out a $100-$120 billion stimulus package to help revive all sectors of the economy, that has been battered by the COVID-19 outbreak and the subsequent nationwide lockdown.

Stressing that the Reserve Bank's decision on key policy rate cut and measures to infuse liquidity could just be seen as a 'quick short-term fix,' Assocham secretary general Deepak Sood said the government would need to do much more.

"This could include the Central government making use of the current scenario, wherein the gloom of deflation as well as recession, and lack of any inflation threat in the economy, to put together the stimulus package," said Mr. Sood.

Pump priming: Assocham says the package is essential to revive the economy hit by COVID-19. ▪ REUTERS

India also stands to gain about $50 billion in fuel import bill due to the fall in global crude prices, he said. Assocham said the government may go in for temporary suspension of the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Rules Act.

Clear renewable energy producers' dues: Centre

Don't delay payments, States told

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Centre has asked States to continue to buy power from renewable energy producers and clear their dues "on a regular basis as was being done prior to the lockdown."

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, on April 1, wrote to all States and electricity distribution companies after renewable energy producers complained that some states were curtailing purchase and payment for electricity generated from sources such as solar energy.

In the letter, the Ministry said the power ministry had recently issued instructions providing for a moratorium to distribution companies or discoms for making payments to electricity generating companies in the wake of COVID-19 outbreak and the following nationwide lockdown.

The Ministry, according to the letter reviewed by PTI, directed the discoms to accept invoices and billing through emails and make payments to renewable energy generators as per their power purchasing agreements (PPAs).

Manufacturing grows slowest in four months

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The country's manufacturing sector activity grew at the slowest rate in four months during March, hampered by softer rises in new business as international demand faltered owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, a monthly survey said on Thursday.

The headline seasonally adjusted IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index fell to 51.8 in March, from 54.5 in February, signalling the slowest improvement in business conditions since November 2019.

Motor third party, health renewal dates extended

Policy renewals allowed till April 21

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Motor third party insurance and health insurance policies whose renewal date falls during the lockdown period (March 25 to April 14) can be renewed till April 21.

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) shared the details of a notification issued in this regard by the Department of Financial Services with insurers. The regulator said the Centre had permitted motor vehicle TP and health insurance policyholders, whose policies fall due for renewal during the 21 days to make premium payment by April 21.

The relaxation is for those who are unable to make payment towards the renewal in view of the situation as a result of COVID 19. "Insurers shall ensure adequate arrangements are made for ease of payment of premium by policyholders during the week following the end of the lockdown period (the last date being April 21)," IRDAI said.

The regulator said such policyholders would be required to pay the renewal premium for the entire period of 12 months from the date it was due, by April 21. It directed the insurers to communicate details to the policyholders concerned "immediately, in a manner that is correctly understood by them" as well as inform agents and intermediaries.

When the policy is issued, on receipt of the premium before April 21, "it shall be ensured that the period of cover commences from the date the renewal was due without any break in the policy period."

Hero Moto, TVS Motor sales fall on virus impact in March

Hero's sales decline 42% from a year earlier

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI/CHENNAI

Hero MotoCorp, the country's largest two-wheeler maker, sold a total of over 3.34 lakh vehicles in March 2020, of which over 3.16 lakh two-wheelers were sold in the domestic market.

In comparison, the company had sold over 5.8 lakh vehicles in March 2019, of which more than 5.53 lakh two-wheelers were sold in the domestic market.

"In March 2020, the auto industry and the entire global economy faced an unprecedented disruption, owing to the coronavirus. COVID-19 has resulted in interrupted supply chains, halted production and lockdown, leading to no retails," the company said in a statement.

It added that with the virus situation escalating through the month of March, Hero MotoCorp setup a Business Continuity Task Force and rolled out measures to ensure health and safety of its employees and partners.

Hero MotoCorp has also elevated Naveen Chauhan as head of Sales and After Sales. In 2019-20, the company sold over 62.31 lakh units in the domestic market, as against sales of over 76.12 lakh units in the previous year.

Chennai-based TVS Motor said it registered sales of over 1.44 lakh units in March 2020 compared with over 3.25 lakh units in March 2019. It added that domestic two-wheeler sales stood at 94,103 units in March 2020 as against 2,47,694 units in March 2019. The company said it had launched the BS-VI version of its entire portfolio, and there were adequate stocks in the market when it reopens.

"Due to the lockdown, there was a significant loss in production, and also vehicle stock in the factory for both domestic and international markets, which could not be dispatched," it added.

Bajaj Fin tells customers to write for EMI refund

'Make request within 5 days of debit'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Bajaj Finserv has asked its customers to write within five days from the time their equated monthly instalment (EMI) has been debited, in case the customer wants a refund.

"In the event of the loan EMI having been debited, requests for moratorium should reach BFL no later than 5 days of date of EMI debit from the bank account," Bajaj Finserv said.

"Refund of such EMIs which have got debited from the bank account will be processed in 10 working days from the date of receipt of such requests," it added.

Since most of the EMIs of Bajaj Finserv are processed on the second of every month a lot of customers were unable to apply for a request for a moratorium.

Refund of such EMIs that have been debited from the bank account will be processed in ten working days

The non-banking finance company has also said new loans sanctioned and availed after March 1 will not be eligible for moratorium.

"Non-payment of EMIs for loans sanctioned or availed after March 1, 2020, will lead to tagging of loans as overdue and delinquent and will be reported to credit bureaus as well," the company said.

While offering moratorium, Bajaj Fin has put a condition that to become eligible for moratorium, customers should not have more than two EMIs due in any of their loans.

Contribution towards COVID-19 relief

Company Name	Amount (₹ Crore)
ONGC	300
NTPC	257
IOC	225
Power Grid	200
BPCL	175
HPCL	120
LIC of India	105
Petronet LNG	100
Infosys	50
Hero Group	50
GAIL	50
SAIL	30
Oil India	38
Dalmia Bharat	25
Sundaram Finance group	20

DONATIONS LISTED ARE TOWARDS PM-CARES FUND AND OTHER STATE FUNDS (WITH PTI INPUTS)

Rating downgrades outpace upgrades, says Crisil

Moody's changes banking sector outlook to 'negative'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The impact of a slowing economy has started reflecting in rating actions with downgrades (469) outnumbering upgrades (360) in the second half of fiscal 2020, rating agency Crisil said on Thursday.

As a result, the credit ratio has dropped to 0.77 times compared with 1.21 times in the first half. A ratio below one indicates more downgrades than upgrades.

Over the near to medium term, credit quality trends would be driven by the ability of companies to rebound from the near-standstill demand situation, it said,

"We foresee India Inc's credit quality deteriorating in the near-term. Our study of 35 sectors, both from manufacturing and services, however, shows sharp variation in resilience in a post-Covid-19 landscape," Gurpreet Chhatwal, president, Crisil Ratings, said.

On non-banking finance firms, Crisil said the liabilities side could pose challenges for companies with high share of capital market borrowings.

This is because no moratorium has been announced so far for capital market borrowings (such as bonds and commercial paper) and repayments on these will have to be made on time, during a period when collections would be impacted significantly.

Separately, Moody's Investors Service has changed the country's banking sector outlook to 'negative' as the virus outbreak and bank default prospects add to risks.

"A sharp decline in economic activity and a rise in unemployment will lead to a deterioration of household and corporate finances, which will result in increases in delinquencies," it said.

Aurobindo, Novartis call off $1-bn Sandoz deal

Transaction could not get U.S. FTC nod

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Aurobindo Pharma and Novartis have called off their almost $1 billion deal pertaining to U.S. generic oral solids and dermatology businesses of Sandoz.

"This decision was taken as approval from the U.S. Federal Trade Commission for the transaction was not obtained within the anticipated timelines," Aurobindo Pharma and Novartis said.

As part of the proposed transaction, for which a definitive agreement was announced in September 2018, Aurobindo was to acquire commercial operations and three manufacturing facilities in the U.S. from Sandoz Inc., a Novartis division. While announcing the mutual agreement with Aurobindo to terminate the pact, Novartis said Sandoz will continue to operate its oral solids and dermatology business as part of the Sandoz U.S. business.

Novartis agreed to sell select portions of its Sandoz U.S. portfolio, specifically the Sandoz U.S. dermatology business and generic U.S. oral solids portfolio to Aurobindo Pharma USA Inc., for $900 million in cash plus $100 million of potential earn-outs.

TAFE's free tractor rental plan for ryots

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

TAFE has announced a free tractor rental scheme through its JFarm Services platform on the Uzhavan App. The scheme will be available for 90 days, starting April 1, across 30 districts of Tamil Nadu.

Under this, TAFE would offer more than 4,400 of its Massey Ferguson and Eicher tractors and 10,500 implements on a free-of-cost rental basis.

"The rabi season is crucial to the farmers of Tamil Nadu. At this crucial juncture, TAFE seeks to support small and marginal farmers to tide over the crisis caused by COVID-19 by offering free rental services of Massey Ferguson and Eicher tractors," said Mallika Srinivasan, CMD of the company.

TV viewership up 37% in first week of lockdown

News consumption sees 298% growth

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Television viewership has seen a sharp increase of 37% from March 21 to 27 as compared to the pre-lockdown period from January 11 to 31.

The TV consumption data for the first week of the lockdown was released by BARC India-Nielsen on Thursday.

The sharp increase is on account of people staying at home during the lockdown and watching news and movies, as per the findings.

This period witnessed the highest-ever TV viewing at 1.20 trillion minutes. And 622 million new viewers were found watching TV for 4 hours 40 minutes daily.

While news saw a growth of 298%, business news grew 180% in viewership. Infotainment clocked a growth of 63%, while movies saw 56% growth in viewership. This is against the 3% growth in general entertainment content (GEC) viewing.

"There has been a huge change in momentum. This is the good time for advertisers to build brands, especially food and beverage brands, on television," said Sunil Lulla, CEO, BARC India. The week witnessed the return of the 1986 produced Ramayan, which garnered a viewership of 51 million on Saturday and Sunday.

"The re-telecast of Ramayan garnered the highest ever rating to a Hindi GEC show since 2015," he said.

These was also a significant rise in smartphone content consumption across geographies, socio-economic classes and age groups.

Tokyo Olympic Games postponement an advantage for India: Herrmann

Youngsters will emerge stronger in a year's time, says High Performance Director

ATHLETICS

STAN RAYAN
KOCHI

For almost the whole of last year, India's preparations in athletics for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics seemed riddled with problems. Confirmation of these fears came at the 2019 Asian championships in Doha, where the country could win just two golds compared to eight at the Jakarta Asian Games just eight months earlier.

Now, the move to postpone the Olympics to 2021 could see stars like javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra and long jumper M. Sreeshankar emerge stronger, feels Volker Herrmann, the Athletics Federation of India's High Performance Director.

Volker Herrmann.

In good shape

"Both of them were in very good shape, they could have come up with very good results this year. But they will be a year older and since they are very young, I believe they might be able to do even better in 2021," said the German in a chat with *The Hindu* from Patiala.

"We have a very young team, which I think is a huge plus. Hopefully, the pandemic will be over soon and we hope to conduct a few competitions by the end of September or October. I think they will start the international season by April or May next year. We have one year to prepare, so this postponement is actually an advantage for us," he said.

And, it's not just the two top stars who stand to gain.

"In the 400m group, we have Hima Das, Anjali Devi and Vismaya, we have some young boys like Amoj Jacob, A. Dharun and 400m hurdler Jabir... several of our athletes are actually below the age of 24-25, which means they have at least one Olympic cycle to show what they are capable of.

"And Neeraj is not the only javelin thrower. We have Shivpal Yadav who is 25, we have Rohit Yadav who is 19."

Big burden: Herrmann says expecting an Olympic medal from Neeraj next year could put too much pressure on him. ▪ AP

"We have a very young 4x100m women's team which has a chance to qualify for the Olympics and we have a couple of distance runners like Lili Das. The more experienced athletes are Poovamma and the men's 400m runners Muhammed Anas and Arokia Rajiv and middle-distance runner Jinson Johnson.

Apart from that, most of our athletes are young so they will not only have a chance to compete in 2021 but in 2024 as well," he said.

However, Herrmann felt that expecting an Olympic medal from Neeraj next year could put too much pressure on the youngster.

Tough competition

"Competition in javelin is very tough, there are a couple of throwers who are capable of going over 90m. Neeraj is definitely one of them. He has the potential. At the same time, it will also be his first Olympics. Often young athletes need to get one Olympic cycle. I don't want to pressurise him.

I think it's better for him to aim for the final and if you're among the top eight, anything can happen. But I don't want to say that Neeraj will win a medal, that's a bit too early. Of course, we will all be happy if he does. But I think that should be his goal for 2024," Herrmann said.

Want to take on World champions?

Contribute to PM-CARES while playing Anand, Humpy and others

CHESS

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

Viswanathan Anand is stranded in Frankfurt, Koneru Humpy is managing her home in Vijayawada, while P. Harikrishna is in Prague and B. Adhiban in Chennai. They – along with Vidit Gujrathi in Nashik and Dronavalli Harika in Hyderabad – will log into their computers at 6.30 p.m. on April 11 to take on the rest of the world. For a noble cause.

India's top four men and two women will play multiple games against chess players from across the world on the portal *chess.com* to support the PM-CARES fund. Those who want may play against some of the biggest names in international chess while also contributing towards India's fight against coronavirus.

Anand.
▪ FILE PHOTO: K.V.S. GIRI

Humpy.
▪ FILE PHOTO: V. RAJU

Harikrishna.
▪ FILE PHOTO: RAJEEV BHATT

At *chess.com*'s simultaneous event, the stars will make their moves on 20 boards each. A guaranteed game against Anand requires a minimum donation of $150. However, a $25 registration fetches the chance to play any one of the six stars (it could be Anand too). Besides, the three biggest donors will get to play against Anand on additional boards during the live stream on *chess.com/tv*.

For a good cause

The five-time World champion is looking forward to the event. "We thought chess fans would enjoy this idea of playing the Indian team and face off with some strong Grandmasters," Anand told *The Hindu* from Frankfurt on Thursday.

"I hope we all will have some fun and raise some money for a good cause."

Humpy, the women's World No. 2, is also glad to be part of the event.

"When *chess.com* approached me with the idea, I immediately agreed," she said. "It sounds very interesting; I think it is for the first time that the top Indian players are coming together for something like this."

Harika.
▪ FILE PHOTO: V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

Gambhir's latest gesture

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Gautam Gambhir has decided to contribute his two years' salary as an MP to the PM-CARES Fund to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.

"People ask what can their country do for them. The real question is what can you do for your country? I am donating my 2 year's salary to #PMCaresFund. You should come forward too," tweeted Gambhir.

"I'm Duty-bound and honoured to contribute Rs 200,000/- to @PMCares, Rs 150,000/- to @TelanganaCMO & Rs 50,000/- to Sec Cantt Board," tweeted Indian cricket team fielding coach R. Sridhar.

Gautam Gambhir.
▪ FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

Shooter Apurvi Chandela also contributed ₹5,00,000 – ₹3,00,000 to PM-CARES Fund and ₹2,00,000 to Rajasthan CM's relief fund. Badminton Association of India has donated ₹10 lakh.

Shah Rukh's initiative

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Kolkata Knight Riders' owner Shah Rukh Khan on Thursday announced a series of initiatives by his group of companies to fight the COVID-19 crisis.

Red Chillies Entertainment, Meer Foundation and Red Chillies VFX will contribute to PM-CARES and the Maharashtra CM's relief fund apart from 50,000 protective equipment to healthcare providers in West Bengal and Maharashtra. The group will also give daily food requirements to more than 5500 families for at least a month and 2000 freshly cooked meals every-

Shah Rukh Khan.

day to hospitals in Mumbai, three lakh meal kits in Mumbai for at least a month, and essential grocery items to over 2500 daily workers for at least a month in Delhi.

Stokes to test skills at virtual Esports GP

S. DIPAK RAGAV

England all-rounder Ben Stokes will trade his cricketing gear for some virtual fun when he competes in the Formula One Esports race this Sunday (April 5).

With the F1 season affected by the pandemic, the sport is planning to run virtual races, on the scheduled race weekends which have been cancelled, with gamers, celebrities and F1 drivers taking part..

The first such race was held on March 22, the day the Bahrain GP was supposed to be held.

The second round will see current Formula 1 drivers Charles Leclerc, Alex Albon, George Russell, Lando Norris and Nicholas Latifi taking part.

Ben Stokes. ▪ REUTERS

The F1 quintet will be joined by former driver Johnny Herbert, who finished 13th in the inaugural race in Bahrain, as well as a host of other stars, including Stokes, with more names set to be announced in the coming days.

This weekend's virtual Grand Prix is the second in the new F1 Esports Virtual Grand Prix series, which gives fans the chance to watch Formula 1 races virtually, despite the lockdown due to COVID-19.

The race will take place at the Albert Park track, traditionally used for the Australian Grand Prix, on the weekend originally scheduled for Hanoi's inaugural Street Circuit race in Vietnam.

The broadcast, which will be available on the official Formula 1 YouTube, Twitch and Facebook channels, will begin at 00.30 IST (Monday).

Bach thanks PM Modi for support

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

IOC president Thomas Bach thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his unflinching support to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, which has now been shifted to 2021.

In a letter to Modi, dated April 1, Bach said he was "grateful" to the PM for his support to the Tokyo Games during the recent G20 Leaders' Summit held via a video conference.

COVID-19 IMPACT

Tiger-Phil to stage event to help relief efforts

NEW YORK

Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson are in talks to stage a golf event to help coronavirus relief efforts that would also include NFL stars Tom Brady and Peyton Manning, according to reports. Golf.com and CNBC reported the 18-hole match will feature two-player teams. AFP

Boateng fined for visiting son 'without permission'

PARIS

Bayern Munich has fined Jerome Boateng for leaving the city "without permission", an act in breach of the strict rules of confinement imposed due to COVID-19. The 31-year-old had left the city to visit his sick son and was involved in a minor

road accident on Tuesday. Bayern did not specify the fine amount, which was being donated to local hospitals. AFP

Spanish league wants mini-camp, testing

MADRID

The Spanish league is putting together a detailed plan to get teams ready when the league restarts, recommending a mini-pre-season and a large number of tests for players, their close relatives and club employees. The protocol prepared by the league gives the first glimpse at what some of the top European leagues may be preparing for when competitions resume following the pandemic. AFP

Mental strain to wait for Games will take toll: Biles

NEW YORK

Gymnast Simone Biles says coping with the mental strain of waiting another year for the Olympics will take a heavy toll by 2021. "Physically I have no doubt that my coaches will get me back in shape. But mentally going another year, I think that's what's going to take a toll on most athletes." AFP

Lewis of 'DLS method' fame passes away

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Tony Lewis, one of the men behind the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern (DLS) method used in weather-affected limited-overs matches, has died aged 78, the England and Wales Cricket Board announced on Wednesday.

"Tony, alongside fellow mathematician Frank Duckworth, devised the Duckworth-Lewis method which was introduced in 1997 and adopted officially by the ICC (International Cricket Council) in 1999.

"Renamed the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern Method in 2014, the mathematical formula continues to be used in rain reduced limited overs cricket games across the globe," said an ECB statement.

A career academic, and not the Welshman of the same name who captained England, Lewis received an MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) for his services to cricket and mathematics in 2010. The big difference between the DLS and previous methods was that it gave credit to sides defending a target for taking wickets as well as chasing sides for scoring runs.

Tony Lewis. ▪ GETTY IMAGES

Significantly, this meant the target could be adjusted proportionately in the event of more than one stoppage.

An enduring criticism of the system is that it is difficult to understand without having access to a chart that shows where teams need to be over by over, for however many wickets they have lost.

But the sight of a D/L target soon became a familiar feature on cricket scoreboards around the world.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12900

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles

To play an interactive version of this crossword online, scan the QR code

ACROSS

1 Shy, love the heartless wolf (6)
4 Incentive to behead for disloyalty (6)
9 Boyfriend starts by enlisting an understudy (4)
10 Concise diet of biscuit (10)
11 First off, imagine odd conundrum (6)
12 Takes for granted first page of summaries (8)
13 American birds murder loved ones, we hear (9)
15 Righteousness of baked dish at Turkey's boundaries (5)
16 Noose for girl in love (5)
18 Bans me coming back to watering holes, departs (9)
22 Fabric for spies' relatives (8)
23 Run away from Central Europe for wool (6)
25 Out of the blue, yet, doctors refuse none (10)
26 Implements rise rapidly from end to end (4)
27 Barbed alien in distress signals Oriental (6)
28 Vipers have calculators (6)

DOWN

1 Enchain doctor in South Indian city (7)
2 Possibly no guy is not new (5)
3 One who makes will starts tallying property (7)
5 Oriental returns, makes contact with judge (6)
6 Covering his ground, cook... (9)
7 ... is most close to eastern building (7)
8 Isolated to protect madmen at sea (13)
14 Oaf protects remains from attacks (6,3)
17 Sailor, starts off healthy, starts speaking to crowds (7)
19 Connected with a second offence, was penalized (7)
20 Odd dean, twenty, from start to finish, requests repeats (7)
21 Athletes from Osaka even rise in revolt (6)
24 Gazelle, say, shrugs off worker to run away (5)

(set by Anon)

SUDOKU

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

No.SS4673 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

Solution to puzzle 12899

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

The Infinite and the finite

The world in which beings enter is full of misery and is impermanent, warns the Lord in the Gita. Still, many either fail to grasp the full import of this warning or easily forget it when they get drawn to the compulsive worldly attractions. Scriptures reiterate that a clear perception of the Paramatma jivatma relationship is the first step in the sadana to insulate oneself from the pulls of the world while being very much in it, pointed out Swami Anubhavananda Saraswati in a discourse.

A frog that is confined to the limited water in a well has no idea of the vast expanse of the water that the ocean stands for; whereas, the ocean dwelling fish experiences this sense of immeasurableness at all times. The Upanishads explain that before creation Paramatma alone existed. Through His Maya He became the world and entered into it as the Jiva, or the individual self. So He is the antaratma in every being, the eternal and imperishable aspect and is forever responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the entire universe. But He remains unaffected and distant at all times.

In every being, the atma is the eternal essence, though one is subject to various experiences in many births. So the present life is transitory and is connected to one's past life and it determines the next life as well. This means all beings are part of continuous existence. When one awakens to the awareness of higher pursuits than mere worldly goals, and consciously takes up responsibility for his life and aims to purify the mind by unselfish acts, worship, etc, his sense of discrimination also develops. He can sift the real from the unreal and seek the real alone. This subtle mental exercise is carried over through various births, and finally he comes to realise the infinite nature of the atma within.

Enterprising players find the space to train

Full marks to the young talent for adapting to the situation arising out of the lockdown

TENNIS

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

There is a saree drying over a clothesline which serves as the net. Yuki Bhambri volleys and jumps up for an imaginary overhead smash. The drill continues for a few minutes as Prateek Bhambri, a former National junior champion who coaches sister Prerna Bhambri, helps in Yuki's training by throwing balls from a bucket.

If that is the video doing the rounds on social media, cut to Ahmedabad, where Zeel Desai has her father Mehul doing the job of ball-thrower.

Sharpening her skills: Zeel Desai engaged in a rally with father Mehul. ▪SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

In front of her home, over a garden bench that serves as the net, Zeel keeps hitting forehands and backhands. She also uses the terrace to hone her skills, using the wall as a net.

Mehul said he was happy to keep his daughter occupied as she was getting bored at home.

"I thought it could just freshen her up a bit, having a racquet in her hands. She also does fitness routines for an hour daily. Staying at home can control the number of coronavirus cases," he said.

Quick and proactive

Australian coach Todd Clark, who has been guiding Zeel at the Ahmedabad Racquet Academy (ARA), said: "Even though a lockdown is inconvenient in India, the government's action has been quick and proactive.

"We have created an ARA WhatsApp group. Daily, we provide players fitness programmes and mental challenges which they have to complete.

"Though everyone is at home, we are still creating a competitive atmosphere," revealed Clark, who is based in Ahmedabad.

Todd and Zeel were in Tunisia when the ITF cancelled the tournament, forcing everyone to fly home before the borders were sealed.

Healthy trend

With the International Tennis Federation (ITF) announcing that there would be no play till July 8, this is a healthy trend as the players are utilising the time on hand instead of worrying about things beyond their control.

Many videos of enterprising tennis players, finding the space to stay healthy and active during the lockdown, are doing the rounds. In the Capital, coaches Sachin Singh and Chandra Bhushan have been sharing videos of their trainees doing physical training, yoga and wall practice.

The tennis fraternity deserves full marks for adapting to the situation and making the best use of it.

Former Wimbledon champions saddened

AGENCIES
LONDON

The Wimbledon tennis championships were cancelled for the first time since the Second World War on Wednesday. Here are some reactions from former champions to the Grand Slam – originally scheduled for June 29-July 12 – being cancelled for the first time in 75 years.

Boris Becker: "The problem is the surface, you only have the summer months to prepare and ultimately play on the best grass courts which is usually the case at Queen's and Wimbledon.

"But in order to do so the grass courts need much more preparation time than any other surface. On grass you can only play in the summer months."

Andy Murray: "Very sad that Wimbledon has been cancelled this year but with all that is going on in the world right now, everyone's health is definitely the most important thing!"

Pat Cash: "These are just very weird and strange times. For me, it's just a big kick in the gut, because it's a tournament I love and a tournament that so many love."

Billie Jean King: "I fully understand and support the decision of the committee. I've been fortunate to go to Wimbledon every year since 1961 and I am certainly going to miss this year."

Petra Kvitova: "Definitely a tough one to take... Not only is it a special tournament to me, but it's a tournament that has been part of history for so long that it will leave a big hole in the calendar.

"I will missing playing on the beautiful grass and wearing my whites, but of course we know it will be back better than ever next year. And maybe we will all appreciate it even more!"

Online classes ensure training is not impacted

Coach Sushrutha Reddy feels Zoom a better platform to teach a group

CHESS

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

When the warning signals began to emerge from China a few weeks ago, Sushrutha Reddy felt he should be prepared. It didn't matter he was living in Bengaluru, far away from the epicentre of the coronavirus outbreak.

A chess coach, he knew that he would have to explore more ways of reaching out to his trainees online.

R.B. Ramesh.
▪FILE PHOTO: R. RAGU

More than anticipated

But the demand to learn the game through the internet was more than he anticipated once the lockdown in India began. That has been the case around the globe. However, there has been no compromise in the quality of training.

Unlike popular sports like football or cricket, chess can be taught flawlessly within the confines of your room, provided you have internet access.

Conducting chess classes online is nothing new. India's best-known trainer R.B. Ramesh has been doing it for the last 15 years. But what is new is that more coaches and wards have opted for it because of the lockdown in several countries.

"Normally I get new students during the school vacation, but more than 50 – including a few from overseas – have joined over the last couple of weeks," said Sushrutha. "I now conduct lessons online to some 85 students right through the day."

Chennai-based T.J. Suresh Kumar said the spurt in numbers is largely due to parents' belief that chess will keep their children occupied when schools are closed. "Coaches like me don't have any other option but to go online," he said.

Pravin Thipsay pointed out that online coaching had its own advantages. "In a city like Mumbai, where I am living, travelling can be such a huge problem," said the veteran Grandmaster. "Now you can train someone even till 10 p.m. Of late, I have been having more students online than offline."

But for Ramesh, much of his time used to be spent at his academy, Chess Gurukul, before the lockdown. He trains some of India's brightest prospects like R. Praggnanandhaa and Aravindh Chithambaram. "Now I teach all of them online," he said.

Multiple platforms

There are multiple platforms to reach out to the students. Skype appears to be preferred the choice since it is free. But Sushrutha has found out that Zoom works better when you have to teach a group. "I had also tried Cisco Webex, which too was useful," he said.

"Zoom may not be free, but when you have a reasonable number of students, you can easily cover the cost."

Carlsen launches richest online event

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

With scores of chess tournaments cancelled worldwide owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, World champion Magnus Carlsen has come up with a $250,000-online event for eight elite players.

The Magnus Carlsen Invitational will be played from April 18 to May 3 with shorter time controls.

Magnus Carlsen.
▪FILE PHOTO: RAJEEV BHATT

Participant list

The list of participants for the world's richest online event will be announced soon. Live action with commentary in nine languages will be available on *Chess24.com*.

Commenting on the initative, Carlsen said, "This is a historic moment for chess, and given that it's possible to continue top professional play in an online environment, we have not only the opportunity but the responsibility to players and fans around the world who need a distraction when no other live, competitive sport is being played."

The format involves seven rounds of single round-robin where each match features four rapid games, the time control being 15 minutes each plus 10-second increment for every move.

The winner of each match gets three points and loser gets none.

If the match ends 2-2, an Armageddon game (where the player with white pieces gets five minutes on the clock and black, four) will decide the winner. The winner gets two points and the loser, one.

The top four players will be involved in a knockout semifinals.

The semifinals, third-place match and final will use the same four-game rapid format to decide the winner.

AICF's new secretary refutes Chauhan's charges

Deshpande says Venketrama Raja has no need to cover up for anybody

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

The newly nominated secretary of the All India Chess Federation (AICF), Vijay Deshpande, has refuted the charges made by predecessor Bharat Singh Chauhan and has also questioned his actions.

On Tuesday, AICF president P.R. Venketrama Raja had removed Chauhan from the post of secretary. Soon after, Chauhan shot off a letter to all the 'stakeholders', mentioning that he continued to be the secretary.

Reacting to Chauhan's allegation that Raja's action was a "malicious attempt to cover his tracks", Deshpande said, "Chauhan should read the court order carefully and then challenge it. Raja has no need to cover up for anybody. Having made a huge contribution to chess, Raja is also known as the first sponsor of Viswanathan Anand. He does not require any certification from Chauhan."

Irrelevant, meaningless

Despande described Chauhan's charge that Raja removed him to save the All Marathi Chess Association (AMCA) as "irrelevant and meaningless."

Chauhan had pointed out AMCA's delay in submitting the accounts to the State authorities after availing a grant of ₹2 crore for holding the World Youth Chess Championship (WYCC) in Mumbai last October, and that Raja was trying to save it.

"What has AICF or its president got to do with this? The Maharashtra government has asked for the expenditure statement of the WYCC. The statement is now with the special auditors nominated for the purpose. As soon as the AMCA gets the certified audit report, it will be submitted. What is there to save AMCA?" wondered Deshpande.

The biggest challenge will be mental fatigue, says Arif

Being confined indoors for such a long time could cause problems

BADMINTON

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM
HYDERABAD

Renowned badminton coach S.M. Arif feels the biggest challenge any athlete will face after the lockdown will be mental fatigue.

"Athletes – or for that matter any individual – used to busy routines and now confined indoors for such a long time might well face this kind of a challenge. So, it is imperative to do everything possible to avoid it," says Arif.

S.M. Arif.
▪FILE PHOTO: V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

The Dronacharya awardee says he is doing, right now, what he has never done in his 46 years of coaching – stretching exercises on the rooftop of his residence and interactions over the phone with his trainees.

The 76-year-old, whose coaching with national teams started four decades ago, has always been a regular at the Fateh Maidan, his 'second home'.

"This happens to be the longest break for me, beating the previous one during the last General Elections," Arif says in a chat with *The Hindu*.

How difficult is it? "For me, it has been a different kind of challenge. Though I retired 16 years ago, I continue to visit the Fateh Maidan and offer coaching free of cost. I can't just be sitting at home. I love being with the trainees," he says.

It's not just athletes!

"So, it is not just the athletes who are hit badly. Coaches find it extremely challenging, too! And, being unsure of what is in store, we are keeping our fingers crossed," says the coach, the first to produce international medalists in badminton from India since joining the national panel of coaches in 1974.

"There are no options but to stay indoors for anyone, given the grim scenario. But my genuine concern is that the players do not get too rusty," he feels.

What is his advice to the trainees? "Just to do minimum exercises possible at home to maintain basic fitness levels. Too much of rest is a scary thing," says Arif, who introduced the likes of Manoj Kumar, Praveen Kumar, Gopi Chand, and Saina Nehwal to the world of badminton.

How does he keep himself occupied? "Well, that is another huge task. I have been watching the Discovery channel a lot of late," he signs off.

Athletics anti-doping programme 'severely disrupted'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

The Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) has acknowledged that its anti-doping programme will be "severely disrupted" because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The AIU, the independent anti-doping watchdog for track and field set up in 2017, operates testing procedures in more than 100 countries.

"Under the current conditions of the global pandemic, many of these countries have social distancing restrictions or guidelines in place, these differ from country to country and in turn are all changing very rapidly," it said.

"As a result, there is no doubt that our anti-doping program will be severely disrupted in the short term, however we will still conduct our priority testing missions in those places where it is feasible and safe to do so."

The AIU added that it was reviewing its testing plans day by day "to ensure we are appropriately balancing considerations of public health and the health of athletes against the need to conduct anti-doping tests".

In this respect, all 500 or so World Athletics registered testing pool athletes "must continue to fulfil their 'whereabouts' obligations".

Athletics has been hit hard the COVID-19 pandemic, with a raft of events having been postponed or cancelled.