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Saudi investments in India on track despite downturn, says envoy
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Announcement

The Board of Directors of The Hindu Group Publishing Private Limited has decided to appoint Raghuvir Srinivasan, Business Editor of *The Hindu*, to succeed Raghavan Srinivasan, Editor of *Business Line*, when the latter retires on August 31, 2020.

The appointment is on the basis of a recommendation of the Nomination & Remuneration Committee of the Company's Board. Raghuvir Srinivasan will take up his responsibility as Editor, *Business Line*, on September 1, 2020.

Petrol, diesel prices go up in State

CHENNAI
 Prices of petrol and diesel have been increased by ₹3.25 and ₹2.50 a litre. The hike is a sequel to changes made by the State government in the tax structure for petroleum products that came into effect since Sunday midnight.

TAMIL NADU • PAGE 4

EDUCATION PLUS • PAGE 11

Central health teams to monitor 20 districts with heavy case load

Nationwide virus tally crosses 40,000; 83 new deaths take toll to 1,306

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
 NEW DELHI

The total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in India crossed 40,000 on Sunday, making it one among 16 countries that have crossed that figure. With 83 new deaths since Saturday, a single-day high, the death toll nationwide has gone up to 1,306.

India currently has 28,070 active cases and 10,886 patients have recovered, according to the latest numbers available on the Health Ministry website. Maharashtra, Gujarat and Delhi led

Rising fatalities

Gujarat has the highest COVID-19 case fatality rate (CFR) of 5.3 while Bihar (0.8) has the lowest. The table on the left shows the eight States with the highest COVID-19 CFR among States that have recorded at least 350 cases, while the one on the right shows the ones with the lowest CFR

HIGH CASE FATALITY RATE				LOW CASE FATALITY RATE			
State	Deaths	Cases	Case fatality rate (%)	State	Deaths	Cases	Case fatality rate (%)
Gujarat	290	5428	5.3	Bihar	4	503	0.8
M.P.	151	2,846	5.3	Kerala	4	499	0.8
W.B.*	48	922	5.2	Tamil Nadu	30	3,023	1.0
Maharashtra	521	12,296	4.2	J&K	8	701	1.1
Karnataka	25	614	4.1	Haryana	5	376	1.3
Telangana	29	1,063	2.7	Delhi	64	4,122	1.6
Rajasthan	71	2,832	2.5	U.P.	43	2,645	1.6
A.P.	33	1,583	2.1	Punjab	21	1,102	1.9

*48 deaths in West Bengal is the official figure, which does not include fatalities due to comorbidities. Data for all States are as of 8 p.m. on Sunday

COVID-19

with the maximum number of cases.

The Centre has announced the formation of Central Public Health teams to investigate 20 districts in 10 States which have registered the maximum cases. These districts and cities include Mumbai, Pune and

Thane in Maharashtra; Ahmedabad, Surat, and Vadodra in Gujarat; Indore and Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh; Chennai in Tamil Nadu; Hyderabad in Telangana; Kolkata in West Bengal; Kurnool, Guntur, and Krishna in Andhra Pradesh and South East and Central Delhi.

These teams, comprising experts from the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), AIIMS, JIPMER and the All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health among others, will submit reports to the State health authorities with recommendations.

In terms of total cases, three other countries are comparable to India – the Netherlands, Peru and Belgium, with confirmed infections from 40,000-49,900.

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 MORE REPORTS ON ► PAGES 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10 & 12

Colonel, Major among five personnel killed in J&K

Two militants were also killed during the 18-hour operation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
 SRINAGAR

Five security personnel, including a Colonel, a Major and a sub-inspector, and two militants were killed in an 18-hour operation in north Kashmir's Handwara.

"In a firefight at Changmull in Handwara of Kupwara district, two terrorists were eliminated and the team of five security personnel, comprising two Army officers, two soldiers and one police sub-inspector, also died," an Army spokesman said in Srinagar.

Initial investigation suggested that one militant was a local and the other was a resident of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir, identified as Hyder alias Iqbal. Sources said Hyder was "a wanted militant commander".

Hostage situation

The spokesman said the operation started after intelligence inputs suggested that terrorists were taking inmates of a house at Changmull hostage. "A joint opera-



Final goodbye: Security personnel paying tribute to the soldiers killed in the encounter on Sunday. • NISSAR AHMAD

tion was launched by the Army and the police on Saturday. A team of five Army and police personnel entered the area, occupied by the terrorists, to evacuate the civilians. They successfully extricated the civilians. However, during the process, the team was subjected to heavy fire by the terrorists," said the Army.

Police officials said the operation was called off on Sunday morning after the bodies of the security per-

sonnel and the militants were spotted in the house in the village, nestled in a forest zone. The deceased were identified as Colonel Ashutosh Sharma, Major Anuj Sood, Naik Rajesh and Dinesh and sub-inspector Mohammad Sagier Qazi of the Jammu and Kashmir police's Special Operation Group. One soldier was injured, officials said.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

Aerial salute



Thanksgiving: A Navy helicopter showering petals on the medical staff of INHS Asvini in Colaba, Mumbai, on Sunday as part of a nationwide exercise to express gratitude to frontline COVID-19 warriors. • AADESH CHOUDHARI (REPORT ON PAGE 9)

COVID-19 cases cross 3,000 in Tamil Nadu

203 persons test positive in Chennai

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
 CHENNAI

With 266 testing positive for COVID-19 on Sunday, the number of people who contracted the novel coronavirus infection in Tamil Nadu so far has crossed the 3,000-mark. As many as 203 of the new patients were from Chennai, taking the city's tally to 1,458. Villupuram district accounted for 33 patients.



Chennai Corporation staff testing people at Koyambedu on Sunday. • K. PICHUMANI

At present, 1,611 persons in the State are under treatment at various facilities. This includes 1,190 in Chennai, where 250 patients have been discharged.

A 44-year-old man died of the infection at the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital around 2.15 p.m. on Sunday.

According to hospital authorities, he was registered for treatment for leukaemia.

He had been admitted to the Coimbatore Medical College Hospital and on April 30, after his condition turned serious, he was sent to Chennai.

RGGGH Dean R. Jayanthi said he was brought in an 108 ambulance on May 1. He

had fever and was subjected to test for the COVID-19 infection. He tested positive and died within two days.

With this, the number of deaths due to the infection has risen to 30 in the State.

On the source of his infection, she said it was possible that the patient contracted it while in Coimbatore.

The other districts to report positive cases were Cuddalore (9), Kallakurichi (6), and Coimbatore (4). Ariyalur, Madurai, Tenkasi and Tiruvallur each reported two cases, and Tiruvannamalai, Kanniyakumari and Chengalpattu reported one positive case each.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 2

'Economic recovery may take over a year'

Allow high performing districts to resume all industrial activity, says CII

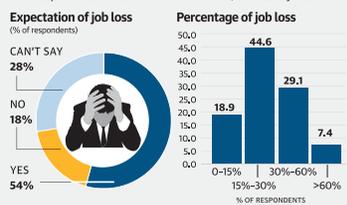
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
 NEW DELHI

The country's high performing economic districts should be allowed to play by different rules in the third phase of the lockdown beginning on Monday, according to the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

In a strategy paper submitted to the Centre on Saturday, the CII called for changes in zone classification, saying that the 100-150 districts with the highest economic value – identified either through GDP contribution or density of industrial clusters – should be allowed to restart industrial activity, even in containment areas, if stringent rules are followed. It argued that the cost of 100% testing and aggressive health protocols is lower than continued shut-

Grim outlook

Over half of the 300-odd CEOs anticipate job losses, and a third expect more than 30% to be laid off, the survey found



down in these areas.

In a CII poll of 300-odd CEOs released on Sunday, almost half said an economic recovery would take over a year. More than half foresee job losses. Three out of four participants identified the complete shutdown of oper-

ations as their biggest problem, followed by a lack of demand, supply and distribution chain woes, and a credit crunch.

In such a situation, the industry body argued for a calibrated exit from the lockdown in the country's most

crucial economic regions.

Within these districts, small restricted areas such as the actual street, *mohalla*, building or industrial complex where COVID-19 cases have been identified should be treated as containment zone. An area of about 500 m radius around these areas should be treated as orange zone. The remaining area of the district should be classified as green zones.

The CII suggested that full industrial operations could be restarted in these priority districts, even within containment zones, if aggressive door-to-door testing, or group testing covering 100% of the population is carried out, and stringent sanitation and distancing protocols are followed.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

महत्वपूर्ण हेल्पलाइन नम्बर

नोवल कोरोना वायरस के संक्रमण से बचाव हेतु लॉकडाउन लागू है। लोगों की सहायता एवं सहयोग हेतु बिहार सरकार द्वारा जारी हेल्पलाइन नम्बर

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अन्य राज्यों में लॉकडाउन की वजह से फंसे छात्रों को विशेष रूप से सहायता पहुंचाने के लिये आपदा प्रबंधन विभाग का डेडिकेटेड हेल्पलाइन नम्बर 0612-2294600

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https://covid19.bihar.gov.in

जन सहयोग से ही होगी कोरोना की हार

सचेत रहें, सतर्क रहें तभी स्वस्थ रहेंगे।

आपदा प्रबंधन विभाग, बिहार द्वारा जनहित में जारी

FROM PAGE ONE

Keeping count | A tracker, across parameters, on how the pandemic has affected the State so far

	Until April 26	April 27	April 28	April 29	April 30	May 1	May 2	May 3	Total
Cases reported	1,885	52	121	104	161	203	231	266	3,023
Recovered and discharged	1,020	81	27	82	48	54	29	38	1,379
Deceased	24	0	1	2	0	1	1	1	30

Persons tested			In home quarantine		Districts with maximum cases	
Active cases	Discharged	Died	35,418	37,206	Chennai	1,458
1,384	1,341	29			Coimbatore	146
1,611	1,379	30			Tiruppur	114
					Chengalpattu	93
					Madurai	90

*Changes in 24 hours As on May 2, 6 p.m. As on May 3, 6 p.m.
Active Cases + Discharged + Died will not equal Total. Cases as 2 deaths were cross-notified to other States and 1 patient, who initially tested positive for COVID-19, later tested negative after death, as per the Health and Family Welfare Department.

COVID-19 cases cross 3,000 in T.N.

Five children, including one aged three, in Chennai, tested positive for the infection. The children acquired the infection through contact with an infected person. The Villupuram cluster included two girls aged three and eight years, who acquired the infection through contact with an infected person.

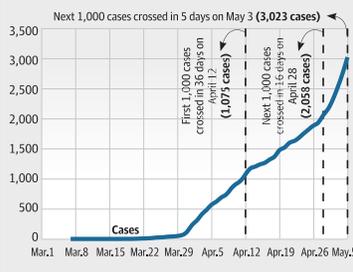
On Sunday 38 patients were discharged, taking the total to 1,379 patients, who had recovered from the infection. As many as 2,362 persons are in isolation wards.

The bulletin from the Directorate of Public Health stated that as of Sunday a total of 3,023* positive cases had been recorded.

The Health Department has added two laboratories to conduct the tests, one in

Rapid progression

Tamil Nadu recorded its first case of COVID-19 on March 7. On Sunday, the State's tally crossed the 3,000-mark. It took 36 days to reach 1,000 cases, 16 days to cross 2,000, and just five days to get to 3,000 cases



the Government district headquarters hospital in Ramanathapuram and the other at Dr. Rela Institute in Chennai. Already 35 government and 14 private labora-

Of 1,50,107 samples, as many as 1,45,520 tested negative, and 1,564 are being processed

atories are functioning. Of the 1,50,107 samples that were picked up as many as 1,45,520 tested negative

COVID-19

and the testing of 1,564 samples is under process. A total of 9,391 are repeat samples. As on date 37,206 are under home quarantine and 40 are quarantined in government facilities. ("This is inclusive of two deaths that were cross notified to other states and one patient who died after turning negative for the infection.")

With industries set to open, government issues guidelines

No employee from a containment zone should be allowed to work

DENNIS S. JESUDASAN
CHENNAI

The State government on Sunday issued several sets of Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to enable certain industries, including the construction sector, to resume partial operations in rural and specified urban areas outside the COVID-19 containment zones from Monday.

As per the SOP, notified a day after Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami announced a relaxation of the lockdown, no employee from a containment zone should be allowed to work. "One should understand [that] the intention of the government is to carefully restart operations of industries and not undo all the precautionary measures taken so far," a senior official told *The Hindu*.

He made it clear that private firms other than those that fall under the sectors specifically mentioned in the G.O. issued by the Chief Secretary cannot resume operations. "If any more relaxation is necessary, the State government would take a call," he added.

Industrial units engaging over 1,000 workers must tie up with a nearby hospital for a daily visit by a doctor. In units with 201-1,000 work-

Rules to restart work

- People with cough, cold or fever should stay at home after consulting a doctor. They should get themselves tested and remain under quarantine for 14 days. Their employers should compulsorily provide them paid leave
- Those commuting in cars/jeeps should ensure that there are only two passengers, in addition to the driver
- All vehicles and machinery entering a premises should be disinfected
- Personnel should be allowed entry into a premises only after they wash their hands
- Provision should be made for hand wash and sanitiser at all entry and exit points and common areas, preferably through a touch-free mechanism
- Disinfectants should be sprayed twice a day in cafeterias/canteens, meeting rooms, conference halls, etc.
- Floors should be cleaned with a 1% hypochlorite solution (1 kg bleaching powder in 30 litres of water or 3 kg bleaching powder in 100 litres of water)
- There should be a total ban on non-essential visitors to work sites

ers, a part-time doctor must visit once in two days, and units with less than 200 employees must have a doctor "on call."

Those aged above 55, persons with co-morbidities and parents of children below five years of age "shall be encouraged from home [sic]". Such permission shall not be entertained in the construction industry.

Disinfecting industrial premises twice a day, thermal screening of employees before they enter the premises, wearing of masks and physical distancing at the

workplace are among the mandatory provisions. "Ensure that only medically fit persons, without any co-morbid conditions and below 55 years of age, are called for work in the first phase," said the G.O, which also officially extended the lockdown till May 17.

Companies should arrange for the transportation of their workers. The vehicles should only carry passengers at 50% capacity, and a provision should be made for disinfectants/sanitiser at the entry and exit points of buses. No pillion riding will

be allowed on two-wheelers. Not more than 2/4 (depending on the size of the facility) persons should be allowed to travel in lifts or hoists. Wearing face coverings is compulsory in all areas of the premises.

The G.O. also specified punishments to be imposed under various provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, in case of violations.

If any employee of a firm tested positive for COVID-19, it must be brought to the notice of the office of the Deputy Director of Medical Services of the district concerned or the 24-hour helpline immediately, the State government said on Sunday.

The person should be admitted to a designated COVID-19 hospital and close contacts must be tested and kept under home or facility quarantine, as per the standard protocols, a G.O said.

"Close proximity of the area in which the employee was working should be thoroughly disinfected for three days and can be put back into use. The whole of the campus should also be disinfected," the G.O. stated.

Identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals was a critical step in protecting people at a work site, it added.

A timely tribute



Celebrating Corona warriors: (Clockwise from top left) An IAF helicopter flying over the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital to salute frontline staff; hospital dean R. Jayanthi expressing gratitude to health workers; and a Navy vessel joining in the tribute by firing flares off the Chennai coast. • R. RAGU, K. PICHUMANI

1.26 lakh Tamils residing outside State register with govt. to return home

1.18 lakh people have expressed their intention to leave Tamil Nadu

DENNIS S. JESUDASAN
CHENNAI

As of Sunday morning, over 1.26 lakh Tamils currently residing or stranded in other States and countries have registered themselves with the Tamil Nadu government, requesting the authorities to facilitate their return in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak. Separately, over 1.18 lakh people currently residing in T.N. have expressed their intention to leave for their native States.

As of 9 a.m. on Sunday, 45,505 requests were made for the return of 52,100 persons from various countries to Tamil Nadu, a senior official told *The Hindu*. Another 13,839 registrations were made for the return of 74,890 persons living or stranded in other States, an official source said.

What is the point of allowing industries [to operate] if there are no workers? Many migrant workers will naturally stay put if the industries resume operations

AN OFFICIAL

As for natives of other States intending to leave Tamil Nadu, 25,302 registrations were made for 1,18,504 persons.

However, a senior official said the State government was hopeful that the number of people intending to leave Tamil Nadu would come down once industries resume operations. "We are not for the exchange of workers, since many of them want to leave only because they don't have work here and are not earning. From Monday, many indus-

tries are set to commence operations and, hopefully, there will be a drop [in the number of people looking to return home]," the official said.

Another official pointed out that workers were crucial to kick-starting the economy. "What is the point of allowing industries [to operate] if there are no workers? Many migrant workers will naturally stay put if the industries resume operations," he argued.

Officials also explained that the process of returning home from a State or a foreign country would be long. "It is not as if one can reach home after getting here by an aircraft or a train. A medical check-up and quarantine will follow soon after," an official said. But the return of students, tourists and pilgrims was inevitable, he added.

The government has requested those abroad to register themselves on the portal nonresidenttamil.org if they intend to return to Tamil Nadu, so that estimates regarding medical check-ups and quarantine facilities could be made.

For persons hailing from other States who wish to leave Tamil Nadu, registrations can be made on the portal rtos.nonresidenttamil.org, the Tamil Nadu State Disaster Management Authority said on Sunday.

Natives of Tamil Nadu who are currently in other States and wish to return have also been asked to register themselves on the same portal. Those who intend to return or leave in their own vehicles can request passes while registering themselves.

Data logic dictates keen focus on vulnerable population

Protecting them from exposure to the virus will also keep the fatality rate low

RAMYA KANNAN
CHENNAI

While the health authorities in Tamil Nadu have been talking about the relative ease of treating the bulk of patients in the State, here are figures to demonstrate that for a fact.

An analysis of COVID-19 positive cases in the State until April 29 shows that over 85% of the cases remained asymptomatic. A mere 14.7% patients report symptoms, very rarely at testing and even at the point of hospitalisation, doctors say.

"This has been the trend right through," says Narayana Babu, Director of Medical Education. Over the months, as the number of cases increased, asymptomatic cases as a percentage of the total number of cases also went up.

For instance, out of a total of 780 patients who were treated, an earlier analysis revealed that 74.1% of the cases remained asymptomatic; 16.4% reported 'mild' symptoms; 5.64% reported moderate symptoms; and 3.84% of the cases had severe symptoms, requiring ICU

Upward trend

An analysis of COVID-19 cases in T.N. until April 29 shows that over 85% of them remained asymptomatic. As the number of cases increased, asymptomatic cases as a percentage of the tally also went up

Description	Count	Proportion
Asymptomatic	896	85.3%
Symptomatic	155	14.7%
• Fever among symptomatic	107	69.5%
• Cough among symptomatic	118	77.1%
• Difficulty in breathing among symptomatic	25	17.1%
Comorbidity among all positives	96	9.1%
Asthma among comorbid	11	11.6%
Diabetes among comorbid	49	51.0%
Hypertension among comorbid	74	77.9%
Heart disease among comorbid	18	18.8%

SOURCE: HEALTH DEPARTMENT

care. These figures have since been amended favouring asymptomatic cases over symptomatic ones, as a percentage of the whole, with more people being tested, another health official added.

Serious symptoms

"When we say mild and moderate symptoms, we usually mean fever and

cough — meaning that the patient might require some medication, paracetamol, antibiotics perhaps." Dr. Narayana Babu explains. The asymptomatic people can actually stay out of hospital, and we have started sending these people from hospitals to COVID Care Centres, which we have set up in colleges and schools. It is also ideal to follow the ICMR re-

commendation on making sure that asymptomatic people who test positive for COVID-19 remain at home, with some supervision by medical personnel. It is the 16% of the people who test positive that do need careful attention. "They show serious symptoms like breathlessness, and more often than not, have multiple co-morbidities — diabetes, hypertension, cardiac diseases or pre-existing lung diseases. In addition, senior citizens would be on this list, even if they do not have symptoms. They need to be in hospital and under constant monitoring," Dr. Narayana Babu says.

In effect, this means over 85% of the population can actually be easily managed in step down institutions, or at home, if they are able to practise isolation in their home itself, a senior health official says. In them, the chest x-ray is normal, they are under 55 years of age, healthy and have no symptoms or complaints whatsoever. What happens if someone in this category develops symptoms suddenly? "We have a 108 ambu-

lance on call at these CCCs. If necessary, it can rush the patient to a government hospital nearby for admission," Dr. Narayana Babu clarifies.

It seems from this that Tamil Nadu has perhaps a milder presentation of COVID-19, after all, reflected in its remarkable recovery rate of 57%. The World Health Organisation in its report of its joint mission with China on COVID-19 in February 2020 recorded that "most people infected with COVID-19 virus [in China] have mild disease and recover." But "approximately 80% of laboratory confirmed patients have had mild to moderate disease, which includes non-pneumonia and pneumonia cases, 13.8% have severe disease and 6.1% are critical. Asymptomatic infection has been reported, but the majority of the relatively rare cases who are asymptomatic on the date of identification/report went on to develop disease."

The road ahead includes ensuring that the vulnerable populations are protected from exposure to the virus, and this would also keep the fatality rate low.

'Retention of workers, availability of building materials will pose a challenge'

Sorting out these issues is key to restarting work: realtors

SANJAY VUJAYAKUMAR
CHENNAI

Notwithstanding the easing of curbs, the retention of migrant workers and the availability of construction materials will pose a challenge to the resumption of activities in the realty sector, industry representatives have said.

"The migrant labourers want to go back to their home States. They were being taken care of at the respective construction sites. However, following the announcement that arrangements will be made for them to go back [home], they have become restless and anxious over the last four days. Family pressure is also a factor," Padam Dugar, president, Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India (CREDAI) - Chennai Chapter, said.

According to industry estimates, there are around one lakh migrant workers in the construction sector in the State.

Mr. Dugar, also the vice-chairman and managing di-

rector of Dugar Housing Limited, said another challenge was the availability of construction materials like cement and steel, among others.

"Unless these materials are freely available, it won't be possible to kick-start activities in a full-fledged manner. The government has been trying its best, and it has been a learning curve for everyone," he added.

Ajit Kumar Chordia, managing director, Olympia Group, said migrant workers wanted to go back home, and there was uncertainty over whether they would return. This would delay projects by at least three months, he added.

"If we can get the [travel] passes quickly and start work, and if they [the workers] are paid wages and offered incentives, there is a chance of retaining 50%-60% of the workers," he said.

Another industry executive, who did not wish to be named, pointed out that the

daily wage of a migrant construction worker was around ₹600-₹700, while a local worker would be paid ₹300-₹400 more.

"Building contractors have a fixed-rate deal with real-estate clients for construction work, and cost calculations are not entertained. The non-availability of workers will delay projects, and the cost will go up as there is going to be a shortage of materials," he added.

Nallathambi Kalyanarann, chief operating officer at Navin's, said most migrant workers had indicated that they wished to go back home.

Moving engineers and materials to the construction sites would pose a challenge in Chennai, since a lot of restrictions were in place, he said.

"The key to retaining migrant workers will be quickly restarting activities and ensuring that they start earning again," W.S. Habib, managing director of RWD, said.

Timings
CHENNAI

MONDAY, MAY 04
RISE 05:47 SET 18:25
RISE 15:30 SET 03:13

TUESDAY, MAY 05
RISE 05:47 SET 18:25
RISE 16:28 SET 04:00

WEDNESDAY, MAY 06
RISE 05:47 SET 18:25
RISE 17:28 SET 04:46

Chennai Weather max min

Thiruvallur	39	26
Chennai Airport	37	27
Chennai City	35	29

Chennai Airport Today
37°C Dry and very warm weather with partly cloudy to prevail during the day. Night will be comfortable.

Chennai Airport Tomorrow
36°C Dry and warm weather with partly cloudy to prevail during the day. Night will be comfortable.

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Hyundai to restart plant

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Hyundai Motor India Ltd. (HMI) plans preparatory operations at its Irungattukottai plant on May 6 while adhering to guidelines laid out by the government.

A statement from the company said: "As a responsible corporate citizen, HMI, has made comprehensive detail-oriented plans for the complete safety and sanitisation of all its facilities inside the plant, to ensure the wellness of its employees. The HMI confirms complete adherence to all safety guidelines set out by the authorities."

Sources at other automobile firms said that they were working on re-opening strategy and would make an announcement in a day or two.

Vendor gets infected

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

A vendor, who was among the crowd that thronged Thiruvanniyur vegetable market on April 25, the day before complete lockdown in city, tested positive for COVID-19.

The Greater Chennai Corporation closed down the market on Sunday to conduct a special outreach camp for vendors and workers.

Their samples are being tested.

A senior official with the Corporation said that they had already asked the vendors to shift to three places — the parking area there, North Mada Street and East Mada Street.

A few more spots would be identified to decentralise the market and it is expected that the vendors can restart operations at these places from May 6, the official added.

Volunteers to undergo test once in 10 days: Radhakrishnan

52 persons in a Triplicane street caught the virus from a volunteer

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

All volunteers who have been assisting residents during the pandemic should get themselves tested for COVID-19 every 10 days, said J. Radhakrishnan, Greater Chennai Corporation Special Nodal Officer for COVID-19.

Speaking to mediapersons after an inspection in



J. Radhakrishnan

COVID-19

Chennai on Sunday, Mr. Radhakrishnan said a volunteer on V.R. Pillai Street, within a containment zone, had become a source of infection for 52 persons. "Volunteers play a key role in helping residents in containment zones. We invite all of them for testing. We will make arrangements for testing delivery boys and other workers who help residents during the pandemic," said Mr. Radhakrishnan.

Stressing on the need for

self-discipline among residents in containment zones and other areas of the city during the lockdown, Mr. Radhakrishnan said more than 25% of the people were found without masks. "We have analysed all aspects of COVID-19 containment zones in areas such as Tondiarpet, Royapuram, Thiru. Vi. Ka. Nagar, Neynampet, and Kodambakkam where a majority of cases have been reported. We need residents' support in containing COVID-19," he said. "We find most of the residents are casual in their approach to the

lockdown. They think they will not get infected. We request residents to clean their homes. We have supplied chemicals to residents for disinfecting their homes. A person who was infected in the slaughterhouse has caused infection of seven family members. So we request people to disinfect their residence to prevent the spread of COVID-19 at home," said Mr. Radhakrishnan.

The Greater Chennai Corporation has launched motorcycle ambulance to help residents in narrow streets. They will create awareness among people on the need for social distancing, hand washing and disinfection. They will provide first aid.

"Residents should wash hands after every visit to a grocery store. They should maintain physical distancing at marketplaces," said Mr. Radhakrishnan.

"At least 68 of the 200 wards have not reported positive cases in Chennai.

But some wards have reported a large number of cases. For example, ward 77 in Pulanthope has 160 cases. We request residents with symptoms to come forward to test. We are carrying out aggressive testing," he said.

Issue of passes

Greater Chennai Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash said the civic body would continue to issue passes for movement within city limits. "Residents can get passes from the Corporation if they have a valid reason. Passes will be issued for the activities permitted by the government. The process has been simplified," said Mr. Prakash.

The Corporation will send stranded persons to their native places soon. "Besides, we have issued notices to all marriage halls. Over 747 halls will be taken over for creating quarantine spaces. In one month, the city will get 50,000 quarantine spaces," said Mr. Prakash.

CPCL ramps up LPG output

Distributors have seen spike in bookings for refill cylinders

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

With the demand for liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) on the rise from domestic users because of the lockdown, Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited (CPCL) refinery has increased its production.

CPCL's Manali refinery complex, which has three refineries, produces around 28,000 tonnes of LPG every month.

"We usually produce 3 to 4% of LPG from crude oil. That has now been increased to 7 to 8%. LPG is the lightest product and it is one of the first to get in the process of refining. The secondary cracking unit too is producing LPG," said an official source in CPCL, which is a subsidiary of Indian Oil Corporation Ltd.

The Centre recently decided to import more LPG to meet the higher demand. Oil marketing companies had to put in place a few restrictions to stop panic bookings by consumers.



Kitchen's lifeline: An LPG cylinder being delivered outside a containment zone in Chennai on Sunday. *K. PICHUMANI

Distributors have been witnessing a spike in demand for refill cylinders with people staying home.

Demand goes up

"We don't see this demand coming any time soon. It will continue even if the lockdown is lifted since many people don't seem to be comfortable eating out. And with salary cuts that option will be put on the back burner as much as possible," said a distributor.

Indian Oil Corporation Ltd., which is the market leader in supply of cooking gas in the State, requires around 1 lakh tonnes of LPG a month.

Around 80,000 to 90,000 tonnes are imported every month through its Ennore terminal.

The State consumes around 2 lakh tonnes of LPG every month. However, this number varies slightly according to the demand, said oil industry sources.

Care givers need to get e-passes

Most shops will stay open from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Plumbers, electricians, AC mechanics, carpenters, domestic help and home care providers can apply for work passes from the Greater Chennai Corporation online. These workers will have to apply through the website <http://tnepass.tnega.org>, said Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash in a release on Sunday.

Standalone and neighbourhood shops selling articles such as hardware, electrical items, mobile phones and computer peripherals, except salons and beauty parlours, will be permitted to stay open from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. However, residents are apprehensive about the process of getting the passes.

Santosh, a resident of Kilpauk who runs a shop in Broadway, said he had applied for an e-pass on the website and the application was pending. He is not sure if the police would allow him to travel to his shop. Shops selling essential commodi-

Anna Salai to be free of police barricades from today

All lockdown restrictions will be enforced, say police



Free from traffic: A stretch of the deserted Anna Salai on Sunday. *M. VEDHAN

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The arterial Anna Salai will be opened for vehicular traffic as part of the State's relaxation of lockdown restrictions in the city.

A major stretch of Anna Salai was closed for traffic since April 23. The decision to seal key junctions on Anna Salai by placing barricades, including at Little Mount Junction, Nandanam signal, Anna Flyover and

Spencer Plaza was taken after the number of vehicles entering the road increased manifold despite the lockdown in place.

Vehicles to be checked

A senior police officer said, "We will open Anna Salai for traffic. All barricades on the road will be removed. However, policemen will continue to intercept vehicles and check whether the movement of vehicle is for ge-

nuine reason. If there is any violation, we will book case against the violator."

Those commuting by cars should note that only two persons, other than the driver, are permitted to travel in the vehicle. Only one person is allowed to ride a two-wheeler.

Police officers clarified that all other restrictions in the containment zone would continue and there would be no relaxation.

22 police personnel in city test positive

Results of eight police personnel confirmed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Twenty-two police personnel in the city have been admitted to hospitals so far after testing positive for the

novel coronavirus disease. Sources in the police said that the results of eight personnel were confirmed by hospital authorities on Sunday.

They were admitted to special wards in city hospitals for treatment.

Their family members and other contacts were be-

ing screened. It all began with a 52-year-old sub-inspector of police getting admitted to the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital following initial test which showed him positive for the dreaded infection on April 18.

Subsequently three personnel from the North Beach

Station, the Government Railway Police station in Egmore and the Central Railway Police Station were admitted for treatment.

Sub-inspectors, traffic police personnel, constables and intelligence constables were among the 22 police personnel infected, said police sources.

Vandalur to hold virtual zoo ambassador camp from today

Those in the 10-20 age group can interact with field experts

S. POORVAJA
CHENNAI

With lessons, activities and learning all going online during the lockdown, Arignar Anna Zoological Park in Vandalur will be hosting a virtual zoo ambassadors camp this year from May 4.

For the last few years, the zoo has played host to children and college students as part of their popular zoo ambassadors camp during summer holidays.

"We were planning to have the ambassadors camp this year as well but the zoo has been shut from March 17 owing to the lockdown. We have now decided to host online sessions by field experts as part of a virtual camp for students from the



The virtual zoo ambassador camp will be on till May 10. *M. KARUNAKARAN

age of 10 to 20," said Sudha Ramen, Deputy Director, Anna Arignar Zoological Park. From May 4 to 10, interactive sessions in English and Tamil with field experts, which include veterinarians and biologists who work with the zoo, will be organ-

ised for an hour every day. There will be live as well as recorded videos of animals and birds in the zoo and participants will be encouraged to ask questions to experts about the work they do at the zoo as well as how the animals are looked after.

"There will be two sessions focusing on butterflies and the butterfly park which the zoo houses," Ms. Ramen said. The zoo has been a pioneer in hosting livestreams of the animals over the years on its website and the virtual ambassadors programme too has evoked good response so far. To register for the virtual zoo ambassadors camp, persons interested can log on to <http://aazp.in/vzap/>

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Tender No BARCF/KNRPC/ME/TH/1/2020
Name of the Work - Preparation of Structural / Piping Drawings & GA Drawings for augmentation of various systems of WIP. Estimate Cost : Rs.20,00,000/- EMD : Rs.40,000/- Download of Tender Document : 04-05-2020 (11.00 Hrs) to 19-05-2020 (17.00 Hrs).
Tender No. BARCF/INRPK-TS/WUTR/02/2020(PT)
Name of the work - Technical assistance for Laboratories of WIP and TS Section, WIP (K), INRP-K. Estimate Cost : Rs.67,73,535/- EMD : Rs.1,35,471/- Download of Tender Document : 04-05-2020(11.00 Hrs) to 19-05-2020 (17.00 Hrs).
Download the Tender documents from the web portal of : www.tenderwizard.com/DAE Please see notice in web sites www.igcar.gov.in **FD, BARCF**

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S. E-tender No.	Name of Work	Approximate NIT Cost ₹	EMD Cost ₹		
01	DRM-ADJ-45-2020-21	Vatva-Ahmedabad-Sabarmati-Chandoliya-Ambli Road Section: Construction of RCC Boundary Wall to prevent encroachments and trespassing in stretches (Total 24.208 kms)(Revised) (TWO PACKET SYSTEM)	21,41,20,090.44	12,20,60,000	
02	DRM-ADJ-46-2020-21	Mehsana-Patan Section- Providing 01 (One) nos. Road Under Bridge to eliminate manned level crossing no. 13 at KM155+50 on MSH+PTN Section by Launching Pre-cast RCC box segments (CUT & COVER Method) including provision of drainage arrangement, covering shed, provision of temporary diversions i.e. earthwork, soling, WBM etc., and other related miscellaneous works related to the road under bridges.	2,00,64,622.40	2,50,300.00	
03	DRM-ADJ-47-2020-21	Gandhidham-New Bhuj Section- Providing 01 (One) nos. Road Under Bridge to eliminate manned level crossings no. 08 at km 135+50 on Gandhidham-New Bhuj section by Launching Pre-cast RCC box segments (CUT & COVER Method) including provision of drainage arrangement, covering shed, provision of temporary diversions i.e. earthwork, soling, WBM etc., and other related miscellaneous works related to the road under bridges.	2,00,84,353.74	2,50,400.00	
04	DRM-ADJ-48-2020-21	Maninagar and Vatva: Cleaning of overhead water tanks and underground water sumps of Maninagar and Vatva Railway colony area and service buildings. (For Two Years)	8,54,239.63	17,100.00	
05	DRM-ADJ-49-2020-21	Virangam- Samakhivli Section - TRR 60kg of DN line from 627.730 to 628.830 total 1.1 km	24,68,544.24	49,400.00	
06	DRM-ADJ-50-2020-21	Jhund - Samakhivli Section 'Supply of potable drinking water by road tanker at station Devaliya, Khakhtechi, Malviya - Milyana, Indiranagar, Surbari, Washirva, Kabanra. LC No 87, LC 88, LC 70, LC 71, LC 73, LC 75, LC 76, LC 79, LC 80, LC 82, LC 84, LC 85, LC 86, LC 87, LC 88, LC 90, LC 91, LC 93, LC 95, LC 97, LC 98, LC 99, LC 100, LC 103, LC 104, LC 105, LC 107, LC 108, LC 110, LC 112, LC 117 (for two years)	45,62,671.55	91,300.00	
07	DRM-ADJ-51-2020-21	Jhund - Samakhivli - Supply of potable drinking water by road tanker at manned LC at LC 14, LC 15, LC 17, LC 20, LC 21, LC 23, LC 24, LC 25, LC 26, LC 29, LC 33, LC 34, LC 36, LC 38, LC 40, LC 41, LC 44, LC 45, LC 46, LC 47, LC 48, LC 49, LC 51, LC 52, LC 54, LC 55, LC 56, LC 57, LC 58, LC 59, LC 60, LC 61, LC 62, LC 63, LC 64, LC 65 & LC 66 under jurisdiction of Senior Section Engineer (Works) (for two years)	4,14,279.38	8,300.00	
08	DRM-ADJ-52-2020-21	Ahmedabad - Virangam - Jhund Section Supply of potable drinking water by road tanker on LC No 118 to 40 and gate quarter and Jhund station and LC No 1 under VGS-JN at Km 563/12-13 under jurisdiction of Senior Section Engineer (Works) (for two years)	16,67,010.53	33,400.00	
09	DRM-ADJ-53-2020-21	Outsourcing of track maintenance activities under jurisdiction of Sr Section Engineer (PWay) North Mahesana for one year (Balance work)	1,68,74,527.70	2,34,400.00	

Closing date & time of e-tender: 02.06.2020, 15.00 Hrs. Office Address : Sr. Divisional Engineer (Coordination) Ahmedabad DRM Office, Near Chumunda Bridge, Opp. New Swadeshi Mill, Naroda Road, Andolpura, Ahmedabad 382345
Website for participating in e-tender: www.irpds.gov.in
DRM (WA), Ahmedabad

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IN BRIEF
Cuddalore MP in self-quarantine

CUDDALORE
Member of Parliament from Cuddalore T.R.V.S. Ramesh of the DMK has gone into self-quarantine after the Health Department added him to the list of people who came in contact with a person who tested positive for COVID-19. Official sources said the grandmother of a cancer patient met Mr. Ramesh in his house in Panruti on April 27 and sought a recommendation letter for the woman's treatment at the Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research (Jipmer).

Drones sought for surveillance

PUDUCHERRY
The Health Department is seeking sanction for the purchase of camera-fitted drones for effectively monitoring Puducherry's borders with neighbouring States to check the spread of COVID-19. Addressing a press conference, Health Minister Malladi Krishna Rao said he would raise with Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy and the Cabinet, the necessity for at least 100 of these drones for the Police Department.

Petrol, diesel prices hiked in Tamil Nadu

A sequel to changes made by the State govt. in tax structure

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

The prices of petrol and diesel in the State are set to go up by ₹3.25 and ₹2.50 per litre. The hike is a sequel to changes made by the State government in the tax structure for petroleum products that would come into effect from the midnight of Sunday, according to a notification issued by the State government.

The structure of State-level Value Added Tax (VAT) for the petroleum products has been changed from a pure ad valorem tax rate to a combination of quantum and the absolute figure of the tax rates.

In respect of petrol, the structure has been changed from 34% to a sum of 15% and ₹13.02 per litre. Likewise, in the case of diesel, it is the aggregate of 11% and ₹9.62 per litre from 25%.

The changes have been made in anticipation of reduction in retail selling prices



The changes have been made in anticipation of a reduction in retail prices to be carried out by the Central authorities.

es to be carried out by the Central authorities in the days to come.

The continuation in the existing rate structure in the event of the reduction would lead to a "steep fall" in the revenue of the State government.

Before the Centre announces the decrease, the State government has tweaked the rate structure so that it can protect its revenue, explained senior officials

of the State government, which hopes to get an additional revenue of ₹250 crore a month.

The Amma Makkal Munetra Kazhagam founder T.T.V. Dhinakaran, in a series of tweets, condemned the decision, which, he said, would hit the poor and the middle class at a time when the prices of essential commodities were on the rise. He has urged the government to roll back the hike.

Does the virus affect the liver?

There have been few predecessor viruses for this one, which share similarities in structure and in the way it inflicts damage to human body. Viruses self-mutate periodically, change its structure and form and take new avatars. The current avatar inducing COVID-19 spreads rapidly and has more death rate than previous generations. All previous coronaviruses were respiratory pathogens.



Dr. HARIKUMAR R. NAIR,
Senior Consultant Hepatologist,
Liver Transplant Physician

COVID-19

Liver impairment has been reported in up to 60% of patients with the preceding coronavirus - SARS-CoV. Given the fact that this novel corona (SARS-CoV-2) has 80% genetic similarity to the preceding strain of the virus (SARS-CoV), does it act similarly with reference to the liver?

Let us look at information from China. Liver damage in mild cases of COVID-19 is often temporary and the organ can return to normal without any special treatment. This could be due to the state of direct infection of liver cells or could as well be due to liver cells getting caught up in the immune war between body's immune system and the virus with chemicals produced by

alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH), often have cardiovascular risk factors, including metabolic syndrome, obesity and diabetes, raising the risk for severe COVID-19 complications.

Although hepatitis B virus (HBV) is common in China and other Asian countries, studies so far have not reported whether HBV-related liver disease influences COVID-19 outcomes. All these liver diseases without advanced scarring or cirrhosis would not have more chance to get the virus infection though.

That is not the case with cirrhosis of liver - cirrhosis per se may be considered an immune dysfunctional state; those under medical management and those in whom a liver transplant is planned and waiting for organ allocation should also be considered at more risk.

Pre-existing disease
Those who have pre-existing liver disease, should they undergo check-up and LFTs to see if coronavirus has entered the liver? The answer is an emphatic NO. What has been mentioned here is abnormality of LFT in those patients who already developed

COVID-19. COVID is a respiratory illness and will have symptoms pertaining to lung. Severe cases who are hospitalised alone may develop jaundice. Liver injury will not occur in the absence of respiratory illness and hence no screening tests/ LFT are indicated in patients with liver disease.

Are liver transplant recipients at higher risk for COVID-19?

Certainly. Those who have undergone liver transplant and are on immunosuppression medicines (anti-rejection medicines) are certainly at higher risk of getting this infection and logically, can end up with severe disease.

People with a weakened immune system may be unable to fight off the virus. So transplant patients have more chance of getting the virus, but paradoxically transplant recipients may not exhibit symptoms - fever, breathlessness - to begin with. Apart from the routine measures of frequent hand washing, hand sanitising, cough etiquette and avoiding putting hands to mouth, they should try to avoid crowds and non-essential travel.

MHA asks States to create a second line of defence

Order comes amid reports of policemen getting infected

S. VIJAY KUMAR CHENNAI

Amid reports of policemen getting infected with the novel coronavirus, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has asked the States and the Union Territories to prepare a second line of defence to sustain the control strategy.

In a note to all Chief Secretaries and Director-Generals of Police, the MHA said police forces need to prepare an effective second line of defence to make up for the personnel rendered ineffective by infection.

While a majority of policemen are deployed for COVID-19-related work and other policing duties, the Head of Police Forces (HoPFs) may consider the option of 'work from home' for personnel not deployed on front-line duties wherever it is feasible, the communication said.

Home Guards, Civil Defence personnel, NCC cadets, Scouts & Guides and

Student Police Cadets could be utilised in areas where there was no imminent law and order problem, the MHA said. "They can especially be of help in maintaining order at the relief centres and in facilitating the maintenance of supply chain and coordinating other essential services."

The MHA said that while performing COVID-19-related duties, police/security personnel should help the public and deal with them with empathy and compassion, especially the weaker sections. They should monitor religious and social con-

gregations during festivals to ensure physical distancing. The police should also be watchful of migrant labourers and slum areas to contain any unexpected and undesirable mass movement.

The Centre's instructions come after States reported infection among police and security personnel deployed as frontline workers to implement the lockdown orders and the guidelines to check the spread of the virus.

In Tamil Nadu, the DGP had recently issued instructions that at least 25% of the

1.25 lakh police force could stay at home so as to keep a healthy reserve to meet any exigency.

The MHA said Police Control Rooms might be expanded, resourced and designed to incorporate special cells to handle all issues arising out of the pandemic. The staff manning the cells should be trained in elementary modules of the epidemic and appropriate responses to handle issues and scenarios they are likely to face. Such cells should be equipped with men and material, including drones.

Industries to reopen today in UT.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT PUDUCHERRY

Industrial units and shops have been allowed to resume functioning from Monday in the Union Territory with strict adherence to precautionary measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy said.

Puducherry and Mahe have been classified as orange zones while Karaikal and Yanam have been categorised as green zones.

The Chief Minister, who chaired a Cabinet meeting to decide on the extent of lockdown relaxations, said the

stipulation that industries in rural or urban areas, and shops requiring prior permission to reopen had been done away with. Industries and shops will function from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. They will ensure use of sanitisers, social distancing and hygiene on premises.

The Cabinet has deferred a decision on whether to reopen liquor outlets. "We will wait and watch the situation and observe how other States go about it before taking a decision," Mr. Narayanasamy said.

Two-wheelers, including the pillion rider, are allowed

while autorickshaws will ply with one passenger in orange zones. Hotels will be allowed to reopen but will not be permitted to serve food. Only takeaways are permitted from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The government has appointed a nodal officer to coordinate with authorities in other States for the return of workers, students and tourists stranded. Since the government opened a portal for Puducherryans stranded outside and people from elsewhere stuck in the city, 9,024 persons had registered.

Stalin alleges irregularities in Highways Dept. tenders

He questions need to award contracts during pandemic

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

DMK president M.K. Stalin on Sunday charged that a petition filed in the Madras High Court alleging irregularities in tenders for works in the Highways Department was proof that the department, held by Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, was involved in a scam even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

He said the petition, filed by Durai Jayakumar, a registered contractor, brought to

light the irregularities in the tender issued for maintenance of 462.11 km of roads in Thanjavur, Orathanadu and Pattukottai divisions for five years.

Mr. Stalin said the contention of Mr. Jayakumar was that the last date for filing the tender was April 15 and the work was awarded to a single contractor even though normally it should be executed by 32 contractors. "The cost of the work is ₹500 crore. But the tender was awarded for ₹1,165 crore. There are al-

so provisions in the tender to award the work to particular contractors," Mr. Stalin quoted from the petition filed in the High Court.

Mr. Stalin wanted to know why the Chief Minister did not wait till the lockdown was lifted.

He also accused Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam, who held the Housing portfolio, of conflict of interest in allowing registration of housing projects by a firm in which his family members had stakes.

Woman dies after giving birth

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT RAMANATHAPURAM

A young woman on Sunday died at the government hospital here after delivering a stillborn baby.

Police said Ranjini was to deliver her third baby around May 1.

On Saturday, she developed labour pain. Within a few minutes, she became unconscious due to excessive bleeding. She was taken to the Rameswaram Government Hospital, where she delivered the stillborn child. She was rushed to Ramanathapuram GH, where she died.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

N.L. NARAYANAN (87)
Retd. Reserve Bank of India (Comptrol)
Passed away on 03.05.2020
Grieved by: Wife: Sundari, Son: Sridhar, D-in-law: Devi & Granddaughters

DEATH

K. SAMPATH (86 Years)
AVM RR Theater
Legendary Audiographer
National Award Winner
Attained Acharyan Thiruvadi at Chennai on 01/05/2020
Bereaved by: Family & Friends
Contact: 98409 99140

DEATH

SRI V.V. RATHANGAPANI (81)
(Retd ICF) attained Acharyan Thiruvadi on 02.05.2020 at Nanganallur Chennai.
Deeply mourned by Family & Friends. Ph: 044-43515929

Mr. R. SAYERAM
Chartered Accountant | Age: 72 Yrs
Attained Heavenly Abode on 3rd May 2020
Deeply Mourned by:
Mrs. S. Manjula
Mr. Swaroop & Mrs. Divya
Mr. Srikanth & Mrs. Saradina
Family & Friends.
73/8, Landons Road, Kilpauk, Ch-10.
Ct: 89037 57900

H. RAMASUBRAMANIAN
Vice President,
Brakes India Pvt. Ltd.,
Passed away 3.5.20
Mourning: wife Gomathi,
sons Hariharasubramanian
and Dakshinamurthy,
Mob: 97105 09933

Mr. K.C. VALSARAJAN
Sr A.O National Institute of Research in Tuberculosis
Who slept in Jesus on 04.05.2019
And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of His Spirit who lives in you.
Romans 8:11
We thank God for his wonderful, blessed life and fruitful ministries.
Wife, Children and Grandchildren

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

SIXTH ANNIVERSARY

Smt. M. HEMALATHA
W/o: J. Manohar Singh
D.O.B: 04.05.1950 D.O.D: 04.05.2014
"You are ever in our hearts"
Fondly remembered by FAMILY MEMBERS Ph: 98648 69047

R. Balasubramanian
"1941 - 2009"
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Birth nor Death
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- Buddha
Remembered by
Aruna Family & Friends
Chennai - 600 089
Ph: 044- 2249 1855.

859/860, Anna Salai, Chennai - 600 002.
Tel: 28575711/28538168/28575757
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Adyar - 2	Suvvathika Advertisements	9841402377
Anna Nagar	Dynamic Marketing Services	9841662233, 9841613111
Anna Salai	Precious Publications	9282129910
Ashok Nagar	Harsha Services	7823997399, 9840035577
Avadi	Activ Marketing	9841294002
East Tambaram	Zigma Marketing	9884089004, 9884089005
ECR	CJ Mediaworks	9444405212, 9498301353
Egmore	Super Tele Ads	9840043844
Kancheepuram	Adage Advertising	9790461619, 9443620912
Kilpauk	Alfa Adds	9840308331
Mylapore	Share Corp. Inc.	94442 09551, 99400 40405
Nungambakkam	Edge Enterprises	9962107000, 9381710502
Parrys	Smart Advertisement	9444971078, 9841022295
Porur	Plus Advertising	9444482582
Purasawalkam	Varsha Ad Agency	9444165133
Saidapet	Pranav Media Services	9841545000
Sholinganallur	Sre Sai Ads	9841010509
Thiruvallur	Shri Sai Enterprises	9677345306
T.Nagar	Kreative Ideas	9940365686
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5 special trains to Bihar from Kerala

Chaos in Telangana over e-passes; Karnataka operates free buses to districts

STAFF REPORTER
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

While there was chaos in Telangana on Sunday over e-passes for migrant workers, the Karnataka government operated free buses, and in Kerala, five Shramik Special trains to Bihar were pressed into service.

In Telangana, hours after Director-General of Police M. Mahender Reddy announced an e-pass initiative to help the stranded return to their States, the Tolichowki area near Hyderabad saw a large number of migrant workers coming onto the roads seeking travel permission.

The workers were not able to get any such immediate permission for inter-State travel since they did not have private transport. They demanded that the government make arrangements to send them back to their native places.

Police officials reached the area and pacified them, promising food and other help as long as they were in Telangana.

Most of the migrant workers were from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal.

The Railways operated



On their way: Migrant workers boarding buses at the Majestic bus station in Bengaluru on Sunday. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

five 'Shramik Special' trains from Kerala to Bihar on Sunday to facilitate the return of migrant workers. One train each was operated from Kozhikode, Thrissur, and Kannur, and two from Ernakulam. The two trains from Ernakulam had a total of 2,201 workers from Bihar. The train bound for Barauni left at 3 p.m., carrying 1,140 passengers, while the Muzaffarpur-bound train left at 6.30 p.m., with 1,061 people, said Ernakulam Deputy Commissioner of Police G. Poonguzhali.

Checking at camps

"Ten teams, comprising officials of health, labour, police and revenue departments,

visited workers' camps, registered them online and conducted health check-up there itself. The shortlisted people were brought to the Ernakulam Junction railway station on KSRTC buses, accompanied by police personnel," Ms. Poonguzhali said.

500 buses

After facing flak for charging exorbitant fares to transport stranded migrants in Bengaluru, the Karnataka government started ferrying migrants to their respective districts without any fare from Sunday morning. This service will be available till Tuesday from the BMTC and KSRTC bus stands in Majes-

Telangana students in Delhi ask to be evacuated

HYDERABAD

Around 200 students from Telangana pursuing various courses in Delhi and civil services aspirants are awaiting evacuation from the capital. A student, coordinating with the NCR administration, said they received a call on Sunday that their request for evacuation had been accepted. "The Telangana government has to work out the modalities," said another student.

On Sunday, the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) operated around 500 buses from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. with around 15,000 people travelling to over 45 destinations across the State, sources said. From Tuesday, buses will ply from 7 a.m. in the morning.

Thousands of people, including migrant workers, students and others thronged the BMTC bus stand in Majestic on Sunday, immediately after the State government announced that it would ferry stranded migrants to their respective districts without any fare.

(With inputs from Hyderabad and Bengaluru bureaus)

New cases leave Telangana, Karnataka and A.P. in the red

Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh adds 30 cases; relief in Kerala as it stays clear

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Andhra Pradesh reported 58 new COVID-19 positive cases, and Telangana 21 new cases on Sunday. No fresh cases were recorded in Kerala but after several days of low case numbers, Karnataka had 34 cases.

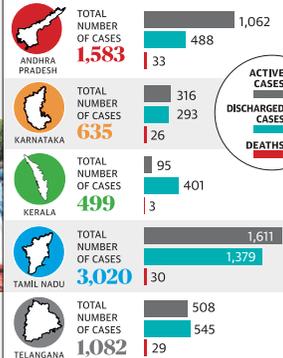
The tally in Andhra Pradesh rose to 1,583, but no deaths were reported. Most of the new cases reported on Sunday were from the red

Hero's welcome

The armed forces conducted fly-pasts and showered petals on several hospitals across the country to express gratitude to doctors, paramedics and other frontline workers fighting the pandemic



Floral tribute: An IAF helicopter showering flowers on health care workers at the Medical College Hospital in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday. ■ S. MAHINSHA



COVID-19

zone districts of Kurnool, Guntur and Krishna. Kurnool alone had 30 fresh cases while Guntur and Krishna reported 11 and eight cases respectively. Anantapur had seven and Chittoor and Nellore two fresh cases each.

Also on the same day, 47 persons were discharged from hospital following recovery. The data on those discharged were: Guntur 18; Chittoor 13; Kurnool 11; East Godavari 3; and Krishna 2. So far, 488 patients, or 31% of total positive cases recovered and 33 patients (2% of the total cases) died.

Cumulative data for the State were: Kurnool 466 cases, Guntur and Krishna 319 and 266 cases, Nellore (91), Kadapa (83), Chittoor (81), Anantapur (78), Prakasam (61), West Godavari (59), East Godavari (45), Visakhapatnam (29) and Srikakulam (5).

Kurnool, inching closer to the 500 mark reported nearly 30% of the State's positive cases. The State had so far tested 1,14,937 samples.

The number of COVID-19 cases in Telangana rose to 1,082. While 20 cases were from Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation area, one was from Jagtial. Of the people in isolation wards, 46

were discharged after recovery. Of the total, 508 were active cases, 545 were discharged, and 29 people died.

For the first time the number of people discharged was higher than active cases. State Health Minister Eatala Rajender said hospital authorities were acting on issues related to medical services pointed out by those who recovered.

One COVID-19 patient who recovered was a 68-year-old man with diabetes. The patient was admitted with bilateral pneumonia, and respiratory problems. The Health Minister's office said the patient in intensive care unit was administered Hydroxychloroquine, Liponavir, Ritonavir. He was discharged after recovery. The number of districts with zero cases in 14 days increased to 17.

95 under treatment

No fresh COVID-19 cases were reported in Kerala on Sunday. The Health department said in a statement that

one patient - a Kasaragod native, undergoing treatment in Kannur, was reported as having recovered from the disease.

Kerala had a total of 499 cases, of which 401 had recovered, while 95 were undergoing treatment in various hospitals.

The government said 21,720 persons were under surveillance in different districts. Of these, 21,332 were under observation in their own homes, while 388 were admitted in isolation wards in hospitals. The number of fresh hospital admissions on Sunday was 63.

Four new places in the State were declared as hotspots today - one each in Wayanad and Idukki district, and two in Ernakulam district. There were 84 hotspots in Kerala.

After several days of reporting low case numbers, Karnataka recorded 34 COVID-19 positive cases on Sunday. Davangere district was in focus, as 21 of the cases were from there. Davangere Deputy Commissioner Ma-

hantesh Bealagi told the media that the district administration had sent 330 throat swabs in the last three days. Of these 37 high risk (A category) samples were tested and 21 were found to be positive. With this, the number of active cases had gone up to 28 in the district, he said.

Among the other cases, six were from Kalaburagi, four from Bengaluru Urban and three from Bagalkote, the media bulletin by the Department of Health and Family Welfare said. Out of these thirteen cases, four patients had Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory infections (SARI), while the contact investigation for one case was on. All the remaining eight tested positive after coming in contact with a patient who was tested positive.

Meanwhile, the case tally in Karnataka stood at 635. A total of 293 patients were discharged, 21 being discharged on Sunday.

(With inputs from Vijayawada, Thiruvananthapuram and Bengaluru)

Pinarayi defends staff salary deferment

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Sunday attacked Congress-led service organisations for criticising the government's decision to defer the remittance of 30 days' salary over five months to steady the State's finances.

In his weekly television programme, *Nam Munnotu*, Mr. Vijayan said teachers who had burnt the government order had become objects of public ridicule. The students of their schools had



Pinarayi Vijayan

torched the order, he said, "Their perverse mindset will never change."

He said the COVID-19 lockdown had choked the government's conventional revenue streams. Kerala had protected its employees from arbitrary wage and dearness allowance cuts resorted to by the Central government. The Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party had done the same in the States ruled by them.

Mr. Vijayan defended his action to hire highly paid la-

yers to argue for the government and said his special advisers bore minimal cost to the public exchequer.

He also justified the government's decision to hire a helicopter for a "high monthly rental" by stating that the State would deploy it during natural disasters.

Kerala Congress Chief Mulpally Ramachandran said the Chief Minister's sense of insecurity had caused him to splurge on helicopters, bulletproof vehicles and expensive cars.

IN BRIEF



Kannada poet Nisar Ahmed passes away

BENGALURU Well-known Kannada poet K.S. Nisar Ahmed, best known for his iconic work *Nityotsava*, passed away at his residence here on Sunday. He was 84. Prof. Ahmed was suffering from age-related ailments. His last rites will be held in Bengaluru on Monday, family sources said. Just over two weeks ago, he lost his younger son to cancer but wasn't able to take part in the last rites as his son lived in the United States which, like India, is under a lockdown owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Liquor to cost 25% more in Andhra Pradesh

VIJAYAWADA The Andhra Pradesh government is going to allow reopening of liquor shops during the lockdown, subject to social distancing and other guidelines laid down by the Central government, besides reducing their number significantly. This apart, the government has ordered that the prices of liquor be jacked up by 25% as a step towards implementing total prohibition. These decisions were taken at a high-level meeting chaired by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Sunday.

Navodaya students from Rajasthan sent back

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM Navodaya students from Rajasthan, who were stranded in Kerala's Thrissur following the lockdown for the last one-and-a-half months, were sent home by a special bus on Sunday. A group of 23 students, including 15 boys and eight girls, from Tonk in Rajasthan had reached Navodaya School, Mayannur, as part of an exchange programme. The students were sent by a special bus arranged by the Rajasthan government.

Farmers in panic after wild elephants kill cattle

Herd also devoured standing crops

STAFF REPORTER
CHITTOOR

Fear gripped the people of Gangavaram and Palamaner mandals abutting the Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary after a herd of wild elephants killed two cattle in a field at Bandameedha Jaravaripalle village under the Palamaner forest range.

According to information, the herd of eight elephants entered the fields close to the village around Saturday midnight and devoured the standing crops of tomato and other vegetables, besides trampling a stretch of paddy.

Seeing the commotion, two cattle, which were tied outside a watch-hut, started bellowing. The herd moved towards the cattle and trampled them.

Huge number

Though the villagers heard the agonised cries of the cattle, they remained indoors due to the big number of the herd.

At sunrise, the villagers found the carcasses of the cattle. Staff from the veterinary hospital in the area reached the spot and conducted autopsy.

Forest officials arrive

Forest officials from Palamaner visited the spot and assured the cattle owner that the matter would be brought to the notice of higher officials.

In view of the COVID-19 lockdown and the scorching heat outside, several farmers have abandoned night vigil, preferring to retreat to their homes after dusk.

Second incident

In the past week, two herds from the wildlife sanctuary have entered the fields and damaged crops, the farmers complained.

Following the incident, farmers have started taking cattle back with them to the villages after grazing, instead of allowing them to be tied in the fields.

Distraught farmer burns his sugarcane crop in Karnataka

He was unable to harvest it due to the lockdown

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HASSAN

Unable to harvest sugarcane during the COVID-19 lockdown, a farmer at Mukunduru Hosahalli in Hassan taluk of Karnataka has burnt standing crop worth over ₹2 lakh. With this, the work his family put in over a year, besides its investment of ₹80,000, has been reduced to ashes.

Gangadhar Murthy, 63, burnt his standing crop on Thursday and informed Chamundeshwari sugar factory, near Channarayana, with whom he had an agreement to sell sugarcane. He had grown sugarcane on four acres of land, but set fire to the crop on an acre and half.

Workers left for home

According to the schedule fixed by the factory, the crop should have been lifted by April first week. The factory sent around 15 workers for harvesting in March. But



Tough times: The crop should have been harvested by April first week.

maintain the crop with a constant supply of water. The standing crop started to dry up. When I lost all options to protect it, I set fire to crop grown on one and a half acres," Mr. Murthy told *The Hindu* on Sunday.

Spent a lot of money

He said he had spent money on fertilizers, medicine and labour, taking the total investment to around ₹1 lakh. The factory had agreed to purchase his crop at a rate of ₹2,550 a tonne. He was expecting around 90 tonnes of sugarcane from his farm. He now remains hopeful that the remaining crop will bring him some money.

When the issue was brought to the notice of Deputy Commissioner R. Girish, he told *The Hindu* that the administration had tried to resolve the problems of sugarcane growers. "We will see what best can be done," he said.

even before they could start work, the lockdown was declared. "A majority of the workers were from Ballari. Soon after the lockdown was imposed, they left for their native place," said Mr. Murthy. He could not get locals to do the work.

He approached the factory officials repeatedly, but they told him to wait as they were experiencing difficulty in providing workers during the lockdown. "I could not

Even Cobra hatchlings are lethal, caution experts

Warning comes after video of a Malayalam actor holding a hatchling on her palm goes viral

K.S. SUDHI
KOCHI

It doesn't require an adult cobra to sniff the life out of you; even hatchlings are capable of it, warn herpetologists.

Snake specialists sounded caution on handling snakes after a video of a Malayalam actor holding the hatchling of a cobra on her palm went viral on social media. The hatchling, a few centimetres in length, could be seen holding its hood up in the video and launching itself forward as if to strike.

Oblivious of the risk, the actor continued speaking on



The venom in a hatchling is of high concentration.

The actor was also seen introducing the snake to some children.

'Enough venom'

"The young cobra has enough venom, fully developed fangs and a poison delivery system sufficient enough to kill an adult person or cause serious health risks. The cobra venom is neurotoxic. It was suicidal on the actor's part to hold the snake on her palm and go for a video recording," said Jose Louies, an IUCN specialist on snakes.

Cobra is one of the four venomous snakes that ac-

counts for most of the snakebite deaths in the country. Russell's viper, Saw-scaled viper and the Common krait are the other members of the lethal league.

The venom in the cobra hatchling would be of high concentration. The striking distance between the snake and the human body was a few centimetres in this case. With its agility, the young snake could strike at any angle with lightning speed, said Mr. Louies, also the founder of Indiansnakes, a website that tracks snakes and snakes.

Snakes hatch towards the

end of summer months and the chance of encountering them were higher during the monsoon period. Most cases of snakebite occurred during monsoon, he said. Ideally, one should stay away from snakes.

Steps to be taken

If confronted in an unavoidable situation, the movement of the snake could be restrained by covering it with a bucket and then waiting for snake rescuers to arrive.

In case of a hatchling, they should be removed from the area safely, Mr. Louies suggested.

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 Monday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning, hail and squall very likely at isolated places over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi; with lightning and gusty winds at isolated places over Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, coastal Andhra Pradesh, coastal Karnataka and Kerala and with lightning at isolated places over interior Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	0.6	32.8	22.4	Kozhikode	0.2	35.2	27.0
Almhedabad	—	42.6	27.1	Kurnool	—	41.5	26.5
Aizawl	—	22.1	14.1	Lucknow	—	34.1	23.9
Allahabad	—	35.3	24.5	Madurai	—	37.2	25.6
Bengaluru	—	33.4	23.2	Mangaluru	0.2	35.6	24.2
Bhopal	—	42.3	26.3	Mumbai	—	34.6	27.4
Bhubaneswar	—	35.3	27.3	Mysuru	—	34.9	24.0
Chandigarh	4.8	33.6	23.0	New Delhi	—	37.2	25.6
Chennai	—	36.8	27.3	Patna	—	33.4	22.4
Coimbatore	0.3	36.7	25.5	Port Blair	2.6	32.7	25.7
Dehradun	6.3	—	17.9	Puducherry	—	35.4	27.6
Dharam	1.6	—	13.8	Pune	0.8	—	39.8
Goa	—	35.3	28.2	Rajpur	—	41.6	26.5
Guwahati	—	33.7	21.1	Ranchi	—	33.6	18.2
Hubballi	—	37.0	24.0	Shillong	1.3	—	21.4
Hyderabad	—	37.2	27.1	Shimla	—	26.6	15.0
Imphal	0.6	26.7	16.5	Srinagar	—	19.3	9.8
Jalpur	—	42.0	27.0	Thiruvananthapuram	0.3	35.6	26.9
Kochi	—	33.8	26.6	Tiruchirappalli	—	40.0	28.4
Kolkata	57.2	23.8	11.4	Vijayawada	—	—	—
—	3.4	32.6	23.0	Visakhapatnam	—	32.8	28.4

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	Sr	No.	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE	Yesterday
Almhedabad	28	20	29	40	58	—	—
Bengaluru	11	17	53	—	69	—	—
Chennai	02	03	53	23	—	—	—
Delhi	12	24	107	68	154	—	—
Hyderabad	13	28	116	60	81	—	—
Kolkata	06	13	17	35	37	—	—
Lucknow	13	17	—	67	—	—	—
Mumbai	84	—	51	74	65	—	—
Pune	29	10	52	36	35	—	—
Visakhapatnam	11	30	06	36	79	—	—

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.
NO₂: 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.



Slow release

A less rigorous lockdown does not mean COVID-19 has been overcome

Balancing lives and livelihoods, the Centre has extended the national lockdown for COVID-19 for two weeks from May 4, with fewer restrictions on activity. But the highly contagious virus has not disappeared and the weeks ahead present a challenge to States. They must ensure that the gains from the lockdown in terms of a relatively low death toll and a cap on new cases are not reversed overnight in the red, orange and green zones, where normality of varying degrees is to be restored, barring the containment zones. Kerala, lauded for its success in containing the pandemic, has chosen to retain some curbs even in green zones. Allowing some economic activity, though not at full pace, and under safeguards, was inevitable, although the stipulations in the Home Ministry's orders require a high degree of civic cooperation. The continued suspension of air, rail, inter-State and urban public transport, and the bar on mass gatherings and entertainment venues remove a major source of crowding, although the restrictions on the number of passengers allowed in private vehicles and taxi cabs, and the protocol for personnel in industries call for strict adherence to succeed. Allowing outpatient clinics to reopen and the permission given for plumbers, electricians and other technicians to work with safeguards are welcome. The relaxation process can be eased greatly if States adopt a 'how to' approach and communicate to citizens clearly.

In the absence of medical remedies, prevention remains the only option against the virus. Using face masks, now mandatory, hand washing and physical distancing at all times are universally recognised precautions. Such measures were adopted relatively late in India, with politicians initially reluctant to even adjourn legislatures, leave alone impose strict curbs on public activity. It has taken more than a month to move migrant workers back to their home States by train; in the interim, several desperate families have tried to walk home across vast distances and many have perished. Besides ensuring decent conditions for these workers and the education of their children, States must also prepare for the arrival of expatriate workers in large numbers from West Asia and elsewhere. These unprecedented pressures add to the need to maintain the highest vigil against COVID-19. Unsurprisingly, the biggest cities, with a legacy of market-driven housing policies, unplanned densification, rampant pollution and poor health-care access are red zones, with large infection clusters. Their decay is marked by the absence of usable commons, including pavements in normally crowded localities, making it difficult to maintain distancing. This is an appropriate moment to start repairing that damage. What the public must be told emphatically is that the relaxation of the lockdown is not a return to life as it existed before the coronavirus. It is a new reality, one that calls for safe, measured activity.

No comfort in numbers

The shame is not in detecting cases, but in hiding deaths caused by the virus

West Bengal, which reported its first COVID-19 case in mid-March, has now recorded a total of 922 cases. The State has reported 48 deaths but had not counted 72 who died of comorbidities. Though it is India's fourth populous State, it now ranks fourth lowest in terms of the number of those tested, and is also way lower than Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Against a national average of 721 tests per million, West Bengal has a dismal 212.6 tests per million. But what is disturbing is the general reluctance of the government to ramp up testing and to acknowledge deaths from the disease as such. This comes as a surprise given its initial proactive stand on several fronts to tackle COVID-19. It was the first State to move from containment to mitigation to contain the spread when it announced a complete lockdown before the Prime Minister announced it nationally. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was seen doing all the right things including demonstrating how social distancing is to be practised and setting up quarantine centres in every district. While it is not clear if testing has improved, there is clearly a reluctance to divulge the true extent of spread of the virus. The hesitation is pronounced on the issue of sharing mortality numbers.

At over 13%, the case fatality rate is very high in West Bengal while the detection rate continues to remain the same, which is a reflection of poor surveillance and a failure to actively look out for fresh cases. When surveillance is good and testing is ramped up, the number of cases reported is bound to increase, as was seen in Kerala, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, and even South Korea in particular. As Kerala has demonstrated, early detection of cases and tracing of contacts, quarantining and testing will not only help in containing the spread but also markedly reduce the case fatality rate. Trying to keep the numbers artificially low by testing fewer people or not divulging the actual numbers and tracing their contacts allows the virus to spread unchecked. At some point, poor surveillance and delay in testing will overwhelm the health system and result in even more deaths, something that no government would be proud of. A higher number of cases is only a reflection of how active the State has been in waging a war against the virus, while a higher case fatality rate serves as evidence of poor response. With the lockdown now extended by two more weeks, the government should follow the advice of WHO and cover lost ground by aggressively testing and isolating cases, and tracing contacts. Assembly polls next year should not be a reason for the Union and the State governments to politicise a public health issue that has been declared a pandemic.

Pandemics without borders, South Asia's evolution

Rather than deliver an autocratic wasteland, the epidemic should be an opportunity to transform the region's politics



KANAK MANI DIXIT

Even if the COVID-19 pandemic spares South Asia the worst impact it has reserved thus far for the northern latitudes, it is certain that this region of nearly a fourth of the global population will be wounded gravely – economically, and as the process unfolds, socio-politically. Holding the largest volume and density of poverty in the world, the countries of South Asia are looking into an abyss of distress and discontent.

Dire sign

As the region from the Indian Ocean to the Himalaya is hit by recession, more than half a century's effort against poverty could be wasted. The coddling of the middle class and neglect of the majority underclass, so starkly seen during the pandemic response, points to all that has gone wrong in our electoral democracies; no country of South Asia is presently a formal dictatorship.

Amidst our separate insularities, South Asians should take the pandemic as a wake-up call beyond public health, on ills ranging from plastic pollution to global warming, extinction of species, hijacking of the commons, dirty water, toxic air, a weakening of the welfare state, infrastructural exceptionalism – and the rapid conversion of our demographic diversity into the worldwide sameness of a suburban mall.

If we fail to act, the COVID-19 episode will be but an interlude as we wade further into the Anthropocene quicksand. You can see the return to 'normalcy' in the aircraft tracking apps that show China's airways bustling once again, as they were before the coronavirus

radiated out from Wuhan.

As a dire telegram sent by Earth to Humanity, COVID-19 has laid bare the demagoguery that marks the democracies of South Asia. The response of the regimes has been to entrench themselves further, and they are shifting blame on mal-governance to the pandemic even as they tighten state control through surveillance, repressive laws and radical populism backed by ultra-nationalism.

The public's fear of the virus is allowing Presidents and Prime Ministers to press on with top-down rule, whereas the lockdown should be the time to generate momentum towards federal devolution and Gandhi's empowering 'gram swaraj' – a term that must be revived without a sense of embarrassment.

In Sri Lanka, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa takes advantage of COVID-19 to grant pardon to a war criminal. In Pakistan, the Army has Prime Minister Imran Khan against the ropes, and Nepal's political class uses the pandemic for political adventurism and Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli engages the military to carry out key COVID-19 tasks, from buying protective gear to contact tracing. The virus has solidified the foundation of Sheikh Hasina's one-party rule in Bangladesh.

India's continent-sized polity craves federalism, but COVID-19 has energised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's centralising mission. His Hindutva-backed, Pakistan-focused ultra-nationalism creates a web of control that strengthens Mr. Modi but weakens India. After a series of polarising actions from Kashmir to the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, we watch unbelievably as Islamophobia is injected into the pandemic response.

The majoritarian attitude exhibited by the state, mass media and social media towards India's 200 million Muslims will before long transfer to the Dalit, tribal and Adi-



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

vasi communities, and the underclass as a whole. The anti-poor impetuosity seen in the demonetisation of November 2016 was evident also in the four-hour notice given for lockdown on the night of March 23, in a country of more than 350 million workers, many of whom are internal migrants. Since Mr. Modi shuns unheard encounters, journalists and academics are not able to challenge him about the fabric of India that is tearing.

Soft power

The reason to talk at length about India within South Asia is that the country comprises much of the region by population and geography. Further, the actions and the omissions of India impact each neighbour. While all the other capitals have adversarial positions *vis-à-vis* New Delhi, however, it is also true that modern India has been aspirational for neighbouring societies – till now, that is.

The trajectory of India, with its galloping centralisation, removes governance from the people's reach. There was a time, decades ago, when New Delhi's messaging was limited to promises of *roti, kapda aur makaan*, but ever more populist slogans were required to maintain command. Hence, the strident Hindutva-aced nationalism, which can only divert attention of the huddled masses, not spread prosperity nor social justice.

In both India and Pakistan, the two large countries of South Asia, ending insensitivity and inefficiency in governance require power

and agency to pass to the provinces/States. Self-correction is only possible in smaller, devolved polities. As has been seen during the ongoing crisis, the States of India have risen to the occasion and are seen to be more caring, for the simple reason that they are closer to the ground and more accountable.

India has shone in the world because of its soft power, defined by a textured history, empathetic open society, "scientific temper" and Gandhian legacy. India simply cannot succeed as a hard power, which is why under the Bharatiya Janata Party-Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the country is losing the very values that command respect abroad.

If India were an internationally confident nation-state, as in decades past, it would have used its clout to lobby and build demand for a sitting of the UN Security Council to discuss the global security threat represented by the COVID-19 pandemic. India is also weakened internally by the New Delhi intelligentsia's China fixation, which must be overcome. Unknowingly or with deliberation, New Delhi seeks to copy-paste Beijing's centralism as well as its xenophobia, both of which are bound to backfire in a country whose historicity and circumstances are quite different.

A reformatting

The unflinching lack of caring for the citizenry by governments in South Asia can only be reversed through a formula that incorporates the internal and external to the nation-states, a reformatting of relationships. Internally, power must devolve from the capital to the provincial units of the two larger countries (Pakistan and India), as well as empowerment of local governments all over (as done in Nepal under the 2015 Constitution, but not yet fully implemented).

Externally, the countries of

South Asia must bring down the hyper-nationalist mind barriers to allow porous borders, thereby reviving historical synergies in economy, ecology and culture. This is essential for both social justice and economic growth, and cannot happen without a palpable reduction in military expenditures that will come with abandonment of the national security state.

South Asian regionalism requires resuming the evolution of the subcontinental polity that was terminated in 1947 with Partition. Regionalism would lead to collaborative battles against pestilence, and for wealth creation through trade, comparative advantage, and economies of scale. Regionalism would help fight plastic pollution in our rivers, battle the air pollution that wafts across our frontiers, promote cooperation in natural and human-made disasters, and boost the economies of the geographical "periphery" of each country.

The push for South Asia-wide thinking and planning need not be seen as a malevolent attempt to subvert India. Instead, it is the path for India's own socio-economic advance, and the way to garner international recognition of its soft power. Internal devolution and cross-border bonding has always been a necessity but impossible for some to contemplate. Hopefully, the shake-up of the COVID-19 pandemic will succeed where past exhortations have failed.

The opinion-makers of India – economists, political scientists, philosophers, sociologists, diplomats and others – have tended to be New Delhi-centric, and, as a result, downright reluctant to address issues of both federalism within and regionalism without. They have thus far been unable to see the jungle for the trees.

Kanak Mani Dixit, a writer and journalist based in Kathmandu, is founding Editor of the magazine, 'Himal Southasian'

India's disease surveillance system needs a reboot

There is enough reason to fear a combination of COVID-19 with existing illnesses and medical complications in India



MAYA JOHN

Unfortunately, the recent experiences of the public health care system in India indicate the side-steps of precisely this issue.

There are many among the poor who are battling various diseases but now have little access to major public hospitals in the wake of the lockdown. Routine functioning, particularly of out-patient department services in public hospitals, has been severely affected, and largely, emergency cases are being entertained. Patients now complain of even greater high-handedness of hospital staff in the still functioning emergency intensive care unit, labour rooms, tuberculosis (TB) wards, etc. Ironically, cardiology and neurology departments that cater to elderly sick patients are turning away many in the bid to streamline "critical" cases. In such circumstances we can expect an aggravation in the poor health conditions already affecting large sections of people who have limited access to health-care services.

Let us scrutinise this issue more closely. Many of the adverse medical conditions prevalent among the vast majority of our country are not even identified due to the lax disease surveillance system. The failure of disease surveillance requires explanation. For one, a significant number of the infected (poor and marginalised people) do not have access to health-care facilities and so fail to report their condition to certified medical practitioners. Even when an infected person has access to such facilities, their clinical case does



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

not always culminate in the required testing (blood/serum, throat swab, sputum, stool, urine). Third, there is a widespread practice among pathological laboratories to categorise diseases on the basis of the pre-existing classification system, which results in failure to identify the definitive cause (aetiology) for an illness by differentiating and separating pathogens (disease-causing microorganisms) on the basis of variations in groups, subgroups, strains, etc.

Silent epidemics

There is, consequently, pervasive non-identification of a definitive cause behind a number of illnesses. Many ailments are simply clubbed together and referred to by generic names such as 'Respiratory Tract Infection' (RTI), 'Urinary Tract Infection', 'Acute Febrile Illness (AFI)', 'Acute Undifferentiated Fever', 'Fever of Unknown Origin' (FUO). Certain of these undifferentiated illnesses are known to affect lakhs of people every year worldwide. They claim many lives, especially of the poor who are victims of low immunity and have limited access to health care. Sources claim that RTI kills over 900 people in India every day. Likewise, Acute Lower Respiratory Tract Infection (ALRTI), which af-

fects mostly children below the age of five years, has been known to infect approximately 3.40 crore people every year worldwide. In recent years it has led to roughly 66,000 to 199,000 deaths. Shockingly, 99% of these deaths are reported from developing countries, and India has a larger share in it. The large number of hospitalisations, enormous deaths and suffering caused by contagious undifferentiated diseases indicate the prevalence of persistent but undetected silent epidemics.

Even if the definitive cause of an illness is identified, it does not necessarily gain the focused attention of scientific research. As the disease evolves but "interest" in it remains fleeting, the differences developing in the sub-groups, strains in genotype of the pathogen concerned fail to be consistently tracked. Knowledge of the pathogen, and, consequently, the required disease control soon lag behind. This overall process is due to the selective, biased approach of mainstream scientific research that is driven by the profits of private pharmaceutical companies, and is the fallout of the lack of priority that governments assign to general health care and diseases of the poor.

Even when the identity of a contagious disease and its treatment are well known it does not mean that the disease's prevalence will generate the necessary reaction. TB is a suitable example. According to public health experts, one person in every 10 seconds contracts TB, and up to 1,400 people in India die every day of the dis-

ease. This indicates that TB has a RO value (basic reproduction number) and fatality rate that is way higher than those attributed to COVID-19 so far. However, it is important to note that TB and many other contagious diseases are ignored as "ordinary", and elicit very low attention. In contrast, some diseases are quickly identified as epidemics of greater public concern.

Diseases are being selectively discovered and have the propensity to be identified as an epidemic when they have a signalling effect for the scientific community. In a majority of instances, it is only when there is a threat of transmission to the well-to-do sections of society or wealthier regions that the disease actually has such a signalling effect. It is not a coincidence that a relatively downplayed disease such as TB is largely a poor man's disease.

Clearly, we are confronted by a skewed relationship between our ways of knowing (social epistemology) and epidemiology. It is precisely in this context that COVID-19 has gained singular prominence over several other lethal diseases. Importantly, pre-existing diseases have the potential to combine with COVID-19, and with devastating consequences. It becomes imperative to identify the comparative fatality rates of many of the silent epidemics, which in their own right require urgent attention.

Maya John teaches in Jesus and Mary College, University of Delhi, and is working on the history of epidemics and epidemiology

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.

The ride home

Not it's not the noise of clapping, vessels being beaten, or the vision of rose petals being showered from helicopters that India must note. It is certainly about developments that have set alarm bells ringing. 'Stay at home' has been interpreted as 'let me go home' by migrant workers. Their desperate attempts walking, riding or hiding even in concrete mixers to escape haunted ground have reached the limit. Their lemning-like exodus is based on the illusion that the other side of the fence is always green. And with

colour coded zones changing in a matter of time, we need to ask ourselves what we are trying to fence out and who we are trying to keep safe.

DAVID BALASINGH,
Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu

While the decision of the Indian Railways to operate "Shramik Special" trains for stranded migrant workers is welcome, it is atrocious and inhumane on the part of the Railway Board to announce extra fare charges (Tamil Nadu, "Special train travellers will have to pay extra", May 3). When the migrants have already run

out of cash and are nearly starving, this is only rubbing salt into their wound. All the suffering they have undergone could have been avoided with advance notice before the national lockdown. The situation only points to the need for a national policy using inputs from States, the Centre and the employers of workers.

A. JANLUARDEEN,
Chennai

Urban planning

The severe spread of COVID-19 in Mumbai, more so in Dharavi, will prove to be a huge challenge for the respective governments.

Those in power at the State and Centre should note the destructive possibilities of having such densely populated areas from the point of view of disaster. Relief operations become a nightmare. Therefore, it is important that measures are initiated to replace the slums with multi-storied tenements and dormitories for the working class especially as they are the backbone of economic prosperity. It will not doubt be an expensive project and may even prove to be a procedural nightmare, but it has to be done. Politicians should keep their outlandish projects on

hold and accord priority for what will now become key projects in a post-COVID-19 world. The situation India faces now is a forewarning.

V.H. SUBRAMONEY,
Bengaluru

Health plan

The public health strategy for COVID-19 has to sharply focus on helping people determine their infection status through widely available testing. It is most unfortunate that the Centre and States have failed to take advantage of the prolonged lockdown period to augment testing capacity. Senior citizens are the worst

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sufferers. A person displaying symptoms such as mild cough or fever undergoes psychological trauma because of lurking suspicion of infection.

Prompt testing can relieve anxiety for the rest of the family. Hospitals and nursing homes face a challenge in treating these patients. Many States have not given permission to accredited private labs to test. The ICMR should revise guidelines to facilitate priority testing for senior citizens.

N. SUKUMAR,
Hyderabad

No relief for the nowhere people

Policy responses to the migrant crisis reinforce the idea of two Indias



RAVI SRIVASTAVA

Jamalo Makdam, 12, died on April 18 walking back from the chilli fields of Telangana to her home in Chhattisgarh. She and a group of other workers decided to return home on foot, as many migrant workers did, after losing their jobs, incomes and even accommodation following the announcement of a nationwide lockdown. Her journey ended in death, possibly due to electrolyte imbalance and exhaustion, said health officials.

In the past month, migrant workers have died, been lathi-charged, herded into shelters with minimum facilities, sprayed with dangerous chemicals, and denied entry into their home villages by the dominant elite. These reports and images have seared our conscience.

No rights and entitlements

The labourers – men, women and children – are the classic nowhere citizens of India. They have no rights and entitlements in the areas in which they work and to whose prosperity they contribute. Being from the poorest and the socially discriminated groups, they are also denied entitlements in the villages to which they belong. Not surprisingly, they have been invisible in policy discourse. There are no firm estimates of their numbers. Estimates prepared by this author and updated from time to time suggest that short-term and circular migrants in the informal wage economy could number 60-65 million. About 40% of these migrants work in the construction sector and 15% in agriculture. The rest are engaged in manufacturing, transport, and other services. With accompanying family members, their numbers would not be less than 100 million. About half these labourers are inter-State workers. We exclude in this estimate longer-term circular migrants who also work in the informal wage economy and as self-employed workers in the urban economy.

Data from the National Sample Survey and the India Human Development Survey (IHDS) show that



"The lockdown imposed by the government has exposed the deep fault lines in India's labour market." Migrant workers wait to board a special train to return to Agra from Ahmedabad. • AP

these migrant labourers are mainly from rural areas in poor regions and States, and belong to the poorest socio-economic classes. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes are over-represented among them. They form the largest section of child, bonded and trafficked labour. They predominate in activities that are characterised by three Ds – dirty, dangerous, and difficult – and consistently face a fourth D – discrimination. Nearly 70% of migrants work in urban and peri-urban areas in and around growth centres in States in the north, west, and south of the country. Industry and employers are bemoaning, for the first time, the fact that activities in a number of crucial sectors and industries will not see revival without these workers.

The lockdown imposed by the government has exposed the deep fault lines in India's labour market which operates in a sea of growing informal employment relations. We know that nearly 81% of wage workers even in non-agricultural sectors do not have any contract with their employers and enjoy no security of tenure. Many do not even know their final employer. The IHDS tells us that half the migrant labourers are hired through contractors. Their condition shows the dismal state of implementation of labour regulations, particularly with respect to inter-State migrants.

With the government's sudden lockdown decision, wages for jobs already carried out remained unpaid. A large percentage of migrants remained saddled with debt taken as advances from their employers, con-

tractors, or landlords. The government's announcement of a tepid relief package on March 26 did not address any of the concerns of this section as the frail social security net largely does not cover them. Crucially, the government side-stepped its major responsibility of paying compensatory wages to the informal workers for the lockdown, putting this onus on employers who are already hit hard by the lockdown.

As the migrant workers tried to move to their homes, the government responded with a strict State and inter-district lockdown and ordered placing migrant workers in quarantines-cum-shelters, and the detention of workers who remained on the move. In a status report submitted to the Supreme Court on March 31, the government argued that the movement of these workers to rural areas constituted a serious risk of spread of COVID-19, a fact that has remained unsubstantiated.

By the end of the first week of April, the government submitted that about 6.3 lakh workers were in shelters run by governments in different parts of the country, while another 4.5 lakh were in shelters run by NGOs and others. Nearly 10 million workers were receiving food assistance through governmental and non-governmental sources. About 5 lakh to 6 lakh workers had reached their source States. As a matter of fact, reports from the ground suggest that a large proportion of intra-State migrants had trudged back home so the total returnees was probably closer to 25 million. At present, with about a million migrant workers in

shelters or quarantines, at least 20 million such workers are still stranded at worksites or living in hovels. Most of these, as successive surveys attest, have not been able to avail of any food or cash assistance, and are on the brink of starvation.

Shifting the burden

On April 19, the Indian government issued a standard operating protocol on movement of stranded labour, permitting the movement and employment of stranded migrant workers in worksites only within the States in which they were involuntarily detained in shelters. On April 29, the Central government issued another notification finally permitting stranded labourers and populations to travel inter-State to their homes only by buses. On May 1, the Railways were permitted to run special trains for migrants with coordination and costs being borne by the States and, in some cases, fares being paid by the hapless migrants. The receiving States, it must be pointed out, are precisely those which have the weakest fiscal capacity. The ensuing confusion and delay has also increased the plight of the migrants. It goes without saying that it must be the responsibility of the Centre to coordinate the movement of the stranded populations by trains, air and buses, and to provide adequate resources, not only for transportation, but also for wages and food requirements of all such workers whose loss of jobs and incomes followed the national lockdown.

The fight against the pandemic can only be built on a vision of a society that is inclusive, equitable, and non-discriminatory. India needs a unified labour market and universal social security system which can ensure security, safety, and dignity to all workers. Pandemics do not recognise artificial walls between living spaces and work spaces, and both have to be able to provide basic amenities and access to health security to all. However, it seems that current policy responses to the crisis and towards the migrants are still embedded in a short-sighted framework that recognises and reinforces the idea of two Indias.

Ravi Srivastava, former Professor of Economics at JNU, is now honorary Director of the Centre for Employment Studies, Institute for Human Development, Delhi

FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

Being wrong

Acknowledging and correcting a mistake is an essential element of ethical journalism



A.S. PANNEERSELVAM

The headline of this column written on World Press Freedom Day draws from a fascinating book by Kathryn Schulz, *Being Wrong: Adventures in the Margin of Error*. The 2010 book has some excellent observations about the three stages of committing errors: why we make mistakes, why we don't know we are making them, and what we do when recognition dawns.

COVID-19 has not reduced readers' expectations of a responsible newspaper. When they see any infraction in journalistic principles or humanistic values, they respond within hours, even during this pandemic. A front-page report with a Ghaziabad dateline, "2 priests found dead on U.P. temple premises" (April 29), triggered responses from readers. They cited my earlier columns – "Cloak-and-dagger words" (December 18, 2017) and "Why context matters" (August 20, 2018) – while registering their protest against the report. The memory of cyberspace cannot match the memories of committed readers.

A criminal act, not a hate crime

An academic friend asked whether the report passed the test I had spelt out on the use of religious or caste identity. I had argued that in cases of excesses – be it lynching or expulsion from a public space – the journalistic team, which comprises reporters and the desk, gives due consideration to human dignity in reporting, editing and providing headlines: "Identities of victims are mentioned only when the victim's dignity is trampled upon because of her identity. The team makes a fundamental difference between a crime and a crime that is driven by hate and bigotry."

G. Selva, a reader from Kachaleswarar Agraharam in Chennai, was taken aback by the fact that the report mentioned the caste of the suspect. He wrote: "[The report] does not only openly state the caste of the suspect but also identifies the suspect as a drug addict and thief. Therefore, it indirectly associates drug addiction and thievery with Scheduled Caste groups, in a society where Scheduled Castes are oppressed, excluded and stigmatised in everyday life. Moreover,

this news also carries the picture of the suspect being [taken by the police] in his underwear." News suggesting that a Scheduled Caste person is the suspect and was paraded half-naked is not only disturbing, but also has the potential to lead to further violence against Dalits, he said, allowing perpetrators to act with more impunity. Most readers in different ways said that direct identification of a suspect as belonging to a Scheduled Caste will only intensify stigmatisation.

The readers are right, and the newspaper was wrong in this instance. The U.P. crime cannot be treated as a hate crime. It is a mistake to identify a criminal act as a hate crime. The Editor had given specific instructions to the desk about the use of caste and religious identity in reports. But the slip-up happened and we can offer no excuses.

Not just the Readers' Editor, but the Editor too sometimes has to suffer the Sisyphean burden of witnessing mistakes like these, about which he had already warned the desk. There are manuals, style books and value statements that guide a newsroom, and the popular belief is that these should ensure flawless copy that adheres to the highest standards. The former Managing Editor, P. Jacob, while updating *The Hindu's* in-house style book a couple of years ago, had remarked: "The style book should not be reduced to a rare reference book. It should be an essential part of the daily practice. Unless journalists internalise the features, the fear of slip-ups and mistakes looms large."

A tricky subject

Handling caste in journalism is not an easy task. The desk must know when to name a community and when to refrain from doing so. This is not a form of self-censorship. One needs to understand the power of the caste hierarchy that perpetuates a dominance-dependency equation undermining our egalitarian imagination. Journalists must understand that their writing should uphold the dignity of people and not become a tool to humiliate them. Most importantly, one cannot permit the journalistic space to normalise any form of humiliation.

Apart from deadline pressures, a journalist sometimes tends to read what he assumed he wanted to say rather than what he had actually written. But as Readers' Editor has not only the benefit of time but also the advantage of collective scrutiny of a text. Acknowledging and correcting a mistake is an essential element of ethical journalism.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

BRICS against COVID-19

The New Development Bank's financial model can become a template to address natural disasters

ATUL ANEJA

In the global war against the novel coronavirus, emerging economies, many belonging to BRICS, have reached out to other countries humbled by the pandemic. India has reinforced its credentials as a rapidly emerging pharmacy of the world. As the world's largest producer of hydroxychloroquine, India has recently exported the drug not only to SAARC countries and to its "extended neighbourhood" in the Gulf, but also to Russia, Brazil, Israel and the U.S. This has set the stage for India to forge an inclusive BRICS-driven pharma alliance, which could also actively explore the production of vaccines.

tional Airport. Since Soviet times, Russia has top-of-the-line emergency services, which are equipped to handle any kind of emergency including biological attacks, nuclear radiation, and chemical weapon attacks.

On the African continent, South Africa, the current rotating head of the African Union, is engaged in framing a pan-African response to COVID-19. Among the BRICS nations, only Brazil's response may need a course correction, as its resistance to breaking the infection chains through travel bans, lockdowns, isolation and testing appears to have led to an infection surge.

Time to coordinate efforts

Having demonstrated their comparative strengths as providers of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), BRICS countries now need to pool and coordinate their efforts, in partnership with the WHO, and Europe and North America, both badly affected by the pandemic, as part of a global assault on the virus. But for seeding a robust institutional HADR response, the BRICS countries may have to reactivate an existing disaster response mechanism, and earmark resources and assets to combat a whole range of natural disasters, with special focus on the emerging economies and the global south.

The Shanghai-based New Development Bank of the BRICS countries has already demonstrated the way forward to allocate financial resources to combat COVID-19. In April, during a meeting of the NDB Board of Governors, NBD President K.V. Kamath announced that apart from disbursing a \$1 billion emergency loan to China, and subsequently to India, South Africa and Brazil, the NDB had the financial help to provide \$10 billion in "crisis-related assistance" to BRICS member countries. The NDB's financial model, demonstrated to address the pandemic, can now become a template to address natural disasters.

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LOCKDOWN UPDATE
MOPR 2.0 LOCKDOWN 5.0 WILL BEHIND INSTALLING IN A FEW SECONDS
INSTALL NOW
IF YOU DON'T IT WILL AUTOMATICALLY UPDATE FAST MIDDNIGHT

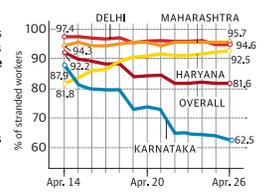
DATA POINT

Distress continues

As the nationwide lockdown to limit the spread of COVID-19 has been extended until May 17, stranded migrant workers continue to bear the brunt of it, data show. The numbers, compiled and presented by the Stranded Workers Action Network (SWAN), were collected from 16,863 distressed workers who reached out to SWAN volunteers from different parts of the country as of April 26.

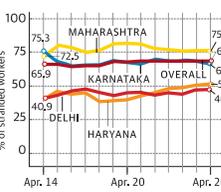
1. RATIONS

The chart depicts the % of workers who did not have access to govt. rations between April 14 and April 26 in four major States and the overall trend for the surveyed States



2. COOKED FOOD

The chart depicts the % of workers who did not have access to cooked food from any source between April 14 and April 26. Delhi and Haryana fared relatively better



3. INSUFFICIENT FUNDS

In all States, over 90% workers who reached out between Apr. 14 and Apr. 26 said they did not receive cash assistance from the govt. In T.N., 97% were not paid during the lockdown and in Punjab, 84% had less than ₹100 remaining

Category	Maharashtra	Karnataka	Delhi and Haryana	Punjab	Tamil Nadu
Less than ₹100 remaining	75%	53%	68%	84%	72%
No cash received from the government	100%	98%	98%	93%	94%
Not been paid by employers during lockdown	81%	70%	80%	81%	97%

4. FUTURE PLANS

Most migrant workers who reached out from Delhi and Haryana (35%) and Tamil Nadu (33%) were unsure of what to do post-lockdown. Most from Maharashtra (31%), Karnataka (49%) and Punjab (48%) said they will continue in the same line of work with the same employer. A relatively smaller % of workers said they will find work in their hometown

Plans post lockdown	Maharashtra	Karnataka	Delhi and Haryana	Punjab	Tamil Nadu
Continue in the same line of work/same employer	31%	49%	25%	48%	28%
Earn some money and leave	3%	1%	12%	3%	0
Leave, but return after sometime	25%	10%	17%	5%	11%
Find work in hometown	13%	13%	11%	3%	28%
Unsure	29%	27%	35%	40%	33%

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 4, 1970

India and Nepal

King Mahendra, who recently set himself up as interim Chairman of his own Council of Ministers, has now appointed a Royal Council under his son and heir, Prince Birendra, to look after routine State affairs during his convalescence. The King is reported to be recovering from an attack of chicken-pox. King Mahendra is the fountain of all power in Nepal, and he is of the opinion that the panchayati system alone is fitted to his country. But there are demands from certain sections of his people for some modifications at least in the three-tier system of panchayat elections and for more civil liberties. The King may eventually have to satisfy these demands. Relations between India and Nepal have been passing through a difficult stage in recent months and Indian personnel who had been doing useful work in that kingdom are being progressively withdrawn. Indian wireless operators from eight checkpoints on the Nepal-Tibetan border have returned home and others will return by the end of this year.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 4, 1920

Khilafat and non co-operation.

At the request of the Madras Khilafat Committee, Mr. C. Rajagopalachariar addressed a political meeting of Hindus and Mohammedans on the subject of the "Khilafat and non co-operation". Mr. Rajagopalachariar, who spoke for nearly an hour and a half, devoted a good portion of his speech to answer certain adverse criticisms made by Mr. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar and Dr. Subramania Aiyar in the volumes of the "New India" paper in respect of the Resolution on Non Co-operation passed at the Khilafat Conference held recently in this city. The speaker said that he agreed to the view expressed by Dr. Subramania Aiyar "that the interests of India are inevitably bound up with the maintenance of British power as long as it is possible to preserve it by every legitimate means," but he protested emphatically against his statement "that I cannot as a Hindu subject of the Empire consent to co-operate with other subjects in it who would seek to destroy the British power on grounds not strictly connected with the Indian interests." Far from Muslim British subjects in this country seeking to destroy the British power, they sought to get the British Government resolve the Khilafat problem so as to continue to maintain their power.

FROM PAGE ONE

20 central teams to monitor hotspots

Data from State Health Departments put the nationwide death toll at 1,389. The number of positive cases overall stood at 42,037, with 29,965 active ones. Mumbai reported 441 new cases and 21 deaths, taking the total number of cases to 8,613 and fatalities to 343, an BMC official said.

Fewer tests

India is one of 11 countries that have tested over one million samples, with the latest Health Ministry update reporting 74,000 tests a day. However, at just 758 tests per million of population, India ranks among countries that have tested the lowest fraction of their population.

In an interview to the Press Trust of India, NITI Aayog Member, V.K. Paul said extending India's lockdown was part of a plan to curb infection transmission. "...Real goal of lockdown was to suppress the chain of transmission of the virus.

So, we will lose that if we abruptly end it," Mr. Paul said.

On April 25, Mr. Paul, who also heads a key government empowered committee on medical management, presented a study to suggest that the lockdown had slowed the rate of transmission and increased the doubling time to about 10 days. He also presented an analysis showing that new cases would cease by May 16, though — as *The Hindu* had reported — this was a guesstimate and questioned by experts.

Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said on Sunday that the rate of growth in new cases in India was steady. "As per data today, for the past three days, the doubling rate is 12; for seven days 11.7 and for 14 days its 10.4. We need to adhere to strict physical distancing and hand hygiene to take lockdown 3.0 to a logical end," a release quoted the Minister as saying.

Colonel, Major among 5 personnel killed in J&K

Colonel Sharma, Commanding Officer of the Army's 21 Rashtriya Rifles, was stationed in Handwara.



Colonel Ashutosh Sharma

Army sources said the militants, who were in a cowed, were presumed dead on Saturday evening after the exchange of fire stopped for over one hour. The operation against the militants, who escaped from the Rajwara forests on Friday afternoon, was launched around 3.30 p.m. on Saturday.

The Army officers and their team went into the house near the cowed to "rescue the civilians", but their communication with the search-and-operation personnel outside got disconnected, forcing them to hold fire for the whole night. The operation was also "slowed down" by heavy rain and thunder, police sources said.

They said the officers found themselves in front of the militants, who had sneaked in from the rear of the house. "Two weapons and a war-like store were also found at the site," officials said.

Six injured in blast

In a separate incident, six civilians were injured when four boys fiddled with an unattended explosive at Ahgam in Handwara, the police said. The area is 3 km-4 km from the site of the encounter. The police did not reveal the details of the blast.

Colonel Ashutosh Sharma and sub-inspector Qazi were known for their successful anti-militancy operations and their meticulous planning, which earned them gallantry awards in

'Economic recovery may take over a year'

Personal protective equipment would be provided free of cost for all within the industrial unit. Workers would have to be housed on the premises or within walking distance, and both raw materials and finished goods would be disinfected and kept in isolation for 72 hours before use.

At the end of the day, the CII argued that a cost benefit analysis favours such an approach. "The cost of undertaking precautionary measures by way of repeated sanitation, wearing of PPE (personal protective equipment), masks, monitoring, group testing etc will be much less than the economic loss if businesses in such high performing districts have to remain shut for a longer duration," said CII Director General Chan-

drajit Banerjee.

The poll of CEOs, the majority of whom belong to the crucial MSME sector, showed that almost two-thirds of respondents expect their revenues to fall more than 40% in the current April to June 2020 quarter. For the full financial year 2020-21, a third of respondents still expect a more than 40% revenue fall, while another third expect their topline to drop between 20% and 40%.

Most of the firms polled expect domestic demand to recover faster than exports. Only 18% do not expect job losses in their sector.

Only 35% have faced salary reductions in their own firms so far, but almost half of those said that the duration of their wage cut is undecided.

Centre reviews health situation

Ministry issues clarification on order allowing movement of stranded persons

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Days after it allowed movement of stranded migrants, pilgrims and tourists during the extended lockdown period, the Union Home Ministry on Sunday clarified that the order was for "stranded persons who had moved from their native places and workplaces just before the lockdown but could not return due to the restrictions".

In a letter to the States, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla said the "facilitation envisaged in the order is meant for such distressed persons" and does not extend to those of category of persons who are "residing normally at places other than native places for purposes of work etc. and who wish to visit their native places in normal course".

Though public transport



Long wait: A ticket collector checking the tickets of migrant workers inside a special train to Agra on May 2. AP

remains suspended, the Railways is running special trains to facilitate the movement of stranded persons.

'Short on infrastructure'

On Sunday, Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba held a video-conference with the Chief Secretaries and Directors-General of Police of States and Union Territories to discuss the health scenario in the wake of the extended

lockdown. Nine out of 20 districts, where most COVID-19 positive cases have been reported, are "short on infrastructure," the States were informed at the meeting.

In zones where high rate of deaths were reported and those facing shortage of healthcare workers, the Centre has asked States to "borrow staff from adjacent districts, hire private doctors

on a contractual basis and explore the possibility of engaging retired professionals, final year medical students, NGOs etc."

A presentation, 'Public Health Response COVID-19', by the Health and Family Welfare Ministry, said "20 districts account for 68% active cases and 72% deaths."

It said that in eight districts — Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Central Delhi, North Delhi, Kolkata, Kanpur Nagar (Uttar Pradesh) and Krishna (Andhra Pradesh) — the doubling rate was faster than 10 days.

The Ministry released guidelines to prevent spread of COVID-19 in prisons and correctional homes. It asked police to collect information from persons being arrested about their travel history, cough, fever symptoms or recent contacts.

Javadekar slams report on press freedom

India slips two places in global index released by Reporters Without Borders

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar, in a tweet on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, said the government "will expose" surveys that portray a "bad picture about 'freedom of Press' in India".

The Minister's comments came against the backdrop of the latest survey of Reporters Without Borders that

shows India dropping two places on the global press freedom index ranking to 142nd on the list of 180 countries. Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka are ranked higher.

'Will expose surveys'

"Media has the power to inform and enlighten people. Media in India enjoy absolute freedom. We will expose, sooner than later, those surveys that tend to portray bad picture about

'Freedom of Press' in India," Mr. Javadekar tweeted. The report on "The World Press Freedom Index 2020", released on April 22, said that with no murders of journalists in India in 2019, as against six in 2018, the security situation for the country's media might seem, on the face of it, to have improved.

"However, there have been constant press freedom violations, including police violence against jour-

Centre drafts new rules for satellite TV channels

Increased reference to the Home Ministry may discourage investors, says an industry source

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

To overhaul its nine-year-old uplink and downlink policy for private satellite TV channels, the Information and Broadcasting Ministry has issued draft guidelines with stringent provisions for any violations, with an additional clause that the Ministry of Home Affairs can step in to revoke the security clearance in case of repeated violations.

The Ministry said a review was prompted by the "fast evolving broadcasting technology" and "changes in the market scenarios". It has called for suggestions from

the stakeholders in the next 15 days.

'Half-measure'

An industry source said the policy is a "half-measure" and there are concerns about "too much reference to the Ministry of Home Affairs" which earlier too had a key role to play. "Given its political nature, the amount of reference to MHA will discourage investors," he said.

What has changed in this policy is that the Ministry in black and white has listed out II violations. These violations include: "Delay or non-intimation to the Ministry about change in the share-

holding pattern of the company", "appointment of a Director without prior permission of the Ministry", "non-removal of a Director who has been denied security clearance" or "showing dual logo/logo or name not permitted by the Ministry". For any of the II violations, the penalty ranges from warning, prohibition to broadcast up to 10 days and even cancellation of permission.

Security clearance

All channels have to take security clearance from the Ministry of Home Affairs, which was the case earlier too.

Once granted, the clearance is valid for 10 years. However, the guidelines also mention that the MHA can withdraw the clearance

Owaisi calls for discharge of 38 Telangana residents

They have been quarantined in Delhi

VIJAYA SINGH
JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (AIMIM) leader and Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi has written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, seeking the discharge of 38 people from Telangana who have been kept in quarantine centres in Delhi since March 30.

They had attended the Tablighi Jamaat congregation at Nizamuddin Markaz (centre) in Delhi in March. The Delhi police have registered a case against the organisers for allowing thousands to congregate at the centre at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic in early March, when the lockdown was not imposed.

Mr. Owaisi said in his letter that all their tests had returned negative, but they were unable to return home because of the "sudden, successive extensions of the lockdown period and the consequent absence of any inter-State...transport".

"In light of your Ministry's recent notification permitting migrants to return to their home States, I request that the concerned persons be discharged from the quarantine facilities and issued a pass to travel to Telangana," the letter said.

The inmates have been quarantined at various facilities in the Narela Industrial Area, Sultanpuri, Lok Nayak Hospital, Badarpur Secondary School and Mandoli.

On April 2, the Union



Asaduddin Owaisi

Home Ministry issued a standard operating procedure for movement of people completing quarantine in government facilities. It said, "Persons testing negative for COVID-19 would be released ... however, this will not apply to a group wherein even one person tests positive, and these persons are to return to their homes by making their own transport arrangements."

It also asked such persons to quarantine themselves at home for another 14 days and their details would be shared with the State and Union Territory concerned for follow-up.

A Delhi government spokesperson said on Sunday that the criterion for allowing return from institutional quarantine to return home was based mainly on two consecutive negative tests. So far, the spokesperson pointed out, the inter-State borders had been sealed, and they were now "opened" in accordance with the Ministry's guidelines for the movement of some categories of individuals.

'India tried to persuade Pak. to free Jadhav'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

India had hoped to persuade Pakistan through 'back channel' to release retired Indian Navy officer Kuldeshwan Jadhav, who was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of 'espionage and terrorism' in 2017, said senior advocate Harish Salve, who was the lead counsel for India in the Jadhav case at the International Court of Justice. "We have written four-five letters. They just keep on denying," he said during an online lecture series.

Scramble for funds as Centre tightens purse strings

By neither releasing GST dues nor raising the borrowing limit, the Union government has squeezed Kerala's options

N.J. NAIR
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The health and economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic has compounded the fiscal woes of the Kerala government, which is battling a grave resource crunch and a hostile political dispensation at the Centre.

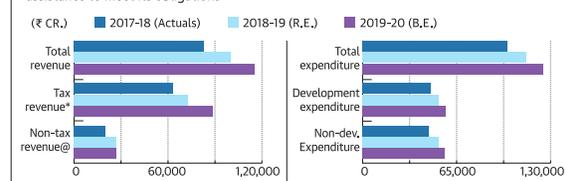
An alarming dip in the State's own tax revenue, coupled with a delay and cut in Central transfers, have pushed the State to the edge of a financial precipice.

A comparison of receipts in April 2019 and April 2020 reveals the intensity of the crisis. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection was ₹1,950.71 crore in April 2019. It dipped to ₹153.26 crore in April 2020. Land revenue has come down from ₹19.65 crore to ₹2.7 crore, State excise duty from ₹193.08 crore to ₹22.83 crore and motor vehicle tax from ₹298.42 crore to a mere ₹35.52 crore.

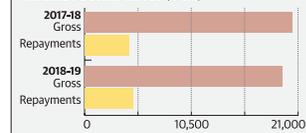
The Centre has not yet heeded the State's demand for the release of GST compensation arrears of ₹5,000 crore. The demand for raising the annual borrowing limit from 3% to 5% also remains a cry in the wilderness. The same applies to the demand for enhancing the allocation for the National Health Mission to tackle the COVID-19 crisis. The State has pointed out

Pushed to the brink

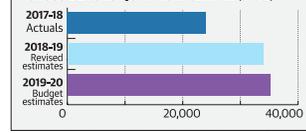
With just ₹2,000 crore left in its coffers, Kerala desperately needs the Centre's assistance to meet its obligations



MARKET BORROWINGS (₹ CR.)

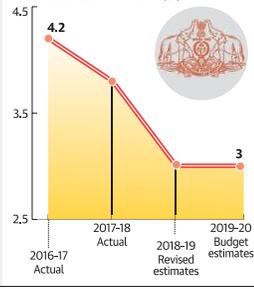


GROSS DEVOLUTION FROM CENTRE (₹ CR.)



* Includes share in central taxes | @ includes grants from Centre

FISCAL DEFICIT PATTERN (%)



SOURCE: RBI STUDY OF STATE FINANCES 2019

that supply chain breaks due to the lockdown would result in a shortage of medicines and other essentials that reach Kerala from the neighbouring States.

The government has only ₹2,000 crore in its coffers at present. Other than debt ser-

ving and similar commitments, the recurring expenditure for disbursing salary and servicing pensions amounts to ₹1,276 crore provided by the Centre as revenue deficit grant whereas the only major revenue

inflow into the treasury this month.

The government's decision to effect a six-day cut in the salary of employees and teachers for five months to cushion the impact of the pandemic's impact ended in a legal tangle, with the High

Court staying the decision for two months. The State government was forced to promulgate an ordinance to get legal sanction for the decision. However, the deduction would earn the exchequer only ₹500 crore a month and ₹2,500 crore in six months. Moreover, the government will have to return the amount once the crisis blows over.

Healthcare costs

Despite its exemplary efforts so far to contain the COVID-19 pandemic with minimal loss of life, the threat is far from over. The government will have to bolster quarantine and testing facilities once the lakhs of Non-Resident Keralites and those residing in other States return after lockdown curbs are eased.

The Kerala State Electricity Board, the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation, the micro, small and medium enterprises, traditional industries and a host of other sectors are desperate for financial assistance to limp back to normalcy.

Turning to the market

The only option left before the government is open market borrowing. Out of the sanctioned limit of ₹24,500

crore for the current financial year, the State has already availed itself of ₹6,000 crore and is now gearing to go to borrow ₹1,000 crore to meet the committed expenditure for the month.

The Reserve Bank of India has, however, cautioned the State against drawing huge sums from the market at exorbitant rates. Which also means that the government would have to tread cautiously while approaching the market.

The State is now looking forward for a substantial assistance from the Centre and also a relaxation in borrowing curbs as a way forward.

It was in this context that Finance Minister T.M. Thomas Isaac took the lead in initiating consultations with Finance

Ministers of non-BJP ruled States to form a pressure group to force the Centre accept the demand for more funds.

Dr. Isaac is hopeful of bringing in Telangana and other Congress-ruled States to the fold and pressing the Centre to accept demands.

Whether the Centre will yield to such demands remains to be seen. Or else, the administrative machinery may grind to a halt for want of financial fuel.

How do States get revenue from the Center (now)?

Devolution (States' share of taxes): As states share of taxes from the Gross Tax Revenue. (This is extra-budgetary)

Scheme Related Transfer: As Centrally Sponsored Schemes from the Scheme Expenditure. (Based on Budget Allocations).

Finance Commission Grants: As Transfer to States from the Transfers, Expenditure, and Other Expenses. (Based on Budget Allocations)

Other Transfers: Other grants or loans. (Based on Budget Allocations).

Devolution (States' share of taxes)

As per the 15th Finance Commission Recommendations, 41% of the divisible pool should be devolved to the States. (vertical devolution)

While distributing the 41 per cent among states, the formula recommended the Finance Commission should be used – which takes into weight different parameters like Income Distance, Population of 2011, Area, Forest & Ecology, Demographic Performance and Tax Effort.

Without including in Union Budget, Center transfers states' share of taxes from the Gross Tax Revenue. This forms a significant part of the devolution.

Scheme Related Transfer

Another major transfer from the Center to states is in the form of Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS). This is part of the Union Budget.

Centrally Sponsored Schemes are divided into Core of the Core Schemes and Core Schemes.

Finance Commission Grants

Based on Finance Commission recommendations, the Center also gives states – (a) Revenue Deficit Grants (b) Sectoral Grants, and (c) Performance-based Incentives.

The Finance Commission Grants will be mentioned in the Union Budget.

Other Transfers

Other transfers include grants and loans given to states – as mentioned in the Union Budget.



1,150 migrants reach Ganjam from Kerala

BEHAMPUR

After covering 1,836 km, the first special train with 24 coaches from Kerala carrying around 1,150 Odia migrant workers reached Jagannathpur station in Odisha's Ganjam district on Sunday morning. The migrants mostly worked at Perumbavoor and Aluva in Ernakulam district of Kerala and boarded the train in Aluva on Saturday evening. This is the second special train to transport stranded workers across the country. The first train had travelled from Telangana to Jharkhand. Jagannathpur is the outskirts of Behampur was the first stoppage of this special train in Odisha, where over 511 migrant labourers got down.

CRPF headquarters shut after driver tests positive

NEW DELHI

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) headquarters in the CGO complex in south Delhi was shut for sanitisation after a driver attached to one of the offices tested COVID-19 positive. A CRPF spokesperson said the headquarters was closed till sanitisation was completed. The driver used to ferry CRPF employees working at the headquarters to their homes. He was in quarantine since he showed symptoms two to three days ago. The results came on Saturday evening. He was staying at a CRPF accommodation and the personnel living with him have also been quarantined.

J&K records 35 cases, count rises to 701

SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir recorded 35 positive cases of COVID-19 on Sunday, pushing the tally to 701. The Srinagar Municipal Corporation has put 50 corporators and employees under quarantine after a corporator's brother tested positive. A government spokesman said 34 of 35 fresh cases were from the Kashmir division and one from the Jammu division. "The number of positive cases in Jammu and Kashmir rose to 701. At least 406 remain active positive cases. Bandipora tops the list with 128 positive cases, followed by Anantnag district with 109," the spokesman said.

Number of positive and negative samples not provided

STAFF REPORTER

BHOPAL

The Madhya Pradesh government has denied that at least 9,271 COVID-19 test results were unaccounted for up to April 31, as reported by *The Hindu*.

The report was based on the data released by the State Directorate of Health Services through its media bulletin. P. Narahari, Secretary, Public Relations Department, said the data were being recompiled by the government.

In a rejoinder, he stated as of April 2, the number of cumulative samples received was 50,749, samples tested were 46,578 and samples re-

As of April 2, the number of cumulative samples received was 50,749, samples tested 46,578, samples rejected 1,542 and those under process were 2,629

P. NARAHARI, Secretary, Public Relations Department

jected was 1,542 and those under process were 2,629. However, the report had instead stated there was a wide variance between the cumulative COVID-19 test reports received and the sum of samples that tested positive and negative until April 30 in Madhya Pradesh,

which raised questions about accuracy of data maintained by the State government. The difference between the two metrics was at least 9,271 tests whose results were unaccounted for.

In the rejoinder, the number of positive and negative samples was not provided, neither was the variance between cumulative test reports received and the sum of samples that tested positive and negative disputed. Besides, the government also did not dispute the inexplicable slashing of the cumulative tally of samples which had tested negative on two previous occasions, as mentioned in the report.

STAFF REPORTER

BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh on Sunday reported six deaths owing to COVID-19, taking the total to 156, the Directorate of Health Services said.

Three persons died in Ujjain, two in Indore and one in Khandwa. The fatality rate in Ujjain, which has registered 156 cases and 30 deaths so far, climbed to 19.2%. The State-wide rate touched 5.5%, according to a bulletin issued by the Directorate.

Forty-nine fresh cases were reported. The tally now stands at 2,837. One hundred and seventy-four patients were discharged from hospitals after recovery.

As many as 798 persons, or 28% of those testing posi-



Grand welcome: Recovered patients at Chirayu Hospital in Bhopal when an IAF helicopter showered petals. *A.M. FARUQUI

tive, had recovered.

Till Sunday, around 17 samples were tested before a positive case was discovered. The test positivity rate came down to 5.8%. The State has conducted 590 tests per million so far.

Chief Minister Shivraj

Singh Chouhan, in an address to the people, said that even he couldn't reach the worst-hit cities owing to the lockdown. "I am bound by the lockdown, and even the party has instructed me not to go there now. But my soul is with the people," he said.

Mr. Chouhan said the situation in the State was more or less under control. "The fatality rate is declining as is the positivity rate, but the crisis is not over yet. It is important to be attentive. If we are to win over it completely, we have to be disciplined and stick to the law," he said.

At a review meeting, I.C.P. Keshari, Additional Chief Secretary, Commercial Tax Department, and in-charge of the State Control Room, said around 4,000 workers were brought back from Gujarat on Sunday. Around 42,000 workers trapped in different districts of the State were transported to their native places in the past 8 days.

So far, 59,000 workers have been brought back to the State.

Maharashtra reports 678 fresh cases

The State's tally nears 13,000-mark; the number of deaths has gone up to 548

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PUNE

The spike in the COVID-19 cases in Maharashtra continued relentlessly, with the State reporting 678 positive cases on Sunday as its cumulative tally climbed to 12,974, while a further 27 deaths took the State's death toll to 548.

As per figures from the Health Department, Mumbai reported 21 fatalities, while four were reported from Pune city and one each from Bhivandi and Navi Mumbai.

Mumbai city reported 441 of the 678 new cases as the city's cumulative tally rose to 8,800 cases with 343 fatalities thus far.

115 discharged

"A total 115 persons were discharged today, taking the cumulative number of discharged till date to 2,115," said State Surveillance Officer Pradeep Awate.

Only 48% of the deaths reported today had high-risk co-morbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, asthma and heart disease, according to authorities.

Till date, 1,70,139 samples have been tested in Maharashtra, of which 1,56,078 (nearly 90%) have returned negative, while 12,974 have tested positive.



Homeward bound: Migrants waiting to collect application forms for travel in Mumbai. *ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY

While the Health Department put Pune district figures at 1,396 active cases, the district administration put the number at 1,464, with a surge of at least 68 fresh cases today. According to the Health Department, Pune district's death toll stands at 106.

While the Health Department has not recorded any rise in the cases in the Pimpri-Chinchwad area, district officials reported six new cases on Sunday, including those of four women, among them a 71-year-old lady, and two youths in their early 20s. Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation Commissioner Shrawan Hardikar has divided the township into 21 containment zones, sealing off the Pimple-Saudagar and Sangvi areas from where the fresh cases were reported.

Thane reports 28 cases
Other parts of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) saw a sharp spike in fresh cases as well, with Thane district reporting a rise of 28 new cases as its tally rose to 548, while Navi Mumbai reported 12 new cases as its cumulative tally touched 216, and Kalyan-Dombivli reported 17 new cases as its to-

Dharavi reports 94 fresh cases

STAFF REPORTER

MUMBAI

Dharavi recorded 94 fresh cases on Sunday, the highest single-day rise so far, pushing the total number to 590. It recorded two deaths, bringing the tally to 20.

A 54-year-old man and a 85-year-old man died. Mahim, which falls under the same G North Ward as Dharavi, reported 16 fresh cases, including one death, on Sunday.

Malegaon in Nashik district – a virus hotspot in north Maharashtra – reported a rise of 10 new cases (as per the State figures) as Nashik's tally surged to 284 active cases, of which 229 are from Malegaon city.

"There are 997 active containment zones in the State currently. A total 11,078 surveillance squads have screened more than 51 lakh people till date. Presently, 1,81,832 people across the State were in home quarantine and 13,158 persons were in institutional quarantine facilities," said Dr. Awate.

No relaxation in Assam for the aged

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

The Assam government has announced the relaxation of COVID-19 lockdown for a slew of activities from Monday but people above 65 years and children below 12 years have been barred from venturing out of their homes except for medical reasons.

The relaxation is applicable in all districts marked green zones. Assam has no red zone and only four of the 33 districts are marked orange.

"All offices and businesses allowed to function will operate during the day hours with sufficient time for employees and proprietors to return home before a total curfew starts from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. until further notice," Finance and Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Sunday.

Shops and offices will have to be closed by 5 p.m. All public and private sector offices will, however, be allowed to operate with 50% employees, while women employees who have children below 5 years have been allowed to stay home. Construction activities have been permitted with 50% workers.

Comply with quarantine norms, returnees told

Odisha Chief Secretary warns of action

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government has warned people returning from other States of legal action if they don't comply with mandatory quarantine regulations.

Issuing a stern warning here on Sunday, Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy said, "Odisha is faring better than other States in containing the spread of COVID-19. It has been possible due to sacrifice by all people, and relentless administrative actions. We will not allow anyone to sabotage the success achieved over two months of uncompromising actions."

Five fresh positive cases – two from Ganjam and one each from Balasore, Keonjhar and Jharsuguda districts – were detected on Sunday.

The total number of positive cases in the State has now climbed to 162.

Officials annoyed

Senior officials were annoyed over reports of several violations by people under quarantine upon their return.

"The government will not allow indiscriminate entry of people returning from other States. They should have valid registration and an approved vehicle route chart with them. Anyone found coming without informing the authorities will be turned away from 12 border checkpoints," Mr. Tripathy said. Overloading of buses would also be viewed as a violation of guidelines, and such buses would not be allowed to enter Odisha, the Chief Secretary said.

Central Coalfields Limited
A Miniratna Company
(A Subsidiary of Coal India Limited)

NOTICE

"All the tenders issued by CIL and its Subsidiaries for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on websites of Coal India Ltd. www.coalindia.in/respective Subsidiary Company (CCL, www.centralcoalfields.in). CIL e-procurement portal <https://coalindiatictenders.nic.in> and Central Public Procurement Portal <https://eprocure.gov.in> in addition, procurement is also done through GeM Portal <https://gem.gov.in>"

The report of the Fifteenth Finance Commission, along with an Action Taken Report, was recently tabled in Parliament.

How revenue has been divided?

FC has considered the 2011 population along with forest cover, tax effort, area of the state, and “demographic performance” to arrive at the states’ share in the divisible pool of taxes. In order to reward population control efforts by states, the Commission developed a criterion for demographic effort — which is essentially the ratio of the state’s population in 1971 to its fertility rate in 2011 — with a weight of 12.5%.

The total area of states, area under forest cover, and “income distance” were also used by the FC to arrive at the tax-sharing formula.

Key recommendations:

The Commission has reduced the vertical devolution — the share of tax revenues that the Centre shares with the states — from 42% to 41%.

The Commission has said that it intends to set up an expert group to initiate a non-lapsable fund for defence expenditure.

State-wise distribution:

Shares of the southern states, except Tamil Nadu, have fallen — with Karnataka losing the most.

Shares of states like Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab, along with Tamil Nadu, all of which have fertility rates below the replacement level, have increased slightly.

On the other hand, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, and West Bengal’s shares have fallen, even though their fertility rates are also low.

Incidentally, Karnataka, the biggest loser in this exercise, also had the highest tax-GSDP ratio in 2017-18, as per an RBI report on state finances.

Criticisms:

The population parameter used by the Commission has been criticised by the governments of the southern states.

The previous FC used both the 1971 and the 2011 populations to calculate the states’ shares, giving greater weight to the 1971 population (17.5%) as compared to the 2011 population (10%).

The use of 2011 population figures has resulted in states with larger populations like UP and Bihar getting larger shares, while smaller states with lower fertility rates have lost out.

The combined population of the Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Jharkhand is 47.8 crore.

This is over 39.48% of India’s total population, and is spread over 32.4% of the country’s area, as per the 2011 Census.

On the other hand, the southern states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and undivided Andhra Pradesh are home to only 20.75% of the population living in 19.34% of the area, with a 13.89% share of the taxes.

This means that the terms decided by the Commission are loaded against the more progressive (and prosperous) southern states.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GUWAHATI

Amid the COVID-19 lockdown, two community-specific groups have renewed their opposition to the permanent settlement of Bru refugees from Mizoram in Tripura.

A joint team of the Nagarik Suraksha Mancha, mostly representing Bengali people displaced from erstwhile East Pakistan post-partition in 1947, and the Mizo Convention on May 2 submitted a memo-

randum to Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb protesting the proposed settlement of the displaced Brus in the Kanchanpur Sub-Division of North Tripura district.

Northern Tripura has a sizeable Mizo population concentrated in the sub-division’s Jampui Hill area. “Leaders of the two organisations gave the memorandum yesterday [on Saturday].” Kanchanpur’s Sub-Divisional Magistrate Chandni Chandran said.

T. RAMAKRISHNAN CHENNAI

The Food Corporation of India (FCI) has supplied around 126 lakh tonnes of food grains, almost equivalent to two-and-a-half months’ supply in normal situations, to States and Union Territories during COVID-19 lockdown.

Between March 25 and April 30, States and union territories obtained 37.13 lakh tonnes of wheat and 89 tonnes of rice, totalling

126.13 lakh tonnes.

On an average, every month, the FCI issues around 50 lakh tonnes of food grains to States and union territories under the norms of the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and other schemes, according to D.V. Prasad, FCI Chairman and Managing Director.

Of the five zones in the country, the northern zone was given the maximum of 39.95 lakh tonnes; southern zone – 29.18 lakh tonnes,

Scheme	Rice	Wheat	Total
NFSA (regular)	26.58	23.30	49.88
PMGKAY	54.23	7.58	61.82
Non-NFSA cardholders	1.55	0.81	2.36
Other welfare schemes	1.29	1.00	2.29
Open market sales scheme	5.31	4.43	9.73
GRAND TOTAL**	89	37.13	126.13

*Lockdown refers to the period from March 25 to April 30
**Grand total figures for rice and wheat include quantities of foodgrains issued to non-governmental and charitable organisations
SOURCE: FOOD CORPORATION OF INDIA

followed by the east – 28.33 lakh tonnes; west – 23.03 lakh tonnes and the north-east – 5.63 lakh tonnes. What has contributed to the steep hike in the disbur-

(PMGKAY), under which beneficiaries of the NFSA are given 5 kg of food grains each per month free of cost for three months (April - June) over and above their monthly entitlement of 5 kg per person.

Enough stock

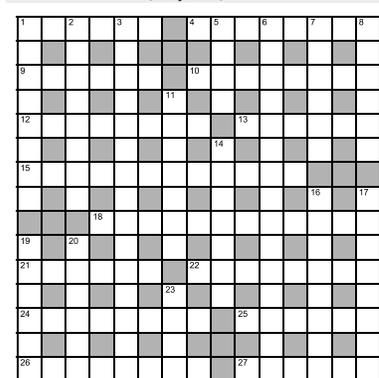
Nearly 62 lakh tonnes of food grains have been lifted by the States under the PMGKAY and this is about 50% of the total allotment of around 120 lakh tonnes.

Enough food grains stocks

are affected due to COVID-19, Mr. Prasad points out.

During April, the FCI moved 60 lakh tonnes of food grains to its godowns across the country, a record quantity, surpassing the previous high of 38 lakh tonnes in March 2014. This included transportation of about one lakh tonnes by road to the Kashmir Valley and Leh/Ladakh as well as about 81,000 tonnes to Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya in the north-east.

THE CROSSWORD+ 12926



- Improve your language & problem solving skills. Try our Crosswords site! @ <https://crossword.thehindu.com>
- 13 Few broken pieces in the table, what are they? (6)
15 Firm to annex – Iowa’s taking number of steps (12)
18 Selfish display of affection from cabinet, means nothing (8,4)
21 Decline invitation, only to be kept in place (3,3)
22 Birth of a Chinaman (8)
24 One price, includes first beer – make it bitter (8)
25 Thin bar through the firmament (6)
26 Providing direction to drama, receiving jeers from the centre (8)
27 See him return, covered in brass (6)
- DOWN
1 Cop breaks into store to cut water supply (8)
2 Strange measures to take on again (8)
3 Composed like a doctor collecting coppers in jail (4,2,1,8)
5 Top copy by Times (4)
6 Ramshackle denim tailored to represent the working class (6,3,6)
7 Need an alternative to 9 (6)
8 Bent in the middle, inclination to come on board (6)
11 Instrument physician inserted into girl (7)
14 Star almost near another star, perhaps (7)
16 Get emoticon changed (4,4)
17 Why deny odds? Truly simple and trusting (4-4)
19 Raids so far close to city, perhaps... (6)
20 ...one then extracts some organic chemical (6)
23 For men it’s 50% still (4)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12925 Solution to yesterday’s Sudoku

I	N	S	I	D	E	R	T	R	A	D	I	N	G		5	8	9	1	7	2	4	3	6
E	E	D	C	E	N	D	R							1	3	2	4	6	9	5	8	7	
S	T	O	L	O	R	P	H	A	N	A	G	E		7	6	4	8	5	3	1	2	9	
T	N	E	S	I	L	L	E	R					6	9	1	7	2	8	3	4	5		
T	I	L	S	E	S								8	4	5	6	3	1	7	9	2		
E	G	G	E	D	T	U	M	E	S	C	E	N	T										
P	H	A	E	O	I	L	L	E	R					3	2	7	8	3	1	6	9	5	4
C	A	T	T	L	E	M	A	N						4	5	3	9	8	7	2	6	1	
H	M	E	O	I	L	L	E	R						9	1	6	2	4	5	8	7	3	
L	T	E	R	A	T	E																	
M	A	T	T	L	E	R																	
E	A	S	T	I	N	D	I	A						4	5	3	9	8	7	2	6	1	
R	E	A	S	T	I	N	D	I	A														
A	L	L	I	N	W	R	E	S	T	I	N	G											

FAITH

Grief too deep

Having ensured that Rama, Lakshmana and Sita were proceeding to Chitrakuta, Sumantra returns with a heavy heart to a desolate Ayodhya. Parting with near and dear ones can cause untold grief and Valmiki captures the pathos of the situation with accuracy and realism, pointed out Swami Paramasukananda in a discourse. Grief does not spare anyone and takes its toll on all from the greatest to the simplest in an impartial manner. Could there have been anyone more fortunate and blessed than Dasaratha who was specially selected by the Supreme Lord to be His father during Rama avatar? This scion of the Ikshvaku clan was also reputed for his righteous reign and extraordinary valour.

But now Dasaratha bewails the lot that has befallen on Rama, Sita and Lakshmana who did not in any way deserve the hardships of forest life. He is immersed deep in the ocean of grief and as he struggles to cope with this, he is eager to hear their parting message from Sumantra. Rama offers His respects and obeisance to all. He asks His father to abide by dharma and show concern for Kausalya. Rama asks Kausalya to be patient and forgiving towards the sorrowing king. Kaikeyi is asked to give up ahamkara. Bharata should not disrespect Dasaratha.

Then Sumantra conveys the message of enraged Lakshmana which is a frank and open accusation of his father. In great anger, he disowns his father. He reiterates that Rama alone is his father, mother, kinsman, brother. Dasaratha heartily welcomes Lakshmana’s words. They give solace to him who is caught in a helpless position. He is glad that Lakshmana has the greatest regard for the very Supreme Being. What better privilege could anyone expect than to be able to constantly remain in devoted service to the Lord?

About BRICS

All are members of G20; Represent over 3.1 billion people, 41% of the world population

As of 2018, BRICS have US \$40.55 trillion (32% of World's GDP PPP)

Bilateral relations among BRICS nations are conducted on the basis of non-interference, equality, and mutual benefit.

There are two components that make up the financial architecture of BRICS, namely, the New Development Bank (NDB) (BRICS Development Bank) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA).

2019 Theme: Economic Growth for an Innovative Future

India & BRICS

India finds itself as one of the emerging economies in the grouping and beyond, especially G20. BRICS now brings together five economies accounting for 42% of the world's population, 23% of the global GDP and an around 17% share of world trade.

BRICS has emerged the voice of developing countries, or the global south. These countries face an aggressive club of developed countries, raising challenges on issues from WTO to climate change. India believes BRICS has to protect the rights of the developing countries.

The fact that BRICS has put counter-terrorism on top of the agenda has been a success for India. That was evident in the BRICS Summit in Xiamen in September 2017, with China as the chair. The fact that it was achieved, despite the strained ties due to the standoff in Doklam, was a testimony to the value Beijing and New Delhi attach to the outcomes of the grouping.

India will host a BRICS workshop on digital forensics

Humanity has come away from threats like World War. But terrorism has emerged as the biggest threat to development and peace. In ten years, two and a half million lives were lost at the hands of terrorism and the society suffered deep damage. Also, according to various estimates, more than one trillion dollars was lost to the world's economy. And has reduced the economic growth of developing countries by 1.5 per cent.

Terrorism, terrorism financing, drug trafficking and organized crimes create deep indirect harm to business and business by creating an environment of scepticism. In this direction, India will organize a workshop on digital forensic analysis of terrorism.

Build on the workshops hosted on traditional medicine and have a BRICS Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on traditional medicine, an initiative that was taken up under India's presidency of BRICS in 2016.

Proposed the first meeting of BRICS Water Ministers in India in order to push for sustainable water management and clean sanitation

India will host the BRICS Digital Health Summit on Innovative Solutions to Healthy Lifestyle. This will be in keeping with "Fit India Movement" launched. The Digital Health Summit will seek to integrate digital technology with healthcare informatics and diagnostics.

Way forward:

India has to maintain the balancing act between Russia-China on the one side and the US on the other.

India has had a growing role in global affairs in the last and is seen to be helping drive the global agenda.

The BRICS mechanism and processes should be outcome-driven and efficient in order to address global economic challenges.

Conclusion:

The Summit is an opportunity for India to lay the groundwork for hosting the 2021 Summit scheduled in India. India also needs to be mindful of the fact that the G20 Summit to be hosted in India will take place in 2022, and this will be an opportunity to synergise the two agendas from New Delhi's lens as well.

New Development Bank

Based in Shanghai

Multilateral development bank operated by the BRICS states

The bank's primary focus of lending will be infrastructure projects with authorized lending of up to \$34 billion annually.

The bank will have starting capital of \$50 billion, with capital increased to \$100 billion over time.

Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa will initially contribute \$10 billion each to bring the total to \$50 billion.

BRICS CRA: BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement

Framework for providing protection against global liquidity pressures.

This includes currency issues where members' national currencies are being adversely affected by global financial pressures.

The CRA is generally seen as a competitor to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and along with the New Development Bank is viewed as an example of increasing South-South cooperation.

Hard-hit Italy prepares to lift lockdown

After two months of closure, industries, restaurants and stores can resume business, and residents can step out of homes

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ROME

European nations on Sunday prepared for further cautious easing of COVID-19 restrictions following signs the pandemic may be slowing, with hard-hit Italy set to follow Spain in allowing people outside after weeks of confinement.

More than 2,43,000 people have been killed and 3.4 million infected worldwide by the virus, which has left half of humanity under some form of lockdown and pushed the global economy towards its worst downturn since the Great Depression.

COVID-19

With signs that the spread of the disease is coming under control, parts of Europe, Asia and the U.S. have begun to lift restrictions to try to inject life into economies crippled by weeks of closures and ease the pressure on populations weary of confinement.

Strolling in parks

After a two-month lockdown, Italians on Monday will be allowed to stroll in parks and visit relatives. Restaurants can open for takeaways and wholesale stores can resume business, but there was some confusion about the extent of the easing. Romans were doing aerobics on their rooftop terraces and exercising indoors on Sunday and the squares in the city centre were mostly empty on the last day Italians were obliged to remain within 200 m of their homes.

Italian authorities have said some preventative measures are still needed in a country that has the second-highest number of virus deaths in the world after the



Hitting the road: People exercising in Madrid, Spain, on Saturday, as the country eased lockdown measures. +AP

United States. Several industries, including automobile sector and construction, have already restarted work. But Italy's 20 regions have imposed their own regulations, leading to some confusion over what people can and cannot do. Veneto and Calabria lifted their lockdowns early and allowed bars and restaurants to open with outdoor tables.

Football in Germany?

Elsewhere in Europe, Germany will continue its easing on Monday, while Slovenia, Poland and Hungary will allow public spaces and businesses to partially reopen.

In another sign of life returning, Germany's Minister for the Interior and Sport said Sunday he supports a resumption of the country's

football season this month as long as teams respect hygiene conditions.

Face masks will be mandatory on public transport starting Monday in Spain, where people were allowed to go outdoors to exercise and walk freely on Saturday after a 48-day lockdown.

Even as some European countries gradually lift restrictions, officials in Moscow urged residents to stay home.

There are also signs that the pandemic is slowing down in some parts of the United States. In New York City, the epicentre of the U.S. outbreak, an emergency field hospital erected in Central Park is set to close, the Christian charity running it said on Saturday, as virus cases decline in the city.

Pompeo hints at Wuhan lab's role

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Sunday that there was "enormous evidence" that the COVID-19 pandemic originated in a laboratory in Wuhan, China.

"There is enormous evidence that this is where it began," he said on ABC's "This Week."

But while highly critical of China's handling of the matter, Mr. Pompeo declined to say whether he thought the virus had been intentionally released.

President Donald Trump has been increasingly critical of China's role in the pandemic. He has insisted that Beijing recklessly

concealed important information about the outbreak and demanded that Beijing be held "accountable."

News reports say Mr. Trump has tasked U.S. spies to find out more about the origins of the virus, at first blamed on a Wuhan market selling exotic animals like bats, but now thought possibly to be from a virus research laboratory nearby.

Not a man-made virus
Mr. Pompeo told ABC that he agreed with a statement on Thursday from the U.S. intelligence community in which it occurred "with the wide scientific consensus that the

Iran to reopen mosques

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TEHRAN

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said mosques would reopen across large parts of the country on Monday, as officials reported a drop in the number of deaths caused by the novel coronavirus. Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said 47 people died of the virus over the past 24 hours, the lowest daily count in 55 days. His remarks came as President Hassan Rouhani said 132 counties, around one-third of the country's administrative divisions, would "reopen their mosques as of tomorrow". "Social distancing is more important than collective prayer," he said, in a televised meeting of the country's virus taskforce.

Kim did not undergo any surgery, says Seoul

Gunfire exchanged near Korea border

REUTERS
SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un did not undergo surgery during almost three weeks of absence from public life, a South Korean official said on Sunday, as the two Koreas exchanged gunfire at the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) separating the two sides.

The government official declined to provide reasons, but said speculative reports that Mr. Kim had had an operation, citing some differences in his leg movements, were untrue. "Our assessment is that (Kim) did not undergo surgery," the official, who declined to be identified, told reporters. Asked if media reports of Mr. Kim having undergone a simple medical treatment were also untrue, the official simply said: "Yes."

Multiple gunshots fired

North and South Korea exchanged gunfire around a rural guard post, raising tension a day after North Korean state media showed Mr. Kim visiting a factory, the first report of him making a public appearance since April 11.

Multiple gunshots were fired from North Korea towards a guard post in South Korea, the South's Joint Chiefs of Staffs (JCS) said in a statement. South Korea responded by firing two shots towards North Korea, the JCS said. No casualties were reported.

After weeks of intense speculation about Mr. Kim's health and whereabouts, which included one report he had undergone cardiovascular surgery, North Korea's official media pu-



Kim Jong-un in a region north of Pyongyang on Saturday. +REUTERS

blished photographs and a report on Saturday that Mr. Kim had attended the completion of a fertilizer plant.

The exchange of gunshots on Sunday was the latest confrontation between the rival Koreas that technically remain still at war after their 1950-53 conflict ended in a truce, not a treaty.

In a lengthy briefing held later on Sunday, an official at South Korea's JCS said the gunshots did not seem a planned provocation.

The U.S.-led UN Command, which oversees affairs in the heavily fortified DMZ, said it was working with the JCS to assess the situation. "The UNC will conduct a thorough investigation tomorrow to determine if there was an Armistice Agreement violation, and will provide the report to the appropriate authorities once completed."

Choi Kang, vice president of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, said he believed the timing of the provocation shows it could have been planned to show that Mr. Kim was still in charge of the North Korean military.

Ewha University international affairs professor Leif-Eric Easley in Seoul said the shooting could be aimed at boosting morale in the North Korean military.

ELSEWHERE



Marine incursion foiled, says Venezuela

Venezuela's government led by President Nicolas Maduro said it foiled a marine incursion on Sunday by "terrorist mercenaries" who attempted to enter the country on speedboats from Colombia. Interior Minister Nestor Reverol said security forces wounded several members of the group and "brought down" others who landed early on Sunday near La Guaira, on the coast about 32 km from Caracas. +REUTERS

Sri Lanka inmate dead after foiled prison break

Prison guards in Sri Lanka foiled an attempt by inmates to escape on Sunday after they used ropes and bed sheets to scale down the wall, leaving at least one dead, police said. Seven prisoners tried to flee the penitentiary in Mahara on the outskirts of the capital Colombo, the police spokesman's office said. +AP

Pakistan's COVID-19 tally crosses 19,000

Pakistan's COVID-19 tally crossed 19,000 on Sunday after 989 new patients were diagnosed in 24 hours. The Ministry of National Health Services said 23 patients died in this period, taking the total toll to 440. So far, 4,817 people have recovered, the Ministry said. +PTI

18 militants killed by Egypt military in Sinai

Egypt's Interior Ministry said on Sunday that 18 suspected militants were killed in North Sinai in a firefight with security forces, two days after a blast claimed by the Islamic State. "National security received intelligence about terrorist elements hiding out in a home in Bir al-Abed, where they were planning to launch hostilities operations," it said. +AFP

South Korea will relax social distancing rules further from May 6

Public facilities like schools & parks could reopen in phases

REUTERS
SEOUL

South Korea will further relax social distancing rules from May 6, allowing a phased re-opening of businesses, as the nation has largely managed to bring the COVID-19 outbreak under control, Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun said on Sunday.

Widespread testing, intensive contact tracing and tracking apps have enabled South Korea to limit the spread of the virus rather than rely on the lengthy lockdowns seen elsewhere.

Disinfection guidelines

The government "will allow businesses to resume at facilities in phases that had remained closed up until now, and also allow gatherings and events to take place assuming they follow disinfection guidelines," the Prime



Monks in Seoul celebrating the Buddha's birthday last week. +AP

Minister told a televised meeting of government officials.

Further easing of rules means public facilities such as parks, libraries as well as schools could reopen in phases, although the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended citizens to continue to ex-

ercise some caution in everyday life.

The new guidelines from the government advise everyone to stay home for three to four days if they feel unwell, stay arms-apart with others in public spaces, and wash hands frequently.

Successful policy

Seoul extended its social distancing policy until May 5 even as it managed to bring down daily infection cases of more than 900 in late February to around 10 per day in the past week.

The national tally is at 10,793 as of midnight Saturday, with 250 deaths.

Some professional sports, including baseball and soccer, are due to start their new seasons this week after being postponed over virus fears, although the matches will be played behind closed doors.

U.K. had contingency plan for PM's death

Boris Johnson spent three nights in intensive care as he battled COVID-19

REUTERS
LONDON

The British government had a contingency plan for Prime Minister Boris Johnson's death as he battled COVID-19 in intensive care last month, he said in an interview with *The Sun* newspaper.

Mr. Johnson, 55, returned to work on Monday, a month after testing positive for COVID-19. He spent 10 days in isolation in Downing Street before he was taken to London's St Thomas' Hospital where he spent three nights in intensive care.

"They had a strategy to deal with a death of Stalin-type scenario," Mr. Johnson was quoted as saying in Sunday's edition of *The Sun*. "It was a tough old moment, I won't deny it."

Resisting hospital visit

Mr. Johnson said that during the period when he was self-isolating in Downing Street, he had resisted going to hos-



Back to work: U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson outside 10 Downing Street, London, last week. +AP

pital. "I was in denial because I was working and I kept doing these meetings by video-link," he said. "But I was really feeling pretty groggy... I was feeling pretty wobbly, not in an intoxicated way, but just, you know, pretty rough."

"Then I was told I had to go into St Thomas. I said I really didn't want to go into hospital. It didn't seem to me to be a good move but

they were pretty adamant. Looking back, they were right to force me to go."

Admitted on April 5

Mr. Johnson was admitted to a ward on April 5 and given oxygen via a face mask and a tube in his nose. "I was going through litres and litres of oxygen for a long time," he said. He was moved to intensive care on April 6.

At one point, doctors dis-

cussed invasive ventilation. "The bad moment came when it was 50-50 whether they were going to have to put a tube down my windpipe," he said.

"That was when it got a bit... they were starting to think about how to handle it presentationally."

"The doctors had all sorts of arrangements for what to do if things went badly wrong... The bloody indicators kept going in the wrong direction."

After he was discharged, St Thomas' said it was glad to have cared for the Prime Minister, but gave no details about the gravity of his illness beyond stating that he was treated in intensive care.

Mr. Johnson and his fiancée, Carrie Symonds, on Saturday announced they had named their newborn Wilfred Lawrie Nicholas, partly as a tribute to two doctors who they said saved Mr. Johnson's life.

Cycling activists seize the moment, seek more bike lanes

From Germany to Peru, they are demanding a transition to more bike-friendly cities as virus wreaks havoc on economies

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MADRID

Halfway through his 30-minute bike ride to work, police ordered Juan Pasamar to dismount, accusing him of breaking Spain's lockdown rules by exercising in public.

The officers were not buying his explanation he was commuting to his job outside of Zaragoza, the northern city where he lives. "You have a car, don't you? Why don't you use that?" he said he was asked. Mr. Pasamar eventually had to hire a lawyer to convince police that the government had not banned cycling.

Crowding on trains

As countries seek to get their economies back on track after the devastation wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic, bicycle use is being encour-



Planning for a safer future: A man cycling near a piece of street art in London. +AP

aged as a way to avoid unsafe crowding on trains and buses. Cycling activists from Germany to Peru are trying to use the moment to get more bike lanes, or widen existing ones, even if it's just a temporary measure.

The transition to more bike-friendly urban environ-

ments "is necessary if we want our cities to work," said Morton Kabell, who co-chairs the European Cyclists' Federation. "A lot of people will be afraid of going on public transportation, but we have to get back to work soon. Very few of our cities can handle more car traffic,"

he said. In addition to bike lanes separated by curbs, Mr. Kabell backs subsidising electric bicycles.

The benchmarks are Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark, where half of the daily commuters are cyclists, and the Netherlands, with its vast network of bike lanes.

Still, countries around the world are catching up at different speeds. The French government asked cycling activist Pierre Serne to draw up a plan for when its lockdown ends May 11. His recommendations, including bicycle lanes separated from other vehicles at an estimated cost of €50,000 per km, have been submitted to the Transportation Ministry.

In Berlin, the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg council simply painted yellow lines on the some roads to take

space from car lanes. This bike infrastructure builds on what is called "tactical urbanism" — low-cost changes that are technically simple and reversible.

Taking over space

Similar initiatives are popping up elsewhere. Officials in Lima, Peru; Barcelona, Spain; and Milan, Italy, are speeding up plans to expand bike paths or take space from cars or current parking lots. In Bogota, where bicycles are used mostly by Colombia's blue-collar workers, Mayor Claudia Lopez has urged everybody returning to work this week to cycle instead of using public transportation, which is now operating at 35% of capacity.

With many U.S. nonessential businesses closed, there is little point now in cycling

that isn't recreational. But cities like Oakland, San Francisco and New York are closing some streets to traffic to allow room for runners and cyclists. Pedro Diaz, a member of Pedalibre, a Madrid cycling club, sees this as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to take over space from cars and resist giving it back when the pandemic ends.

If arguing for environmentally friendly transportation was a key factor for activists before, the economic fallout from the virus is adding momentum, said Laura Vergara, head of Spain's ConBici advocacy group.

Beyond infrastructure, cycling advocates say many minds must still be changed, noting that many officials have called for prioritising the use of private vehicles in the lockdown.

Israel: hearing to challenge govt. begins

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
JERUSALEM

Israel's top court on Sunday started hearing arguments to bar Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from forming a new government as he faces a criminal trial on corruption charges. The Supreme Court will also hear petitions challenging a coalition deal with his rival-turned-partner Benny Gantz, who is currently speaker of the Knesset, Israel's Parliament. Either case carries with it the danger of forcing another election, after three polls in less than a year failed to produce a government and left the country in a grinding political deadlock. The hearing was broadcast live on the court website.

ASK US

VIDYA BALA
Long-term investment

Q. I am 31 years old and looking for some good investment options on a long-term basis for me and my husband. We can't have a PPF account as we are NRIs right now. What is the best option for us? Last week, I started investing in Bajaj Allianz Goal Assure on a monthly basis. Is this a good option?

MALEMNGANBI NAOREM

A. We do not know about your time frame and goal and what plan under the Bajaj Allianz Goal Assure you have chosen. This is a ULIP. So, if your primary purpose is to build wealth, you have to make sure the fund is performing well. Ask your adviser/agent to send regular updates on the growth of your money. If you find the performance not up to the mark in five years compared with mutual funds, consider stopping SIPs then. Try not to invest in bundled insurance products unless you are sure you understand all the features and costs.

As for other investment options, your time frame is paramount in deciding the risk you can handle. Having invested in a ULIP, I am assuming that you are willing to take market risks. If you are an NRI outside U.S./Canada, you can consider some exposure to index funds or ETFs in India. There are funds on the bellwether indices such as the Nifty 50, Next 50 or Nifty 500. You can own a mix of these for the equity component of your portfolio. This should constitute a long-term portfolio for the next 5-10 years, with regular SIPs to average the cost.

For the debt component, for the next 1-1.5 years, the low interest rate notwithstanding, consider NRE deposits in large private or public banks. We may see smaller banks coming under pressure post COVID-19 and hence, you need to be careful with the choice of banks.

This is not a time to chase returns in deposits. Look for safety. Lock into shorter tenures (1-1.5 years and not more). If you have a demat account, you can also check with your broker if they offer government securities (called gilts) and you can invest in those for the long term.

Any top-rated PSU bonds (nothing other than PSU) maturing in 3-4 years, traded in the market, will also be the options if your broker will help you with the same.

If you are based out of the U.S./Canada, your investment options are quite restricted here. It would be better for you to seek the advice of a fee-based investment adviser who is also familiar with the U.S. security and tax laws.

Retiring from the Army

Q. I am retiring from the Indian armed forces at 35. I will get pension and some lump sum in the form of PF, gratuity and other dues. Where and how should I invest my money?

RATUL BASUMATARY

A. We are assuming that you will take up some employment and have some regular income or that your pension will be sufficient for regular expenses. In that case, you can invest this sum for the long term for any goal you may have, including retirement from your next career, a couple of decades later.

If you are very conservative and only safety matters, then consider large public or private bank deposits, post office time deposits and deposits with large NBFCs like HDFC or Sundaram Finance. Lock into these for only 1-1.5 years as rates are low now. You can renew them when rates go up a year or two later.

If you can take some risks, then our suggestion would be that you park 20-30% of your corpus in equity index funds such as Nifty 50 or Nifty 500 for a minimum of 7-10 years. You can also park 5-10% of this in Indian funds that invest in U.S. indices such as the S&P 500 or Nasdaq 100.

This will help provide exposure to the U.S. markets, too, by just investing in rupees. Use a systematic investment plan to invest in these over the next 1-1.5 years and don't let the market ups and downs worry you. Make sure 70% of your money is in safe investments. You can also consider the RBI Taxable Bond available with all major banks. Do not be lured by any high interest rates in deposits. Over the next 1-2 years, high interest will carry far higher risks.

(The author is co-founder, Primeinvestor.in)

Readers can send in queries on personal finance and investing to moneywise@thehindu.co.in. Our experts who write on personal finance will answer these queries. Moneywise will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund scheme, share or fixed deposit.

Look before you leap

Ask questions about your investments before, and not after, making them

JOYDEEP SEN

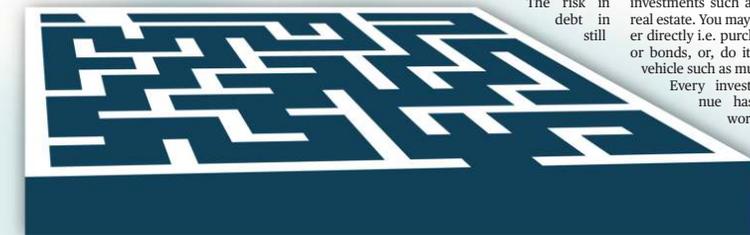
We are going through challenging times. There is correction in the equity market, defaults in debt funds and even issues with certain banks. Many investors are wondering what is 'safe.' Nothing has changed fundamentally in our economy or the financial markets. Due to COVID-19, economic growth has been impacted, but we will come back over a period of time. There is no reason to suspect something is going wrong with investments in general.

To put the current situation in perspective: the equity market, in particular, the global markets, pre-COVID-19, had a significant run up. There was a lot of surplus liquidity floating around (there still is) and that pushed up prices in equity markets in advanced economies. In India, the equity market had moved up but more at the index level (Nifty, Sensex) and in large cap stocks. The broad market, taking all listed stocks into consideration, had not moved up as much. After the pandemic, the sharp correction has been inevitable as advanced economies are staring at a recession.

With markets being inter-linked, the correction had to happen in India as well.

The defaults in debt funds happened due to multiple reasons, the major one being the cleaning up of the system. Earlier, the practice of ever-greening was rampant i.e. granting one more loan so that an existing loan does not go bad. With stricter regulations, including the IBC, some companies were taken to the NCLT.

The risk in debt is still



THINK INVESTOR

Lessons to learn in personal finance

A mix of equity and bank deposits can add to your investment portfolio

VENKATESH BANGARUSWAMY

Most people in the lower income group want to start working even at the risk of contracting COVID-19. There are lessons to learn from this. In this article, we discuss why you could experience a similar risky attitude with your goal-based portfolios and how to moderate the same.

Avoiding losses

Do you invest in bank deposits and gold? Specifically, do you avoid equity investments because you consider them risky? Then, there is a cause for concern. Why?

Picture this. You need ₹1.5 crore in 10 years to finance your child's college education. You invest in bank deposits and gold to achieve this goal.

Two years before your child has to enter college, you realise that given the actual returns, your investments will fall short of funding your child's education.

What will you do? Because you cannot postpone the goal, it is highly likely that you will make risky investments to bridge the shortfall. Or you may be forced to borrow at a high interest rate. So, what should you do to moderate the possibility of having to take high



Investments only in bank deposits and gold, while avoiding equities, may endanger your financial goal. ©GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

risk to bridge a shortfall?

Forward SIPs

You know that the expected return on equity is higher than that on bank deposits. So, if you invest in equity along with bank deposits, you can expect to accumulate more in your investment portfolio for the same amount of savings.

But that is easier said than done. Bank deposits offer certainty in cash flows. You know today, the value of your deposit at maturity. You want to avoid equity because of the uncertainty in the investment outcome. Yet, you willingly take high

risk at the end when faced with a confirmed shortfall in your investment portfolio!

To overcome your fear of investing in equity and at the same time reduce the possibility of having to take high risk, set up a forward systematic investment plan (SIP) on an equity fund at least a month before your annual salary raise.

For instance, set up an SIP in April that will start in May (the month of salary raise) with savings from the incremental salary. Why? For one, it is easy to risk your savings you do not have as yet! For another, you are not cutting your current living stan-

dards to save more. Importantly, if your investments are profitable, you may not have to make risky choices towards the end of the time horizon for your life goal.

Given the current scenario, you may not get a salary raise immediately. But, if you realise how your attitude of taking risk can change, you should be on course to setting up forward SIPs when you expect a salary raise.

What if you experience negative returns on your equity investments? You will then have to borrow to bridge the shortfall which you will anyway do if you were not invested in equity!

Yet, there is a good chance that your equity investments will perform well, and you may not have to take high risk at the end to achieve your life goal.

Conclusion

So, do you want to take high risk at the end in an attempt to bridge a confirmed shortfall in your portfolio? Or, do you want to invest in equity, hoping to achieve your goal without having to take higher risk at the end? The choice is yours.

(The author offers training programmes for individuals to manage their personal investments)

TECH TRAIL: PRECIOUS METALS

Mixed picture for gold, silver

B. KRISHNAKUMAR

There was a strong uptrend in the early part of April that pushed the price of Comex gold to seven-year high on April 14. The recovery in the equity markets in the latter half of April played a key role in capping the rise in precious metals. As a result, they remained largely range bound in the second half of the month.

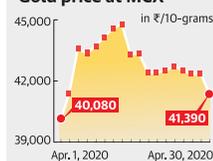
Comex gold gained 6.1% in April to settle at \$1,694.2 an ounce while Comex silver, too, gained by 5.2% to settle at \$14.9 an ounce. In the domestic market, gold futures at MCX gained 3.9% in April to settle at ₹44,906 per 10 gm. MCX silver futures gained 4% in April to close at ₹41,390 per kg.

In the short-term, Comex gold is likely to remain in the range of \$1,650-1,800 zone. A strong breakout from the extremes of this range would set the tone for the next move in gold. Above \$1,800, gold price could rally to \$12.4-12.8 zone. On the other hand, a fall below \$1,650 would be a sign of weakness and a further slide to \$1,550-1,580 is likely.

Comex silver has a strong resistance at the \$16.8-17 zone. A move above \$17 would be a sign of strength and the price could then rise to the subsequent target of \$17.8-18.2 zone. A fall below \$14 would indicate weakness and silver could then slide to \$12.4-12.8 zone. As long as \$14 is not breached, there would be a case for a rally to \$17.8-18.

MCX gold futures ruled firm in April and also achieved the earlier mentioned target of ₹44,800-₹45,000. The short-term outlook is

Gold price at MCX



positive and a breakout past ₹46,800 would push the MCX gold price to the short-term target of ₹47,800-49,000. The trend would turn weak if the price falls below ₹44,000 per 10 gm.

MCX silver, too, edged past the earlier mentioned target of ₹43,500. The short-term outlook is positive, and the price could move up to ₹47,500-48,000 range per kg. A breakout above the immediate resistance at ₹45,000 would strengthen the positive view. A drop below ₹39,500 would be a sign of weakness and reduce the possibility of a rally to ₹47,500-48,000.

To summarise, precious metals present a mixed picture. While the prices of gold and silver are stuck in a range in the international markets, the short-term outlook in domestic markets is relatively positive.

(The author is a Chennai-based analyst/trader. The views and opinions featured in this column are based on the analysis of short-term price movements in gold and silver futures at Comex and the Multi Commodity Exchange of India. This is not meant to be trading or investment advice)

LOOSE CHANGE

RAVIKANTH



"The number you have dialled is switched off. Please try later. The number you have dialled is switched off. Please try later. The..."

Life insurance term plan premium

Male: 30 Years, Sum insured-Rs. 1 crore, Cover upto - 70 Years

Insurance company	Plan name	Maximum cover Up to (Years)	Annual premium (Rs.) (Male)
Aditya Birla Capital	Life Shield Plan	80	12,998
Aegon Life	iTerm Insurance Plan	100	9,114
Bajaj Allianz	Smart Protect Goal	99	8,010
Canara HSBC OBC Life	iSelect+ Term Plan	99	9,284
Edelweiss Tokio Life	Zindagi+ Term Insurance Plan	80	9,309
Exide Life Insurance	Smart Term Plan	75	12,411*
Future Generali	Flexi Online Term Plan	75	9,427
HDFC Life	Click2Protect 3D Plus	85	12,601
ICICI Prudential	iProtect Smart	99	15,089
India First Life	e-Term Plan	80	8,260
Kotak Life	Kotak e-Term Plan	75	9,558
Max Life insurance	Online Term Plan Plus	85	10,148
PNB Met Life	Mera Term Plan	99	10,148
Reliance Nippon Life	Digi Term	80	11,012
SBI Life	eShield	80	15,070
TATA AIA Life	Maha Raksha Supreme	100	12,980

*Exide coverage upto 60 yrs for age 30 yrs Source: www.policybazaar.com

Health insurance premium

Insurer name	Key features	Plan names	Premium (Rs.)
Religare Health	Day Care Treatments	NCB Super Premium	9,092
	Family Floater option	Care with unlimited recharge	8,265
Max Bupa Health	Health Checkups	Care with unlimited recharge	8,885
	Pre and Post Hospitalisation Coverage	NCB Super Premium with UAR	9,712
Star Health	Day Care Treatments	Health Pulse Enhanced	10,696
	Hospitalization at Home	Health Companion	9,862
HDFC Ergo Health	Family Floater option	Go Active	11,747
	Alternate Medicine		
Star Health	Family Floater option	Medi Classic	9,661
	Restoration of cover	Star Comprehensive	11,476
HDFC Ergo Health	Wellness Benefits		
	Family Floater option	Optima Restore	11,024
HDFC Ergo Health	Restoration of cover	Restoration of cover	9,613
	Pre and Post Hospitalisation Coverage	Easy Health Individual Standard	
HDFC Ergo Health	Day Care Treatments	Easy Health Individual Exclusive	12,067
		Easy Health Individual Premium	14,945
HDFC Ergo Generali	Health wallet	Health wallet	22,908
	Hospitalization at Home	MyHealth Suraksha Gold Smart	13,886
Aditya Birla Health	Hospital Room Eligibility		
	Alternate Medicine		
Aditya Birla Health	Pre and Post Hospitalisation Coverage		
	Day Care Treatments	Activ assure Diamond	7,938
Aditya Birla Health	Restoration of cover	Activ Health Enhance	9,801
	Family Floater Option	Activ Health Enhance (Diabetes)	38,148
Aditya Birla Health	Health Checkups	Activ Health Enhance (Asthma)	16,818
		Activ Health Enhance (Hypertension)	32,616
Aditya Birla Health		Activ assure Diamond with Super NCB	8,732
		Activ assure Diamond with Unlimited Reload	8,494
Aditya Birla Health		Activ assure Diamond with Super NCB and Unlimited Reload	9,287
Royal Sundaram Generali	Day Care Treatments	Lifeline supreme	7,936
	Hospitalization at Home		
Manipal Cigna Health	Hospital Room Eligibility		
	Alternate Medicine		
Manipal Cigna Health	Day Care Treatments	ProHealth - Protect	8,979
	Hospitalization at Home	ProHealth - Plus	10,119
Digitel Healthcare Plus	Alternate Medicine		
	Family Floater Option		
Digitel Healthcare Plus	Hospital Room Eligibility	Option 1 - Maxima Restore Super	8,861
	Day Care Treatments	Option 2 - Early Cover	7,985
Digitel Healthcare Plus	Hospital Room Eligibility	Option 3 - Super care	7,541
	Pre and Post Hospitalisation Coverage		
TATA AIG	Medicare	Medicare	9820
	Day Care Treatments	Medicare Premier	12176
Liberty Generali	Hospitalization at Home		
	Elite		10,777
Liberty Generali	Hospitalization at Home	Basic	9,579
	Hospital Room Eligibility	Supreme	11,337
Bajaj Allianz Generali	Hospital Room Eligibility	Individual Health Guard	11,569
	Wellness Benefits	Health Ensure	7,642
Bajaj Allianz Generali	Family Floater Option	Health Infinity	15,576
	Hospitalization at Home		
Universal Sampo Generali	Complete Healthcare Insurance Privilege		12,241
	Hospital Room Eligibility		
Rahja QBE	Alternate Medicine		
	Hospitalization at Home	Health QBE Basic	4,711
Rahja QBE	Restoration of Cover	Health QBE SuperSaver	3,820
	Hospital Room Eligibility	Health QBE Comprehensive	5,511
Rahja QBE	Day Care Treatments	Edelweiss Health Insurance-Gold (Health 241 Add-on)	10,398
	Hospitalization at Home	Edelweiss Health Insurance Gold	8,318
Edelweiss Generali	Hospital Room Eligibility		
	Alternate Medicine		
Oriental	Pre and Post Hospitalisation Coverage		
	Day Care Treatments	Individual Mediclaim Policy	12,080
Oriental	Hospitalization at Home		

For a 30-year-old male, non-smoker, for sum insured of Rs 10 lakh living in a metro city Source: www.policybazaar.com

IN BRIEF



Want to retire in KKR jersey: Andre Russell

NEW DELHI West Indies all-rounder Andre Russell says playing for Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL is where he gets the "most goosebumps" and wants to remain in the side till his very last game in the league. The 32-year-old was speaking to KKR's official *Knights Unplugged* online show. "Let me confess something... IPL is where I get the most goosebumps. I get that in CPL (Caribbean Premier League) as well but when it comes to playing in IPL, especially Eden Gardens, there is no comparison," Russell said. PTI



Shami recalls his fight with depression

NEW DELHI India speedster Mohammed Shami has claimed that he thought of committing suicide while battling personal issues a few years ago. He said his family members feared he "might jump" from their 24th-floor apartment. Shami opened up on his personal and professional life during an Instagram chat with Rohit Sharma. "I think if my family had not supported me back then, I would have lost my cricket," Shami said.

Carlsen to face Nakamura in final

NEW DELHI Magnus Carlsen bounced back to win the last two games and pipped Ding Liren at the post with a 2.5-1.5 verdict on way to the final of his signature event — Magnus Carlsen Invitational Online chess tournament — on Saturday. In the final, Carlsen will take on Hikaru Nakamura. **The result: Semifinal:** Magnus Carlsen (Nor) bt Ding Liren (Chn) 2.5-1.5.

Vettel makes esports debut at Legends Trophy

LONDON Ferrari star Sebastian Vettel made his esports debut with the Legends Trophy, organised by Torque Esports. Vettel battled with the likes of former F1 racer and two-time Indy 500 winner Juan Pablo Montoya and fellow ex-Formula 1 World champions Emerson Fittipaldi and Jensen Button. Vettel finished 15th and 12th in his two races. IANS

'2021 WC is pretty much open'

Mithali says there will be no favourites at the showpiece event in New Zealand

LANVANY
CHENNAI

India ODI captain Mithali Raj believes the pause in sporting activity due to the coronavirus pandemic has evened out the competition ahead of the 2021 Women's World Cup in New Zealand.

With lockdowns in place almost everywhere in the world, sport finds itself in limbo, with games suspended and strict physical distancing norms in place.

On hold

"Access to gyms is restricted and play has been put on hold. So the 2021 World Cup is pretty much open and there are no favourites," Mithali told *Sportstar* in an Instagram live session.

She said that the players were in regular touch with coach W.V. Raman and the support staff to devise training routines that will suit their requirements.

"Some of us have running space while others like me



Not finished yet: The 37-year-old Mithali Raj feels she still has the ability to put in the long yards. *FILE PHOTO

have to manage within the restricted spaces indoors, so our trainers are adapting

routines for us. W.V. Raman (sir) is trying to be creative with our skill training reg-

men. It is difficult because irrespective of how much we train indoors, we need to get out onto the ground to be fully prepared," Mithali said.

Relying on experience

The 37-year-old announced her retirement from T20 cricket last year to prolong her ODI career. On her priorities in the run-up to 2021, she said: "Fitness, at my age, is something I need to consciously and constantly keep up. I know I can't forget my skill — I still have some batting in me. I might need a few sessions to get my rhythm going."

Mithali has enlisted the assistance of her watchman and his son in her daily cricket practice. "I get them to bowl to me with a tennis ball or I use a hanging ball. It's nowhere close to a regular routine at the nets, but it keeps me going with my basics and helps me clock some batting time," the Hyderabad-based cricketer added.

CA secures \$50 million loan as safety cover

To offset losses if India fails to tour

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MELBOURNE

Cricketer Australia has secured a loan of \$50 million, an upfront payment as part of a larger \$200 million credit, which it has sought to cover the losses if India fails to tour the country later this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to a report published in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, stakeholders have been informed that the loan with the Commonwealth Bank is a "done deal".

More questions

However, it raised fresh questions about CA's decision to stand down 80% of its staff due to financial crisis.

CA stood down more than 200 staff on 20% pay until the end of June with chief executive Kevin Roberts fearing they might run out of money by August if



Kevin Roberts. *AFP

the drastic cuts were not made.

The decision, which had saved CA about \$3 million, is in question now with the governing body securing \$50 million loan.

Staggering

CA is staring at losing a staggering \$300 million in the wake of the pandemic and India's four-Test tour in December-January could provide relief to the struggling body.

'WTC points system is ridiculous'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

West Indies fast bowler great Michael Holding has termed the World Test Championship's points system as "ridiculous", where some of the Tests will be rendered inconsequential once teams realise that they can't finish in top two in the points table.

As per the current points system, the value for each Test match win in a two-match series is 60 points a game.

However, if it's a five-match series, the value of a Test match win is reduced to 24. So basically, a team can gain up to 120 points from a series, regardless of the number of matches. The top two qualify for the final.

"It doesn't work," Holding told *Wisden Cricket Monthly* during a round table when asked if the Test championship was achieving what it was designed for.

"First of all, the points system is ridiculous. You can't play five Test matches and get the same amount of points if you play two Test matches.

"And secondly, at some point you're going to have teams who know they cannot get to the final and so those Test matches aren't going to be all that entertaining. People know it's just another game."



Holding. *FILE PHOTO

Nervous wait for Jerlin

Young shuttler fighting to get ready for the 2021 Summer Deaflympics

RAYAN ROZARIO
COIMBATORE

When 16-year-old Jerlin Anika clinched four medals, including a gold, at the World deaf youth badminton championship in Taiwan last year, her father Jaya-rathagan shed tears of joy.

This time, however, it's bitter-sweet as his little one is unable to practise for the Summer Deaflympics to be held in Brazil next year.

"A medal for the country is a challenge that I have taken in my hands. It is something very important for her. We have been working for hours together in a bid to achieve this dream. But COVID-19 has crushed our hopes," he said.

The class ten student of Avvai Corporation GHSS in Madurai, however, is sure to face some rust. "It takes time for an able-bodied player to strike form after a break. In my daughter's case, it's going to take even longer," he said.

But he believes her coach T. Saravanan will work his magic and Jerlin has been sincerely following the fit-



Jerlin Anika. *FILE PHOTO

ness exercises given by the former.

Jayarathagan has plans to send Jerlin for a three-month training to Malaysia, but that may not happen given the current situation. But Jerlin isn't bothered.

After dedicating all her time and effort to the sport over the years, she can now finally enjoy her time with family.

After all, she has already seen the big stage, at the 2017 Deaflympics. The expectations may have now gone up, but Jerlin's many sacrifices on and off the court will keep her in good stead as she chases glory.

Duplantis and Lavillenie share honours

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

Three of the best pole vaulters of all time went head-to-head from their back gardens in a competition on Sunday. World record holder Armand Duplantis and former Olympic champion Renaud Lavillenie cleared five metres 36 times in half an hour, while world champion Sam Kendricks managed 26 successful attempts.

The event saw Lavillenie competing from his home in Clermont-Ferrand, France, Swedish star Duplantis in Lafayette, Louisiana and Kendricks in Oxford, Mississippi.

Italy gives Serie A clubs some hope

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ROME

Italy offered Serie A clubs a glimmer of hope on Sunday after it said footballers could take part in individual training sessions as the strictest coronavirus lockdown measures began to ease. The Interior Ministry's go-ahead for players to attend their club's training facilities offered fans in the football-mad country the first sign that the 2019-20 season might be saved.

Plan to resume national camps from May end, says Rijiju

'Can't open all coaching centres, will allow only elite athletes'



Kiren Rijiju. *FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Sunday said the Government would allow elite athletes to resume their training at the earliest in order to keep them ready for future competitions.

"We are planning out a way to start functioning as soon as possible. I thought we should first allow practice for athletes who have qualified for the Olympics and those participating in the qualifiers or important championships. We can't open all the coaching

centres, so we will allow only elite athletes (to train). Junior camps have to wait for some time as safety will be the priority," said Rijiju, at a video conference attended by 140 boxers and coaches.

Top pugilists, including Mary Kom, Amit Panghal, Pooja Rani, Simranjit Kaur, Lovlina Borgohain, Vikas Krishan, Satish Kumar and Manish Kaushik, took part.

Rijiju expressed confidence that boxing — nine Indians have won Olympic quotas already — would help the country shine at the Tokyo Games next year.

Indian-owned company develops test kit

If it is approved, COVID-19 testing speed and accuracy may increase significantly

ADITYA ANAND
MUMBAI

After the United States, Italy and Europe, India might soon see the deployment of antibody ELISA kits to know if a person has actually recovered from the COVID-19 coronavirus without even knowing that he or she had been infected, thus returning to a normal life without restrictions.

The kits will be put to use after they receive the approval of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation, the national regulatory body for pharmaceuticals and medical devices. They have been developed by scientists from India, the U.S. and the U.K. for Erba Mannheim, a company founded by Mumbai-based businessman Sunil Vazirani.

'Not going away' Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Vazirani, who started TRANSASIA Bio-Medicals in 1979, long before he set up Erba Mannheim Germany in 1995, said that the world was realising the coronavirus was not going away without a vaccine.

"Our kits help identify individuals who had COVID-19,



Sunil Vazirani.

were asymptomatic and recovered without even knowing. They can thus confidently return to work and bring back normalcy to life, while reducing the stress on the frontline warriors," Mr. Vazirani said.

Italy is testing 5 lakh people a day using the kits developed by Erba Mannheim. Each kit can be used to perform 100 tests, Mr. Vazirani said. The kits took a month-and-a-half to develop.

After first receiving the European CE approval, Erba Mannheim also received the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's nod for the advanced method of testing antibodies, which it claims is much faster than the rapid

testing kits from China.

Mr. Vazirani claims that his COVID-19 antibody ELISA kits can test 100 samples an hour, with an accuracy rate of 98%.

Research tells us that the SARS-CoV-2 viral antigens stimulate the body's immune system to produce antibodies that can be detected with IgM and IgG antibody tests. IgM is produced first and is detectable during early onset of the disease. IgG is produced later and is maintained for long-term immunity. ERBA Mannheim's kit, called ErbaLISA® COVID-19 ELISA kits, can detect both antibodies.

Through group company TRANSASIA India, Mr. Vazirani's team has applied for permissions to use the kits in India, for which 500 sample kits have been imported.

"Antibody tests are important to do. India imported rapid test kits from China which, as per the Indian Council of Medical Research, have a 6-30% [rate of] accuracy," he explained.

A team that includes Drugs Controller General of India Dr. V G Somani and others is looking into approvals for the antibody kits.

Asked how many people could actually be infected with COVID-19, Mr. Vazirani said, "It is anybody's guess, but 20-30 times more than those [who have been] tested have been infected. Our understanding is that 80% of those infected don't show symptoms."

Existing plants

Once the approval is obtained, Mr. Vazirani plans to produce the kits at existing TRANSASIA India plants in Daman and Sikkim, which will further the setting up of a COVID-19 unit making only testing kits for the virus. This plant in Andhra Pradesh's Med Tech Zone is backed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and is awaiting necessary regulatory approvals and on-ground permissions.

For the future, Mr. Vazirani believes that the kits will help individuals test themselves, and also help companies test their employees in a big way.

"Everybody is worried. This is an easy and affordable test. It will help bring back confidence in people — that they have the antibodies," Mr. Vazirani said.

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