



Kerala nurse raring to return to duty after defeating COVID-19

page 5



Father-daughter duo in Madhya Pradesh recover completely

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Life insurance policy holders get 30 more days to pay premium

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Pope opens Holy Week amid pandemic, says now is the time to serve

page 12



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NEARBY



Corpn. gets tough with shops violating norms

CHENNAI
 The Greater Chennai Corporation has decided to shut shops which violated norms for three months. Officials closed the temporary market in T. Nagar put up on a playground after huge crowds assembled.

CHENNAI • PAGE 4

Seven youth walk from Nanded to reach home

TIRUCHI
 Seven youth belonging to Tiruvavur and Nagapattinam districts have walked all the way from Maharashtra to reach home after the lockdown was announced. Employed in a company manufacturing agricultural products, the youth started their journey on March 29.

TAMIL NADU • PAGE 3

Muslim leaders urge members to cooperate

CHENNAI
 The Tamil Nadu Jamaath-UL-Ulema, the IUML, the TMMK, the SDPI and Tablighi Jamaat leaders have urged members of the Muslim community to co-operate with officials and not hold gatherings in mosque during the lockdown. The leaders also appealed to the government to end the communal hatred that was being spread on social media.

TAMIL NADU • PAGE 3

Cases doubled in 4.1 days due to Tablighi Jamaat event: govt.

We are chasing the virus, say officials as new cases rise in Maharashtra, T.N.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

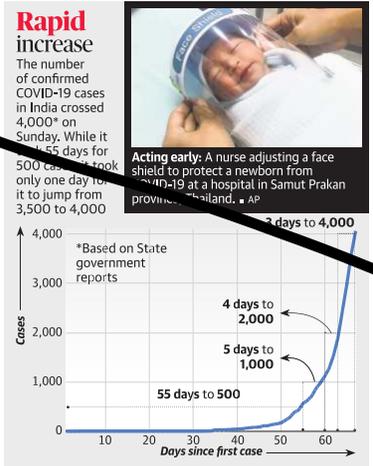
India's death toll from COVID-19 rose to 83 on Sunday, with 11 fatalities since Saturday. The number of confirmed infections across the country stood at 3,374, with 505 new cases; 274 persons have recovered, the Union Health Ministry said.

"We are chasing the virus rather than the other way around and India's strategy continues to be preventive. We rather be over prepared," Joint Secretary in the Union Health Ministry Lav Agarwal said at Sunday's press briefing.

COVID-19

The Ministry maintained that last month's Tablighi Jamaat gathering in Delhi has pushed up the doubling rate of cases in India to 4.1 days from the estimated 7.4 days.

Reports from State Health Departments put the death toll across the country at 129, with 3,736 active cases. The maximum number of cases continued to be reported from Maharashtra at 748, with 13 fatalities in the past 24 hours. Tamil Nadu followed with 571 cases, reporting two fatalities since Saturday.



Stating that there is no evidence to suggest airborne transmission of the novel coronavirus, head of Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases with the Indian Council of Medical Research Raman Gangakhedkar said rapid antibody-based blood test for COVID-19 would be deployed by Wednesday for high prevalence areas and hotspots across India.

Asked about concerns raised by doctors of AIIMS, Delhi, and other cities on the shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE), Mr. Agarwal said the situation should ease in a few days.

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 MORE REPORTS ON ► PAGES 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11
 300 TABLIGHI JAMAAT MEMBERS TEST POSITIVE IN PAK. ► PAGE 12

'Ready to stop academic loss'

The government will take a decision on reopening of schools and colleges on April 14 after reviewing the COVID-19 situation in the country, Union HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal said. He added that the safety of students and teachers is of utmost importance and his Ministry is prepared to ensure there is no academic loss if the lockdown is extended. ► PAGE 5

Puzzling cases in Karnataka

As 22 of the 151 positive cases in Karnataka don't have any foreign travel or contact history, State health officials are at a loss to understand how they could have contracted the infection. While the cases raise questions as to whether it is the beginning of community transmission, officials have been denying it. The patients have spread the infection to eight others. ► PAGE 5

PM lights lamp as nation joins hands against virus

Fireworks, conches join nine-minute event across country

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

People across the country switched off lights in their houses and lit lamps at their doors and balconies in solidarity with the rest of the country in combating COVID-19 at the call of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Mr. Modi had, in a video message last week, asked Indians to light a lamp or flash a torch from their mobile phone at 9 p.m. on Sunday for nine minutes. The Prime Minister lit a lamp at his official residence at 7 Lok Kalyan Marg and tweeted a Sanskrit verse, seeking health and prosperity for all and the defeat of all enemies.



United effort: Nurses of J.N. Ray Hospital in Kolkata expressing solidarity in the fight against the pandemic. ► PTI

Mr. Modi wore a white southern *angan mundu* (dhoti) and an Assamese *gamocha* (towel) and lit a traditional oil lamp from south India.

This was to convey, sources said, solidarity with all corners of the country.

President Ram Nath Kovind and First Lady Savita Kovind also lit lamps as did Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu. Several political party leaders, including YSRCP chief and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Eddappadi Palaniswami, joined in.

Union Health Minister

Harsh Vardhan lit a lamp along with AIIMS doctors and staff, whom he called "Corona warriors", on the Delhi campus.

'Victory of good'
 "Let the brightness of the lights ignite our energies and ensure the 'victory of good' over evil. My prayers go out for all those million homes across the planet who are suffering because of coronavirus," he said.

As the clock struck 9, lights went out in most houses and people gathered in balconies and at doors, flashing lights, while many lit candles and lamps. The sound of fireworks, conches, beating of vessels, whistles and police sirens broke the silence of the lockdown. At

some places, Hindu devotional songs, mantras and the national anthem were also played.

The event passed off without any disruption to the national electricity grid after the government and utilities put in place elaborate plans to deal with the sudden drop and then a quick spurt in demand.

India has been on a 21-day lockdown from March 25 to check the spread of coronavirus pandemic that has claimed over 83 lives in the country and 1,000 globally, while more than 12,00,000 declared cases have been registered in 190 countries since the epidemic first emerged in China in December 2019.

(With PTI inputs)

Many women from T.N. attended Tablighi meet

Sample survey

Antigens are substances that stimulate the immune system to produce antibodies. Each antigen has a distinct surface feature or epitope. Thus there is a resultant effect of a specific response. Antigens could be anything like a pathogen or bacteria or fungi or even virus. They cause diseases or allergic reactions.

SDPI and Tablighi Jamaat leaders have urged members of the Muslim community to co-operate with officials and not hold gatherings in mosque during the lockdown. The leaders also appealed to the government to end the communal hatred that was being spread on social media.

To summarise in a nutshell, antigens are the harmful germs or pathogens or other foreign substances that pose a threat and disrupt the normal functioning of the body. And in order to stop this disruption, the body produces an antibody to protect itself, thereby destroying the antigens.

Rapid antibody testing: The rapid testing kits are quicker to get early results. They use blood samples of suspected patients and normally takes around 15-30 minutes to give the result. Under this, one has to clean their finger with an alcohol swab and use the lancet provided for finger-pricks.

Keeping informed: Villagers tuning in to a community radio station in Odisha. ► SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Radio Muskan added: "We work in close coordination with the district administration. Awareness messages and warnings on health hazards are sourced from very authentic sources."

Community radio stations are operating in remote pockets of Puri, Jagatsinghpur, Bhadrak, Nayagarh, Kandhamal, Khordha, Nuapada, Balasore and Koraput districts.

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Rapid antibody testing for hotspots first: ICMR

The rollout is likely on Wednesday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said the rapid antibody-based blood test for COVID-19 will be deployed by this Wednesday in clusters and hotspots showing high incidence of confirmed cases.

Raman R. Gangakhedkar, head of the Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases Division of the ICMR, explained that overall testing for COVID-19 using real-time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR), a laboratory technique combining reverse transcription of RNA into DNA, is increasing and that India would be approaching full capacity soon.

"At the same time, we are expecting delivery of rapid test kits (blood-based) for use in response to COVID-19

Free testing and treatment

The Centre has decided to provide free testing and treatment of COVID-19 under the Ayushman Bharat Scheme. The move will benefit more than 50 crore beneficiaries across India. ► PAGE 8

situation. By Wednesday, this should be up and running," he added.

The Health Ministry added that all States/UTs had been issued guidelines for implementing these tests and reports may be entered into the ICMR portal, similar to results of real-time RT PCR tests for COVID-19.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8



At a clinic near the DHARY

Tamil Nadu reports 86 new cases, two more patients die

85 of these are linked to the Delhi conference

R. SUJATHA CHENNAI

Two persons who tested positive for COVID-19 infection died, taking the death toll in the State to five, health officials said on Sunday.

Meanwhile, 86 new cases were reported, bringing the total number of cases to 571. A bulletin from the Health Department said a 71-year-old man from Ramanathapuram, who was admitted to Stanley Government Hospital on Thursday around 9.45 a.m., died two hours later. The results of his blood samples returned positive for COVID-19 infection.

Health Secretary Beela Rajesh told mediapersons that the patient had been under home quarantine and



A two-wheeler rider passing through a disinfectant tunnel at Madhavoyal. ► M. VEDHAN

was brought to hospital only after his condition worsened significantly. He died within 90 minutes of reaching the hospital, she said.

On Sunday morning, a 60-year-old man, admitted to the same hospital on April 1,

tested positive for the infection and died around 1.45 a.m. "Till yesterday, he was doing fine, but within hours ventilator support was required and it was given. Death occurred within two hours," Dr. Rajesh added.

All but one of the 86 cases were either people who travelled to Delhi or their contacts did. One person had a travel history to Dubai, the Health Secretary said.

Among the 85 persons who tested positive, four had contact with those who went to Delhi and tested positive. This includes three women from Kanniyakumari, Namakkal and Thoothukudi districts and a man from Thoothukudi.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 3

audiences in Odisha. "Our experience shows that for more than 60% of the rural population, DTH (direct to home) and Internet-based media are still out of reach. Moreover, neither television nor any other sources of information would provide them with news related to the small geographical area they live within," said N. A. Shah Ansari, founder of Radio Namaskar and president of

migrant labourers who had returned from outside the State, to inform their respective gram panchayats of their arrival. "We deliberately did not utter the word quarantine as it causes panic. We just urged migrant labourers to go to panchayat offices and inform them of their arrival. Our approach clicked. According to the feedback we have received, most of them went and disclosed

their travel history," said Mr. Ansari. Villagers turn up the volume on radios for groups of listeners with emphasis on social distancing. "When misinformation is flooded on social media, people get confused, but we broadcast verified weekly markets, adhering to rules on safe distance, and the status of local ATMs are critical messages that community radio can disseminate effectively. When misinformation is flooded on social media, people get confused, but we broadcast verified



OUR EVERYDAY HEROES

Hope. The very essence that keeps humanity thriving.
In these times, hope is what fuels courage.
Together, we can emerge victorious.
Together, we can be informed citizens who rely on news that
is credible, authentic and well-researched.

Without capes or superhero titles, swords or artillery, here are
the many faces committed to serving a great cause.
Our last-mile delivery heroes strive hard to keep you informed
and radiant with hope, braving all odds.
Empowering you. Enabling us. Flattening the curve.

**The Hindu Group salutes them.
And says – Thank you!**

THE HINDU

STAY HOME. STAY VIGILANT.



FROM PAGE ONE

Two more die of COVID-19, 86 fresh cases reported in T.N.

COVID-19 in T.N. | A tracker, across parameters, on how the pandemic has impacted the State so far

	Until March 29	March 30	March 31	April 1	April 2	April 3	April 4	April 5	Total
Cases reported	50	17	57	110	102	74	86	571	
Recovered and discharged	5	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	8
Deceased	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	5

Monitoring*	Capacity*	Testing*
Persons screened at airports	Beds in isolation wards	Samples collected
Persons under home quarantine#	Ventilators	Tested positive
Persons in isolation wards in hospitals		Tested negative
Persons in quarantine facilities		Under process

*Status as on date; #Includes only Health and Family Welfare Department figures. People under home quarantine as per Bureau of Immigration advisory not included

The official said that as of Sunday, 90,824 passengers were under home quarantine and 127 were in a government quarantine facility. A total of 10,814 passengers had completed the mandatory 28-day follow-up and 4,612 samples had been tested. The results of 339 samples were awaited. Eight patients had been discharged so far, the official added.

7 in private hospitals
Seven patients – all of them displaying symptoms – were undergoing treatment in private hospitals. They were, however, not in ICU or on ventilator support, she said, adding that

as many as 1,246 persons who had attended the conference in Delhi had been traced and isolated and their samples sent for testing for the infection.

"The entire focus of the government is to aggressively contain the infection. So far, we have already conducted an active surveillance of 9,22,860 households and a population of 38,88,896 has been covered," she said.

The Health Department is picking up samples of all persons reporting with severe acute respiratory infection to check for community transmission.

"So far, we have tested 650 such cases, of whom

we have not found any unlinked positive history. We have got four positive cases and all of them have travel history or contact history," she said.

The government was also aiming to increase the number of testing centres in the State.

A number of machines had already been ordered and they would be installed very soon, the official said.

Stage of disease

Dr. Rajesh said it would be possible to assess the exact stage of the disease only after collating information following door-to-door surveillance.

Laboratory technicians had been trained in doing the tests once the machines arrived and 'high level committees' were in place to estimate how the disease will pan out and the rate of its spread.

"We have made projections and based on them, we are predicting the worst case scenario. We have been making systematically short-term and long-term plans. We need to be focussed on containment. We have to give active and passive surveillance.

Full-fledged containment activity and judicious testing" are of prime importance, she said.

After heckling row, two test positive

Officials faced opposition from villagers while taking them in

S. SUNDAR
THOOTHUKUDI

A few Health Department officials who went to a village near Kayathur in Thoothukudi to pick up persons suspected of being carriers of COVID-19 were heckled by a group of villagers on Saturday. Some residents even attempted to manhandle the driver of the vehicle in which the officials were travelling.

A day after the incident, it transpired that two of the five family members of a COVID-19 patient, whom the health officials eventually managed to shift to the Kavvipatti Government Hospital, had also tested positive for the virus.

With this, the total number of COVID-19 cases in

Thoothukudi district has gone up to 11. "The test results of 11 other persons who are under institutionalised quarantine are awaited," Thoothukudi Collector Sandeep Nanduri said.

The two new cases are the wife and son of the COVID-19 patient.

The Thoothukudi district police have booked 12 persons for heckling the Health Inspector of the Vellankottai Primary Health Centre when he, along with a medical officer, a few nurses and paramedical staff, tried to take the patient's kin to the GH in an ambulance as a precautionary measure on Saturday.

The villagers had objected to the officials taking photographs of the people who

were being taken to the GH, a police source said.

But after the police and revenue officials explained to them the need to keep such people in quarantine in the hospital, the villagers relented, according to the police.

The hecklers were booked for abusing government officials and preventing them from discharging their duty and for criminal intimidation. They were also booked under provisions of the Disaster Management Act and the Epidemic Diseases Act, Superintendent of Police Arun Balagopal said.

"Around 2,500 persons are under home quarantine in the district," the Collector said.

PM invites Palaniswami to all-party meeting

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Chief Minister and AIADMK co-coordinator Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Sunday tweeted that he had been invited by Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the phone to take part in an all-party meeting on April 8 to discuss the prevailing COVID-19 crisis.

Calls Stalin

The Prime Minister and Home Minister Amit Shah also had a telephonic conversation with DMK leader M.K. Stalin and enquired about his health, his mother Dayalu Ammal and other members of his family.

Mr. Stalin told the Prime Minister that the DMK had received an invitation for the meeting, and that its representative will be Parliamentary Party Leader T.R. Baalu.

"We will offer constructive suggestions to improve the situation in the country," the DMK leader said.

Modi spoke to PMK MP Arumani Ramadoss to seek the party's support for the crisis being made by the Central government to combat COVID-19.

Mr. Ramadoss was urged to give his suggestions in writing, a press release said.

₹101 cr. sanctioned to govt. departments

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu government has allocated ₹101.66 crore from the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) to various departments to help them meet various COVID-19 lockdown-related expenses. The funds form part of the ₹500 crore sanctioned by the Chief Minister.

While ₹75.27 crore had

been sanctioned for providing food to over 91,000 police personnel for 33 days (between March 24 and April 30, excluding Sundays) at the rate of ₹250 per personnel per day, ₹22.75 crore had been sanctioned to the Director of Public Health and Preventive Medicine towards establishing temporary quarantine facilities for COVID-19 patients.

A G.O. issued by Revenue

Secretary Atulya Misra said ₹1.88 crore had been allocated towards disinfection activities at Slum Board tenements and ₹1.42 crore to the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation towards preparedness/preventive measures, including the procurement of sanitary materials.

The T.N. Disaster Risk Reduction Agency was sanctioned ₹50 lakh.

IN BRIEF

Collector orders closure of Kayalpattinam GH

THOOTHUKUDI
District Collector Sandeep Nanduri has ordered the temporary closure of the government hospital at Kayalpattinam after it came to light that a practising doctor had tested positive for COVID-19. According to sources, the doctor had attended a conference at Nizamuddin in Delhi and had returned to Thoothukudi on March 24. He subsequently reported for duty at the hospital and had even attended to a few patients.

Law officers contribute ₹25 lakh to CM's fund

CHENNAI
Law officers at the Madras High Court and its Madurai Bench have donated ₹25 lakh to the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund to aid the fight against COVID-19, with Advocate General Vijay Narayan having made the highest individual contribution of ₹3 lakh. Additional Advocates General P.H. Arvindh Pandian, K. Chellapandian (Madurai), S.R. Rajagopal, Narmada Sampath and Balaji Srinivasan (Delhi) have also contributed substantial amounts.

For want of buyers, sections of farmers dump produce

Since the lockdown came into force, they have been unable to sell the produce

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
COIMBATORE

Raju, a farmer from Belagadapalli near Hosur, recently dumped three tonnes of capsicum that he had harvested from his field. Since the lockdown came into force, he has been unable to sell the produce.

The vegetable, which has a significant market in Bengaluru, was dumped for want of takers and due to the hurdles in transportation. "Other vegetables still have takers every day. But capsicum is largely procured by restaurants and exporters," said Mr. Raju, who grows capsicum on two acres. The 70-day crop, cultivated annually, generally sees good production during summer, with farmers spending close to ₹3 lakh per acre.

Capsicum is grown on 50 acres in Denkanikottai and Hosur blocks of Krishnagiri. Red and yellow capsicums fetch anywhere between ₹100 and ₹150 per kg, while green capsicums fetch ₹70



In dire straits: In the Nilgiris, the prices of carrots and garlic are expected to crash in the coming weeks.

per kg. "Traders are unwilling to take the risk of purchasing the vegetables from the farm gate, and the export market in Hosur was shut even before the lockdown," Mr. Raju said.

To leave the vegetable on the field would destroy the entire field. It has to be harvested to save the crop. Mr. Raju and other capsicum growers here have been harvesting the crop only to dump them later.

P.M. Sivasamy, who grows cabbage on his two-

acre farm at Devarayapuram in Coimbatore, is struggling to sell the produce.

He spends ₹30,000 to ₹40,000 an acre and harvests nearly 10 tonnes of cabbage after 90 days. "I am able to sell only 100 kg to 150 kg a day. I used to sell to the daily markets in Coimbatore city. Now, traders come to the farms and ask for the produce at ₹6 to ₹10 a kg. Before the lockdown, I sold it at ₹15 to ₹20 a kg," he said.

D.N. Aruchamy, a tomato

farmer, said, "Today, the trader who buys from me every day did not come. I do not know what to do with the tomatoes." Tomato crop cannot be left without harvesting for more than two or three days. Tomato growers are selling 15 kg for just ₹130, as against ₹300 earlier. In the Nilgiris, prices of carrots and garlic are expected to crash in the coming weeks. Recently, a truckload of carrots were dumped in a pit.

Farmers and traders of vegetables say that due to the lockdown, sales of the produce to other districts has been affected. "As a consequence, the production of vegetables has far outstripped demand, meaning vegetable prices have fallen steeply," said R. Hariharan, a carrot trader from Ketti Paladai.

Supply hit

"Supply of vegetables to the local markets too has declined and farmers have stopped harvesting their crops over the last few

weeks," he added.

Pavish Shankarnathan, a prominent farmer and vegetable trader from Udhagamandalam, said, "People have cut down on harvesting crops, and some vegetables such as garlic are being stored in large quantities in warehouses till the lockdown eases. When it does finally end, all of these vegetables are going to come to the market, which will translate into a steep drop in prices." Principal Secretary of the Agriculture Department Gagandeep Singh Bedi said a video of a load of carrots being dumped in Nilgiris was filmed on the second day of the lockdown. Now, with the government removing restrictions on the movement of agricultural and horticultural crops, there will be no hitch for any farmer in selling his or her produce, he said.

(With inputs from P.V. Sridhara in Krishnagiri, Soudarya Preetha in Coimbatore, Rohan Premkumar in The Nilgiris and T. Ramakrishnan in Chennai)

What type of weather and soil is required for growing the vegetables highlighted?

CONCERNS TAUCS OVER COMMUNITY HATED

STAFF REPORTER
CHENNAI

Leaders of the Tamil Nadu Jamaath-Ul-Ulema, the Indian Union Muslim League, the Tamil Nadu Muslim Munnetra Kazhagam, the Social Democratic Party of India and Tablighi Jamaat have urged members of the Muslim community to cooperate with officials and not hold gatherings in mosques during the COVID-19 lockdown period.

The leaders also appealed to the government to put an end to the communal hatred that they said was being spread by the media and on social media.

K.A. Kader Mohideen, M.H. Jawahirullah, Umar Farook, Nellai Ameen and A. Jamaluddin (of Tablighi Jamaat) attended a meeting chaired by T.N. Jamaat-Ul-Ulema president Moulana P.A. Kajamoideen Bakavi. "We appeal to those who have tested positive for CO-

VID-19 and those under quarantine to cooperate with officials," a joint statement issued by the leaders said. They urged those who had been hospitalised not to use social media to air their grievances, and instead flag any issues they may have by calling the government's helpline. They urged members of the community not to share everything they had come across on social media.

"The District Collectors and social activists are involved in ensuring that those who have tested positive and their families are being isolated without any issue. They should continue their work in the same manner. However, we also request the government to make basic facilities available for those who have been admitted to hospitals after showing COVID-19 symptoms," the leaders said.

Ensuring dignity for the dead in the time of a virus

Octogenarian caretaker continues to help bereaved families perform the last rites

P. A. NARAYANI
MADRAS

The outbreak of COVID-19 has not deterred 85-year-old G. Mariammal from tending to the dead without fear.

Whenever people approach her to perform the last rites, the caretaker reaches the cremation ground in a tricycle carrying dung cakes, hay and firewood. She prepares the pyre with the help of her grandson and stays there till the end of all procedures to give a receipts to the family members.

Dip in numbers

"They say that the elderly, aged above 60, must stay indoors in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. But I need to perform my duty and make sure that a dead person gets the dignified last rites," she says.

Like Ms. Mariammal,



G. Mariammal

They say that the elderly must stay indoors in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. But I need to perform my duty

many workers of cremation grounds are performing their duties in these testing times. A. Venkateswaran, registrar at the cremation ground at Thathaneri, says that since the lockdown there

has been a dip in the number of people opting for the traditional method of burning the mortal remains on a pyre of wooden logs.

Less cases

"Earlier, we used to cremate around 10 bodies every day. But, since the lockdown, we have around four cases. Because it is difficult for people to travel to the cremation ground amidst the curfew, many people head to the adjacent gasifier crematorium," he says.

The workers who cannot avoid physical contact with the bodies while performing the last rites have not been provided hand gloves. While face masks are provided to many workers, some of them use kerchiefs to cover their face.

The number of people

accompanying the dead person has come down to around 15, says A. Nagarajan, a worker at the cremation ground.

Sober participants

"With the closure of liquor shops because of the lockdown, those accompanying the dead person are sober. This has provided us some respite as this has prevented any possible quarrel at the cremation ground," he says.

A. Gnanashekar, another worker at the cremation ground at Thathaneri, says that since the outbreak of the pandemic workers are anxious about the safety of their family members.

"But, we consider it an honour to perform the last rites of the dead. Being in the profession has made us realise that death, in fact, marks a new beginning," he says.

A gruelling journey from Maharashtra that ended on a sweet note

Good samaritan helps travel-weary migrant workers from T.N. return home

KATHELENE ANTONY
TIRUCHI

After travelling over 1,000 km from Maharashtra by walking for days at a stretch and hitchhiking, a heavenly feeling descended on seven youths belonging to Tiruvavur and Nagapattinam districts when a good samaritan in Tiruchi volunteered to drop them off at their homes.

The group of engineering graduates, employed at a company that manufactures agricultural products in Nanded district, were caught unaware by the announcement on the COVID-19 lockdown.

Though their employer had arranged for food, Nitish Kumar, R. Vijayan, B. Bharathan, S. Rahul, V. Jegan, S. Prabhu and Shoban Babu were longing to get back home, and began their journey on March 29.

"We covered at least 500



The youth from Tiruvavur and Nagapattinam districts who succeeded in returning to T.N. from Maharashtra.

km on foot. Kind souls in many villages provided us food and water despite the language barrier," said Mr. Kumar, adding, "We also hitched rides on trucks and autorickshaws and spent nights at petrol bunkers."

The most difficult part of their journey was the stretch from Nanded to Solapur in Maharashtra, Mr. Kumar

They did not know until we reached home," he said. "All along, we pretended that we were staying in Maharashtra," he said.

The men were on the last leg of the journey on the Chennai Bypass Road – the Cauvery Bridge – when Arun Kumar, a photographer from Tiruchi, spotted them looking weary. "They looked exhausted. When I stopped them and asked them who they were, they narrated their tale," Mr. Arun said.

He informed the District Collector, sought a travel pass and volunteered to take the youths to their destination.

"They were dropped off at the Tiruvavur Government Hospital on Saturday evening. "We were asked to stay the night there, and were subjected to blood tests. We were allowed to go home only after the tests came back negative," Mr. Babu said.

Parents didn't know

Mr. Babu said they had not informed their parents about their trip. "Had we told them, they would have kept worrying for our safety.

On one end of the spectrum we have hecklers who don't allow government officials to function and on the other we have Good Samaritans who go beyond the call of duty to serve humanity. Write an essay elaborating the complexities of human behaviour.

Shops to face enforcing physical distancing

Greater Chennai Corporation seals 52 meat outlets; 35 held in Tiruvallur

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

Struggling to enforce physical distancing in markets and shops in the city, the Greater Chennai Corporation has decided to shut for three months shops that violate the rule.

Hundreds of people thronged the George Town area on Sunday. At the temporary market in Broadway Bus Stand, there were crowds around retail vendors since early morning. A little later, the Corporation swung into action and enforced physical distancing between consumers.

Corporation officials closed the temporary market in T. Nagar put up on a playground after huge crowds assembled, violating physical distancing norms. According to estimates, each of the 15 zones of Chennai Corporation reported two to five violations of physical distancing norms, with people crowding the markets and shops. Many temporary markets in crowded areas had been closed, said a civic official.

Former councillor P.V. Tamil Selvan said protesting in markets was because of shortage of essential commodities.

"The price has increased by 10% to 15%. The traders are unable to get supply from other States because of delay in transportation. The government should make arrangements for transportation of essential commodities from other parts of the country. Otherwise the situation is likely to worsen," he said.



A virtual hot spot: At the temporary vegetable market at Broadway Bus Stand on Sunday, the police had to enforce physical distancing norms. The scene was no different at the Ambattur fish market. ■ R. RAGU AND M. VEEDHAN

Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash asked officials to seal the shops for three months for not enforcing physical distancing norms.

Meat sellers face flak On Sunday, the corporation sealed 52 meat shops that sold meat without veterinary officials' certification. Six meat shops in Tiruttani were sealed.

Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash asked officials to seal the shops for three months for not enforcing physical distancing norms.

"Starting Sunday, all regional deputy commissioners and zonal officials will keep a close watch on meat shops.

"If meat is sold without the butchering done at our slaughterhouses, the shops shall be closed and sealed immediately. If shops don't maintain physical distancing norms, they will be closed," said Mr. Prakash.

The Commissioner instructed the civic officials to be "ruthless" if violations are seen. "Waste no time in sealing.

Such sealed shops shall not be opened for three months. This is equally applicable for grocery stores and supermarkets," said Mr. Prakash.

Many traders reportedly violated regulations relating to public health in the city. The civic body has taken steps to penalise traders who increased public health risk to residents. Corporation officials said they would close grocery stores if crowding was reported.

35 arrested Meanwhile, the Tiruvallur police arrested 35 persons who defied the district administration orders to close meat shops and fish markets on Sunday.

Following 11 COVID-19 positive cases in Tiruvallur district, the district administration created seven containment zones.

All shops, except pharmacies, in these zones were ordered closed and meat shops would remain closed till April 14.

"This was mainly to contain the spread of the COVID-19," said Tiruvallur District Collector Mageshwari Ravikumar.

However, on Sunday, around 35 shops were open and based on information, the police rushed to the spot and had them closed.

"We have arrested 35 persons. Similar action will be taken if others open the shops," said a senior police officer.

The entire world is facing an unprecedented medical emergency caused by the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Medical professionals and scientists are working hard to halt the spread of COVID-19 and save lives. Many countries have gone into a lockdown, to stop everyone except emergency services personnel from moving about, in a bid to prevent transmission of the infection.

Healthcare teams are struggling to treat patients who have varying degrees of symptoms. Some may require treatment in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), and a few may warrant artificial respiration with the use of a ventilator. The warriors at the forefront are the intensivists, critical care specialists, and anaesthetists.

Although most of the people have understood the seriousness of the problem, the few still want to have planned or proposed elective surgeries done in this period, without realising the possible risks and difficulties involved in getting operated now.

The concern and apprehension is multifold when the diagnosis is cancer. As individuals and teams have not encountered such a situation before, many organisations such as the International Society for Diseases of Esophagus, the American College of Surgeons, SAGES with inputs from WHO and CDC, are coming out with guidelines to be followed to resolve dilemmas. These professional medical societies are guarded in providing these principles, adding a note that they



Dr. S.M. CHANDRAMOHAN Senior Surgical Gastroenterologist

COVID-19

are based on the evidence available as on date and that the recommendations are subject to change every day. It is time we understood the implications of having a planned elective surgery at the present time.

Any patient who has to undergo surgery has to consult the surgeon and the anaesthetist for an assessment. For this, or she has to visit a hospital or laboratory, where the patient will not be the only one going for tests. There would be people with emergency situation waiting for tests. There is a need to maintain social distancing too as one does not know the status of the others waiting there. Moreover, in the wake of COVID-19, there may be a need for additional testing.

Limited resources

The labs and diagnostic centres will be working with limited staff to handle emergencies. After the tests are done

and you wait for the fitness report from the physician and anaesthetist, you will be intruding into the time which they would like to devote to emergencies.

If you have to undergo surgery, even if it is an outpatient procedure, you have to go with a relative to give consent, subjecting them to the risk in the time of lockdown.

The situation becomes complex if the surgery is a major one necessitating long operating hours, obviously wanting a full-fledged surgical team, anaesthetic team, theatre sisters, theatre technicians and workers from the sanitary department.

After the surgery, there may be need for ICU care and even ventilator support, adding to the burden of the ICU staff. All these resources may be needed for another patient in crisis.

Guidelines from most of the professional Societies across the globe suggest: wherever there is a possibility to continue medical therapy, to do so, and to plan surgery for a conducive time; even if surgery is the only option and but not on emergency basis, it can still wait.

There is also a growing concern about doing laparoscopy or open surgery, for which we do not have clear answer yet.

Patients diagnosed with cancers have different problems: their concern will be about the potential advancing nature of the disease if not operated immediately. The medical team's concern is about weighing the balance between the benefit and risk of subjecting them to a major surgical procedure, which may warrant long operating hours, involving a bigger team, ICU and ventilator care.

Collective decision

In such circumstances, multi-disciplinary meetings are held via video conferencing and a collective decision is made by the experts on what is best for the patient in the current situation. Sometimes, they resort to a treatment strategy like initial chemotherapy and radiotherapy which halts the progression of the disease.

This policy gives the patient and the team the "wind-down period", buying time to operate at a favourable juncture. If the risk of surgery, including ICU stay, outweighs the benefits, they may be subjected to non-surgical treatment modalities.

The government and the entire medical fraternity is fighting a serious pandemic, working hard to save society. If elective surgery is postponed, it is only in the interest of the patient.

It is equally important to understand that their help is required for patients who are in need of more immediate care.

Today's difficult situation calls for understanding from all of us. That advice to postpone elective surgeries is given in the interest of all concerned. We must understand that while waiting, we are not wasting time.

By relieving unnecessary pressure on the health system, based on sound medical evaluation, the patient is actually doing herself a service - saving oneself and society by helping doctors save more lives.

Spike in domestic violence complaints in State amid lockdown

Several calls in the last 15 days: ADGP M. Ravi

S. VIJAY KUMAR CHENNAI

In the last 15 days, the number of calls received by women helpline desks across the State has gone up. Dozens of women have called complaining that they were being harassed, abused or beaten up at home. In one instance, a city-based doctor accused her celebrity husband of assaulting her, following which police intervened and shifted her to safety.

The COVID-19 lockdown seems to have a few more challenges in store, some yet to come. Police say hackers are working round-the-clock to break into systems to steal data for ransom. With employees of government organisations, IT firms and other major establishments working from home, hackers would focus on targeting residential WiFi connections that would not have adequate security features, police sources said.

"We are receiving a number of calls from women that they are being verbally abused or beaten up at home by their spouses. Domestic violence is a punishable offence and we are taking appropriate action through the local police. It is a fact that complaints have gone up in the last 15 days," Additional Director-General of Police (Crime against Women and Children) M. Ravi said.

He said remote residential areas were prone to crimes during the lockdown period. There was a case last week where a shopkeeper tried to molest a girl who went to purchase essential commodities. After her parents lodged a complaint, the Neelankarai police registered a case against the suspect. Local police across the State were sensitised not to toss petitions or delay action on complaints lodged during the prevalence of prohibitory orders under Section 144 of Criminal Procedure Code.

"Crimes committed during the lockdown period is even more serious since coming out of house is itself prohibited unless there is a valid reason. Complaints of domestic violence received by the NGOs or at the control room in the police headquarters were being forwarded to the respective city/district police for action. Many cases require only counselling since the affected women seek only intervention and show no interest in pursuit of legal action," he said.

Mr. Ravi said online pornography sites were vulnerable to frauds like phishing. "Net users should avoid opening a link that comes in the guise of COVID-19 home remedies, updates, and so on. At times such links are issued in the name of WHO and other credible institutions," he said.

Chennai Weather

MONDAY, APR. 06	RISE 06:02 SET 18:21
	RISE 16:47 SET 04:35
TUESDAY, APR. 07	RISE 06:02 SET 18:21
	RISE 17:48 SET 05:24
WEDNESDAY, APR. 08	RISE 06:01 SET 18:21
	RISE 18:47 SET 06:11

Chennai Airport Today

34°C A cloudy and warm day. Chances of rain and thundershower.
Chennai Weather max min
Tiruvallur 39 24
Chennai Airport 35 26
Chennai City 34 26

Chennai Airport Tomorrow

34°C Dry and warm weather with partly cloudy sky to prevail. Chances of thundershower.

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Banks shut in parts of Ranipet district

STAFF REPORTER

RANIPET

Ranipet Collector S. Divyadharshini has ordered suspension of banking operations in Panapakam, Melvisharam and Arakkonam regions.

The decision comes in the wake of the COVID-19 cases. ATMs in the area will function. The number of COVID-19 patients in the district has risen to 23.

The list of banks to be closed are: Panapakam: Canara Bank, Bank of India, Lakshmi Vilas Bank, Melvisharam: Indian Bank, City Union Bank and the State Bank of India; Arakkonam: Indian Bank, Federal Bank, Tamilnad Mercantile Bank, Canara Bank, State Bank of India, Central Bank of India, Andhra Bank (Indian Bank), IDBI Bank, City Union Bank, Punjab National Bank, Indian Overseas Bank, Union Bank of India, Karur Vysya Bank, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Lakshmi Vilas Bank, Equitas Small Finance Bank, and the Suryodaya Small Finance Bank.

Governor, CM light candles



S. POORVAJA CHENNAI

From loneliness to procuring essentials, 80 volunteers of the

They say marriage is an institution. Of late the spike in cases of domestic violence points to the fact that the institution is failing. What do you think are the reasons for this and what remedial measures would you suggest as the Chairperson of the National Women's Commission?

was heard in many places.

The police took part in some places. In Adambakkam police station, lights were

Minister for Electricity P. Thangamani told presspersons that the demand for power dipped by 2,500 MW.

Volunteers, Corpn. reach out to those under quarantine

From loneliness to procuring essentials, 80 volunteers of the

with the Corporation, said as on April 4, they were following up with over 12,500 people in the city who were under quarantine.

THE HINDU
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OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH
With deep grief we share news of the demise of
Smt. Shantha Rangarajan on April 5th 2020 in Delhi, Born 22 September 1931, /Alumni of Queen Marys College wife of late R Rangarajan eminent journalist,
Survived by son Mahesh daughter in law Geetha and grand daughter Uttara, 24 Samachar Apts, Mayur Vihar Delhi 110091, Rangarajan.mahesh@gmail.com

DEATH
A.S.MANI, 85 Yrs. Nanganallur, Retired Post Trust passed away on 03.04.2020. Ph. 044-22241584

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES
OM SAI RAM SAD DEMAISE
Mrs. YASHODRA RAJU
Passed away in Chennai on 5th March 2020
Anuradha/Ashok/Nagesh/Ramji May her soul rest in eternal peace
Ashok Kumar Raju 7639595235

FIRST DEATH ANNIVERSARY
06-04-2020
SARAH THOMAS
15-10-1947 to 06-04-2019
Fondly Remembered by A.T.THOMAS and FAMILY - CHENNAI

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES
11th ANNIVERSARY
Prof. Major S.VAITHEESVARAN, MCC (87 yrs)
Retired Vice-Principal & Head PG & Research, Dept. of Botany, National College, Trichy
Passed on April 4, 2020 at 3:45 am, at Mogappir Chennai
He is survived by
Son: Sayer Kumar, Daughter: BhavaPriya, Sisters: Uma, Jayamma & Baghya, Grandchildren: Darshini & Meenakshi.
Email: vaitthybot@gmail.com Ph: 89-39-36-9538 or 91-76-46-7939

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES
15th ANNIVERSARY
SULOCHANA SHANMUGHAM
"Safely Hissed along Life's Way
Quietly Remembered Every Day
Yet you remain in our Hearts and Deeds"
R. Shanmugham - Husband
B. Gayathri - Daughter-in-law
B. Nandakumar - Grandson



Sunday snapshots: Bishop Alex Vadakuthala arriving for the Palm Sunday prayer at the empty Holy Trinity Cathedral in Kannur on Sunday; a policewoman in Bengaluru inspecting vehicles seized for violating the lockdown restrictions; a sweet lime vendor taking rest at Khammam in Telangana; and residents barricading a road in Nuzvid town in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh. • S.K. MOHAN, PTI, G.N. RAO & K.V.S. GIRI



Concern over possible community spread

22 people in Karnataka had no foreign travel history

AFSHAN YASMEEN
BENGALURU

With 22 of the 151 positive cases, including the 75-year-old person who succumbed to the infection in Bagalkot on Friday, not having any foreign travel or contact history, Karnataka health officials are at a loss to understand how they could have contracted the infection.

While these 22 cases, whose detailed investigation is still under process, raise questions as to whether it is the beginning of community transmission in the State, officials have been continuously denying it. These 22 people have so far spread the infection to eight others. Also, as a precautionary measure, hundreds of their secondary contacts have been isolated in their homes.

For instance, despite detailed investigation, health officials have still been unable to find out the cause of infection in the Nanjangud case of a pharma company employee, who is the first of the 17 who tested positive

there. The 35-year-old person (patient number 52), who did not have a foreign travel or contact history, tested positive on March 26. Subsequently, 14 more employees from the same company got infected and tested positive "simultaneously".

While officials said that three of the 14 employees were in close contact with

COVID-19

patient 52, it is still not clear how the remaining 11, who were neither his contacts nor had any travel history, got the infection.

Patient 52 also spread the infection to three of his relatives. Last Thursday, two roommates of one of these 11 employees also tested positive.

On Saturday, two more persons from Mysuru with no foreign travel or contact history, tested positive too. Sources said Mysuru has now become a "cluster hotspot" and aggressive preven-

tion measures should be taken to stop the spread.

Similarly, on March 10, a 10-month-old baby from Dakshina Kannada, who tested positive, is also one such case that officials are concerned about. His baby or his parents did not have any foreign travel history. The only possibility is that the baby's mother and grandmother had taken him to Kerala to a relative's house.

In Bengaluru, a 62-year-old woman and a 24-year-old male who did not have any foreign travel or contact history have tested positive.

Admitting that tracing the cause of infection in some of the positive cases has become "complicated", Jawaid Akhtar, Additional Chief Secretary (Health and Family Welfare), told *The Hindu* that the officials were very close to finding the cause of infection in the Nanjangud pharma firm employee case. "We have found some clues. However, it is too early to term this spread as community transmission," he said.

Andhra Pradesh records 26 new cases

Delhi congregation continues to impact numbers, new cases in Kerala, Karnataka & Telangana too

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

AMARAVATI/THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/BENGALURU

With the cascading effect of the Delhi congregation still being felt in the southern States, the tally of COVID-19 cases climbed further on Sunday.

The infection curve rose in Andhra Pradesh as 26 cases were added on Sunday, taking the tally to 252. In all 62 cases were added in the State since Saturday.

The Minister Narendra Modi called Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy over phone on Sunday evening and discussed the situation arising due to the Tablighi congregation impact. They discussed containment measures and facilities for the affected persons, official sources said.

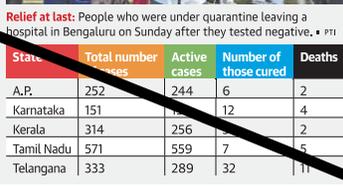
In Kurnool district, COVID-19 cases, which were just four till Saturday, shot up to 27 since Saturday night and further up to 53 by Sunday evening, a bulletin said. Close to 190 people from the district attended the Delhi event.

While Kurnool topped the State list, SPS Nellore came second with 34 and Guntur

Stemming the surge

The southern States have stepped up measures to combat COVID-19. A look at the numbers reported on Sunday:

State	Total number of cases	Active cases	Number of those cured	Deaths
A.P.	252	244	6	2
Karnataka	151	12	4	4
Kerala	314	256	2	2
Tamil Nadu	571	559	7	5
Telangana	333	289	32	11



Relief at last: People who were under quarantine leaving a hospital in Bengaluru on Sunday after they tested negative. • PTI

third with 30 cases. More than 90 people from Guntur and 70 from SPS Nellore district were in Delhi for the meet. With five coronavirus patients discharged, and the death of a 55-year old man, active cases in A.P., stood at 246, a bulletin said. The two

north coastal Andhra districts of Srikakulam and Vizianagaram remain unaffected by the virus so far.

62 cases in Telangana
As many as 62 new cases were detected in Telangana on Sunday taking the total

number of cases to 333. Thirty-two persons have been discharged. Across the State, the highest number of 145 active cases were reported in Hyderabad.

Eight in Kerala
Eight more persons, including four who had returned from the Jamaat meeting tested positive for COVID-19 on Sunday, taking the total cases in the State to 314.

Of the eight new cases, five were in Kozhikode while one each was reported from Pathanamthitta, Kannur and Kasaragod districts. Four of the five cases at Kozhikode were linked to the Nizamuddin meeting, while one other person had returned from Dubai. The Pathanamthitta resident had returned from Delhi. The cases at Kannur and Kasaragod were contacts of imported cases. So far, 10 people from the State who had returned from Nizamuddin had tested positive for COVID-19. Of the 26 cases reported, 256 are under treatment.

7 positive in Karnataka
Three persons out of seven who tested positive for CO-

VID-19 on Sunday in Karnataka were asymptomatic.

The Department of Health and Family Welfare bulletin said among the three, two had a travel history to Dubai and one to the Delhi event.

Health Commissioner Pankaj Kumar Pandey said: "These people who do not have symptoms probably have good immunity. We tested them because of travel history. We are glad that they were tested and placed under isolation," he said.

Under quarantine
Also, of the seven positive cases, five – which included three women – attended the Tablighi Jamaat event. Four persons were in isolation at the district hospital in Belagavi and one quarantined at a hospital in Ballari.

A senior citizen couple who returned from Dubai on March 22 had tested positive and quarantined in Bengaluru.

The number of COVID-19 cases in Karnataka stood at 151, including four who died. Besides, 12 had been discharged. Bengaluru had the most patients at 57. This was followed by Mysuru with 28.

IN BRIEF



Traders booked in A.P. for fleecing customers
BENGALURU

Legal Metrology officials cracked down on traders who sold essential commodities at exorbitant prices in Vizianagaram, A.P. They registered five cases against the traders who sold pulses and other commodities at prices higher than the State stipulated rates. "Heavy fines will be imposed on traders if they fleeced people during lockdown," an official said.

Four siblings fall into pond in Karnataka, die

BELAGAVI

Four siblings drowned in a farm pond in Ajjakatti village near Gokulnagar, Karnataka on Saturday. Farmer Kareppa Jakkannavar told the police that his children, Bhavya, 6, Tayamma, 5, Malappa, 4, and Rajashree, 2, fell while going to their grandfather's farmhouse. Malappa was carrying a mobile phone, which fell into the pond. The children tried to retrieve it and drowned, the farmer said.

Nurses move SC, say health staff ill-equipped

"There's no management protocol"

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A Kerala-based 3.8 lakh-strong nurses' association has approached the Supreme Court saying the government has not formulated a National Management Protocol for COVID-19 to address the serious concerns relating to imminent and extreme risks posed to the health and safety of medical personnel across the country.

Noting that the pandemic is seeing a "persisting and ever escalating spread" the United Nurses Association, represented by advocates Subhash Chandran and Biju P. Raman, pointed out that nurses and health workers are ill-equipped and exposed to infection.

"Health care workers are at the front line of the COVID-19 outbreak response and as such are exposed to hazards that put them at risk of infection. Hazards include pathogen exposure, long working hours, psychological distress, fatigue, occupational burnout, stigma,

and physical and psychological violence etc," the petition said.

No testing kits

The problems highlighted in the petition include lack of availability or sub-standard personal protective equipment (PPE) in numerous hospitals, non-availability of sufficient number of COVID-19 testing kits, lack of training on infection prevention and control, lack of basic facilities in isolation wards, mental harassment in the nature of forced overtime followed by negligible transport facilities and deduction of salary on account of leaves, health workers who are pregnant, lactating or immune compromised are being forced to work.

The association also urged the court to direct the government to expand the scope of personal accident cover provided under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package for Health Workers Fighting COVID-19 to include all health care workers.



One-and-a-half-year-old Anvitha, who has been diagnosed with retinoblastoma, with her parents. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Kerala govt. facilitates child's travel for treatment

STAFF REPORTER
ALAPPUZHA

After days of uncertainty due to the COVID-19 lockdown, one-and-a-half-year-old Anvitha and her parents from Kerala left for Hyderabad for treatment on Sunday.

The child who is suffering from retinoblastoma (eye cancer that begins in the retina), has to reach L.V. Prasad Eye Institute, Hyderabad on April 7.

With the lockdown in progress, her parents Vineeth Vijayan and Gopika from Cherthala were a worried lot. The father recently

published a post on social media seeking the attention of the authorities.

The State government and politicians acted immediately and made arrangements for the family's travel.

According to Health Minister K.K. Shylaja, the family left their home in an ambulance at 7.15 a.m. and they would reach the hospital around 11 p.m. on Sunday.

The entire travel expenses are being borne by the government. A sum was handed over to the family by Kerala Social Security Mission officials before starting the journey.

Why exclude us from meet, asks Owaisi

STAFF REPORTER
HYDERABAD

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen president Asaduddin Owaisi on Sunday asked why his party was excluded from the Prime Minister's COVID-19 video conference of parliamentarians, and termed this a *tauheen* (insult) to the people of Hyderabad and Aurangabad, from where the party won.

According to a press release, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Prahlad Joshi stated that Prime Minister Narendra Modi would interact with the floor leaders of parties with more than five representatives in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

Taking to Twitter, Mr. Owaisi said, "As MPs it's our job to represent to you the misery of our people."

'YSRCP seeking votes during aid disbursement'

STAFF REPORTER
VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh BJP president Kanna Lakshminarayana has complained to State Election Commissioner (SEC) N. Ramesh Kumar that the YSRCP leaders are using the disbursement of ₹1,000 financial aid to the poor for their political ends by seeking votes for the ensuing local body elections.

Mr. Lakshminarayana alleged that the ward and village level volunteers were advising the beneficiaries to vote for the YSRCP in the elections, which amounted to hijacking the occasion (of distributing relief) by the MLAs and YSRCP leaders for achieving their political ends. Trying to garner votes in the guise of disbursement of aid was unethical, he said.

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 and gusty winds likely at isolated places over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, east Rajasthan, south interior Karnataka; with lightning at isolated places over Telangana, coastal Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaiikal, Kerala and Mahe.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	36.5	22.4	Kozhikode	.....	37.2	27.6
Almedabad	36.5	21.3	Kurnool	.....	39.7	27.2
Aizawl	37.7	16.8	Lucknow	.....	34.4	16.8
Allahabad	36.0	26.3	Madurai	4.5	38.2	25.4
Bangaluru	35.4	20.2	Mangaluru	.....	36.6	26.9
Bhopal	32.7	25.9	Mumbai	.....	33.0	23.8
Bhubaneswar	31.2	15.6	Mysuru	.....	33.0	23.8
Chandigarh	34.0	28.3	New Delhi	.....	34.6	16.8
Chennai	37.1	25.0	Patna	.....	36.6	17.4
Coimbatore	30.1	13.6	Port Blair	.....	33.4	24.9
Dehradun	20.4	11.7	Puducherry	.....	34.5	26.8
Goa	33.2	26.6	Pune	.....	39.7	21.8
Guwahati	35.2	16.1	Raipur	.....	35.8	22.4
Hubbli	36.0	23.0	Ranchi	.....	33.8	18.6
Hyderabad	31.2	12.5	Shillong	.....	31.7	17.3
Imphal	35.0	18.0	Shimla	.....	19.2	8.6
Jajpur	33.0	17.0	Srinagar	.....	22.0	6.0
Kochi	34.0	23.0	Thiruvananthapuram	.....	35.2	26.7
Kohima	23.2	12.8	Tiruchirappalli	.....	38.5	27.4
Kolkata	37.1	27.6	Vijayawada	.....	35.2	26.7
				Visakhapatnam	.....	33.4	27.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	41	56	17	75	89	■
Bengaluru	12	02	38	55	78	■
Chennai	05	15	40	46	78	■
Delhi	25	23	24	168	112	■
Hyderabad	08	10	23	64	69	■
Kolkata	09	17	22	97	77	■
Lucknow	04	19	50	53	50	■
Mumbai	05	17	15	52	89	■
Pune	34	12	48	43	41	■
Visakhapatnam	06	38	06	38	52	■

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.

PM_{2.5} & 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.

Kerala nurse raring to return after recovery

Reshma was cured of COVID-19 and is now under home quarantine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOTTAYAM

"I will leave this room within a week after defeating you," the nurse had vowed after contracting the coronavirus while attending to India's oldest COVID-19 survivor, expressing unflinching faith in Kerala's health care system.

Last Friday, Reshma Mohandas, 32, walked out to her home, where she is placed under 14-day quarantine, after she and the elderly

man and his wife were discharged from the Medical College Hospital here on being cured of the disease.

Soon after, Thomas Abraham, 93 – whose recovery has been called a "miracle cure" by doctors – and Mariyamma, 88, left the hospital, Reshma, too, headed home, but with the resolve to come back and serve the patients after the mandatory quarantine.

'World-class system'
"I will leave this room within a week after defeating you," Reshma had posted in a WhatsApp group of her friends and colleagues while



Nurse Reshma Mohandas leaving the Kottayam Medical College hospital.

The nurse, who took care of Thomas and Mariyamma since March 12, believes she contracted the virus as she was in close contact with and often talked to the couple, who did not wear masks, for they made them uncomfortable. She said she loved taking care of all their needs. "I was not tensed at all. I love taking care of elderly people. We used to talk a lot [in the Intensive Care Unit]," she said.

The warning sign came on the morning of March 23 when she had a throat infection. Reshma immediately alerted the head nurse, who informed the doctors. She was asked to visit the fever

clinic at the Medical College and was referred to the isolation facility where she took care of the elderly COVID-19 patients. Some 20 nurses who had come in contact with her were sent to home quarantine.

On March 24, she tested positive. "I did not have any other complications, barring headache and body pain," she said. Reshma said she was ready to serve in the isolation facility for COVID-19 patients after the home quarantine.

"I am ready to work again in the isolation facility when I return," said the nurse, whose husband is an engineer.



Enemy at the gates

Kerala-Karnataka border issue poses questions on restrictions, relations during a pandemic

Kerala's grievance over Karnataka sealing its border to prevent the spread of COVID-19 has brought under focus the extent and the possible limits, of restrictions that may be imposed by the government to deal with a public health emergency. After the Kerala High Court directed the Centre to ensure free vehicular movement for those requiring urgent medical treatment on the national highway that connects Kasaragod in Kerala to Mangaluru in Karnataka, the Supreme Court has directed the Centre to confer with the States and formulate the norms for creating a passage at Talapadi, the border. An amicable solution is possibly round the corner, as there are reports of Kasaragod district suffering due to the highway closure. Many here depend on medical facilities in Mangaluru for emergencies, while others rely on inter-State movement for essential medicines to reach them. These include those battling endosulfan poisoning for many years. Karnataka's objection is based on the fact that Kasaragod has Kerala's largest number of positive cases. It has a reasonable apprehension that allowing vehicles might result in the disease spreading to its territory. However, it is clear that those who may travel across the border for urgent medical needs are patients other than those who are pandemic victims. A key question that has arisen is whether legal measures taken by the State to prevent the further spread of an epidemic can extend to a point where there is no exception even for medical needs.

The Kerala High Court took the view that denying emergency medical aid amounts to a violation of the right to life and liberty, and addressed jurisdictional objections from Karnataka by observing that its direction was to the Centre, as what was under closure was a national highway. There is significant irony in the Kerala point of view. Late last month, the Kerala Governor promulgated the 'Kerala Epidemic Diseases Ordinance, 2020' to arm itself with extraordinary powers to deal with the pandemic. One of its clauses says the State can seal its borders for such period as necessary, while another empowers it to restrict the duration of essential or emergency services, including health, food supply and fuel. Karnataka may have reason to believe that it is equally entitled to seal its borders and restrict essential services. It is a moot question whether Kerala's new law would weaken its case that its neighbour cannot shut down its border and deny medical access to its residents. Interestingly, inter-State migration and quarantine are under the Union List, while the prevention of infectious diseases moving from one State to another is under the Concurrent List. This can only mean that while States have the power to impose border restrictions, the responsibility to prevent a breakdown of inter-State relations over such disputes is on the Centre.

Mockery of justice

Pakistan's commitment to punishing those involved in terror acts remains suspect

Thursday's ruling by the Sindh High Court that overturned the conviction of Omar Saeed Sheikh, and three others, of murdering American journalist Daniel Pearl, for lack of evidence is scandalous in its utter disregard for criminal jurisprudence. The court observed that no evidence had been brought before it by the prosecution to link any of the four — the others being Fahad Saleem, Syed Salman Saqib and Sheikh Muhammad Adil, whose convictions were similarly overturned — to the killing of Pearl. This is sophistry at its best and speaks eloquently of the systematic way the case has been dilated from the beginning. Pearl, then South Asian Bureau Chief of *The Wall Street Journal*, was abducted in Karachi in January 2002, in an operation managed by Omar Sheikh, who had demonstrated links to, among others, Pakistani militant groups as well as to al-Qaeda. Pearl had been baited while investigating links between al-Qaeda and the British 'Shoe Bomber' Richard Reid, who tried, in mid-air on a flight, to light explosives in his shoes on December 21, 2001, just two months previously. Many ransom demands later, a video was handed over on February 21, 2002, wherein Pearl was shown being methodically beheaded with a knife. When the Americans began to squeeze Pakistan to go after the perpetrators, Omar Sheikh 'surrendered' to Ijaz Shah, a former Intelligence Chief, then Home Secretary of Punjab; he is now the country's Interior Minister. Even more curiously, it was after many days that Sheikh's arrest was shown.

The Sindh government has extended Sheikh's detention and the provincial prosecutor has said that the High Court ruling will be appealed in the Supreme Court. But these moves could be aimed at blunting growing international opprobrium, including at the FATF, the global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog, that has already put Pakistan on its 'grey list', and where India has said it will bring this matter for discussion. It is likely that once the pressure eases, Sheikh and his cohorts will be let off as has happened with others before them. Pakistan's record of leniency on this has been as consistent as it has been alarming. In 2015, Zakir Rehman Lakhvi, who supervised the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, was released from detention, and remains free. Just last month, Pakistan's Economic Affairs Minister Hammad Azhar revealed that Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar had conveniently gone "missing" along with his family. Masood Azhar, Omar Sheikh, and Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar had been released in exchange for hostages of Flight IC 814 in December 1999 into Taliban/ISI custody in Kandahar. Pakistan needs to be persuaded to move beyond tokenism and demonstrate a much higher order of commitment to deal with such terrorists than it has hitherto shown.

A niggardliness that is economically unwarranted

The Centre can afford to step up its COVID-19 assistance to a higher scale: fiscal deficit is no worry



PRABHAT PATNAIK

The three-week long lockdown imposed on the country, it can be argued, was an over-reaction. More widespread testing of possible cases, "social distancing", self-quarantining by the elderly, and selective lockdown of sensitive areas (as the Chinese government did in Wuhan) might have been quite adequate. But while this can be debated, what cannot be is the utter thoughtlessness that has accompanied the actual lockdown.

Ameliorative steps made necessary by it should have been announced simultaneously, to prevent the mass exodus of migrant workers which occurred not because of any "Fake-News"-induced panic, as the government claimed before the Supreme Court, but out of sheer desperation. Instead, some steps were announced by the Finance Minister a full 36 hours into the lockdown; and they were minuscule.

A comparison

Indeed, India stands out among all the countries of the world as much for the scale of the draconian measure it has imposed as for the extent of concern it has displayed for the working poor affected by it. In the United States, for instance, where the lockdown has raised the number of persons filing unemployment claims from 2.8 lakh to 6.6 million in a matter of days, those affected can fall back on unemployment benefit; and the government has approved a package of ameliorative steps costing

roughly 10% of that country's GDP to cope with the crisis. In India by contrast, the Finance Minister's package comes to less than 1% of its GDP; and much of it is just a re-packaging of already existing schemes. New expenditure comes to just a little over half of the ₹1.7-lakh crore earmarked for the package.

Besides, none of the steps will help the migrant workers; not even the larger foodgrain ration which in principle could, because most of them would have ration cards back home rather than in the places where they stay. But much has already been written on all this, and I need not repeat it here.

What can be done

What I wish to argue here is that this niggardliness is totally unwarranted on economic grounds. Many economists and civil society activists had suggested a cash transfer of ₹7,000 per month for a two-month period to the bottom 80% of households to tide over the crisis, in addition to enhanced rations of foodgrains and the inclusion of certain other essential commodities within the ration basket. The cost of their proposed cash transfers alone would come to ₹3.66-lakh crore, which is more than 10 times the cash transfers provided in the Finance Minister's package. Providing assistance on the scale proposed by civil society organisations is necessary; it will no doubt pose logistical problems, but not financial problems.

Even if all of it is financed through a fiscal deficit for the time being, the economic implications of such an enlarged deficit would not be forbidding. These implications can manifest themselves in two ways: one is through inflation, and the other by precipitating a balance of payments problem. Let



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us consider each of these. As long as supplies of essential commodities are plentiful and these are made available through the Public Distribution System to the vast majority of the people, so that they are insulated against the effects of inflation, any inflation per se should not be a matter of great concern. This is the case in India at present.

Foodgrains aplenty

The supply of the most essential of goods, foodgrains, is plentiful. Currently there are 58 million tonnes of foodgrain stocks with the government, of which no more than about 21 million tonnes are required as buffer-cum-operational stocks. This leaves a surplus of 37 million tonnes which can be used for distribution as enhanced ration, or for providing a cushion against inflation.

The rabi crop is supposed to be good; as long as it is safely harvested, this would further boost the government's foodstocks. There are some reports of labour shortage holding up harvesting. This may be a temporary problem that would disappear once the lockdown eases; but if necessary Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act work can be extended to cover harvesting operations in areas experiencing labour shortage.

Likewise the supplies of other

essential commodities which consist of manufactured goods and where output has been demand-constrained all along, will get boosted in response to higher demand; and in special cases, imports may have to be resorted to. There is in short no reason to think that inflation of a worrisome magnitude will follow if the fiscal deficit is increased.

There is an additional factor here. The increase in total demand caused by an initial increase in demand, which is financed by a fiscal deficit, is a multiple of the latter. Now in a situation like the present, when even if the lockdown is lifted social distancing and restrictions on social activities will continue, the value of the multiplier will be lower than usual. People in short would hold on to purchasing power to a much greater extent than usual because of the continuing restrictions on demand, which would act as an automatic anti-inflationary factor.

Of course there will be shortages of some less essential commodities and also hoarding on account of such shortages. But since these shortages will be expected to be temporary, a result of the pandemic unlikely to last long, there will be a damper on hoarding.

Issue of deficit

True, if inflationary expectations are strong and persistent, then the prices of non-rationed commodities may rise sharply for speculative reasons; but the government can prevent such expectations, by adopting measures such as bringing down petro-product prices, taking advantage of the collapse of world oil prices. A larger fiscal deficit, therefore, need not cause disquiet on account of inflation.

On the balance of payments front, the worry associated with a larger fiscal deficit is financial

flight caused by frightened investors. Some financial flight is already happening, with the rupee taking a fall. This flight is not because of our fiscal deficit but because, whenever there is panic in financial markets, the tendency is to rush to dollars, even though the cause of the panic may lie in the United States itself.

But India has close to half a trillion dollars of foreign exchange reserves. These can be used, up to a point, to check the flight from the rupee to the dollar. If the flight nonetheless persists, then India will have a legitimate reason for putting restrictions on capital outflows in the context of the pandemic.

We are currently in a bizarre situation where cross-border movement of people is virtually barred, while cross-border movement of finance is freely allowed. If the hardships of the people caused by the pandemic, and the lockdown it has created, are not ameliorated through larger government expenditure, because of the fear that the larger fiscal deficit required for it would frighten finance into fleeing, then the privileging of finance over people would have reached its acme.

This must not be allowed. The Centre must not worry about its fiscal deficit; and since the State governments will bear a substantial expenditure burden on account of the pandemic, the Centre must make more resources available to them. It should raise their borrowing limits, perhaps double their current limits as a general rule, apart from negotiating the magnitude of fiscal transfers it should make towards them.

Prabhat Patnaik is Professor Emeritus, Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

The critical question: What do you mean by fiscal deficit? How can high fiscal deficit lead to inflation? How can fiscal deficit lead to current account deficit? What is twin deficits?

It has a pivotal role



SOHAM D. BHADURI

Mockery of justice

A highly significant observation arising out of a pioneering health-care initiative led by a doctor couple in Ahmednagar, Maharashtra in the 1970s greatly inspired primary health-care delivery, both within and outside the country. This observation was that a significant cultural gap existed between health-care personnel such as auxiliary nurse-midwives and rural and tribal beneficiaries, significantly impeding delivery of preventive and promotive health care. It was realised that a cadre of health workers recruited by and from within the community, and also accountable to the community, would have greater affinity with people, thus ensuring greater community participation in care delivery. Soon, a series of community health worker schemes followed, the latest being the accredited social health activist (ASHA) programme.

Ground reality

The recent attack on an ASHA worker conducting a COVID-19 survey, due to an alleged suspicion that she was a government National Register of Citizens agent betrays the faltering of our community health worker programmes in a

detached public health employees rather than being community representatives enjoying the unwavering confidence of people as originally envisaged.

Such things remain common to the specific incidents of non-cooperation in our anti-coronavirus campaign, from the Tablighi Jamaat fiasco to migrant workers being violence against the police. First, that a strong felt need for coronavirus control remains absent due to deficient threat perception. Second, that deficient threat perception has resulted in strict control measures such as quarantine to be perceived as high-handed government instruments. What this signifies is that government messaging of the coronavirus threat will alone not suffice, and that a willingness to cooperate can only be engendered from deep within the community.

Key strategy

Community engagement is a prerequisite for risk communication, which entails effectively communicating the threat due to the virus, instilling the right practices and etiquette, and combating rumours and stigma. Till date, the government's machinery to communicate risk has served a thin upper and middle-class segment quite well. However, with COVID-19 moving briskly towards slums and rural hinterlands, one should not be surprised if such incidents of non-cooperation start surfacing at



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a brisk pace too. Rural awareness generation and community engagement has until now comprised mainly of engaging with the panchayats, disseminating public material in local vernacular, and casting on the participation of civil society organisations. For our anti-coronavirus campaign to be a success, community engagement has to ensue on a war-footing, much akin to the production of ventilators and masks. Like the Antyodaya approach, it has to embrace the remotest community stalwart who enjoys the community's confidence and is perceived as an impartial non-state agent.

One may say that we are too far into the pandemic to focus on risk communication. But community engagement is more than just risk communication. It is the bedrock of community participation, the need for which will only be felt even more acutely as the epidemic worsens. Contact tracing activities will have to pick up as COVID-19 increasingly percolates to rural areas. Enhancing testing for SARS-CoV-2 and concomitant expansion of quarantine, isolation, and treat-

ments will necessarily strain out thin public health machinery. This will not be possible without community participation at every step.

Further, mitigation activities in case of considerable rural penetration of COVID-19 will require efforts of dreadful, phenomenal proportions. Imagine a primary health centre equipped with one doctor and a nurse catering to 20-odd villages spread across miles of difficult terrain.

Even attending to the mildest cases and referring severe ones will not just be infeasible but highly risk-laden too. Strongly involving the nearly 2.5 million informal health-care providers would become crucial for a range of activities. Make-shift arrangements for transportation and care, such as motorised ambulances and mobile medical units, will need to be made. Further initiatives such as community kitchens of Kerala will assume tremendous importance in cases of a stringent and prolonged lockdown. These, along with simply a strict adherence to social distancing throughout the pandemic, cannot be conceived without full community participation.

Crucial factors

The criticality of community engagement on a war-footing is underscored by a set of factors. First, a concoction of local culture, values and beliefs can lead to blithe disregard of the coronavirus threat and gravely endanger contain-

forts. Second, weakened livelihoods due to lockdowns and a resultant downplaying of the coronavirus risk can instil indignation and non-cooperation, as witnessed in the case of many migrants. With our weak social support system, we cannot afford quarantine allowances like in Sweden and Singapore; even the entitled modest relief could get delayed.

Third, there is increased likelihood of repeat lockdowns due to the virus likely to bounce back, which will greatly test public patience and co-operation. Lastly, we also need to remember the trust deficit between health workers and the public that has lingered on since decades, given our unsatisfactory public and profiteering private health care. One may say that these challenges are not completely mitigable through community engagement, but that is undoubtedly the best shot we have.

Urgent reinforcing and galvanising of community engagement activities will largely decide the trajectory of COVID-19 undertakes in India. Recruiting a medical workforce, augmenting infrastructure, and manufacturing personal protective equipment on a war footing — unless these go hand-in-hand with the former, will result in undermining of both.

Dr. Soham D. Bhaduri is a Mumbai-based doctor, health-care commentator, and editor of the journal, *The Indian Practitioner*

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 pandemic battle

Amid the outbreak of the global novel coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent imposition of a pan-India lockdown, people are divided based on two opinions regarding revocation of the lockdown. A section, economically disadvantaged, unquestionably demands that it be revoked after 21 days irrespective of the situation, while the other, largely the middle class and government employees, wants its continuation until a satisfactory result. A majority of those opposing the lockdown are those facing extreme poverty. The lockdown poses a threat to their lives. I wonder what would happen if such a lockdown

continues beyond the date. It is sad to see people who have found income being indifferent to others' sufferings especially those who have lost employment. An educated Indian is likely to stand by the government's side but it is simultaneously a must that he or she shows equal empathy for others who are not similarly situated and extend aid if possible.

SHAYAN DAS, Gobardanga, West Bengal

At a time when over 180 countries are engaged in an all-out struggle to derail the march of the novel coronavirus, with India being no exception, India's top leader should be advocating scientific knowledge on how to contain and prevent the spread of the virus among

his people (Editorial page, "Only through the prism of science", April 4).

Had he appeared on television while addressing the nation wearing a protective mask — even for a second — the message of that symbolism would have been louder and clearer. Unfortunately, these appearances have only created leeway for his many admirers to peddle pseudo-scientific concoctions. This amounts to trivialising the grim situation the country is in.

One cannot possibly fight superstition and the coronavirus outbreak simultaneously. If all of us strictly adhere to and and scrupulously follow the precautionary measures suggested and guidelines issued by the scientific

community and the medical fraternity, there is a greater chance of stopping the silent microbe.

ABDUL ASSIS P.A., Thrissur, Kerala

Natural disasters and pandemics are not fought by governments and their machinery alone. It requires the seeding and nurturing of private institutions and even, more importantly, non-governmental institutions (NGOs). There are a number of them engaged in health services, covering health education and awareness, dedicated groups for the elderly, etc. In its drive to weed out NGOs, apparently out of sync with the government's social policies and tenets, there has been a drive to bring in tighter regulations on their funding

and compliance. There can be no quarrel with this, yet the summary approach may have dampened the functioning of key NGOs. We may be missing the organised and trained contribution of these entities. The time that we review the role of voluntary organisations and work out a more pragmatic architecture for their participation has come as they do largely provide last-mile delivery.

R. NARAYANAN, Navi Mumbai

How to use masks

In these trying times around the world, many have started to use surgical or other masks to stave off the possibility of contracting coronavirus infection. But, in India, and especially in Kerala — this includes the

medical and health-care fraternity — many can be seen practising improper use of the mask.

One critical point missed seems to be the fact that many are not maintaining the double-layer or triple-layer arrangement of the mask cloth to ensure protection. By stretching the cloth/fibre material of the mask and extending it below the chin, not much protection can be expected by wearing the mask this way. We must remember that the size of the virus is smaller than the pore of the cloth used in masks and an extra layer or two obviously heightens user protection. This has to be highlighted.

Dr. Jayasekharan V.P., Payyanur, Kannur, Kerala



To read more letters online, scan the QR code

National Food Security Act

The Act was signed into law on 12th September 2013 retroactive to 5th July 2013.

The Act is in line with Goal Two of the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations General Assembly.

Goal 2 seeks sustainable solutions to end hunger in all its forms by 2030 and to achieve food security.

The aim is to ensure that everyone everywhere has enough good-quality food to lead a healthy life.

Schemes such as the Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDM), the Public Distribution System (PDS), and the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) are included under the Act.

The Act is being implemented by all the States and the Union Territories.

Salient Features of the NFSA

The major features of the Act are described below:

Coverage: The state-wise coverage determined by the NITI Aayog on the basis of the 2011-12 Household Consumption Expenditure survey of NSSO.

The Act legally entitled up to 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population to receive subsidized foodgrains under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS).

About two-thirds of the population, therefore, is covered under the Act to receive highly subsidized foodgrains.

Entitlements:

The food grains would be provided at highly subsidized prices under the Public Distribution System.

The Act ensures nutritional support to women and children. Pregnant and lactating women would be entitled to nutritious meals, free of charge under the MDM and ICDS schemes.

Children in the age group of 6-14 years would also be entitled to free nutritious meals under the MDM and ICDS schemes.

Maternity benefit of not less than Rs.6000 is also provided to pregnant women and lactating mothers.

The Act also empowers women by identifying the eldest woman of the household as the head of the household for the purpose of issuing ration cards.

The Central Government will be aiding the States to meet the expenditure incurred by them on transportation of foodgrains within the State and will also handle the Fair Price Shop (FPS) dealers' margins according to the norms.

There is a provision of a food security allowance to the beneficiaries in the event of non-supply of food grains.

Transparency: Provisions have been made to disclose the records related to the PDS to ensure transparency.

Who are the beneficiaries of the National Food Security Act?

The Act covers two-thirds of the entire population under two categories of beneficiaries:

Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) households

Priority Households (PHH)

AAY households encompass the households headed by widows or disabled persons or persons aged 60 years or more with no assured means of subsistence or societal support.

It usually takes into account the households of those below the poverty line too.

It also includes support for women and children.

NFSA gives the right to receive food-grains at subsidized prices by people belonging to eligible households, i.e., the PHH. A major section of the ration card holders in the priority sector comes under this category. This is an effort to alleviate poverty.

The work of identification of eligible households within the coverage under TPDS determined for each state is to be done by the states and the UTs.

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi is a central sector scheme under the government of India which provides income support to the farmers and their families. PM-KISAN scheme was first implemented as the Rythu Bandhu scheme by the Government of Telangana where a certain amount was handed directly to the eligible farmers. Later, on 1 February 2019, during the 2019 Interim Union Budget of India, Piyush Goyal announced the implementation of this scheme as a nationwide project. Narendra Modi launched the PM-KISAN scheme on 24 February 2019 in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh. Under this scheme, all small and marginal farmers will be provided with income support of Rs.6,000 per year in three instalments which will be deposited directly to their bank accounts. The total annual expenditure for this scheme is expected to be Rs.75,000 crore which will be financed by the Union Government in 2019-20.

However, the area under the curve, the total number of cases, whether the curve is bell-shaped or flattened, will be the same. This crucial information in the epidemiology of the epidemic must be taken into account for planning a response.

Flattening the curve

There are two ways of flattening the curve: imposing a strict lockdown for a number of weeks or use of face masks all the time when outside our homes. A lockdown physically distances families from each other. The disadvantage is that family members may not be able to keep a physical distance of two metres from one another all the time. As a result, intra-familial spread occurs and more people are infected at the end of the lockdown than at the beginning. But during a lockdown community transmission is prevented.

There are four reasons for the universal use of masks. First, any infected person will not infect others because the droplets of fluids that we let out during conversations, coughing or sneezing will be blocked by the mask. Remember, most infectious people don't have symptoms, or have mild symptoms, and are unaware that they are infected. Second, unin-

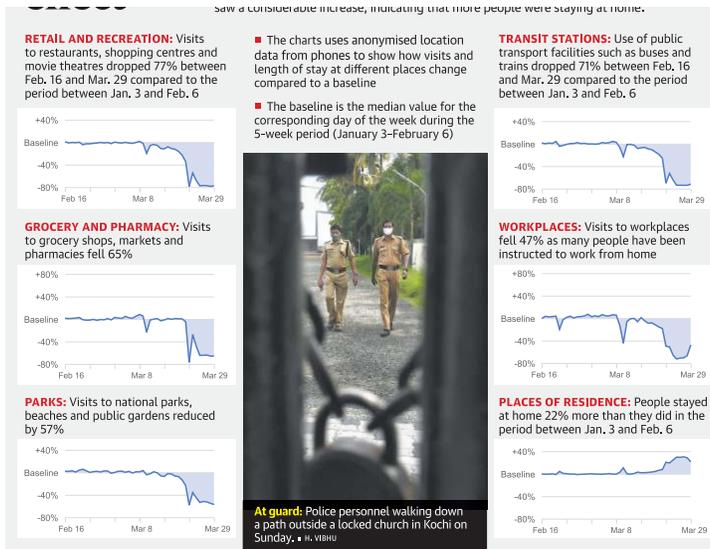
proverbially, is slower than adventure.

Making your own mask

Taiwan and the Czech Republic depended primarily on universal mask use and slowed down the epidemic. In the Czech Republic, people made their own masks. Cotton pieces, preferably coarse, three layers, stitched with two straps, make masks of sufficient quality. These masks should cover the nose from just below the eye level and reach and cover the chin. All adults, and children who are old enough to wear masks, should wear them. At the end of the day, cotton masks can be washed in soapy water and hung to dry for re-use.

COVID-19 mortality is due to three reasons. Virus virulence is the given and cannot be altered. Co-morbidity (diabetes, chronic diseases) is already prevalent. Then there is low-quality healthcare. Slowing down the epidemic by imposing a lockdown and ensuring universal mask use gives us the chance to protect people from infection and improve healthcare quality; wherever that was done, the mortality was less than 1%.

T. Jacob John is retired Professor of Virology in the Christian Medical College, Vellore



vision stations in giving saturation coverage.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 6, 1920.

The Asiatic question. (Third editorial)

The temper of the Whites in South Africa can be seen from the way in which a Unionist candidate was heckled at an election campaign meeting. Here is the report of the incident as given in "Indian Opinion": Capt. W.C. Halford, Unionist candidate for the Greyville Division, addressing a meeting in the Inands Hall recently is reported to have said in regard to the Asiatic question that he was not prepared to recommend the repatriation of Indians who were born in this country, but was against further immigration. Several questions were put to Capt. Halford after his speech. In reply to one question regarding Asiatics, he said he was in favour of cessation of Asiatic encroachment, provided it was done with justice. He wanted to see justice to every section in the country. (Applause). To another question put to him if he was in favour of equal political rights to workers of all colours, Capt. Halford said: "I do not want to see any extension of the Native franchise, or the extension of the vote to aliens in this country who were not prepared to become British." But he did not mention a word about the Indians who were already British.

SOURCE: GOOGLE'S COVID-19 COMMUNITY MOBILITY REPORTS

FROM PAGE ONE

'Cases doubling due to Tablighi Jamaat event'

"... [the] allotment done... us is based on cases reported in States. We have advocated for rational use of PPEs. We are also making an effort to see how procurement can be further enhanced. We have discussed this with all health secretaries and other officials," he said.

He explained that initially a component of the PPE was being imported so there was some shortage but now domestic manufacturers have started producing and procuring them from whichever country has them.

Mr. Agarwal quoted Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan as saying that till a drug or vaccine is found, social distancing and lockdown are the only available

and effective vaccines against SARS-CoV-2.

Doctors at the All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS), Delhi have opposed a circular calling for mandatory donations from salaries to the PM CARES fund. They also expressed concern about lack of PPEs, difficulties in travel faced by health care workers, and lack of sanitation and urged that funds collected be used locally instead of transferring it to the PM CARES.

The Health Ministry issued a clarification on Sunday night stating that a fake notification was doing the rounds asserting that five days salary of employees under Health Ministry would be remitted to the PM CARES fund.

Modi calls up ex-Presidents and PMs, Opposition leaders

A video conference with parliamentary leaders is scheduled for Wednesday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In a bid to forge bipartisan support over India's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic that has seen the country enter its 11th day of lockdown, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reached out to former Presidents, Prime Ministers and Opposition leaders.

According to government sources, Mr. Modi dialled former Presidents Pranab Mukherjee and Pratibha Patil as well as former Prime Ministers H.D. Deve Gowda and Manmohan Singh on Sunday. "He also called up Congress president Sonia Gandhi, Odisha Chief Minister and Biju Janata Dal leader Naveen Patnaik, West Bengal



Reaching out: Mr. Modi talked to among others, Congress president Sonia Gandhi and Manmohan Singh. • V. SUDERSHAN

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu, Telangana Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu, Samithi chief and Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu, Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh and

Mr. Modi also enquired about the health of his mother Dayalu Ammal. "The calls all pertained to the challenge that the COVID-19 pandemic presents before us as a country and the need to be united to combat it," a source said.

Mr. Modi has called for a video conference on April 8 with floor leaders of political parties whose combined strength in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha number up to five MPs. The Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress had, however, declared that it would not be attending the meeting. Sunday's calls are being seen as an attempt to make up for any feelings of neglect the Opposition parties may have to such an outreach.

Congress seeks wider testing

Party also demands larger package

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Lighting a diya alone cannot succeed in containing the spread of the COVID-19, the Congress said on Sunday asking the Narendra Modi government to alter the testing protocol to make its scope wider and increase the number of tests.

It also pressed the government to come up with a larger economic package for businesses and individuals.

"The PM made a request to people of India to light a diya at 9 p.m. for nine minutes today. There is no harm in it. But just as lockdown alone cannot succeed in containing the virus, it has to be backed by mass testing and a robust economic package, a diya alone won't help people of India,"

spokesperson Sushmita Dev said.

"Sitting at home alone under a lockdown won't help till there are enough tests done. Out of 135 crore people we have only tested a little over 75,000 persons. South Korea, which has managed to halt the virus, tests 10,000 persons every day," Ms. Dev said.

The Congress also rejected the government's latest announcement making the COVID-19 testing free, under the Ayushman Bharat Yojana saying the policy has a limited reach.

Pointing to the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) kits for health workers, she said: "There are about 3.3 lakh PPE kits while the actual requirement is more than 62 lakh."

Many women from T.N. attended Tablighi meet

"There is a possibility of a number of such women being carriers of COVID-19. Since they stay in the homes of hosts, we have asked police in all cities and districts in Tamil Nadu to identify them and take appropriate precautionary measures as per the safety protocol," a senior police officer said.

Special teams were in touch with the coordinators of the Tablighi Jamaat to locate the members of Mastoorat Jamaat if they were still staying as part of their preaching schedule.

Meanwhile, the police sources also said that most of the 125 foreigners belonging to the Tablighi Jamaat were identified and quarantined in their places of stay in Tiruvavur, Nagapattinam and Kancheepuram districts.

"The charge against them is that they violated the visa conditions. They came on a tourist visa and indulged in preaching religion. There is also violation of prohibitory orders issued under Section 144 of the CrPC," the officer said.

Rapid antibody testing for hotspots first: ICMR

Explaining about who to test and the scale of testing the Health Ministry has said that testing has to be focused and judiciously done, even when scaled-up.

It added that contact tracing is vital for this and is now greatly enabled by the AarogyaSetu App. "RT-PCR test detects the virus and the antibody tests, which use blood, detect the body's response to the virus. A positive result tells that the body was exposed to the virus. The antibody tests, even when used for screening, must be used with care, as with all tests, and interpreted by a professional. As of now, when so used, they can inform how groups of people have been exposed," noted the Ministry.

Experts point out that individual-level interpretation also needs to be done by a professional, who can take a comprehensive assessment. When combined with nu-

merical tests, the antibody tests can give a complete status.

HIV experience

Meanwhile a study on pooled sampling, said that pooled COVID-19 tests could help scale up testing and identify and contain disease hotspots. The study was conducted by the Center for Disease Dynamics, Economics & Policy among others. "Testing samples from multiple patients with a single PCR test (pooled sampling) has been used previously in the early stages of the HIV epidemic. We found that the use of the strategy could reduce the time, cost, and resources required when identifying infected people and estimating the infection rate. Allowing us to identify community clusters for targeted public health interventions," said Ramanan Laxminarayan, study author and CDDEP Director.

Reopening of schools, colleges to be decided after lockdown

HRD Minister says safety of students is most important

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The government will take a decision on reopening of schools and colleges on April 14 after reviewing the COVID-19 situation in the country, Union Human Resource Development Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' said on Sunday.

In an interview, Mr. Pokhriyal said the safety of students and teachers was of utmost importance.

He said the Ministry was prepared to ensure there was no academic loss to students if schools and colleges

needed to remain shut beyond April 14.

"The classes are already being conducted online using various government platforms like Swayam. We are prepared to ensure there is no academic loss to students if the need arises to keep schools, colleges closed after April 14," he said.

"It is difficult to take a decision at the moment. We will review the situation on April 14 and depending upon the circumstances, a decision will be taken on whether schools and colleges

have to be closed for more time," Mr. Pokhriyal said when asked about his Ministry's post-lockdown plan.

34 crore students

"There are 34 crore students in the country, more than America's population. They are our biggest treasure. Safety of students and teachers is of utmost importance to the government," he added.

"I am regularly reviewing the plan of action being followed by schools and colleges during the lockdown. A plan is also ready for conducting pending exams."

Tests, treatment free under Ayushman Bharat

More than 50 crore beneficiaries can get free services in de-

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

The Central government has decided to provide free testing and treatment of COVID-19 under the Ayushman Bharat Scheme.

This, it notes, will help more than 50 crore Ayushman beneficiaries to get free testing and treatment in designated private hospitals across India.

COVID-19

Confirming this, Indu Bhushan, CEO of Ayushman Bharat, said this would allow beneficiaries to get timely and standard treatment.

The announcement comes after India registered



Expanding coverage: States are in the process of enlisting private hospitals to be converted. • ADAESH CHOUDHARI

an increase of 302 cases in the 12 hours to Sunday morning. The total number of positive cases has risen to 3,374 in India (including 3,030 active cases, 267 cured/discharged/migrated people and 77 deaths), ac-

cording to the Health Ministry.

Giving details, Dr. Bhushan said: "The empanelled hospitals can use their own authorised testing facilities or tie up with an authorised testing facility for the

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
NEW DELHI

Parents cried foul on Sunday, as several schools monitored whether their students lit diya at 9 p.m. as urged by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, pressured by a letter from the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) asking for an action taken report.

The Ministry later clarified that no coercion was intended and that the participation in the event was voluntary.

"I got a call from the parent representative at our

school asking me to comply with the government's directions. I was told, and told her it was more important that the government contribute personal protective equipment (PPE) to hospital workers than monitoring children lighting diya," said one angry parent, with children in Class 5 and 7 at a south Delhi school, who did not wish to be named. "The representative said there was a lot of pressure on the school."

The school sent a message to parents asking them to report back by 9 p.m. on the

child's participation in the lighting of diya, and by 10 p.m. on the downloading of the Ministry of AYUSH's Aarogya Setu app, adding that the Department of Education "requires an update on compliance".

It included a letter from MHRD Joint Secretary Maneech Garg, giving directions for how the app could be downloaded, as well as some "general measures to enhance the body's defence system prepared by the Ministry of AYUSH" and details for the 9 p.m. candle lighting.

Prepare a consolidated essay on AYUSHMAN Bharath and the potential benefit of having COVID treatment being included under it.

Himachal CM asks Tablighis to get tested

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SHIMLA

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Sunday asked all members of the Tablighi Jamaat who had attended the group's congregation in Delhi's Nizamuddin, a COVID-19 hotspot, to come forward for testing by 5 p.m., failing which action would be taken against them.

Three of the seven persons who tested positive for COVID-19 in the State on Saturday were members of the Islamic organisation, he said.

Earlier in the day, the State's Director General of Police had issued a similar warning to the district heads of the Jamaat.

Probe against ex-Tripura Cong. chief

SYED SAJJAD ALI
AGARTALA

The Tripura police have launched a probe into forgery and criminal conspiracy charges against former State Congress president Gopal Chandra Roy after an FIR was lodged in a city police station on Sunday.

A lawyer, Arabinda Deb, submitted a complaint in the New Capital Complex (NCC) police station alleging that Mr. Roy, former MLA, has been spreading canards against Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb through statements written in his letterhead that contains the emblem of 'Ashok Stambh'.

The complainant claimed that the opposition leader was not authorised to use the national emblem and by doing so he committed an offence of forgery. The advocate also claimed that the allegations against the Chief Minister were tantamount to criminal conspiracy.

Look into issue of parole for PSA cases: J&K HC

HPC told to urgently implement rules

PERZADA ASHQ
SRINAGAR

The J&K High Court has asked the High Powered Committee (HPC), convened to de-congest jails by releasing prisoners on parole in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak, to examine the allegations that no detainee booked under the Public Safety Act (PSA) was being considered for any parole.

Chief Justice Gita Mittal and Justice Rajnesh Oswal passed these orders on Saturday while hearing a Public Interest Litigation on the COVID-19 outbreak and the response given by the J&K administration.

"Let the rules be urgently implemented and steps for grant of special parole to prisoners as is envisaged therein be taken on priority," observed the division Bench.

The Bench directed advocate Salih Pirzada to place his submissions by e-mail

before the HPC comprising Justice Rajesh Bishnoi, Chairman and executive chairperson of the JKLSA; Shaheen Kabra, Secretary; Home; B.K. Singh, DGP (Prisons) and M.K. Sharma, Member Secretary of the JKLSA.

The direction came after advocate Pirzada informed the court that the HPC has overlooked the aspect of detainees who have been detained under the PSA. "The order of the Supreme Court makes a reference only to prisoners without specifying the provision of law under which they may have been imprisoned."

In his letter, Mr. Pirzada said, "There were indications that there was vulnerability [of catching the virus] in jails in the context of health, hygiene and sanitation. There is a sizeable number of detainees detained under the PSA and are equally exposed to the hazards of the viral disease in J&K and outside jails."

Parrikar's biography details tense eve of surgical strikes

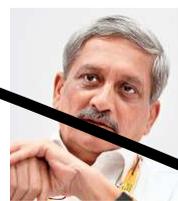
Former Defence Minister was desperate to ease nerves

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

A new book on former Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar reveals just what went on, on the eve of the surgical strikes against Pakistan (announced on September 29, 2016) after the Uri attack that killed 18 Indian soldiers and left more than 30 injured.

The biography of Parrikar, *An Extraordinary Life* (Penguin Random House) by Sadguru Patil and Mayabhushan Nagyenkar, describes in great detail the events of the evening the surgical strikes were supposed to take place.

Quoting Milind Karmarkar, a Sanghridayamsewak, considered close to the then Defence Minister, the authors say Parrikar was "desperate to speak to someone" that evening, in order to calm his nerves.



Manohar Parrikar

the mediaperson called even one more time he would have invited him over."

Once he was informed about the successful completion of the mission and the return of the Indian commandoes, Parrikar "desperately" tried reaching his son Utpal, who was on a business visit to Japan.

'Pakistan knocked off'

"He could not get through despite several calls, when he did, his first two words to his son were: *Pakistanak udaylo* (Pakistan has been knocked off)," says the book.

This is just one incident in a well-researched look at the storied career of Mr. Parrikar who rose from the ranks of being an RSS volunteer to being the Defence Minister of India. The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed back the book's release, scheduled for the end of March.



On guard: Army jawans patrolling the snow-covered border area of Kupwara district. • NISSAR AHMAD

Five militants, 3 soldiers dead in Kupwara strike

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Five militants have been killed in an ongoing operation along the Line of Control (LoC), North Kashmir's Kupwara.

Three soldiers were killed during the operation, according to an Army spokesman.

"In another ongoing anti-infiltration operation in Keeran sector of North Kashmir, alert troops braving inclement weather and hostile terrain have so far eliminated five terrorists attempting

to infiltrate across the LoC taking advantage of the bad weather," said a Srinagar-based Army spokesman.

"Operation is still in progress," said the spokesman.

Sources said the militants sneaked into this side of the LoC five days ago through the Sangam area in Kupwara district.

They were later spotted in the Teen Bahak area, which is surrounded by a mountain range. "The militants managed to run around because of snow and rain in the area," said an official.

Police, forensic teams visit Nizamuddin

Members in full protective gear map the Tablighi Jamaat centre, seize documents

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A team each of the Delhi police Crime Branch and the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) went inside the Tablighi Jamaat centre at Nizamuddin on Sunday.

A joint team in full protective gear remained inside the centre for around six hours during which they mapped the entire building. They videographed the entire premises, including two basements of the centre, where the attendees used to stay during their visit to the building. The building was disinfected for two days and got clearance from the Health Department before the joint team entered in it.

Full survey

"We have obtained a few documents from an office inside the building and surveyed the entire building. If required, we will revisit the building. We have asked the building manager to provide



Keep up the fight: Firefighters spraying disinfectants at a locality near the Nizamuddin mosque in New Delhi. •PTI

the CCTV [footage] of March. We also talked to the Maulanas who are part of the management committee of the centre, and all documents were seized in their presence," said the police officer.

After and before the 10 members of the team en-

tered and left the building, they were thoroughly checked by a team of the Health Department at the main gate of the centre.

The officer said the Crime Branch was working in various dimensions in the case and they were following procedures and legal opinion

before initiating any step because it was a sensitive case.

According to Deepa Verma, Director of FSL, Rohini, members from the Cyber Forensics Unit biology, chemistry, physics and photo divisors visited the spot and collected exhibits.

The forensic team was in

Hazmat suit and is likely to be sent for home quarantine, sources said.

The officer said the building had five floors and two basements and several shoe racks were found inside the building.

Dump data analysis

Meanwhile, the police said they were identifying visitors to the centre with the help of dump data analysis. They are identifying who all visited and stayed in the centre for more than eight hours in the past one month. A Defence service man who was sent to quarantine was identified with the help of dump data analysis.

"We are identifying people after scrutinising more than one lakh cellphones. We are sending report to the States concerned after identifying the people who were the part of the religious gathering at the centre and later went back to their native places," said the officer.

18 Malaysian nationals stopped from flying back

10 detained at the Chennai airport, eight in Delhi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI/CHENNAI

Eight Malaysian nationals have been sent to quarantine after they were stopped from boarding a special flight to Malaysia at the Delhi airport, an Immigration official said on Sunday.

It was found that they figured in a list of foreign nationals who attended the religious congregation at the Tablighi Jamaat centre in Nizamuddin. Their credentials are being verified with the Malaysian Embassy.

The official said the eight wanted to board a special flight to Malaysia when they were stopped by Immigration personnel.

A Delhi police official confirmed that the eight Malaysian nationals had been handed over to them by the Immigration Department. Later, they were sent for medical examination.

"All Malaysian nationals have been shifted to a quarantine centre after their samples were taken by the Health department", a senior police officer said.

With Crime Branch

In another development, Immigration authorities at the Chennai International Airport on Sunday detained 10 Malaysian nationals who had arrived in the country on a tourist visa and attended the Tablighi Jamaat meeting in New Delhi. They were handed over to the Central Crime Branch (CCB) and later placed under quarantine in Poonamallee.

Police sources said the foreign nationals were involved in the Jamaat's activities in Tenkasi district from March 14 to 26 after returning from Delhi. They were intercepted by the immigration officers when they tried

to fly out of the country on a special flight that had been arranged for stranded Malaysians.

According to the police, the 10 Malaysian nationals had stayed at Nizamuddin in Delhi till March 11, after attending the conference. They arrived in Chennai on March 12 by train and went to Tenkasi the following day.

"Between March 14 and 26, they visited different mosques in Tenkasi, Courtallam and Vallam in connection with the Jamaat's activities, along with two locals — Muzamil and Moulana Moideen, a police officer said. On Sunday, they reached the Chennai airport along with 127 other Malaysian nationals from different parts of the State.

They were supposed to fly back on a Malindo Air flight, arranged by the Malaysian government.

9 from Delhi event test positive in U.P.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

Nine more cases of COVID-19 have come to light in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh. All of them attended the Tablighi Jamaat event in Nizamuddin area of Delhi. Ghaziabad district now has 23 cases.

After four people from the Masuri area tested positive on Friday, on Saturday four persons from Pasonda, three from Muradnagar and two from Loni were found to be infected with the virus, Chief Medical Officer N.K. Gupta said. He said the number of cases linked to Tablighi Jamaat could go up as results of 80 more samples were awaited.

Man who threw feast for 1,500 tests positive

Morena turns a virus hotspot as 10 relatives, including seven children, have contracted the infection

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

Fourteen days after he returned from Dubai, a 40-year-old man from Morena tested positive for COVID-19, along with his wife on Thursday. And a day later, 10 of his relatives who had taken part in a feast thrown by him tested positive too.

More than 1,500 persons who had attended the feast ceremony in the honour of the man, a restaurant waiter who had been confined in quarantine and the locality where the venue was located had been sealed too, said District Chief Medical and Health Officer R.C. Bandil.

Of the 23 persons whose samples had been taken, 10



Staying safe: People standing in a queue to buy essentials from a shop in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, on Sunday. •PTI

relatives, including seven children, had tested positive, he added.

The district administration had declared the house of the man, a restaurant waiter who had returned from Dubai on March 17, as the

"epicentre" and the area within its 3 km radius as the "containment area".

The children were aged between two and 14, whereas a 60-year-old woman had contracted the illness too, said Sapna M. Lovanshi,

Additional Director, State Directorate of Health Services.

The curfew was imposed in the area, all persons being screened at its exit points and traffic was prohibited too, said district officials.

"His own two children have tested positive. We are collecting samples of all their primary contacts now and those residing within the containment area who have symptoms, including cough and cold," said Dr. Bandil.

When the man landed in New Delhi, he was screened for illnesses but showed no symptoms until March-end, according to A.K. Gupta of the Morena District Hospital.

"His wife told us she had caught a cough and cold

even before her husband's return," he said. Still, even when the couple turned up at the hospital on March 29, the man did not declare his travel history.

"However, he returned to the hospital on March 31 complaining of mild cough and cold that's when he declared he had returned from Dubai, and we took their samples," said Dr. Gupta. "The 10 members who had tested positive a day later didn't have any symptoms," said Pallavi Jain Govil, Principal Secretary, State Public Health and Family Welfare Department.

The participants at the ceremony had dispersed and their primary contacts were being traced, said an official.

India bans export of hydroxychloroquine

It's now a complete prohibition

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India has changed its official policy and prohibited export of hydroxychloroquine, a drug that has uses in the treatment of COVID-19, hours before U.S. President Donald Trump urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to release the quantity of the drug that the U.S. had ordered.

The Directorate-General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) had prohibited the export of the drug on March 25. But it left the option of export open to fulfil "export obligation" and on "humanitarian grounds".

On April 4, the DGFT issued a new notification,

ending the exception mentioned in the previous order. As a result, India will not export hydroxychloroquine even "against full advance payment". "The export of hydroxychloroquine and formulations made from hydroxychloroquine, therefore, shall remain prohibited, without any exception," said the notification issued by the DGFT on Saturday.

The Ministry of External Affairs did not respond to questions on the sudden change in the policy. Following Saturday's phone conversation, the Ministry said Mr. Modi conveyed India's "deep condolences" to Mr. Trump for the loss of lives in the U.S.

Lead kindly light



Spirits alive: PM Narendra Modi and President Ram Nath Kovind and his wife Savita in the glow of lamps as people across India lit lamps at 9 p.m. on Sunday on the Prime Minister's call to express solidarity in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic; and children at a Delhi house join in during the nine minutes when electric lights were switched off and oil lamps and candles took over. •ANI & R.V. MOORTHY

Stay positive, urge COVID-19 survivors

Father-daughter duo are the first patients declared free of the virus in Bhopal

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

Thirteen days have flown past for Gunjan Saxena, Bhopal's first COVID-19 patient and also the first to recover from it in Madhya Pradesh.

Along with her father in the isolation ward of AIIMS, Bhopal, Ms. Saxena barely had the time to ponder over the cough, cold and breathlessness that felt like the symptoms of any other viral infection, as more than 50 friends called and kept in touch every day.

A typical day for Ms. Saxena, who is doing a Master's in international business law in London, began when she was woken up at 8.30 a.m. to her get vitals checked. Then she read the Rigveda and spent an hour or so in prayer. Then came the calls to friends. Some reading followed till friends in the U.K called her up in the afternoon. Later, she chatted with her mother and brother.



Family first: Gunjan Saxena and K.K. Saxena. The father and the daughter lent each other support. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

er. Then came course lectures through videoconferencing till she went to bed at round midnight.

After testing positive on March 22, she was sure of being cured. "Given my age, I was sure of being cured. But when her father, 62, tested positive on March 25, I was crestfallen. "That was the lowest hour for me in the ward. I was ridden with guilt. For 24 hours I shut myself from everyone, from my friends. I had nothing to say to them," she says. "I was cool about my testing positive, but not Papa."

A veteran journalist for 25

years, K.K. Saxena had attended the March 20 press conference where then Congress Chief Minister Kamal Nath announced his resignation. Mr. Saxena's routine visits to the Raj Bhavan and Vidhan Sabha over the next few weeks, before his COVID-19 status was confirmed, resulted in journalists, officials and Congress MLAs going into home quarantine. The father and the daughter, the only occupants in the ward having four beds set in corners, lent each other support.

It was at 8.30 p.m. on April 3 when the doctors finally declared the two coronavirus-free.

Ms. Saxena credits her recovery to positive attitude, peace of mind, enough sleep and "giving the body a chance to recover." For her father, it was confidence, and his habit of reading for an hour before going to bed, a ritual the virus failed to disrupt.

Ganjam to penalise those without masks

STAFF REPORTER
BERHAMPUR

The Ganjam district administration in Odisha has said it will impose a penalty on those who are not covering their faces with masks while coming out when the lockdown is relaxed from 7 a.m. to noon.

Collector Vijay Amruta Kulkarni said violators in urban areas would be fined ₹1,000 and those in rural areas ₹500.

How Ahmedabad is fighting the pandemic

City has enforced home quarantine and ensured doorstep delivery of essentials

MAHESH LAL
AHMEDABAD

Ahmedabad, which has reported over 50 COVID-19 cases and five deaths, has been identified as one of the hotspots of the pandemic. It is fighting the virus through innovative means: use of technology, home quarantine and delivery of essential services at the doorstep in certain clusters.

The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) has taken several initiatives even before the lockdown started on March 24. On March 5, it announced a plan that mandated home quarantine for all those who returned from

abroad. "From March 6 to 22, 6,000 people came to Ahmedabad from abroad. All were compulsorily quarantined for 14 days. When we realised that it was important to quarantine their families too, we ensured that they were quarantined and all essential services were delivered by the civic body," AMC Commissioner Vijay Nehra said. He said the home quarantine of international passengers had a major effect; only a couple of cases were reported from among them.

As the cases started coming in, the AMC, in a first in the country, declared the

names and addresses of infected persons citing public interest. "The names of the persons found positive may be declared in public interest so that others who could have come in contact with them can voluntarily inform the authorities and isolate themselves," the civic body said. During the lockdown, the civic body started delivering vegetables and fruits in different localities and asked Reliance Fresh, DMart and Big Bazaar to deliver provisions and food items at the doorstep.

When the exodus of migrant workers started, the AMC asked all builders and

developers to make sure that the workers from their sites did not flee.

The AMC has created 500 teams of health workers and others for a door-to-door survey. Those with even mild symptoms will be taken to hospitals for testing.

The civic body wants mass testing of people in certain areas from where cases have been reported in order to weed out the potential asymptomatic patients. "In consultation with the Health Department, the next step is to go for mass testing to ascertain the extent of pandemic in the city," he said.

No proof of community transmission, says Odisha

Complete shutdown lifted in 3 cities

STAFF REPORTER
BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government on Sunday lifted the 48-hour complete shutdown from three cities after asserting that no community transmission of COVID-19 had occurred.

The three cities where shutdowns were to end at 8 p.m. on Sunday were Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Bhitarkanika. "We became puzzled following detection of COVID-19 positive cases from the Surya Nagar and Bomikhil areas of Bhubaneswar. Now, we have found that

these infections had roots outside States. The apprehension about community transmission has now disappeared to a large extent," said Asit Tripathy, State Chief Secretary, here.

There was no evidence based on which it could be concluded that community transmission had already taken place, he said. "District administrations have been asked to force containment strategy at hotspots where patients have no travel history and are asymptomatic, during the lockdown period," he said.

Lockdown to end in U.P. in phases: CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

The lockdown against COVID-19 will come to an end in Uttar Pradesh on April 15 but will be done so in phases, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has said.

"The lockdown will come to an end on April 15," Mr. Adityanath said while interacting with MLAs in the State during a videoconference on Saturday. He, however, stressed the need to end the lockdown in phases. "If crowds gather once, then all the efforts that will go down the drain," he said.

Coronavirus chatbot sees 2 crore users

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI**

The government's dedicated WhatsApp chatbot MyGov Corona Helpdesk, aimed at providing timely updates and helping citizens clear their questions on COVID-19, has been used by more than 2 crore users.

Artificial Intelligence chatbot company Haptik Infotech Pvt. Ltd., which is 87% owned by Reliance Jio, developed the MyGov Corona Helpdesk. According to Haptik, more than 55 million messages have been sent by over 20 million users since the chatbot was launched by the government on March 20.

"Misinformation & rumours are the primary outlets of panic. The @reliancejio & @haptik powered official @mygovindia coronavirus chatbot has helped eliminate these outlets for millions. Whatsapp +919013151515 for your queries," Haptik tweeted.

In two weeks since its launch, the helpdesk chatbot has been used by more than 2 crore people in India. "The MyGov Corona Helpdesk has already processed over 28 million conversations on WhatsApp from users across the country, while more than 20 million users have taken their queries to the chatbot within the 13 days since its launch," Haptik CEO Aakrit Vaish told PTL.

Railways mulls post-lockdown protocols

Officials say the focus will be on routes catering to migrant workers and avoiding hotspots

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI**

From making passengers wear masks to using the Arogya Setu app to check their health status before allowing them to travel and encouraging physical distancing on board are a few proposals that the Railways is mulling over as it prepares to gear for the end of the 21-day lockdown on April 14.

While no decision has yet been taken on when the passenger services will be resumed, officials said it is likely to be done in a phased manner.

A decision, officials said, is likely to be taken in the coming week on how to restore services. The Railways, officials said, had discussed



Amber signal: If it is a selective lifting of lockdown, trains will run only in virus-free areas. **SHY KUMAR PUSHPAKAR**

the option of resuming services only on specific approval of each train from the Railway Board. Suggestions for phase-wise resumption of services have to be provided by the zone to the board. "These are sensitive times

and we are not looking in terms of revenue generation for now. The focus is on passenger safety and to ensure that the disease does not spread. Trains will run in due course, once the government gives us the green signal. However, as of now, we have not taken any decision yet," said a senior official.

In the zones, officials are also identifying trains and routes which can be resumed with the approval of the board. The focus, say officials, is to see if routes catering to migrant workers can be resumed initially and those that are not travelling through or had halts at COVID-19 hotspots.

Railways is also unlikely to rescind a March 19 order suspending all concessions for passengers except those offered to patients, students and people with disabilities.

Masks, keeping distance
The Railways is mulling options like thermal screening to screen passengers boarding trains.

"We are thinking of requesting passengers to wear masks as per the Health Ministry advisory. We are also thinking of using the Arogya app to check the health of patients and allow only healthy passengers, an official said. The Railways has also asked zones to ensure the security of coaches parked in depots.



Officials added the Railways also have to factor in how the lockdown is eventually opened. If it is selective, then trains will only run in areas where the lockdown

30 more days to pay life insurance premium

Applied to policies due this month

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD**

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has allowed an additional 30-day grace period for policyholders to pay premium on life insurance policies whose renewal due date falls in April.

It had earlier provided a similar grace period for those policies whose premium was due for payment in March.

An additional grace period is over and above the 30-day grace period, from the due date, that usually is available to pay the premium without any interest charges and thus ensuring continuity of the policy without any break.

The grace period varies depending on the frequency of premium payment – it is less, usually 15 days, if the mode of payment is monthly and invariably 30 days for quarterly, half-yearly or yearly modes.

A circular issued by IRDAI Member (Life) K. Ganesh said the additional grace period for life insurance policies, whose premiums are due in March and April, would be 30 days. The communication, however, did not specify whether it will be applicable to all life insurance policies, irrespective of their frequency of payment.

Settlement options
The decision follows representations from life insurers and the Life Insurance Council, in which they had cited "various operational constraints and difficulties being faced by policyholders due to the lockdown," in view of the pandemic.

In another instruction to life insurers, IRDAI said they



IRDAI may offer settlement options for maturity payout of unit-linked policies.

may offer settlement options for maturity payout of unit-linked policies. Settlement option is a facility extended to ULIP holders to receive the maturity proceeds in instalments.

Regulatory returns
"Where unit-linked policies mature and fund value is to be paid in lump sum, life insurers may offer settlement options. This one-time option is regardless of whether such option exists or not in the specific product," the circular said.

In doing so, life insurers have to "exercise all due care and diligence to explain clearly the possible downside risk of continued fluctuation of fund value based on daily NAV and clear consent has to be obtained from the policyholder. This is allowed for unit-linked policies maturing up to May 31," the circular said.

IRDAI has given more time for insurers to file regulatory returns – 15 days for monthly returns; and 30 days for quarterly, half-yearly and yearly returns as well for Cybersecurity Audit. The additional time for filing regulatory returns is as on March 31, another circular said.

EPFO to accept Aadhaar date of birth as proof

Facility for members to change date

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) will accept the date of birth recorded in Aadhaar as a valid proof for those applying for changing the date, as long as the difference is less than three years, on EPFO records, a statement from the Union Labour and Employment Ministry said on Sunday.

"In a move to extend the availability and reach of online services in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, EPFO has issued revised instructions to its field offices to facilitate PF members to rectify their date of birth in EPFO records, thus ensuring that their UAN [universal account number] is KYC compliant," the note read.

The Ministry said PF subscribers who want to rectify their DOB in the EPFO records could do so online.

"This will enable EPFO to validate the date of birth of members online with UIDAI instantaneously, thus authenticating and reducing the processing time of change requests," the Ministry said.

Following Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's announcement on March 26 that EPF members could now withdraw non-refundable advance amounts, the Ministry had notified the amended scheme on March 27.

On Sunday, the Ministry reiterated that EPFO had "instructed field offices to expedite disposal of online requests for availing non-refundable advance."

Empowered group joins forces with private sector, UN & NGOs

Panel opens dialogue on production of health gear and PPEs

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

The government on Sunday said it had set up an empowered group, chaired by NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant, to undertake discussions with the private sector and international organisations on actions planned and challenges faced in dealing with COVID-19.

The empowered group, constituted on March 29, has already had several rounds of meetings with U.N. agencies, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the civil society organisations and development partners, and industry associations, such as the CII, FICCI, ASSOCHAM and Nasscom, on "their contribution to the



Amitabh Kant

government in identifying hotspots, deputing volunteers and care givers to deliver services to the elderly, persons with disabilities, children, transgender persons and other vulnerable groups and create awareness about prevention and combating stigma. He has also requested them to provide shelter to homeless, daily wage workers and urban poor families and set up community kitchens for migrants.

"The committee has opened up cross-sectoral dialogue within the private sector and start-ups to engineer collaboration among them to produce health equipment and PPEs," the release said.

Since March 30, the panel has conducted six meetings.

Mr. Kant has also reached out to over 92,000 NGOs/civil society organisations, appealing to them to assist the

government in identifying hotspots, deputing volunteers and care givers to deliver services to the elderly, persons with disabilities, children, transgender persons and other vulnerable groups and create awareness about prevention and combating stigma. He has also requested them to provide shelter to homeless, daily wage workers and urban poor families and set up community kitchens for migrants.

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IN BRIEF



CRPF DG, 14 senior officers test negative

NEW DELHI
Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Director General A.P. Maheshwari and 14 senior officers, who had gone into self-quarantine, have tested negative for COVID-19. They had gone into self-quarantine after it was found that they had come into indirect contact with the Chief Medical Officer of the CRPF, who had tested positive for virus symptoms on April 2.

Himachal man blamed for spreading virus, ends life

CHANDIGARH
A 34-year-old man, who tested negative for COVID-19, allegedly ended his life in a village of Himachal Pradesh's Una district on Sunday after a few villagers allegedly blamed him for spreading the disease. He had reportedly met two attendees of the Tablighi Jamaat congregation held recently in Delhi. The police said an investigation team had reached Una to probe the matter.

Pune reports three more deaths, 21 new cases

PUNE
Three deaths were reported from Pune district and one from Aurangabad as Maharashtra saw a further spike of 55 fresh cases with positive cases soaring to 747 and the toll at 45 on Sunday. Pune district witnessed a sharp surge with 21 new cases, taking toll to 103. At least four new cases are from Pimpri-Chinchwad.

Punjab reports one more death, toll reaches six

CHANDIGARH
Punjab on Sunday reported one more COVID-19 related death, taking toll to six, according to an official statement. A 69-year-old woman, who was suffering from diabetes and high blood pressure, died in Ludhiana while three fresh cases were reported on Sunday, taking the tally of confirmed cases to 68.

U.K. to evacuate 20,000 citizens starting this week

The elderly and the most vulnerable will be the first to leave

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

The United Kingdom will operate seven charter flights during this week to evacuate stranded British nationals from Goa, Mumbai and Delhi, its High Commission said on Sunday. Around 20,000 citizens will leave in a week-long operation that the U.K. envoy to India described as "huge".

Around 35,000 U.K. citizens are stranded after India suspended commercial international air travel on March 23 to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. The

High Commission, in a press release, said 20,000 of them had expressed willingness to leave.

"We know how worrying the past few weeks have been for British nationals in India. I hope this announcement will bring relief, especially to those in greatest need. Due to the large numbers of travellers involved, the scale of this operation is huge. The U.K. government continues to work hard with our Indian counterparts in New Delhi and London to arrange a safe journey back for as many people as possible,"

said Jan Thompson, acting High Commissioner.

The first flight will take off from Goa on April 8 and then on April 10 and 12. The flights from Mumbai and Delhi will leave on April 9 and 11. The first few flights are expected to carry the elderly and the most vulnerable.

The U.K. evacuated 113 of the most vulnerable citizens from Goa on an Irish aircraft on April 4. The effort will be focused on those citizens who are residents in the U.K. and their family members, the High Commission said.

IAF places Sergeant who visited Nizamuddin under quarantine

12 outsiders who attended congregation held in Lucknow

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has placed a Sergeant under quarantine as a precaution after the Delhi police found that he had visited the Nizamuddin area during the time of the Tablighi Jamaat congregation last month.

"He came in contact with two other personnel and they all are asymptomatic. But as per procedure all three have been quarantined," IAF spokesperson Wg. Cdr. Indranil Nandi said. Investigation is on to determine if the Sergeant had actually attended the congregation. The families of the personnel have also been quarantined.

Phone records
The Sergeant was identified by the Delhi police after they traced people present in the Nizamuddin area using phone records as part of efforts to identify those pre-



Disinfectant being sprayed at a locality near Nizamuddin mosque in Delhi. **PTI**

sent during the congregation.

Once the information was known, the contact list of the Sergeant was ascertained and it was identified that he contacted two more personnel, Wg. Cdr. Nandi added. Currently, the IAF is working on skeletal staff with a majority working from home due to COVID-19, so the contact list is very limited.

Meanwhile, in Lucknow, a total lockdown was enforced in Sadar Bazar in the Can-

tonment area after 12 outsiders who attended the congregation in Delhi were identified by Military Intelligence (MI) to be staying there.

"Actionable information regarding presence of a group of strangers who returned from Nizamuddin after attending the Tablighi Jamaat congregation was provided to the police by the MI unit of Lucknow," a defence source said.

Acting on the input, the police and the district administration detained 12 people in the Pathar Mosque of Sadar Bazar, which is about 600 m from the Command headquarters of Army's Central Command, the source stated. All 12 have tested positive to COVID-19, following which a lockdown in the area was enforced.

The police are now trying to identify those who gave them shelter without informing the authorities.

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In the time of the pandemic, classes go online and on air

Teachers and students enter a new world of virtual lectures and worksheets as the lockdown brought about by the coronavirus shuts down schools and colleges

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The long lockdown for the COVID-19 pandemic has closed schools, colleges and other educational institutions and ushered in the city-wide classroom: tens of thousands of students in cities and towns are glued to computers and smartphone screens as teachers take to online apps for lectures, tutorials and assessments.

e-learning poses a challenge to both teachers and students over technology and access, but it is keeping everyone busy with worksheets, video lectures and assignments.

Some institutions are uploading lectures to YouTube, while the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan is deploying its Swayam Prabha portal, which has lectures on DTH and online, to help students. Andhra Pradesh is trying to tap Doordarshan to remove access barriers. Some institutions have adopted the Zoom app, others Google Classroom. Yet, the instructors are unable to say how effective they are, and not every student is tuning in. Here is how the system has rolled out.

Chennai
At DAV Public School, Principal Minoo Aggarwal is keen that student interest in online classes offered as live teaching can be sustained only with a mix of activities, worksheets and interactive sessions. "It is unfair to expect the same level of concentration and involvement as in the classroom. Teachers should have a structured plan which does not suffice or burden them," she said.

Not all students might



Making a trade-off: Online learning may not have the same level of involvement as in the classroom. —SUDHAKARA JAIN

have laptops or tablet computers. "Since the whole family is at home, the only laptop or computer in the house might be used by the parents who are working from home as well."

While smartphones are the next best option, teachers are apprehensive about students using them earnestly because of distracting apps.

Teachers too might have technical constraints, said K.R. Maalathi, an education consultant. In a higher secondary school, teachers had requested for laptops to plan their curriculum. "These teachers are equipped to take classes but the same might not be the case for other institutions. Going forward, all institutions will have to chalk out an infrastructure plan," she said.

In the face of such constraints, several schools have engaged coaching academies that have subject experts and a structured online curriculum for students taking board exams in the next academic year.

Mumbai
Parents in Mumbai are relieved that children are academically engaged online. "My daughter Tia is in 10th class, at Podar International School, and it is important that online classes are started. About the quality of education, it is too early to say," said Ajay Raorane a marketing executive.

Most teachers find it difficult to cope with online teaching. Lack of familiarity with technology forces them to seek help from their children to set up apps and deal with technical glitches.

Sudha Sharan, Headmistress, Gopal Sharma Memorial School, Powai, said the Maharashtra State Board schedule is from June, but 10 days of revision and examination have already been lost. "To compensate, we are trying to use e-learning. The problems is that we do not

have much technical help due to the lockdown. State Board schools are using trial and error methods to send worksheets and videos. But unlike the classroom we do not have 100% attendance," she said.

Parents are finding it difficult to adjust to the online system of the children. Due to the lockdown, domestic help is not available adding to household work. Some parents say schools are going online only to justify charging the fees in April. Without text books for the new session, schools are sending study materials as terse WhatsApp messages.

Language teacher Meena Raut (name changed) was exasperated as "many parents could be heard talking in the background while the class is on. This is very distracting." She said an entire domestic guard could be heard from a child's home. "Some parents don't use the mute button. Managements have put off

the last date for fee payment to May 31 and children of all classes have been promoted. Podar International School uses Google Hangouts.

New Delhi
Teachers in the national capital have been pushed out of their comfort zones.

"Teachers all over are struggling to make online learning work. It is important to just embrace this new reality and work within its limitations and use the opportunities," said Naomi George, who teaches social studies and English to elementary and high school students at the Metro Delhi International School.

Teachers at the school alternate between prepared video and PowerPoint lessons and hosting live teaching via Google Classroom. Most teachers and students are digitally literate and savvy, but full-time distance education is still a new experience.

"How children feel or what they are going through

during this lockdown needs to be worked through, and teachers need to be considerate," Ms. George said.

For educational institutions that are not so used to the digital world, the new reality can be more difficult. "We were caught off guard and did not foresee such a long lockdown, so we could not prepare our students for this," said Anita Keskar, Deputy Director of the Women's Training Institute, which provides vocational education to girls.

"Most of our subjects are very practical and hands on — beauty culture, fashion design and tailoring, office management, travel and tourism, web design — so it's difficult to teach from a distance. How do you show a student how to cut and tailor a piece of cloth unless they are in front of you," she asks.

Only theory classes are being taught via Zoom for now. The apex body of Kendriya Vidyalayas, KVS, said the schedule of live and recorded lessons of the National Institute of Open Schooling for secondary and senior secondary levels, effective April 7, had been shared with schools for coordination between students, teachers and parents. Select teachers would clarify doubts via Skype and live web chat. NIOS also offers free DTH television channels, a YouTube channel and massive open online courses.

Hyderabad
Vivek Akki of Hyderabad Public School at Begumpet concentrates just like he does in his classroom when his favourite teacher appears onscreen. "The transformation is exciting as I can see all my classmates," he says.

HPS, Begumpet, a prominent school, has gone online. Vivek's mother Parvati Akki said the Zoom app is used to livestream classes. "As parents this is a new experience for us," she says. HPS, Ramnathapur Principal, Narsimha Reddy said the focus is on 10th and 12th classes. "We haven't started online classes but are keeping students busy with assignments through video links from educational providers."

At the Narayana group of schools, Sparshita Guda from Tarnaka, who is in 10th class said four daily classes are held via Zoom.

At some schools using Google Classroom, there is no live teaching, but students and teachers interact through video lessons. Sanjit Kaila, a 10th class student of DRS International School, Kompally said, "I get video lessons and assignments."

Veda, a 7th class student of Abhyasa Waldorff School, Kompally said Google Classroom is also used to assess students' performance. Students can also leave their comments for clarifications by teachers.

Vijayawada
The Andhra Pradesh State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) thinks online classes for all students would not be possible. The focus is therefore on 10th class. "We are trying to rope in Doordarshan to impart classes to our SSC students," said B. Pratap Reddy, Director, APSCERT.

In the private sector, KCP Siddhartha Adarsh Public School and St. John's Public School send students videos of classroom lessons through WhatsApp. "We tried the online mode but gave up after

realising that not all children have access to laptops," said V. Sasikala, convener of a group school in Vijayawada.

Thiruvananthapuram
In Kerala's capital, Bindu Santhosh, who teaches Maths to class 12 students at Christ Nagar Higher Secondary School, Kowdiar, said the lockdown came in the way of training for teachers on using the Zoom app. Ms. Santhosh and class 12 Chemistry teacher Rekha P. reached out to students using Google Classroom.

The limitation is that students would have to type, write and scan doubts and then send them as a PDF file through the app.

Gayathri Rani M., the high school section head at Tri-vandrum International School, Edakkode, and a history teacher, said Google Classroom was being used for grades 6 to 9 using the school connection. She also uses Eduzzle to create interactive videos and embed questions.

Bengaluru
Lecturers in Bengaluru find attendance rates for online classes higher. "Attendance for online classes is even 90%, while for regular classes it is about 80%," said K.R.Venugopal, Vice-Chancellor, Bangalore University. Some lecturers said they were struggling with technology as students played music or ran audio clips of cookery classes during lectures.

(With inputs from Priscilla Jeebaraj, S. Poorvaja, R. Krishnamoorthy, R. Ravikanth Reddy, P. Sujatha Varma, Tanu Kulkarni, Roshni R.K., Lalendu Mishra, Gauri Vij)

Study abroad dreams shattered or delayed

Some students believe it is time to look for a plan B and apply for colleges in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

With an acceptance letter from Australia's Deakin University, 21-year-old Tripathi Luthra was on cloud nine a month back but is now glued to TV following news updates from across the globe about the coronavirus pandemic as uncertainty surrounds her study abroad dream.

For Anoushka Ray, who had plans to go to New York for the session beginning in September, the development is demotivating but not a factor to change her entire life plan.

However, Tara Osan, who had acceptance letters from multiple colleges in Canada and Italy, believes it is time to look for a Plan B and apply for colleges in India.

The three are among sev-

eral students whose study abroad plans have either been shattered or delayed due to lockdown restrictions imposed in various countries across the globe leading to suspension of classes and visa processes.

No clarity on jobs

Equally hard-pressed are those students who are already enrolled in courses abroad and are in final year with no clarity on jobs and their visa deadlines racing against lockdown timelines besides education loans adding financial strain.

"I had plans to study Masters in Architecture at Deakin University in Australia. I was supposed to go there soon and was waiting for my exams for undergraduate degree to be over. But now it feels like time has frozen,"



Ms. Luthra said. "I had not applied for further studies in any college in India and the option of taking up a job or internship also looks a distant dream here with the economic slowdown on the doorstep once the lockdown is lifted," she added.

Ms. Tara Osan, a Shri Ram School student, who wanted to study Advertising either in Italy or in Canada, believes that for students who opted for the IB curriculum, study-

ing abroad had been a plan in mind since long.

"Two months back, I was elated to be counting the number of options I had but now it is a very demotivating phase. Our Class 12 exams are also suspended and will be evaluated on basis of internal assessments. So it is a feeling that lot needs to be done to get future plans in order but everything is on hold.

"Studying abroad does not look like a possible thing this year so I will now look for a plan B and start applying for colleges here," she said.

However, for Ms. Anoushka Ray, who wanted to study Liberal Arts in New York, the plan is only deferred but not cancelled.

"Planning to study abroad is a long process, I have in-

vested way too much both financially as well as mentally in the process so altering an entire life plan because of the situation at the moment, does not seem to be wise decision. I will go for next session but I will go. I am reaching out to my university in New York to see if my admission can be considered for next fall," she said.

"There are many students who have already got admission but are now reconsidering because the classes have moved online and there is no clarity when situation will improve," Anupam Singha, who runs a Study Abroad consultancy firm in Delhi, said.

Interviews and announcements for several fellowship opportunities are also on hold in view of the uncertainty.

Anganwadi workers get online sessions on COVID-19 steps

Aim is to ensure safety of pregnant women, new mothers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Women and Child Development Ministry is regularly holding online interactive sessions with anganwadi workers to ensure the safety of pregnant women and lactating mothers after the 21-day lockdown ends, sources said.

The Ministry has reached out to more than two lakh anganwadi workers through these interactive sessions, the sources said.

"The Women and Child Development Ministry has initiated a series of interactive awareness sessions with them using digital platforms to ensure front line anganwadi workers have first-hand information regarding

measures to safeguard themselves from COVID-19 [even after the lockdown ends]," a source said. The government is also in touch with health experts on the matter, they said. "Special focus is also being given to ensure that the nutritional requirements of pregnant women and lactating mothers are met even after April 15," another source added.

On Sunday, digital interactive sessions, including an introduction on the virus, the preventive measures to be taken and the psychosocial impact of COVID-19 on women and children, were conducted by the Ministry, sources said. "Several measures and suggestions were discussed for maintaining

the physical and mental well-being of women and children amid the pandemic," an official said.

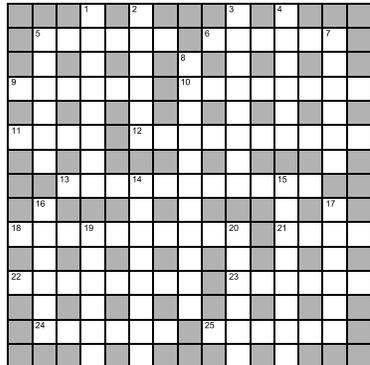
In a bid to help domestic violence victims, the National Commission for Women (NCW) has decided to form a task force of over 15 NGOs to help women in need, sources in the Commission said.

The move comes a few days after the NCW said that it has received 69 complaints of domestic violence since the imposition of the countrywide lockdown.

Since March 24, 257 complaints related to offences against women were received, of which 69 were of domestic violence, NCW Chairperson Rekha Sharma said.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12902

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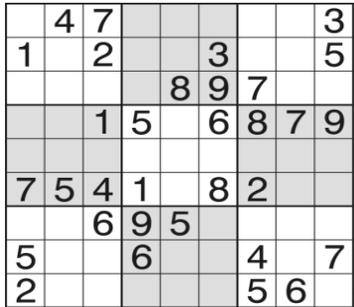
■ ACROSS

- 5 Recluse to ignore a thing's trading limits (4-2)
- 6 Coming out pithily expressed (6)
- 9 Charged policemen for being odious (6)
- 10 Neighbourhood in old city still decked out (8)

- 11 Fellow gobbled up bread spread (4)
- 12 She might tie you up in knots! (10)
- 13 Swiping for thrills and spills like a man smuggling illegal pot (11)
- 18 Sick maiden at LA ranch treated by self-proclaimed physicians (10)
- 21 Promise grain for horses with lisp (4)
- 22 Overwrought interface wants a redesign (8)
- 23 Bore old woman's bed-mate! (6)
- 24 Bureau's power to act (6)
- 25 Spiritual calling! (6)
- DOWN
- 1 Turning up at fight (boxing championship inaugural) from bar-hopping (3-5)
- 2 Glossed over, flagrantly lied in grand case (6)
- 3 Creature in a Canon ad broadcast (8)
- 4 Fetish you tolerate after morning (6)
- 5 Drivel from someone known for manhandling! (6)
- 7 Tom loves this anti-PC establishment (6)
- 8 Showiness in peregrine falcon, maybe (11)
- 14 Dry-run for performance (8)
- 15 Seaweed around beluga, ginger essences that promotes respiration (4,4)
- 16 Mountaineer assesses her pack's contents (6)
- 17 Mark's achievement (6)
- 19 Forest official in peril runs for aid finally (6)
- 20 Food for drinker! (6)

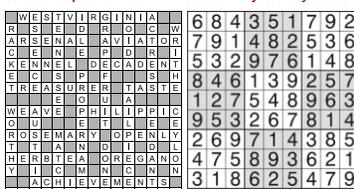
(set by Skulldigger)

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

Solution to puzzle 12901 Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



FAITH

Change is in our hands

The first step of inner purification (*antar tap*) in Jainism is repentance (*prayaschitta*). Repentance, as explained by the Mahavira, is a unique concept very different from conventional notions. The Sanskrit word '*prayaschitta*' contains the suffix '*chitta*', the self, the most significant part of the word. Repentance is 'not crying over spilt milk.' Repentance is the process of a radical transformation; a mutation of the level of being of the individual. Mostly one repents for their actions believing that certain actions are condemnable and some praiseworthy. But when it is thought about, can any 'action' ever be right or wrong? It is simply dependent on the situation and one's perception of right and wrong. But it is very convenient to blame actions, because it reinforces the belief that "I am good, the situation made me do it" or "that person made me do it". This approach to life can't lead one further; rather it is the process of staying at the same place. So, the Mahavira did not stress much on changing actions, but rather that the individual must undergo a metamorphosis. Jain philosophy gives utmost importance to the self. Actions are pointed to other people, making the latter more important, when one decides to change actions. To simplify this concept, if a person decides to not get angry at any cost, they will have to wait for several situations to test their resistance. The most likely outcome is that that person will just learn to put on a facade, maybe even hiding the anger from themselves. Yet if a person simply changes the self, making the self incapable of anger, they are free.

On the pious occasion of Mahavir Jayanti let all of us look within and continue to evolve in the journey of life — just like the Mahavira, the Buddha, and several others did.
(Rushil Khajanchi & Avni Khajanchi Kolkata)

A weak Afghanistan can be a hot spot for terrorist recruitment. The recent attack on Sikh Gurudwara confirms this. The apparent stale mate between Taliban and the government of Afghanistan (still there is no agreement in Afghanistan as to who is leading the country) is akin to brushing all the trouble under the carpet. An Afghan “ LED, OWNED AND CONTROLLED” solution sounds like a utopian proposition that will never see the light of the day. For India this would mean a fresh bout of terrorist attacks and a fresh wave of influx of refugees.

ASK US



N. SREEKANTH

Q. If a person is sailing for six months and has no income generated from any source in India, is he still liable to pay tax here? If that is the case, what would be his tax liability?

NAIREEN AHMED

A. A person leaving India during an assessment year as a member of an Indian ship will be considered a resident if he is in India for more than 182 days. If the number of days crosses 182 in India, then any income earned by him from anywhere in the world will be taxable in India. He will be treated as a resident and all provisions applicable to a resident will be applicable to the said sailor.

Q. My son is presently working in an MNC, drawing an annual salary of ₹14 lakh and other perks, in addition. He is also entitled to the company's shares. What I would like to know is: are the shares eligible for tax payment when sold or while holding them; does he have to pay tax the next year also for the same shares?

MATHEW JACOB

A. As per the tax provision for AY 2020-21, taxability of Employee Stock Option Plan (ESOP) - the taxability of ESOP is two-fold: first, at the time of vesting the options viz. at the time of accepting the eligible shares as a requisite. The difference between the fair market value (FMV) and the exercise price is the requisite and the same will be taxed in the hands of the employee. Usually, TDS will be deducted for the requisite, taking care of the tax liability.

Second, on sale of the shares received by way of exercising ESOPs, the same is to be treated as a capital asset and tax is to be computed in the following manner - sale proceeds minus transfer expenses minus FMV on the date of exercise. If the shares are held for more than one year (in the case of listed securities) it will be termed as long-term capital gain/loss, and short-term otherwise. In case the shares are not listed, then the holding period criteria will be three years.

Determination of FMV: unlisted - price determined by the merchant banker; if listed - if traded, the average of opening price and the closing price on the exercise date, in case traded on both the exchanges, then, the exchange which records the most volume is to be considered.

Q. I had filed my income tax return on June 19, 2019 for assessment year 2019-20. The status shows 'successfully e-verified.' It's been six months now, I have not received my refund yet. All my previous returns were done within the normal time and refunds issued. This year, I had done the e-verification from outside the country. Please let me know if refunds should take this long and whom to approach for getting this sorted out.

VISHWANATH

A. This is something that we don't have an answer for; refunds are processed based on various parameters set by the Central Board of Direct Taxes. You may want to raise a ticket through the help desk in the web portal e-Nivaran.

Further, the processing is held up especially in a case where the transactions are to be matched with AIR (Annual Information Return) information and other data reconciliations which the CBDT undertakes for that particular assessment year.

Q. Kindly clarify whether TDS is applicable on dividends from equity shares as per the Budget for financial year 2020-2021

P.K. DAMODARAN

A. Under section 194 w.e.f 01-04-2020, TDS is to be deducted by companies on the dividend issued to its shareholders if such sum paid to a shareholder exceeds ₹5,000 in a year.

(The author is partner, GSS Associates, Chartered Accountants, Chennai)

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.

In these troubled times, when a pandemic is sweeping the world, investors need to be careful about their money

VIDYA BALA

In troubled times such as the present one, the urge to do 'something' to make your money work better is high. Here are some of the questions I received frequently, reflecting the above sentiment, and my corresponding suggestions.

"I have some surplus to invest now, where should I invest for high returns?" Having some surplus does not automatically qualify it for risky, long-term investments in these hard times. The COVID-19 pandemic may take time to resolve; some of us may have pay cuts and worse, some may lose jobs. If that be the case, be happy that you have some surplus and earmark the same as a contingency fund.

At least six to nine months of your expenses are best set aside in these extraordinary times. Stash much of this money in savings accounts and short-

term bank deposits (of large scheduled banks) that you can break. Overnight or liquid funds should only be your next choices. Please stop bothering about the interest it earns, until such time we get over this current crisis. In other words, near-term survival and sustenance matter first.

EMI payment
"Should I stop paying my EMI and use the money to invest?" No, this is not a good idea. First, there is no free moratorium. Your interest will get added over the three-month period. If you have enough money for your daily needs, avoid skipping the EMI. Second, in such a dicey market, the last thing to do would be to ride the market on borrowed money hoping the market will generate quick returns.

"The RBI is cutting the interest rate. Should I lock into higher-earning depo-

sit options?" Higher earning options do not come without risk in normal times. They come with heightened risk in these risky times. Stay clear of any kind of credit risk if you are dependent on your investment for regular income. Good old small savings schemes will offer slightly better interest rates than bank FDs, especially for senior citizens, even after the recent rate cut. There are select, quality low-risk options in debt mutual funds that you can explore if you have other sources of income.

"Markets have fallen sharply. Can I buy some stocks now?" If you are a seasoned stock investor, then you might find opportunities in quality stocks that you are already invested in and accumulate those.

If you are new to stock markets, then trying to buy when markets fall can be like catching a falling knife. Instead, add more to

your mutual funds or simply use index funds or ETFs and keep accumulating in 6-8 small instalments and slowly deploy every week. Make sure this is money you don't need for 3-5 years at least and you have enough debt allocation in place. Avoid wasting your time asking friends or even experts whether this is the correct time to buy. Nobody really knows.

"Small-caps have been hit badly. So, they may bounce back fast. Should I shift to smaller companies?" This is not the kind of correction where stocks that fall the most bounce back the highest. The present crisis will lead to a question of survival of the fittest as stressed working capital and poor sales would threaten companies with weak finances.

Also, previous market falls have taught us that some stocks and sectors go out of fancy when a new rally starts after such ma-

corrections. This may mean that stocks that you eyed in the earlier rally may completely lose out and fade into oblivion, at times. Unless you track smaller companies and their financial strength closely, stay with quality companies that are cash rich, are known to emerge from downturns and are currently at a double-digit discount to the prices they were in a bull market.

Equity investment
"All my equity investments are below my cost after 5 years of investing now. What is the point in investing in equities?"

Social media comments on 5-year SIPs turning negative, 5-year FD returns or liquid funds being better than equity at present... are all true. But just 2.5 months ago, there would have been no case

to make. Also, nobody speaks of the bounce-back that happens not far after the hit. My point is, get to know how you could have mitigated it. The answer is asset allocation. Some equity, some debt, some gold and so on. If you had done this, then please a look at your portfolio in its entirety and not just your equity. You will still be better off.

When you have asset allocation in place, an annual check will tell you whether the allocation needs to be rebalanced - that is, bringing your asset proportion back to your original allocation if an asset class swells. For exam-

ple, if your 60:40 equity:debt portfolio has grown to 70:30, you need not know anything about the markets. You simply need to know your equity allocation is inflated and bring it back to 60:40. Such rebalancing will indirectly help you book profit in the inflated asset and redeploy in the deflated asset class (debt, in our example).

This way, in steep falls, your portfolio is better protected, and you would already have reaped some profit and shifted it out, without knowing whether markets may rise or fall.

Stay safe, invest right! (The author is co-founder, Primeinvestor.in)

THINK INVESTOR

The 'long-term' investment trap

A fall in equities nearer to the end of your goal term can land you in trouble

VENKATESH BANGARUSWAMY

The recent stock market crash has presumably affected your financial health. Yet, you take comfort from the typical advice that equity generates positive returns in the 'long term.' It is important that you make optimal decisions while managing your personal investments.

To make such decisions, you should first ask the right questions. One such question is: can I achieve my goal if equity generates positive returns in the 'long term'?

Life's asymmetry

If you run 10 km every day, you could, perhaps, maintain your body weight or, at best, reduce your weight by, say, 5 kg. But stop running for two months and you would gain 10 kg. Notice the adverse relationship. You do not lose much weight when you run, but you gain more weight when you stop running. In other words, you have to apply more effort to achieve a positive outcome, but a negative outcome comes easily.

A similar relationship exists in the market. Suppose your equity investments declined from 100 to 75 during the recent market crash. Note that a 25% unrealised loss requires a 33% gain to recover the losses (25 upon 75). In addition, your investment has to generate positive returns to justify your



Churn in time: One should keep reducing equity allocation as one nears his or her investment goal. •GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

decision to buy equity instead of investing in bank deposits.

You may argue that the market can gain 33% just as easily as it lost 25%. That is not necessarily true. Fear is at least twice as powerful as greed. This means that it takes less time for the market to decline than it takes for it to go up. Remember, the market rose between April 2003 and January 2008, but lost 65% in the subsequent 10 months.

Thereafter, it took another two years to recover the losses and an additional five years to generate significant positive returns. So, the question is: Can you wait enough for your loss-making

equity investments to generate positive returns?

Goal-based investments

Suppose you created a portfolio in 2010 to fund your child's college education in 2024. What if your equity investments are down 25% in 2020? Your portfolio has to recover 33% in the next 4 years and, in addition, earn the annual expected return. Why?

Suppose you invested a fixed amount every month from 2010.

You had determined that 8.5% compounded annual post-tax returns over 14 years will help you accumulate the money required to fund your child's education.

Based on a post-tax expected return of 10.8% (12% less 10% capital gains tax) on equity and 4.5% on bonds, you invested 65% in equity and 35% in bonds.

Then, the market crashes four years before your child is scheduled to go to college. What should you do? You cannot wait for the 'long term' because you need the money four years hence. Besides, you need to earn 10.8% returns every year on your equity investments to achieve your goal.

The point is this: Equity investments could recover over a long term. But you have a different time horizon. So, the question you should be asking is: are your investments likely to recover losses and generate gains in time to fund your life goal?

Thinking of equity as a long-term investment can help you reduce the emotional pain of investment losses. But that is unlikely to help you achieve your goal. What should you do?

For one, you should continually reduce your portfolio's equity allocation as you come closer to the time you need the money for your life goal. For another, you should have a plan to bridge any shortfall in your portfolio to meet your life goal.

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

TECH TRAIL: PRECIOUS METALS

Get set for volatility

Gold, silver prices move in a weak band

B. KRISHNAKUMAR

After an initial spike in the first week of March, precious metals fell sharply along with other asset classes in the second week. Comex gold gained 1.91% in March to settle at \$1,596.6 an ounce while Comex silver fell by a whopping 13.6% to close at \$14.15 an ounce.

In the domestic market, gold futures on the MCX gained 3.3% in March to settle at ₹29,956 per 10 gm. MCX silver futures slipped 10.1% in close to ₹39,523 per kg.

As observed in the previous post, Comex gold turned weak and fell way below the target zone of \$1,510-1,520. The short-term outlook for Comex gold remains weak and a slide to \$1,450-1,490 appears likely.

From a medium-term perspective, gold price is likely to trade in the range of \$1,450-1,700. Until there is a breakout from this range, a range-bound action is likely to persist.

Comex silver, too, ruled weak and hit the earlier mentioned target zone of \$15.5-15.7 an ounce. The short-term outlook remains weak and a drop to \$13-13.5 appears likely. The trend would remain weak until the price moves past the resistance at \$16.6-17 zone.

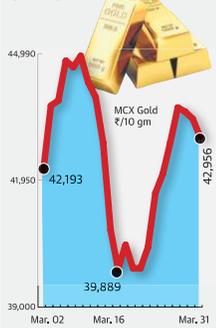
Outlook positive for MCX gold

The short-term outlook for MCX gold futures is positive and a breakout past ₹43,800 would push the MCX gold price to the short-term target of ₹44,800-45,000. The trend would turn weak if the price falls below ₹41,500 per 10 gm.

The short-term outlook for MCX silver is positive and the price could move up to ₹42,800-43,500 range. A move past ₹41,750 would strengthen

Losing sheen

In the medium term, Comex gold is likely to trade in the range of \$1,450-\$1,700



the positive view. A drop below ₹33,000 would indicate a major trend reversal and the price could then slide to far lower levels.

To summarise, precious metals achieved their short-term downside targets and have rebounded thereafter. Though there is a case for a minor bounce, especially in the domestic market, the international price of gold and silver are likely to remain volatile and range-bound.

(The author is a Chennai-based analyst/trader. The views and opinion featured in this column are based upon 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



"Don't panic, I say! Yes, I have milk. No, I don't sell cows."

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 10 Years)	Annual premium (Rs.) (Male)
Aditya Birla Capital	Ultima Term	85	10,270
Aegon Life	iTerm Insurance Plan	100	9,114
Aviva Life Insurance	iTerm Smart	80	9,007
Bajaj Allianz	Smart Protect Goal	99	8,010
Bharti AXA	Flexi Term Plan	85	9,440
Canara HSBC OBC Life	iSelect+ Term Plan	99	9,284
Pramerica Life	Flexi e-Term	75	9,403
Edelweiss Tokio Life	Zindagi+ Term Insurance Plan	80	9,309
Exide Life	Smart Term Plan	75	12,411*
Future Generali	Flexi Online Term Plan	75	9,427
HDFC Life	Click2Protect 3D Plus	100	12,478
ICICI Prudential	iProtect Smart	99	12,502
India First Life	e-Term Plan	80	8,260
Kotak Life	Kotak e-Term Plan	75	9,558
Max Life	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	Sampoorna Raksha	100	9,912

*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	8,675
	Family Floater option	Care	7,887
	Health Checkups	Care with unlimited recharge	8,478
	Pre and Post Hospitalisation Coverage	NCB Super Premium with UAR	9,267
Max Bupa Health	Day Care Treatments	Health Companion with Health Recharge	8,764
	Hospitalization at Home	Health Companion Go Active	11,747
Star Health	Family Floater option	Medi Classic	9,661
	Restoration of cover	Star Comprehensive	11,476
HDFC Ergo Health	Wellness Benefits	Optima Restore	11,024
	Pre and Post Hospitalisation Coverage	Easy Health Individual Standard	9,613
	Day Care Treatments	Easy Health Individual Exclusive	12,067
HDFC Ergo General	Hospitalization at Home	Easy Health Individual Premium	14,945
	Hospital Room Eligibility	Energy Gold	20,036
	Health wallet	Energy Gold with Co pay	14,136
		Energy Silver with Co pay	11,316
HDFC Ergo General	Hospitalization at Home	MyHealth Suraksha Gold Smart	13,886
	Hospital Room Eligibility	Alternate Medicine	14,945
Aditya Birla Health	Day Care Treatments	Acti assure Diamond	7,938
	Restoration of cover	Acti Health Enhance	9,801
	Family Floater Option	Acti Health Enhance e (Diabetes)	38,148
		Acti Health Enhance (Asthma)	16,818
Oriental	Acti assure Diamond with Super NCB	8,732	
	Acti assure Diamond with Unlimited Reload	8,494	
	Acti assure Diamond with Super NCB and Unlimited Reload	9,287	
	Acti assure Diamond with Super NCB and Unlimited Reload	9,287	

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



Yuvraj pledges ₹50 lakh for PM-CARES Fund

NEW DELHI Former India cricketer Yuvraj Singh on Sunday pledged to donate ₹50 lakh to the PM-CARES Fund to help fight the COVID-19 pandemic. The all-rounder also appealed to the people to stay united in the fight against the pandemic. **PTI**

Contributions raised by IOA crosses ₹1 crore

NEW DELHI The Indian Olympic Association said in a statement that ₹1,02,56,003 has been raised by the NSFs, State Olympic associations, non-members (who have applied for recognition) and others for combating the pandemic. The IOA will transfer the donations to PM-CARES Fund. **PTI**



Harbhajan to feed 5000 families

NEW DELHI Harbhajan Singh has pledged to feed 5000 families in Jalandhar affected by the lockdown. The 39-year-old said he would continue to feed those who are homeless and jobless until normalcy returns. **PTI**

Badminton Worlds to be rescheduled

LONDON The Badminton World Championships next year is set to be rescheduled because it clashes with the new dates for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. The Badminton World Federation (BWF) said it was working with the organisers in Spain's Huelva to find a new time slot. **IANIS**

Stephen O'Keefe quits First Class cricket

SYDNEY Former Australia Test spinner Stephen O'Keefe retired from First Class cricket after being omitted from New South Wales' list of contracted players for the next domestic season. The 35-year-old left-armed took 35 wickets in nine Tests, including 12 in a match against India at Pune in 2017. **AP**



Cancel F1 this season, says Ecclestone

LONDON Former Formula One boss Bernie Ecclestone feels that the 2020/21 Championship should be cancelled. "I can't see it's going to be possible to get the right amount of races in that count for a championship," he said. **IANIS**

Olympic Games ban for Thailand, Malaysia lifters

BUDAPEST Thailand and Malaysia have been banned from sending weightlifters to the Tokyo Olympics. The International Weightlifting Federation said in a statement on Saturday that the Thai Amateur Weightlifting Association (TAWA) has been suspended for three years, while the Malaysian Weightlifting Federation (MWF) has been given a one-year ban. **IANIS**



Liverpool deserves to be given title: Berbatov

LONDON Former Manchester United striker Dimitar Berbatov says the 2019/20 Premier League title should be awarded to arch-rival Liverpool if the season cannot get underway. "People are suggesting the title be given to Liverpool, and honestly they deserve it the way they had been playing, nobody was going to catch them," Berbatov said. **IANIS**

Chirag-Satwik looking for coach

The ace doubles team planning to maximise the Olympics postponement

BADMINTON

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI**

The crack men's doubles pair of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy is now hoping to avail the services of a new foreign coach to help in their Olympic preparation after the sudden exit of Indonesian Flandy Limpele.

Limpele, appointed till the Tokyo Olympics, stepped down as doubles coach last month, becoming the fourth foreign coach to resign without completing his tenure.

Chirag said the postponement will now give them more time to deal with the departure of Limpele, who was specifically hired to prepare them for Tokyo.

More time to prepare "We will definitely get more time to prepare now. Since it is more than a year to go, I believe we will get a new foreign coach. If the Olympics had happened this year, we wouldn't have got a coach



Dynamic duo: Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy believe that an experienced coach will make a big difference to their chances at the Olympics next year. **FILE PHOTO: AFP**

for 3-4 months. But now, BAI might get one to help us," said Chirag.

"Now we have a year... hopefully, we will get a new coach and adjust to the new regime. So in a way, we got lucky with this postpone-

ment. If an experienced coach comes on board, it will make a big difference."

"We are almost there, it is a matter of 2-3 points. We are 90% there and a good coach like Rexy Mainaky (head coach of Thailand) would

give us that extra 10%. A high-calibre coach can help us get into world's top three."

Satwik said: "We also have coaches like Dwi Kristiawan and Namrih Suroto who can make a programme for us."

Premier League players reject pay cut

**ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON**

The English Premier League players rejected a move on Saturday by clubs to cut their wages by 30% during the coronavirus pandemic, escalating a bitter row as their union claimed the government would lose out on more than £200 million in tax.

"This would be detrimental to our NHS (National Health Service) and other government-funded services," the Professional Footballers' Association said in a statement.

Taking on the Premier League as a whole, the PFA said the £20 million pounds being given to the NHS by the world's richest

soccer competition was "welcome, but we believe it could be far bigger."

The union's strident stance came after further talks on Saturday involving clubs and the league.

No-win situation

Former England captain Wayne Rooney said the move would have placed footballers in a "no-win situation".

"If the government approached me to help support nurses financially or buy ventilators I'd be proud to do so - as long as I knew where the money was going," said Rooney. "I'm in a place where I could give something up. Not every footballer is in the same position."

Young Rohit reminded me of Inzamam, says Yuvraj

CRICKET

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI**

Former India cricketer Yuvraj Singh said that Rohit Sharma reminded him of Pakistan batting legend Inzamam-ul-Haq in his early days.

The flamboyant India vice-captain made his ODI debut in June 2007 while his maiden T20 game came during the World Cup later that year against England, where unfortunately Rohit didn't get a chance to bat.

Asked about his first impression of Rohit, the left-hander said the swashbuckling batsman looked like somebody who had a lot of time to play his strokes.

"I think when he came into the Indian team, he



Admiration: Yuvraj Singh, right, says Rohit Sharma is someone who has a lot of time to play his strokes. **FILE PHOTO: VIVEK BENDRE**

looked like somebody who had a lot of time," Yuvraj said during a YouTube chat show.

"He reminded me of Inzamam, because, when he batted, Inzi had a lot of time to

Bergamasco has not lost hope

Women's coach wants to visit family after travel ban ends

BOXING

**Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA**

Despite being caught between a rock and a hard place, Raffaele Bergamasco has not lost hope.

Even as Bergamasco, the foreign coach for Indian women boxers, is leading a solitary life on the campus of the Indira Gandhi Stadium in New Delhi, his heart is with his ailing wife and daughters in Italy.

No other choice

With the coronavirus outbreak hitting Italy hard and spreading dangerously in India, Bergamasco has no choice but to wait for the situation to improve.

"I would like to travel back home and spend some time with my family as and when the situation improves. However, my commitment is towards Indian boxing and the boxers and till the time there is no clarity on the status of travel I would like to stay put here.

"As per the current government guidelines, if I re-



Raffaele Bergamasco.
•SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

turn to Rome my visa will stand cancelled. With Olympics postponed, there is time for preparation and I hope I can visit my family once travel bans are relaxed," Bergamasco told *The Hindu*.

Glad that family is safe

The Italian is happy that his family is safe. "My family is fine as they live far away from the areas of major outbreak in Italy. Fortunately, today we have social media and video-call facility. I talk to them often and we also have family video chats."

Bergamasco is worried

for his wife, though. "Unfortunately, she is unwell and has been on therapy for the last two years. I am concerned about her well-being.

"I try to talk to her often over phone and my daughters are there with her and keep me updated.

"I had promised to my wife that I will be there with her every month, even for a day or two, during the therapy. But she understands. She is a brave lady."

Bergamasco, who had a tough time during self-quarantine when he returned with the Indian side from the Asia/Oceania Olympic qualifier in Jordan, wants to continue with his current job and has been guiding the women boxers despite being in isolation.

"I am connected to all the boxers and my team through video conference on a daily basis. I prefer them with what they are supposed to train at home.

"The aim is to keep them fit so that once we resume we can take things further for our Olympic preparation," said Bergamasco.

Could have handled KP better, admits Strauss

They fell out over ECB's IPL policy

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON**

Former England captain Andrew Strauss admits he may not have handled Kevin Pietersen well during his time at the helm. The flamboyant batsman should have been given some space despite not exactly adhering to the team ethos, Strauss said on a Sky Sports podcast.

However, Strauss maintained that while he understood why the cash-rich Indian Premier League (IPL) is necessary for players, he still does not agree that it should get precedence over Test cricket.

Strauss and Pietersen had a major fallout due to their difference of opinion on ECB's IPL policy. "I always had sympathy with KP over the IPL. I understood what a big event it was with all the best players playing there and huge amounts of money on the table as well," he said.

It must be mentioned that when Strauss became ECB's Director of Cricket he created a window for England players to play in the IPL, something Pietersen had always advocated. "But I thought it was incredibly dangerous to allow players to miss Test cricket to play

in the IPL. The message you'd be sending and the precedent you'd be setting was the IPL is more important than Test cricket," he said.

Strauss said he repeatedly tried to make Pietersen aware why Test cricket is more important.

After being dropped for good in 2014-15, Pietersen had hit out at some of his teammates like Matt Prior and Stuart Broad in his autobiography, which also included criticism of Strauss for not supporting him.

In hindsight, Strauss feels he should have cut Pietersen a little slack. "I think instead I just let KP be KP. In retrospect that was a mistake and might have sowed the seeds for what was to come down the track," Strauss admitted.

Strauss said Pietersen had not exactly been a team-man but the England dressing room should have been more accepting.

"I've always felt a good team environment embraces difference and finds a space for everyone.

"I think we did that for large periods of time but possibly through neglect, KP became increasingly isolated," Strauss said.



Avoidable friction: Andrew Strauss feels, in hindsight, he should have cut the maverick Kevin Pietersen some slack. **FILE PHOTO**

Lockdown triggers novel online competition

About 60 participants involved in the exercise initiated by Ved Prakash

SHOOTING

**KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI**

Amidst the global health crisis, Indian shooting is staying robust.

An online competition for rifle and pistol shooters across the country, conducted over the weekend, has opened a new avenue for efficient training.

Ved Prakash Sharma, A qualified coach and an ISSF-approved official, who got the idea from the Chinese, conducted the competitions from his base in New Delhi. About 60 shooters connected via the internet for the competition.

The shooters shot at electronic targets in their homes and computers, connected through two applications, provided live video and scores to the central module. The SIUS-Ascot scoring sys-



Ved Prakash Sharma.
•SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

tem gave complete details, while the live video checked on the shooters, making the whole exercise transparent and lively.

"I got this idea after reading about the criticism about the training camp for the National team at the Dr. Karni Singh Range. I decided that we should also try it. There was a good response to our



Firing away: A young shooter showing her prowess during the online contest. **FILE PHOTO: VIVEK BENDRE**

effort, and we didn't charge any entry fee," said Ved Prakash, who invited Asian Games gold medalist Jitu Rai to inaugurate the competition from his army base in Mhow.

"We will do it bigger in the future. State competitions can be done this way, so that shooters don't have to travel. Most of the shooters have in-

vested in electronic targets. I am also trying to develop a software so that we have a good system," said Ved Prakash.

"Shooters have known me for many years. I announced the competition through social media. Jitu has said that he will join the competition in future," observed Ved Prakash.

India submits bid to host AFC Asian Cup

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI**

India has submitted its bid documents for hosting the AFC Asian Cup in 2027, a top official of the national federation confirmed on Sunday.

If India wins the bid, it will be the first time the country will host the continental showpiece. "We have already submitted our expression of interest to the AFC (Asian Football Confederation). That is what's required as of now," said AIFF general-secretary Kunal Das.

The AFC is expected to announce the host early next year. Saudi Arabia, which has never hosted the tournament, had already announced its bid. South Korea is likely to join the race. China will host the 2023 tournament.

No squash till July

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI**

The Professional Squash Association (PSA) announced in a release recently that the suspension of the PSA Tour due to COVID-19 has been extended and all World Tour, Challenger Tour and WSF & PSA Satellite Tour events, scheduled for May and June, have been postponed.

On March 13, the PSA initially suspended both the PSA World Tour and PSA Challenger Tour until the end of April, but following regular communication with players and organisers, the suspension will continue till July.

Two PSA Challenger Tour events in July - Victoria Open and the Noida Leg of the HCL SRFI Indian Leg - are expected to go ahead as planned (the Thiruvananthapuram and Pune legs have been affected), while the PSA World Tour is expected to resume in August.

Speaking to *The Hindu* on Sunday, Cyrus Poncha, secretary of Squash Rackets Federation of India (SRFI), said "the Thiruvananthapuram and Pune legs will be held at a later date. Fortunately, no big events were planned by SRFI at this time."

Fast bowlers have biggest challenge to remain fit: Nehra

Says lack of running time is an issue for them



Word of caution: Ashish Nehra, seen with Umesh Yadav, wants fast bowlers to refrain from shuttle runs on hard surfaces. **FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR**

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI**

A batsman can make do with yoga and weight training. But for merchants of speed, former India pacer Ashish Nehra felt the absence of running for more than three months at a stretch could affect fitness levels.

According to him, the fast bowlers will have to start running sooner or later.

With sporting activities coming to a standstill, elite athletes are confined to their homes, trying to remain fit.

"Let's consider a few situations. Even if the lock-

down ends on April 15, it will take a lot of time for life to become normal.

Long break

"I am not expecting any cricketing activity before July. So this is a long break but once action starts, fast bowlers have the biggest challenge to remain fit," Nehra said.

"Lack of running time for fast bowlers is an issue. So whoever has a garden with say 15 metres or 20 metres space, they should do shuttle run thrice a week," said Nehra.

He had a word of advice for those who had sprawling terraces with soil and grass cover.

"It's fine if you are doing 'Surya Namaskar' on the terrace, but if you start doing shuttle run, you will end up damaging your knees and ankles because of the hard surface."

Nehra also had a word of caution for the fast bowlers. "Zaheer Khan and Nehra can afford to come back from the lockdown with a paunch, not active players. So a break from sport doesn't mean you will have biryani."