



**Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel blames Centre for crisis**  
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**Set up ₹1 lakh cr. corpus for MSMEs, Jairam Ramesh tells govt.**  
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**Industrial output grows 4.5% in Feb; may plunge drastically in March**  
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**British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's health improving**  
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**NEARBY**



**State to purchase 4 lakh rapid test kits**

CHENNAI  
 The State government has placed orders to purchase four lakh COVID-19 rapid test kits, said Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami. "Over 50,000 rapid test kits will arrive by tonight (Thursday)," he added.

TAMIL NADU ▶ PAGE 2

**Class X exams will not be cancelled, says CM**

CHENNAI  
 Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Thursday said the State Board's Class X examinations will not be cancelled. "It is the duty of the students to study. Only if they appear in exams, we will know who has excelled," he said.

TAMIL NADU ▶ PAGE 2

**Corporation launches mobile retail outlets**

CHENNAI  
 The Chennai Corporation on Thursday launched mobile retail outlets in residential areas to sell essential commodities at affordable rates. In addition to permitting 7,000 mobile units to sell groceries, 3,348 shops in 76 markets have been shifted to alternative locations.

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## No significant rate of increase in COVID-19 positive cases: ICMR

Nationwide deaths at 169; Maharashtra toll climbs to 97 with 1,142

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
 NEW DELHI

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) on Thursday said the country has maintained a steady rate of COVID-19 positive cases – 3% to 5% over the past month and half – and has registered no significant increase in this trend so far.

The country currently has 5,865 confirmed cases and 169 deaths. This includes 591 new cases and 20 deaths in the last 24 hours, Joint Secretary in the Union Health Ministry Lav Agrawal said at the daily press briefing. He added that 473 people had recovered and been discharged so far.

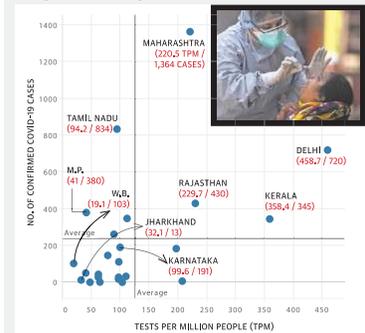
### COVID-19

The ICMR noted that 1,44,910 samples from 1,30,792 individuals had been tested as on April 9. Of these, 5,734 samples tested positive till date. "Positivity rate ranges between 3%-5% with no major increase. On Wednesday, we tested 13,143 samples," said ICMR official Manoj Murhekar.

### Plasma therapy

Dr. Murhekar added that the Council was in the final stages of drawing up a protocol for trial on convalescent

**Testing tales** Kerala has recorded relatively fewer confirmed cases despite a high testing rate for COVID-19, while Delhi leads all States/UTs. While Jharkhand and West Bengal have among the lowest testing rates, Maharashtra leads in total cases



CONFIRMED CASE COUNT IS AS OF 9 P.M. ON THURSDAY.

plasma therapy, for which approvals have to be taken.

"In this therapy, plasma from a COVID-19 recovered patient is transfused into an infected severely ill patient so that the specific antibodies in the blood of the recovered patient can help fight the infection. This is done for very ill patients on ventilators and has given good results in some studies abroad," he said.

The nationwide death toll touched 205 on Thursday,

State Health Departments reported. The number of active cases was 5,815. Maharashtra continued to report the maximum number of deaths, at 97, as well as active cases at 1,142. Tamil Nadu reported 799 active cases, with 96 new cases, while Delhi has 683 active cases with more three deaths since Wednesday.

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

## T.N. risks slipping to stage 3 of COVID-19 pandemic, says CM

'Decision on lockdown extension after inputs from experts'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
 CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu was in stage 2 of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the possibility of moving to stage 3 (community transmission), Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami said on Thursday.

After chairing a review meeting with members of 12 coordination teams at the Secretariat, he said that the government was taking proactive steps against the disease. "Measures to contain it at stage 2 are being taken," he added.

About the possibility of extending the lockdown beyond April 14, Mr. Palaniswami said: "A decision will be taken only on the basis of the severity of the spread (of the pandemic). The spread has been increasing day by day... Every other day, the



People passing through a disinfection tunnel at an Uzhavar Sandhai in Coimbatore on Thursday. • M. PERIASAMY

coronavirus tally is on the rise." Inputs of the 12 member medical experts' team, along with recommendations from the 12 coordination teams, which include IAS officers, would be considered before deciding on extending the lockdown, he said.

Mr. Palaniswami called upon people with COVID-19 symptoms to go to nearby hospitals for treatment.

"People should not step out unnecessarily except for essentials. As I said earlier, shop and stock for a week... We don't want to lose even a single life to this," he added.

## ₹15,000 crore sanctioned to States

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
 NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday announced that ₹15,000 crore has been sanctioned to States under the India COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Package.

The 100% Centrally-funded scheme will be utilised for immediate COVID-19 Emergency Response (₹7,774 crore) and rest for medium-term support (1-4 years). This is to be provided under a mission mode approach.

Announcing this, the Union Health Ministry noted that the key objectives of the package include mounting emergency response to slow and limit COVID-19 through the development of diagnostics and dedicated treatment facilities.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## Lockdown robs Mumbai's dabbawalas of lunch

As thousands switch to working from home, the iconic deliverymen have lost their livelihood

GAUTAM S. MENGLE  
 MUMBAI

Less than a month ago, they ensured that home-cooked food reached thousands everyday on the dot across this bustling megapolis. Yet, today the iconic dabbawalas of Mumbai are staring at starvation as the 21-day nationwide lockdown has left them without a livelihood.

On March 19, the dabbawalas, who have been an integral part of the city's history for more than a century, had announced that they would be suspending services in light of the coronavirus crisis. Less than a week later, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the complete lockdown.

With almost all workplaces switching to work-from-home, there is now no demand for their services.

"We are facing an unprecedented situation for the first time in the 130 years that we have been operational. If we have no customers, we have no earnings. Our stomachs depend on the stomachs of our customers," said Uthas Mukle, president of the Nutan Mumbai Tiffin Box Suppliers' Trust.

Depending on how far a tiffin box had to be delivered, a dabbawala could earn between ₹13,000 to ₹15,000 a month. "This amount, along with whatever our spouses could earn, had to suffice for all



Hard times: Dabbawalas at work in south Mumbai before the lockdown was announced. • VIVEK BENDRE

expenses, including house rent, children's education and other expenditure, including emergencies," Vinod Shete, spokesperson of the Trust said. "A lot of us hail from Pune and nearby areas;

about half of us managed to return just before the lockdown. The rest are stuck in Mumbai, unable to arrange for two meals a day," he added. "The dabbawalas' predicament is exacerbated

by the fact that many of their wives, who worked as cooks or domestic help, have also been laid off due to the need for minimal outside contact and social distancing with the virus outbreak.

The dabbawalas have now approached charitable trusts and institutions they once visited as guest lecturers to speak about supply chain management, for help. On Thursday, they also sent out a WhatsApp SOS. "There are 5,000 of us and we have always enjoyed a wonderful relationship with this city. We are not expecting much but every small effort counts in times of crisis and this city always takes care of its own," Mr. Shete said.

## Amid a pandemic, a salute to selfless service on the streets

Conservancy staff of Tirunelveli Corporation lauded by police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
 TIRUNELVELI

Celebrations have not been part of conservancy worker M. Lakshmi's routine at the Tirunelveli Corporation. Even during events such as Independence Day, Ms. Lakshmi and her colleagues always had to finish their work of sprucing up the VOC Stadium in Palayamkottai ahead of the actual celebrations and leave. Before leaving the stadium, their supervisor would tell them to return once the celebrations were over.

The workers would watch



Everyday heroes: Police according a guard of honour to sanitary workers in Tirunelveli, T.N. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

from a distance as the Collector hoisted the national flag and received the guard of honour from smartly uniformed policemen with gleaming arms, and come back to clean up the premises again.

But on Thursday, when the police accorded a guard

of honour to the conservancy workers of the Tirunelveli Corporation for their selfless work amid the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak and nationwide lockdown, it was an emotional moment for Ms. Lakshmi.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

# 96 persons test positive in State

Official says 84 persons linked to the Delhi event; tally rises to 834

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

	Until April 2	April 3	April 4	April 5	April 6	April 7	April 8	April 9	Total
Cases reported	609	102	74	86	50	69	48	96	834
Recovered and discharged		0	1	0	0	11	2	6	27
Deceased	1	0	2	2	1	2	0	0	8

Monitoring*		Capacity*		Testing*	
Persons screened at airports	2,10,538	Beds in isolation wards	29,074	Samples collected	7,267
Persons under home quarantine	59,918	Ventilators	3,371	Tested positive	834
Persons in isolation wards in hospitals	2,042			Tested negative	5,824
Persons in quarantine facilities	213				

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

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI**

Tamil Nadu reported 96 more positive cases of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on Thursday, taking the total number of cases in the State to 834.

Health Secretary Beela Rajesh said of the 96 persons, 84 were connected to the "single source event" (Delhi conference) - both participants and their contacts. Of the remaining 12 patients, three had inter-State travel history and nine, including a doctor, had a history of contact with COVID-19 patients.

"There have been no deaths in the last 24 hours in the State," she told reporters. As on date, 27 patients were discharged after treatment. Among those hospitalised with COVID-19, six were ill with symptoms but did not require critical care. One patient, who was admitted to a private hospital, was put on a ventilator. The number of persons who had attended the single source event was increasing in a phased man-

**COVID-19**

ner. Many reported after the government made an appeal. We first had 1,000 persons, and then the number went up to 1,103 and then to 1,131. As on date, there are 1,480 persons who had attended the event. A total of 763 persons - 554 participants and 188 of their contacts and seven foreigners and 14 of their contacts - have tested positive," she said. The remaining 71 had a history of travel or contact history, she added.

Erode reported the highest number of cases on Thursday. Twenty six patients - 14 women and 12 men - were from the district, taking the total to 58. In Tirunelveli, 16 persons tested positive - 14 women and two men. Eight persons (three women and five men from Namakkal), eight persons (four women and four men from Kanniyakumari), seven persons (one woman and six men from Chennai) reported positive. Five persons each

from Tirupattur, Thoothukudi and Vellore, four persons each from Chengalpattu and Tiruppur, and one person each from Kallakurichi, Madurai, Nagapattinam, Salem, Sivaganga, Tenkasi, Theni and Tiruvallur have tested positive.

With 163 cases, Chennai continued to top the list of patients, followed by Coimbatore with 60 patients. The number of samples tested till date was 7,267 and 485 of them were under process. In fact, the number of samples has increased by 1,172 since Wednesday, the highest single-day increase till now. A total of 2,042 persons were admitted to isolation wards in hospitals, while the number of beds in isolation facilities was 29,074.

**Results in 30 minutes**  
Dr. Rajesh said the rapid test kits would provide results in 30 minutes. "These tests will be done on the field. This is to understand the prevalence of COVID-19 in the community. We will be able to assess how many people

have been exposed to infection. The kits are from China, and were approved by an expert screening committee and the Indian Council of Medical Research. This is an antibody test specific to COVID-19. If found positive for antibodies, we may still have to confirm the result by RT-PCR test," she said.

The Health Secretary said the containment strategy was going on in 34 districts. So far, 16,61,487 households were covered, and a total of 58,77,348 persons were screened. A total of 32,807 field staff were involved in the containment activities.

She added that they continued to test persons hospitalised for severe acute respiratory infection, while the National Institute of Epidemiology had undertaken a prevalence study. She urged the public to cooperate with the government.

"It is important to follow guidelines on hand washing and physical distancing. If anybody has symptoms, approach the hospital for help," she said.

# Officials blame clerical error for discharge of COVID-19 patient

An employee reportedly made a wrong entry of the patient's result

**S. PRASAD VILUPURAM**

A day after the COVID-19 test results of a Delhi-based patient turned out positive after he was released from quarantine at the Villupuram Government Hospital, the Health Department authorities in Villupuram claimed that a "clerical error" had led to the incident.

Top sources in the Health Department, on condition of anonymity, said the patient, aged 30, had come to Pudukkottai to attend an interview last month after which he reached Villupuram. He was staying in a Villupuram Red Cross facility when he developed fever and was ad-



The Villupuram Government Medical College and Hospital. T. SINGARASELOU

mitted to the Villupuram Government Hospital on April 6.

"The treatment protocol for COVID-19 testing was followed and the throat swabs of the patient along with test

samples of others were sent to the Villupuram Government Medical College and Hospital (VGMCH) at Mundiambakkam here for testing the same day. While the test results of three others had come positive, the results of the Delhi man were pending and inconclusive. As per protocol, patients who had tested negative should be sent to the facility or home quarantine while the second round of confirmatory tests had to be taken for tests which were inconclusive or pending," an official said.

The staff in the hospital, while feeding the results into the computer had made an error and mentioned his test results as negative. Based on this, the patient was discharged. The man was taken in a 108 ambulance to the quarantine facility operated by the Red Cross, from where he went missing. Health Department officials said that a minimum of 15 to 20 samples were sent every day to the hospital. "The department has requested the staff in the hospital to be more cautious to prevent such incidents," an official said. Meanwhile, the Villupuram district police have constituted seven special teams and intensified surveillance across the district to trace the man.

# Speedy nod to manufacture HCQ

Drugs Control Dept. has granted approval to 15 pharma companies so far

**SERENA JOSEPHINE M. CHENNAI**

In the last three weeks, the Tamil Nadu Drugs Control Department has granted approvals to as many as 15 pharmaceutical units across the State for the manufacture of hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) tablets.

Officials of the Health Department said the 15 units, which had applied for permission to manufacture the tablets, were given the nod in a day. A bulk drug manufacturer in Hosur had also sought approval, which was granted the same day.

"The government has declared that the conditions for

Schedule H1 drugs will apply to HCQ tablets. The role of the Drugs Control Department is to see to it that the drug is sold as per Schedule H1 conditions. This means pharmacists should maintain a separate registry for the sale of HCQ and should sell it only based on the doctor's prescription. Schedule H1 includes antibiotics and anti-tuberculosis drugs," an official said.

Once these manufacturers get the approval for production, they can place orders for the supply of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients, i.e., the raw materials, he said.

As of now, there is minimal stock of HCQ in districts across the State. Doctors are not prescribing the drug to people, officials said.

J. Jayaseelan, chairman, Indian Drugs Manufacturers' Association, Tamil Nadu, said the country had an adequate quantity of the anti-malarial drug, and there was no chance of stocks running out. "Tamil Nadu has not started prescribing the drug as a prophylactic. Even if it does, the State government will be in a position to buy the drug easily," he said.

The Centre had fixed the price of HCQ, he said, adding, "The rate - Rs. 5.80 for

a 200 mg tablet - is below the MRP. The raw materials cost more, and hence, many are unable to manufacture the drug immediately. Pharmaceuticals are in the 'essential' category. As of now, there is restricted manufacturing and about 25% to 30% of our capacity is functional. However, we will have enough drugs considering the capacity of leading manufacturers in the country."

He said India was the main supplier of HCQ to the world, and barring one or two components, all the raw materials were manufactured here.

**IN BRIEF**

**Anna University exams rescheduled**

Anna University on Thursday rescheduled the semester examinations for April or May. The university extended the registration date till 5 p.m. on April 20. This includes the special examination of affiliated colleges too, according to the university website. The university has attributed the change in exam date to the uncertainty over the lifting of lockdown.

**23 foreigners held in Tiruvallur, Mayiladuthurai**

MAYILADUTHURAI  
Twenty foreign nationals reportedly found overstay in India were arrested at Nidur in Mayiladuthurai limits on Thursday, along with two Indian guides - one from Maharashtra and the other from Bihar - and a local acquaintance. The foreigners were reportedly staying in a madarasa. The Needamangalam police in Tiruvallur district have arrested 13 Bangladeshi nationals on charges of violation of visa conditions on Thursday. The foreigners had reportedly attended the event in Delhi.

**Plea against exemption to media dismissed**

CHENNAI  
The Madras High Court on Thursday dismissed a writ petition which sought a direction to remove print media from the list of establishments exempted from the nationwide lockdown to fight COVID-19. Justices N. Kirubakaran and R. Hemalata refused to entertain the case filed by T. Ganesh Kumar of Kancheepuram district.

**Ramadoss urges gov to ramp up testing**

CHENNAI  
PMK founder S. Ramadoss on Thursday called for immediately ramping up the number of tests for SARS-CoV-2 infection in the State. In a statement, he said the lockdown had helped in control of the outbreak, however, the country had not come out of the danger fully. In Tamil Nadu and across India there might be more number of persons infected and not reflected in the daily medical bulletin issued, he said.

# 4 lakh rapid test kits ordered

First preference for patients' families

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI**

The State government has placed orders to purchase 4 lakh COVID-19 rapid test kits, according to Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami.

"Over 50,000 rapid test kits will arrive by tonight (Thursday) and another 20,000 kits will be received from the Centre," he told journalists in Chennai.

Once the test kits arrive, family members of those who have tested positive for COVID-19

would be made to undergo testing in the first phase.

**Second phase**  
In the second phase, those who were in contact with these COVID-19 positive persons and their family members would be tested, Mr. Palaniswami said. Eventually those in their outer circle would be tested.

The State government had sufficient stock of masks and personal protective equipment, he added.

# Case burden high; next stage of intervention to begin

Aggressive containment and testing to be carried out in the identified zones

**RAMYA KANNAN CHENNAI**

As the number of positive cases continues to climb in Tamil Nadu, with a moderate dip for a day on April 7, it is clear that the "task" is still ahead of the health officials and continues to be imposing.

The bulk of the cases reported every day is derived from what the State government calls a "single source". This is the group of people who attended the conference at Nizamuddin in Delhi. If the numbers continue to be high, has the State government not completed testing the participants? In effect, who are actually being tested now, contributing to the high figures?

According to sources in



The writing on the road: A woman rides past a painting on the road that has a message about maintaining social distance and staying safe, in Vellore on Thursday. C. VENKATACHALAPATHY

the Health Department, the bulk - the actual travellers - have been tested, and the contacts among those who tested positive have also

been tested. There are about 1,500 contacts of these patients who tested positive.

This will now be taken to the next level with aggressive containment/testing methods in the zones already identified.

These include areas that the participants, both

groups - those who tested positive, and those who tested negative - resided in. Families, neighbours and close associates will be included in this exercise. Sources said the task had begun to identify these groups and bring in people for testing and enforce strict containment rules.

The idea, according to officials, is to ensure that every such case is identified, traced, tested and contacts examined within the lockdown period.

Sources hinted that the State government was looking at a public health angles and various models to be followed with regard to post lockdown protocols. Global health experts would be consulted, they added.

# 8.20 lakh unorganised sector workers to get ₹1,000 aid

₹10 lakh for kin of traffic policeman who died in Chennai

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI**

Over 8.20 lakh workers, who have registered as members in various labour welfare boards, will be granted cash assistance of ₹1,000 each, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami said in Chennai on Thursday.

Mr. Palaniswami told presspersons that over seven lakh members of these boards for the welfare of sanitation workers, fishermen, transpersons, tribal people, small traders, artisans, nomadic tribes and film industry, would benefit from this decision. Besides, over 1.20 lakh workers attached to the ESI would benefit.

Condoling the death of a 33-year-old traffic policeman Arun Gandhi, who died of cardiac arrest, while on duty in Foreshore Estate in Chennai on Wednesday, Mr. Palaniswami announced a solatium of ₹10 lakh from the CMPRF for his family.

The Chief Minister said one of his family members



Migrant workers receiving food packets from police officers at Thandalam on Thursday. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

would be provided with a government job. He announced that in case the government staff died during COVID-19-related work, a solatium of ₹10 lakh would be granted to their families from the CMPRF.

**Assistance distributed**  
Cash assistance of ₹1,000 (for each rice family cardholders) had been distributed to 96.3% of the eligible beneficiaries across the State.

The mobile vegetable units operated by the Agriculture Department had sold about 2,000 tonnes of vegetables on April 8 alone and Uzharav Sandhais sold about 1,700 tonnes of vegetables.

The Chief Minister said the Cooperation Department would acquire provisional supplies from the neighbouring States to counter the possibility of a rise in prices of essential commodities.

# State govt. to wait for Centre's decision on lifting lockdown

Government may gradually relax restrictions

**T. RAMAKRISHNAN CHENNAI**

While Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Thursday said a decision on extending the COVID-19 lockdown will be taken in consultation with medical experts and others, officials indicated that the State may look up to the Centre for its decision. No unilateral decision will be taken, he said.

Indicating the thinking on the part of the State government, a senior official said the administration was of the view that such a course of action would be more meaningful.

Before the Centre announces its decision, there will be no point in going ahead with extending the lockdown voluntarily and requesting the Centre not to operate flights and trains, the official said.

Another official pointed out that the Prime Minister had said the lockdown could not be lifted in one go. If the Centre opts for a



CM Edappadi K. Palaniswami presiding over a meeting with the 12 coordination teams constituted to fight the COVID-19 crisis, in Chennai on Thursday. B. JOTHIRAMALINGAM

phased withdrawal, the State government can relax certain conditions for movement of people. But they may extend the lockdown in places such as malls, amusement parks and cinema halls, where people are likely to converge in large numbers.

AIADMK MP A. Navaneethakrishnan, who attended Wednesday's meeting with the Prime Minister, said he had requested the Centre to ensure that vehicles originating from northern States carrying groceries and other essential commodities meant for Tamil

# Class X exams unlikely to be cancelled

Government may gradually relax restrictions

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI**

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Thursday said the State Board Class X examinations will not be cancelled. "It is the duty of the students to study. Only if they appear in exams, we will know who has excelled. It is not like other classes," he said and added that the government had decided to promote all students till class IX. "But, Class 10 is for going to the next stage. It is an important exam. The government is scrutinising the issue," he told a press conference in Chennai.

To a question, he said action would be taken against a group of men from Gujarat who allegedly visited Tamil Nadu for religious purposes and tested positive for the infection. Palaniswami reiterated his appeal to the people and corporates to contribute generously to the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund. "As of now, funds to the tune of ₹100 crore had been received."

**Timings**  
**CHENNAI**

**FRIDAY, APR. 10**  
RISE 06:00 SET 18:21  
RISE 20:49 SET 07:50

**SATURDAY, APR. 11**  
RISE 05:59 SET 18:21  
RISE 21:50 SET 08:41

**SUNDAY, APR. 12**  
RISE 05:58 SET 18:22  
RISE 22:50 SET 09:35

**Chennai Weather** max min

Thiruvarur	37	28
Chennai Airport	35	28
Chennai City	34	28

**Chennai Airport Today**  
35°C A dry and warm weather to prevail. Night will be comfortable.

**Chennai Airport Tomorrow**  
35°C A dry and warm weather to prevail. Night will be comfortable.

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# Corporation launches mobile retail outlets for essentials

Combo pack with rice, dal, other commodities made available for ₹850

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

The Chennai Corporation on Thursday launched mobile retail outlets in residential areas to sell essentials at affordable prices.

Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash launched the outlets on P.T. Rajan Salai in K.K. Nagar, in Kodambakkam zone. "Residents will get a combo pack of rice, dal, cooking oil, spices, salt and other commodities, at a price of ₹850. The products can be used by a family of four, for 15 days. Residents have been requested not to violate lockdown norms and buy from traders of the mobile retail outlets, once in 15 days," said Mr. Prakash.

On Thursday, residential areas in Kodambakkam received groceries from 80 retail outlets, set up in vehicles such as mini lorries. "Other zones will get 450 more vehicles for selling groceries to



Over 3,000 shops have been shifted to alternative locations in a bid to enforce physical distancing. — R. RAGU

residents. Traders have been asked to sell groceries in each residential area. The initiative will prevent crowding of residents in markets. Residents have to maintain physical distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19," said Mr. Prakash.

The Corporation will continue issuing more passes for traders to sell groceries in each residential areas of

the city. "The idea is to permit at least 7,000 vehicles to sell groceries. Traders can visit zonal offices or the Ripon buildings to get permission for vehicles," said a civic official.

### Physical distancing

In addition to permitting 7,000 mobile units to sell groceries, 3,348 shops, in 76 markets, have been shifted

to alternative locations to adopt physical distancing. All congested markets have also been shifted to alternative locations to promote physical distancing. Many markets have been closed for an hour in the evening. Some localities experienced gusty winds as well.

N. Puvirasani, Director, Area Cyclone Warning Centre, Chennai, said that a trough was running from Madhya Pradesh to south Tamil Nadu, extending up to 900 m above mean sea level. This weather system and convective activity led to thundershowers in many areas.

However, dry weather may return to Chennai from Friday. A change in wind di-

# Sharp showers lash city

Trough cited as reason; weather to stay dry today

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

Sudden showers lashed many parts of the city on Thursday evening, bringing relief from the relatively warm weather during the day.

Several areas in and around the city, including Vandalur, Porur, Velachery, Ashok Nagar and Avadi, received sharp spells for nearly an hour in the evening. Some localities experienced gusty winds as well.

N. Puvirasani, Director, Area Cyclone Warning Centre, Chennai, said that a trough was running from Madhya Pradesh to south Tamil Nadu, extending up to 900 m above mean sea level. This weather system and convective activity led to thundershowers in many areas.

### Temperature to soar

There are chances of rain in one or two places in south coastal Tamil Nadu. Temper-



Respite from heat: A sudden downpour brought the temperature down in the city on Thursday. — R. RAGU

ature is set to soar in places south easterly winds will help keep temperatures close to normal in the city, he said.

The meteorological Department forecast a generally cloudy sky and a temperature around 35 degrees Celsius on Friday.

interior parts of the State, as cool easterly winds may not penetrate to that extent, Puvirasani added.

The meteorological Department forecast a generally cloudy sky and a temperature around 35 degrees Celsius on Friday.

# Creative activities to keep students engaged

Besides academics, CBSE encourages schools to recommend craft, art projects

S. POORNIMA CHENNAI

While schools have largely trained their focus on live online classrooms and worksheets for secondary and senior secondary students during the lockdown, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has also been encouraging them to recommend creative activities for students, especially for younger classes.



Schools are putting up one-minute videos detailing the crafts that students can try.

From helping out in maintaining kitchen gardens to trying out small do-it-yourself craft projects, teachers from schools in the city have been giving suggestions to parents who are looking for ways to keep their children

occupied. "After our initial focus on online learning for academic subjects, we realised that students need to be encouraged creatively as well. With the help of our art

teachers, we're putting together one minute videos that will detail easy crafts that the students can try at home," said Lakshmi Prabha, principal, Prasan Vidya Mandir.

### Guiding parents

Ms. Prabha said with parents also working from home, they can allot time during the day to work on any interesting projects or activities with the children.

"Teachers have been interacting and guiding parents who have reached out for ideas to keep the children engaged at home," she added. Schools are also recognis-

ing the need to keep the children active.

"We've partnered with a support organisation to conduct short online fitness classes in yoga and simple exercises every morning that students and parents can follow," said Maheshwari Natarajan, principal, Vidya Mandir Estancia.

The CBSE Chennai branch has also called all its affiliated schools to send in creative projects of students during the lockdown, which can be showcased online.

Schools too have been asking students to send their ideas so that it can be shared among parents and students who are looking for ideas.

# Avadi gets 2 disinfection tunnels

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

The Avadi Municipal Corporation installed two disinfection tunnels — near the Thendur market and near the old Municipality office — on Thursday, as a precaution against COVID-19.

Corporation Commissioner N. Ramachandran said that there were plans to install them in six more places, including Paruthipattu, Kovilpadagai and Thirumullaivooyal, soon.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

Over 15 cows, grazing near the Thenner lake in Walajabad, Kancheepuram district, drowned after they ran into the middle of the waterbody, frightened by the sound of thunderstorms on Thursday evening.

According to villagers, more than 50 cows from villages like Surameni Kuppan, Sirupakkal, Athivakkam, Chinnavakkam and Alapakkam usually graze near the lake,

every day. On Thursday evening too, they were spotted near the waterbody. Around 4.30 p.m., when it started raining heavily, the cows were frightened by the sound of thunder and lightning.

### Rescue operation

Some local residents claim that the cows ran into the middle of the lake, and got stuck, as the water level rose. "The cowherds ran to the nearby village, asking for

help. We went on four boats and rescued a few buffaloes and cows. Close to 15 of them had drowned by then," said S. Ramaraj, a resident of Surameni Kuppan. "Though we informed the Tamil Nadu Fire and Rescue Services (TNFRS), they did not come immediately. They reached around 8 p.m.," he said.

Mathi Adhvan, VCK district spokesperson, said: "The government should provide ₹40,000 for each nearby village, asking for

# Aavin provides buttermilk to policemen on duty

DEEPA H. RAMAKRISHNAN CHENNAI

Aavin has been providing 200-ml packets of buttermilk for distribution among policemen manning the roads every day.

"We have been asked to supply an additional 6,000 packets for policemen out on the streets. For now, orders have been placed for 15 days, following the request of Police Commissioner A.K. Vis-

wanathan," said an official. The milk major usually provides 5,000 packets of buttermilk for supply among traffic policemen, during April, May and June, at ₹5 a pack.

It has also been supplying packs with cookies, flavoured milk and chocolates to the Social Welfare Department, to be provided to various homes for special children in the State.

Official sources said that the Tamil Nadu Cooperative Milk Producers' Federation, popularly known as Aavin, had so far provided around 2,000 packs, every day, with these products.

"We began distribution on Wednesday. We have received orders for around 6,000 packs so far. These are being distributed in various districts by Aavin," said an official.

Four varieties of cookies manufactured in Aavin's product dairy, are being provided.

On Tuesday, Aavin has also been supplying milk powder, buns and cookie packs to institutions that might the milk major's help with milk supply. "So far, 400 kg of milk powder and 700 cookies packs, along with buns from Modern Bread, have been supplied," the official said.

# 29 taken for screening

They had come from Ahmedabad

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

Twenty-nine persons from a seminary in Basidra police station limits were taken by authorities to a hospital, after one of the clerics tested positive for COVID-19, said sources.

The 29 persons came in two different groups from Ahmedabad, on March 9,

and stayed in mosques in the city. They were involved in religious activities, the sources added. After an 80-year-old person who stayed with them tested positive, health authorities, with the help of police, took the 29 persons in buses for screening to the Government Kilpauk Medical College Hospital.

**SOUTHERN RAILWAY**  
DIVISIONAL RAILWAY MANAGER'S OFFICE  
CHENNAI DIVISION  
ENGAGEMENT OF CONTRACT MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS AND PARA MEDICAL STAFF  
MODIFICATION TO NOTIFICATION NO.01/2020/COVID 19  
Date 07-04-2020

In Partial Modification to the above Notification for Engagement of Medical Personnel and Para Medical Staff for Divisional Railway Hospital, Arakkonam on contract basis, the proposed WALK IN INTERVIEW IS CHANGED TO TELECONFERENCE INTERVIEW due to prevailing emergency situation and restrictions on account of outbreak of Covid 19.

Candidates are advised NOT TO REPORT AT THE VENUE on the Dates Specified in the Notification.

Willing Candidates are requested to refer the Website given below for Registration of their Names for TELECONFERENCE INTERVIEW and Terms & Conditions.  
Website : sr.indianrailways.gov.in  
Last Date for Registration : 17.04.2020.

**SOUTHERN RAILWAY**  
DIVISIONAL RAILWAY MANAGER'S OFFICE,  
TRUICHIRAPPALLI DIVISION  
Notification No: TIP 441/CMPS Paramedical/COVID-19 Date: 09-04-2020  
ON-LINE INTERVIEW

In view of the exigencies related with the COVID-19 pandemic, Truichirappalli Division of Southern Railway requires immediately the following Medical and Para Medical Personnel for their Divisional Headquarters Hospital, Golden Road (designated Hospital for COVID-19) on contract basis for a period of 3 months.

Name of the Post	No. of Vacancies	Monthly Remuneration
Contract Medical Practitioners (Doctors)	36	₹ 75,000/- fixed. In case of specialists ₹ 95,000/-
General Medicine - 03, Chest Physician - 03		
Nursing Sister	36	₹ 44,900/- in Level-7 (Plus DA & other admissible allowances)
Pharmacist	12	₹ 29,200/- in Level-5 (Plus DA & other admissible allowances)
Lab. Assistant	12	₹ 21,700/- in Level-3 (Plus DA & other admissible allowances)
Radiographer	12	₹ 29,200/- in Level-5 (Plus DA & other admissible allowances)
Hospital Attendant	36	₹ 18,000/- in Level-1 (Plus DA & other admissible allowances)
Housekeeping Assistant	72	₹ 18,000/- in Level-1 (Plus DA & other admissible allowances)

Date of Online Interview	Post
16.04.2020	Contract Medical Practitioner (Doctors)
17.04.2020	Nursing Sister & Pharmacist
18.04.2020	Lab. Assistant, Radiographer, Hospital Attendant and Housekeeping Assistant

For further Details and terms & conditions, please refer website sr.indianrailways.gov.in

**UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD**  
(A Central University established by an Act of Parliament)  
Prof. C.R. Rao Road, Gachibowli, P.O. Central University, Hyderabad 500 046  
ADMISSION ANNOUNCEMENT 2020-21

University of Hyderabad, an Institution of Eminence, ranked 4th among Universities and 11th under overall category in the NIRF rankings 2019, listed in Category-1 of UGC (Categorization of Universities for grant of graded autonomy) Regulations 2018, with NAAC grading of 3.72 out of 4.00, invites bright, aspiring students committed to excellence to apply for admission to various 5 Year Integrated B.S., Ph.D., M.Tech., M.Phil. Courses and Ph.D. programmes through an All-India entrance examination.

Candidates are required to apply online through University website: <http://acad.uohyd.ac.in>

**IMPORTANT DATES**

Online Application start date	03-04-2020
Last date for submitting the Online Application	03-05-2020
Downloading of Hall Tickets	27-05-2020
Dates of Entrance Examinations	02-06-2020 to 06-06-2020

Important Information: Hall Tickets, information to short-listed candidates for interview and selected/waived candidates will only be notified in website. It is the responsibility of the candidates to check the University website for downloading the Hall Tickets, results and the relevant formats required for admission. For further details including courses offered, eligibility criteria, prescribed fee, reservation policy please refer to the website <http://acad.uohyd.ac.in> or <http://www.uohyd.ac.in>

10-04-2020 Sd/- Devesh Nigam, Controller of Examinations

**Indian Bank** ZONAL OFFICE, PONDICHERRY.

**NOTICE INVITING TENDERS FOR LEASING OF OFFICE PREMISES**

Indian Bank, a Public Sector Bank invites tenders under 2 bid system (Technical & Financial Bid) from owners of Office Premises willing to offer on lease basis (To-be built / Premises under construction) in Reddiarpalayam, Pudukchery (preferably in Pondy-Villanur main road) measuring about 1500 Sq.ft carpet area incl. of ATM area in Ground Floor with parking facility for a lease period of 15 years for shifting of its Reddiarpalayam branch.

The tender forms can be downloaded from our Bank's website [www.indianbank.in](http://www.indianbank.in) or obtained from the following address from 10.04.2020.

Indian Bank, Zonal Office Pondicherry, 66/4, East Coast Road, Pakkamudayanpet, Pudukchery - 605008, Ph : 0413-2257139, Mob : 94422 04638

Last date for submission of bids at the above address is 22.04.2020 before 3 pm in sealed cover along with EMD of Rs. 1000/- in the form of DD favouring Indian Bank, Zonal Office, Pondicherry.

The Bank reserves the right to reject any or all offers without assigning any reasons whatsoever.

ZONAL MANAGER, Indian Bank, Pondicherry Zone.  
For further details please visit : [www.indianbank.in](http://www.indianbank.in)

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**GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT**  
CHENNAI - KANYAKUMARI INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR PROJECT, KANCHEEPURAM

Rc.No.28/2019/A2(SH-58) FORM - A  
Notice Under section 15(2) of the Tamil Nadu Highways Act 2001 (Tamil Nadu Act 34 of 2002) Dated: 23.03.2020

In order to regularize the increasing volume of Traffic and for setting up businesses and facilitating the efficient movement of goods and people and to maintain the free flow of vehicles, it has been proposed for widening the State Highways Road SH-58, Chengalpattu to Kanchipuram Road (From Km. 48/70 to Km. 51/00) under the Chennai-Kanyakumari Industrial Corridor Project. The Government of Tamil Nadu keeping the above public case in mind have approved to acquire an extent of 596 sq.m of Additional land (approximately) in No 87 Vallapakam (Additional) village in walajabad Taluk in Kanchipuram District as mentioned in the schedule under the provisions of Tamil Nadu Highways Act, 2001 (Tamil Nadu Act 34 of 2002) and Tamil Nadu Highways Rules 2003.

The owners and any other persons interested in the said property may set their objections in writing to the Special District Revenue Officer (L.A.O), Chennai-Kanyakumari Industrial Corridor Project, No.16, Visalakshi Nagar, Sevillimedu, Kanchipuram - 631 502 and show cause as to why their land should not be acquired for the above said public cause within 30 days from the date of publication of the notice.

**SCHEDULE**

Sl. No.	Survey No.	Sub-Division No.	Extent (in Ha) (0.0000)	Classification	Boundaries for acquisition extent shown in column (5)				Immovable assets such as structures, wells, trees, etc. lying on the acquisition extent shown in column(5)	Owner(s)/interested persons for the acquisition extent shown in column(5)	
					North by	East by	South by	West by			
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	
1	272/1		0.09.00	Wet	77	281	270	272/2 (part)	272/1 (part)	Vacant	634. Venkataraman S/o Nagarajan
2	318/2A3A		0.06.50	Dry	51	317	318/2A3B (part)	318/2A3A (part)	318/2A2 (part)	Aadhi Narayanan tree-2	562. S.B. Sundaresan S/o Boopathy Muthaiyar
3	318/2A3B		0.13.50	Dry	468	317	318/2B (part)	318/2A3B (part)	318/2A3 A (part)	Neem tree-2, Aadhi Narayanan tree-1	513. Sujatha W/o Krishnamoorthy
<b>Total Land Acquisition Area:</b>					<b>596 Sq.m</b>						

DIPR/232/Land/2020  
Special District Revenue Officer (L.A) Kanchipuram

## Do not ignore non-COVID-19 medical emergencies

Fear of coronavirus and the need for quarantine should not deter people from seeking treatment for non-COVID acute medical and surgical emergencies. Over the last two weeks, we have come across several instances of patients and relatives seeking medical attention very late for even emergencies because of fear. Since all the clinics and many smaller hospitals are closed, we are seeing quite a high number of patients with cardiac, neuro, stroke, gastro, diabetic and orthopedic emergencies presenting late with all complications leading to delayed intervention and recovery. What are the cardiac emergencies, which present late?

It is well known that cardiovascular death is the number one cause of death globally. The intervention in golden hour after acute cardiac events like heart attacks will reverse the harmful effects and save lives. In the last few days, we have seen patients with acute coronary syndrome, heart rhythm abnormalities and complete heart block presenting late with all complications. Cardiac patients are also at increased risk of Covid-19 complications and they can present as heart attack, myocarditis and heart failure. All these patients need to be treated in hospitals with facilities for 24/7 Acute Coronary Care Units (ACCU), managed by senior cardiologists.

How about stroke and neuro emergencies?



**Dr. ARAVINDAN SELVARAJ,**  
Executive Director,  
Kauvery Hospital

### COVID-19

Stroke is another medical emergency, which if treated within the window period of 4 hours will result in near complete resolution of condition. Now, we see many patients with stroke presenting late leading to complications, prolonged stay in ICU and delayed recovery. The delay in seeking treatment in these patients is due to several reasons like fear of Corona and lack of transport in the lockdown period.

But, well equipped hospitals with facilities like Hyper Acute Stroke Unit (HASU) are manned round the clock by stroke physicians and nurses to take care even at this time of crisis. We also see patients with epilepsy with fits presenting late.

What are the gastro-intestinal conditions one should take prompt treatment for?

We also see patients with acute abdominal conditions like ap-

pendicitis, cholecystitis due to gall stones and obstructed hernia presenting late with gangrene and perforation leading to peritonitis and sepsis. These patients needed emergency surgery and prolonged stay in ICU because of delay in seeking treatment. The complications could be avoided by early interventions.

What are the emergencies you see in diabetic patients now?

We see diabetic patients with very high blood sugar levels, presenting acutely with diabetic keto acidosis. Also, we see diabetic patients with cellulitis and sepsis presenting late. Diabetic patients have to be extra careful at this time, monitor glucose levels regularly and seek help early in case of abnormal levels.

How about injuries and fractures?

Though we see a sharp reduction in road traffic accidents, the number of people with fractures due to domestic fall have remained the same.

In particular, the elderly with hip fractures present to the hospital even a few days after the fracture with complications. They should be treated promptly.

The patients presenting with COVID-19-like symptoms are treated in isolation facilities so that the non-COVID emergencies are managed in the main hospital in an uninterrupted way. Please don't ignore emergencies and call for help immediately.

Interactive voice response (IVR) is a technology that allows a computer to interact with humans through the use of voice and DTMF tones input via a keypad. In telecommunications, IVR allows customers to interact with a company's host system via a telephone keypad or by speech recognition, after which services can be inquired about through the IVR dialogue. IVR systems can respond with pre-recorded or dynamically generated audio to further direct users on how to proceed. IVR systems deployed in the network are sized to handle large call volumes and also used for outbound calling, as IVR systems are more intelligent than many predictive dialer systems.

IVR systems can be used for mobile purchases, banking payments, services, retail orders, utilities, travel information and weather conditions. A common misconception refers to an automated attendant as an IVR. The terms are distinct and mean different things to traditional telecommunications professionals—the purpose of an IVR is to take input, process it, and return a result, whereas that of an automated attendant is to route calls. The term voice response unit (VRU) is sometimes used as well.

hospitals and the rest could be shifted to the rail coaches.

"A unique feature of these coaches is that they can be moved on wheels and deployed in any region in the country," the counsel said.

people can converse in their mother tongue, a press release said.

According to the release, anyone can give a missed call to 94999 12345. The system would call them back and ask

initiative would facilitate transfer of information for further action. The district emergency control room would step in for providing appropriate assistance including despatch of ambulance de-

district emergency control room would provide required medical assistance. Disease prevention and control measures would be carried out through the control room for high-risk category persons.

VELLORE  
The All Traders Association members met Vellore Collector A. Shanmuga Sundaram on Thursday to urge him to revoke the revised timings for the operation of shops and establishments.

## Tiger and tigress found dead, may have been poisoned

Officials find carcass of a wild boar near the remains of the big cats in the Anamalai Tiger Reserve

WILSON THOMAS  
COIMBATORE

A tiger and a tigress, found dead in the Anamalai Tiger Reserve (ATR) in Coimbatore on Wednesday, may have been poisoned, officials have said.

A group of forest officials attached to ATR and veterinarians found a poison-laced carcass of a wild boar near those of the two carnivores on Thursday.

Remains of the bear were also

on Thursday. The animals were found dead in the Pothamadai forest beat, falling under the Polachi forest range of ATR.

Forest Department staff found the carcass of the tigress on the bed of a stream just outside the forest area on Wednesday afternoon.

They later found the remains of a tiger at another location along the stream, less than a kilometre away. Both carcasses were

to be examined by a veterinarian. The forest beat, in the presence of Sankararaman from NTCA and representatives of NGOs.

They ensured that parts of the two big cats, such as teeth and claws, were intact.

Samples were collected from the two carcasses for examination at a laboratory.

during the mating period and had ingested the flesh from the wild boar's carcass, which contained poison," he said.

K. Kalidasan of the NGO *Osai*, also a former member of the Tamil Nadu State Board for Wildlife, who was present during the autopsies, said the carcass of the wild boar was found very close to a farm.

In the NTCA's Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) Re-

Office of the Chief Engineer (Konkan) & Project Director (EAP),  
Public Works Region (Konkan), 25, Marzban Road,  
IVth Floor, Bendhikam Bhevan, Fort, Mumbai-400001  
Email: eapdir.ce@mahapwd.com, Phone +91 022-22078863 / 22078973  
Corrigendum No.1 Outer No. 1545 Date: 07-08-2020

Memo No:

INVITATION FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST  
For Project Management Services to assist PMU/PIUs

Date: 27-02-2020

**Value-Added Tax (VAT), also known as a goods and services tax (GST) in some countries, is a form of tax that is assessed incrementally. It is levied on the actual transaction value of a product or service at each stage of production, distribution or sale to the end consumer. VAT essentially compensates for the shared service and infrastructure provided in a certain locality by a state and funded by its taxpayers that were used in the creation of the said product and service.**

### Overview of Value Added Tax

The amount of VAT is decided by the end-market price. Its main purpose is to tax only the value added by a business on top of the services and goods it can purchase from the market. At each stage of production, the product gets successively more valuable at each stage (e.g. chocolate bars starting off as cocoa beans). When an end consumer makes a purchase, they are not only paying for the VAT of the entire product at hand (e.g., a cup of coffee) but for the entire process of production (e.g., the purchase of the cocoa beans, transportation, processing etc.), since VAT is always included in the prices. The value-added effect is achieved by prohibiting end-consumers from recovering VAT on purchases but permitting businesses to do so. The VAT collected by the state is computed as the difference between the VAT of sales earnings and the VAT of those goods and services upon which the product depends. The difference is the tax due to the value-added by the business. In this way, the total tax levied at each stage in the economic chain of supply is a constant fraction.

### How is Value Added Tax different from Income Tax

The VAT is similar to the income tax as it is based on the value of a product or service at each stage of production. However, there are some important differences. A VAT is usually collected by the end retailer. Therefore, even though is incurred at every stage of production and distribution. A VAT is usually a flat tax. For VAT purposes, an importer is assumed to have contributed 100% of the value of a product imported from outside of the VAT zone. The importer incurs VAT on the entire value of the product, and this cannot be refunded, even if the foreign manufacturer paid other forms of income tax.

### Limitations of Value Added Tax

A VAT, like most taxes, distorts what would have happened without it. Because the price for someone rises, the number of goods traded decreases. Correspondingly, some people are worse off by more than the government is made better off by tax income. That is, more is lost due to supply and demand shifts than is gained in tax. This is known as a deadweight loss. If the income lost by the economy is greater than the government's income; the tax is inefficient. VAT and a non-VAT have the same implications on the microeconomic model. The entire amount of the government's income (the tax revenue) may not be a deadweight drag, if the tax revenue is used for productive spending or has positive externalities – in other words, governments may do more than simply consume the tax income. While distortions occur, consumption taxes like VAT are often considered superior because they distort incentives to invest, save and work less than most other types of taxation – in other words, a VAT discourages consumption rather than production.



**Safety first:** Migrant labourers involved in building a special hospital for COVID-19 patients maintaining physical distance during lunch time in Hyderabad on Thursday; ASHA workers collecting details from a woman as part of a door-to-door survey to contain the virus in Vijayawada; workers sanitising a market in Bengaluru; and a Maundy Thursday mass without devotees at the St. Joseph's Cathedral in Thiruvananthapuram.



**IN BRIEF**



**Hegde gives communal colour to COVID-19**  
BENGALURU BJP MP for Uttara Kannada and former Union Minister Anant Kumar Hegde has published on his Facebook page a communally charged article against Tablighi Jamaat followers and the community in general in relation to COVID-19. The article accuses Tablighi Jamaat of involvement in "various terrorist acts" across the world over the last three decades and alleges a conspiracy by the group to spread COVID-19 in India.

**Wild elephant rescued from farm well in A.P.**

CHITTOOR A wild elephant which fell into a farm well near the Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh was rescued after a three-hour operation on Thursday. A herd of five elephants was on the move in Gangavaram mandal, raising crops. On Wednesday night, when the herd entered a field, an adult elephant slipped into the abandoned well. On information from the residents, senior forest officials from Palamander and Chittoor rushed to the spot and rescued the elephant.

# COVID-19 claims 3 lives in south

Patients succumb to the disease in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
HUBBALLI/VIJAYAWADA/HYDERABAD/THIRUVANANTHAPURAM  
COVID-19 claimed the lives of an 80-year-old woman in Gadag, Karnataka, a 45-year-old man in Guntur (A.P) and an unidentified individual in Telangana, while Kerala expressed cautious optimism that it would be able to keep disease transmission under control on Thursday.

The Karnataka patient had no travel history or traceable contact. It was also the first positive case in Gadag district, and the sixth death in the State. There were 16 new cases on Thursday, taking its total to 197.

**COVID-19**

The fatality in Andhra Pradesh was from Narsaraopet in Guntur district. The State reported 15 more positive cases from four districts, and a cumulative death toll of six. There were 364 cases as of Thursday evening. Telangana registered 18 coronavirus positive cases during the day. The individual who succumbed was under treatment, an official statement said. The State's casualties stood at 12. Five cases in Karnataka were from Bengaluru, three each from Bagalot and Belagavi, two from Mysuru, and one each from Chickballa-



**Cleaning drive:** People passing through a sanitiser tunnel set up at a vegetable market in Palakkad on Thursday. ■ K. K. MUSTAFAH

State	Total number of cases	Active cases	Number of those cured	Deaths
Andhra Pradesh	363	347	10	6
Karnataka	197	161	30	6
Kerala	357	258	97	2
Tamil Nadu	834	799	27	8
Telangana	471	414	45	12

pur, Dharwad, and Mandya. On the Gadag death, Deputy Commissioner M.G. Hiremath said that the woman was admitted to a government facility on April 4 with severe respiratory problems and tested positive for COVID-19 on April 6. She had with no history of travel outside and was staying with her sister at Rangiwad. She had taken part in a family function. After she tested positive, all her contacts, including seven from Goa who attended the function were tested. Throat swabs of 35 primary contacts and seven medical staff who were attending to the patient tested negative. "Yesterday we traced 11 other primary contacts from the family function, including two from Goa, and have sent the swabs," the DC said.

**Foreigners recover**

Exactly a 100 days after the first COVID-19 case was reported in Kerala and a total of 357 cases later, the State government expressed cautious optimism that it could keep disease transmission under control with lockdown norms and protocols like social distancing and universal wearing of masks.

**Tough night**

Kerala is taking several measures to contain the pandemic, including this tunnel that sprays disinfectant

**Health Minister Eatala Rajender said 385 out of the 471 cases pertained to people who attended the meeting at Nizamuddin and their close contacts.**

The TS government would put in place telemedicine facility from Friday, enabling people to take medical advice from home.

**In Telangana, the total number of cases touched 471 on Thursday with 18 new coronavirus positive cases.**

The Narsaraopet (A.P.) patient who died had no history of travel and was a tuberculosis patient.

**In a scenario where break-the-chain measures, physical distancing or quarantining are wholly absent, symptomatic cases can peak at 4.8 lakh cases, hospitalisation at 8.2 lakh cases between June and July-end this year, according to the statistical models created by an eight-member ISMA team.**

The possible scenarios were presented before Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday.

**In a scenario where break-the-chain measures, physical distancing or quarantining are wholly absent, symptomatic cases can peak at 4.8 lakh cases, hospitalisation at 8.2 lakh cases between June and July-end this year, according to the statistical models created by an eight-member ISMA team.**

The possible scenarios were presented before Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday.

# 'Without curbs, virus cases can hit lakhs'

KSDMA for strict post-lockdown steps

**TIKI RAJVI**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM  
The Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) has recommended active intervention, including stringent screening at State borders, long-term physical distancing strategies and effective quarantining, to forestall an unmanageable spike in COVID-19 cases in post-lockdown Kerala.

If there is no intervention whatsoever when the lockdown is lifted on April 14, hospitalisation in the State could peak in the range of 4.8 lakh to 8.2 lakh cases between June and July-end this year, according to the statistical models created by an eight-member ISMA team. The possible scenarios were presented before Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday.

In a scenario where break-the-chain measures, physical distancing or quarantining are wholly absent, symptomatic cases can peak at 4.8 lakh cases, hospitalisation at 8.2 lakh cases between June and July-end this year, according to the statistical models created by an eight-member ISMA team. The possible scenarios were presented before Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday.

If the infection spreads at a medium pace, by the beginning of July symptomatic cases can peak at 65 lakh, hospitalisations at 6.5 lakh,

# Beware of cyber fraud, say police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MYSURU

The COVID-19 scare may have confined people to their homes, but there is no stopping cyber fraudsters from continuing their efforts to dupe gullible bank customers.

The fraudsters are not only seeking contribution in the name of the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister relief funds by providing bogus QR codes and account numbers, but also seeking sensitive details from the public for postponing their EMIs against existing loans.

The police said that anonymous fraudsters were calling up people and seeking contribution to the relief funds. "They even suggest that payments can be made through digital wallets and then send the account numbers or QR codes to be scanned. The account numbers they send belong to the fraudsters, who will withdraw the money," said Aradhya, CID inspector in Mysuru, who has been handling cyber crime and economic offences.

A number of fake bank account numbers are also shared through WhatsApp. The fraudsters send account numbers and IFSC codes required for digital transfers.

# Kerala gets nod for trial of plasma therapy

ICMR approval of clinical protocol may help critically ill COVID-19 patients

**Promising treatment**

**What is convalescent plasma?**

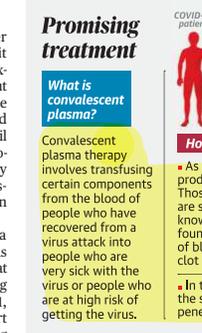
Convalescent plasma therapy involves transfusing certain components from the blood of people who have recovered from a virus attack into people who are very sick with the virus or people who are at high risk of getting the virus.

**How does it work**

As people fight the virus, they produce antibodies that attack it. These antibodies, proteins that are secreted by immune cells known as B lymphocytes, are found in plasma or the liquid part of blood that helps the blood to clot and supports immunity.

**Once a person recovers, that person has developed antibodies that will stay in their blood waiting to fight the same virus. Those antibodies, when injected into another person with the disease, recognise the virus as something to attack.**

**In the case of coronavirus disease, scientists say antibodies attack the spikes on the outside of the virus, blocking the virus from penetrating human cells.**



It may be noted that plasma from the blood of previously infected yet healthy individuals had been transferred to five critically ill patients in China and their condition had steadily improved and were subsequently discharged from hospitals.

The proposal submitted to the ICMR says that the Transfusion Medicine Department of Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology would help the State Health

Department in exploring the feasibility of plasma therapy for COVID-19 treatment. "Getting the clinical protocol for administering plasma therapy cleared by the ICMR is just part of our preparedness," he added.

# Two Manipur students refused entry into store

Manager, two security guards booked

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD**

The Rachakonda police on Thursday booked a store manager and two security guards of a Star Market outlet here for racial profiling and refusing entry to two students from Manipur.

"We used to go to this shop regularly but yesterday, they stopped us, calling us foreigners. Even after we showed our Aadhaar cards, they didn't relent. One gentleman asked where we are from but did not help," says Angam Weapon. The incident occurred on Wednesday. A video of the incident went viral, drawing the attention of IT Minister K.T. Rama Rao and top officials.

On Thursday, Principal Secretary Arvind Kumar wrote on Twitter: "It's unfortunate & our apologies! Collector RR district has informed that an FIR is registered against the manager of this outlet and that the accused are in custody. Also request people to come out in support of our brothers & sisters from NE at this point."

**Studying engineering**

Mr. Weapon said, "We are pursuing engineering here. We never faced this kind of harassment before. We went to buy groceries when this incident happened. My friend is very upset."

The police booked the case under Sections 153-A (promotion of disharmony, enmity or feelings of hatred or ill-will between different religious, racial, language or regional groups), 188 (disobedience of order promulgated by a public servant) and 341 (wrongful restraint) of the IPC.

**WEATHER WATCH**

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 19:00 HRS)  
**Forecast for Friday:** Thunderstorm with lightning and gust likely at isolated places over West Bengal, Sikkim, Telangana, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	0.4	36.6	24.3	Kozhikode	...	36.4	26.4
Ahmedabad	...	38.6	24.3	Kurnool	1.7	40.1	23.8
Bhopal	...	33.8	15.4	Lucknow	...	35.9	21.3
Bhubaneswar	...	39.8	20.3	Madurai	2.9	39.2	25.5
Chennai	...	33.7	21.0	Mangaluru	...	35.6	25.3
Chandigarh	...	32.0	15.2	Mumbai	...	32.6	22.6
Coimbatore	...	34.1	28.5	Mysuru	...	33.9	19.4
Delhi	...	30.2	14.1	New Delhi	...	33.0	16.6
Dehradun	...	32.1	12.9	Patna	...	37.4	21.8
Gangtok	...	34.8	23.8	Port Blair	...	31.8	26.1
Goa	...	35.5	20.0	Puducherry	...	34.0	28.2
Guwahati	0.3	35.5	20.0	Pune	...	37.3	15.9
Hubballi	...	36.0	21.0	Raipur	...	38.5	24.0
Hyderabad	...	33.0	23.2	Ranchi	...	34.8	16.9
Imphal	...	31.2	12.9	Shillong	...	4.6	24.5
Jaipur	...	35.7	20.8	Shimla	...	0.5	20.8
Kochi	...	32.4	25.4	Srinagar	...	18.8	4.7
Kolonia	...	1.4	24.2	Thiruvananthapuram	...	5.6	34.6
Kolkata	...	35.4	25.2	Tiruchirappalli	...	40.6	25.8
				Vijayawada	...	33.0	23.8
				Visakhapatnam	...	1.7	32.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>2</sub>	CO	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	PM <sub>10</sub>	CODE	Yesterday
Ahmedabad	23	19	17	51	86	Good	
Bengaluru	13	10	58	43	44	Good	In observation made at 7:00 p.m., Nandesar, Gujarat recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 157 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Chandigarh, Haryana, recorded a healthy AQI score of 26.
Chennai	09	15	25	13	...	Good	
Delhi	29	21	17	130	105	Poor	
Hyderabad	12	48	18	57	67	Good	
Kolkata	15	19	27	36	31	Good	
Lucknow	06	21	55	168	...	Poor	
Mumbai	05	11	05	64	115	Good	
Pune	33	27	48	60	40	Good	
Visakhapatnam	08	38	06	30	47	Good	

**AQI** Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)  
**SO<sub>2</sub>:** Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.  
**NO<sub>2</sub>:** Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal water to form critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.  
**PM<sub>2.5</sub> & PM<sub>10</sub>:** 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.

# With Ranga Shankara now online, the show goes on

Theatre space in Bengaluru reinvents itself; actors perform monologues for the camera and share it over Internet

**STAFF REPORTER BENGALURU**

Theatre has been facing an existential crisis in times of social distancing following the COVID-19 pandemic. In Bengaluru, the theatre space, Ranga Shankara, has reinvented itself and is trying to reach out to the theatre community and its audience, online.

As part of the initiative, more than 20 actors, directors, playwrights and thespians from language theatres across the country have performed monologues for their favourite theatre texts for the camera and shared it online.

These include performances by Shabana Azmi, Simranjit Singh Chandru, Mandya Ramesh, Prashant Kalyanmani Chandru and B. Jayashree, while actor Umashree has performed a play after several years. This campaign is also part of the 15th anniversary celebrations of Ranga Shankara. Those who couldn't record a video have still participated with an audio recording.

**'Encouraging response'**  
"With the lockdown, our life-line to the audience was cut off. At Ranga Shankara, we never celebrated World Theatre Day, as we argued



A file photo of Ranga Shankara in Bengaluru. ■ MURALI KUMAR, K

we do it every day. But this year was different. As a community space, we realised we had a role to play to keep theatre alive. What we could do now was only work with monologues as all of us are locked up at home. The response we got from the community has been very encouraging," said Arundhati Nag, founder of Rangashankara, who has performed a monologue from Girish Karnad's play *Anju Mallige*, her first Kannada production.

Live-streaming of plays has become the norm abroad, but remains untried here. Has COVID-19 changed the theatre community in the town to explore the video as a medium? At Ranga Shankara have tried recording plays for archival purposes, but have failed to do great work like at NCPA, Mumbai. I feel a play in video is reductionist as it doesn't give that wholesome experience," Ms. Nag said.

Umashree, who started with theatre and went on to become a noted film actor, said the experience of recording the monologue was strange. "I enacted a theatre text to the camera," she said, but added that after years before the camera she was accustomed to it.

**'Human element'**

Filmmaker B. Suresha had a different take. "Even at Ranga Shankara we have tried to live-stream plays when we got Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* Theatre. But only a handful of people watched it online. Theatre requires that human element," he said.



## In time of need

Irrespective of whether India bowed to U.S. pressure, it is unlikely to run out of the drug

After imposing a blanket ban on the export of anti-malaria drug hydroxychloroquine on April 4, without exemptions on humanitarian or other grounds, India reversed the policy two days later. The decision to reverse the ban was made public hours after U.S. President Donald Trump warned of "retaliation" if India withheld supplies of the drug for which orders had already been placed. Given the circumstances, it would be difficult to believe that the decision to lift the restriction was taken independent of U.S. pressure. But the pandemic has seen several countries displaying solidarity and cooperation providing essential supplies to others even while tackling the novel coronavirus in their own backyards. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's message to Mr. Trump that "India shall do everything possible to help humanity's fight against COVID-19" should, therefore, be seen in that light. Lauded as the pharmacy of the global south, India's decision to export the drug on humanitarian grounds to neighbouring countries and others that have been badly hit by the pandemic is welcome. Till recently India relied solely on other countries for test supplies and may look to others for essential materials if the situation worsens. Also, India may have much to gain from the U.S. in the future by this diplomatic act of supplying the drug at a crucial time. The sudden demand for hydroxychloroquine across the world arose after Mr. Trump championed it as treatment for COVID-19 patients. The drug became much sought-after in India after the Indian Council of Medical Research approved its use as prophylaxis for novel coronavirus by certain categories of people on March 23. Two days later, the drug was placed in the restricted category for export and included in schedule H1 on March 26 to prevent its sale over the counter, thereby preventing self-medication and hoarding. This was also to ensure its availability to people with rheumatoid arthritis and other conditions.

India has a production capacity of 200 million hydroxychloroquine tablets of 200 mg strength each month and three well-established pharmaceutical companies make the drug. While the capacity is sufficient to meet the current demand, the companies are confident of ramping up production if the need arises. In all likelihood, in the short term, India might not run out of hydroxychloroquine as the national taskforce for COVID-19 had relied on weak, anecdotal evidence to make the recommendation. Though the U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued an emergency use authorisation for the drug to treat COVID-19 patients, on April 7, the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention revised its position saying there is no drug available to prevent or treat COVID-19. Clearly, more research work is needed to establish the efficacy of the drug.

**The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is an international organization that seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons. The IAEA was established as an autonomous organisation on 29 July 1957. Though established independently of the United Nations through its own international treaty, the IAEA Statute, [3] the IAEA reports to both the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council.**

wealthy and for campaign financing regulations among other systemic changes did not endear him to the Democratic establishment. Mr. Sanders' emphasis on economic justice as key to overcome the social inequality in a racially divided U.S. did not have as many takers among African American voters who preferred Mr. Biden's "safer" candidacy due to his identification with Barack Obama's presidency in which he served as Vice-President. Mr. Sanders will be remembered for bringing to the forefront ideas of social welfare, collective action, and liberal idealism that had been relegated by the neoliberal/neoconservative duopoly that had firmly established itself in the U.S. since the 1980s. He might have lost the battle, but the war for a progressive America will now be waged by activists inspired by his legacy.

# A time for extraordinary action

An unprecedented scale of state investment is required to lift up the Indian economy



TEJAL KANITKAR & T. JAYARAMAN

Even before the full impact of COVID-19 on the health of Indians is clear, the economic impact of the measures required to deal with the pandemic are already posing grave problems. The Indian economy was in dire straits even before COVID-19 reached our shores. Specifically, the lockdown and other movement restrictions, backed by scientific and political consensus on their inevitability, have directly led to a dramatic slowdown in economic activity across the board. What is their impact on the Indian economy? This question calls for an urgent answer.

### Methodology

We provide an initial, quantitative response, using a methodology that is based on the technique of input-output (IO) models, first elaborated by the economist Wassily Leontief. Such models provide detailed sector-wise information of output and consumption in different sectors of the economy and their inter-linkages, along with the sum total of wages, profits, savings, and expenditures in each sector and by each section of final consumers (households, government, etc.). Crucially, it pays attention to intermediate consumption, namely consumption by some sectors of the output of other sectors (as well as consumption within their own sector).

The key advantage of such a model is that it allows the calculation of the impact of any change in any sector in both direct and indirect terms, which has made this model somewhat ubiquitous in the

computation of the economic impact of disasters. This also renders it well-suited to estimating the economic consequences of COVID-19. Regrettably, the last officially published IO table for India was for the year 2007-2008. In our estimates, we use the IO tables for India published by the World Input-Output Database for the year 2014 that updates the IO tables for individual countries using the series of national income statistics.

To calculate the impact of the lockdown, we proceed by constructing four different scenarios of the number of workdays lost in different sectors. Assuming that the estimated annual output is distributed uniformly across the year, it is possible to calculate the daily output and therefore the daily output loss. The direct and indirect impacts of the lockdown are then estimated using IO multipliers which are assumed to be constant. We then calculate the percentage decline in the national gross domestic product (GDP) of 2019-2020 that this impact amounts to.

### Impact on various sectors

Our model (see table) shows that the loss of GDP ranges from ₹17 lakh crore (7% of GDP) in the most conservative scenario, where the average number of output days lost is only 13, to ₹73 lakh crore (33% of GDP) in the most impactful scenario, where the number of days of lost output averages 67. In intermediate scenarios of 27 and 47 days of lost output, the GDP decline is ₹29 lakh crore (13% of GDP) and ₹51 lakh crore (23% of GDP), respectively. We emphasise again that the number of days of lost output noted here is only an average across all sectors, and that we do input in the calculation of different numbers for each sector, based roughly on the available information in the public domain and exercising some judgment. Further details can be accessed at <https://bit.ly/2UXK5WR>.

Scenario	Average number of working days lost	Loss of GDP (₹ lakh crore)	Loss of GDP (%)
1	13	15	7%
2	27	29	13%
3	47	51	23%
4	67	73	33%

These, of course, need more accurate representation, an exercise that can undoubtedly be best carried out by national statistical institutions and their State-level counterparts. These estimates also accord well with other estimates, such as those of the OECD that suggest a 20% loss of GDP for India.

Even assuming that sectors will have varying lockdown periods, all sectors face serious losses due to their interdependence. If we take the scenario where a prolonged lockdown happens, averaging about 47 days across sectors, we find that the mining sector faces the largest drop of 42% in value added despite that sector itself being shut down for, say, 35 days as we have assumed, which is less than the economy-wide average. The electricity sector sees a 29% fall in value added, even though it faces no shut down per se. Losses are expected across all sectors in terms of both wage compensation and availability of working capital.

The linear character of our estimates, intrinsic to IO analysis, does not allow incorporation of feedback effects and assumes that output commences where it left off without further constraints. We have attempted to correct for this by using varying number of days of output loss across sectors, but this is quite possibly inadequate to capture the continuing economic impact. We are faced today with the unique situation where both supply and demand have collapsed in several sectors. In some sectors such as agriculture, the impact may manifest in delayed fashion, if the anti-COVID-19 measures,

or the pandemic itself, affects agricultural operations in the next kharif season, even if, as reports suggest, much of this year's rabi has been successfully harvested. Given the database we are using and the initial character of our analyses we have also not explicitly accounted for possible shortfalls in exports due to lack of demand elsewhere in the world, as well as the unavailability of intermediate imported goods that are crucial for the Indian economy. Nor are we able to adequately separate the impact on the informal sector, that is partially aggregated with the formal sector in the database that we are using and partially unaccounted for due to lack of data. Dealing with the travails of the informal sector will require separate sector-wise considerations.

But the most striking feature of even this simple calculation is the all-round pervasive impact on the economy of the anti-COVID-19 measures that we are currently undertaking and that are likely to continue in modified form for a short period. Measures such as debt relief, postponement of revenue and tax collections, immediate relief in cash and kind to the poor, and revamping and scaling up public distribution are all undoubtedly necessary but far from sufficient. Our numbers suggest that the resort to huge stimulus packages that developed countries have already started putting in place is by no means mistaken.

### The way forward

India needs a similar strategy. As Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan pointed out, extraordinary

measures need extraordinary action. We need to compensate and pump cash into the hands of not only wage workers in the formal and informal sectors, and also into the livelihood activities of the informal sector, but businesses too need to be primed with handouts in the case of small and medium enterprises, and with a variety of concessions even in the case of larger businesses. It is critical to preserve the productive capacities of the Indian economy across the board. The annual budget of the current year, already passed, clearly cannot cope with such a massive effort and needs to be revisited by suitable parliamentary measures.

Redistributing expenditure, seeking to keep the fiscal deficit "under control" as it were, through measures such as cutting back on government salaries, are unlikely to be helpful. Apart from sending the wrong signal to private sector employers, who have so far been exerted to maintain salaries and wages during the lockdown, it is quite likely to lead to further reduction in demand since the government is the biggest employer in the country.

Finally, one must note that the current crisis is not a transformational moment for the Indian economy, even if the scale of the impact and recovery process will undoubtedly push the economy in new directions. But "greening" the economy or more radical transformative measures are not particularly relevant in its current state. What is needed is ensuring the key role of the state to lift up an economy that is in danger of being brought to its knees, and to restore some semblance of its normal rhythm, by an unprecedented scale of state investment.

Tejal Kanitkar is at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru, and T. Jayaraman is at the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation

## A double whammy for India-Gulf economic ties

It is going to be a challenge to manage the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the oil shock



MAHESH SACHDEV

The Gulf region is at the epicentre of a perfect storm: apart from the COVID-19 pandemic, it also has an oil price meltdown. Although this double jeopardy still has some distance to go before stabilising, given India's vital relations with the eight Gulf countries, the situation's impact on bilateral economic ties needs to be anticipated and managed.

### Oil prices in a tailspin

The region, especially Iran, has been maulled by COVID-19, and the figures are yet to peak. The pandemic has put nearly a third of the world's population under some form of lockdown curbing the consumption of hydrocarbons, the mainstay of Gulf economies. A Goldman Sachs report published on March 30 estimated that COVID-19 had lowered the world crude consumption by 28 million bpd. The consequent oil glut began depressing the price. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other

failed to reach a production-cutting strategy as Saudi Arabia and Russia, the cartel's two biggest producers, held different views. As a result, OPEC unravelled with each producer chasing a higher share in a collapsing market. Consequently, the oil prices went for a tailspin having fallen by 55% during March to an 18-year low on March 30. Though the market has recovered since and a wider production-sharing compromise is in the works, the general outlook remains bleak.

In a rare joint statement on March 16, the heads of OPEC and the International Energy Agency (IEA) warned that developing countries' oil and gas revenues will decline by 50% to 85% in 2020 with potentially far-reaching economic and social consequences. The economic outlook for the Gulf has indeed deteriorated, with Saudi Arabia's fiscal deficit expected to cross 8% in 2020. The global economy is expected to have a recession induced by COVID-19 this year. Even if it limps back to growth in 2021, the process may be slow and less energy-intensive: national self-reliance on strategic goods such as pharmaceuticals may deter their trade, and the tourism and hospitality sectors, the core of Dubai's economy, may take



ROITERS

year's Hajj and Dubai Expo doubtful.

India's economic ties with the Gulf states have two dominant verticals: the economic symbiosis and India's expatriate community. Bilateral economic ties are strong: the India-Gulf trade stood around \$162 billion in 2018-19, being nearly a fifth of India's global trade. It was dominated by import of crude oil and natural gas worth nearly \$75 billion, meeting nearly 65% of India's total requirements. Some of these countries have large Indian investments and some have planned large investments in India. Second, the number of Indian expatriates in the Gulf states is about nine million, and they remitted nearly \$40 billion back home. Both these intertwined pillars of India-Gulf ties have been affected by the recent maelstrom roiling the shared region.

India being the world's third largest

helps its current account. However, this is not an unmitigated blessing. The Gulf's lower oil revenues also presage decreased bilateral trade and investments as well as expatriates' remittances — all of them adding to India's current financial stress.

### Impact on expatriates

Oil is a cyclic commodity and the Gulf producers have long evolved a pattern to handle its periodic lows. They tend to tighten their belts and dip into their reserves. They also transfer the burden on to the last person in line, viz. the Asian expatriate. The fresh recruitment stalls, salaries are either lowered or stalled, taxes raised and localisation drives launched. The net result is that a large number of expatriates return to their homes. This time there is an added complication of the pandemic, to which the Asian expatriates living in densely populated camps are particularly vulnerable. In case the pandemic worsens in the lower Gulf, panic-stricken, wage-deprived Indians may prefer to come back. This would create an exodus of epic proportions, the nearest example being the evacuation of over 1,50,000 Indians from Kuwait in 1990-91, albeit for political reasons, an event that upended

sporting million of expatriates back, they would need to be resettled and re-employed.

While hoping that the Gulf states are able to contain the pandemic and the oil shock, India needs to make some contingency plans in consultation with the individual countries. It should do whatever it takes to enhance their capacity to handle COVID-19 cases among the Indian expatriates. India's missions there also need to monitor the situation and try to avoid panic among its nationals.

In the longer run, it is quite clear that we need to find new drivers for the India-Gulf synergy. This search could begin with cooperation in healthcare and gradually extend outward towards pharmaceutical research and production, petrochemical complexes, building infrastructure in India and in third countries, agriculture, education and skilling as well as the economic activities in bilateral free zones created along our Arabian Sea coast eventually leading to an India-Gulf Cooperation Council Free Trade Area. Only then would we have sufficiently diversified the India-Gulf economic ties to protect them from such shocks.

Mahesh Sachdev, a former Ambassador, is

**The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was founded in Baghdad, Iraq, with the signing of an agreement in September 1960 by five countries namely Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela. They were to become the Founder Members of the Organization. It is a permanent, intergovernmental organization. Currently, the Organization has a total of 14 Member Countries. OPEC's objective is to co-ordinate and unify petroleum policies among Member Countries, in order to secure fair and stable prices for petroleum producers; an efficient, economic and regular supply of petroleum to consuming nations; and a fair return on capital to those investing in the industry. It is headquartered in Vienna, Austria. OPEC membership is open to any country that is a substantial exporter of oil and which shares the ideals of the organization. Why is OPEC+ more influential than OPEC? OPEC's 14 members control 35 percent of global oil supplies and 82 percent of proven reserves. With the addition of the 10 Non-OPEC nations, notable among them Russia, Mexico and Kazakhstan, those shares increase to 55 percent and 90 percent respectively. This affords OPEC+ a level of influence over the world economy never seen before.**

VIP

# Will COVID-19 affect the course of globalisation?

PARLEY

Import substitution, which had once become a bad word, may be back in currency

*The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on free trade is yet to be completely understood. Biswajit Dhar and Nagesh Kumar spoke to Vikas Dhoot on whether the epidemic would spell an end to open markets as we know it. Edited excerpts:*

**With several countries and regions locked down, will there be a redrawing of geographical boundaries?**

**Biswajit Dhar (BD):** I think we are going towards a new normal now. Much of what we saw in terms of global integration of trade and finance would suffer in the short run. If you recall, when the world was hit by economic recession in 2008, trade dipped by almost 10% in 2009 when there was a 3% decline in global GDP. That's roughly the relation between trade and growth. When there's a boom, trade grows much faster than GDP. The World Trade Organization (WTO) has now estimated that in a worst-case scenario, global trade could dip as much as 32%, indicating the kind of dislocation they expect in large economies. It's going to be a very different ball game – the first thing that will happen is countries will try to build themselves up. In India, for instance, we can see the disruption that is taking place – almost 50% of our trade is directly linked with the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) sector as even large players have sub-contracted to the smaller producers. So it is anyone's guess what the impact is going to be on trade because of the disruption in production. Going forward, most economies, with the exception of

**Nagesh Kumar (NK):** UNESCAP has released its annual Economic and Social Survey on Wednesday – what we are finding of course, is that the COVID-19 crisis is a challenge never seen before and it is going to be a bigger shock for the world economy than the global financial crisis which was only driven by a demand shock. This entails a demand and supply shock and it is still unfolding. It is now clear that many economies are going to shrink – developed countries as well as many in the Asia Pacific region that are highly dependent on tourism and commodities trading will also shrink. Commodity prices are at their lowest in the last 10 years. For India, however, there is a slight silver lining because of low oil and commodity prices as we are net importers and, also, since the government is not allowing a full pass-through of the lower global prices, it means that there is some fiscal space through commodity price reduction. Still, the disruption in work, especially in MSMEs that are the backbone of manufacturing, trading and services, is very serious. This is a very large shock to the world economy and many things will change after we come out of it.

**We have seen over the last couple of months a significant slowdown in trade flows in advanced economies and a sharper fall in developing countries. Do you consider this a passing phase or is COVID-19 set to reverse the trend of globalisation as we know it?**

**NK:** The process of globalisation



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

lue chains are linked with China. Countries will reconfigure their economies to look at import substitution with a greater clarity now, as the perils and pitfalls of overdependence on foreign supplies become clear. Import substitution, that had become a bad word, may be back in currency.

**Mr. Dhar, you mentioned that China might have a slightly different experience...**

**BD:** Over the past week, news has been filtering through that China's manufacturing sector is back, with Wuhan coming back into action. Other countries will remain in a lockdown phase for at least another two months. Nobody is yet talking of the flattening of the curve, and after that happens, it will take some more time for normalcy. So, if the Chinese get this sort of a lead in getting their act together, they are going to consolidate their position in the global economy further. It's very interesting if you look at the two ma-

**6** If governments have to do the heavy-lifting in dealing with this crisis, then they want full force of their sovereign powers

**BISWAJIT DHAR,**  
Professor, JNU

don't know how badly it was impacted by the virus. China doesn't really figure in the top of countries that have announced stimulus packages. But we know for sure they will do it – and this factor will determine the response of other countries. Countries are going to be extremely wary of the superpower that China will become and would like to disengage. I have absolutely no doubt that India will disengage. Stimulus packages – be it in the U.S., France, Germany – have an overwhelming emphasis on small businesses, which really were at the heart of their post-war industrialisation strategy, and you will see industrial policy whose flip side will be import substitution. So, globalisation will be defined in a very different way.

We never got back to a pre-2008 high-growth phase. But even to go back to the pre-COVID period, countries will require a huge effort.

**NK:** The first priority of every government would be to create jobs for its own people. In a high unemployment scenario, hiring expats won't be in favour. In any case, there had been rising protectionism on this front already.

**Do you feel that the social fabric in places that are now open to immigrants could come under stress?**

**NK:** We have gone into the impact on social structure and have emphasised the need for governments to push for universal healthcare and social protection. Our experience from the financial crisis is that economies that paid greater attention to social protection were able to recover very quickly. This crisis has exposed the gaps in the health sector and social protection and the stimulus packages should focus on closing these gaps which will also help in achieving sustainable development goals. The first priority will be to create jobs for those rendered jobless. But I think in certain sectors that are highly skill-intensive, and countries are dependent on outsiders for those skills, that will continue.

**How do you see the role of WTO evolving in such a situation? It has already been struggling...**

**BD:** There are worse days ahead for the WTO. Trade rules have worked best when the global economy is booming and isn't facing a crisis. The last time serious discussions took place at WTO was in 2008, be-

mit in rice subsidies as a good citizen. But do you think, going forward, the government of India can be restrained from giving more subsidies for rice or other sectors vital for food security? If the WTO rules are junked, then it's a free-for-all situation. That's the problem. Then you go back to the situation of the 1930s when it was just brute economic strength that will determine things, like the law of the jungle. Unfortunately, the impact on global governance systems hasn't been understood yet. I was greatly disappointed with the G20 leaders' and trade ministers' statements. They should have reflected on global rules being in further jeopardy. If they have to work out flexibilities within the WTO framework, they should do it collectively.

**Shall there be a rethink on existing multilateral and bilateral pacts?**

**BD:** Countries cede a part of their sovereignty while getting into these trade agreements. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, we saw one driver of governance – market forces-oriented. But now, in major economies, governments have taken centre stage and depending on how long the pandemic drags on, the government will remain in the driver's seat and markets will take a backseat. If governments have to do the heavy-lifting, then they want full force of their sovereign powers. So I would think the project of globalisation is going to settle at a new normal and it will be a very different WTO and trade governance framework, with different kinds of regional and bilateral engagements. India, of course, has already become a reluctant player and had, in a way, started disengaging. Other coun-



**Biswajit Dhar**  
is a Professor at  
the Centre for  
Economic Studies

**Import substitution is a strategy under trade policy that abolishes the import of foreign products and encourages for the production in the domestic market. The purpose of this policy is to change the economic structure of the country by replacing foreign goods with domestic goods. Post-Independence India adopted the policy of import substitution by imposing heavy tariffs on import duty. The industrial policy that the country endorsed was linked to the trade policy. In the first seven five year plans, trade in India was distinguished by the inward-looking trade strategy. This strategy is known as import substitution with the aim to boost domestic production and shield domestic products from international competition.**

**The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is the regional development arm of the United Nations for the Asia-Pacific region. Made up of 62 member States, with a geographical scope that stretches from Turkey in the west to the Pacific island nation of Kiribati in the east, and from the Russian Federation in the north to New Zealand in the south, the region is home to 4.1 billion people, or two thirds of the world's population. This makes ESCAP the most comprehensive of the United Nations five regional commissions, and the largest United Nations body serving the Asia-Pacific region with over 600 staff. Established in 1947 with its headquarters in Bangkok.**

**NAFTA is the initialism for the North American Free Trade Agreement, an agreement signed by Canada, Mexico, and the United States that reduced or eliminated trade barriers in North America. (Since the U.S. and Canada already had a free trade agreement (signed in 1988), NAFTA merely brought Mexico into the trade bloc.)**

**Negotiations for the trade agreement began in 1990 under the administration of George H.W. Bush and were finalized under Bill Clinton's presidency in 1993. The agreement went into effect on January 1, 1994.**

**What was the purpose of NAFTA?**

**In 1993 the European Union (EU) created a "single market"—one territory without any internal borders or other regulatory obstacles to the free movement of goods and services. This allowed every country and business in the EU to have access to more than 500 million consumers. NAFTA, which was approved that same year, was designed to have a similar effect, providing a way to allow the exchange of goods and services to flow more freely across national borders without the artificial restrictions. NAFTA provided for progressive elimination of all tariffs on any goods qualifying as North American. The deal also sought to protect intellectual property, establish dispute-resolution mechanisms, and, through corollary agreements, implement labor and environmental safeguards.**

**Why is NAFTA controversial?**

**NAFTA was controversial when first proposed, mostly because it was the first [free trade agreement] involving two wealthy, developed countries and a developing country. Some people felt that allowing free trade with a developing country provides an incentive for U.S.-based business to move their operations to that country. Since its implementation NAFTA has remained a prime target of trade protectionists (those who advocate taking measures such as taxing imports to "protect" domestic industries from foreign competition).**

**The House of Representatives has passed the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement — the replacement for NAFTA, or the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement. The new deal includes stronger labor and environmental provisions. American labor groups have backed the new trade deal.**

**About United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA):**

**It's basically NAFTA 2.0, with major changes on cars and new policies on labor and environmental standards, intellectual property protections, and some digital trade provisions**

FROM PAGE ONE

## No significant rate of increase, says ICMR

The Health Ministry added that two of its labs have started whole genome sequencing of the COVID-19 virus.

Mr. Agarwal said there was no need to panic over the availability of COVID-19 personal protective equipment (PPE), but stressed these should be used rationally.

"Twenty companies are manufacturing PPE in India and orders for 1.7 crore PPE have already been placed with them. There is no reason to believe any rumours regarding PPE. Our guidelines state when, where and who should use the PPEs," he said.

"It (PPE) should be used as per requirement. We can use four N95 masks within a day, or use just one within a day. While the central government is augmenting supplies to the States, we are also requesting people

to use them rationally," said. He added that orders for 49,000 ventilators have been placed and their supply was underway. Mr. Agarwal said 10 teams of COVID-19 specialists have been sent to nine States including Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat – to cover see preparedness and ensure maximum containment of cases.

"Indian Railways has produced about six lakh reusable face masks and over 4,000 litres of hand sanitiser; it has also converted 3,250 coaches into COVID-19 isolation units with beds. Total 5,000 coaches are to be converted," Mr. Agarwal said.

Punya Srivastava, joint secretary, Home Ministry said State governments are extending support through shelters and food camps for those stranded by the lockdown.

## ₹15,000 cr. sanctioned to States to fight COVID-19

"We also expect States to use this money for centralised procurement of essential medical equipment and drugs required for treatment of infected patients, strengthen and build health systems to support prevention and preparedness for future disease outbreaks, setting up of laboratories and bolster surveillance activities, bio-security preparedness, pandemic research and proactively engage communities and conduct risk communication activities," Joint Secretary in the Health Ministry Lav Agarwal said.

A release issued by the Ministry added that it was authorised to re-appropriate resources among components of the package and among the various implementation agencies – the National Health Mission, Central Procurement, Railways, Dept of Health Research/ICMR, National Centre for Disease Control – as per the evolving situation.

"We have now rapidly increased our health sector response with the rise in the number of COVID-19 cases. As on March 29, a total of 223 labs comprising a network of 157 government and 66 private laboratories are conducting rigorous screening process. Also we have already disbursed ₹413 crore to all the States and UTs for dealing with the emergency COVID response," the release added.

"The allotment will allow for rapidly ramping up the number of corona testing facilities, buying Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), isolation beds, ICU beds, ventilators and other essential equipment. The major share of the expenditure will be used for mounting robust emergency response, strengthening pandemic research, community engagement and risk communication and implementation, management, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation component," he added.

## A salute to selfless service on the streets

"Since we felt that the conservancy workers' job should not go unnoticed, the police decided to honour them in recognition of their work for the well-being of others, as instructed by City Police Commissioner Deepak M. Dabor," said S. Saravanan, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Law and Order), Tirunelveli City.

As the Health Officer (CFO) of Tirunelveli Corporation, Sathish led the conservancy workforce, the police presented the honour in the presence of Corporation Commissioner G. Kannan and Assistant Collector (Training) Sivaguru Prabhakaran at the Corporation's administrative office.

## J&K tightens lockdown in wildlife zones

Move aimed at protecting large cats

PEERZADA ASHIQ SRINAGAR

The J&K wildlife department on Thursday decided to implement a tightened lockdown in the peripheries of wildlife zones and zoos in the Valley to prevent any transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from humans to animals, especially the wild cats.

"People living close to forested and wildlife areas should refrain from moving into these areas to avoid human-wildlife interface to prevent the possibility of transmission of this infection," Rashid Naqash, Regional Wildlife Warden, Kashmir, told *The Hindu*.

"The move is made after an increased frequency of COVID-19 cases reported in Jammu and Kashmir, and the report of a tiger housed in Bronx Zoo, New York, contracting the virus," he added.

big cats, Kashmir is home to a number of species of lion, tiger, and leopard, including the snow leopard. The lockdown has already helped in their movement to lower areas of the wildlife zones.

"Mammals like leopard, tiger, big cats and primates face potential threat of spread of the infection and also transmission from humans to wild animals. People living in the fringes of forest and wildlife areas still venture into these areas for collection of firewood, morels (wild mushrooms) and other minor forest produce," said Mr. Naqash.

Umar Nazir, Veterinarian, Department of Wildlife Protection, Srinagar, said there was a need for extra precaution because the SARS-CoV-2 mutates fast and it would be difficult to know the trajectory of mutation once it travels from humans to animals.

# Study flagged lockdown impact

ICMR paper said the measure could lead to 'long-lasting adverse health outcomes'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Multiple scientists of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), currently coordinating the fight against COVID-19, authored a research study in February that questioned the effectiveness of a lockdown.

The study, *The 2019 novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic: A review of the current evidence*, appears online in the Indian Journal for Medical Research, which is affiliated to the ICMR. It described lockdown as a "drastic public health measure" that could lead to "long-lasting adverse health outcomes."

The review paper recommended against "coercive top-down quarantine approaches, which are driven by the authorities" and pitches for "community and civil-society led self-quarantine and self-monitoring that could emerge as more sustainable and implementable strategies in a protracted pandemic like COVID."

The piece, however, was written before February 29,



Multiple complications: The researchers also appeared to cast a doubt on travel bans. \*AFP

when India was yet to announce the suspension of new visas, compulsory screening of all international passengers and the eventual lockdown from March 25. Though India had recorded its first cases on January 30, a steady, discernible escalation of confirmed new cases had begun only from March 3.

The study has as its lead author Pranab Chatterjee of the Translational Global Health Policy Research Cell, which is an interdisciplinary unit set up with the ICMR and the World Health Organisation (WHO). Other authors are Nivedita Gupta and

Raman Gangakhedkar – the latter being the ICMR spokesperson at the Health Ministry's daily briefings – of the Epidemiology Division at the ICMR; Bhabatosh Das of the Translational Health Science and Technology Institute, Faridabad; Nazia Nagi of the Department of Microbiology at the Maulana Azad Medical College and Sayantan Banerjee of the WHO.

The review paper also didn't appear to be a votary of travel bans. "The medium and long-term impact of such travel bans remain to be seen but modelling studies suggest that in the short-term, these are unlikely to

have meaningful impact on global transmission of SARS-CoV-2, unless sustained 90% travel restrictions are implemented in combination with more than 50% reduction in local transmission. Such bans may only provide a symbolic shield unless the ongoing outbreak is staunch. Ethical concerns of imposing such travel bans have also been questioned," it said.

### Citations from studies

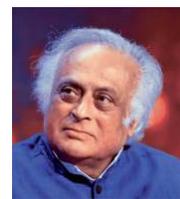
For the view on bans, the paper cited evidence from a study in the *Lancet* and another paper, which was still being reviewed, at the time it was written. Their assertions also appeared to rest heavily on the experience of measures in Wuhan, China.

Scientists say the effectiveness of the lockdown in curtailing the spread of the disease would be apparent only two-three weeks after, given the average incubation period of the virus. Since the lockdown was announced, cases rose 10-fold to around 5,700 on Wednesday.

# MSMEs need huge package: Jairam

They are in distress, says Cong. leader

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI



Jairam Ramesh

Warning that the COVID-19 lockdown has thrown MSMEs – Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises – into deep distress, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh has urged the Centre to set up a ₹1 lakh crore corpus fund as part of a relief package for the sector.

In a letter to MSME Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday, Mr. Ramesh called for tax sops and other measures to ensure liquidity, preventing mass unemployment. He urged payment of dues and paying litigation against MSMEs, and from post-lockdown steps to improve consumer sentiment and investment appetite.

The Rajya Sabha MP noted that there were over 6.3 crore MSMEs in the country, which account for almost half of all exports and a third of the national GDP. They employed 11 crore people, and were struggling to pay wages, given the shutdown of many businesses,

the sharp depression in demand and a massive cash crunch. With the vast majority of MSMEs not obligated to have PF accounts for their workers, the measures announced by the Finance Minister to support organised labour workers would not give them any relief, he said.

To ensure liquidity, Mr. Ramesh suggested restructuring options, and a 6-month moratorium on payment of dues.

Tax payments could also be deferred for six months, while property taxes and other local body taxes could be waived for three months.

## Baghel blames Centre for COVID-19 outbreak

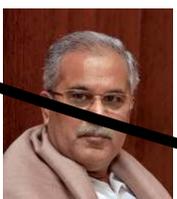
'Quarantine, overseas flights were key'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The country could have been spared of all the problems arising out of the COVID-19 outbreak if the Union government had quarantined all those coming from abroad, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel said on Thursday.

He said that had the Centre taken the COVID-19 seriously, the country may have been spared from an extensive outbreak. "Had the government stopped international flights and kept all those coming to the country in quarantine, this virus could not have spread across the country and a lot of problems people are facing today could have been averted."

Though Chhattisgarh was among the States with lowest reported COVID-19 cases, Mr. Baghel said, a final decision to lift the three-week lockdown would be taken only after Prime Minis-



Bhupesh Baghel

ter Narendra Modi's meeting with Chief Ministers on April 11.

"We are looking forward to the Centre's response on April 11 on the extension of the lockdown, and thereafter, a meeting of the Chhattisgarh Cabinet will be held on April 12 to decide the future course of action," Mr. Baghel said. "There should be more discussions with the States and their views should be taken by a Decision before arriving at a decision on the lockdown extension."

# Navy chief advises forces to take extra precaution

'Concrete measures needed to prepare for the deadly virus'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Navy chief Admiral Karambir Singh has asked the rank and file of the Navy to redouble current efforts to ensure that all personnel and their families are safe. The Services were the "first line of defence" and "if the caregivers become care-seekers, it would be a big problem."

"We have to ensure that our operational assets, specifically ships and submarines, remain free from the virus. It is a very difficult task because physical distancing onboard ships and especially submarines is very tough... but physically we will maintain the required distance of six feet," he said in a video message released to the force.

The challenge was not over yet and it was only going to intensify in days and weeks ahead, Adm Singh said.



Admiral Karambir Singh

marine, remain free from the virus; support the overall national effort, which the Navy is already contributing in a big way across all stations.

Adm Singh said everyone should keep the guard up and "retain our sights on being combat ready." "Operational readiness must remain an important priority."

We should hope for the best and plan for the worst. We need to be ready for the worst case scenario. It is going to be a long battle," he added.

In case the situation worsens, the Navy should scale up facilities to handle people, facilitate movement from one coastal State to another, assist the local authorities in law and order, prepare short vehicles for movement and intensify efforts for community kitchens and support groups among other measures.

## Uddhav recommended for MLC post

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Cabinet held a special meeting, led by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, on Thursday to recommend to Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari to appoint Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray as MLC to one of the vacant posts in the State Council.

Minority Affairs Minister Nawab Malik said that no council election could be held for other vacant MLC seats due to the COVID-19 epidemic. "There are two vacant MLC posts which the Governor appoints, and the Cabinet requested Mr. Thackeray to be appointed as the MLC," he said.

Mr. Thackeray is a member of any House of State legislature and as per the Constitution he needs to be a member of either Assembly or Council within six months of taking oath. He took the oath on November 28 and has time till May 28.

# Outfit with LeT link under scanner

5 terrorists, alleged to be its members, were gunned down in Kupwara on April 5

DEVESH K. PANDEY NEW DELHI

A newly floated outfit, the Resistance Front, has come under the scanner of enforcement agencies for its suspected links with the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). Its five alleged terrorists were gunned down by security forces in an encounter in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara on April 5.

"We have reason to believe that the outfit is a front for the LeT. It has been launched to evade the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) scrutiny and avoid further sanctions. The FATF is to review Pakistan's performance in acting against terror funding at its meeting in Beijing to be held from June 21 to



Big threat: Those killed in encounter are suspected to have infiltrated the Indian territory only days before. \*NISAR AHMAD

26," said an official of the Enforcement Directorate.

The agencies are trying to unearth the channel of funding to the new outfit, which is also called JK Fighters, to identify all those involved.

Three of those killed in

the encounter were from Kashmir, identified as Sajad Ahmad, Aadil Hussain and Umar Nazir. It is suspected that they crossed over to the other side in 2018 and infiltrated the Indian territory days before the encounter.

On March 23, the J&K police arrested four alleged members of the same outfit and seized weapons from them. They were identified by the police as Shafiq Ali, Iqbal Hussain, Nisar Ahmad and Musajib Hasan.

Investigations revealed that they were allegedly receiving instructions from a Pakistan-based handler through a mobile app. The accused had also been told to recruit locals.

"Attempts are being made to project that Pakistan-based elements are not involved in any terror activity in Kashmir. However, recent encounters have revealed that regular infiltration attempts are being made," the official said.

# Pak. Army shoots down Indian quadcopter

'It intruded 600 m into our territory'

MEHMAL SARFRAZ LAHORE

The Pakistan Army on Thursday claimed to have shot down an Indian quadcopter for violating the country's airspace.

According to a press release issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) in Pakistan, "The Indian quadcopter intruded 600m inside Pakistan's territory for conducting surveillance."

The release said this "blatant act was aggressively responded to by Pakistan Army troops" that shot down the quadcopter.

"Such unwarranted acts by the Indian Army are a clear violation of the esta-

lished norms and the existing air agreement between the two countries and reflect the Indian Army's consistent disregard for the Ceasefire Understanding of 2003," the ISPR press release added.

**India rejects claim**  
Rejecting the Pakistan Army's claims, Army sources said it denied any quadcopter having intruded from the Indian side.

The veracity of the nature of the quadcopter and its impact on snow when it was shot down had to be verified, a source in the Army said.

(With inputs from Dinakar Peri)

## Swiss flight to evacuate citizens and Europeans

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Switzerland's airline Swiss on Thursday launched a special flight from Zurich to Mumbai and New Delhi to repatriate its citizens and European nationals.

The flight is being operated on behalf of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), the airline said. An empty Airbus A330 plane arrived in Mumbai on

Thursday morning and is scheduled to reach Delhi shortly after midnight. The flight from Delhi to Zurich is scheduled to leave 90 minutes later.

Earlier, the Lufthansa Airlines – which along with Swiss, Austrian Airline and Eurowings is part of the Lufthansa group – also operated nine flights to Frankfurt to help European citizens return home.

# SC tells Centre to reply to plea for 4G in J&K

Doctors, patients and public unable to access latest information, says petition

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday sought a reply from the government on a petition to restore mobile internet data services in Jammu and Kashmir to 4G speed as doctors, patients and the general public are unable to access the latest information, guidelines, advisories, daily updates and restric-

tions about COVID-19.

A Bench, led by Justice N.V. Ramana, via video conferencing, issued formal notice to the government and sought a response in a week. The petition, filed by the Foundation for Media Professionals through its president and journalist Paranjay Guna Thakurta and represented by advocate Shadan Parasat, said the "citizens in

Jammu and Kashmir should not be deprived of facilities that are already available to Indians across the country, i.e., effective and speedy internet, an indispensable tool in the struggle against COVID-19."

The plea said "The restriction in respect of mobile internet speeds effectively amounts to a targeted rollback of such rights in res-

pects of the residents of Jammu & Kashmir."

It pointed out that Internet in Jammu and Kashmir had been restricted for over seven months following the abrogation of the special status of the Kashmiri people under Article 370 in August 2019.

The petition specifically challenged an Internet restricting government order of March 26,

## Toll rises to three in Dharavi

STAFF REPORTER  
MUMBAI

A 70-year-old woman from Kalyanwadi in Dharavi died of COVID-19 at the KEM Hospital on Thursday morning, taking the death toll in the area to three. Dharavi also reported three new cases in the evening, increasing the tally to 17.

The woman's immediate contacts are being traced, while Kalyanwadi has been declared a containment zone. Among the new cases, two men, a 58-year-old and a 30-year-old, are residents of Mukund Nagar, which has already reported two cases. However, they have no link to the earlier cases. The other new patient is a 55-year-old man from Dr. Baliga Nagar, which reported the first COVID-19 case in Dharavi.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, which has not yet identified the index patients in the two recent deaths, has decided to screen residents of Dharavi showing symptoms of COVID-19. "I have demanded health check-ups for every resident with rapid testing," Dharavi MLA and Education Minister Varsha Gaikwad said.

# Virus surges in Maharashtra

Bulk of new cases were reported from Mumbai

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PUNE

Maharashtra recorded a new high of more than 25 deaths and 200 cases over a 24-hour span as the cumulative death toll shot to 97 and the total number of positive cases on Thursday stood at 1,364, the highest in the country, said health officials.

Nearly 50% of the country's deaths due to COVID-19 have been reported from Maharashtra.

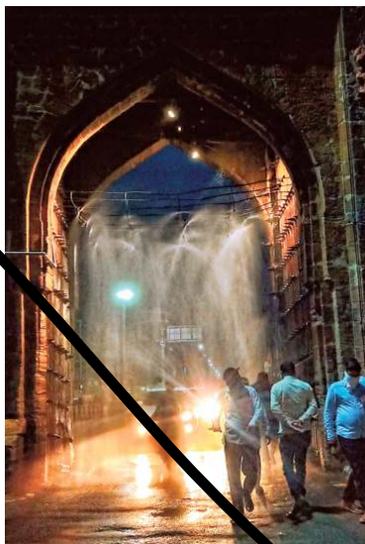
Among the 25 new deaths 84% had high-risk comorbidities like diabetes, asthma and hypertension, said officials while 125 persons have recovered and have been discharged so far.

### New deaths

Nine new deaths were reported from Mumbai taking the city's death toll to 54, while health authorities in Pune district reported 14 deaths since Wednesday taking the district's death toll to 24.

Malegaon in Nashik and Ratnagiri in the Konkan reported their first deaths.

Malegaon also reported five positive cases, all said to have participated in the Fa-



History helps: Japura gate, the entrance of Chandrapur city, has been converted into a sanitisation tunnel. ■ SUDHAKAR SHAN

blighi Jamaat conclave in Delhi last month. The bulk of the 229 new cases were from Mumbai, where more than 160 persons tested positive on Thursday.

Health authorities struggled to rein in the spread of the contagion in Maxim City as the tally soared to 876 cases.

Pune registered 12 more cases, taking the district's tally to 210, while three more

cases were reported from Aurangabad. Fresh cases were reported from Kolhapur, where the number of positive cases has risen to five, while eight new cases were reported from Akola, and other cases from Buldhana, Aurangabad and Yavatmal districts.

Kolhapur's latest patient, a youth from from Shahuwadi is believed to have been part of the Jamaat conclave.

### Sangli exception

One silver lining was that Sangli district in western Maharashtra, where 24 members of a single family from Islampur tehsil had tested positive, has not yet shown any surge, while 14 of the 26 people have recovered and been discharged.

"We had 26 people from the same cluster who were infected with the virus of whom 24 were of the same family. However, with an effective containment strategy and the sealing-off of Islampur tehsil (the origin of these cases), the number has not increased so far. We have already discharged 14 people and the remaining cases have tested negative following their 14-day incubation period and test. The results of their repeat samples are now awaited," said Sangli Collector Abhijeet Chaudhari.

# 'Operation SHIELD' at 21 locations in Delhi

People to be quarantined, essentials to be delivered at home

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government will carry out 'Operation SHIELD' at 21 locations identified as containment zones in the capital, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said here on Thursday.

The operation involves sealing, identifying and quarantining people, doorstep delivery of essential items and door-to-door checking of people, he said.

"We have begun Operation SHIELD... S-Sealing of the immediate area after geographical marking, H-Home quarantine of all in the area, I-Isolation and tracing of people who have been first and second contacts, E-Essential supplies delivered at the doorstep, L-Local sanitisation and disinfection and D-Door-to-door checking, so that people having symptoms of the novel coronavirus infection are isolated, and testing can be done after taking samples," he said.

Mr. Kejriwal also underscored the need for wearing masks by all those stepping out of their homes. "This



Community spirit: Volunteers in New Delhi distributing food to those in need on Thursday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

has been advised based on recent observations and news from across the world where authorities are advising everyone, and not just people infected with the coronavirus, to wear masks to protect themselves," he said.

"Based on the experiences of other countries, we have issued orders that everyone stepping out of their homes in Delhi should wear masks. If you do not have a mask, you can use a clean cloth or a handkerchief to cover your nose and mouth so that you are not infected," he said.

Mr. Kejriwal said the go-

vernment would take strict action against those misbehaving with healthcare professionals, after two women doctors of Safdarjung Hospital were mistreated by a local at Gautam Nagar on Wednesday.

He said the pandemic would necessitate tough decisions. "As no economic activities are taking place, tax collection has stopped. In view of this, we have decided that except for the expenses to contain the spread of the virus and provide free ration and food, no other expenses will be incurred by the government," he said.

## IN BRIEF



### ESIC hospitals dedicated to COVID-19 response

Eight hospitals of the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) with a total of 1,042 isolation beds across the country have been declared COVID-19 dedicated hospitals, ESIC said on Thursday. The ESIC hospitals in Anklashwar and Vapi in Gujarat, Gurugram in Haryana, Udaipur in Rajasthan, Jammu in J&K, Baddi in Himachal Pradesh, Adampur in Jharkhand and Joken in West Bengal had been turned into dedicated COVID-19 hospitals.

### Two doctors assaulted for spreading virus

Two women doctors of Safdarjung Hospital were allegedly beaten up on Wednesday by a man after an argument ensued when he accused them of not maintaining social distancing and spreading COVID-19. The incident occurred at Hauz Khas market in south Delhi. A complaint was received at the Hauz Khas police station regarding the incident, after which police registered an FIR and arrested the man.

### AIIMS doctors beaten up by policemen in Bhopal

Police allegedly thrashed two junior resident doctors of AIIMS, Bhopal, with batons as they were returning home after performing emergency duties on Wednesday. The two doctors were stopped by two policemen patrolling the Bag Sevan area and asked what they were doing outside. As the two doctors didn't wear face masks, the policemen told them they were a threat to society. The two then proceeded to land batons on them. An inquiry has been initiated against the policemen, officials said.

### Doctor dies of COVID-19 in Madhya Pradesh

A 62-year-old doctor from Indore in Madhya Pradesh died of COVID-19 on Thursday while undergoing treatment at a hospital, taking the toll owing to the illness to 23 in the city. "We received the news this morning that one of our doctor friends had also died," confirmed Pravin Jadia, Indore Chief Medical and Health Officer. The doctor, a general physician, had tested positive for the disease on Wednesday. According to the death summary, he didn't have a contact or a travel history, and had complained of fever, shortness of breath for two days.

## NSA invoked against four for attacking policeman

Stones pelted at the official in Indore

STAFF REPORTER  
BHOHAL

The Indore police have invoked the National Security Act against four persons who allegedly attacked a policeman while he was on lockdown enforcement duty on Tuesday.

"We have arrested six of the accused and the law has been invoked against four," said Vivek Sharma, Inspector General of Police, Indore Zone.

The constable had told the accused, who were in a vehicle, that they cannot

pass through Chandan Nagar in view of the lockdown on Tuesday, but they got out and started throwing stones at him, said Mr. Sharma. "As he was alone at that point, he had to flee and call for reinforcements, which arrived immediately and arrested them," he added.

Last week, the city's police had invoked the Act against four persons for instigating residents of a locality to pelt two doctors who were tracing contacts of a patient suffering from COVID-19 with stones.

# Siwan in Bihar emerges as a COVID-19 hotspot

20 of the 51 positive cases in the State are from this district; many patients have travel history to Gulf

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PATNA

Siwan district has emerged as a COVID-19 hotspot in Bihar, with 20 of the 51 positive cases in the State coming from this district alone.

Many of Siwan's positive cases have travel history to Gulf countries, and the villages they come from have been sealed by the district administration.

On Thursday, 10 of the 12 COVID-19 positive cases detected in Bihar were from Siwan district — nine from the same family and most of them women. "They all came into contact with a per-



Long wait: Account holders of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana in a queue in Patna on Thursday. ■ RANJEET KUMAR

son who had a travel history to Oman and whose sample had earlier tested positive," said the State's Principal Health Secretary Sanjay Kumar. Many of the district's

positive cases are from Raghunathpur, Barharia, Darauli and Hasanpur blocks. A large number of residents from these areas bordering the neighbouring district of

Gopalganj go to Gulf countries every year to work as masons, construction labourers and unskilled workers.

"The borders of villages from which the highest number of COVID-19 positive cases have come have been sealed and there is strict monitoring by district officials... it's a curfew-like situation here," Bihar's Director General of Police (DGP) Gupleshwar Pandey told presspersons in Patna.

The district administration has sent samples of over 90 people from the affected areas for test in Patna.

"Local people have been asked to cooperate with officials and come forward to test," State Health Minister Mangal Pandey, who is himself from Siwan, said. Bihar has, so far, reported 51 COVID-19 cases. While its 'patient zero' from Munger district has died, 16 patients have recovered from the disease.

Meanwhile, the State's Disaster Management Department has said that strict action would be taken both against migrants who go missing from quarantine centres and the officials in charge of the centres.

## Ahmedabad adopts South Korean model

Intensive surveillance, aggressive testing will ensure detection of cases: officials

STAFF REPORTER  
AHMEDABAD

As COVID-19 cases surge, Ahmedabad is battling to contain the spread of the pandemic with intensive surveillance and aggressive testing to detect the maximum number of cases of infected people, and isolate them to curtail further spread of the disease and break the chain of transmission.

So far, 141 cases have been reported from Ahmedabad, with 58 reported on Thursday morning alone. Six persons have succumbed to their infection in the city. "Intensive surveillance and aggressive testing — these two approaches will ensure we detect as many cases as possible. One case proactively detected can mean up to ten lives saved, assuming one positive undetected person can infect around 400 people and considering about 3% mortality rate," Municipal Commissioner Vi-



Viral strategy: Fire personnel spraying disinfectant at Teen Darwaza in Ahmedabad. ■ VIJAY SONJI

jay Nehra said on Thursday. The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) has now adopted the South Korean model of enhanced testing to ascertain the scale of the epidemic in the city of 6.5 million people.

"On 4th April, the number of samples tested from the city were 57 while after four days on 8th April, we tested 840 samples," Mr. Nehra said. He posted details of samples tested on his Twitter handle.

Along with aggressive testing, the civic body has hardened social distancing measures by strictly regulating goings and comings in the entire walled city area, from where the maximum number of cases have emerged.

The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) has identified 14 clusters or hotspots where intensive surveillance, mass testing and contact tracing of infected persons will be carried out with enhanced focus.

## U.P. to seal hotspots in other districts

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
LUCKNOW

After sealing over 100 hotspots in 15 COVID-19 most-affected districts till April 14, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday asked officials to enforce similar measures in other districts as well even if they reported just one positive case.

Meanwhile, the number of positive cases in Uttar Pradesh reached 410 across 46 districts, said Amit Mohan Prasad, Principal Health Secretary.

In a videoconference meeting with district and health officials, Mr. Adityanath said hotspots should be sealed in all those districts that report positive cases. He expressed concern saying the virus had spread to 46 out of the 75 districts in just a month.

"Even if a single case is found in a district, identify the hotspot and seal the areas around it through barricades," Mr. Adityanath said.

While all movement within these areas would be prohibited, only medical and sanitation teams, along with those ensuring door-step delivery of essential items like milk, vegetables and other food will be allowed to operate.

### CM's praise

The doctor even earned the praise of Chief Minister Shivaraj Singh Chouhan, who said he saluted such "warriors". He wrote on Twitter: "I and the whole of Madhya Pradesh greet warriors like you who are fighting the war against corona. If we all continue to win this great war more quickly, Sachin ji, salute your spirit."

brush, towel were all inside the car. "It was a compulsion... I didn't have a choice," Dr. Nayak from the Anaesthesia Department at the hospital told *The Hindu*. The hospital first tend-

## Doctor shifts to hotel after 'car quarantine'

He was worried his wife, daughter could contract COVID-19 from him

SIDHARTH YADAV  
BHOHAL

After living in his car for weeks outside his home, Sachin Nayak moved into a hotel in Bhopal on Tuesday after his hospital made the arrangements.

The doctor was worried that his wife and three-year-old daughter could contract COVID-19 from him.

As cases spiralled in Bhopal, he slept in the car across the road and spoke on the phone with his family. He read, too, if time permitted, or took a stroll on the road.

After returning from duty at the government-run J.P. Hospital each day, he would plunk himself on a mattress spread over the reclined back seat. Soaps, laptops, chargers, clothes, tooth



One day at a time: An image of Dr. Sachin Nayak. As cases spiralled in Bhopal, he slept in his car. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

to incoming patients, which overwhelmed his resources, and then made arrangements for doctors at other city-based hospitals eased its initial load. After performing duty in isolation wards for a few days, doctors are re-

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IN BRIEF

Sanitation app upgraded

NEW DELHI: The Sanitation app 'Swachhata-MOHUA' has been updated to include features such as reporting of suspected cases of COVID-19 and lockdown violations. A statement from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) said on Thursday. The app's primary use was to report sanitation-related grievances but nine features have been added to support citizens, it said. At a video conference, MoHUA Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra announced the features.

AIUDF MLA's bail petition rejected

GUMMATHI: The District Sessions Court in central Assam's Nagaon has rejected the bail plea of All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) lawmaker Aminul Islam, arrested on Tuesday for sedition. The court also prescribed quarantine for him in jail. Mr. Islam was arrested under various Sections of the Indian Penal Code, including sedition, for making objectionable remarks over the COVID-19 pandemic.

Delhi High Court cancels summer vacation

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court on Thursday decided to cancel its summer vacation and function through the month of June to make up for the loss of court working hours due to the lockdown imposed over the coronavirus pandemic. The High Court and its subordinate district courts in the capital had suspended its functioning following the imposition of 21-day lockdown in March. However, "extremely urgent matters" are being heard by the court through video conferencing.

# Study points to community transmission

40% of patients with severe respiratory illness lacked travel history, suggest ICMR scientists

JACOB KOSHY  
NEW DELHI

There was evidence of community transmission – or instances of COVID-19 in patients who had no established contact with someone who had picked up the disease from abroad – from as early as March 22, suggests a research study in the *Indian Journal of Medical Research*, authored by several ICMR scientists, including its head Balram Bhargava, and made public late on Thursday.

On March 24, Prime Minister Narendra Modi imposed a nationwide lockdown for three weeks. The ICMR's official position continues to be that there is no evidence for community transmission. With the case load increasing on an average of 500 per day for nearly a week, the Health Ministry and the States have stepped up surveillance and testing at hotspots and an-

## Rising prevalence

The percentage of patients hospitalised with Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) who tested positive for COVID-19 went from 0% in the initial weeks to 2.6% in the 14th week, after the ICMR began testing their samples

Week	No. of SARI Patients tested	No. of COVID-19 positive (%)
8-9 (February 15 - 29)	2	0 (0.0)
10-11 (March 1 - 14)	642	0 (0.0)
12 (March 15 - 21)	106	2 (1.9)
13 (March 22 - 28)	2,877	75 (2.6)
14 (March 29 - April 2)	2,069	54 (2.6)
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,911</b>	<b>104 (1.8)</b>

nounced indefinite extensions of the 21-day lockdown. The ICMR's testing strategy has been to check those who showed symptoms of the disease – cough, fever and laboured breathing – in those with international travel history, their contacts and health-workers tending to those with Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI)-

syndrome of COVID-19. To check whether there was a wider prevalence of COVID-19, it began to randomly test samples of hospitalised SARI patients from February 15, and from March 20, all patients who exhibited the syndrome.

"When the COVID testing strategy was expanded to include all SARI patients (from

March 21), a total of 4,946 samples yielded 102 (2.1%) cases. The positivity increased from zero during the initial weeks to 2.6% in the 14th week," the report notes. A total of 102 of these cases were from samples gleaned from March 22 to April 2. "Of the 102 COVID-19 positive SARI patients, 40 (39.2%) did not report any history of contact or international travel," the study underlines. Only two of the samples from February 15 to March 20 later turned positive.

Details of the States from which these cases were emerged also point to why certain districts are under increased surveillance. In 15 States, more than 50% of SARI patients were COVID-19 positive. About a third of the COVID-19 positive SARI cases did not have any history of contact with laboratory-confirmed cases or international travel, and such cases were

reported from 36 districts in 15 States. These districts need to be prioritised to target COVID-19 containment activities, the study underlines. 2.3% of those SARI patients who tested positive were male, and positivity among women was only 0.8%.

The 50-59 age group was most likely to test positive for the infection.

A majority of the SARI patients were tested from Gujarat (792), Tamil Nadu (577), Maharashtra (533) and Kerala (503). These are also the States with the highest prevalence overall of COVID cases. "Tracking the spread of COVID-19 is critical to inform response activities, including testing, containment and mitigation measures. The current SARI testing strategy will complement and strengthen the routine COVID-19 surveillance activities," the study added.



Safe passage: Perishable farm commodities take the rail route due to obstacles in road transport. •PTI

# 50 trains to carry perishable goods

States asked to begin intervention

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Fruit and vegetable farmers have been among the hardest hit by the lockdown imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19, facing major losses due to obstacles in harvesting and marketing their perishable produce.

The Centre has now directed all the States and Union Territories to implement the Market Intervention Scheme to ensure good prices for perishable crops.

It has also begun a train service to transport perishable agricultural and horticultural commodities to markets due to the obstacles in road transport. On Thursday, 50 trains were deployed for this purpose, an Agriculture Ministry statement said.

The payment for slots on carriage fee was due on March 31 and the NBA sought it to be deferred until July. According to sources, the NBA and Prasar Bharati are working out an alternative model which, sources said, would require the channels to pay an interest of 10% per annum. This has left the broadcasters miffed.

half the losses of procurement, with the remainder being borne by the Centre, whenever there is a 10% fall in ruling market prices in comparison to the previous normal year.

The Agriculture Ministry also took steps to aid pulses and oilseeds farmers, most of whom are in dry-land areas. Farmers have been complaining that market prices for tur and urad dal, chickpeas and soyabean have been far below the minimum support prices.

The Centre has extended the procurement window for its Price Support Scheme, under which the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (NAFED) and other agencies procure pulses and oilseeds, up to 90 days from the date of commencement of the scheme in each State. It has also hiked the daily procurement limit from 15 quintals to 40 quintals per farmer for the rabi season.

The limit ensures that all farmers get an equal chance to sell their produce. But transport restrictions make it difficult for farmers to repeatedly bring their produce for procurement, leading to this relaxation.

# Indian seafarer dies of COVID-19 in Florida

He was taken from ship to hospital

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Even as 17,000 Indian seafarers wait for a policy to be finalised for their return, a Mumbai family has lost a 48-year-old earning member, Andrew Fernandes.

A Kalina resident, Mr. Fernandes, working as an assistant security officer on cruiser Costa Favolosa, died of COVID-19 in Miami, Florida on April 5. He is survived by wife Maria and two sets of twins, boys studying in classes I and girls in class V. On March 29, Mr. Fernandes was medically disembarked and transferred through a tender boat to

Larkspur Community Hospital in Miami, Florida.

Mr. Fernandes's family and friends said his condition worsened and the doctors had to sedate him and put him on ventilator support after he contracted pneumonia and lung infection.

The shipping company in an email to Ms. Adelaide said they did all that was possible to assist in transferring her brother to another hospital but could not accelerate the process as there were no beds available due to COVID-19. Reports said 400 Indians are stuck off the Miami coast.

# News channels seek time to pay Prasar Bharati carriage fee

They cite rising costs and falling advertisement revenues

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Amidst the ongoing lockdown, the News Broadcasters Association (NBA), an association of 77 news channels in India, has sought delayed payments for the carriage fee for slots on DD Free Dish from the Information and Broadcasting Ministry.

The DD Free Dish reaches 30 million households, who get 80 channels without paying any monthly subscription fee to cable TV providers. DD Free Dish has slots for 80 channels, out of

which 26 slots are reserved for Doordarshan-run channels and the remaining 54 slots are open for bidding by private channels.

In a recent letter, NBA President Rajat Sharma wrote to the Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Prakash Javadekar about the backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown, news broadcasters were facing a financial crisis as operating costs have shot up while advertising release orders are being cancelled. "Advertising inventory bookings are lower

than 50% even for the top-rated news channels – advertising is a single source of earning for news broadcasters and this will lead to a serious cash flow problem," Mr. Sharma wrote.

The payment for slots on carriage fee was due on March 31 and the NBA sought it to be deferred until July. According to sources, the NBA and Prasar Bharati are working out an alternative model which, sources said, would require the channels to pay an interest of 10% per annum. This has left the broadcasters miffed.

INTERVIEW | AMARINDER SINGH

# 'PM will take a call on lockdown'

Bid to give a communal touch will damage efforts to fight COVID-19: Punjab CM

AMIT BANERJEA

Amarinder Singh, Punjab Chief Minister, said a "final decision" to extend the lockdown beyond April 14, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had stated, would be taken on April 11 in consultation with the Chief Ministers. According to him, any bid to give a "communal touch" to the spread of COVID-19 from the Tablighi Jamaat centre in New Delhi would be "highly damaging" to the efforts to fight the pandemic. Excerpts from an email interview:

Do you favour continuing the current stringent lockdown after it ends at the midnight of April 14?

■ It all depends on how things stand at that time, but there is a general sense among various Chief Ministers that, given the current graph of the virus, the lockdown may need to be extended. The Prime Minister has said a final decision will be taken on April 11, in consultation with the Chief Ministers. My understanding is that stringent restrictions would need to be continued for some more time, in whatever form.

If not, what are the other kinds of curbs that can be put in place by Punjab and other States to deal with the pandemic?

■ Well, as I said, some restrictions would need to be put in place if we decide against extension of the curfew/lockdown. Apart from creating containment zones in the hotspots and sealing them, we need to ensure that strict social distancing is strictly implemented, which means not everyone can go to their offices/businesses/shops at the same time. We may need to open some more industries, but that would also depend on the safety protocols and the situa-

tion, as we go forward. In any case, COVID-19 is unlikely to disappear overnight, so whenever things improve the restrictions will have to be lifted in a staggered manner to ensure there is no overcrowding, safe distance continues to be maintained, people wear masks when going out.

There's little doubt that the Tablighi centre in New Delhi added to the spread of the novel coronavirus in Delhi. But Hindu elements are trying to give it a communal colour. What's your view on this?

■ We are all facing an unprecedented crisis, which governments around the world are coming together to tackle. To give the matter a communal touch at this critical time is not only irresponsible but also highly damaging to our efforts to combat the pandemic. Of course, what happened in Nizamuddin was a disastrous and total failure of the Delhi government. Let us not divert ourselves from the main task – of fighting the virus and overcoming it – by making it a communal affair.

Are you satisfied with the quantum of assistance being provided to the States by the Centre?

■ Not at all. The Central government needs to understand that everything, from medical assistance to the people to setting up of necessary facilities and ensuring equipment, as well as managing the lockdown/curfew, has to be done by the States on the ground. That needs a huge amount of resources, which the States do not have. In Punjab, for instance, we have not even received our pending GST arrears, despite our repeated requests and despite the fact that we have no other source of income right now, given



Stringent restrictions will need to be continued for some more time, in whatever form

that VAT and taxes have all dried up. The Centre has to pitch in. What they have given us so far is nowhere close to what we need. We have only received ₹296 crore against the MGNREGA account, ₹632 crore towards the Finance Commission grant.

On account of disaster relief, we have received a meagre ₹225 crore. How do we manage with this? The total sum pending with the Centre is ₹6,752.83 crore, which is the bulk amount pending with them. We need that urgently and we need a special economic package to tide over the immediate crisis and then revive economy/industry in the post-COVID-19 scenario.

Have you been able to provide personal protective gear to doctors and hospitals on COVID-19 duty?

■ Yes, we have provided protective gear at all government hospitals. We had purchased 15,000 PPE kits, and 14,000 have been distributed. We have ordered another 2 lakh kits to prepare for bigger exigencies. Of the 80,000 N95 masks, 60,000 have been distributed, while of the 42 lakh triple-layer masks purchased, 40 lakh have been distributed.

We have ordered another 2 lakh N95 and 55 lakh triple-layer masks. Not just the

doctors, we want to ensure that all our front-line warriors, including police personnel and sanitation workers, are fully protected.

Delhi has gone in for random testing. Will Punjab follow suit?

■ Definitely. Now that the ICMR has given permission for rapid testing, we will be starting that in a couple of days, as soon as we start getting the first set of kits from the Centre.

We have ordered nearly 10 lakh such kits, and we expect the first bunch in the next two days. We will be focussing on the hotspots first and then maybe expand to other areas. As of now, hotspots have been seen in certain pockets of SBS Nagar, Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar, Pathankot and Mansa districts, along with two areas of SAS Nagar.

Punjab has a large number of people living abroad. Have you been able to do contact-tracing of all those people who have come from abroad?

■ Approximately 95,000 persons were screened at international airports and land checkpoints in the State before curfew. Self-declaration forms of all passengers were filled and all were examined. All passengers were home-quarantined, while five symptomatic persons were traced during screening and were admitted to isolation wards of hospitals. Subsequently, the Government of India shared a list of around 55,000 passengers with us – these were people who had arrived since January 2020. The passengers were home-quarantined, and posters have been pasted outside these houses and they are being tracked by the police. We have appealed to all passengers who have come to Punjab to self-report.

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# The facts about furry friends and COVID-19

'No clear evidence of human-to-animal transmission'

NARAYAN AKSHMAN  
CHENNAI

While the WHO has initiated a study into the possibility of the novel coronavirus infection spreading from humans to domestic animals after a four-year-old female Malayan tiger at the Bronx Zoo became the first of its kind to test positive for the virus, some veterinarians have argued that there is so far no clear evidence of human-to-animal reverse transmissions.



**Purrfect pal:** For many pets provide companionship and fun during the long days of lockdown. ♦PTI

At the Bronx Zoo, a total of four tigers and three African lions were also said to have developed a dry cough, a typical symptom of COVID-19 patients. Further, a study published this week on the website of the journal *Science*, found that ferrets could also potentially be infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes the COVID-19 disease. The study, however added that dogs, chickens, pigs and ducks are not likely to get infected.

Juliet Decaestecker, an India-based veterinarian from Belgium, and author of the book *Healthy Dog, Happy You*, said, "Despite the number of global cases of COVID-19 surpassing the one million mark... we have only seen examples of two dogs and one cat in Hong Kong, and a tiger in New York, that had positive results of tests for infection."

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Dr. Decaestecker said PCR testing conducted in these cases only concludes that virus material is present — a case of passive contamination — but that does not necessarily imply an ongoing infection in the animal that could be further transmitted.

To be sure that there is an infection in the animal, antibodies testing must be performed.

The presence of the coronavirus in case of the Bronx Zoo tiger, Nadia, was said to be due to the animal's exposure via contact with a zoo employee who was actively shedding the virus.

At the broader, species level, "We can find virus fragments in the stomach or aerial pathways in dogs, but this should also be the virus... of the sick owner in close contact with the dog," Dr. Decaestecker noted.

### Different viruses

In fact, domestic animals including dogs naturally carry other coronaviruses in their gastro-intestinal, respiratory tract, which are different from the novel coronavirus behind COVID-19, she said.

Even if a companion animal presents respiratory or gastro-intestinal signs they should not be routinely tested for COVID-19 at this time, lest it exacerbates the scarcity of testing kits for humans, Dr. Decaestecker said.

Instead, the animal's owner should first consult with

a veterinarian via phone to determine whether an in-clinic examination is needed. Where appropriate, testing for infectious diseases that commonly cause companion animal illness could be conducted.

If a new, concerning illness is observed that cannot be otherwise explained, and the companion animal has had close contact with a person with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection, the vet should contact the state public health veterinarian or designated health official to discuss whether or not there is a need to test that animal for COVID-19, Dr. Decaestecker said.

She said that in many cases there would be no reason to remove pets from homes even if COVID-19 has been identified in members of the household, unless there is risk that the pet itself is not able to be cared for appropriately.

"During this pandemic emergency, pets and people each need the support of the other and veterinarians are there to support the good health of both," Dr. Decaestecker pointed out.

# BEL, AIIMS develop remote monitor

The system seeks to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 for health workers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

A remote patient health monitoring system that can be installed at homes or hospitals promises to spare healthcare workers the risk of exposure to COVID-19, while attending to persons undergoing isolation either for suspected infection or as precautionary quarantine.

Jointly developed by Bharat Electronics Ltd. and the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Rishikesh, the system reduces the need for scarce personal protective gear. "The solution aims to significantly reduce the



Monitors inside hospitals can be used for the most serious cases of infection.

risk of exposure to infection for healthcare workers," BEL said in a statement on Thursday. "It is also expected to reduce the increasing demand of PPE [personal protective equipment] and logistics,"

the public sector company added.

The device has non-invasive sensors to measure the main parameters of a person who may be a COVID-19 patient: temperature, pulse rate, SPO2 or saturated oxygen level, and respiratory rate.

BEL said it developed a proof of concept model of the system based on inputs given by AIIMS - Rishikesh. The public enterprise used its expertise in network-centric and IoT (Internet of Things) systems. A mobile app and Web browser have been developed.

People who show symptoms of infection get enrolled with AIIMS - Rishikesh.

"Patient health parameters, along with patient location, are uploaded to a centralised command & control centre on cloud using either the patient's mobile phone or a virtual GSM SIM card," BEL said. "Use of cloud will facilitate seamless scaling of the database of COVID-19 suspects/patients," it added. When the monitored parameters exceed preset thresholds, the software would send out alerts to the medical officers.

# Tata Sky, Airtel to air channels on education

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

With schools remaining shut, the government has coaxed two leading DTH providers - Tata Sky and Airtel - to air the educational channels Swayam Prabha it runs.

The channels were earlier available only on Doordashan-DTH, Dish TV and Jio Star TV. "The learners can continue their education and learning even sitting at home in this difficult situation and due to unfortunate outbreak of COVID-19," HRD Minister Mesh Pokhriyal said.

# Goa denies entry to liner with Indian crew

Ship will go to Mumbai, says Minister

ADITYA ANAND  
MUMBAI

The Goa government on Thursday refused berthing permission to a cruise liner with 500 Indian crew members on board citing guidelines of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.

The State government held a meeting after the cruise liner with the Indian crew members turned up off its coast.

Following the meeting, Goa's Ports minister Michael Lobo said that the ship would now sail to Mumbai where the crew would be quarantined at the port. There were 100 Goan seafarers on board and the government would send buses to bring them back to the State, Mr. Lobo added.

"The cruise ship with 100 Goan crew members, which is anchored off Goa coast, will be sent to Mumbai where they will be off loaded and quarantined for 14 days. Once in Goa they will be quarantined for another 14 or 21 days and tested for COVID-19," Mr. Lobo said.

Mumbai Port Trust officials, however, said that permissions were yet to be received with regard to allowing the vessel to berth at the port and letting its crew disembark, the checks they would need to undergo and for quarantining within the port premises.

"There is a proposal and that is about it," said a senior port official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "Verifications are on and no permissions have been granted," the official added.

Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said that the Captain of Ports had received a message about the vessel on Thursday. "We are following protocols of the Ministry of Home Affairs in regard to this issue," he said.

# Russian rescued from cave

Lifeguard on Goan beach spotted the man in distress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

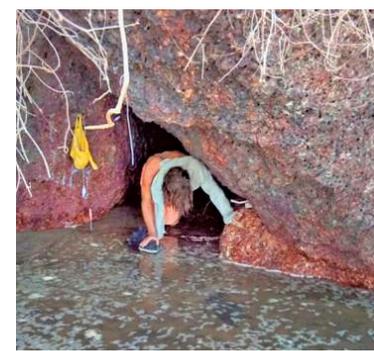
Lifeguards rescued a Russian national from a rapidly flooding coastal cave at Keri in north Goa on Thursday.

Officials said lifeguard Girish Talkar of Drishti Marine stationed at the Keri beach area spotted the man in a small narrow cave along the shoreline during a routine patrol.

The Russian, later identified as Valenti, was in obvious distress as the cave was flooding quickly due to the high tide. He also appeared to be physically challenged and was unable to swim.

Mr. Talkar immediately called for back-up. Meanwhile, ambulance and police patrol team were alerted.

Soon afterwards, lifeguards Dhako, Jayesh and Vikram joined Girish in the rescue operation. Valenti was evacuated on a spine board and brought to shore.



**Timely move:** The Russian was found in a rapidly flooding cave in north Goa on Thursday. ♦SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

His vitals were checked and he appeared to be normal.

He was shifted to the ambulance and transported to the Public Health Centre at Pusa.

Contact was later established with Valenti's brother who lives in Russia. The Russian embassy was also informed. Many tourists have been stranded in Goa due to the lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19.

# 'Gamosa' evolves from memento to mask in Assam

The ubiquitous decorative cotton towels are being repurposed as protective gear to fight the coronavirus

RAHUL KARMAKAR  
GUWAHATI

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the ubiquitous *gamosa*, a decorative cotton towel, evolve from memento to mask.

For Pratibha Das, Mamani Malakar, Rebati Baishya and other members of the non-profit Hargila Army in Pacharia, a village 25 km northwest of Guwahati, sewing the *gamosa* masks is more than just keeping themselves engaged to beat the lockdown inactivity.

They have been designing the masks with motifs of the endangered *hargila* (greater adjacent stork), rhino and elephant to add a dash of wildlife conservation to the

protection of human faces.

"We had ordered thousands of *gamosas* to be made and sold by the women during the Rongali Bihu festival. Since lockdown has put paid to the Bihu celebrations, the women turned the towels into masks for use during the COVID-19 crisis," Purnima Devi Barman, stork conservationist and founder of the Hargila Army, told *The Hindu* on Thursday.

The Hargila Army women, however, were not the first to improvise. A Fine Arts student named Phanindra Pradhan had transformed the *gamosa* after pharmacies in his town of Gohpur ran out of masks.



**Unique motifs:** Members of a non-profit organisation have designed these masks from *gamosas*. ♦SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"We wash the *gamosas* in disinfectant before ironing and stitching them into masks that are sold at ₹50 apiece," Mr. Pradhan said, adding that he has been

receiving regular orders. Assam has traditionally had two types of *gamosas* — the *uka* or plain kind used to wipe sweat or dry the body after a bath, and the

*phulam*, which is decorated with floral motifs to be gifted as a memento or during festivals such as Bihu.

### Cultural identity

Cultural historians say the *gamosa* came to symbolise Assamese nationalism in 1916 when the Asom Chatra Sanmilan, a students' organisation was formed, followed by the Assam Sahitya Sabha, a literary body. Wearing the *phulam gamosa* around the neck became a standard for cultural identity.

"The Assamese way of life is woven in the *gamosa*, whether plain or decorative. From a cultural symbol, it became a political symbol

before designers explored its potential as dress material such as distinctive shirts," said B.K. Goswami, a retired banker and writer.

The *gamosa*'s graph as a symbol of protest rose during the anti-foreigners Assam Agitation from 1979 to 1985.

The extremist United Liberation Front of Asom too used the towel with "revolutionary" motifs.

The *gamosa* staged a comeback as a political statement with the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act from mid-December 2019. The protests have continued intermittently after the COVID-19 pandemic struck.

# Impersonators pose as policemen and doctors

Eight arrested in Assam for cheating

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

COVID-19 may not have hit Assam badly but has led to a rise in cases of impersonation for making a quick buck.

In the past two days, the police caught at least eight people across the State for impersonating the men in uniform and other government officials to extract money from trucks carrying essentials and shops in the rural areas that open on the sly.

On Wednesday, the police in eastern Assam's Jorhat district arrested three men who had taken fraudulently to another level - by posing as doctors assigned to disseminate awareness and test people for possible infection for a fee.

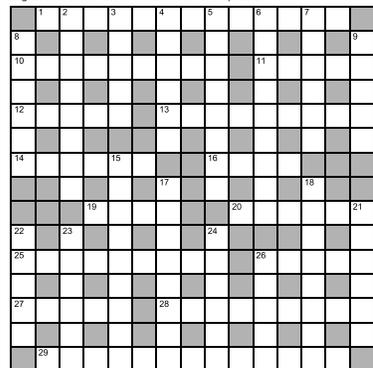
The trio had been operating for some days in villages around Jorhat town.

"We caught them from the labor area on the basis of public complaints. Apart from convincing people by posing as doctors and showing them the photos with ambulances, they also tried to pass off as officials and seized gutkha packets to demand money from shops," Jorhat Superintendent of Police Mrinal Talukdar said.

Diganta Neog (25), Ujjwal Bora (24) and Biswajyoti Dutta (18) were produced before a court and sent to jail.

# THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12906

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



- (set by Afterdark)
- Underlying layer at the top of the surface had later burst into pieces (9)
  - Order from princess; king to wear shoddy clothes (6)
  - Evidence is that, leaving vice leads to paradise (4)
  - Foodshop opening day — eighteenth, lavish inauguration (4)
  - Keep company with a saint; endless golden time (6)
  - Barbaric rule again? It's a pain (9)
  - Drink's great, have pure shot; make it more exciting (6,2)
  - Even schoolboy gets a luxury watch in an American state (8)
  - Sometimes crosswords can be this, tough at the start on perimeter, in the end lack substance (6)
  - Malls land here. Waste bin? Nothing wrong (5)
  - Exercise? Sprain at the top (4-2)
  - Could be 18, almost fumbles on one and two (6)
  - Railway goes bankrupt. Central ministers involved in game in a private meeting (5)
  - Conferred a rank and honoured in the end (8)
  - Skye as seen in laptop (5,4)
  - Forbidden wife to leave, father to leave, pay expenses (6)
  - Fought with ally to buy a posh car (6)
  - Preamble to verse about writing (5)
  - Former criminal moves ahead and joins English regiment to become king (9)
  - Sometimes crosswords can be this, tough at the start on perimeter, in the end lack substance (6)
  - Malls land here. Waste bin? Nothing wrong (5)
  - Exercise? Sprain at the top (4-2)
  - Could be 18, almost fumbles on one and two (6)
  - Railway goes bankrupt. Central ministers involved in game in a private meeting (5)
- ACROSS
- Strong criticism on aidman (13)
  - Degradation for opposition; leader is sacked by Australia (9)
  - Bury within terminal's limits (5)
  - Relationship emerged naturally, engagement with leaders to start again (5)
- DOWN
- Ballet dancer is terribly skinny, needs to take some juice and iodine (8)
  - Bird is second umpire at Perth ground to retire (5)
  - Most boring diets served across Romania (6)

# SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12905

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

# FAITH

## Glory follows suffering

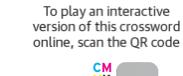
The Red Cross is an expression of caring for soldiers wounded in a war field, and the Blood-wet Cross of Lord Jesus Christ on Good Friday is an expression of God's "agape" love for mankind battling their sinful nature that leads to eternal death. The Bible says that the "wages of sin is death" and also that "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22), and mankind's redemption from this precondition is made possible by the sinless precious blood of Lord Jesus shed on Calvary's Cross. Christ died a painful death on the hill of Calvary, hanging on a rugged cross, pinned to it by three nails, his head pierced by a crown of thorns; and bleeding from head to toe.

But the Cross is not a symbol of shame but one of glory for anyone who accepts the salvation provided by the sacrificial death of the Son of God.

There was no sin in Jesus, declared Pontius Pilate the Governor; yet He was condemned due to the jealousy of the Chief Priests, but these events fit perfectly into God's eternal plan for mankind's redemption. Lord Jesus became triumphant over death, when he rose from the dead on the third day (celebrated as Easter), leaving the sealed sepulchre (guarded by Roman soldiers) empty.

The mystery and message of Good Friday and Easter will unfold in the life of anyone seeking the living and loving saviour with a childlike heart. The life of Mother Teresa, who saw God in the suffering masses, is an example. To carry one's cross daily is not easy, but the message from Good Friday and Easter is that there is glory awaiting anyone who would wear the crown of thorns on earth in a spirit of service.

T. Prabhakara Rao



To play an interactive version of this crossword online, scan the QR code

# World faces new 'Great Depression'

IMF anticipates the worst economic fallout since the 1930s; 17 million workers lose jobs in U.S.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
WASHINGTON

World powers scrambled on Thursday to build a global response to the human misery and once-in-a-century economic collapse caused by the coronavirus epidemic, as death tolls in the U.S. and Europe soared higher.

In a locked-down New York, the UN Security Council was to meet on the pandemic for the first time. And, by video conference, EU Finance Ministers are wrangling over how to bail out their worst hit members Italy and Spain.

"We anticipate the worst economic fallout since the Great Depression," said IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva, warning that all but a handful of countries will see incomes fall and urging governments to provide "lifelines" to businesses and households alike.

The U.S. Federal Reserve tossed out just such a rescue to Americans, with chairman Jerome Powell announcing financing facilities of \$2.3 trillion "to provide as much relief and stability as we can during this period of constrained economic activity".

He warned, however, that

## COVID-19

the U.S. economy is moving "with alarming speed" towards "very high unemployment". Another 6.6 million U.S. workers filed for unemployment benefits last week, new data showed on Thursday, meaning that nearly 17 million workers have lost their jobs since mid-March.

On the spiritual front, Pope Francis was preparing to celebrate Maundy Thursday with the Mass of the Lord's Supper, but he was to be unable to perform the tradition of washing the feet of the faithful in case of infection.

Meanwhile, the number of worldwide cases of the novel coronavirus since it spread from China earlier this year topped 1.5 million, according to an AFP tally. More than 88,981 people have died.

**Worst recession**  
Alongside the personal tragedies and the pressure on overburdened hospitals, there has been a stark economic toll, with the World



**Keeping safe:** A woman putting cloth masks for drying before distributing them for free in Tangerang, on the outskirts of Jakarta, Indonesia, on Thursday. • REUTERS

## Boris Johnson's health 'improving'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's health "continues to improve" on his fourth day in COVID-19 intensive care, his spokesman said on Thursday, while the government prepared to extend a nationwide lockdown.

"The Prime Minister had a good night and continues to improve in intensive care at St Thomas' Hospital. He's in good spirits," the spokesman said, adding that Mr. Johnson was not working.

While much of the focus in Britain has been on Mr.



Boris Johnson

Johnson's health, there is also concern over the numbers of people infected with the virus.

Britain announced another 881 deaths of people testing positive for coronavirus in Thursday's daily update, bringing the

country's total toll to 7,978. The total number of cases stood at 61,516.

Senior Ministers were to discuss extending strict social distancing measures rolled out on March 23, during a daily coronavirus response meeting.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, who is standing in for Mr. Johnson, will lead the "war cabinet".

However, Ministers have made it clear no announcement on the status of the lockdown will be made until that period has ended on Monday, at the earliest.

Trade Organization warning of the "worst recession of our lifetimes".

The worst-hit countries in Europe – the worst-hit continent – are Italy and Spain, where daily death tolls are now down from their peaks but still running high, despite strict lockdowns.

In Italy, the country's youngest COVID-19 patient, a two-month-old baby girl,

was reportedly released from hospital, a moment of hope in a country with 17,669 dead.

Madrid and Rome are seeking assistance from EU partners to rebuild their economies. EU finance ministers were to meet later Thursday by videoconference for crisis talks to try to agree terms to allow hard-hit members to access funds.

Iran's Health Ministry on Thursday said 117 new deaths took the total to 4,116. But spokesman Kia-noush Khanpour said the latest figures showed there was a downward trend in the number of new coronavirus infections.

"We have identified 1,634 new cases, bringing the total number of confirmed cases to 66,220."

## 100 doctors dead in Italy

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
ROME

One hundred Italian doctors have died of the coronavirus so far, FNOMCeO health association said.

The toll includes retired doctors the government began calling a month ago to help fight the virus that has claimed 17,669 lives in Italy. Media reports estimate that 30 nurses and nursing assistants have also died of COVID-19.

## Spain sees drop in deaths

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
MADRID

Spain's daily death toll fell to 683 on Thursday, after rising for two days. The toll was down from 757 on Wednesday.

The country, one of the worst hit by the pandemic, has now recorded 15,238 deaths. The number of daily new cases also dropped slightly, bringing the total to 1,52,446.

## 'New cases drop in Iran'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
TEHRAN

Iran's Health Ministry on Thursday said 117 new deaths took the total to 4,116. But spokesman Kia-noush Khanpour said the latest figures showed there was a downward trend in the number of new coronavirus infections.

"We have identified 1,634 new cases, bringing the total number of confirmed cases to 66,220."

# Google must pay news firms for content, says France

Regulator tells tech giant to negotiate with publishers

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
PARIS

France's competition regulator said on Thursday that Google must start paying media groups for displaying their content, ordering it to begin negotiations after refusing for months to comply with Europe's new digital copyright law.

The agency said it "requires Google, within three months, to conduct negotiations in good faith with publishers and news agencies on the remuneration for the re-use of their protected contents".

"This injunction requires that the negotiations effectively result in a proposal for remuneration from Google" that must be applied retroactively to October 2019, when France became the first country to ratify the EU law.

The new rule on so-called "neighbouring rights" is designed to ensure news pu-



Google was told to conduct talks within three months.

lishers are compensated when their work is shown on websites, search engines and social media platforms.

But Google, which effectively has a lock on Internet searches in Europe, refused to comply, saying that snippets of articles, pictures and videos would be shown in search results only if media groups consent to let the tech giant use them at a cost.

If they refuse, only a headline and a bare link to the content will appear, Google said, almost certainly result-

ing in a loss of visibility and potential ad revenue for the publisher.

Media groups and news agency Agence France-Presse lodged a complaint with the competition regulator last November.

The regulator said on Thursday that "Google's practices... were likely to constitute an abuse of a dominant position, and caused serious and immediate harm to the press sector".

Google said that since the new European copyright law came into force in France last year it had been "engaging with publishers to increase our support and investment in news".

Google's vice-president for News, Richard Gingras, said in a statement: "We will comply with the (French competition regulator's) order while we review it and continue those negotiations".

# Oil producers put heads together over output cuts

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON

Top oil producers started a crucial meeting on Thursday to discuss a possible cut in output after a collapse in demand due to the coronavirus and a Saudi-Russian price war caused the market to crash.

The videoconference meeting began between OPEC, its OPEC+ allies, including Russia and other key non-members.

Oil prices rose sharply as the meeting opened, extending earlier big gains, but then fell back again later to post more modest gains as nervous traders took profits.



The headquarters of OPEC in Vienna. • REUTERS

The meeting is seen as the best chance of providing support to prices which have been wallowing near two-decade lows.

Experts warn that without concerted action the commodity risks a steep sell-off.

Last week U.S. President Donald Trump claimed Russia and Saudi Arabia would step back from their standoff and agree to slash output.

Then OPEC kingpin Saudi Arabia called for an urgent meeting of producers "to try to reach a fair deal" to "stabilise the oil market" following a phone call between its Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Mr. Trump.

Thursday's meeting intends to conclude an agreement to cut production by between 10 and 15 million barrels per day, Kuwaiti Oil Minister Khaled Al-Fadhil said in an interview with the *Kuwaiti Al-Rai* daily.

## ELSEWHERE



### Space station crew dock at ISS

ALAMY

A three-man crew docked successfully at the International Space Station on Thursday. Anatoly Ivanishin and Ivan Vagner of Roscosmos and NASA's Chris Cassidy reached the ISS at 1413 GMT, just over six hours after blasting off from the Baikonur Cosmodrome, where COVID-19 caused changes to pre-launch protocol. The departing crew neither faced questions from a large press pack nor were waved off by family and friends. AFP

## 'Half a billion people face poverty due to virus'

Richer countries should help: Oxfam

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
LONDON

Around half a billion people could be pushed into poverty as a result of the economic fallout from the pandemic unless richer countries take "urgent action" to help developing nations, a leading aid organisation warned on Thursday.

Oxfam has urged richer countries to step up their efforts to help the developing world. Failing to do so, it added, could set back the fight against poverty by a decade and by as much as 30 years in some areas, including Africa and West Asia.

"The devastating economic fallout of the pandemic is being felt across the globe," said Jose Maria Vera, Oxfam International interim executive director. "But for poor people in poor countries who are already struggling to survive there are almost no safety nets to stop them falling into poverty."

The report, which is based on research at King's College London and the Australian National University, warns that between 6% and 8% of the global population could be forced into poverty.

# Spy chief Kadhemi named Iraq's third PM-designate this year

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BAGHDAD

Iraqi President Barham Salih nominated spy chief Mustafa Kadhemi on Thursday as the country's third Prime Minister-designate this year, months after his predecessor ended his bid to form a government.

Mr. Kadhemi, the 53-year-old head of the National Intelligence Service, has ascended to the role as Iraq faces a budget crisis brought on by the collapse in world oil prices and the spread of the novel coronavirus.

"This is a huge responsibility, and a difficult task," said Mr. Salih in his nomi-

nating speech, describing Mr. Kadhemi as someone with integrity and reason.

### Widespread support

His nomination was endorsed by Ministers, political rivals and even the UN representative in Iraq, indicating widespread support for Mr. Kadhemi that neither of the previous PM-designates had enjoyed.

Moments before the ceremony, his predecessor Adnan Zulfari announced he was withdrawing his candidacy due to "internal and external reasons". Mr. Zulfari had been staunchly opposed by hardline Shiite factions with

close ties to Iran, which enjoys vast influence in Baghdad. Any candidate for the premiership, observers say, must have a green light from Iraq's Shiite, Kurdish and Sunni communities – as well as Iran's arch-rival, the U.S.

Mr. Kadhemi is able to secure that support after weeks of lobbying that peaked in a flurry of meetings in Baghdad over the last week, sources said. Among them were gatherings attended by Iranian General Ismail Qaani, who has headed the Quds Force foreign operations unit since a U.S. drone strike killed his predecessor Qasem Soleimani.

# Saudi-led ceasefire in Yemen's long war begins

No decision yet from Houthi leadership

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
RIYADH

The Saudi-led coalition began a unilateral ceasefire in Yemen's long war on Thursday, saying it hoped the initiative to prevent coronavirus would lead to a wider political solution.

Iran-backed Houthi rebels have formally responded to the coalition's declaration of a two-week pause in the five-year conflict. However Yasser Al-Houthi, secretary of the Houthis' political council, poured cold water on the idea, saying that the Saudis "are dishonest and violate

every truce they announce".

"The announcement of this truce is to evade the true national vision that offers real solutions," he said, referring to a roadmap for peace that the rebels unveiled on Wednesday.

If the ceasefire does hold, it would be the first breakthrough since the warring parties agreed to a UN-brokered truce in Hodeida during talks in Geneva in late 2018. The UAE, a key player in the coalition which drew down its troops last year, applauded the Saudi move as "wise and responsible".

# Most New York virus cases came from Europe

CARL ZIMMER

New research indicates that the coronavirus began to circulate in the New York area by mid-February, weeks before the first confirmed case, and that travellers brought in the virus mainly from Europe, not Asia.

"The majority is clearly European," said Harm van Bakel, a geneticist at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, who co-wrote a study awaiting peer review.

A separate team at NYU Grossman School of Medicine came to strikingly similar conclusions, despite studying a different group of cases. Both teams analysed genomes from New Yorkers starting in mid-March.

The research revealed a previously hidden spread of the virus that might have been detected if aggressive testing programmes had been put in place.

On January 31, President



People at a makeshift hospital under construction at theUSTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center. • AFP

Donald Trump barred foreign nationals from entering the country if they had been in China during the prior two weeks.

It would not be until late February that Italy would begin locking down towns and cities, and March 11 when Mr. Trump said he would block travellers from most European countries. But New Yorkers had already been travelling home with the virus. "People were just oblivious," said Adriana Heguy, a member of the NYU team. NY TIMES

# What's next for Bernie Sanders's 'revolution'?

The Vermont Senator continues to push Democratic politics to the Left

STANLEY JOHNS

Bernie Sanders, the insurgent American politician who pushed the Democratic Party to the left on several issues, on Tuesday dropped out of the race for party nomination. This was the second straight election Mr. Sanders is ending up as a runner-up in the Democratic nomination contest. The 78-year-old Senator from Vermont may not get another chance to bid for the White House, but the movement he launched, which he calls a political revolution, has already shaken up the Democratic Party.

### Historical parallels

There were a few politicians in the U.S. who left lasting imprints on the political system despite their failure to win the top office. Historian Michael Kazin has compared Mr. Sanders to the late 19th century Democratic insur-

gent William Jennings Bryan and the 1972 Democratic candidate George McGovern. Bryan, who first won the Democratic party nomination in 1896, was a critic of the gold standard, a champion of inflationary policies and a consistent critic of "American imperialism". Bryan lost all three White House bids – in 1896, 1900 and 1908. Despite these failures, writes Mr. Kazin, the Democratic Party "embraced the pro-regulation, anti-monopoly, pro-union stand of this eloquent politician called 'the Great Commoner'".

In 1972, McGovern defeated the establishment favourites to win the nomination, but lost to incumbent Richard Nixon in the presidential election. When McGovern was running a high-spirited liberal campaign, he was called by critics a "communist apologist". Despite his massive loss to



Bernie Sanders

Nixon, his anti-war positions would resonate through the American people in the years that followed. President Nixon himself would end the Vietnam war that had been lost for years.

### Political legacy

Like Bryan and McGovern, Mr. Sanders also built a movement at the grassroots level. While the former two made it to the presidential race, Mr. Sanders could not reach that milestone, partly because he failed to broaden his support base through the diverse Democratic voters. He also faced a combative

party establishment, which threw its weight behind its favourites, Hillary Clinton in 2016 and Joe Biden this year.

But the impact of the Sanders campaign on the Democratic politics is already visible. Most Democrats who joined the 2020 race supported restructuring America's healthcare system. They also supported doubling the minimum wage, fighting climate change more vigorously and taxing the rich more. Support for Medicare for all, one of Mr. Sanders's top promises, is rising across party

### NEWS ANALYSIS

lines. According to a WSJ/NBC poll, the support for the proposal among all registered voters stood at 43% in March. About 73% support an option to buy into a Medicare system. Among the Democratic voters, 67% voters supported Mr. Sanders' proposal, while the support for the public option stood at 81%. And at a time when the U.S. is facing an unpre-

cedented healthcare crisis in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak and its economic impacts, the focus of the political debate could further shift to healthcare and inflationary policies. The Democratic Party also has a host of young leaders, including New York Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who are taking forward the Sanders-style leftist politics.

Unsurprisingly, in a statement issued after Mr. Sanders announced his decision to drop out, Mr. Biden has reached out to the leftist leader's base. "We will confront income inequality in our nation. We will make sure healthcare is affordable

and accessible to every American. We will make education at our public colleges and universities free. We will ease the burden of student debt. And, most important of all, we will defeat Donald Trump," said Mr. Biden. Mr. Sanders may have dropped out of the race to win the Democratic nomination, but he continues to shape the Democratic politics.

# Taliban slams release of prisoners

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
KABUL

The Afghan government said it would release another 100 Taliban inmates on Thursday, even though the insurgents have walked out of talks over a comprehensive prisoner swap and dismissed Kabul's piecemeal freeing of captives as "unacceptable".

The administration of President Ashraf Ghani on Wednesday released 100 low-risk Taliban prisoners who had vowed never to return to the battlefield.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the release was inadequate. A Taliban team came to Kabul last week to meet the government to discuss a comprehensive prisoner swap that was initially supposed to see 5,000 Taliban released in return for 1,000 Afghan security forces. But they abandoned the "fruitless" meetings on Tuesday and returned to Kandahar.

**MARKET WATCH**

	09-04-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	31160	4.23
US Dollar	76.28	0.08
Brent oil	33.05	1.11

**NIFTY 50**

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	251.90	1.05
Asian Paints	1651.35	42.40
Axis Bank	420.15	28.80
Bajaj Auto	2435.95	194.25
Bajaj Finserv	4820.25	211.75
Bajaj Finance	2551.85	218.95
Bharti Airtel	488.70	27.05
BHEL	344.90	2.60
Britannia Ind	2801.70	26.15
Cipla	579.60	66.85
Coal India	140.80	3.45
Dr Reddys Lab	3621.55	-61.45
Eicher Motors	13742.30	583.80
GLS (India)	87.75	2.20
Grasim Ind	530.55	17.95
HCL Tech	469.05	5.95
HDFC	1703.10	144.30
Indus Bank	925.05	36.10
Hero MotoCorp	1099.90	169.25
Hindalco	107.55	6.70
Hind Unilever	2372.25	-88.60
ICI Bank	342.70	23.75
Indiabulls	394.40	-3.75
Bharti Infratel	173.90	7.50
Infosys	636.25	4.65
Indian Oil Corp	83.40	1.65
ITC	166.30	6.60
JSW Steel	166.30	11.70
Kotak Bank	1272.90	85.25
LAT	812.80	5.70
M&M	381.40	55.60
Maruti Suzuki	536.65	628.55
Nestle India Ltd.	16839.70	-31.55
NTPC	87.10	1.90
ONGC	77.30	2.85
PowerGrid Corp	168.45	6.10
Reliance Ind	1219.95	27.80
State Bank	187.75	4.75
Shree Cement	16935.30	871.35
Sun Pharma	454.45	17.75
Tata Motors	74.60	7.00
Tata Steel	284.85	10.10
TCS	1766.15	60.70
Tech Mahindra	545.25	-13.65
Titan	1013.85	100.40
UltraTech Cement	3366.05	109.60
UPL	319.00	-1.20
Vedanta	76.80	6.50
Wipro	196.70	3.80
Zee Entertainment	149.85	6.70

**EXCHANGE RATES**

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on April 09

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	76.09	76.41
Euro	82.65	83.00
British Pound	94.61	95.02
Japanese Yen (100)	69.89	70.21
Chinese Yuan	10.78	10.83
Swiss Franc	78.31	78.65
Singapore Dollar	53.45	53.68
Canadian Dollar	54.20	54.43
Malaysian Ringgit	17.54	17.63

Source: Indian Bank



**IN BRIEF**

**Kotak Group leadership takes 15% salary cut**

MUMBAI Private sector lender Kotak Mahindra Bank has said that the group's leadership team had unanimously and voluntarily opted to take a 15% cut in compensation for the financial year 2020-21 in view of the economic impact of the COVID-19. "Uday Kotak has personally opted to forgo his salary, and will receive ₹1," the lender said. The bank said the revival of the economy will depend on a healthy and robust financial sector.

**RBI gets ₹1.13 lakh cr. bids in targeted LTRO**

MUMBAI The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday said it had received ₹1.13 lakh crore worth of bids in the targeted long-term repo operation (LTRO) conducted for an amount of ₹25,000 crore with a three-year tenor. The RBI received 18 bids in the auction. The total bids received amounted to ₹1.13 lakh crore, implying a bid to cover ratio — the amount of bids received relative to the notified amount — of 4.5, the RBI said in a release. It allocated ₹25,016 crore on a pro-rata allotment percentage of 22.04%. PTI

# Inflation may drop to 2.4% in FY21: RBI

Regulator refrains from making growth forecast amid COVID-19 induced fluid circumstances

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

The consumer price index (CPI)-based inflation, which had stayed elevated in the last few months, is expected to soften during the course of the financial year, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in its monetary policy report (MPR).

"CPI inflation is tentatively projected to ease from 4.8% in Q1 of 2020-21 to 4.4% in Q2, 2.7% in Q3 and 2.4% in Q4, with the caveat that in the prevailing high uncertainty, aggregate demand may weaken further than currently anticipated and ease core inflation further, while supply bottlenecks could exacerbate pressures more than expected," the RBI said. The central bank said, looking ahead, the balance of inflation risks is slanted even further towards the downside.

The MPR was released on Thursday. The report follows



Renewed bouts of global financial market volatility could exert pressure on the rupee, says the RBI. ■ V. V. KRISHNAN

the unscheduled monetary policy meeting held in end March to discuss the uncertainties arising from the nationwide lockdown. Since the review was conducted in end March, the early policy review, scheduled for April, was withdrawn.

"Given the lockdown, the compilation of the CPI for March and the following few months by the National Sta-

tistical Office could also be challenging. For 2021-22, assuming a normal monsoon and no major exogenous or policy shocks, structural model estimates indicate that inflation could move in a range of 3.6-3.8%," the RBI said. The RBI had reduced the repo rate by 75 basis points (bps) to 4.4% in the monetary policy review while cash reserve ratio was

reduced by 100 bps to 3%. The central bank, however, refrained from making any prediction on growth. "Under highly fluid circumstances in which incoming data produce shifts in the outlook for growth on a daily basis, forecasts for real GDP growth in India are not provided here, awaiting a clear fix on the intensity, spread and duration of COVID-19," the RBI said while observing the economy was looking up before the virus broke out.

**Oil price drop**  
"The sharp reduction in international crude oil prices, if sustained, could improve the country's terms of trade, but the gain from this channel is not expected to offset the drag from the shutdown and loss of external demand," the report said.

The RBI said relatively modest upsides are expected to emanate from monetary, fiscal and other policy mea-

asures and the early containment of COVID-19, if that occurs. However, it added, such uncertainties make the forecasting of inflation and growth highly challenging. On exchange rates, the central bank said renewed bouts of global financial market volatility caused by the uncertainty of macroeconomic impact of the COVID-19, as in February-March 2020, could exert pressure on the Indian rupee.

"Should the rupee depreciate by 5% from the baseline, inflation could edge up by around 20 bps while GDP growth could be higher by about 15 bps through increased net exports," it said.

In contrast, should COVID-19 normalise quickly, strong capital flows could revive. An appreciation of the rupee by 5% could moderate inflation by around 20 bps and GDP growth by around 15 bps vis-a-vis the baseline," the RBI said.

## The government has decided to merge the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) with the Central Statistics Office (CSO) under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). The order dated 23rd May 2019 has cleared formation of an overarching body - National Statistical Office (NSO) through the merger of the NSSO and the CSO. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has two wings, one relating to Statistics and the other - Programme Implementation.

The Statistics Wing called the National Statistical Office (NSO) consists of the Central Statistical Office (CSO), the Computer Center and the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). CSO coordinates the statistical activities in the country and also evolves statistical standards. NSSO is responsible for conduct of large scale sample surveys in diverse fields on an all India basis.

The Programme Implementation Wing has three Divisions, namely, (i) Twenty Point Programme (ii) Infrastructure Monitoring and Project Monitoring and (iii) Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme.

Besides these two wings, there is National Statistical Commission created through a resolution of the Government of India (MOSPI) and one autonomous Institute, viz., Indian Statistical Institute declared as an institute of national importance by an act of the Parliament.

## Guidance on virus impact

Businesses hit, client demand set to drop in Q2 as well

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT BENGALURU

Cognizant has decided to withdraw its revenue guidance for calendar year 2020 against the backdrop of fluid economic environment and COVID-19-driven market uncertainties.

"The long-term fundamentals of our business remain strong. However, given the unprecedented nature of this crisis, uncertainty around its duration and its impact on our ability to forecast performance, the company is withdrawing its 2020 guidance that was provided on February 5, 2020," said Brian Humphries, CEO, Cognizant, on Thursday.

However, he said he was happy to see business momentum in the first two months of the quarter and was grateful to all associates for their commitment and professionalism which enabled Cognizant to meet its previously-announced revenue guidance.



He further said, "We acted decisively to limit COVID-19's impact on our business, including rapidly enabling work-from-home capabilities across delivery teams."

"In this fluid environment where uncertainty prevails, we are well-positioned with deep client relationships across more than a dozen industries, and a strong balance sheet that provides solid financial flexibility." Cognizant said its first quarter revenue was expected to be in the \$4.22 billion to \$4.23 billion range, up 2.7-2.9% (3.4-3.6% in constant currency) over the corresponding quarter last year. Financial performance in the first two months of the quarter was on track to exceed previous guidance, driven by strong performance in North America.

Cognizant expects the pandemic to further reduce client demand in Q2, as its societal and economic impact causes broader disruptions across industries.

**Work-from-home**  
During the latter part of March, the company said, COVID-19 had increasingly affected business, largely due to delays in project fulfilment as delivery, particularly in India and the Philippines, shifted to work-from-home and reduced client demand, primarily in the travel and hospitality industries.

Cognizant expects the pandemic to further reduce client demand in Q2, as its societal and economic impact causes broader disruptions across industries.

## from Apr. 14'

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

The government must "immediately review" its decision to allow airlines to continue to sell tickets from April 14 when there has been no decision on lifting the lockdown, else passengers will face steep losses, aviation consultancy CAPA said.

"As of now, significant funds for passengers are already locked up in Indian carriers as a result of early bookings prior to the lockdown and a decision to allow bookings post April 14 without any decision of lifting the lockdown will increase the risks which need to be avoided," it said in a statement.

Even after the lockdown is lifted, CAPA said, airlines should be allowed to sell tickets for those routes that are opened up by the government and not for the entire network, according to the aviation consultancy company.

## Delivers over 3.38 cr. cylinders in 15 days

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

Indian Oil Corporation (IOCL) plans to double its LPG imports amid rising demand for cooking gas in India arising in the course of the COVID-19 lockdown.

"The Corporation has tied up for additional imports of the product for April and May (to the tune of about 50% over normal imports) to ensure uninterrupted availability of bulk LPG for its bottling plants," said IOCL in a statement.

IndianOil has delivered more than 3.38 crore cylinders to its customers in the last 15 days since the lockdown was implemented, that is, 26 lakh cylinders every single working day.

**Extended hours**  
"IndianOil is taking steps to increase LPG production at its major refineries by optimising operations, improving LPG yield in LPG producing units. The Corporation's LPG bottling plants, too, are working extended hours, operating night shifts and on public holidays/Sundays, to meet the growing demand. The transport infrastructure linking the plants to the distributors has also been optimised for quick turnaround of cylinders, and the statement.



IndianOil has also advised its distributors to give priority refill deliveries to LPG customers under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana for whom the Centre has extended three LPG refills free of cost during the months of April, May and June 2020.

## \$200 bn relief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

NAREDCO, the industry body of real estate developers, and industry association Assocham, have urged the government to provide a relief package of more than \$200 billion, which is about 10% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), for Indian industry.

They said the amount could be pumped into the economy in a staggered manner to retrieve the business cycle without incurring further loss.

"The industry seeks working capital to ensure that the Indian economy does not tank; business organisations do not default on their loans and saddle banks with NPAs," they also cause job losses," Niranjani Hiranandani, national president, NAREDCO and Assocham, said. He added, "We need a stimulus of over \$200 billion with an ability to go up to \$300 billion."

## IndiGrid to buy Sterlite unit for ₹1,008 crore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

The board of the investment manager of IndiGrid has approved the acquisition of Gurgaon-Palwal Transmission Limited (GPTL) from Sterlite Power for ₹1,008 crore.

The acquisition would increase IndiGrid's assets under management by 10% to \$1.75 billion and its portfolio will rise to ten power transmission projects with a total network of 25 power transmission lines and seven sub-stations. IndiGrid had signed a framework pact in 2019 with Sterlite Power for the acquisition.

## News, movies keep people glued to television

Viewership rose by 4% in the week ended April 3 over previous week: BARC India-Nielsen

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

Television viewership increased by 4% in the week ended April 3, 2020, over the previous week as people remained glued to TV to watch news and movies during the ongoing lockdown period.

As compared to the pre-COVID-19 period (January 11 to January 31) TV consumption has gone up by 43% across India, as per data released by BARC India and Nielsen.

The Prime Minister's request to switch off lights at 9 p.m. on April 5, garnered the lowest-ever total TV viewership for those nine minutes.

Viewership was down 60%, indicating that over half of India's population could have participated in the diya/candle lighting event.



The growth in TV consumption in the week was driven by movies (77% growth), BARC India executives said. ■ REUTERS

The growth in TV consumption in the week was driven by movies (77% growth), BARC India's top executives said.

DD National became the most-watched channel during the week, across India, with the telecast of classics such as Ramayan and Mahabharat.

"Non-prime time continues to be the growth driver for TV (81% over the pre-COVID period) with early morning and late night slots also showing a growth," officials said.

Non-prime time continues to be the growth driver with early morning and late night slots also showing a growth

Free commercial time (FCT) on TV advertising grew by 9% on the back of social advertising, as per the findings.

## Prepare an essay on

1. Inflation and its causes
2. How is it measured?
3. What is the difference between CPI F& WPI?

What is IIP? Who publishes the data and what is its purpose?

and Marketing, Lee India

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

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

BusinessLine MIND YOUR MARKETING #BLMindYourMarketing

## IN BRIEF

## Pujara's deal with Gloucestershire called off

NEW DELHI Cheteshwar Pujara's deal with Gloucestershire for the first six matches of the County Championship has been cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. The 32-year-old was supposed to play six matches for the club at the start of the County's first season back in Division One. However, Gloucestershire



On Thursday said that the deal is off now given the global health crisis. PTI

## Former hockey player Diwan seeks IOA's help

NEW DELHI Ashok Diwan, member of the 1975 hockey World Cup-winning team, sought help to get back to the country from USA. His deteriorating health adding to the trauma, the 65-year-old made a distress call to the IOA president Narinder Batra, requesting him to take his plea to higher authorities. It was confirmed that Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju has received the letter. PTI

## Australia's Test tour of Bangladesh postponed

SYDNEY Australia's two-Test cricket tour of Bangladesh in June has been postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic. The first Test was to start on June 11 in Chattogram and the second from June 19 in Dhaka. Both were part of the World Test Championship. The final of that tournament is scheduled for next June. Trying to find a new slot for the Tests will be a challenge. AP



## James hopeful of Lakers resuming revival

LOS ANGELES LeBron James says the abrupt shutdown of the NBA season has left the Los Angeles Lakers

feeling they still have something to prove. The Lakers were in the midst of a revival season, having made the playoffs for the first time in seven years. At the time of the postponement, the Lakers were in first place in the Western Conference and had the second-best record in the league behind Milwaukee. If the season doesn't resume, James says there will be a void. "I'll be able to look back and say we did something special at that small period of time." AFP

## Sunrisers Hyderabad set to donate ₹10 crores

NEW DELHI Indian Premier League franchise Sunrisers Hyderabad on Thursday decided to donate ₹10 crore towards the nation's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. "Sun TV Group (SunRisers Hyderabad) is donating ₹10 crores towards Corona Covid-19 relief measures," the franchise said in its official twitter handle. Sunrisers' initiative drew praise from the team's skipper David Warner. "How good is this well done Sun TV Group @SunRisers," the Australian tweeted. PTI

## Real players accept upto 20% pay cut

MADRID Real Madrid players have agreed to cut their salaries by as much as a fifth, the LaLiga club announced on Wednesday, as Spanish football remains on hold due to the coronavirus pandemic. In a statement, Real Madrid said players and coaches from the side's football and basketball teams, as well as key directors, had voluntarily agreed to the reduction, of either 10 or 20%, "depending on the circumstances that may affect the closing of the current 2019/20 season". AFP

## 'Chance to revive national circuit'

We can have all the top players in the country competing, says Vishnu

## TENNIS

KAMESH SRINIVASAN  
NEW DELHI

In difficult times, it is natural to fall back on good memories.

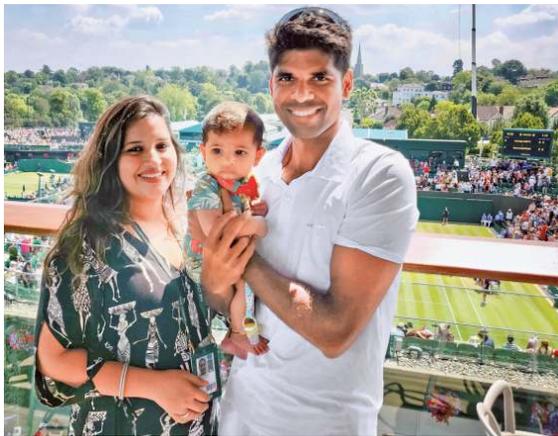
Vishnu Vardhan competed in his maiden Grand Slam main draw in Wimbledon in 2018, and he cherishes it dearly.

## Among best memories

"It was one of the best memories of my tennis career — playing my debut Grand Slam main draw in Wimbledon with Sriram Balaji, one of my closest friends, and winning a match with my family watching," recalled the 32-year-old Vishnu, who represented the country in the London Olympics with Leander Paes.

This season, Vishnu was playing his second professional tournament in Kolkata in March, before the tournament was cancelled midway by the International Tennis Federation (ITF).

"I actually was having a terrible cough at that time. That was when there were some initial cases of COVID-19 in India, just before the WHO called it a pandemic. The players in the tournament were very concerned about my cough. Luckily, it



Family man: Vishnu Vardhan is spending time with his son Siddhartha, and helping his wife Sonia. \*FILE PHOTO

was a regular cough and I recovered soon. I was ready to get tested, but the doctor assured me that it was normal, as I did not have any other symptoms," recalled Vishnu.

Vishnu is confident that India will control the virus soon, and suggests a national circuit to revive tennis.

"It will be a great opportunity to revive the national circuit. We can have all the

top-ranked players in the country competing in the tournaments," he said.

Now, he is happy spending time with his two-year-old son Siddhartha, and helping his wife Sonia bake some "amazing cakes".

"Being home has been fine for me. My dad (Jagadeesan) and Sonia are the designated people to go out and buy the essentials. So, I

have been completely home," said Vishnu.

"We have breakfast together. When Siddhartha goes to my parents' place [on a different floor], I get a workout. We both enjoy our long afternoon naps, which was never in my schedule. In the evening, we go to the terrace, watch the sunset and water the plants," said Vishnu.

## F1 could be held behind closed doors: Brawn

Says a July date now looks likely

IAN S  
LONDON

Formula One motorsport managing director Ross Brawn has said that in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, the 2020 season could potentially be held behind closed doors.

So far, nine races have been affected by the outbreak, with the March 15 season-opening Australian Grand Prix cancelled along with May's showcase Monaco Grand Prix.

"Travel for the teams and travel for everyone involved is going to be one of the big issues. You could argue once we get there, we could become fairly self-contained. Our view is probably a European start will be favourable and that could even be a closed event," Brawn told Sky Sports.

## Better than no racing

"We have a race with no spectators. That's not great, but it's better than no racing at all," he added.

Although the French GP is currently scheduled for



Ross Brawn. \*GETTY IMAGES

If we were to start at the beginning of July, we could do a 19-race season

June 28, Brawn explained a July start now looks more likely.

"If we were to start at the beginning of July, we could do a 19-race season," he said. "It's tough, three races on, weekend off — but we've looked at all the logistics."

F1 is already working with promoters on a revised 2020 calendar with the actual sequence and schedule dates for races likely to differ significantly from the original calendar.

## India doesn't need money, can't have cricket now, says Kapil

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The legendary Kapil Dev, on Thursday slammed Shaob Akhtar's idea of a made-for-television three-match ODI series between India and Pakistan to raise funds for the COVID-19 pandemic, saying "India doesn't need the money" and it is not worth risking lives for a

cricket match.

Akhtar, on Wednesday, proposed a closed-door series to jointly raise funds to fight the deadly virus both in India and Pakistan.

## Not feasible

Kapil said the proposal is not feasible.

"He is entitled to his opinion but we don't need to

raise the money.

"We have enough. For us, what is important right now is that how our authorities work together to deal with this crisis," Kapil said.

"The situation is unlikely to get normal anytime soon and organising a cricket game means putting our cricketers at risk which we don't need to," he said.

## Australia first, IPL contracts secondary: Tim Paine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
HOBART

The Australian cricket team didn't want to unnecessarily provoke Virat Kohli but his predecessor Michael Clarke's claims of players being scared to sledge the India captain in order to protect their IPL deals is far from truth, says current Test skipper Tim Paine.

"I certainly didn't notice too many people being that nice to Virat or not trying to get him out or anything like that," Paine told ESPNcricinfo.

"I thought everyone who had the ball in their hand or when we were batting were trying their absolute best to win the game for Australia. "I'm not sure who was go-

ing easy on him; we certainly had a thing where we didn't want to provoke any fight with him because we think that's when he plays at his best," Paine said.

India is scheduled to tour Australia from October, 2020 to January, 2021 to play four Tests, three One-Day Internationals and three Twenty20 Internationals.

## Was willing to die on the field: Richards

Always aware of the risks but it didn't bother him, says the legend



Vivian Richards. \*FILE PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MELBOURNE

The legendary Viv Richards, one of the greatest batsmen to have ever played the game, says such was his passion for the game he didn't mind dying on the cricket field while representing the West Indies.

Known for his aggressive batting, Richards dominated some of the fiercest fast bowlers of world cricket without

donning a helmet. Richards, 68 now, was always aware of the risks but it didn't bother him.

"My passion for the game was such I didn't mind dying on the field playing something I loved," Richards told former Australia all-rounder Shane Watson in a podcast.

Richards said he had always looked up to other athletes, who risked their lives for inspiration. "I have

looked at other sportsmen and women who I have a lot of respect for doing it to an extreme level," said Richards, who amassed 8,540 and 6,721 runs in 121 Tests and 187 ODIs respectively.

"I see a guy driving a Formula 1 racing car, what could be more dangerous than that?" said Richards, to which Watson quipped: "Facing 150kmph without a helmet?"

## Sathiyam begins training with a robot

'Valuable for those who want to improve their technique'

## TABLE TENNIS

K. KEERTHIVASAN  
CHENNAI

India's top paddler G. Sathiyam is making optimum use of his time at home in Chennai. The 27-year-old now has started playing table tennis, not with any other player, but with an imported robot at his residence.

"It's a remote-operated robot (Butterfly Amicus Prime for advanced players). I got it from Germany under the advice of my coach S. Raman in November last when Shen Yaohuan of China

came to the Raman TT Academy. Now with the lockdown in place, I took it back from the academy so that I can practice," said Sathiyam, who is the top-ranked Indian in the world at 31.

The robot was funded by the Go Sports Foundation and with help from Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu which took care of the import duty and customs clearance.

The speciality of the robot, according to Sathiyam, is that it can give the ball at different speeds, trajectory, frequency and spin.

"Of course, the imported robot can never replace a human. It gives one shot for a backhand and another for a long forehand whereas a normal robot will put the ball only at the same speed.

"It can send 120 balls per minute, which is two balls per second and 300 balls can be loaded into it. I feel in these times it is extremely helpful," he said.

Sathiyam stressed that the robot is valuable for those paddlers who want to improve on their technique, sharpness and reflex.

"It's the best robot I've seen," Sathiyam added.

## Ojha feels at 'home'



Pragyan Ojha with his family. \*SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

VV. SUBRAHMANYAM  
HYDERABAD

Former India left-arm spinner Pragyan Ojha believes that the 'lockdown' has presented him with the best phase of his life — spending invaluable time with his eight-month-old son, Yohaana.

"When I spoke to quite a few senior cricketers, they felt that the lockdown presents us with a huge opportunity to be with our families, especially our kids," said the 33-year-old Ojha in a chat with The Hindu on Thursday.

"I feel at 'home' with this lockdown as I normally don't like moving around except for official work. Now I have a chance to see my son from close quarters. He is growing and I am trying to understand his 'sign' language. I take snaps too," said Ojha.



Tech savvy: G. Sathiyam practises with the Butterfly Amicus Prime at his home.

\*SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

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