

To my dear aspirants I have marked E and PA for certain articles. E IS FOR ETHICS. These are stories of how the human mind works in the face of adversity. Make a note of it. These will be useful as examples for case studies and also for framing a very good answer for your GS paper IV. PA IS FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PAPER II. HAPPY READING.



Travel nod for Yes Bank case co-accused Kapil Wadhawan triggers row
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Punjab government extends preventive lockdown till May 1
page 8



India has sufficient hydroxychloroquine stocks, says Centre
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British Prime Minister Boris Johnson out of intensive care unit
page 12

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NEARBY



1,973 residents report symptoms during survey
CHENNAI
The Chennai Corporation has identified 1,973 residents who have reported symptoms in COVID-19 while reporting at least 700 new cases since Thursday evening. The nationwide death toll from the epidemic touched 206, and the Ministry confirmed 6,761 positive cases.

Increase salaries of front line staff, urges HC
CHENNAI
Observing that the salaries of government doctors, paramedics, sanitation workers and policemen were not commensurate with their services, the Madras High Court has expressed the hope that the government would increase their salaries.

Tamil Nadu may face tax revenue shortfall
CHENNAI
Irrespective of whether the Tamil Nadu Cabinet recommends extension of the lockdown or not, the State government appears to be reconciling itself to the scenario of getting only minimum revenue through State taxes in April.

METROPOLIS WEEKEND ▶ PAGES 3
PROPERTY PLUS ▶ PAGE 3

No evidence of community transmission: Health Ministry

States cite surge to extend lockdown, death toll across country climbs to 206

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI
The Union Health Ministry on Friday denied evidence of community transmission (CT) of COVID-19 while reporting at least 700 new cases since Thursday evening. The nationwide death toll from the epidemic touched 206, and the Ministry confirmed 6,761 positive cases. The Ministry's response follows an Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) report on Thursday of nearly month long surveillance of 5,911 randomly chosen samples of patients who exhibited Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI), whom 104 tested positive for COVID-19.



No distancing: A jostling crowd at the Keshopur vegetable market in West Delhi on Friday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

COVID-19
All but two were tested between March 21-April 2 and 40 had no history of international travel or contact with someone with travel history but had picked up the infection, indicating community transmission, the ICMR said. Over the last few weeks, there have been reports from several States of people testing positive but who were unable to explain the possible source of the infection. However, the Health Ministry has consistently maintained that this was not evidence for CT.

The Health Ministry response comes even as States have announced an extension of the lockdown beyond April 14 citing CT; Chief Minister Amarinder Singh declared on Friday that CT had been observed in Punjab.

Have enough facilities, says Harsh Vardhan

India is unlikely to face an "unmanageable crisis" from COVID-19, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said at an online conference in New Delhi. Should matters deteriorate, India had enough infrastructure to tide over, he said. "We have 500 dedicated COVID hospitals, 2,00,000 beds across hospitals and 50,000 ICU beds." ▶ PAGE 9

70 health staff in Bhopal test positive

As many as 20 health workers, including two doctors, tested positive for COVID-19 in Bhopal on Friday, taking the number of the affected staff in all to 70 in the city, according to the district administration. On the day, the patients' tally in Bhopal soared to 119 as 24 fresh cases were reported. Health workers make up 59% of the cases in the city. ▶ PAGE 9

Scarcity of drugs, devices imminent, govt. warned

Ensure resumption of units, urges Dept. of Pharmaceuticals

VIKAS DHOO MUMBAI
A countrywide shortage of medicines and medical devices is likely in the coming weeks, the Department of Pharmaceuticals has warned the Home Ministry, urging it to take immediate steps to help drug makers resume production under the current lockdown. Drug and medical device makers are functioning "at an average, at only 20%-30% capacity during the lockdown," as per feedback from various industry formations, Department of Pharmaceuticals Secretary P.D. Vaghela pointed out in an April 9 communique to Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla, which has been reviewed by The Hindu.

A bitter pill

The Indian pharma industry is hit hard by the restrictions imposed during the lockdown

- Pharma and medical device producers are operating at just 20 to 30% of their capacity
- Reverse migration and the inability of local workers to turn up has reduced their labour force
- Lack of adequate transport and logistics services (such as courier)
- Mistreatment by police and local officials
- Lack of clarity on permits for factory operations
- Ancillary industries such as packaging and raw material suppliers are shut
- As close to 50% of the pharmaceutical output is exported by India, the domestic market is more vulnerable to such production shocks

Export demand
"If the production does not reach the pre-lockdown level soon, it could lead to shortages of medicines and medical devices in the coming weeks," the letter said. Underlining that half of India's output of pharmaceuticals is exported as global markets offer better prices, the Department of Pharmaceuticals stressed that this could lead to disproportionate shortages in the domestic market, calling for suitable measures to be

taken "in the right earnest" to prevent this "avoidable situation." Production units engaged in making essential commodities, including medicines, vaccines, masks and their ancillaries had been exempted from the restrictions imposed as per the three-week national lockdown announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 24. Though several States had already imposed restrictions on mobility and production by then, Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba and Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister had urged State governments to ensure such production work continues, at a review meeting on March 22. Since then, repeated advisories from the Home Secretary to the State governments to ensure that the production and movement of essential goods is not hampered hasn't changed things on the ground, prompting the Department of Pharmaceuticals to raise the issue afresh.

India pounds LoC terror launchpads, Pak. Army sites

Villagers forced to flee firing, despite COVID-19 lockdown

PEERZADA ASHIQ SRINAGAR
The Army on Friday said it had inflicted heavy damage on the Pakistani Army's gun areas and terrorist launchpads after unprovoked ceasefire violation by the "enemy side" in two areas along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir. A defence spokesperson said the Army retaliated "effectively and strongly" to the ceasefire violation in Keran sector in Kupwara district in the afternoon. Police officials said Pakistan had violated the ceasefire in Uri area of Baramulla district as well. The heavy exchange of fire amid the ongoing lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic forced scores of villagers living along the LoC



On guard: BSF jawans at the international border near Jammu on Friday. ■ PTI

"The whole world is battling the coronavirus. This is the time to allow people to be safe in their houses rather than sending them in hordes looking for shelters," he said. Following the firing, Internet was suspended in Kupwara district. **'Bid to disrupt peace'** Director General of Police (DGP), Kashmir, Dilbag Singh said it was condemnable that when the entire world was coming together to fight the pandemic, Pakistan and its sponsored terrorists were making attempts to disrupt peace. The shelling comes days after a gunfight between the Army and infiltrators resulted in the death of five elite paratroopers and an equal number of infiltrators.

Field day



New threat: Pigeons hovering over a wheat field on the outskirts of Mohali in Punjab on Friday. These birds feast on the crop, which is yet to be harvested owing to shortage of farm workers due to the COVID-19 lockdown. ■ AKHILESH KUMAR

Ready to fly stranded Indians: UAE

HASINI HAIDAR KHAN LOL BHATTACHERJEE NEW DELHI
Responding to India's concerns, the United Arab Emirates has offered to fly stranded Indian nationals who want to return home in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ambassador Ahmed Al Banna told The Hindu on Friday that the government of UAE has decided to help all countries fly their citizens home after the completion of the necessary medical tests. "We have reached out to all foreign governments to repatriate their nationals including testing them before they leave and if found positive to treat them here. A note verbal to all embassies was sent seeking the help of all governments," said Dr. Al Banna

Extend lockdown by 14 days: experts

T.N. records 77 fresh cases, taking the total to 911; one patient dies

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI
On a day when a team of medical experts recommended that Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami extend the lockdown by 14 days beyond April 14, the State recorded a further 77 cases of COVID-19. Briefing reporters after a meeting with the Chief Minister, Dr. Prabhdheep Kaur of ICMR National Institute of Epidemiology said: "Despite all the efforts taken by the government, cases have been increasing... All the experts feel that it will be good if the lockdown is extended for 14 more days. This is the recommendation of the committee."



Keeping the faith: Devotees offer prayers outside a church in Chennai on Good Friday. ■ PTI

The Cabinet, which is meeting on Saturday, may take a call on the issue. On Friday, Tamil Nadu's tally of COVID-19 cases surged to 911, with the addition of 77 cases. A woman, who had tested positive for COVID-19 and was undergoing treatment at Thoothukudi, died, taking the total number of deaths to nine.

were connected to a "single source event" (Delhi conference), according to the Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine's bulletin. Coimbatore reported the highest number of cases with 26 persons - 21 women and five men - testing positive. Twelve persons, including nine women, from Chengalpattu, nine persons each in Chennai and Ranipet, eight from Dindigul, three each from the Nilgiris and Villupuram, two each from Erode and Tuticorin, and one each from Cuddalore, Kanniyakumari and Tiruvannamalai tested positive. "Our main aim is to control the spread of COVID-19. We are taking steps to ensure that new cases do not occur outside quarantine or containment zones," he said.

Red army keeps virus at bay in northeast

Unmindful of risks, village elders work with govt.

RAHUL KARMAKAR GUWAHATI
A 'red army' of wise old men and women are helping villages across some hill States in the northeast keep the novel coronavirus away. Though a majority of those felled by the COVID-19 pandemic are aged 60 years or more, this hasn't stopped the *gaon buras* (male village elder) and *gaon buris* (female village elder) - usually referred to as GBs - from following their predecessors in forming a shield between the villages and the enemy - in this case, the virus. The village elders across the States are distinguished by their red coats provided by the government, which also pays them a stipend of ₹1,500 per month.



In charge: Village elders putting up a barricade at Salang village in Arunachal Pradesh. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"The villagers look up to us in times of crisis as well as happiness. It is our duty to ensure their safety and liaise with the government agencies for guidelines and in maintaining order," said Tamon Mibang, one of the three GBs of Lileng village in Arunachal Pradesh's Slang district. Mr. Mibang is 64, although the Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulation of 1945, under which

a village decides the number of GBs. During epidemics and disasters, we put our heads together to decide what is best for the villagers and share the responsibilities," he told The Hindu. Innakumba Longchar, 59, of Khensa village in Mokokchung district of Nagaland, plays a similar role. "Keeping everyone calm is a major challenge," he said. Assisting the GBs in Nagaland are the *dobashi*, the custodians of Naga customary laws who also wear red coats. They have been salaried government employees since 1842 when the British appointed the first *dobashi* for interpreting Naga dialects into Assamese or Hindi. Arunachal Home Minister Bamang Felix said the importance of village veterans was evident from the inclusion of the powers of the GBs in the Constitution. "They are indispensable," he said.

Decision on lockdown after today's Cabinet meeting

Experts say an extension can be used to test contacts of COVID-19 patients

DEVI S. JESUDASAN
CHENNAI

After making a set of recommendations to the government on extending the lockdown, representatives of the expert team said that during the extended 14-day period, many people, including those who were contacts of COVID-19 positive cases, could be tested.

Prabdeep Kaur of ICMR National Institute of Epidemiology said: "Based on the data after the results of those

COVID-19

tests, an informed decision could be taken after two weeks," she explained.

A senior official told *The Hindu*: "Some doctors recommended a two-week extension and some favoured a three-week extension and some, even beyond. The government will wait for Prime Minister's video conferencing with Chief Ministers on Saturday and a final decision will be taken during the State Cabinet meeting [in the evening]."

Besides medical experts from Tamil Nadu, Chief Scientist of World Health Organisation Dr. Soumya

Based on the data after the results of those tests, an informed decision could be taken after two weeks

PRABDEEP KAUR
ICMR National Institute of Epidemiology

Swaminathan participated in the two-hour meeting through video conference from Geneva.

A doctor, who participated in the meeting, said doctors who were present included some from the 19-member expert committee and also from other committees.

Govt. steps lauded

The doctors "were appreciative of the steps being taken by the State government" and emphasised on the need for strengthening the public health system, which would increase the State's capacity to detect the cases/clusters at the earliest.

The doctors underlined the need for ensuring the safety of doctors, nurses and other health workers, who were in the front line in the fight against COVID-19.

Health Minister Chinnayya-baskar, Health Secretary Beela Rajesh and senior officials participated.

Tax revenue may drop to a minimum in April

State government has to rely heavily on its share of Central taxes and grants-in-aid

T. RAMAKRISHNAN
CHENNAI

Irrespective of whether the Tamil Nadu Cabinet would recommend extension of the COVID-19 lockdown or not on Saturday, the State government appears to be reconciling itself to the scenario of realising minimum revenue through State taxes in April.

In other words, it has to rely much more on its share in Central taxes and grants-in-aid from the Union government. Its dependence on the Centre is expected to continue during the first quarter (April-June), as policy-makers feel that it may take at least a few months to see signs of economic recovery, even if the lockdown gets lifted in May.

As per the Budget Estimate for 2020-21, the State Own Taxes Revenue (SOTR) is around ₹1,33,530 crore. In terms of monthly average revenue, it will be ₹11,127.5 crore. Even though it is too early to hazard a guess, the government is sure that only a negligible amount will get realised, that too if certain taxpayers come forward to make their remittances, un-



Bound by belief: A family joins the Good Friday prayers from home during a live telecast in Chennai. • R. RAVINDRAN

derstanding the government's plight.

Traditionally, SOTR's share in the total revenue receipts is around 60%. Non-Tax Revenue contributes about 9% of the revenue. Approximately 31% of the revenue receipts is from the Union government in the form of the State's share in Central taxes and grants. The State's monthly aver-

age figure of total revenue receipts based on pre-COVID-19 calculations comes to around ₹18,281 crore. It would be a tall order if the total revenue receipts exceed the mark of ₹10,000 crore in April and even in May. The fall in SOTR is being visualised due to several factors such as 60-70% decline in consumption of petroleum products and ban

on sale of liquor through retail outlets of the Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation Limited (TASMAC) and registration of documents, apart from reduction in the prices of petroleum products.

GST revenue

Besides, the government is not expecting much revenue through Goods and Services Tax in the next couple of

months due to concessions announced by the Central government for firms. Those having an aggregate annual turnover less than ₹5 crore have been given three months (up to June last week) to file returns for March to May with no interest, late fee, and penalty.

For "bigger firms," a similar concession has been provided, though late filing of returns after 15 days will carry 9% interest. The State government is of the view that these firms too will make use of the extension of time under the given circumstances.

Even otherwise, during 2019-20, the State government experienced the pain of the general slump in the economy, which got reflected in terms of tepid growth in revenue. Amid a tight financial condition, it had made the full payment of salary to its employees for March, unlike in States such as Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, which have either deferred their payment or decided to make the payment in two installments, a senior Tamil Nadu government official points out.

Transporters can't pay for 2 months: assn.

SANJAY VIJAYAKUMAR
CHENNAI

Private transport industry will not be able to pay salaries to employees for the next two months and needs government support to tide over the situation, A. Afzal, president, Tamil Nadu Omnibus Owners Association said.

In mid of March the collections were coming and he had funds to pay the salaries," he said.

Man in isolation ward ends life

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
ARIYALUR

A 60-year-old man belonging to Kadambar near Vikramangalam in the district, who was admitted to the COVID-19 isolation ward in Ariyalur Government Hospital, ended his life on Friday evening. According to sources, the victim, a construction worker, was admitted to the hospital on April 6 and had test results were awaited.

Assistance for overcoming suicidal thoughts is available on the State health helpline 104 and Sneha's suicide prevention helpline 044-24640050.

IN BRIEF

Give relief to MSMEs, Ramadoss urges Centre

CHENNAI
PMK founder S. Ramadoss on Friday urged the Centre to provide relief such as tax breaks, easy loans for micro, small and medium sized industries and unorganised workers who depend on these industries after the economic activity has ceased markedly due to lockdown imposed to tackle Covid-19. In a statement, Dr. Ramadoss said that 90% of the workers who belong in the informal sector workers would be severely affected due to the lockdown imposed in India.

Dhinakaran wants farmers in govt. panel

CHENNAI
The Anna Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK) founder T.T. Dhinakaran on Friday called upon the State government to make arrangements for procuring the agricultural produce from farmers. Referring to reports of sections of farmers either dumping vegetables including carrots, facing hurdles at the direct procurement centres or selling pulses such as urad dal. Mr. Dhinakaran, in a statement, suggested that a committee of officers, constituted to coordinate farm activities district-wise, should include farmers.

Help unorganised sector workers, Vaiko to Centre

CHENNAI
MAMK general secretary Vaiko on Friday requested the Centre and State government to unveil the plan to address concerns faced by workers in the unorganised sectors who are facing a bleak situation due to the lockdown, announced to contain the spread of COVID-19. In a statement, Mr. Vaiko said the Centre should take note of the report released on April 8 on the economic situation of the workers in the unorganised sector.

Assist Tamil Muslims in Delhi: Thirumavalavan

CHENNAI
Viduthala Chiruthaigal Katchi founder and Chidambaram MP, Th. Thirumavalavan on Friday said that Muslims from the State, who went to New Delhi for Tablighi Jamat and have been quarantined there in government hospitals and student hostels, should be helped and taken care of by the State government. In a statement, he said that both patients and those who have been tested negative are suffering without access to food and change of clothes. "Bihar has helped Muslims from that State and made all arrangements. Tamil Nadu should do the same," he demanded.

Court favours higher salaries for front line workers

Policemen, sanitation staff work round-the-clock: Bench

MOHAMED IMRANULLAH S.
CHENNAI

Observing that the monthly salary paid to government doctors, paramedical staff, sanitation workers and policemen was not commensurate with the services rendered by them, the Madras High Court has expressed hope that the government will appreciate their services by increasing their salaries appropriately.

Justices N. Kirubakaran and R. Hemalatha made the observations in their common interim order on a couple of public interest litigation petitions. "This court is of the firm opinion that doctors, health workers, sanitary workers and policemen are serving round-the-clock throughout the year. Yet, their salary is not commensurate with their work."

"This court hails and appreciates the services rendered by them especially in the fight against the dangerous pandemic COVID-19 which is now threatening the entire humanity. This court hopes and expects that respective governments will appreciate their services by proper increase in their salaries," their order read. Though the litigant S. Jim-



A health worker in a protective suit collecting a swab from a person in Chennai on Friday. • B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

raj Milton had complained about lack of certain facilities in hospitals, the court recorded the submission of Additional Advocate General P.H. Arvindh Pandian that 37,648 personal protective equipment, 1.17 lakh N-95 masks, 7.75 lakh three-layered masks and 14,000 testing kits were available as on date in the State.

Pointing out that orders had been placed for more number of safety gear, he said the stocks were replenished regularly.

The AAG denied the litigant's claim that some residents and migrant workers at Pulianthope, Korukkupet, Vyasarpadi and Ambattur

were suffering without food. He said Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami had ordered free distribution of rice, oil, dal and ₹1,000 cash not only to ration cardholders but also to non-cardholders.

When the court wanted to know whether government doctors and paramedical staff were being given sufficient time to relax, the AAG replied in the affirmative.

"They should be safeguarded against the viral attack and therefore, they should be subjected to regular testing by the authorities," the Bench said and adjourned the cases by two weeks.

FROM PAGE ONE

Extend lockdown by 14 days: experts

All family members of COVID-19-positive persons were being tested for the infection, and this exercise would be completed within 10 days. Their contacts would be isolated, checked for symptoms and further action would be taken as per protocols, he said, adding: "The Chief Minister has instructed that all family members should be tested again."

"We hope that the number of positive cases will come under control once all contacts are tested for COVID-19," he added. Persons hospitalised with severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) are being monitored on a daily basis across Tamil Nadu. "This is to check if there is community spread of COVID-19. In

the last 24 hours, a total of 71 persons were tested. Five results are pending, and none of the remaining persons has tested positive for COVID-19," the official said.

As per Thursday's data, the source of infection for 23 persons who tested positive for COVID-19 could not be established and confirmed. "However, we can tentatively identify, for instance, there are two or three patients who have visited Phoenix mall. There is a contact but we are unable to confirm it. Apart from the 23 persons, there is no case where we have not been able to zero in on the source," he said.

He said as per the statistics, the State was still in stage 2 of COVID-19 transmission.

"We have not progressed to stage 3. In that, there will be numerous cases with unidentifiable sources of infection," he explained.

The rapid test kits should have reached the State on Thursday night, he said, adding: "The Centre has got a purchase order and has informed us it would supply a part of the order. We will get the kits in a day or two."

Protective gear

On availability of protective gear, he said, "As soon as the pandemic broke out in China in January, the Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation started preparatory works to procure medical equipment. We are not dependent on the Centre for supply of personal protec-

tive equipment. We have roped in manufacturers in Tiruppur and are directly purchasing from them. This is the same for triple layer masks. We are directly procuring ventilators as well," he said.

The official clarified that the State had received ₹314 crore from the National Health Mission for tackling COVID-19. He said that ₹234 crore - Rs. one crore from Member of Legislative Assembly Constituency Development Fund - would be utilised for procuring medical equipment, and a G.O. would be issued soon. Meanwhile, a staff of the Directorate of Medical and Rural Health Services, Chennai, has tested positive for COVID-19, officials said.

To be read from Laxmikant: High Court, Advocate General, SHRC, State Election Commission, National Commission for Women, NHRC

SHRC seeks report on police 'excesses'

Plea for a simple mechanism to lodge complaint against men in uniform

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) has sought a report from the Director-General of Police, a plea, which sought an easy access complaint mechanism through which general public could post their grievance against police officials.

The plea also urged the SHRC to direct the DGP to ensure protection for all policemen from the spread of COVID-19.

The complainant, R.S. Aafreen, a student of the Tamil Nadu National Law University, submitted that a few police personnel beat up those on the road. Some of them resorted to such action without even finding out the reason for which they had come out.



Bending the rules: Police personnel questioning two-wheeler riders who ventured out during the lockdown in Chennai on Friday. • R. RAVINDRAN

formed him that he was a doctor.

"It might be the tip of the iceberg since many such incidents might go unnoticed because there are neither many on the streets nor do they have the courage to video-graph such violations," Mr. Aafreen contended.

"Moreover, a few video clips in circulation on social

media show that some of the police personnel are not provided with adequate protective equipment/information to safeguard themselves from the spread of COVID-19," the complainant said.

Excessive force

While the general public appreciated the dedication of

the police they were also equally worried that exercise of excessive or illegal or inhuman force might degrade the dedicated service of the entire Police Department.

Acting on the complaint, SHRC acting chairperson D. Jayachandran has sought a report from the DGP within four weeks.

A farewell after a full recovery

The 24-year-old from Erode sent home in an ambulance

KATHELENE ALTONY
TRICHUR

A 24-year-old man who had tested positive for COVID-19 at the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Government Hospital on March 26 was discharged on Friday after treatment. He was discharged after two successive tests turned out to be negative.

The man, who hails from Erode had travelled to Dubai in search of job opportunities, official sources said. The patient had been discharged and sent to his hometown in a 108 ambulance by hospital officials. He was handed some fruits, boiled eggs and two water bottles so that he did not go hungry to Erode. "Even though he has recovered, he will have to remain in home quarantine for the next 28 days. The district authorities in Erode had been informed of his arrival. The doctors there will monitor his health," K. Vanitha,



Back to normal: The discharged patient (in protective suit) leaving the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Government Hospital in Trichur on Friday. • M. MOORTHY

Dean, MGMGH, said.

A set of self-care instructions, including dietary information, has been given to the patient, Dr. Vanitha said. "He came to the hospital on March 22, on his own after he experienced cough and fever. He has been cooperative and has responded very well to treatment," she said. Along with treatment for COVID-19, the hospital held a counselling session for the patient. "Patients tend to get anxious and depressive. Ho-

wever, he took everything we said positively and had no fear," he said.

Meanwhile, a team of doctors who cared for the patient said he was an example of how early detection could save lives. "We are hearing about cases of people hiding symptoms and resisting visits to the hospital. They must know that they are not only putting themselves at risk, they are also harming their near and dear ones," a doctor said.

**Soil :
Apple
Soil and Climate**

Apples grow best on a well-drained, loam soils having a depth of 45 cm and a pH range of pH 5.5-6.5. The soil should be free from hard substrata and water-logged conditions. Soils with heavy clay or compact subsoil are to be avoided.

Climate :

The apple is a temperate fruit crop. However, in India the apple growing areas do not fall in temperate zone but the prevailing temperate climate of the region is due to the Himalayan ranges and high altitudes. The average summer temperature should be around 21-24OC during active growth period. Apple succeeds best in regions where the trees experience uninterrupted rest in winter and abundant sunshine for good colour development. It can be grown at an altitude of 1500- 2700 m above the sea level. Well-distributed rainfall of 1000-1250mm throughout the growing season is most favourable for optimum growth and fruitfulness of apple trees.

**Soil
Pomegranates
Soil & Climate**

Pomegranate can be grown on a wide range of soils. However, it grows well in medium deep, loamy and well-drained soils having a pH of 7.5. Heavy soils with poor drainage facilities are unsuitable for its cultivation.

Semiarid climate with mild winters and hot summers are ideal for its growth.

Pomegranates can be successfully grown in areas with temperature ranging from 25-35OC and an annual rainfall of 500-800mm.

Climate

Hot and dry climate during fruit development improves its fruit quality.

The plants are affected if the

temperature remains below 11 C for a longer time. Humid climate during fruit setting adversely affects the fruit colour development, quality and increases pest and disease attack.

would escort two compartments.

"Immediately after the lockdown is lifted, some changes are expected in the structure of the compartments. There will only be one entry/exit and the number of seats will be reduced. Each train will run to only 2/3rd of its capacity. There will be no

unreserved compartment," said an officer.

The government is also planning various measures pertaining to the running of trains. One is to divide the country into three zones - red, yellow and green - depending on the number of COVID-19 cases. In the red zone,

come down. All scheduled trains are to be cancelled and only special trains will run. There will be thermal screening at all entry points and passengers above 60 will not be allowed to travel," said a railway official.

There are also plans to make wearing of masks compulsory.

Bringing patrons back to theatres

SANGEETHA KANDAVEL
CHENNAI

Theatres and multiplexes across Tamil Nadu are mulling options to bring back movie lovers once shows resume. From physical distancing within theatre premises, cleaning the restrooms after every usage, to delivery of food and beverages to the seats, theatres are looking at how to operate their business during the initial few weeks after the lockdown.



Theatres are looking at how they can instil confidence in moviegoers.

PVR Cinemas has decided on maintaining physical distancing between seats. CEO Gautam Dutta said leaving one seat between a certain group would eat into 16-20% of capacity, but the brand's endeavour was to win back confidence of its consumers. Udeep B., managing direc-

tor of Mayaajaal Cinemas, said that his group would be selling tickets for alternate seats, like airlines.

The team at AGS Cinemas is looking at how to work out seating arrangements. Archana Kalpathi, CEO, AGS Cinemas, said, "We are putting together a sanitation plan and

trying to see how temperature checks can be done for our patrons in a short duration."

Nikilesh Surya, executive director of Rohini Silver Screens, is planning to enforce physical distancing, but is waiting to see how the situation will unfold in the coming weeks.

According to estimates, a one-day closure of all theatres in the State will lead to an average loss of ₹8 crore a day.

Senthil Kumar, co-founder of Tube Cinema Technologies, said that physical distancing and deep cleaning between seats would give people extra confidence.

Theatres across the State are working on the economics of installing hand-washing stations and disinfectant spraying booths.

Mangoes land in city, to be sold through mobile units

Horticulture Dept. buys them directly from farmers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Fresh loads of mangoes, apples and pomegranates arrived in Chennai on Friday, for sale through mobile units. The Tamil Nadu Horticulture Department has been directly buying fruits and vegetables from farmers for distribution to consumers during the ongoing COVID-19 lockdown.

"Fresh Alphonso mangoes have come from Krishnagiri, Dharmapuri, Tiruvallur and Kancheepuram. We procured apples from the northern States from Maharashtra," said agriculture production commissioner Gagandeep Singh Bedi.

He inspected the stock of vegetables and fruits, along with horticulture director N. Subbaiyan, at the horticulture godown in Madhavaram.

Cheap rates

Vegetables are being procured from farmers in Krishnagiri, Dharmapuri, Tiruvallur and Kancheepuram. "Since we are buying directly from the farmers, the rates are cheap and this will also benefit



Priced at ₹500, a bag of groceries will contain toor dal, gram flour and salt, among other items. •K. PICHUMANI

Grocery kits for ₹500

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Ten lakh bags of groceries, with 19 items, will be sold through fair price shops in the State.

Priced at ₹500 apiece, the bag will contain toor dal and urad dal (500 g each); gram flour (250 g);

salt (1 kg) and edible oil (250 g), apart from pepper and mustard (100 g each), among other items. The Triplicane Urban Cooperative Society has procured all commodities. Chennai has been allotted 57,000 bags.

the buyers. We are selling either in bulk or in packages with fixed prices," Mr. Bedi said.

In Chennai, vegetables and fruits are sold in 15 zones, through mobile

vehicles, and the department sells 200 tonnes a day. Besides, the Chennai Corporation and CMDA are buying directly from the wholesale market in Koyambedu.

Metrowater houses migrant workers at 32 camps in city

Groceries, medicine and sanitisers being provided

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

A total of 572 migrant workers, engaged in various water supply and sewerage projects, have remained in the city since the lockdown.

Chennai Metrowater has set up camps in 32 places across the city to house these workers from various States, including West Bengal, Jharkhand and Odisha. The workers are involved in projects funded by multilateral agencies. They are being provided groceries, medicines and sanitisers.

"Project engineers in-charge will check on their needs. Our dispensary doctors also visit them for regular check-ups. Works on to lay pipelines in the added areas have been suspended. Most migrant workers are engaged in such projects," said an official. The workers have been advised to practice physical distancing. The water agency has provided safety gear to nearly 3,500 officers and workers engaged in essential services. This includes safety suits and boots.



Metrowater's camps house workers from various States like West Bengal, Jharkhand and Odisha. •B. JOTHIRAMALINGAM

"Several of them continue to work round-the-clock to provide water supply and sewage disposal. We continue to take up emergency

works such as water pollution complaints and desilting of sewer manholes," said an official.

Safety gear

It has sought N-95 masks for field workers, particularly those involved in sewerage management.

"After the lockdown was announced, the number of trips by water tankers has come down by 900, every day, as more water is being supplied through pipelines. Now, about 5,000 tanker trips are being operated daily, said officials.

The N-95 masks will be given to workers with high-exposure risks.

After the lockdown was announced, the number of trips by water tankers has come down by 900, every day, as more water is being supplied through pipelines. Now, about 5,000 tanker trips are being operated daily, said officials.

NCC cadets to help police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The Kancheepuram police have roped in NCC cadets from colleges in the district for crowd management at public places over the coming weeks.

"A total of 42 NCC cadets from various colleges have come forward to help us manage crowds at ration shops, ATMs and markets in Kancheepuram district," said B. Shamoon Vari-SP, Kancheepuram district

GREATER CHENNAI CORPORATION

PUBLIC ADVISORY REGARDING SAFE DISPOSAL OF MASKS & GLOVES FOR PREVENTION OF COVID-19

1. Disposal of Mask, Gloves and other solid waste from Quarantined House
The Residents from the quarantined houses are requested to handover the used masks, gloves and other waste to the Sanitary Workers of Greater Chennai Corporation separately in a yellow bag on daily basis. It will be sent to the Bio Medical Waste Processing Facility Centers and also to the Incinerator maintained by the Greater Chennai Corporation. These yellow bags will be provided to quarantined homes by Greater Chennai Corporation. The used masks, gloves and other waste should be disinfected using ordinary bleach solution (5%) (or) Sodium Hypo Chlorite Solution (1%) and kept in yellow bags exclusively in a closed bin and yellow bags to be handover to the sanitary workers of Greater Chennai Corporation on daily basis.

2. Disposal of Mask, Gloves from Non Quarantined Houses
The Residents from the Non Quarantined Houses are requested to disinfect the used mask and gloves using ordinary bleach solution (5%) (or) Sodium Hypo Chlorite Solution (1%) wrap the same in a separate wrapper and keep in a closed bin before handing over to the Sanitary Workers of Greater Chennai Corporation during door to door collection on daily basis. It will be treated as Domestic hazardous waste and it will be incinerated safely by Greater Chennai Corporation.

All the Public are hereby requested to follow the disposal method as said above and help Greater Chennai Corporation to prevent the spreading of Corona Virus for the safety of the Community and Chennai City.

Commissioner
Greater Chennai Corporation

DIPR/480/Display/2020

SOUTHERN RAILWAY

ONLINE INTERVIEW FOR ENGAGEMENT OF CONTRACT MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS (CMP) AT RH/PERAMBUR, CHENNAI FOR MANAGEMENT OF COVID-19

Southern Railway has decided to engage 46 Medical professionals as detailed below for a period of maximum three months from the date of engagement to manage the COVID-19 cases at Railway Hospital, Perambur, Chennai.

| No. of Vacancies |
|------------------|
| 12 |
| 6 |
| 28 |

Notified as (1) in case of Railways, should not completed 53 is relaxable including of age as on (2) Retired doctors and (3) Officers of doctors and copy of their duty filled certificates as and time is (4) subjected the interview requirement. Time 11.00 hrs examination awarded. **ONLY REFER**

IN BRIEF

Two more test positive in Pudukcherry
 Two more persons who returned from Tablighi Jamat conference in New Delhi have tested positive on Friday making the total tally of active COVID-19 cases in the Union Territory to seven.

Mobile testing kiosk set up in Ranipet
 The district administration has introduced a mobile testing kiosk for collection of blood samples at the doorsteps of home-quarantined people on Friday, Collector S. Divyadharshini said. The vehicle was an effort to minimise the struggle in collecting samples from clusters of people quarantined at their homes.

NLICIL sets up disinfection tunnels
 The Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) NLICIL India Ltd (NLICIL) has rolled up preventive measures to ward off COVID-19 by installing disinfection tunnels in three places - North Gate, Thermal Power Station - II Expansion and Neyveli New Thermal Power Project (NNTPP).

MMN appoints office-bearers
 Makkal Needhi Maiam founder Kamal Haasan has appointed noted entrepreneur C.K. Kumaravel as the General Secretary for Propaganda and M. Muruganandham has been appointed as party's General Secretary (Organisation - West and South).

Namakkal introduces colour-coded card system

The district administration has started issuing colour-coded cards to residents to reduce vehicle movement.

To discourage the public from venturing out unnecessarily, the district administration from Thursday started issuing cards in three colours - green, blue and rose.

Collector K. Megraj said in a release that those with green cards could come out on Mondays and Thursdays, while Tuesdays and Fridays would be the days when those with blue cards could venture out and rose card holders would be able to come out to buy essentials on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Mr. Megraj said that those going on medical emergencies would be exempted and only those in the age group of 15 and 60 years must use the cards to venture out. The district administration has advised the public to carry the cards with them when they come out.

CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS OPEN TENDER
 No. COS/CRJ/PUB/e-Tender/19/0162 Date:08/04/2020. The following e-Tenders can be accessed under the link www.ireps.gov.in. Offers for such e-Tender can be submitted only electronically by accessing the link www.ireps.gov.in --login-->E-Tender Stores/Supply. Vendors may also contact the following officials to obtain clarification regarding particular tender or IREPS related information if any, Dy.CMM/HQ/CLW/Chittaranjan, 0341-2525594 or SMM/CON/HQ, 0341-2535631. Sl.No.; Tender No.; Brief Description of Item; Qty.; Earnest Money Deposit (Rupees); Tender Closing Date & Time (IST): [1]:70191265; Reservoir (consisting of 02 items) (1)B.S. Reservoir 240 Ltrs. (2) Main Reservoir 450 Ltrs. for WAG-9HC Loco. Specn. No. CLW/MS/3/110 ALT-3 & Other Drg. 1209-07-132-011, ALT-5:186 set. 226760; 20/04/2020 at 11:00 am. Office Address: Dy.CMM-HQ/CLW/Chittaranjan, 9163340711 or SMM/HQ, 9163340719. Principal Chief Materials Manager RDS-013 CLW/Chittaranjan Like us on www.facebook.com/clwtraways

'Tangedco field staff too should get free treatment, ex gratia'

Corporation says front line staff play a vital role in supplying power to affected areas



Despite the lockdown, field staff have to visit affected areas in case of power disruption and ensure restoration of supply.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI
 The Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (Tangedco) wants the State government to extend free treatment for COVID-19 and ex gratia benefits to its operations and maintenance staff.

The staff, including linemen, wiremen, supervisors and local engineers, are involved in the rectification of power disruptions in the State.

The State government on April 4 issued an order announcing an ex gratia of ₹ 2 lakh for frontline staff of various departments involved in the fight against COVID-19 and that the expenses incurred for the treatment would be fully borne by the government.

Front line staff of the Health and Family Welfare, police, sanitation and con-

servancy employees of urban and rural bodies and staff of Revenue and Disaster Management departments were covered under the order. But operations and maintenance staff of the Tangedco, who play a vital role in the maintenance of power supply, were left out, a Tangedco official said.

Despite the lockdown, field staff have to visit the affected areas in the 15 zones in the city in case of power disruption to restore them, a senior official said.

Govt. sanctions ₹4 crore corpus for fire services personnel

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI
 The State government has sanctioned over ₹4 crore to be released as feeding charges for the Tamil Nadu Fire and Rescue Services (TNFRS) personnel across the State.

C. Sylendra Babu, DGP, TNFRS, sought funds for feeding charges, as firemen have been working hard to contain the spread of the virus.

Over 5,587 personnel and 536 firefighting vehicles have been used to disinfect public places throughout the State, including government hospitals, Koyambedu bus stand and vegetable markets, railway stations, places of worship and other locations, where people gather. This is expected to go on till April 30 or till the need ceases.

Retaining the humanitarian approach in times of COVID-19

There are many questions that plague us everyday, as health care professionals. But in times of COVID-19 the very core of medical practice - its humanitarian approach is under threat. The questions now in front of health care professionals, for different reasons are: "To treat, or not to treat"



DR. V. SHANTA
 Chairperson, Cancer Institute

COVID-19

"Is it right, or is it wrong?" Further, "How long can we defer treatment?" This decision is neither simple nor easy, as treating doctors, we have to think of the patient and the family in the context of the pandemic, and what we do based on strong evidence.

For instance, early common cancers are curable. In such cases, it will be unethical to delay treatment. An advanced disease can be controlled, and if untreated, it might progress to the stage of palliative care. Again, palliative care cannot and should not be denied to patients.

And then, uncommon cancers with a doubtful outlook, advanced age, and with multiple co-morbidities form a category all by themselves. They have to be treated

based on individual decisions and are ideally deferred. The expenses involved, will not be either risk or cost beneficial.

Treating institutions
 As of now, only partial, selected cases are being treated. Should this continue?

NGOs, and voluntary charitable institutions providing free cancer care, of which Cancer Institute is one, are facing a major crisis.

Patients have a serious problem, with the lockdown, they are not able to

find transportation to reach the centre for treatment.

While with residential staff, there are no issues, because they live on campus. However, non-residential health care staff too face the same problem - lack of transport to reach the hospital. As for housekeeping staff, who are key to running a hospital well, the institution has to make transport arrangements until the condition improves. Some medical staff members too, who do not have their own personal vehicles, need assistance to reach the centre.

General criteria
 We need specific guidelines or criteria for providing personal protection equipment, masks, gown etc for professional and paraprofessional workers. For one, it will be helpful to reduce staff fear/panic and convince them that they are well protected with the gear.

This is for those who are not working with those who tested positive, are on routine hospital duty, including doctors, technicians and nurses who are working with patients who have not been tested.

Innovators urged to come up with products for immediate use

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

The current health crisis has spawned competitions, all looking for answers to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 infection among people as quickly as possible.

The National Innovation Foundation, that comes under the Department of Science and Technology, has announced an open-ended contest calling on citizens to give ideas that can be put to use immediately by the public.

The Challenge COVID-19 Competition is open to all.

The NIF would assist with mentoring or funds to make a prototype or develop the idea/product.

Foundation director Vipin Kumar said already hundreds of suggestions and ideas had been received in the last few days. The contest was announced on March 31. "We have shortlisted 10 of them and we are in touch with these people," he said. "The aim is to have a technology that can be converted into a workable product. There is no deadline and we are not giving awards. If the idea is good we will provide funding and

incubate it. We are looking at ideas and products that can be put into people's hands. An open source platform would be created and people could make the product at home. The NIF is not looking just at the current scenario but also taking it forward post-COVID-19 and post-lockdown," Mr. Kumar said.

The NIF contest revolves around sanitation; supply and distribution of essential items to the disabled and the elderly; and keeping the population gainfully engaged during lockdown, he said.

Contributions continue to come in for CM's Public Relief Fund

STAFF REPORTER CHENNAI

Kalpathi AGS Group has contributed ₹50 lakh to the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund.

The group, which includes AGS Cinema Private Limited that runs multiplexes, AGS Entertainment Private Limited and Kalpathi Investments, among others, had earlier contributed ₹10 lakh to the Film Employees Federation of South India (FEFSI).

Gemini Edibles - Fats India Pvt Ltd (GEF India), a company which is in the business of importing of Palmolein through Chennai and Karaiikal ports has contributed a sum of ₹25 lakh to the CM public relief fund. Chaudhary Anjana Samarth Foundation has made a contribution of ₹5 lakh, while Punam Jewellery has contributed ₹1 lakh each to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Relief Fund, PM Cares Fund and Rajasthan Chief Minister Public Relief Fund.

Sun TV Network Ltd and its Group Companies said it will donate a sum of Rs.10 crore to COVID-19 relief funds. The employees of Sun TV and other affiliated Group companies numbering more than 6,000 will also contribute one day's salary, it said.

Guidelines for security personnel assisting police in lockdown duty

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT PUDUCHERRY

A set of guidelines has been issued for security personnel assisting the police force to maintain order and social distancing in public places to check the spread of COVID-19.

The private security agencies are governed by The Private Security Agencies (Regulation) Act, 2005 as well as The Puducherry Private Security Agencies (Regulation) Rules, 2009.

A circular issued by Balaji Srivastava, Director General of Police, noted that owing to manpower constraints of the police force, many points could not be covered. Hence, it



A man being screened for COVID-19 symptoms. * T. SINGARAVELU

has been decided to utilise the services of private security guards as 'force multipliers' to assist the police. The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), formulated in this regard, spells out the objective of these guards as assisting and supporting the police

personnel in enforcing the orders of the government during the pandemic and beyond when they would remain cooped in policing and crime prevention.

The security guards shall not be posted alone, but along with a police official and twinned with the beat staff of local police stations.

When posted, it is the duty of the uniformed guards to cover a stretch of 100m and inform the police of any illegal activity or anything amiss. Those overseeing markets, banks, ATMs or other places where people gather, should ensure social distancing markings and compliance.

Shops in containment zones in Chengalpattu to stay shut from today

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

Shops operating in containment zones in Chengalpattu will be closed from Saturday. The district administration has proposed to close the veget-

able and fruit shops in the areas identified to prevent COVID patients to prevent further spread.

In a press release issued by Chengalpattu Collector John Louis said steps have been taken to distribute ve-

getables and fruits along with providing medicines and other food commodities at the doorsteps of patients every three days. However automated teller machines (ATMs) would be allowed to function.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| DEATH | DEATH | DEATH ANNIVERSARIES |
|  | Mr. V. Sivasubramanian, 84 yrs., retired The Union Co.(Motors) P Ltd group and Advisor, Sundari Silks passed away on 10th April, 2020 at his residence. Phone: 24915444. | 6th Death Anniversary  Natarajan DOB: 11.04.2014 Hearts and minds always grieving Natarajan & Family |
| BIRTHDAY | | |

It is an autonomous body of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India. Set up in February 2000 at Ahmedabad, Gujarat to provide institutional support for scouting, spawning, sustaining and scaling up the grassroots innovations across the country. It is India's national initiative to strengthen the grassroots technological innovations and outstanding traditional knowledge. Its mission is to help India become a creative and knowledge-based society by expanding policy and institutional space for grassroots technological innovators.

Related key facts:

The INSPIRE Award – MANAK (Million Minds Augmenting National Aspiration and Knowledge) is being revamped and executed by Department of Science & Technology and National Innovation Foundation-India to align it with the action plan for "Start-up India" initiative.

Micro Venture Innovation Fund (MVIF) at NIF, with support from Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), has provided risk capital to 230 innovation based enterprise projects, some of which are at different stages of incubation.

Being organised since 2008, IGNITE is an annual competition for student's ideas and innovations conducted by NIF in partnership with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).

NIF has set up a Technology Business Incubator (NIF) – NIF Incubation and Entrepreneurship Council (NIFentreC).

Southern States focus on containment

With 49 new cases, A.P., Telangana, Kerala and Karnataka continue tracing and tracking of contacts

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/
HYDERABAD/VIJAYAWADA/
BENGALURU

Seven more cases of COVID-19 were reported in Kerala on Friday, taking the State total to 364. Three were from Kasaragod, and two cases each were from Kannur and Malappuram.

The Malappuram cases are linked to the Nizamuddin meet, while the rest are contacts of imported cases. On Friday, 27 persons under treatment tested negative.

So far, 124 patients have tested negative and been discharged. These include eight foreign nationals touring Kerala. They were admitted to Ernakulam and Thiruvananthapuram Medical College hospitals. There are 238 people under treatment.

The number under surveillance dropped to 1,29,751. Of these, 730 were in isolation wards in hospitals, and the rest in home quarantine.

16 more Telangana cases
The number of people test-

On guard

Police personnel have a tough time making people adhere to rules to prevent the spread of virus during the lockdown



Patient wait: People standing in a long queue to collect food at Journalist Colony in Bengaluru on Friday.

■ V. SREENIVASA MURTHY

| State | Total number of cases | Active cases | Number of those cured | Deaths |
|----------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------|
| Andhra Pradesh | 381 | 365 | 10 | 6 |
| Karnataka | 207 | 167 | 34 | 6 |
| Kerala | 364 | 238 | 124 | 2 |
| Tamil Nadu | 911 | 858 | 44 | 9 |
| Telangana | 487 | 430 | 45 | 12 |

ing positive for coronavirus in Telangana was less than 20 for the second consecutive day on Friday, giving the State government a breather.

discharged and the death toll stood unchanged at 12.

Nizamabad, with 49 cases including two reported on Friday, stood next to Hyderabad (59) followed by Rangareddy (27), Rangal Urban (23) and Medchal (19). The case load was up in Nirmala district, with 15 and Jogulamba Gadwal district (19) while 10 cases each were reported from Mahabubnagar and Kamareddy districts.

Public Health and Family Welfare Director, G. Srinivas Rao, said there was no evidence of community transmission in the State and the government had identified 101 hotspots. Containment activity was taken up in all districts with cases.

Efforts to trace and track primary and secondary contacts of Delhi returnees continued on Friday.

16 more in A.P.

The addition of 16 new COVID-19 positive cases raised Andhra Pradesh's total to 381. Fresh cases emerged after day-long testing on Fri-

day. Guntur reported seven cases, East Godavari five and Kurnool and Prakasam districts, two each.

Ten individuals were discharged after recovery, and six succumbed to the virus.

COVID-19

Also, 365 were under treatment. In all, 133 clusters were identified as COVID-19 red zones in 13 districts. The highest number of cluster red zones are in Nellore district (30).

Tally crosses 200

With 10 new cases detected on Friday, Karnataka's case number touched 207. Five cases were from Mysuru. On the brighter side, the first person who tested positive, from a pharma company in Mysuru was discharged on Friday.

Of the other five cases, two are from the greater Bengaluru area, two from Bengaluru Rural, and one from Kalaburgi.

Tougher norms likely for public transportation

Protocol chalked out for post-lockdown situation in Kerala

S. ANIL RADHAKRISHNAN
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Restricting the number of persons travelling in cars, buses and on bikes, increasing the working hours, a five-day week, and the odd-even system to restrict vehicles have been spelled out in a protocol chalked out for public transportation post-lockdown in Kerala.

The protocol also calls for developing an app/software to track the movement of inter-State rail and bus commuters.

Motorcycle travel will be limited to one, private cars for three, and one per seat in other vehicles. Family members will be allowed in cars, and motorcyclists will have to use full-face helmet with visor. No standing travel will be allowed on public transport, which will be applicable to school and college buses too. Commuters will have to enter the bus through the rear door and

Easing restrictions

- Motorcycle travel will be limited to one
- Private car for three and one per seat in other vehicles
- Motorcyclists will have to use full-face helmet with visor
- Commuters will not be allowed to stand and travel in public transport modes
- Those having cold, fever and other diseases will not be allowed to travel in the public transport modes
- All commuters will have to enter the bus through the rear door and exit via the front door

leave from the front door. Those having cold, fever, and symptoms of other diseases will not be allowed to travel on public transport per the protocol.

There will be facilities to wash hands at bus stops. Kiosks for masks and to provide safety tips to travellers will also be set up. Social distancing will have to be ensured in public places and identity card/passes issued by the police will be necessary for those travelling.

Now, masks mandatory while stepping outside

Telangana to execute 'MaskOn' policy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

The Telangana government has ordered propagation and implementation of a 'MaskOn' policy at all levels that envisages that people wear masks while stepping outside and while stationed in closed spaces and interacting with others. The policy is an update to an earlier advisory by the government that masks be used "only for the sick".

To contain virus

The update was based on studies in Japan that showed that MaskOn had slowed the spread of coronavirus con-

siderably, a memo issued by Special Chief Secretary, Health, A. Santhi Kumari, said.

The revision of advice was a sequel to the learning from the medical and scientific community that a large number of infected people did not show any symptoms but were still carriers of the infection and therefore could infect others.

MaskOn will protect people from inhaling infected droplets released while sneezing, coughing and talking. Therefore, homemade reusable masks were recommended for use as the first line of protection.

Prayer time



Good Friday was observed in churches all over the country. Family names of the faithful were pasted on empty chairs to signify their presence at a church in Kochi, and right, the Archbishop of Hyderabad distributing food and masks to the needy on Friday.



IN BRIEF



'A vicious design to remove incumbent SEC'

With the A.P. government reportedly issuing an ordinance on Friday reducing the tenure of the State Election Commissioner, TDP president N. Chandrababu Naidu wrote a letter to Governor Biswa Bhushan Harichandan, urging him to intervene to "uphold the rule of law". Mr. Naidu said the government had amended Section 200 of the A.P. PR Act with a "vicious design to remove the present SEC".

Tourism sector starts at 70% job loss

The tourism and hospitality sectors are starting at a potential job loss of around 38 million, which is around 70% of the workforce, leading to accounting and audit firm KPMG says. The tourism and aviation sectors were the first industry to take a hit. Many believe this crisis is a greater threat than the earlier ones, such as 2011 and the financial meltdown of 2008-09. KPMG pointed out in a report "Potential impact of COVID-19 on the Indian economy."

Maldivian nationals to be flown back today

The Maldivian nationals stranded in Kerala for the last three weeks will be evacuated on Saturday on two flights to the island nation. Maldivian, the country's national airline, will operate the first flight Q2 6702 at 10.20 a.m. from the Thiruvananthapuram international airport. The Dash 8-300 aircraft can accommodate 50 passengers. The second flight Q2 6703 from here to Male is scheduled for departure at 12.45 p.m.

Social media posts land 6 in trouble in Karnataka

They had put out hate messages

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MANGALURU/MANDEYA

The Dakshina Kannada police has registered five cases against six persons for their alleged social media hate posts relating to the Muslim community.

While three cases by the Bantwal Town police have been registered against Santosh Gowda of Nandavara, a case has been registered by the Dharmastala police against Muralidhar and three others of Ujire. The four cases were registered on Monday. A case was registered by the Bellare police on April 4 against Kusumadhara.

In a statement, Dakshina Kannada Superintendent of Police B.M. Laxmi Prasad said stringent action would be taken against those who try to create communal

hatred. In another development, two persons at Ankanahalli in Ramanagara district have been booked for asking villagers to prevent the entry of Muslims, blaming the community members for the spread of COVID-19.

It is said that a member of Kailancha Gram Panchayat had hired an elderly man to alert the villagers against allowing Muslims to enter the village.

This was videographed by a person and the clip was shared on social media.

Meanwhile, K.R. Pet tahsildar M. Shivamurthy has drawn the ire of social activists for stating that three people who were roaming around with quarantine seals on their hands were Muslims, while they did not belong to the community.

'Concern over my son's safety made me ride 1,400 kilometres'

Teacher goes on a solo rescue mission on a scooter

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD

At first thought it sounds like mission impossible. But the 1,400 km distance did not deter dotting mother Rajia Begum from travelling on her scooter to bring back her younger son Nizamuddin, stranded in Rahamatnagar in Nellore, following the lockdown.

He had gone to Nellore on March 12 to drop his friend from a NEET coaching institute in Hyderabad and got stuck there.

Fearing she would be dissuaded from her mission if she revealed her idea, Rajia Begum set out with a pack of rotis and a 5 litre petrol can on the morning of April 6 and reached Nellore the following day.

She travelled all alone



Rajia Begum travelled from Bodhan to Nellore on her motorcycle to fetch her son.

and from the Mandal Parishad Primary School in Salamapad for several years making the teacher a seasoned rider. Armed with a letter from ACP Jaipal Reddy and a Google map, she hit the highway. "I had to undergo problems en route as food was not available. I took only fruits and relaxed for a few minutes intermittently. I managed to reach Nellore early on April 7. On the return, I dared to travel at night as my son was with me. So, we started our journey at 4 p.m. and reached Bodhan on Wednesday around 3 p.m."

"My story has gone viral on social media after one of my colleagues posted it on WhatsApp. On the way back home, mediapersons at Kamareddy hosted lunch for us," she said.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT CITIES OVER 35 YEARS



Forecast for Saturday: Thunderstorm with lightning and gust likely at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, West Bengal, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Bihar, Odisha and Maharashtra.

| CITY | RAIN | MAX | MIN | CITY | RAIN | MAX | MIN |
|-------------|------|------|------|--------------------|------|------|------|
| Agartala | 0.8 | 37.2 | 23.2 | Kozhikode | 1.0 | 36.6 | 24.9 |
| Almedabad | 0.0 | 40.6 | 24.4 | Kurnool | 0.0 | 40.1 | 23.4 |
| Aizawl | 0.0 | 32.0 | 15.1 | Lucknow | 0.0 | 36.0 | 18.3 |
| Allahabad | 0.0 | 40.6 | 19.2 | Madurai | 2.9 | 37.8 | 22.2 |
| Bengaluru | 33.2 | 33.4 | 18.6 | Mangaluru | 0.0 | 35.6 | 25.2 |
| Bhopal | 0.0 | 32.2 | 22.1 | Mumbai | 0.0 | 33.8 | 24.0 |
| Bhubaneswar | 0.0 | 36.8 | 24.6 | Mysuru | 0.0 | 37.3 | 21.6 |
| Chandigarh | 0.0 | 34.0 | 16.8 | New Delhi | 0.0 | 36.2 | 17.0 |
| Chennai | 9.2 | 33.5 | 24.4 | Patna | 0.0 | 38.7 | 19.9 |
| Coimbatore | 0.0 | 33.8 | 21.2 | Port Blair | 0.0 | 32.1 | 24.7 |
| Delhi | 0.0 | 32.6 | 15.1 | Puducherry | 0.0 | 34.5 | 25.4 |
| Dispur | 0.0 | 25.6 | 10.3 | Pune | 0.0 | 38.1 | 18.8 |
| Goa | 0.0 | 34.4 | 24.3 | Raipur | 0.0 | 36.8 | 21.2 |
| Gurgaon | 0.0 | 33.6 | 16.4 | Ranchi | 0.0 | 35.7 | 21.0 |
| Guwahati | 0.0 | 36.0 | 22.0 | Shillong | 0.0 | 23.2 | 18.5 |
| Hyderabad | 18.0 | 35.2 | 21.5 | Shimla | 0.0 | 21.6 | 11.2 |
| Imphal | 0.0 | 30.8 | 16.3 | Srinagar | 0.0 | 20.5 | 6.8 |
| Jaipur | 0.0 | 38.0 | 22.0 | Thiruvananthapuram | 0.0 | 34.2 | 25.6 |
| Kochi | 0.0 | 33.2 | 26.0 | Tiruchi | 0.0 | 45.0 | 36.0 |
| Kolkata | 0.0 | 48.2 | 21.2 | Vijayawada | 0.0 | 33.0 | 22.0 |
| Lucknow | 0.0 | 36.5 | 26.2 | Visakhapatnam | 0.0 | 32.0 | 25.6 |

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

| CITIES | SO ₂ | NO ₂ | PM _{2.5} | PM ₁₀ | CODE | Yesterday |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|------|--|
| Ahmedabad | 43 | 32 | 17 | 54 | 80 | Good |
| Bengaluru | 07 | 38 | 90 | 90 | 100 | In observation made at 7:00 p.m. |
| Chennai | 07 | 26 | 78 | 78 | 100 | recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 106 indicating a moderate level of pollution. In contrast, Ramanagara, Karnataka, recorded a healthy AQI score of 21. |
| Delhi | 26 | 34 | 19 | 200 | 136 | |
| Hyderabad | 05 | 90 | 46 | 27 | 34 | |
| Kolkata | 10 | 13 | 18 | 37 | 41 | |
| Lucknow | 04 | 24 | 59 | 154 | 100 | |
| Mumbai | 04 | 09 | 07 | 53 | 95 | |
| Pune | 40 | 14 | 50 | 48 | 100 | |
| Visakhapatnam | 07 | 45 | 06 | 39 | 67 | |

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.
NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.
PM_{2.5} & PM₁₀: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.

Kerala girl sketches Spanish street, wins hearts



Play on: The pencil sketch of a Spanish street during the COVID-19 epidemic drawn by Shehana Fathima.

Work depicted an 'eerie' locality during the pandemic

M.P. PRAVEEN
KOCHI

For Shehana Fathima, a 20-year-old engineering student from Thrikkakara, the evening of March 24 will always be memorable.

Just an hour before the Prime Minister announced a 21-day nationwide lockdown, the budding artist posted on Instagram a pencil sketch that portrayed two artists serenading an eerily empty Spanish street from their balconies even as quarantined neighbours emerged on their balconies to enjoy the music.

The video of noted Spanish pianist Alberto Gestoso and saxophone player Alex Lebron Torrent performing

Canadian singer Celine Dion's 'My Heart Will Go On' in the middle of March had gone viral.

Musicians take notice

The youngster was on cloud nine when hardly a couple of hours later she posted the image, both the musicians praised her work, with Mr. Torrent even promising to repost it from his Instagram account.

Later, the partner of one of the artists also personally messaged her.

"The video was going around for a while, and that inspired me. It took me a day to complete the picture. Actually, I don't know how to draw buildings, and I simply

replicated the scene from the video," said Ms. Shehana, a self-taught painter who is still basking in the glory of completely unexpected adulations.

Hoping to go further in the world of arts, she is now using the lockdown period to master digital drawing tools.

Other mediums

Having started with painting two years ago, the youngster has since then moved on to other mediums and a wider canvas.

"I plan to conduct an exhibition and even a workshop once I have enough collection of works," Shehana Fathima said.



Lives and livelihoods

Centre must spend more, forego tax revenues to protect livelihoods during lockdown

The government is in the process of applying its mind on whether it should extend or lift in phases the 21-day lockdown that ends next week. The choice for Prime Minister Narendra Modi now, as when he decided to impose the lockdown on March 24, is the same – between saving lives and ensuring livelihoods. He rightly privileged the former over the latter then. But as India nears the end of the lockdown period, the serious damage to the economy and livelihoods is beginning to make itself apparent. There is tremendous pressure from industry bodies to opt for a nuanced policy that will help economic activity to restart as they fear a collapse if activity is stopped for another fortnight. Lives could be lost to hunger and livelihoods sacrificed in the lockdown. One way to sidestep this existential dilemma is by bringing on a second round of an economic relief package that goes well beyond the first both in terms of the financial commitment and the spread. Out-of-the-box ideas for delivering support and also for raising the required funds might be required. For starters, it is clear that the government should consign fiscal conservatism to the cupboard for now and go all out to spend and support the economy. Economists are unanimous that there is little option now but to print money and spend. That is exactly what the developed countries are doing.

The ₹1.7-lakh crore package announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on March 26 was a good start but barely accounted for 1% of GDP. India should spend at least 5% of GDP for now – about ₹10-lakh crore. The cash transfers to the poor should be hiked to at least ₹3,000 a month for the next three months. This should be in addition to free rations and cooking gas, as was announced earlier. In the harvest season, farmers need logistical support for moving their produce to markets. Lenders, including NBFCs, should be granted freedom to reschedule their loan accounts so that borrowers are not under pressure to repay for fear of turning delinquent. A credit guarantee fund that will support non-delinquent borrowers for the next six months will be a good option. Such a fund can be financed through a domestic bond offering. The bankruptcy code should be suspended for the next six months, at least for MSMEs. And why not a GST holiday for the next three months? The loss of revenue will be ₹3-lakh crore at worst, but in reality will be much lower than that because economic activity is at a standstill now. Such a move will ease cash flows for business and also obviate the need for statutory compliances at a time when the focus will have to be on getting businesses back on track. The crisis now is without precedent and the solutions cannot be conservative. Generous support from the government, and quickly delivered, is the need of the hour.

Stage fright

Limiting transmission in hotspots depends on a wider tracing and testing strategy

Even after the Health Ministry on March 28 acknowledged on its website that there was “limited community transmission”, India’s national taskforce for COVID-19 continues to deny it. Now, a paper in the *Indian Journal of Medical Research*, by ICMR and Health Ministry researchers, provides evidence of community transmission in 36 districts in 15 States. The study is based on sentinel surveillance undertaken by the task force among severe acute respiratory infections (SARI) patients who have been hospitalised in public sector institutions to identify the spread and the extent of transmission of COVID-19 disease in the community. If there were 1.9% (two of 106) SARI cases positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus by the end of March third week, the number increased to 104 by April 2. Of the 102 coronavirus positive SARI cases tested between March 22 and April 2, 40 (39%) had no travel history or contact with a positive case; data on exposure were not available for 59 (58%) cases. If more than 1% of SARI patients tested positive for the virus in 15 States, at 21 (3.8%), Maharashtra had the most number of coronavirus positive SARI cases in eight districts followed by Delhi (4 cases; 5.1%), Gujarat (13 cases; 1.6%), and West Bengal (9 cases; 3.5%). Kerala had just one SARI patient testing positive. The authors point out that antibody-based testing carried out in those testing negative for molecular test could have helped identify more positive cases.

With community transmission, or the third stage, now being confirmed in 36 districts, an expansion and change in testing strategy has become imperative in the high focus areas for the lockdown to be more meaningful. Though the taskforce has not openly declared community transmission, it is reassuring to note that the ICMR has already initiated changes in the testing strategy in response to the change in the pattern of community spread. On April 9, the ICMR revised the testing strategy for hotspots/clusters and large migration gatherings/evacuee centres. While the criteria for testing across India remain the same, the testing norms for the high focus areas will now include people with influenza-like illness (ILI) with certain symptoms. Antibody testing should be carried out whenever molecular tests on these patients turn out negative. It is important to include antibody testing along with molecular testing when necessary in the high focus areas. Together with containment measures, this approach will help in snapping the transmission chain. Syndromic surveillance of all SARI and ILI patients along with quick and effective tracing, quarantining and testing of their contacts should be the way forward now. How well India responds now will determine whether the spread is contained quickly or leads to more cases and deaths.

Against Trump, and the Democratic machine

Democrat voters did not want to risk voting for Bernie Sanders, but Joe Biden is a flawed candidate



GARY YOUNGE

At 11.30 on Monday morning, there was a queue of cars, two vehicles deep and several miles long, for the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank in Duquesne, Pennsylvania, waiting for the two boxes of food offered when it opens at noon. Every week the lines get longer. Two days later, Bernie Sanders, the left-wing challenger for the Democratic presidential nomination, withdrew from the race and vowed to back the presumptive nominee, former Vice-President Joe Biden.

America on the edge

The coronavirus has made the case for universal health care, a welfare state and tackling inequalities in a manner that Mr. Sanders was unable to. Even before the pandemic struck, a significant portion of the country was on the brink: four in ten American adults could not withstand an unexpected \$400 expense. Now they have been pushed over the edge.

The trouble, for Mr. Sanders, is the lesson came too late and too few people believed that he was either capable of defeating President Donald Trump or getting his agenda through Congress or both. Put bluntly, in a moment when progressives believe American democracy is in peril at the hands of an egomaniacal right-wing demagogue, too many liberals thought it was too great a risk to stand a septuagenarian Jewish socialist from Vermont who had a heart attack six months earlier.

That concern was not entirely justified. Throughout February, Mr. Sanders led Mr. Trump in every poll by between 2% and 8%. The early States he performed well in – Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada – were all the kind of swing States Democrats need to win in November.

But the more he won among Democrats and threatened to break the mould the more those who had been sceptical in that mould, insisted he would lose against Mr. Trump. The confidence in his unelectability sat somewhere between a script and an anticipation, recited dutifully and earnestly by the media and political establishments, most of whom had insisted that Mr. Trump could never win the presidency.

If he won the nomination not only would he be running against Mr. Trump but the Democratic machine. After he won Nevada and it looked like no clear contender had yet emerged, Matt Bennett, of the moderate group, Third Way, told *Politico*: “It’s this incredible sense that we’re hurtling to the abyss. I also think we could lose the House. And if we do, there would be absolutely no way to stop [Trump]. Today is the most depressed I’ve ever been in politics.”

Cornerstone constituency

There was no justification for this bed-wetting. But concerns about his electability were not entirely unjustified either. Despite considerable and concerted efforts, he failed to convince African Americans that his candidacy was viable. That is no small thing. African Americans are the cornerstone of the Democratic coalition: the party has only won the presidency with the white vote alone once – in 1964 – since the Second World War.



It was not his programme they did not like. African Americans were more likely to support universal health care and free college tuition than any other ethnic groups. It was either him or his capacity to achieve those goals, they were unconvinced. “I think African Americans, particularly older ones, have learned not to expect too much from Democratic politicians,” explains Keeanga-Yamba Lita Taylor, a Princeton professor of African American studies. “Because that’s what they usually get.”

His other key vulnerability was younger voters, who did back him – including, it should be noted, younger African Americans – but did not turn up in sufficient numbers to make a difference. Mr. Sanders had predicated his potential on his ability to change the electorate by galvanising non-voters. If they were not going to show up then a crucial part of his coalition would be missing.

In this sense, Mr. Sanders’ precarity was, at its root, similar to that of his counterpart in the United Kingdom, the former left-wing leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn. Their ascent was disorganised. They did not emerge from a deeper movement seeking electoral representation that could sustain them, but were, instead, the product of a broad, amorphous, alienated sentiment that sought electoral remedy through them

but had no infrastructure to make that happen. Given his agenda, Mr. Sanders’ appeal was considerable: but it did not take sufficient root beyond his base.

His prospects went south when the voting went South. The first state in the former Confederacy to vote, South Carolina, was the first in which the African American vote was decisive. Mr. Biden won handily. Democratic grandees would have settled for anyone but Mr. Sanders. The trouble is, until South Carolina, they did not have anyone.

As Mr. Biden rose, other centrist candidates – some of whom had been outperforming him – pulled out and endorsed him. After Super Tuesday, when, apart from the big prize of California, Mr. Sanders won little else, his candidacy was effectively over.

But the political questions it raised are more pertinent than ever. That line in Duquesne, which is more than five times bigger than it was at the start of the pandemic, illustrates the transformative nature of this crisis. The day after Mr. Sanders withdrew, unemployment rose by 6.6 million bringing the number who have lost their jobs in the last three weeks to 16 million. Recovering from the global economic depression, we are about to experience the demands of a thoroughgoing structural alternative to neo-liberalism. That is what Mr. Sanders was suggesting. That is why the establishment was so desperate for him to lose.

On Biden

Clearly, that alternative is by no means the only scenario; Mr. Trump could win and things can get even worse.

But a Biden candidacy is by no means a risk-free proposition. Far from it. There is a reason why South Carolina was the first State

he has won in the three times he has run for the presidency in 32 years (1988, 2008, 2020). At the best of times he is a terrible candidate. On the stump he rambles hopelessly, losing himself midsentence, wandering into rhetorical cul-de-sacs and is overly tactile with women. He told a crowd in Houston he was looking forward to Super Thursday and once confused his wife and his sister, who were both on the stage with him.

And these are not the best of times. The trouble is not just his performance but his politics. He was an enthusiastic backer of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the Iraq war, deregulation and social security freezes, which does not leave him with much to take on Mr. Trump with.

And so it is that after three-and-a-half years that have seen the largest demonstrations in U.S. history, including two women’s marches and a youth-led protest against gun control, we end up with a 77-year-old man who is to the right of Hillary Clinton.

Mr. Biden won the nomination by not being Sanders; but not being Trump may not be enough to seal the deal in November. A poll two weeks ago showed he attracted the lowest recorded amount of “strong enthusiasm” among his own supporters for any Democratic presidential hopeful in the 20 years of polling. Mr. Trump’s base remains fired up.

Coronavirus has made a volatile electorate and a fragile political structure even more unpredictable. Anything could happen. Both Mr. Biden and Mr. Sanders represented a risk, but Mr. Sanders was a risk worth taking; Mr. Biden is the risk we are now stuck with.

Gary Younge is a professor of sociology at Manchester University and the senior U.S. correspondent for *The Guardian*.

Team India and winning the pandemic battle

The ability to quell the epidemic is linked to political will and professional skill shaping a multi-sectoral response



K. SRINATH REDDY

When will we move COVID-19 from a tense present to past tense? That question hangs perplexingly and lies posed before an embattled world and an anxious India. As we look to the possible end of the 21-day national lockdown, what next? Is there an early timeline for return to normalcy or will we have to wait for years to regain the vigour and the vitality of life as before in a reconnected world?

Self-reliance is the way

India has to chart its own strategy, whether it is in planning a staged release from the lockdown or in developing domestic capacity for medical equipment. There will be a need for scientific and economic cooperation with the rest of the world, but self-reliance is the rudder that must steer our ship as we sail through these rough seas. Globalisation lies shredded as we read of French and German officials protesting at the Americans seizing shipments of masks that they had ordered from China, in what is being called “guerres des masques” (war of the masks).

We have charting our course ahead, we have to answer several questions. Did the lockdown benefit us

and will we gain further by extending it fully or partially? Will we be in a position to gear up the capacity of our health system for effective public health and health-care responses across the country within the next few weeks if there is a surge in cases? How can we triage our response strategies to best use our limited resources? Are there favourable factors which suggest that India will have a less extensive spread or a milder manifestation of illness? What kind of partnerships need to be mobilised in the country to develop and deliver an effective response?

Moving forward

The impact of a three-week lockdown on reducing infectivity cannot be gauged well till the third week because the virus has an incubation period that can extend up to 14 days, though the vast majority of cases clinically emerge by 11 days. Whether there are already infected cases that will spread outdoors after the lockdown will be gauged by clinical criteria (syndromic surveillance) and testing (using viral or antibody tests as indicated). House-to-house surveillance being implemented in Andhra Pradesh, even during the lockdown, involves accredited village and block level volunteers partnering front line health workers to identify symptomatic persons for later visits by medical teams. The involvement of designated volunteers and community-based organisations can greatly enhance case detection, isolation,



counseling, severity-based care and social support. Potentially favourable factors for India are the younger age profile and a higher rural proportion of our population compared to China, Europe, the United States or other highly affected countries whose populations are older, urban and highly mobile. However, this enjoins us to energetically protect the elderly and rural segments of our population. Restricting urban to rural movement to essential goods and essential needs, for at least six weeks after the lockdown ends, will help. The health, nutrition and financial security of the poor must be ensured. Elderly persons too should observe social distancing and limit visits outside home for this period. Essential economic activity can be resumed in stages.

We would be entering June by this time. By then, we should have a better picture of the spread and severity of the epidemic in different parts of the country. That would need a greater level of testing to detect both asymptomatic and symptomatic persons who have been infected, through random population sampling in different parts of the country. We

should quickly gear up our testing capacity to meet this mapping mandate. Hotspots should be identified, based on numbers of self-referred symptomatic cases, persons identified on home visits and population survey results. These should be ring fenced, with intense search for contacts and active spreaders, with further localised lockdown as needed.

The height of summer in June may also give us some respite, if not full relief. There is some evidence that this virus too, like other coronaviruses, is likely to wane in hot weather. Other suggestions, of protection from malaria endemicity and past BCG vaccination, are speculative and based on correlation studies which do not qualify for inference of causation. Crowded living conditions and propensity to have myriad mass gatherings, for political, religious or social reasons, can be our undoing if we do not enforce discipline.

Even if some factors favour us, our ability to quell the epidemic will depend on how well political will and professional skill can shape a coherent, countrywide multi-sectoral response. Think of it as a game of cricket. Even if the pitch conditions favour us, we still have to play well if we. If COVID-19 is the batsman scoring freely, the health system is the bowler trying to tie him down and get him out. Full support is needed from the other sections of the government who form the close-in field and the citizens who are guarding the out-field. Everyone has to be

on their toes, avoiding a poor health system response (loose balls), supply chain delays (dropped catches) and social distancing violations (misfields). No huddles please!

Focus on health services

We also need to make sure that our health-care system provides timely and competent care to all who need. Primary health-care facilities, district hospitals, public and private tertiary care institutions have to gear up with equipment and augment human resources drawn both from trainees and retirees. Considering the higher risk to older health-care providers, the first line of care should be formed by younger staff members who will have milder effects even if infected. The older staff members can provide supervisory support. This will prevent attrition of the health workforce due to exhaustion or illness. Temporary hospitals for treatment and isolation facilities for persons on quarantine may need to be set up at short notice. Industry must produce essential medical equipment and drugs to meet our needs and, if capacity permits, assist other countries.

This has to be our game plan, with flexibility to change the field settings and bowling options as we reassess the situation periodically. Let us get going, to win this match as Team India.

Dr. K. Srinath Reddy is President, Public Health Foundation of India. The views expressed are personal.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Managing the pandemic

With much of the world in the grip of the pandemic, there is growing apprehension about the extent of devastation the virus will leave behind (“World” page, “Half a billion people face poverty due to virus,” April 10). What the globe is experiencing today is an extraordinary situation where even most of the developed world is reeling under the viral onslaught. Their sheer helplessness in not having anything ready off the shelf to deal with the virus medically has only aggravated their desperation. The impact of the ongoing disruptions to their economies can never be assessed until normalcy returns, but it would be on an unprecedented scale.

When they face so much disruption, it would be naive to expect them to reach out to the developing countries to the level expected of them.

KAMAL LADHIA, Bengaluru

The Indian government will have to act fast with relief measures to bring about some semblance of sanity in various critical areas such as health, infrastructure and employment. Countries hitherto adopting a give-and-take policy could be forced to adopt protectionism in a more strident manner. Our exports may get impacted. We may have to pay a higher price for import of raw materials not indigenously manufactured. Our dependence on China for raw materials required in the

pharmaceutical and electrical fields could cost us dear. The return of expatriates due to job losses is going to hit us hard, when we are struggling with an employment crisis. The idea of globalisation in the present environment may look far fetched when the globe is under a recessionary trend. Instead of waiting for COVID-19 to abate, the government should set up a high-level task force straightaway – made up of financial experts and representatives from various industries – to handle the economy. “Make in India”, now in slumber, needs to be given a new lease of life (OpEd page, “Parley” – Will COVID-19 affect the course of globalisation?”, April 10).

V. SUBRAMANIAN, Chennai

There appear to be differences of opinion among State governments and the Centre on many issues related to the COVID-19 containment strategy such as the lockdown period and ensuring social welfare. The time has come to act in tandem. Having different sets of lockdowns will only result in confusion and increase the risk of the virus spreading. There needs to be a clear message on this (Page 1, “Odisha becomes first State to extend lockdown till April 30”, April 10). There are also attempts by private and public organisations to make cheaper ventilators. The government needs to bring all such organisations under one umbrella and provide its support. There also appears to be

some resistance to self-declaration in some parts of India. Insurance companies may be asked to roll out a COVID insurance model. Another step would be to reward those who call the health authorities on their own with some incentive. The award can also be given to informers such as neighbours and shopkeepers. The identity of patient and informer must be kept secret. Awareness of COVID-19 is important – the ground reality can shock a person – so a mass campaign on every possible platform is a must. The message of self-isolation, quarantine, hygiene should be conveyed in an easy to understand way and in a number of local languages.

RISHIN PAL, New Delhi

It is sad that the iconic dabbawalas of Mumbai are staring at starvation due to the 21-day nationwide lockdown (Page 1, “Lockdown robs Mumbai’s dabbawalas of lunch”, April 10). The 5,000-odd dabbawalas have been a symbol of Mumbai’s resilience to any crisis, man-made or natural, and it would certainly have been a difficult decision to make as they have never stopped their service. It is all the more painful that these committed men have now been left to struggle. Perhaps their services can be used in a better way as they form a vital link in the great city.

R. SIVAKUMAR, Chennai

To read more letters online, scan the QR code



The story of India's largest COVID-19 cluster

Despite government orders prohibiting large gatherings, more than 4,500 people assembled at the Tablighi Jamaat Markaz in mid-March. **Saurabh Trivedi** recounts the events of the week when costly mistakes were made



On March 30, the evacuation exercise at the Tablighi Jamaat Markaz started with the help of the local police. (Below): People leave for hospitals from the Markaz at Nizamuddin after showing symptoms of COVID-19. •R.V. MOORTHY, PTI

It was a letter that arrived sometime on March 25 evening that announced the beginning of a nightmare. The letter, which confirmed the Delhi authorities' worst fears, landed at New Delhi's South-East district administration from the district administration of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. It stated that all the six patients who had tested positive for novel coronavirus in the islands had one thing in common: they had all returned from a gathering at the Markaz (Centre), the headquarters of the Tablighi Jamaat, a conservative Islamic organisation, in New Delhi. The six of them had attended a large convention with more than 4,500 people from the world over.

The nightmare for the authorities was that all the attendees and their contacts had to now be traced and quarantined to prevent further spread of the deadly virus. Until this information came, India's efforts in combating the COVID-19 pandemic were confined to screening travellers who had come from abroad.

Chalking out a plan

The Delhi police, the district administration, and the Delhi government's Health Department quickly huddled together for a meeting. Their agenda was to chalk out a plan to trace everyone who had attended the convention at the Markaz between March 12 and March 22. The attendees at the congregation had been divided into several groups. Each group had attended a two-three day workshop. Many of them had left, but many of them continued to stay at the Markaz. This was because a day-long Janata Curfew on March 22 and the 21-day national lockdown announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi beginning March 24 had made it virtually impossible for the Jamaat members to leave the Markaz. So, quickly evacuating the premises, sanitising the building and placing the attendees in quarantine was also on the team's agenda. The occupants at the Markaz, all in close proximity in the building in the crowded area of Nizamuddin in the capital, were perhaps unaware of the presence of the invisible, malevolent virus in their midst.

The immediate plan was this: for five days, from March 26 to March 30, a team supervised by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Defence Colony, Vinod Kumar Yadav, would inspect the building. The team, in its report to the Deputy Commissioner of South-East Delhi, Harleen Kaur, flagged several concerns. It reported that there was no social (physical) distancing being maintained between the members of the Jamaat. They were not wearing face masks. And there were no sanitisers on the premises. By the time the evacuation process started on March 29, some members of the Jamaat were already coughing and complaining of having a headache and a fever. The fear was becoming real: they were all showing signs of SARS-CoV-2. On March 29 night, at about 9 p.m., 34 people were immediately shifted to hos-

pitals from the premises. A medical camp was established outside the building for screening purposes.

Process of evacuation

With many members still inside, on March 30 morning, a white canopy tent was erected outside the Markaz. The evacuation process started with the help of the local police. They barricaded the entire area to prevent others in the neighbourhood from coming into contact with those emerging from the Markaz. The Health Department set up a help desk at the tent. Each person coming out of the Markaz was thermally screened. Their names, addresses and their duration of stay at the Markaz were noted. After their thermal screening was completed, attendees were asked to walk with their luggage towards the main road, about 50 metres away, through a barricaded corridor erected by the police to prevent the spread of infection in the locality. About 70 buses were arranged to transport the attendees from the Markaz to various hospitals or quarantine centres in the city. Bus drivers of the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) were provided hazmat suits and other protective gear that covered their faces. Each bus accommodated about 30 persons.

An officer with the Health Department said that the process of shifting the Jamaat members to hospitals and quarantine centres was an onerous task. "We had to save our own men from getting infected. We noted down the details of the attendees. We erected a tent outside the building and sanitised the entire area with the help of the Delhi Police. The DTC bus drivers also played an exemplary role in shifting people to the hospital. We did all this to the best of our ability," he said.

Even as these efforts were being taken, news broke late on the night on March 30 that six people who had returned from the Markaz at Nizamuddin had died after testing positive for COVID-19 in Telangana. Hearing this, the team in Delhi charged with evacuation developed cold feet, but nevertheless continued with their duty. They evacuated 2,361 people from the Markaz. When the last batch shuffled out of the premises on April 1, the team heaved a big sigh of relief.

Violating orders

As members of the Jamaat were being evacuated, questions piled up. How had so many people gathered at the Markaz when warnings had been issued about the serious threat posed by the deadly virus across the world? The recklessness of the Tablighi Jamaat aside, how had the Ministry of External Affairs granted visas to foreigners to attend the meeting? The gathering had included people from Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Afghanistan, France, Italy, Myanmar, Algeria, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, the U.K., Singapore, Belgium, Tunisia, the U.S. and Kuwait. At the time, some of these countries were already witnessing a

surge in COVID-19 cases. And how did the Delhi Police, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Home Affairs, fail to detect the presence of such a large gathering? Did this not amount to a huge intelligence failure?

The Delhi government had passed two orders restricting the size of gatherings. The first order, passed on March 13, prohibited more than 200 people from assembling at one place. Another on March 16 prohibited gatherings of more than 50 people. Both orders were violated by the Jamaat members. The police too failed to enforce the orders.

When the Delhi Police were asked about their correspondence with the Jamaat, a senior official told *The Hindu* that the Delhi Police verbally informed the members about the Delhi government's order. "The Markaz is a huge building. It has five floors and two basements. The police never go inside it," he said. The police officer said the police had sent out letters to the office-bearers of the Markaz on March 19 and 24 asking them to come to the Nizamuddin Police Station on March 24 to meet with the SHO, Mukesh Walia. At the meeting, Walia asked them to clear the building at the earliest, he said. A video of the meeting was released by the Delhi Police after questions were raised about the role of the local police in allowing the gathering.

Maulana Yousuf from the Markaz wrote to the police on March 25 stating that they had vacated 1,500 people. However, 1,000 people remained in the premises, he said. "We still have more than 1,000 people from different States in the building. As per your direction, we contacted [the respective] SDMs [Sub-Divisional Magistrates] for vehicle passes so that we can send the remaining people to their respective places," the letter said. "You [the police] are therefore requested to kindly approach the SDM for early action. We are ready to comply [with] all your directions." In the March 25 letter, Yousuf also informed the area SHO that they were trying to shut down the Markaz as directed by him the previous day.

On March 28, the Assistant Commissioner of Police (Lajpat Nagar), Atul Kumar, wrote to the Tablighi Jamaat that

despite the lockdown, "many persons have gathered at the centre in Nizamuddin". He warned of legal action.

In another letter to the police on March 29, Yousuf said that further efforts to vacate the premises had been stopped due to the lockdown announced by the Prime Minister.

On March 30, the Delhi government asked the Delhi Police to register an FIR against Maulana Mohammed Saad, the Delhi head of the Markaz. A Delhi Police officer said that the Tablighi Jamaat Markaz had applied for passes for only 12 vehicles, and all public transport to the Markaz had been banned. How could they evacuate 1,500 people using only 12 vehicles, he asked.

On March 31, the Delhi Police registered an FIR against Maulana Mohammed Saad and six other office-bearers charging them with "deliberately and wilfully" allowing a huge gathering on the premises, an act that posed a threat to many lives.

In his complaint, the SHO of Nizamuddin Police Station said that on March 21, the Delhi Police contacted the authorities of the Markaz and reminded them about the Delhi government's March 16 order. The Jamaat was directed to send the foreign delegates back to their respective countries, and the Indians to their respective cities and towns. On March 24, a meeting was held at the Hazrat Nizamuddin Police Station between the SHO and the office-bearers of Tablighi Jamaat, the FIR stated.

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

A Delhi government official, who was part of the evacuation team, said, "If you put 2,000 people in a closed building, everyone is bound to test positive. It was bad timing for faith and a pandemic to clash."

In order to decongest the Markaz, many of the occupants were shifted to various mosques in the National Capital Region. In a joint operation, the Delhi Police, Special Branch, and the Delhi go-

vernment quarantined 275 foreign nationals in various mosques. All of them had attended the Tablighi Jamaat event. How were they given visas? A senior officer with the Foreigner Regional Registration Office said that most of the foreign nationals visiting India as a part of Tablighi Jamaat had come on the strength of the tourist visa. Any person entering the country on a tourist visa cannot indulge in any missionary activity and the Ministry of Home Affairs had already issued guidelines on this, he said. "There is a separate visa category for missionary activities which allows overseas missionaries to work long term in the country if they are associated with a registered organisation," said the officer.

Besides the 275 foreign nationals, 1,744 asymptomatic people were moved to quarantine centres in Narela, Wazirabad, Dwarka, Jharoda Kalan and other places, and were closely monitored. Delhi's Education Minister and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia requested all those who attended the Markaz in March to report to the authorities. "If you do not come forward or if you are ill and are hiding it, then action will be taken against you," he said. In Tamil Nadu, the Health Secretary issued a humanitarian appeal as the number of those testing positive for COVID-19 and had attended the event in March began to spiral in the State. "You are patients and we will treat you like that. Please voluntarily report," she said. Many came forward.

Preventing spread of the virus

On April 2, the Nizamuddin area was declared as a containment zone, after many positive cases of COVID-19 were found. In order to prevent further spread of the virus, movement restrictions were put in place. To prevent infection, 42 policemen of the Nizamuddin Police Station, who were part of the evacuation operation, said they shaved their heads. A policeman said that this was their attempt to keep themselves safe as they were closely involved in the evacuation operation. Every member of the police station was sanitised by a team of the Delhi Fire Services (DFS) and the 50-metre passage used by the occupants of the Markaz was washed with disinfectant.

A day after a team of the DFS went inside the Markaz and disinfected the premises, a team of the Health Department inspected it. "The Markaz teaches to obey the rule and law made by the government of the state. It [the gathering] was never intentional but it is unfortunate that this happened," said a Maulana who did not wish to be named.

A Delhi Police officer said extensive data mining has been carried out to identify each individual who attended the religious congregation or stayed in the building. "We are preparing lists of their contacts. We are preparing the profile of each individual and sharing it with the concerned State police. Most of the people who attended the congregation went back either by bus or train,"

said the officer.

In a press release issued on March 31, the Tablighi Jamaat said that the programme at the Nizamuddin Markaz was discontinued immediately after the Prime Minister announced a Janata Curfew to be held on March 22. "However, due to the sudden cancellation of rail services across the country on March 21, 2020, a large group of visitors who had to depart by way of railways got stuck on the Markaz premises," it said.

A communal colour

Away from the Delhi hotspot, and spread across half-a-dozen districts of Rajasthan, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, the Mewat region, predominantly inhabited by Meo Muslims, is the birthplace of the Tablighi Jamaat. The region has been divided into 18 blocks for the purpose of the activities of the 94-year-old religious organisation. While Mewat has lost its pre-eminent stature to Delhi, Sadar Shura Majlis Ilaka Mewat, Mufi Mohammad Zahid Hussain, told *The Hindu* that the region was preferred to other regions for hosting the congregation of the Jamaat workers, known as "Jod". The last Jod was held from December 21 to 23 at the Nuh Idgah. It saw the participation of several thousand workers. "Only dedicated Jamaatis with more than four months of association with the organisation are allowed to participate in the Jod," said Hussain.

He said that the Jod held in Mewat and other regions was separate from the Jamaat programmes held at the Nizamuddin Markaz all through the year. About 1,000-1,500 Jamaatis from across the world are present at Markaz to participate in various programmes at any given point in time, he said. "Hundreds of delegates keep visiting the Markaz all through the year. The problem was that this time they were stuck there due to the cancellation of trains and flights because of the Janata Curfew and the sudden announcement of the lockdown. The embassies were duly informed about their visit, so it is wrong to say that the Markaz violated the lockdown," said Hussain. There are reports from across the country on the number of Jamaatis infected, but why is all the emphasis on the Jamaatis and their contacts, he asked. "If samples of only Jamaatis are collected, of course only they will test positive," he said.

Following the identification of the cluster, Tablighi Jamaat members have become an easy target on social media. They have been accused of "spreading the virus" and being "careless". With social media and some TV channels fuelling hatred against Muslims, the Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana, Kerala and Maharashtra have warned people against communalising the issue and painting one community as the perpetrator.

Hussain agreed. "It is an injustice to give this event a communal colour. It is against democracy," he said.

With inputs from Ashok Kumar



FROM PAGE ONE

No proof of community transmission: Ministry

Reports from State Health Departments put the death toll at 252 with 6618 active cases. Maharashtra reported 197 fresh cases even as the death toll in the State climbed to 110.

The ICMR had randomly tested samples from laboratories in 52 districts in 20 states. As of now, nearly 280 districts have reported confirmed cases.

Independent epidemiologists said the ICMR still had too few surveillance sites to detect CT evidence and ought to be expanding it manifold.

"Sentinel site surveillance of all SARI (or at least all X-ray positive pneumonia) is essential for getting an idea about the spread of COVID-19. All cases report-

ing to these sites have to be tested. At least 10-20 sites every district have to be selected and sample collection facilities have to be arranged there. Sites will have to be increased in a locality if community transmission occurs," Dr. Iype Joseph, an epidemiologist at the Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Biotechnology in Thiruvananthapuram, told *The Hindu*.

At the daily media briefing, Mr. Agrawal said India needed about one crore hydroxychloroquine tablets and had stocks nearly three times that.

"Arrangements for additional two-three crore tablets have been made and through private sector two crore tablets had been sent to the field," he added.

Scarcity of drugs, devices imminent, govt. told

Citing multiple factors responsible for the impasse at several pharmaceuticals in the country, the letter has identified the unavailability of labour, transport and courier services as the biggest problems, along with the closure of ancillary industries that are not being considered essential by local administrations and the police despite the Home Ministry's directions.

Constraints on labour
Reverse migration of labour and local workers not reporting to work due to lack of public transport options and the fear of police action, combined with family and local community pressure, has made it difficult to operate factories even at lower than normal capacity, the department says.

The letter urged the Home Ministry to allow the pharma industry to ferry back their contractual workers from their native places and make courier services 'fully functional' in metro cities as well as Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities. Courier services are 'crucial in ensuring movement of medicines and medical devices... is not adversely affected during the lockdown,' Mr. Vaghela noted.

Truckers' troubles
State and district administrations need to be sensitised and nudged to be proactive to fulfil the need for pharma units to function fully, the Pharma Secretary said, mooting that drivers with commercial licences be allowed to move with or without a vehicle by treating it as a 'pass' during the lockdown.

"Many drivers... have left

their vehicles on highways or *dhabas* and returned to their native places. Unless they are allowed to reach their vehicles, those vehicles will be left stranded and this would be out of circulation," the letter pointed out.

"When drivers who are not stranded in between trips are unwilling to take up work due to the 'fear of ill treatment by the police, stoppage of vehicles on State, district and city borders, and lack of food and diesel on the route'" the letter noted.

"There is a dire need to not only address the apprehensions of these drivers but also to motivate/incentivise them (with insurance, etc.)," it said.

The Department of Pharmaceuticals, entrusted with ensuring the seamless production and distribution of critical life-saving medicines in the wake of the lockdown to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, also reiterated its concerns about ancillary industries that it had raised in an earlier April 3 letter to the Home Ministry.

"Ancillary suppliers of inputs, including packaging material, excipients (required for tablets and capsules manufacturing), utility consumables like briquettes/gases (required to run boilers) and spare parts are not able to operate/supply..." the letter had said.

Apart from directives from the Home Ministry and the Pharma Department to State governments on the issue, the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) had also written to all State Chief Secretaries on March 26 after it learnt of the problems facing pharma firms.

UAE offers to fly in stranded Indians

The repatriation offer would be available only to those citizens unaffected by the viral outbreak, Dr. Al Banna said.

The assurance comes on a day when Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan sought the intervention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to persuade the UAE to ensure that the large workforce of Keralites in that country was effectively insulated from the risk of exposure to COVID-19.

In a letter to Mr. Modi, Mr. Vijayan said Keralites, who made up the bulk of blue collar workers in the Emirates, lived in crowded facilities in cities such as Dubai and ran a high risk of contracting the infection.

Kerala was worried about the safety and well being of its diaspora in the Gulf, the Chief Minister said, seeking Central intervention.

The Ministry of External Affairs has not yet responded to the UAE's offer. New Delhi has said there are at least 25,000 Indian citizens

consisting of travellers, students and stranded tourists in various parts of the globe who want to return home. It is believed that a substantial number of these citizens are in Dubai and Abu Dhabi as these are two prominent aviation hubs that serve India.

The Ambassador said the UAE has introduced one of the "most comprehensive programs" to diagnose the novel coronavirus infection and has tested more than half a million samples in the country to contain spread of the virus.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has so far held several rounds of telephone conversations with the regional heads of governments of the Gulf region since the COVID-19 pandemic. He spoke to Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi on March 26 during which the Crown Prince assured his government's support to the large Indian community in the country.

Choked supply lines to be cleared

Centre to consider truck movement, harvest while deciding on extending curbs

NISTULA HEBBAR NEW DELHI

Stoppered supply lines with trucks waiting on highways, the ongoing harvest season and procurement of foodgrains in various parts of the country are some of the issues that will inform the kind of lockdown the country will continue to have post April 14.

Government sources said that smoothing the supply lines that have still to be seamless and the harvest and procurement season have complicated the decision on the kind of lockdown to have.

"Harvesting is very important, as is procurement as there are standing crops and they need to be taken care of. Mandis do not lend themselves to social distancing," said a government source. Various micro plans are being considered for various States and an overall advisory on how to go about enforcing the behaviour required for the prevention of



Question of priority: Rural areas are likely to get priority during the phasing out of the lockdown.

the spread of COVID-19 is likely to be sent out.

On Friday, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said each district with groups of farmers would be given specific dates for bringing their crops to the mandis for procurement and the number of mandis would be increased from 1,900 to over 3,000 to make the operations smaller, leading to fewer crowds.

Such district specific plans are being sought from every State.

While Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to announce his decision on the continuation of the lockdown after consulting the Chief Ministers through a video conference on Saturday, harvesting and movement of trucks will be likely exempt.

At a meeting held by P.K. Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, with the empowered group of officials set up to tackle the COVID-19 crisis, on Friday, the issue of shelters being run for migrant workers and the homeless was also brought up. Mr. Mishra emphasised that "data sanctity" be maintained to ensure the transfer

of benefits under the Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Yojana as well as close coordination with NGOs and other organisations for the same.

"It was pointed out that there were many people who did not have a ration card to get the free grain distribution undertaken by the government and the instructions were to distribute grains to all," said a government source.

Chhattisgarh and at least two divisions of Bihar, there were reports of shortages of supplies and instructions were given to address these," said the source. "If needed, Food Corporation of India stocks would be unlocked to make sure there was enough supply."

With most economic activity at a standstill due to the lockdown, it appears that harvesting and procurement at least, will be exempted from it, while big urban areas will continue to be under strict lockdown.

Bihar official's letter sets off alarm

'Alleged infected individuals likely to cross Nepal border into India'

AMARNATH TEWARY PATNA

Bihar's Home Secretary Amir Subhani has forwarded to the Union Home Ministry a letter sent by the District Magistrate of West Champaran warning that nearly 200 Indian Muslims, believed to be infected with COVID-19, are likely to cross the Nepal border into India.

"We have forwarded the letter to the Union Home Ministry and everything is under investigation," Mr. Subhani told presspersons.

The State's Director-General of Police, Gupeshwar Pandey, said the letter was written based on verified in-

formation, but there was no evidence yet on the ground. "We are in touch with our district superintendents in border areas and keeping a strict vigil on movement of people," he said.

In the "confidential" letter (No: 1250, dated April 7, 2020), District Magistrate Kundan Kumar asked his subordinate officials to deal strictly with "any suspicious movement". The letter refers to intelligence information received from the 47th Battalion of the Sahastra Seena Bai (SSB) that a person named Jalim Mukhia from Nepal was planning to spread COVID-19 in India.

Jalim Mukhia, *The Hindu* has learnt from sources, is a criminal involved in arms smuggling on the India-Nepal border. Several cases are pending against him in local police stations in the border districts. The District Magistrate, however, could not be contacted. Local journalists quoted him as saying "it was a routine thing."

On April 3, Commandant of the 47th battalion of SSB posted at Pantoka in Ramgarhwa on the Indo-Nepal border in West Champaran district had sent a letter (No 5039-40 U/2130) addressed to the District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police

alerting them to the "movement of suspected Corona positive Indian Muslim national from Nepal to India."

"Input received from very reliable sources that one person, namely Jalim Mukhia, r/o Vill-Jaganathpur, Post-Janki Tola, P/S-Serwa, Dist-Parsa (Nepal), is planning to spread pandemic in India. He is also involved in smuggling of Arms & FICN [fake Indian currency notes] from Nepal to India. He has also taken responsibility to cross Indian Muslims working in different Muslim countries during lockdown," said the one-page letter marked "Confidential / Urgent."

Priyanka urges Adityanath to emulate Rajasthan example

Congress leader writes to Chief Minister on fight against virus

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

As the Union government mulls an extension of the lockdown to further contain the spread of COVID-19, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury on Friday said that lockdown alone would not help unless it was backed by increased testing to identify and isolate hotspots.

"Merely extending the lockdown and thereby increasing the economic misery and chances of people losing their livelihood, can't be allowed to happen in order to contain the spread," he said at a press conference.

Mr. Yechury said that there had to be a staggered withdrawal of the lockdown by opening up clusters free of COVID-19 patients.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has urged Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to increase testing for COVID-19 and cited the example of Rajasthan.

In a letter to Mr. Adityanath, dated April 9 and released by the Congress on Friday, she said, "It is essential to increase the rate of testing in Uttar Pradesh. In a State like U.P. with massive population, increased testing can prove to be an effective way to contain the spread of the virus."

The letter, in Hindi, said, "South Korea, with a population of 6 crore, tested 6 out of every 1,000 persons and managed to prevent the



Priyanka Gandhi Vadra

spread of the infection by the virus. Rajasthan's Bhilwara saw work on war-footing as 24 lakh people were screened in just 9 days, aggressive testing was done and the infected people were identified. The population in U.P. is nearly 23 crores but the sample sent for testing is 7,000."

Along with increased testing, all those categorised as "Moderate High Risk Cases" should be immediately treated to prevent any pressure on intensive care units of hospitals, she added.

Ms. Vadra also asked for improvement the "isolation ward quarantine facilities", keeping in mind human dignity, as reports of poor hygiene from some of the facilities had come in.

With reports of community transmission coming in, the government should increase awareness among clusters, as people tended to hide their disease. "Please make sanitizers and masks available on a war-footing and inform the people as to how and where they will get them," she said.

Punjab extends lockdown till May 1

CM to convey decision to Modi today

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHANDIGARH

Punjab on Friday extended the lockdown till May 1 amid apprehension of community spread of COVID-19.

On Thursday, Odisha extended the lockdown till April 30.

A meeting of the State Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Capt. Amarinder Singh, also decided to prevent overcrowding at bazaars during the wheat harvesting and procurement season.

Chief Minister Amarinder will convey the decision to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the latter's video-conference with the Chief Ministers on Saturday, an official statement said.

Grim projections

Citing grim projections of the impact of the pandemic, the Chief Minister said curfew-like restrictions were essential so that the medical

infrastructure was not burdened. "There was general consensus in the medical community that the lockdown curbs would only delay the spread of the disease," he said.

Role of private hospitals

At the meeting, the Cabinet approved the Punjab Clinical Establishment (Registration and Regulation) Ordinance to make private hospitals join the battle against COVID-19. The Chief Minister was authorised to approve the final draft of the Bill.

The ordinance would provide for the registration and regulation of clinical establishments in a professional manner to ensure compliance of clinical standards and protocols and transparency in their functioning for fair and proper delivery of health services to the common man, said the statement.

Sonia concerned over low number of tests

'Cong. ready to play its role in the fight'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Reviewing the Congress's efforts to provide relief to people hit by the three-week COVID-19 lockdown, party president Sonia Gandhi on Friday expressed concern over the low testing and shortage of testing facilities.

Ms. Gandhi agreed on a Corona Action Strategy that will seek to utilise the network of party workers nationwide. She also hoped that the Union government would come out with a plan to deal with the situation arising out of the prevailing lockdown.

Addressing Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) chiefs from across the country via videoconferencing, Ms. Gandhi said the party was ready to play its role in the country's fight against COVID-19.

She urged party colleagues to take it up with their State governments the need to ramp up testing, provide PPEs for the corona warriors, financial package for them and economic relief for the vulnerable sections.

"Due to the lockdown, the poor labourers left for their villages, and our workers got down to help them. Even today, all over the country, Congress workers from every district are engaged in this work," she said.

The Congress chief also mentioned that she and Rahul Gandhi had written to the government and made suggestions over the battle against the pandemic. "We hope that the government comes out with a plan to meet this challenge. The poor, farmers and labourers



The economy was already in crisis, and now it seems that difficulties will increase

SONIA GANDHI Congress president

are suffering the most," the Congress chief said.

"The lockdown is going to put a lot of burden on our economy. The economy was already in crisis, and now it seems that difficulties will increase. We have to be ready for it," she added.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, in an open letter, hailed accredited social health activists, auxiliary nurse and midwives and Anganwadi workers for their role in the fight against the pandemic and said "they are true patriots" who toil to keep communities safe in the midst of this grave crisis."

In another development, the Congress urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to impress upon the United States not to terminate the H-1B visas of Indians living in the country.

"The sword of H-1B visa job termination looms large on the heads of an estimated 1,75,000 Indians, with the United States giving them only a 30-day period to find a new job in case of a lay-off. There are 3.05 crore Indians working on H-1B visas," Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said.

CBI asks officials not to free Wadhawans

They face warrants in Yes Bank case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has asked the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police of Satara, Maharashtra, not to release Kapil and Dheeraj Wadhawan without its consent or a court order.

Non-bailable arrest warrants are pending against the Wadhawans in the Yes Bank case registered by the CBI in March.

"On April 9, we received information that the accused were located in Satara and were lodged at a government quarantine centre at Panchgani. Thereafter, an email was immediately sent to the District Magistrate and the



Kapil Wadhawan

Superintendent of Police for not releasing them without a no-objection (certificated) from the CBI or a court order," a CBI official said.

The local administration has also been told to ensure that the accused do not flee. According to the CBI, the Wadhawan brothers have been absconding since the investigation started.

IPS officer sent on leave for issuing travel permit

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The State Government sent Principal Secretary (Special) Amitabh Gupta, on compulsory leave following the controversy over allowing DHFL chairman Kapil Wadhawan and his 22 family members to travel from Khandala to

Mahabaleshwar on April 8 despite the lockdown.

Mr. Wadhawan and his brother Dheeraj are DHFL promoters, and co-accused in a case of cheating and money laundering registered against Yes Bank co-founder Rana Kapoor. Late on Thursday night, both brothers, along with

over 20 family members, were detained at Mahabaleshwar for violating prohibitory orders. State Home Minister Anil Deshmukh also announced an inquiry into the matter by Additional Chief Secretary Manoj Saunik and asked him to submit a report within 15 days.

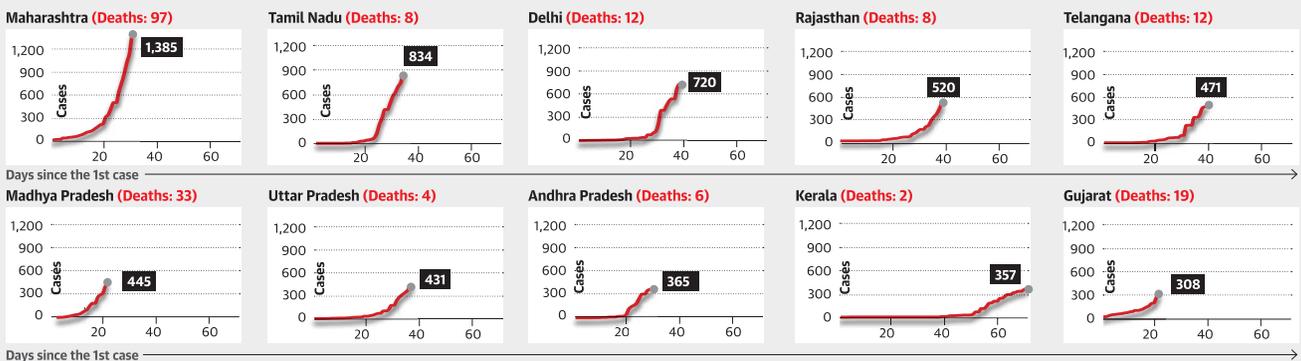
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHANDIGARH

The Punjab police on Friday booked Purpatwant Singh Pannun and his banned group Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) for seditious automated calls aimed at instigating people against the State during the lockdown.

Cases have been registered under Section 124 A of IPC, and Sections 10 (a) and 13 (f) of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, said Director General of Police, Dinkar Gupta.

Tracking the rise in States

The charts show the progression of COVID-19 cases since the first case in 10 States/U.T. where maximum cases were confirmed. With 1,385 cases, Maharashtra had the highest number of cases. The data is as of 6:45 p.m. on Friday



IN BRIEF



Jallianwala Bagh memorial to remain shut

NEW DELHI
The Union Ministry of Culture said on Friday that the Jallianwala Bagh memorial in Amritsar would remain closed to the public till June 15, as planned renovation works had been affected by the coronavirus pandemic. The memorial has been closed since February 15 and was supposed to open on April 13, ending the year-long commemoration of the centenary of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. On April 13, 1919, British forces opened fire on unarmed Indians at Jallianwala Bagh, killing hundreds of people.

Assam records first COVID-19 death

GUWAHATI
The local authorities on Friday declared a mosque in Guwahati a 'containment zone', hours after Assam recorded the first COVID-19 death from Malakandi district. Officials said about 100 people, including eight who had returned from the Tablighi Jamaat in Delhi's Nizamuddin, had attended a congregation at the Athgaon Kabrastan Mosque on March 12. Two of the mourners had tested positive, and another person who attended the congregation with them.

18 went home from quarantine without check

LUCKNOW
A village pradhan was booked and a panchayat secretary and lekhalpal were suspended in Uttar Pradesh's Sitapuri district on Friday after 18 persons quarantined in a primary school building were allowed to leave without a medical inspection for COVID-19. The incident is the latest in a series of lapses reported from quarantine centres in rural areas of the State, where people, especially migrants who recently returned from other States, have escaped from quarantine before time.

India well-equipped: Vardhan

Minister says country is unlikely to face an 'unmanageable crisis' from COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

India is unlikely to face an "unmanageable crisis" from COVID-19, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said at an online conference organised by the India Foundation. He was addressing international delegates, according to information on his official Twitter handle.

While matters deteriorate, India had enough infrastructure to tide over the crisis, he said.

"We have 500 dedicated COVID-19 hospitals, 200,000 beds across hospitals and 50,000 ICU beds. We have ordered everything in plenty. In the last two months, we have ensured adequate testing facilities. We started with one lab and today we have over 200. Over 150 are public labs."

Multiple strategies

As on Friday, the Ministry has reported 6,761 cases and 206 deaths. Dr. Vardhan said India had multiple strategies



Ready for challenge: A municipal worker spraying disinfectant in a makeshift hospital in Mumbai. *AADESH CHOUDHARI

in place to contain the pandemic. For more than 15 cases in a district, we have a "large outbreak" strategy and for less than 15, a cluster containment strategy, he said.

According to guidelines released by the ICMR this week, both strategies involve active surveillance for cases and contacts in an identified geographic zone, expanding testing to all at risk in these

authorised 39 manufacturers to make such equipment locally.

"From next week, 10 lakh PPEs are expected, as well as 48,000 additional ventilators," he said.

Hails health officials

He also addressed a conference with health officials from various States and "congratulated them" for keeping the situation under control, according to a statement from the Press Information Bureau. He exhorted all States to establish at least one dedicated COVID-19 hospital in every district.

States ought not to be neglecting the treatment/medical needs of pregnant women, dialysis patients and those suffering from thalassemia and must improve access to mobile blood donation.

Everyone should download the Arogya app as it would help assess the risk of infection, the press statement added.

23 members of a family in Bihar's Siwan test positive

The borders of three districts have been sealed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT PATNA

As many as 23 members of a family in a village in Bihar's Siwan district have tested positive for COVID-19, taking the total number of cases in the district to 29. The borders of Siwan, Begusarai and Nawada districts have been sealed by the State administration to prevent the spread of the disease.

In the village under Raghunathpur block of Siwan, a youth had returned from Oman on March 21 and had mingled freely with the residents, even playing cricket with friends. After his sample tested positive on April 4, 22 of the 28 members of his family, including several women and children, too were found infected. Six other people from different villages of the district too have tested positive.

With 29 positive cases out of the total 60 in the State,



Long wait: Beneficiaries waiting to withdraw relief money from their bank accounts in Patna on Friday. *ANJANEET KUMAR

Siwan has become the most hot spot in Bihar. A sizeable population in the district belong to the minority community and nearly 60,000 work in Gulf countries. The village from where 23 members of a family tested positive has a population of over 5,000, with nearly 900 households. It is 31 km from the Siwan town and 5 km from Raghunathpur block.

The Siwan district administration has sealed the vil-

20 more health workers test positive in Bhopal

Among them are 2 junior resident doctors; the number of cases in M.P. capital goes up to 119

STAFF REPORTER BHOPAL

Twenty more health workers tested positive for COVID-19 in Bhopal on Friday, taking the number to 70 in the city, the Bhopal district administration said.

The number of cases in Bhopal soared to 119 as 24 fresh cases were reported.

Health workers, including doctors and others engaged in combating the outbreak in Madhya Pradesh, make up 59% of the cases in the city.

As the infected officials don't have any travel or contact history, the Health Department is yet to locate the source of the disease, which has visited even the Principal Secretary, Public Health and Family Welfare, and the CEO of the State Ayushman

Bharat Yojana. Two junior resident doctors from a government medical college here, who have been engaged in COVID-19 duties, also contracted the disease on Friday.

This comes a week after the first case from the Health Department, of an IAS officer tasked with procuring drugs and equipment for public healthcare institutions, was reported.

The office of the State Directorate of Health Services has been sanitised multiple times as most of the officials who had contracted the disease were not field workers, but those who devised strategies at the office. The virus has infected 13 police personnel and their families in the city.



For safety gear: An official pacifies contract workers of a government hospital in Bhopal on Friday after they staged a protest against low-quality personal protection equipment. *PTI

Bhilwara breaks virus transmission chain

11-day-long "all-down curfew" helped

MOHAMMED IQBAL JAIPUR

The "ruthless containment" model adopted in Bhilwara, which emerged last month as the worst-affected district in Rajasthan, has succeeded in breaking the chain of novel Coronavirus transmission. Among the 27 COVID-19 positive cases found earlier in the textile city, 25 patients have been cured of infection and 15 discharged from hospital.

Bhilwara Collector, Geetendra Bhatt said on Friday that the remaining 10 persons, who were under observation, would be discharged in a couple of days. The two elderly people who died after testing COVID-19 positive reportedly had co-morbidity and other medical complications, while one of them was also in a state of coma when he was tested.

Since April 3, when an aggressive 11-day-long "all-down curfew" started with even essential services being curtailed, only two new cases have been reported in the city of 4 lakh people. Teams of health workers have screened a population of 24 lakh in the entire district and conducted contact tracing of COVID-19 patients on a war-footing.

The only patient infected with Coronavirus and being treated in the district is a 47-year-old teacher, who was detected positive in the screening by a medical team



Of the 27 positive cases reported, 25 patients have been cured.

on Thursday. He has claimed that he had no travel or contact history. Daulat Meena, a physician at the Mahatma Gandhi Government Hospital who treated some of the patients, told *The Hindu* that the regimen was decided after studying the contact and medical history of each of them. "The right combination of drugs and multiple testing at regular gaps ensured timely recovery of patients. Since most of them were staff members of a private hospital, they knew that the illness could be fatal if not managed properly."

The containment model involved some meticulous strategies adopted in several phases, including isolation of the district with its borders being sealed, screening in the city and in rural areas, and sending the people showing symptoms to home quarantine and the confirmed patients to isolation wards. This was followed by a rigorous monitoring in the villages.

Maharashtra cases mount to 1,574

13 new deaths reported across State

STAFF REPORTER PUNE

Maharashtra recorded a surge of over 200 new COVID-19 positive cases for the second consecutive day on Friday as the cumulative tally shot to 1,574, while the death toll rose to 110 with 13 new deaths being reported from across the State.

In a now-familiar pattern, Mumbai once again recorded the maximum deaths - 10 and the maximum cases - 132, of the 210 fresh cases as the city's tally itself exceeded 1000 cases on Friday, standing at 1008.

One death each was reported from Pune, Vasavi-rar and Panvel, said State health authorities.

Bharavi reports 11 new cases

STAFF REPORTER MUMBAI

Eleven more residents of Bharavi tested positive for COVID-19 on Friday, taking the number to 28. Among the new cases are five persons whose samples were collected during a medical camp at Mukund Nagar on Thursday and a 26-year-old man who lives in Rajiv Gandhi chawl.

than 35 cases being recorded across the district, taking the figure to 245 while Pune city alone exceeded 200 cases.

In fact, the number of cases in Pune city has nearly doubled over a four-day span, shooting from a 100-odd positive cases earlier this week to its current tally of 207.

The district has reported 25 deaths so far.

Gujarat records 116 positive COVID-19 cases and 2 deaths

The total number of positive cases has increased to 378

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT AHMEDABAD

In the largest single day spike, 116 new cases of the novel coronavirus infection and two deaths were recorded in Gujarat on Friday.

The total number of positive cases has increased to 378, and 19 persons have died so far.

Two persons died in Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar. Till Friday, Ahmedabad accounted for seven deaths and Surat four. So far, 33 infected persons have recovered and discharged from hospitals.

On Thursday and Friday, the State recorded 195 cases and three deaths.

7,718 samples tested

As per the details released by the Health Department, a total of 7,718 samples have been tested in the State and 378 of them have returned positive and 7,237 negative. The reports in respect of



In full swing: A worker spraying disinfectant in a residential complex in Ahmedabad on Friday. *VIJAY SONEJI

103 samples are pending. Gujarat's Health Secretary Jayanti Ravi said the State had increased the number of testing, so more cases were coming out.

The infection has now covered 20 of the 33 districts. However, Ahmedabad remains the main hotspot, with 197 cases. Fifty-nine cases have been reported

from Vadodara, 27 from Surat and 22 from Bhavnagar. "We are doing more tests and have identified clusters from where larger number of cases have emerged. Surveillance has been intensified in these clusters as part of the containment strategy," a top official of the State government told *The Hindu*.

He said they stayed in a mosque and were asked to undergo a test. DGP Shivanand Jha said a total of 130 people had been identified in the State who had attended Tablighi Jamaat's congregation in Delhi in March. Of them, 13 tested positive, including one who died.

Tablighi members infected

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT AHMEDABAD

The novel coronavirus infection is spreading to more districts in Gujarat.

On Friday, seven cases were reported in Bharuch in the first occurrence of COVID-19 in the district.

They are all members of Tablighi Jamaat from Tamil Nadu and Haryana, who had arrived here for preaching in villages of Bharuch.

"Seven cases have been reported from a village in Bharuch. They are all Jamaat members, five from Tamil Nadu and two from Haryana," a top official from Bharuch told *The Hindu*.

He said they stayed in a mosque and were asked to undergo a test.

DGP Shivanand Jha said a total of 130 people had been identified in the State who had attended Tablighi Jamaat's congregation in Delhi in March. Of them, 13 tested positive, including one who died.

TAMIL NADU WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD

Tender Extension Notification No. IFB No. 29-1/F. Urupakkam/DO/CE/VLR/2020/Dt : 09.04.2020

Name of work : Setting up a water Distribution Station (WDS) to Cater the Needs of IT Companies and Neighbourhood Areas of Urupakkam in Chengalpattu District under (MNF) Fund - Execution period : 9 months. Trial run period - 6 months and maintenance of the Scheme 12 months - 2nd call.

Ref : 1. The office Invitation of Bid No. 29 / F / Urupakkam / DO / CE / VLR / 2020 / Dated: 09.03.2020.

The tender for the above works have been called for in the reference cited is hereby extended as follows :

| Sl. No. | Description | Already given | Extended upto |
|---------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. | The sale of Tender Schedule | Upto 5.45 PM on 09.04.2020 | Upto 5.45 PM on 15.05.2020 |
| 2. | Final date of receipt of tender | Upto 3.00 PM on 13.04.2020 | Upto 3.00 PM on 18.05.2020 |
| 3. | The date of opening | At 3.30 PM on 13.04.2020 | At 3.30 PM on 18.05.2020 |
| 4. | Pre-Bid Meeting | At 11.00 AM on 27.03.2020 | At 11.00 AM on 08.05.2020 |

The offer terms and conditions specified in the tender documents for above works remain unaltered. Please Visit our Website www.tenders.in.gov.in for further details.

Chief Engineer (IC), WAD Board, Vellore - 6.

DIPR/1605/ITENDER/2020

Mobile link must for PF withdrawal

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

Employees' Provident Fund account-holders who do not have a mobile number linked to Aadhaar may not be able to withdraw money immediately under a government scheme to mitigate the economic impact of the novel coronavirus outbreak.

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation accepts only online claims. A key requisite is an Aadhaar-

BSF told to suspend border passes

Home Ministry asks States not to allow social or religious gatherings or processions during lockdown

VIJAYTA SHARMA
NEW DELHI

The Border Security Force (BSF) has been asked to suspend all passes given to farmers to tend to crops, especially along the densely populated Bangladesh border, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The border guarding force is in a fix as the West Bengal government is yet to issue guidelines restricting the movement of farmers as the harvest season is on.

Following the directions

was a lot of resistance among the local people.

The Ministry has also asked the States to maintain "appropriate vigil on social media" against the circulation of objectionable content, the communication adds.

Security review

Home Minister Amit Shah reviewed the border security arrangements along Pakistan and Bangladesh borders through video conferencing on Thursday. He spoke to



Amit Shah

who cross the border gates or zero line to attend to their

areas along the border is such that the zero line passes through the houses of villagers, one part in India and the other in Bangladesh. There are around 60 villages in North, South 24 Parganas and Nadia districts of South Bengal located right up to the zero line. Only 42% of the area is fenced owing to the riverine and complex land boundary.

"The district officials in West Bengal say they have not received any written communication from the

ing people to not let Bangladeshis enter their homes as they might be COVID carriers," a senior BSF official told *The Hindu*.

India had sealed all its land borders on March 23. India shares 4096.7 km border with Bangladesh and 3323 km border with Pakistan.

In the meeting with BSF officials, Mr. Shah directed that vigil on the border may be intensified.

In another communication, the Ministry directed



Crucial move: Following a Supreme Court court order, a few laboratories have started free testing. • AP

Some private labs offering free tests

Guidelines on compensation awaited

Key Features

The government-sponsored health insurance scheme will provide free coverage of up to Rs 5 lakh per family per year at any government or even empanelled private hospitals all over India for secondary and tertiary medical care facilities.

Modicare will be available for 74 crore beneficiary families and about 50 crore Indian citizens. Under the process, 80 percent of beneficiaries, based on the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) data in the rural and the urban areas, have been identified.

There is no restriction on the basis of family size, age or gender.

Ayushman Bharat is unlike other medical insurance schemes where there is a waiting period for pre-existing diseases. All kinds of diseases are covered from day one of the Ayushman Bharat policy. The benefit cover includes both pre and post hospitalization expenses.

The expenditure incurred in premium payment will be shared between Central and State Governments in a specified ratio. The funding for the scheme will be shared – 60:40 for all states and UTs with their own legislature, 90:10 in Northeast states and three Himalayan states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal and Uttarakhand and 100% Central funding for UTs without legislature.

The NHPS will draw additional resources from the Health and Education Cess and also depend on funding from States to boost the Central allocation. The premiums are expected to be in the range of `Rs 1,000 – ` 1,200 per annum.

The NHPM (National Health Protection Mission) will pay for the hospitalisation costs of its beneficiaries through strategic purchasing from public and private hospitals.

NOTE:

"Strategic purchasing" means active, evidence-based engagement in defining the service-mix and volume, and selecting the provider mix in order to maximize societal objectives.

Wellness Centres: The 1.5 lakh sub-centres that are converted into wellness centres will cater to majority of services such as detection and treatment of cardiovascular diseases, screening for common cancers, mental health, care of the elderly, eye care, etc.

The wellness centres will also offer a set of services including maternal and child health services, mental health services and vaccinations against selected communicable diseases.

Benefits

The scheme, if implemented properly could enhance access to health care including early detection and treatment services by a large section of society who otherwise could not afford them.

NHPS could help country move towards universal health coverage and equitable access to healthcare which is one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG3: Good health and well-being). „

The wellness centres that are planned under the Ayushman Bharat programme can play a preventive role by reducing the incidence and impact of non-communicable diseases. „ The proposed NHPS could be the precursor to the Universal Insurance Scheme which will provide cover to all citizens.

How will NHPS work financially?

The NHPS operates around the insurance principle of 'risk pooling'. When a large number of people subscribe to an insurance scheme, only a small fraction of them will be hospitalised in any given year. In a tax-funded system or a large insurance programme, there is a large risk pool wherein the healthy cross-subsidise the sick at any given time. „

The NHPS will be financially viable, despite a high coverage offered to the few who fall sick in any year, because the rest in the large pool do not need it that year.

Tasks Ahead

State governments, which will administer it through their own agency, will have to purchase care from a variety of players, including in the private sector, at pre-determined rates.

Reaching a consensus on treatment costs through a transparent consultative process is vital for a smooth and steady rollout.

A large-scale Information Technology network for cashless treatment should be set up and validated.

Since a majority of the families will be rural, and the secondary and tertiary public hospital infrastructure suffers from severe efficiency and accountability problems, State governments should upgrade the administrative systems.

New helpline to fight domestic violence

People can contact the National Commission for Women over WhatsApp during the lockdown

JAGRITI CHANDRA
NEW DELHI

The National Commission for Women (NCW) on Friday launched a helpline number — 0721-7735372 — to enable those facing domestic violence to send a WhatsApp message to access help.

"Many women don't know how to send an e-mail, whereas WhatsApp is easy to use. That is why we decided to launch this initiative," NCW Chairperson Rekha Sharma told *The Hindu*. However, she added that the helpline was only a temporary facility being made available for the period of the lockdown.

In the first week after the lockdown, the NCW record-



Many women don't know how to send an email, whereas WhatsApp is easy to use. That is why we decided to launch this initiative
REKHA SHARMA
Chairperson, National Commission for Women

ed more than a two-fold increase in complaints of domestic violence and sexual assault as well as a three-fold rise in complaints of police apathy towards crimes against women.

The move comes days after Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani held a web-conference with more than 1,000 participants from various institutions linked to her Ministry

on the issue of women's safety. The Minister sought to convey the message that the government was working for women in need of protection.

Digital governance

She urged her staff to take steps to encourage reporting of violence against women as well as use digital governance effectively to ensure their safety.

Ms. Sharma explained that when a person sends a message on the number seeking help, the NCW's complaints and legal cell will contact her and seek specific details about the intervention she requires. Following this, she will be linked with the local police team or a counsellor from a local NGO or a medical facility or relocated to a One Stop Centre temporarily.

The messaging facility will also help those women who cannot make a call because they may be overheard by the perpetrators of abuse.

The NCW has compiled a State-wise list of One Stop Centres as well as nodal police officers who can be con-

tacted immediately. It is also working on building a network of counsellors and has sought UN Women's help on this.

When asked how the NCW plans to popularise the new helpline, Ms. Sharma said it would use social media, news media, radio and NGOs to spread the word.

On why the NCW did not opt for an easier number to recall as a helpline, Ms. Sharma said, "To set up the facility in a short span, we are merely using a spare personal number we had with us, which will be discontinued after the lockdown. It is also difficult to get a new number because of the restrictions imposed."

NHRC asks govt. about steps taken to help the mentally ill

'Home Ministry must take steps to protect those on streets'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Friday asked the Union Ministry of Home Affairs to address the concerns of the mentally ill on the streets during the lockdown to check the spread of the novel coronavirus.

The NHRC took cognisance of a complaint about the alleged violation of the human rights of such people and asked the Ministry to inform it, within two weeks, of the arrangements made for them.

"In the meantime, neces-

sary directions may be issued by them [the Ministry] to all the States and Union Territories to ensure that persons suffering from any kind of mental ailment under their jurisdiction are provided with proper counselling towards necessary precautions for their personal care and protection from the virus and not deprived of basic amenities like food, shelter and medical care etc.," a statement from the NHRC said.

The NHRC said that while the Central and State governments were trying to provide food and health ser-

vices during the crisis, some sections, like those suffering from mental illness, should be provided food, shelter and social security by the state.

Dependent on charities

It said the complaint highlighted the issue of mentally ill persons dependent for food and shelter on charities, temples and gurdwaras. "But the administration has not issued any specific guidelines for these people, and no arrangements for their survival during this period of crisis have been made," the NHRC said.

'Ministry move weakens scrutiny of genetic labs'

AIDWA writes to Health Minister

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A women's rights group has sent a memorandum to Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan asking the government to withdraw an order that could weaken the implementation of the law that bans pre-natal sex determination.

"The suspension of these rules throughout the country would mean that clinics and genetic labs can carry on functioning without any scrutiny. This is the only scrutiny that these labs are subjected to, to assess their adherence to the basic rules and to ensure that sex selection is not being carried out by them," the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) stated.

It was referring to a gazette notification issued by the Health Ministry on April 4, which suspended Rule 8, Rule 9(8) and Rule 18A(6) of

the Pre-Conception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994.

The clauses deal with the process for renewal of registration of genetic and ultrasound clinic, responsibilities of labs in maintaining and preserving records of all tests, techniques and procedures as well as the duties of district authorities in sharing a quarterly progress report.

The Health Ministry has since issued a clarification through a press statement that its move was to only allow an extension of deadline for submitting these reports until June 30, but AIDWA has rejected this explanation.

Application for re-registration should not be postponed as it can be done online, AIDWA pointed out, adding that relevant records must be maintained as per the Act.

No ticket



Dancing heads: Asia's largest tulip garden, now in full bloom, remains closed to visitors in Srinagar due to the nationwide lockdown as a preventive measure against the spread of COVID-19. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

Bengal Chemicals gets COVID-19 drug boost

PSU can make hydroxychloroquine

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

In an overnight decision, Bengal Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals Ltd. (BCPL) was issued a licence to manufacture hydroxychloroquine, an anti-malarial drug that is being used in the treatment of COVID-19, on Friday.

The decision comes in the wake of reports that the profit-making unit, despite being the only government undertaking to manufacture anti-malarial drugs in the country, did not have a licence to manufacture hydroxychloroquine. The BCPL is reputed as India's first pharmaceutical company.

Friday's order from the Directorate of Drug Control, Government of West Bengal, allowed the BCPL to manufacture hydroxychloroquine tablets. The public sector undertaking has a facility to make tablets at Manikata.

"We got the licence only a few hours ago from the Drugs Controller. Now, we can manufacture it subject to the availability of raw material," P.S. Chadraiah, Managing Director, BCPL, told *The Hindu* on Friday.

The company was manufacturing chloroquine phosphate and the management had assured that it could rise to the occasion and make hydroxychloroquine, which was just another formulation, if it got the licence and orders. After reports emerged of the company not using its optimum capacity, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee raised the issue. "What is Bengal Chemicals doing?" she asked on Thursday.

However, even with the li-



Bengal Chemicals, in Kolkata, can make 10 lakh tablets a day.

cence, BCPL does not have adequate raw materials for production.

Not enough raw stock

We do not have the active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) which is available with a few companies in India or is imported from China. Since it is not possible to import from China we are asking both the State and the Centre to help us procure it," Mr. Chadraiah said. BCPL officials said a few pharma companies, such as Cadila and Inpa, may have the API and the company was trying to procure that. Mr. Chadraiah said with the API, the company could manufacture about 10 lakh tablets a day.

BCPL's trade union, however, welcomed the initiative. Mrinal Roychowdhury, representing the CITU-affiliated Bengal Chemicals Workers' Union, welcomed the development.

Bengal Chemicals was set up by chemist and entrepreneur Acharya Prafulla Chandra Roy in 1901.

While there has been talk of a strategic sale of the company, the PSU, with 300 employees, has posted profits for the past few years. In 2018-19, it made a profit of ₹25 crore.

Join duty, govt. tells Kannan Gopinathan

STAFF REPORTER
AHMEDABAD

The government has asked Kannan Gopinathan, who quit the Indian Administrative Service eight months ago "over denial of freedom to the people of Jammu and Kashmir", to join duty in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. But he has refused.

The government has asked him to join duty on the grounds that his resignation has not been accepted yet. Mr. Gopinathan said he was willing to volunteer during the COVID-19 crisis but not as an IAS officer.

BCAS extends validity of certifications

Civil aviation body's move will help in assigning duties to pilots and crew

S. VIJAY KUMAR
CHENNAI

The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) has extended the validity of refresher training certifications that are mandatory for assigning flight/ground duties to pilots, crew, ground staff and others.

After the nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19 grounded all aircraft, aviation staff have remained housebound, complying with the prohibitory orders. The Aviation Security Training Centres and Institutes that offer the mandatory refresher courses for pilots, crew, flight engineers,



Aviation staff get regular refresher courses on safety.

ground handling staff, security personnel and others have also closed down.

With the lockdown likely to be extended, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has decided to extend the validity of re-

resher course certifications expiring on or after March 20, up to June 20 or till revocation of the instructions issued in the circular dated April 6, 2020.

The validity of the certification is mandatory for signing flight duties to pilots, crew, aircraft maintenance engineers, ground handling staff, etc. The refresher courses update them on the latest technology developments, amendments in International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) norms and latest guidelines issued by the Ministry of Civil Aviation," a BCAS official told *The Hindu* on Friday.

The BCAS conducts at least eight types of refresher courses to personnel involved in flight operations at the national and regional Aviation Security Training Centres/institutes. The aviation industry has stringent regulations with regard to flying hours, training, refresher courses to ensure safety and security of passengers, the official said.

The extension of the validity or eligibility period of the certificate holders would help in uninterrupted services in case the COVID-19 lockdown is lifted and flight operations are allowed, the official said.

Online tool for mental health offered free

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

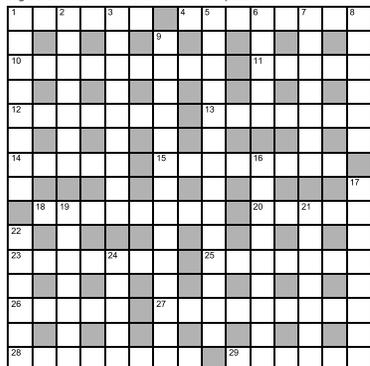
Global mental health platform InnerHour will offer its online programmes and self-help tools pro bono to help people to better cope with stress and anxiety during the lockdown.

InnerHour's self-help platform has benefited nearly six lakh people globally, its founders, Amit Mahajan and Neha Kirpal, said in a press statement.

The organisation will offer a range of clinical tools and self-help activities and voice or video therapy sessions in seven languages.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12907

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



- (set by KrisKross)
- By entering US state without visa, finally make a discovery (7)
 - Restaurants abruptly drop/withdraw orders (7)
 - Some operas said to be very musical (5)
 - Modern Indian state, now reduced toxic emissions primarily (2-2-4)
 - Court accepts a pure form of entertainment (7)
 - She gives a lecture — one essentially about a musical composition (8)
 - Very fit but lax (5)
 - Vehicle out at sea, subjected to endless mishandling (7)
 - Briefly leave bar, beginning to edge towards the beach (7)
 - Group without legendary leader is lost (5)
 - Send back additional diet supply (9)
 - Stitching coat — need yarn (8)
 - Cattle respectfully addressed by Spooner in English and Hindi (6)
 - After that, idiot carrying present reaches hotel (9)
 - Zulu chased by wild bear and another animal (5)
 - They transport waste from say, your dirty street, mostly (7)
 - Herb quietly visits ruined minarets (9)
 - Public showers? (14)
 - After extraordinary zeal, son does nothing (5)
 - Court accepts a pure form of entertainment (7)
 - Picks up notices about a herbarium's top tree (3,3)
 - Humbly we stretched up in order to welcome head of Italy (4,3,7)
 - Boyfriend holding sweetheart's huge sack (9)
 - Church to measure yard for burial ground (8)
 - Read regularly and plan — it's a tough competition (3,4)
 - Girl passes, receiving spectacles as gifts (7)
 - Doctor makes an incision in leg, near a point in the skull (6)
 - Fried a kebab for starters in garden (5)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

Solution to puzzle 12906

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Narasimha praised

One of the names by which Lord Mahavishnu is praised in the Vishnu Sahasranama is Sandhaata. This is a reference to His avatara as Narasimha, said M.A. Venkatakrisnan in a discourse. As Narasimha, He calls out to devotees like Prahlada, and keeps them beside Him. The next name is Sandhimaan. This means that not only does He draw His bhaktas to His side, but He also ensures that they are beside Him always, and are not separated from Him. Narasimha is Sthirah, which means that even if those who are with Him should err, while they are with Him, He willingly forgives them and overlooks their errors.

He is Ajah. This means that His birth is unusual. He suddenly sprang from a pillar. Vedanta Desika says that because of the Narasimha avatara, a pillar became Brahma's grandmother! Vishnu is the father of Brahma, and since Vishnu as Narasimha, appeared from a pillar, naturally, the pillar becomes Brahma's grandmother! Narasimha is Durmarshana, because enemies cannot face Him. He is Saasta, because He punished the wicked in a way they deserved. He is Visrudanta. This indicates that the story of Narasimha is one that should be heard by everyone. He is Surairaha, because He tore up the enemy of the celestials, namely Hiranyakasipu.

Ramanujacharya appointed 74 Simhasanadipathis to carry forward the Visishtadvaita philosophy, and for every one of them, Narasimha was the Aradhana murti. Namazhvar asks, will anyone study about anyone but Rama, or by association with Him, even blades of grass were liberated? In the following verse, Namazhvar extols the Krishna avatara. But he finally says knowledgeable persons will not want to learn anything except the glories of the Narasimha avatara.

British PM Boris Johnson out of intensive care

Hundreds of millions of people around the world to spend Easter holidays at home as COVID-19 death toll nears 1,00,000

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON/ROME

Prime Minister Boris Johnson



Recovered patients test

Wear masks, Melania urges Americans

First Lady contradicts husband's stance

KATIE ROGERS
WASHINGTON



A Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) is a company registered under the Companies Act, 1956 engaged in the business of loans and advances, acquisition of shares/stocks/bonds/debentures/securities issued by Government or local authority or other marketable securities of a like nature.

NBFC does not include any institution whose principal business is that of agriculture activity, industrial activity, purchase or sale of any goods (other than securities) or providing any services and sale/purchase/construction of immovable property.

A non-banking institution which is a company and has principal business of receiving deposits under any scheme or arrangement in one lump sum or in installments by way of contributions or in any other manner, is also a non-banking financial company (Residuary non-banking company).

Difference between banks & NBFCs

NBFCs lend and make investments and hence their activities are akin to that of banks; however there are a few differences as given below:

NBFC cannot accept demand deposits;

NBFCs do not form part of the payment and settlement system and cannot issue cheques drawn on itself;

Deposit insurance facility of Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation is not available to depositors of NBFCs, unlike in case of banks.

Long Term Reverse Repo Operation (LTRO) is a mechanism to facilitate the transmission of monetary policy actions and the flow of credit to the economy. This helps in injecting liquidity in the banking system.

Funds through LTRO are provided at the repo rate. This means that banks can avail one year and three-year loans at the same interest rate of one day repo. But usually, loans with higher maturity period (here like 1 year and 3 years) will have a higher interest rate compared to short term (repo) loans.

According to the RBI, the LTRO scheme will be in addition to the existing Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) and the Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) operations.

The LAF and MSF are the two sets of liquidity operations by the RBI with the LAF having a number of tools like repo, reverse repo, term repo etc.

The central bank has been conducting LTROs for one- and three-year tenors of appropriate sizes for up to a total amount of Rs 1,00,000 crore at the policy repo rate from the fortnight beginning February 15, 2020.

The central bank received total bids of ₹1.94 lakh crore, for the three-year repo, compared with the notified amount of ₹25,000 crores.

In yet another (LTROs) ₹48,856 crores worth of bids were conducted for an amount of ₹25,000 crores with a three-year tenor.

LTROs are conducted on Core Banking Solution (E-KUBER) platform. The operations would be conducted at a fixed rate.

The minimum bid amount would be Rs 1 crore and multiples thereof. There will be no restriction on the maximum amount of bidding by individual bidders.

E-Kuber

e-Kuber is the Core Banking Solution of Reserve Bank of India which was introduced in 2012.

Core Banking Solutions (CBS) can be defined as a solution that enables banks to offer a multitude of customer-centric services on a 24x7 basis from a single location, supporting retail as well as corporate banking activities.

The centralisation thus makes a "one-stop" shop for financial services a reality. Using CBS, customers can access their accounts from any branch, anywhere, irrespective of where they have physically opened their accounts.

Almost all branches of commercial banks, including the Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), are brought into the core-banking fold.

The e-kuber system can be accessed either through INFINET or Internet. The INFINET is a Closed User Group Network for the exclusive use of member banks and financial institutions and is the communication backbone for the National Payments System.

Barr believes the Russia investigation that shadowed President Donald Trump for the first two years of his administration was started without any basis and amounted to an effort to "sabotage the presidency."

Mr. Barr offered no support for his assertion that the FBI lacked a basis for opening the investigation and made no mention of the fact that the bureau began its probe after a Trump campaign adviser purported to have early knowledge that Russia had dirt on Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton.

Mr. Barr, who has appointed a U.S. attorney to lead an investigation into the origins of the Russia probe, said the Justice Department has evi-

gation that eventually morphed into special counsel Robert Mueller's probe.

"I think the President has every right to be frustrated, because I think what happened to him was one of the greatest travesties in American history," Mr. Barr said in the interview with Fox News.

The Attorney-General said the FBI launched its counter-intelligence investigation into ties between the Trump campaign and Russia "without any basis."

"Even more concerning, actually, is what happened after the campaign, a whole pattern of events while he was President," Mr. Barr said.

"To sabotage the presidency, and I think that — or



William Barr

at least have the effect of sabotaging the presidency."

Security threat

The Justice Department's Inspector General found the FBI was justified in opening an investigation into ties between the Trump presidential campaign and Russia — to protect against a national security threat — and found the bureau didn't act with political bias.

Mr. Trump and his supporters are counting on dif-

fering Mr. Barr selected to examine the early days of the Russia probe. Mr. Durham's investigation is going on.

Mr. Barr has been a loyal supporter of Mr. Trump since becoming Attorney-General, though their positive relationship showed signs of fraying earlier this year when Mr. Barr said in an interview that Mr. Trump's tweets about ongoing Justice Department cases made it "impossible" for him to do his job.

Mr. Mueller concluded that the Russian government interfered in the 2016 poll, but his probe didn't find sufficient evidence to establish a criminal conspiracy between Mr. Trump's campaign and Russia.

and stood in line at 3-foot intervals. They were required to have their body temperatures taken, to rub their hands with sanitiser and to put on disposable plastic gloves handed out by officials. Then they entered the booths and voted, as South Korea pressed ahead with its first election in a time of epidemic.

The coronavirus pandemic is disrupting political calendars around the world, causing delays and triggering electoral chaos in the U.S. It has provoked voter ire in Wisconsin, where many absentee ballots failed to arrive in time and voters were afraid to put their health at risk by going out to cast their ballots. In South Korea, the



Vote of confidence: Resident casting ballots during early voting at a polling station in Seoul on Friday. • AFP

parliamentary election is proceeding relatively seamlessly so far. The government is trying to assure its 44 million eligible voters that it is safe to leave their homes to go to the polls.

To make the voting run

smoothly, South Korea has mobilised armies of public servants. They have disinfected 14,000 voting stations across the country.

South Koreans were also allowed to vote in advance on Friday and Saturday at temperature readings higher than 37.5 Celsius (99.5 Fahrenheit) would be stopped at the gates of polling stations and escorted to a separate area to vote. The voter would then be sent for testing and the voting booth disinfected.

Officially, the election for South Korea's 300-member National Assembly is scheduled to take place Wednesday. But nearly 5 million people cast ballots on Friday and more were expected to vote on Saturday. The advance voting system, introduced in 2013, is serving as a dress rehearsal of sorts for the extraordinary plan disease-control officials have designed for an epidemic-era election. NYTIMES



Export sector may see 15 mn jobs go, NPAs rise: FIEO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

About 15 million people's face job losses in India's exports' sector following cancellation of over half of the orders and a gloomy forecast for global trade due to the COVID-19 pandemic, exporters' body FIEO said.

Seeking immediate announcement of a relief package for exports, Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President Sharad Kumar Saraf said fine balancing is required between life and livelihood, as opting for only one can be disastrous for the country.

He said that exporters were left with "very" few orders and if factories were not allowed to work with a minimum workforce, many of them will suffer "irreparable losses" which will bring them to the brink of closure as they were saddled with fixed costs that, in any case, had to be absorbed by them.

"With cancellation of over 50% of the orders and a gloomy forecast for the future, we expect 15 million job losses in exports and rising NPAs (non-performing assets) amongst exporting units, hitting the economy very badly," he said.

"We are losing markets to China. All orders are going to China as they have resumed work. It will be very late if we don't start our factories now," he said.

Bank credit shot up just before lockdown

Loans grew by a whopping ₹2.31 lakh crore in the fortnight ended March 27, RBI data showed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Bank loans grew by a whopping ₹2.31 lakh crore in the fortnight ended March 27, indicating robust loan demand just when a nationwide lockdown was imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19, according to the RBI.

This was probably the highest fortnightly loan growth recorded in financial year 2019-20. The lockdown, that paralysed the economic activity, came into effect on March 25.

Soumya Kanti Ghosh, group chief economic adviser, SBI, had said in a report that the banks have witnessed a healthy credit demand in the last seven days of the financial year 2019-20.

"The good thing is that banks have witnessed good traction in credit (term and

Rising numbers

RBI data shows that credit growth for the year ended March 27 was 6.1% - one of the lowest in many years. Credit growth for the previous year was 13.3%

| For fortnight ended | Variation (₹ cr.) | |
|---------------------|-------------------|----------|
| | Credit | Deposit |
| Mar. 27, 2020 | 2,31,440 | 2,31,883 |
| Mar. 13, 2020 | 35,627 | 12,871 |
| Feb. 28, 2020 | 62,397 | 1,05,410 |
| Feb. 14, 2020 | -63,491 | -88,464 |
| Jan. 31, 2020 | 98926 | 1,97,560 |
| Jan. 17, 2020 | -30,686 | -83,893 |
| Jan. 3, 2020 | 99,728 | 20,5578 |
| Dec. 20, 2019 | 12,519 | -97,401 |
| Dec. 6, 2019 | 74,437 | 1,47,366 |
| Nov. 22, 2019 | 14,541 | -39,224 |
| Nov. 8, 2019 | 6,954 | 20,505 |

Source: RBI

working capital requirements) in the last seven days of the year ending March 31, 2020," Mr. Ghosh said in the report. "It seems companies/corporates are preparing themselves for a surge in demand after the lockdown pe-

Incremental outtake

The report had estimated the incremental credit outtake would have been ₹2,10,000 crore in March of which agriculture demand

It seems companies are preparing for a surge in demand after the lockdown period

SOUMYA KANTI GHOSH
Group CEA, SBI

would have been ₹10,000 crore, industry ₹1,20,000 crore, services ₹60,000 crore and personal loans ₹20,000 crore.

"Clearly, the tide seemed to have turned as far as bank credit is concerned in March," the report said.

Credit growth at nadir
Latest data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) showed, credit growth for the year ended March 27 was 6.1%, one of the lowest in many years. Credit growth for the previous year was 13.3%. Deposit growth dur-

ing the reporting fortnight was ₹2.31 lakh crore while the growth for the year was 7.9% compared with the 10% recorded in the previous year.

The central bank had also said that there were signs of growth picking up, in the monetary policy report released on Wednesday.

"Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, the outlook for growth for 2020-21 was looking up," the RBI said as it cited the bumper rabi harvest, transmission of monetary policy rates and reduction in GST rates.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically altered this outlook," the central bank added while refraining from providing any forecast on growth due to the uncertainties on how long will be the pandemic will continue.

Saudi, Russia want oil cuts finalised at G20 talks

But, Mexico refuses to sign up in full

REUTERS
DUBAI/MOSCOW

Top oil nations were finalising a deal at G20 talks on Friday for big output cuts to lift prices slammed by the COVID-19 crisis with Russia and Saudi Arabia taking a lion's share and signs the United States might take unprecedented moves to help.

Riyadh, Moscow and its allies, which make up the informal OPEC+ group, had forged a pact to curb crude production by the equivalent of 10% of global supplies in marathon talks on Thursday and said they wanted others to cut a further 5%.

But efforts to conclude the OPEC+ deal hit the buffers when Mexico refused to sign up in full. However, the Mexican President said Do-



nald Trump had told him he might make cuts on Mexico's behalf, even though the U.S. President has given no public indication Washington would join in the cuts and has instead threatened Saudi Arabia with tariffs and other measures if it did not resolve the oil market crisis. Major oil markets were closed on Friday as the G20 energy minister held a video conference, hosted by Saudi Arabia, but prices failed to rally after Thursday's cuts.

Moratorium on repayment puts NBFCs in a spot

Institutions can't postpone repayments to banks: Crisil

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) may face a tough time following the Reserve Bank of India's recent directive on providing a moratorium on repayment.

This is because though these entities are providing moratorium to their customers, they still have to continue repaying banks and other borrowers. NBFCs are highly dependent on banks for funding.

"NBFCs face a double whammy because they are offering moratorium to customers despite not getting one themselves from their lender-banks. That will put a

significant pressure on the liquidity profiles of many NBFCs," Crisil said.

According to Crisil, liquidity pressure will increase for almost 25% of the Crisil-rated NBFCs if collections do not pick up by June 2020.

These NBFCs have ₹1.75 lakh crore of debt obligations maturing by then.

"With collections being minimal and the moratorium [applicable] only for their borrowers, raising fresh funds is critical, especially because NBFCs, unlike banks, do not have access to systemic sources of liquidity and depend significantly on wholesale funding," it said.

Crisil said while ₹1 lakh crore has been made available following the RBI's targeted long-term repo operations (TLTRO) window, only half of that is earmarked for primary issuances.

"Also, an expected scramble for funds means corporates and government-owned financiers will also be interested in this window. Consequently, only high-rated NBFCs may end up benefiting," it said.

Crisil said while larger and better-rated NBFCs may still be able to manage the situation, smaller or lower-rated NBFCs, which have significant dependence on bank funding, will find the going extremely tough.

Half of stores shut, footfalls drop: D-mart

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Avenue Supermarts, which owns and operates retail chain D-mart, said operations of half of its stores are closed, following the directions issued by authorities amid the lockdown.

The company is retailing only essential items from the operating stores and average footfall is "significantly lower than usual" due to several restrictions imposed by the authorities, Avenue Supermarts said in an update on business operation to bourses.

"Nearly 50% of our stores remain closed based on a directive by the local authorities," it said. The firm has presence in 206 locations via D-mart stores.

Removal of tariff ceiling may revive investment in renewables

Solar energy producers to get leeway to factor in higher risks

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Centre's decision to remove the tariff ceiling from renewable energy tenders will give the beleaguered industry a much-needed leg up. Capacity addition in renewables dropped to 9 GW in fiscal 2019, compared with 11-12 GW over the 2017 and 2018 fiscals, and remained subdued through fiscal 2020 as well.

The allocation rate fell from almost 75-80% over fiscals 2016 and 2017 to 35-40% over fiscals 2018 and 2019, and is likely to be even lower at 20% in fiscal 2020.

Miren Lodha, director, Crisil Research said, "We estimate an incremental fillip



of 6-7 GW from the removal of tariff ceiling over the medium term. Solar energy developers will now have the leeway to factor in higher risk in cases where the counter-party has a weaker profile, irradiance is low, or there are other execution hurdles. This will allow for

higher bid tariffs and improve subscription to tenders, though positive impact is expected to materialise only after the pandemic ends."

Crisil Research, however, expected solar weighted average tariff to remain in the current ₹2.50-2.60 per unit range as lower module cost, larger scale of projects, and continued tendering activity in the segment continue to spur competition among players.

As for wind energy tenders, though tariffs have remained sticky at the ₹2.8 per unit mark, viability remains a concern as the sector grapples with execution challenges on the ground.

'Post-pandemic period will see turnaround in job market'

Healthcare, pharma, biotechnology will be 'sunrise' sectors

LALATENDU MISHRA
MUMBAI

Once the COVID-19 dust settles down, a new order will emerge in the job market, analysts say. Several new jobs in the field of health and hygiene and technology may come up.

According to HR firms, gaming, over-the-top (OTT) services, work-from-home virtual team, project management software, e-commerce and edutech segments would see a steady increase in business.

"There will be hot jobs in these sectors," Francis Padamadan, senior director, RPO & BPS Practice, APAC, KellyOGG, said.

"Virtual medical tourism could take off to provide psychological aid and faster therapeutic healing to patients. Services and health

sectors will see a spike," he said. He said there will be increased demand for contract employees across delivery services, fulfilment centres and contact centres to manage and support disaster management activities, sanitisation and cleaning work. But companies will have full-time employees in their core areas and across IT digital skills, online marketing and content writing.

COVID-19

Microbiology and biotechnology, as segments, are expected to take off, as every organisation would require the services of such people to advise and sensitise staff on microbes and how to deal with infections. Such people will also be required for research by pharmaceutical

companies, they added.

Jyoti Bowen Nath, managing partner, Claricent Partners said, "While start-ups and small to mid-sized companies have been badly hit by the crisis, the large cash-rich business houses are also facing the brunt."

However, pharma, medical equipment companies, and the whole digital and e-commerce segments are possibly the new 'sunrise' sectors as they are the need of the hour, she added.

Sashi Kumar, MD, Indeed India said, "As the job market slows down in the wake of a global pandemic, essential services such as medical and public health continue to drive demand. Despite the slump in the sector, healthcare continues to be one of the foremost drivers of economic growth."

Merged banks get time on bancassurance agreements

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Insurance regulator IRDAI has allowed the four banks, emerging from the recent mega bank merger exercise, to continue for a year with existing bancassurance agreements of the lenders that amalgamated with them.

"The acquiring bank may continue arrangement with more than three entities in each of the life, general and health categories of insurers for a period of 12 months from the date of merger by transfer of the existing insurance arrangements of the acquired banks to their name," the regulator said.

This exemption allows only for transfer of existing insurance arrangements of acquired banks to the acquiring banks and should not be construed as permission by the Authority to enter into new arrangements with other insurers, said a communication to heads of the banks concerned from IRDAI Member (Life) K.Ganesh.

The communication applies to Punjab National Bank, Canara Bank, Union Bank of India and Indian Bank that, on April 1, had a few banks merging with them as part of a government plan to create larger banks.

As per bancassurance regulations, a bank can only market three life, general and health insurance companies' products. The banks that have been merged with them also had bancassurance business.

The IRDAI eventually wants the acquiring bank to retain the existing certificate of registration to act as a corporate agent and surrender COR(s) held by acquired banks by submitting written request to the Authority.

Sunrise Industry

Sunrise industry is a term used for a sector that is just in its infancy but shows promise of a rapid boom.

The industry is typically characterized by high growth rates, high degree of innovation and generally has plenty of public awareness about the sector and investors get attracted to its long-term growth prospects.

On the other hand Sunrise industry rapid emergence may threaten a competing industry sector that is already in decline. Because of its dim long-term prospects, such an industry is referred to as a sunset industry.

Existing Indian sectors that can be termed as Sunrise sectors and likely to hold us in good stead in the future in terms of employment generation and business growth are:

- Information Technology
- Telecom Sector
- Healthcare
- Infrastructure Sector
- Retail Sector
- Food Processing Industries
- Fisheries

Ceiling and floor prices. Ceiling is the maximum upper limit at which a product can be sold. Floor is the lower most limit at which a product is brought.

Union Bank reverses charges

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

State-run Union Bank of India has reversed the amount deducted by the bank due to non-maintenance of minimum balance by a migrant worker.

The lender reversed the funds after some users pointed out in social media that a seasonal migrant worker, having an account with Union Bank, was in need for funds and ₹800 was transferred to the person's account. However, the bank deducted most of the amount deposited under the category, 'general charges and recovery.'

"When the matter came to our notice, we reversed the money that was debited," a senior official from the bank said.

IT firms' Q4 profits likely to be impacted by virus

Billing, utilisation to see impact: MOFSL

PIYUSH PANDEY
MUMBAI

Fourth quarter (Q4) profits of leading Indian information technology (IT) firms are likely to be impacted due to the disruptions caused by the pandemic outbreak.

Motilal Oswal Financial Services said it expected IT firms' revenues to grow 6%, earnings before interest and tax to grow 4% and profits to fall by 2% in Q4.

"The second half of 4QFY20 witnessed varying levels of COVID-19 disruption across most of core markets of IT companies like the U.S. [and] Europe. Not all service offerings are amenable to be delivered from home for a variety of reasons. In conjunction



with lower productivity, both billing and utilisation in Q4 should witness impact," MOFSL said in a research note.

Jefferies equity research said discussions were likely to be dominated by COVID-19 in the results season, though its impact on Q4 performance and bookings is likely to be limited in most cases.

What is the G20?

The G20 is an annual meeting of leaders from the countries with the largest and fastest-growing economies. Its members account for 85% of the world's GDP, and two-thirds of its population. The G20 Summit is formally known as the "Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy".

Establishment:

After the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997-1998, it was acknowledged that the participation of major emerging market countries is needed on discussions on the international financial system, and G7 finance ministers agreed to establish the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting in 1999.

Presidency:

The group has no permanent staff of its own, so every year in December, a G20 country from a rotating region takes on the presidency. That country is then responsible for organising the next summit, as well as smaller meetings for the coming year. They can also choose to invite non-member countries along as guests. The first G20 meeting took place in Berlin in 1999, after a financial crisis in East Asia affected many countries around the world.

Full membership of the G20:

Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union.

Its relevance in changing times:

As globalization progresses and various issues become more intricately intertwined, the recent G20 summits have focused not only on macroeconomy and trade, but also on a wide range of global issues which have an immense impact on the global economy, such as development, climate change and energy, health, counter-terrorism, as well as migration and refugees. The G20 has sought to realize an inclusive and sustainable world through its contributions towards resolving these global issues.

What is G20+?

The G20 developing nations, also called G21/G23/G20+ is a bloc of developing nations which was established on August 20, 2003. It is distinct from the G20 major economies. The G20+ originated in September 2003 at the 5th ministerial conference of the WTO held at Cancun, Mexico. Its origins can be traced to the Brasilia Declaration signed by the foreign ministers of India, Brazil and South Africa on 6th June 2003. The declaration stated that the major economies were still practising protectionist policies especially in sectors they were less competitive in and that it was important to see to it that the trade negotiations that took place provided for the reversal of those policies. The G20+ is responsible for 60% of the world population, 26% of the world's agricultural exports and 70% of its farmers.

Opec+ refers to the alliance of crude producers, who have been undertaking corrections in supply in the oil markets since 2017.

OPEC plus countries include Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman, Russia, South Sudan and Sudan.

What are their goals?

The Opec and non-Opec producers first formed the alliance at a historic meeting in Algiers in 2016.

The aim was to undertake production restrictions to help resuscitate a flailing market.

What is OPEC?

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.

