



Need to reset our mind to adjust to situation, says Venkaiah Naidu
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Sonia writes to PM to extend free rations to vulnerable families
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Retail inflation drops to 5.91% as coronavirus hits domestic demand
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North Korean leader Kim Jong-un reshuffles top governing body
 page 12



PRINTED AT - CHENNAI - COIMBATUR

K - PATNA

NEARBY



Amid lockdown, huge rush in Koyambedu

CHENNAI
 Shops in the Koyambedu wholesale market witnessed heavy crowd on Monday as people made last-minute purchases, ignoring the lockdown and the physical distancing norm ahead of the Tamil New Year.

CHENNAI • PAGE 3

'Persistent hypoxia triggered deaths'

CHENNAI
 Persistent hypoxia (reduced oxygen in the cells) was the main trigger for the death of persons who tested positive for COVID-19 in the State, according to doctors. In some patients, it happened all of a sudden. In some, their condition did not improve even though they were provided oxygen supply.

TAMIL NADU • PAGE 2



Funds of Government of India The Indian government's funds are kept in three parts, which are listed below:

**Consolidated Fund of India
 Contingency Fund of India
 Public Accounts of India**
 All three are described below briefly.

Consolidated Fund of India

This is the most important of all accounts of the government.

This fund is filled by:

Direct and indirect taxes

Loans taken by the Indian government

Returning of loans/interests of loans to the government by anyone/agency that has taken it

The government meets all its expenditure from this fund.

The government needs parliamentary approval to withdraw money from this fund.

The provision for this fund is given in Article 266(1) of the Constitution of India.

Each state can have its own Consolidated Fund of the state with similar provisions.

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India audits these funds and reports to the relevant legislatures on their management.

Read about the other two from Laxmikant Indian Polity

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 RAVANAN

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 m Rajesh

Centre may raise loan to pay GST dues to States

Rise in spending to tackle COVID-19

NISTULA HEBBAR
 NEW DELHI
 The Union government is exploring raising a loan to pay the shortfall of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) compensation amount to the States as the latter have had to ramp up spending to combat the outbreak of COVID-19.

According to senior officials in the Finance Ministry, the idea has been circulated and since the GST Act prohibits withdrawal of funds from the Consolidated Fund, raising loans is being seen as a way out.

States to be consulted

"We will either need to call a videoconference of the GST Council or ask the States in writing whether they are on board on this," said a senior government source.

According to Krishna Byre Gowda, former Minis-

ter for Agriculture in the Karnataka government and part of the GST Council when the Act was drafted under the aegis of then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, this route can be explored quite legitimately by the government of India.

"A discussion was held earlier on how to address if there was a revenue shortfall. There were concerns over what if cess accruals were not adequate to pay the shortfall. The government of India was adamant in resisting suggestions to pay the shortfall from the Consolidated Fund of India and at that point the option of raising a loan on the cess account was discussed and agreed as an option, and the loan accrued would be paid from cess accruals in the future," he said.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

Work as usual



Balance of power: Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation workers carrying out maintenance work in Thoothukudi amid the ongoing lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19. The summer months witness a surge in power use. • N. RAJESH

Mother drowns five children in the Ganga

Hunger forced the woman, say activists

SOCIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
 A woman in Bhadohi district of Uttar Pradesh drowned her five children in the Ganga in the early hours of Sunday. Four out of the five bodies were recovered by Monday afternoon, said locals.

Talking to media on the banks of the Ganga, Manjiv Yadav, a resident of Jahangirabad village in Gopiganj, confessed that she pushed her five children, including three girls, into the water due to mental stress after a quarrel with her husband. She alleged that her husband would often beat her and that they were having a dispute.

"Dimaag ulta hogaya [I lost my mind]," she said. "Tension mein dimaag raha, [pani mein] daal diya [My mind was under stress... I threw them into

the water]."
 Social media users, including CPI(M) leader Kavita Krishnan and lawyer Prashant Bhusan, however, alleged that the woman drowned her children as she was unable to feed them due to the lockdown.

Ms. Krishnan, who posted a video message alleging that Ms. Yadav drowned her children due to food shortage, said the woman was forced to issue a contradictory statement in police custody. "People can understand what the truth is and what hunger is," she tweeted.

The police, the administration and the village pradhan refuted this claim, stating that the woman pushed her children, the young ones aged three, into the river due to a domestic dispute.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

Locals bar cremation of doctor's body

Fear of virus spreading sparks protest at Ambattur

S. VIJAY KUMAR
 CHENNAI

The body of a doctor, who succumbed to COVID-19 in a private hospital at Vanagpalam in Chennai, was taken back to the mortuary on Monday evening after some residents protested against the cremation, fearing the spread of the virus.

The 55-year-old orthopaedist, a native of Nellore in Andhra Pradesh, was admitted to the hospital about a week ago after he tested positive for COVID-19. He was declared dead at 3 a.m. on Monday.

When health workers clad in personal protection equipment brought his body to the Chennai Corporation crematorium at Ambattur, some locals objected to the cremation, police sources said.



Fears allayed: Corporation workers spraying disinfectant near the Ambattur crematorium. • K. PICHUMANI

Even after a police team reached the spot and explained to the protesters that the cremation would not trigger a spread of the novel coronavirus, they refused to budge. For hours, the body remained in the vehicle as health and police officials tried to persuade the locals to allow the cre-

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 2

Free tests only for the poor, clarifies SC

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
 NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday modified its April 8 order to clarify that free testing for COVID-19 shall continue to be made available to the poor eligible under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana.

Free testing would also be made available to any other category of economically weaker sections of society as notified by the government from time to time, the court said.

Private labs would continue to charge the Indian Council of Medical Research rates of up to ₹4,500 for tests from people who can afford to pay.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

MGNREGA jobs crash to 1% of normal

With worksites closed, activists urge SC to ensure wages for all those registered

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
 NEW DELHI

Employment under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has collapsed to just over 1% of the usual rate this month due to the COVID-19 lockdown.

Activists petitioned the Supreme Court demanding that the government pay full wages to all active job card holders during this time, following its own instructions issued to other employers.

1.9 lakh families

Data from the MGNREGA website show that less than 1.9 lakh families have been provided work under the scheme so far in April 2020, in comparison to almost 1.6 crore households which were provided work in March, and the 1.8 crore

Livelihoods collapse

The number of families engaged for work under MGNREGA has dropped from about 1.6 crore in March to only 1.9 lakh families in April. Tamil Nadu was hit the most, with the count dropping from around 22 lakh in March to just 179 families in April



households employed under the scheme in February before the lockdown began.

Chhattisgarh was the highest employment generator under the scheme in April, providing work to

more than 70,000 families, followed by Andhra Pradesh with more than 53,000 households given work. However, these figures are a fraction of the usual employment provided in

these States, and also raise concerns about COVID-19 infection being spread at worksites.

Key source

The scheme, which guarantees 100 days of work per year at an average daily wage of ₹209, is key to providing livelihoods to poor villagers and is a backbone of the rural economy in difficult times.

Overall, 7.6 crore families hold active job cards under the scheme, and almost 5.5 crore families found work under the scheme last year.

The crash in employment rates under the scheme is despite the fact that migrant workers returning to villages should have increased demand in rural areas.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

Tangedco extends bill payment deadline

Low-tension consumers get time till May 6

STAFF REPORTER CHENNAI
The Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (Tangedco) has extended the deadline for the payment of electricity bills till May 6 for low-tension consumers.

The move follows Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palanisami's decision to extend the COVID-19 lockdown till April 30.

In a press release, Tangedco said that since assessments could not be carried out in view of the lockdown, consumers could pay the last-billed amount of January or February for the current period. "Once the lockdown is lifted, the assessed electricity bill would be adjusted based on the next reading cycle," it added. The State power utility has advised low-tension consumers to pay their electricity bills online.

FROM PAGE ONE

Locals bar cremation of doctor's body

Senior police, Corporation and health department officials are working on a strategy to cremate the body as early as possible. The deaths caused due to coronavirus, the bodies will not be handed over to the family though they can be present at the crematorium. Some guidelines have been issued by the Chief Secretary in this regard and a decision on disposing of the body will be taken soon," the official said.

Health Secretary Beela Rajesh attributed the confusion to a "communication gap" and said that detailed guidelines on the disposal of bodies had been circulated to all hospitals. Steps would be taken to ensure that such incidents did not recur, she said, adding that since the doctor had tested positive for COVID-19 in Andhra Pradesh, the death would be added to the number of fatalities in that State.

Health workers disinfected the Ambattur crematorium premises after the body was removed. No case was registered in connection with the incident, police sources added.

Fishermen, farmers can go about their business, says Narayanasamy

Puducherry CM stresses need to adhere to social distancing norms



V. Narayanasamy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT PUDUCHERRY
Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy on Monday announced an extension of the lockdown till April 30 to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the Union Territory.

In an audio message, the Chief Minister said the territorial administration had decided to extend the prohibitory orders till the end of the month, as had been done in Tamil Nadu.

Fishermen and farmers could engage in their vocation and sell their produce in the market. Fish vendors should adhere to social dis-

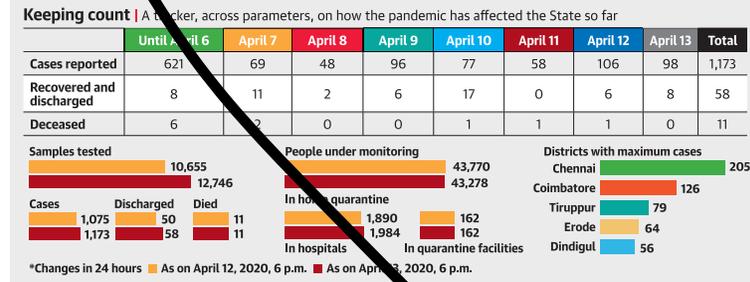
Any relaxation of rules for other sectors would be done based on the announcement to be made by the Prime Minister

tancing norms while selling their catch, the Chief Minister said.

Vegetable and grocery shops would continue to function as they had been during the past 20 days, he added. Any relaxation of rules for other sectors would be made based on the announcement to be made by the Prime Minister regarding the lockdown, the Chief Minister said.

98 more persons test positive, taking Tamil Nadu's tally to 1,173

Of the fresh cases, 91 came from a single source; Tiruppur tops with 18 cases



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI
Tamil Nadu reported 98 more cases of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on Monday. With this, the total number of patients who have tested positive for COVID-19 in the State has reached 1,173.

Of the fresh cases, 91 were from a single source, four were contacts of a person who had tested positive for COVID-19 earlier, and three were doctors, according to Health Secretary Beela Rajesh.

She said that till Sunday, a total of eight doctors had tested positive, while three more — two government doctors and one private doctor — had tested positive since then. With this, a total of 11 doctors and five staff nurses/hospital staff have tested positive in the State.

Eleven persons have died of COVID-19 in T.N. so far.

As many as 58 patients had been discharged after treatment from various hospitals in the State, Dr. Rajesh said. Among the 1,173 COVID-19-positive patients, 31

were below the age of 10, she added.

Among the 98 fresh cases, most of the patients were contacts of earlier patients. Tiruppur reported the highest number of cases — 18. This apart, two persons from Chengalpattu, 9 from Chennai, seven (including two primary) from Coimbatore, 15 from Karur, 14 (seven primary) from Madurai, five from Nagapattinam, three

from Ramanathapuram, four from Sivaganga, one from Tirupattur, four from Tiruvallur, one from Tiruvannamalai, three from Tiruvannur, two from Thoothukudi, four from Vellore and six from Virudhunagar had reported positive.

The total number of patients in Chennai rose to 205, followed by Coimbatore, with 126. Samples were lifted from 62 persons who had been hospitalised for severe acute respiratory infection, and none of them had tested positive for COVID-19, she

said. "So far as Tamil Nadu is concerned, we have been successful in identifying the source of infection of patients. Based on this, we are taking up aggressive containment measures. Our aim is to keep the number of deaths down," she said.

When asked about the death of an employee of a private airline, she said all the contacts of the patient had been traced. While testing was being done for high-risk contacts, low-risk contacts were being put under home quarantine, she said.

The State has a total of 25 testing facilities in the government sector and 9 in the private sector. Two new laboratories had been approved — at the Government Vellore Medical College Hospital and the State Public Health Laboratory in Chennai, she said.

Monday recorded the highest number of samples lifted for testing — 2,091.

Rapid test kits

Dr. Rajesh said rapid test kits were expected to arrive in a day or two. "Rapid test kits are only a surveillance tool.

We are not waiting for it. We already have the confirmatory tests (RT-PCR). We are taking up massive and aggressive testing of all persons with influenza-like illness and severe acute respiratory infection, and high-risk and low-risk contacts in containment areas," she said.

She said the State had received 10,000 PCR testing kits from the Centre. "In addition, we have procured 14,000 kits. We have placed orders for 1.5 lakh more PCR testing kits. The shipment has already reached Mumbai and is likely to reach us in a day or two," she said.

"The State is well-prepared and has adequate stock of protective equipment. Now, we have 65 lakh triple-layer masks, three lakh N95 masks and two lakh [pieces of] PPE (personal protective equipment). We have a total of 3,371 ventilators," she added.

A total of 1,984 persons were in isolation facilities at hospitals across T.N. A total of 43,278 persons were under home quarantine and 162 in government quarantine facilities, she said.

"We don't like it but it is essential. The State government did not take the decision *suo motu*. It was a collective responsibility. We had considered the recommendations of medical experts," he told *The Hindu*.

When asked why the State government did not wait for the Centre's decision on the lockdown, despite having stated earlier that it will, he said, "Ultimately, people's welfare comes first, and a decision has been taken accordingly."

A senior official said, "We had decided to wait for the PM's decision, hoping that he would address the nation sooner. But as it turned out, they (the Centre) were waiting till the penultimate day of the lockdown. So, we decided to go ahead."

CPI(M)'s warning

However, CPI(M) State secretary K. Balakrishnan was of the view that the government could not have decided against the Centre. He felt the announcement was perhaps made after "every much [receiving] occurrence" from the Centre. Mr. Balakrishnan, however, cautioned that the next few days would not be easy, since the general public was running out of money.

Senior DMK leader Duraimurugan said the PM should have explained the reason behind his decision.

IN BRIEF

Restricted functioning of courts till month-end

CHENNAI
Even before the government announced the extension of the lockdown till April 30, the Madras High Court had decided that all judicial functions across the State will remain restricted till the end of the month, and only extremely urgent cases will be heard through video-conference or otherwise. The administrative committee took the decision after observing that the prevailing status of COVID-19 in the State was likely to continue "for some time in future."

Don't grant exemptions to specific sectors: PMK

CHENNAI
PMK youth wing leader Anbumani Ramadoss on Monday said the Central government should not exempt 16 types of industries from the COVID-19 lockdown, as had been recommended by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade. Mr. Ramadoss said the lockdown should be extended by two weeks, and then by another week in May.

Govt. clarifies on distribution of relief aid

Press release had only urged 'coordination with district administration'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

A day after it warned of legal action against individuals, NGOs and political parties distributing food packets and other relief material directly to the people in need during the COVID-19 lockdown, the AIADMK government on Monday clarified that it had only called for "coordination with the district administration" to ensure that the relief material reached the beneficiaries in a safe manner. However, the government did not say whether political parties could extend such material assistance to the needy.

In an official press release on Monday, the government claimed that the contents of Sunday's press release had been misunderstood. "The government had only instructed them (the benefactors) to follow norms in accordance with the prevailing situation, and had not



Proper channel: The government has urged the people to contribute relief material to the authorities concerned.

stopped anyone [from helping those in need]. Volunteers and organisations could coordinate with the district administration on the distribution of relief material when required," Monday's press release said.

Calling upon the people to contribute relief material to the authorities concerned, the release said, "Arrangements would be made to distribute relief material,

cooked food and dry rations offered by NGOs in the areas or to the people specified by them."

Flays Oppn. leaders

The government alleged that DMK president and Leader of the Opposition M.K. Stalin, MDMK founder Vaiko and Tamil Nadu Congress Committee president K.S. Alagiri "have been campaigning against the truth",

and acting as if the government had stopped volunteers from extending assistance to the poor. "The government is not playing politics," the release said.

Around 2,500 organisations and over 58,000 volunteers had registered themselves with the State government and had been extending assistance "along with the district administration following social distancing and public health norms, it said.

"The government's intention is not to stop aid. The government's position is that relief should be extended appropriately and through safe means, considering the prevailing situation," the release said.

While it hailed the "commendable work" done by volunteers and NGOs during natural disasters in the past, it pointed out that there were no prohibitory orders in place back then.

Three petitions filed against curbs on relief efforts

'Govt.'s move arbitrary, unreasonable and discriminatory'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

Three public interest litigation (PIL) petitions have been filed in the Madras High Court, challenging the restrictions imposed by the State government on the distribution of relief material by volunteers, and its insistence that they coordinate with government officials before distributing the goods.

The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), represented by its organising secretary R.S. Prabhathi, Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK) leader Vaiko and advocate A.P. Suryaprakasam filed individual cases questioning the government's interference in relief work by volunteers.

In its affidavit, filed through senior counsel P. Wilson, the DMK stated that it had been distributing



food, grains, vegetables, groceries, medical kits and so on to the poor, who did not have the wherewithal to order food through home delivery services during the lockdown.

The party claimed that its cadre had been following all necessary protocols, by wearing masks and gloves. Nevertheless, the government had unilaterally ordered that volunteers should not distribute relief material unilaterally without roping in government officials, it alleged. "Such action of the government directly infringes

on the fundamental right to life and existence and the right to food, guaranteed under Articles 21 of the Constitution of India. It is also highly irrational, arbitrary, unreasonable and discriminatory," the DMK's affidavit read.

In his petition, Mr. Suryaprakasam insisted that the government should also be directed to ensure home delivery of the 500 grocery kit that it had planned to sell through ration shops. He demanded adherence to social distancing norms at ration shops.

Over 300 textile merchants stranded in Sri Lanka

They have urged the Indian govt. to arrange a special flight to bring them back

L. SRIKRISHNA DINDIGUL

Over 300 textile merchants from various parts of Tamil Nadu, who had gone to Sri Lanka on a business trip, are stranded in the island nation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Every year, small and marginal merchants from Chinnalapati, Nilakottai, Kundalapati, Anaipatti and other small towns visit Sri Lanka during the Katchatheevu festival in March to sell sarees. The silk and kandangi sarees from Chinnalapati are much sought-after in the neighbouring country.

The merchants travel to different parts of Sri Lanka, including Colombo, Jaffna, Trincomalee, Kandy and a few other cities. "We stay there for around two months

We have already spent all the money we had earned through the sale of goods

and when return home," said Rajendran, who is among the merchants stranded in the neighbouring country.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, he said, "The sudden cancellation of flights has forced us to stay here. We have already spent all the money we had earned through the sale of our goods. We are in dire need of help. Many have fallen sick. There are no health facilities, and assistance has not been forthcoming from the government here. We are looking for help from the Indian government. Please save us by arranging a special flight immediately so that we could reunite with

our families." A few other merchants, stranded in Colombo, said a curfew had forced them to stay indoors. "Through our local contacts, we have been managing to get cooked food. Many NGOs gave us hope and tried to connect us with the officials of the High Commission. We have been hearing that the Indian government has been taking steps to help people (us), but we have not seen any tangible efforts so far," they said. The relatives of some of the affected merchants from Dindigul submitted a memorandum to the District Collector on Monday, urging him to take up the issue with the State government.

According to officials at the Indian High Commission in Sri Lanka, a group of visit-

ing businessmen from Virudhunagar, who had sought help, were provided support. "The Indian mission has set up helplines to assist visiting Indians. Those seeking help are being provided assistance," a spokesperson told *The Hindu*.

It is unclear how many Indian tourists or businesspeople are currently in Sri Lanka and are unable to return to India. India is among Sri Lanka's top tourism source markets. In February 2020, the country accounted for the highest number of international tourists to Sri Lanka. As many as 35,309 Indian tourists arrived in the island nation during the month, according to Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority.

(With inputs from Meera Srinivasan in Colombo).

'Persistent hypoxia' triggered deaths of patients

Taking steps to pick up warning signs early: experts

SERENA JOSEPHINE M. CHENNAI

Persistent hypoxia (reduced oxygen in the cells) was the main trigger for the deaths of persons who had tested positive for COVID-19 in the State, according to senior doctors.

Tamil Nadu, which reported the first death of a COVID-19 patient on March 25, has recorded a total of 11 deaths of persons aged between 45 and 75 years so far. At least five of them are women. Some of them had comorbidities, including diabetes and hypertension.

Officials of the Health Department said each of these deaths was being audited, and treatment and moni-

toring protocols were being tweaked for better management of patients, and to prevent further deaths.

"All these patients had persistent hypoxia. This was the trigger. In some patients, it happened all of a sudden. In some, their condition did not improve even with us providing oxygen supply. So, we are taking measures to detect hypoxia early. It is important to pick up the signs early. We have modified the protocols, making it practical for better management of patients," a senior doctor said.

Constant monitoring

Pulmonologists explained that hypoxia basically means reduced oxygen in the cells, and in COVID-19 cases, typical for critical cases. When the lungs are

damaged, adequate oxygen does not reach the cells. This leads to resistance to treatment.

Doctors said that they were monitoring the oxygen saturation levels in patients using pulse oximeters. "Some patients, who have tested positive for COVID-19, have no symptoms. They were identified during contact tracing and isolated. We see that they are doing fine during rounds. On the second or third day, they develop breathlessness when they walk. So, for patients who are ambulant, we are using finger pulse oximeters once in two to three hours. This way, we are able to find the oxygen saturation in the blood. We can pick up early signs before their condition deteriorates," a doctor in-

volved in the treatment of COVID-19 patients said.

He explained that in patients with COVID-19, the fluid in the lungs interferes with the oxygen transfer to the blood. As a result, there is a decrease of oxygen levels.

He added that patients undergo chest X-ray on admission. "We see if there are findings suggestive of involvement of the lungs. Even if it is mild, we bring these patients under our radar and they are monitored frequently. Supplementary oxygen is also provided, and there are instances where patients have recovered well," he said.

If the patients have a saturation level of above 96% or 97% in the room air environment, they are taken off the radar, while others with 93% or 94% are monitored, he said.

Timings
CHENNAI

TUESDAY, APR. 14
RISE 05:57 SET 18:22
RISE 00:00 SET 11:26

WEDNESDAY, APR. 15
RISE 05:57 SET 18:22
RISE 00:41 SET 12:20

THURSDAY, APR. 16
RISE 05:56 SET 18:22
RISE 01:32 SET 13:13

Chennai Weather max min

| | | |
|-----------------|----|----|
| Thiruvallur | 38 | 22 |
| Chennai Airport | 35 | 25 |
| Chennai City | 34 | 27 |

Chennai Airport Today
35°C The day will be warm and partly cloudy. Night will be comfortable.

Chennai Airport Tomorrow
34°C The day will be warm and partly cloudy. Night will be comfortable.

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Number of travel passes to be reduced

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

With lockdown extended till month-end, Tamil Nadu police plans to reduce the number of travel passes to bring down instances of violation as the number of violations reached 1,63,477 across the State.

Additional Director General Police, Law and Order, K. Jayanthi Murugesan said, "We are going to reduce the passes. Excessive passes were issued in some places. We are taking steps to reduce it."

Over 1,75,636 were arrested for violation of prohibitory orders and 1,39,008 vehicles were seized. As many as 1.6 lakh First Information Reports were opened and ₹68.57 lakh as fine has been collected.

City Police Commissioner A.K. Viswanathan said people have widely cooperated to effectively implement prohibitory orders in the city. But there were violations in some places. The city police registered over 48,000 cases so far for violation of prohibitory orders and traffic rules and seized 23,000 vehicles including two-wheelers and four wheelers.

Mask a must when stepping out of home

Violators will see passes scrapped and vehicles impounded, says Corpn. Commissioner G. Prakash

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Residents will have to compulsorily wear masks when they step out of their homes.

Chennai Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash on Monday announced that under the relevant provisions of the Epidemics Control Act and the Public Health Act, all persons were required to wear masks when they stepped out of their houses.

"As long as people are moving outside, they have to wear them. If found without masks, their movement passes will be cancelled and vehicles impounded for three months," he warned.

The order came into effect on Monday night.

Extraordinary resilience
Earlier in the day, the Commissioner said that people of the city had shown remarkable resilience and cooperated with the ongoing COVID-19 lockdown.

Though the State was known for demonstrations



Health first: A doctor checking a migrant worker at a shelter in Pudupet on Monday. • B. VELANKANNI RAJ

and hartals, there wasn't a single instance of people coming on the roads to protest.

"We understand the difficulties of daily wage labourers, artisans, carpenters, autorickshaw drivers and others in the lower strata of society who eke out a living on a daily basis. There is no doubt that they are hit hard by the lockdown. The Chief Minister has already rolled out financial assistance to these people and dry ra-

tions. People struggling but cooperating with," he said.

Mr. Prakash said people were welcome to contribute food, dry rations and survival kits to poor people. The Chief Minister had urged the public not to engage themselves in distributing these items directly. People wishing to render such assistance could drop the food packets, dry ration bags, survival kits etc. at the three designated spots - Amma Arangam, She-

noy Nagar; JJ Indoor Stadium, Kilpauk; and TNHB Marriage Hall, Besant Nagar. "We will issue a receipt and make sure that the items are distributed to the needy," he said.

Those who distribute food and relief materials should get permission from the Corporation. They will permit only the driver of the permitted vehicle and one person to distribute the relief materials in the presence of one officer from the Corporation. "Political parties will not be allowed to carry party flags, banners or other material during the distribution of relief materials," said Mr. Prakash, in a statement.

Groceries distribution
Civic agencies would strengthen door-to-door delivery of groceries in Chennai and other areas of the State. Local Administration Minister S.P. Velumani said.

Speaking to reporters, he said that groceries were being sold door-to-door on many streets of the city using

3,955 tricycles and 937 vehicles. Over 1,416 mobile units in other cities and 1,189 units in smaller urban areas were selling groceries. "All residents will get groceries at an affordable price at their doorstep," he assured.

At a review meeting, civic officials were directed to help residents get groceries at their doorstep. Stressing on the need for supply of food to all residents, the Minister said 407 Amma Cantens in Chennai and 247 cantens in other parts of the State were providing food for 6.25 lakh residents every day.

"Chennai Corporation has covered 95% of residents in the door-to-door survey of COVID-19 symptoms. Over 19 lakh households in the city have been covered. We have also received complaints from residents about private hospitals refusing treatment for patients with symptoms. Teams of civic officials have been formed to help such persons," said Mr. Velumani.

Heavy rush at Koyambedu flower market ahead of Tamil New Year Day

Prices of flowers double on Monday



Flouting norms: Customers at the Koyambedu market did not observe physical distancing norms on Monday. • K. PICHUMANI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Shops in Koyambedu wholesale market witnessed heavy rush on Monday, ahead of the Tamil New Year Day. People made last-minute purchases but did not observe the physical distancing norms.

The prices of flowers, which were very low till Sunday due to the lockdown, doubled on Monday. Wholesale traders said there was more crowd than usual in both vegetable and flower shops since the lockdown period started last month.

Many visitors wore handkerchiefs as masks and people jostled for space to make the purchase.

The flower market received 4,000 visitors on Monday, which was more than double the number compared to last week. A to-

There was demand for marigold and jasmine and most of the produce was sold out

SHIVA PETER
Flower merchant

tal of 17 truckloads, mainly roses and marigold, arrived in the market on Monday. This was double the quantity received till Sunday, they said.

N.Shiva Peter, a flower merchant, said there was demand for marigold and jasmine and most of the produce was sold out. As the market was operated for limited hours, people rushed in to buy vegetables and flowers.

While roses and marigold were priced up to ₹100 a kg, jasmine was sold for ₹40-₹80 a kg in the wholesale market.

Eight Ethiopian nationals arrested for violations

R. SIVARAMAN
CHENNAI

The city police have arrested eight Ethiopian nationals for violating the provisions of the Foreigners Act, 1946, and for being involved in religious activities.

Police said the foreign nationals were staying at a mosque in Mannady, within the Muthialpet police station limits. They were rounded up by the police and subjected to COVID-19 test. As they tested negative, they were produced before a judicial magistrate and lodged in Central Prison, Puzhal. "They came on medical visas and indulged in religious activities contrary to the provisions of the Foreigners Act," a senior police officer said.

The foreigners were booked under Sections 188 (Disobedience to an order lawfully promulgated by a public servant), 269 (Negligently doing any act known to be likely to spread infec-

tion), 271 (Knowingly disobeying any quarantine rule) of IPC and provisions of the Epidemic Diseases Act, T.N. Public Health Act, National Disaster Management Act and Foreigners Act.

129 held in past week

In the past week, 129 foreign nationals, staying in various mosques in the State, have been held for violation of visa norms and involvement in religious activities. These predators hailed from Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Congo.

The police said they had arrived in India on tourist visas and violated the guidelines by travelling to different parts of the country and preaching. They also attended the Tablighi Jamaat conference in Delhi last month. The foreign nationals were picked up in Kanchipuram, Salem, Erode, Madurai and Dindigul districts, police said.

LPG consumers flock to gas agencies seeking free refills

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

LPG consumers have been flocking to gas agencies asking if they were eligible for the free cylinders as announced by the Central government.

Oil companies had announced that consumers under the Ujjwala Scheme (Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana) will get three free refills for the months of April, May and June.

"For the past few days we have been getting at least 5-6 customers daily asking if they were eligible for the scheme. And they come in with the gas book, which clearly shows they are not under the Ujjwala Scheme," said a distributor.

Already, distributors said they have been finding it difficult to function due to police restrictions on the roads. "Since agencies are kept open as we come under essential services, customers



Around 30 lakh consumers in the State get supplies under the Ujjwala Scheme. • B. VELANKANNI RAJ

Text messages can be sent to non-Ujjwala customers saying they need not reach out to their agency as they will not be eligible

cancelled. "The government announcement seems to have only created confusion among the people. Text messages could be sent to non-Ujjwala customers saying they need not reach out to their agency as they will not be eligible for the free cylinders. Or better, they could provide free cylinders or refills on loan since many don't have cash on hand to pay for cylinders," said a distributor of South Chennai, hoping that oil companies would step in to bring in clarity to consumers.

Around 30 lakh consumers in the State get supplies under the Ujjwala Scheme.

Departing passengers too may be screened once airport operations begin

STAFF REPORTER
CHENNAI



When the operations resume, passengers flying out of Chennai airport too may be screened at the departure hall of the domestic terminal. So far, only passengers arriving in the city were screened before the lockdown was imposed.

Airport Authority of India (AAI) officials said that screening of departing passengers also a precautionary measure was under consideration.

"We had discussions on how it can be implemented. We are framing a standard operating procedure for every airport to carry out operations in a safe way," said an official.

"The reason for screening passengers leaving the city is now being considered because they should not come in contact with other passengers in the aircraft and spread the infection. If a passenger has fever or any other symptoms, then he/she may be sent to a quarantine facility. We are still finalising the plan and working out how to implement it," an official said.

The airport will make arrangements to ensure passengers stand at one metre distance from each other at all points inside the terminal.

"Right now, we are only making arrangements for domestic operations. We think international opera-

Arrangements will be made to ensure that passengers stand at a distance from each other at all points.

tions will take more time," he added.

Though there has not been any official announcement on whether domestic flight operations will begin, some of the airlines have already sent their flight schedules for Wednesday to the AAI on Monday, sources said. Initially, only a reduced number of flights will be operational from the city. For instance, one of the leading airlines has given a schedule to operate about 19 flights a day as against 110 a day that was used to operate, sources said.

THE HINDU
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The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) is a government scheme launched in 2016 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The scheme envisages the distribution of 50 million LPG connections to women below the poverty line. It was launched with a budget allocation of Rs. 80 billion. A total of 22 million LPG connections were distributed during the first year of its launch.

The Finance Minister of India, Nirmala Sitharaman made an announcement on 26th March, 2020 to provide free cylinders to the BPL (Below Poverty Line) families for the next three months under the Ujjwala scheme. This announcement was made as an initiative towards the loss caused by the Covid-19 outbreak in India.

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IN BRIEF

a. Balachandran is PSC chairperson
CHENNAI
The Tamil Nadu government has appointed senior IAS officer a. Balachandran as the chairperson of Tamil Nadu Public Service Commission (TNPSC). Mr. Balachandran has been serving as the Principal Secretary to the State in the Registration and Commercial Taxes Department until recently.

An app to track offenders
TIRUVANNAMALAI
A mobile application to track offenders has been launched by the Tiruvannamalai district police. Named 'smart cop', the app installed by all ranks of policemen, is implemented from Monday, said M.R. Sibi Chakkaravarthy, SP, who launched the app. The Ranipet district administration has introduced door delivery of essentials through an app. Delivery Me was launched by Collector S. Divyadarshini.

CBSE schools seek nod to collect fees

The management body has also asked for reimbursements for RTE admissions

STAFF REPORTER
CHENNAI

The CBSE Schools Management Association (CSMA) has appealed to the State and Central governments to let them collect fees from parents to pay staff salaries and ensure the smooth functioning of schools.

In a memorandum, the association president C.S. Manoharan has stated that all schools had shut down by March 21 owing to the sudden lockdown due to the spread of COVID-19.

"We request the parents and government to understand that lakhs of teachers and other staff members will be drastically affected without their salaries. If the government extends the time for paying fees for the parents, we request the government to give interest-free loans



Schools have begun online classes for students during the lockdown. A student attending an online session from her home. — R. RAGU

through banks to help schools cover expenses during the lockdown period," the memorandum stated.

The CSMA has also asked for reimbursements for RTE (Right to Education) admissions, which have been kept on hold, to be released soon and to grant schools awaiting new or an extension of their affiliation, an extension of one year.

P. Ashok Shankar, secretary of the association, said that most schools had immediately started

online classes and ensured that students were effectively engaged. "We are following the directives of the CBSE and Ministry of Human Resource Development to ensure that learning continues and are taking efforts in facilitating live classrooms and other such activities," he said.

The Tamil Nadu Nursery Primary and Matriculation Higher Secondary and CBSE Schools Association too had appealed for financial exemptions from the government.

The CBSE schools finish their final term exams in March and generally conduct classes for the next academic year for a few days in April before they close down for summer holidays. Most private State board schools too finish the fee collection for the new academic year in advance. But the lockdown, they say, has disrupted this.

"While we understand that it is a tough time for everyone, we want institutions to be allowed to collect fees from parents. We do not wish to compromise on the salaries of our teaching and non-teaching staff," a school principal said.

Chennai Chief Educational Officer and other district-level officers have warned schools in their jurisdictions about pressuring parents to pay the fees immediately. With a question was recently raised about schools collecting fees, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami said action would be taken if specific complaints were received about schools pressuring parents.

193 tonnes of veggies distributed in 5 days

They are sold through mobile units to city residents

T. RAMAKRISHNAN
CHENNAI

A total of 193.5 tonnes of vegetables were distributed to residents of Chennai in the last five days ever since the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) inaugurated the service of mobile vegetable shops.

On April 8, the CMDA announced that vegetables would be sold through mobile units. For delivering them to those who make individual orders the CMDA entered into an arrangement with Swiggy, Zomato and Dunzo, online food ordering and delivery platforms. For bulk booking, the CMDA uses its own vehicles. Also, it tied up with the Cooperation Department.

Of the overall figure,

31 tonnes were provided through online platforms. The authority, on its own, provided 108.29 tonnes to those who placed bulk booking.

On Monday, it ran 90 trips of vehicles to deliver 18 tonnes of vegetables, officials said. Besides, in cooperation with the Cooperation Department, the authority distributed 53.5 tonnes to city residents, according to an official of the Housing and Urban Development department.

The rationale behind the service is to make vegetables available to residents at "affordable rates" because of the lockdown to contain the spread of COVID-19.

A few days ago, Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam, who holds the portfolio of

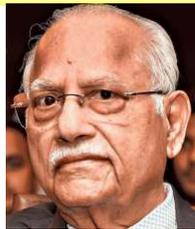
Housing and Urban Development, reviewed the status of different arrangements being made by different arms of the department in connection with COVID-19 relief measures.

Slum tenements
On Sunday, 1,472 tenements of the Slum Clearance Board in Chennai, including 864 tenements in Vyasapadi's K.P.Park area, were handed over to the Corporation for conversion into temporary isolation wards for COVID-19 patients. The remaining tenements are in Tiruvottiyur.

Also, 1,176 tenements, spread across Ariyalur, Perambalur and Thanjavur districts, have been given to the respective district authorities for the purpose.

Post COVID-19, life will never be the same again

In my career as a clinician for over six decades, I have witnessed doctors battling disease, every single day, alongside their patients. There have been crises, situations that caused great panic, emergencies and alongside, enormous joy, every time a medical miracle was achieved and precious lives saved.



Dr. PRATHAP C. REDDY
Founder Chairman,
Apollo Hospitals Group

I was 12 years of age then, so I remember World War II quite well. It was a war, we knew who the enemy was and there was preparedness for combat. But the COVID-19 pandemic is proving to be a furtive adversary, threatening people in more than 200 countries and challenging even the most advanced healthcare systems in the world. If this is World War III, then it would go down in the annals of history and medicine as one, which in just 100 days, overwhelmed humanity and infected more than 1.5 million people and snatched 88,000 lives.

I have never seen what we are seeing today and believe that the world that I've known will never be what it was!

SARS-CoV-2, a 120 nm virus has brought the world to virtually a standstill. It has made us pause, stop and think. It has made us realise that the world we live in today has no borders.

It has made us think that what we thought indispensable can actually be done away with. It has made us aware that we as a human race can break the barriers that we have erected and as a united force, can take on any challenge. It has made us recognise the amazing ability we

have to find solutions in record time. It has made us appreciate the beauty of stillness. It has made us rekindle the power of finding solace in the arms of family members.

As I write, I am reminded of the period before India became independent from colonial rule in 1947. I was a teenager and was living with my parents in Aragona, a small village in Andhra Pradesh. Then, the father of our nation Mahatma Gandhi was leading our freedom struggle through a movement of non-violence, and like every Indian, in spirit, I too joined the revolution.

Today, once again, I am seeing the same spirit of patriotism across our glorious nation, and I commend the Government of India and all the State governments for their relentless efforts in containing the pandemic.

India is bracing well to the challenge of COVID-19. The Gov-

ernment of India started preparing early (in January when there were no cases in India) and prepared well. The evacuation of our citizens from China and other countries, establishment of quarantine facilities, contact tracing, airport screening and travel advisories helped in preventing the spread of COVID-19 to a significant measure.

Extensive advertisements, messages on cell phones and various social media platforms were employed like never before to reach all our citizens.

Be it augmenting capacity in testing, procurement and development of diagnostic kits, enhancing infrastructure, standardising protocols for quarantine, containment and treatment, augmenting access to personal protective equipment (PPE) and availability of ventilators, there was a strong intent with decisive action.

Doctors and researchers came together across the globe and unravelled the genome of SARS-CoV-2 in days. Diagnostic kits were developed rapidly, clinical and vaccine trials were undertaken in record time. Our understanding has improved considerably in managing patients with COVID-19, we now have effective efficacious medication and we are at the cusp of using newer therapy. The public and private sector came together to take on SARS-CoV-2.

The Prime Minister of India has personally led the fight against COVID-19 addressing the nation three times in a fortnight. Global leaders and WHO have applauded the Govern-

ment of India for its proactive approach.

A countrywide lockdown when there were less than 600 cases for a country of 1.35 billion is unprecedented in history and without parallel. This decision has met with huge support across the country and till date, 310 districts of India's 735 remain free of the COVID-19 infection. People, even though inconvenienced, have realised that this action needed to be taken in the larger interest of the nation. There will be huge economic consequences but the decision was imperative in the larger interest of citizens. If there is health, only then can there be wealth. The lockdown is estimated to have prevented several thousand individuals from getting infected and saved numerous precious lives. The lockdown will help flatten the curve and not allow the health infrastructure to be overwhelmed.

The 1.4 million physicians of Indian origin working across the globe have been at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19, as they have done on many occasions in the past. The world is looking up to them for solutions and they will never let people down.

On 22nd March, we saw an outpouring of emotions from 135 crore Indians that would have uplifted the spirit of every healthcare professional. For doctors, patients come before all else because, at the age of 22, on graduating, they took an oath to care for humanity.

Together, we can, we must

and we will be victorious over COVID-19. We are at an inflection point in our war and with a well thought-out strategy with meticulous execution, we will be victorious. As advised by the WHO, in the days ahead, we need to test, test and test, as ramping up testing is pivotal to break the chain.

On Tuesday, the 21-day lockdown period will be completed, a few States have already announced an extension till the end of the month. With the Prime Minister to address the nation, we will know the Centre's decision on the road ahead. It is an arduous decision as they would have to weigh innumerable aspects regarding safeguarding the health of every Indian and secure the health of our economy. As responsible citizens, each of us have to abide by, respect the decisions of our administrative leaders, and do our part in staying well and safe.

Hopefully, the lessons we would have learnt about living within the parameters defined by the lockdown without dependence on what was once unimaginable, will stay with us. Who would have thought that virtual meetings can be as meaningful as they have turned out to be? Who would have thought that social distancing as a term would not only find its place in our vocabulary but also our day to day lives? Who would have thought we can demonstrate such discipline collectively? We will now have a new definition of what is normal, a new normal has taken shape in 2020. Life will never be the same again.

'Not blocking free rice distribution'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUDUCHERRY

Distribution of free rice for 'above poverty line' cardholders, as demanded by political parties, was under the consideration of the government, Lt. Governor Kiran Bedi said on Monday.

In a Whatsapp message to reporters, the Lt. Governor said that the distribution of free rice and grains under the 'above poverty line' cardholders was being carried out based on a standard operating system.

Disputing reports that appeared in a section of media that she was blocking the distribution of free rice, the Lt. Governor said, "The truth of the matter is that rice and grains are already being organised for distribution to BPL families through a fair method."

Inspector transferred after clip goes viral

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KALLAKURICHI

An inspector of police attached to the China Salem police station in Kallakurichi district was transferred to the Armed Reserve after a video showing him allegedly assaulting a PMK cadre went viral on Saturday.

The police said Sakthivel, a PMK cadre of Moongilpadi village, posted a message on a social networking site

criticising inspector Sudhakar of China Salem police station.

In the video, the inspector is seen assaulting Sakthivel for the post on social media even as the latter's party members are pleading with Mr. Sudhakar to leave their sole.

After initial investigation, Superintendent of Police T. Jayachandran ordered an inquiry and transferred Mr. Sudhakar to the Armed Reserve.

Selective medicines to be delivered at homes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

In view of the extension of lockdown, the Health department is facilitating door delivery of selective medicines based on doctors' prescriptions.

The service is supported by the Tamil Nadu Chemists and Drugists Association and nearly 4,000 pharmacies have been networked.

People can call the toll free number - 18001212172 - and place

their orders for medicines. The association has facilitated door delivery of the medicines through the nearest medical shop.

Service launched
The service has been launched in Chennai and 37 districts in the State.

Officials said that this would cover drugs that are permitted for door delivery.

Health Minister C. Vijayabaskar launched the service on Monday.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

We deeply mourn the demise of

Mr. A. P. Krishnamoorthy
Retd. DRM, Bank of India, Cathedral Road, Chennai
DOB 12.3.1940
Passed away 10.4.2020
Deeply mourned by Vasantha Krishnamoorthy, Kamala Devi Rajan, T. N. Rajan, Neha Rajan, Nisha Rajan, Patives & Friends
Funeral ceremony will be held on 19.4.2020 at 10.30 a.m., Plot No. 1816, 13th, Main Road, Anna Nagar West, Chennai 600040
99623 22073, 99409 98989

DEATH

SMT. USHA, MANAGER, Kalavai Vridhacharam, Attur, Achayan Thiruvadi, 12-04-2020 Midnight.

A good reputation is better than expensive perfume, and the day you die is better than the day you are born. ECC - 7:1

V.R. KRISHNAN, CA
S/o V. R. Ramaswami
D.O.B. 11.09.1944
D.O.D. 12.04.2020
Leaves behind
Wife - Nirmala
Son - Venkatesh
Daughter-in-Law - Remya
Nephew - Sathish
email: vangaal@yahoo.com

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

7th Death Anniversary
The Spirit lives in the shelter of God's love and mercy.

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

IN MEMORY OF

Rev. J. ISAAC MOON
M.A., B.Sc., B.D.
Former President of IELC
Entered into the Kingdom of God this day. We thank our Lord Jesus Christ for His Wonderful Ministry and Led us into Christ.
Children, Relatives & Believers
87549 34086

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

BIRTH CENTENARY

Mrs. Hilda Samuel
(w/o Mr. D.V. Samuel)
Born: 31-07-1934 Promoted to Glory: 14-04-2013
I Good people pass away, the goodly often die before their time. No one seems to understand that God is protecting them from the evil to come. 2 For those who follow goodly paths will rest in peace when they die. Isaiah 57:1-2
Loving husband, children and family
0891-2516161, 92908 39974, 097414 05317, 099400 01123.

DEATH

Smt. LAKSHMI (87yrs)
W/o T. NARAYANA RAO (Formerly of Lucas India)
Passed away on 12-04-2020
The Tamarappakam Family of Madras has lost a pillar
Thank you Friends & Relatives who were able to attend obsequies.
Mobile: 9840880811

DEATH

Mr. M.C. MARIANATHAN
Founder, Naathan Promoters
A man of principles who believed in hardwork and selflessness, has left behind a legacy to cherish and honour
In reverence & remembrance
Wife, Sons, Daughters, Sons-in-law, Daughters-in-law, Grand Children, Great Grand Children.
98400 49421

Govt. of Bihar

Notice No.: -BMSIC/45025/232-2020/411

SHORT TERM PUBLIC NOTICE

(Invitation for Expression of Interest)

In view of Pandemic situation prevailing due to Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19) outbreak leading to an emergency like situation including the lockdown in the country and its anticipated adverse impact on the supply chain of Medical Devices/ Consumables, BMSICL is going to procure the following item under emergency procurement so as to deal with the emergency COVID-19 situation across the Health facilities in the State of Bihar on an urgent basis. Interested parties may submit their willingness to supply of the following item:

| S.N. | Name of Item | Immediate Requirement (May increase as per needs) |
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| 1. | RT-PCR KITS (ICMR Approved) Compatible with all types of RT-PCR Machines | 25000 Test Units |

The interested suppliers are required to submit through e-mail, their proposal in the below mentioned format along with the delivery schedule and the details (Address, GST Registration no. and PAN) of the supplier, at the office of "Managing Director, Bihar Medical Services and Infrastructure Corporation Limited (BMSICL), 4th Floor, Bihar State Building Construction Corporation Limited, Hospital Road, Shastri Nagar, Patna-800023" within three days of publication of this notice to the e-mail id: covid19@gmail.com. The suppliers are also required to provide the certificate to justify the quality.

Format to be used by the bidders to express their interest:-

| Sl. No. | Name of Item | Specification (to be filled by the bidders in accordance to the availability of the respective item for immediate supply) | Available Quantity with the supplier (in units) | Unit Price excluding GST (to be filled by the Bidder) | Unit Price including GST (to be filled by the Bidder) | Delivery Schedule (in days) |
|---------|--------------|---|---|---|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. | | | | | | |

NOTE:

- Priority shall be given to the supplier who ensures early supply.
- For any clarification or query the interested parties may contact GM (Procurement), BMSICL on Mobile no. 9471006242 or visit our website. For further details please visit website www.prbihar.gov.in

GM (Procurement) BMSICL

PR. No. 000123 (Ni Ni) 2020-21

नौकर कोरेणा के संक्रम में रिकवर्त जानकारी एवं राहतोयें लें। Toll Free No. 104 पर संचालित कर सकते हैं।
काय समझी-संक्रमी किरमी तरह लो जानकारी अउदाय सुवातयें हेतु दुभाषण संस्था 0612-2217636 पर सम्पर्क किये जा सकते हैं।
प्रतिको के सवाली एवं सवातयें हेतु हम संचालन किये जा Toll Free No.: 18003456138

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शुद्धि पत्र

E-RFP Inviting Notice No. 03(Cons./)2019-20 & PR No-016741/19-20 एवं E-RFP Inviting Notice No. 04 (Cons./)2019-20 & PR No-017392/19-20 में निम्न रूप से तिथियों में संशोधन किया जाता है।

- (1) Date and Time of Pre-bid Meeting - Date: 11/05/2020 Time 3:00 PM
- (2) Last Date and Time of Download of bid document - Date: 26/05/2020 Time 3:00 PM
- (3) Last date and time of upload of bid document - Date: 27/05/2020 upto 3:00 PM
- (4) Time and Date of Opening of Tech. Bid - Date: 28/05/2020 Time 3:00 PM

शेष शर्तें यथावत रहेंगी।

मुख्य महाप्रबंधक
बिहार राज्य भवन निर्माण निगम लि.,
पटना

PR. No. 000086 (Ni Ni) 2020-21

नौकर कोरेणा के संक्रम में रिकवर्त जानकारी एवं राहतोयें लें। Toll Free No. 104 पर संचालित कर सकते हैं।
काय समझी-संक्रमी किरमी तरह लो जानकारी अउदाय सुवातयें हेतु दुभाषण संस्था 0612-2217636 पर सम्पर्क किये जा सकते हैं।
प्रतिको के सवाली एवं सवातयें हेतु हम संचालन किये जा Toll Free No.: 18003456138

Safety first



Boxes have been drawn on a flyover-turned-weekly vegetable market in Hyderabad on Monday to suggest the space required to keep a safe physical distance. **BY DANARAJ CHITRA**

Karnataka to turn 1

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT BENGALURU
The Karnataka government, which is staring at a severe financial crunch due to the lockdown in the wake of COVID-19, on Monday decided to turn to real estate sector and monetise government properties, besides allowing real estate growth that would bring in additional financial resources to the treasury.
Major decisions taken by

the government include the sale of more than 12,000 corner sites in Bengaluru to improve the finances of the State. Similarly, the State has given its nod to auction corner and stray sites in the jurisdiction of various urban development authorities. "We are expecting generation of about ₹15,000 crore from auctioning sites. We will sell sites only if we get the market value and we are hoping to get a

Read High Court, Ordinance, State Election Commission from Lakshmikanth.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT BENGALURU
The Chief Minister where various proposals to augment financial resources were discussed with Ministers and officials. "The COVID-19 situation has thrown our State into deep financial trouble and there is a need to find ways to overcome the crisis," the Chief Minister

2 more die of virus in Karnataka

With seven new cases, Andhra Pradesh tally rises to 439, Kerala has 378

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI/ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/ VIJAYAWADA/BENGALURU
Karnataka reported two more COVID-19 deaths on Monday, taking the total toll in Karnataka to eight.
The deceased were a 55-year-old man, who had self-reported at ESIC Hospital in Kalaburagi on April 7, and a 75-year-old woman, who was admitted to the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Chest Disease in Bengaluru.
In the other southern States, Andhra Pradesh had seven new cases, Karnataka 15, and Kerala three.
Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the steady decline in new positive cases should not be taken as a licence to violate the current restrictions.
Even though there was no evidence of community transmission, the disease might flare up once the safeguards are relaxed, he said, briefing the media on Monday.
The State also recorded 19 patients who tested negative following treatment. Two of the new cases, from Kannur, were contacts of imported cases. The other was a person who had returned home to Palakkad from abroad. Of the 378 COVID-19 cases reported so far in the State, 178 were under treatment.
The number of people under surveillance dropped to

On the job

Police personnel are not just enforcing the lockdown, but also lending a hand to help citizens in need



In safe hands: A policeman carried a woman back to her home in Begumpet, Hyderabad, after she lost her way. **BY ANI**

| State | Total number of cases | Active cases | Number of those cured | Deaths |
|----------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------|
| Andhra Pradesh | 439 | 420 | 12 | 7 |
| Karnataka | 247 | 179 | 60 | 8 |
| Kerala | 378 | 178 | 198 | 2 |
| Tamil Nadu | 1,173 | 1,104 | 58 | 11 |
| Telangana | 592 | 472 | 103 | 17 |

isolation wards in hospitals and the rest in home quarantine.
Mr. Vijayan said testing had improved and up to

also trying to procure kits directly from the market but it was not easy.

A.P., Karnataka tally

With seven new cases Andhra Pradesh had 439 cases in all, an official bulletin said. Of the new ones, four were from Nellore and three from Guntur district.
Karnataka reported 15 new positives including four children, taking the total to 247. These include seven deaths and 60 persons discharged. Six were dis-

COVID-19

charged on Monday morning. The new cases are: Manjuri and Belagavi (3 each), Pallebali-Dharwad (4, including two children), Bidar (2), Bengaluru Urban, Bengaluru Rural and Bagalkote (one each).

Except for a 62-year-old man from Bengaluru Urban, 13 persons had contact history with those who travelled to Delhi and one travelled to Delhi. The Bengaluru Urban patient had Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI).
Primary and Secondary Education Minister Suresh Kumar told the media that Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa on Monday launched a Corona Helpdesk along with WhatsApp. People could use the facility by texting HI to 8750971717.

Not feasible to evacuate all, says govt.

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The government told the Supreme Court on Monday that it is not feasible to evacuate Indian citizens from abroad considering the present situation of the coronavirus outbreak in India.
"Given the present situation of the coronavirus outbreak in India and the available limited resources, it is not feasible to selectively evacuate Indian citizens from abroad when a large number of them from a number of countries want to return back due to various reasons," the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement before the Supreme Court.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde is hearing separate petitions seeking the evacuation of stranded Indian citizens - students, migrant labourers, fishermen, tourists, etc - from countries like the U.K., United States, Iran and the Gulf.
The court, however, admitted the petitions, even asking the government to respond by April 20 to a petition filed by a Nagaland resident for the immediate evacuation of 860 fishermen from Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Gujarat who are stranded in Iran due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

SEC ordinance: HC asks A.P. to file counter

STAFF REPORTER VIJAYAWADA

The A.P. High Court has directed the State government to file a counter by April 16 in response to the petition filed by former State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar pertaining to the reduction of his tenure to three years through an ordinance, which resulted in the termination of his services.
The court also adjourned the hearing of a batch of petitions pertaining to the case to April 20.
Chief Justice J.K. Maheswari and Justice M. Satyanarayana Murthy directed Advocate General S. Sriram to file a counter stating the government's position in response to Mr. Kumar's contention that neither was there an urgency nor a justifiable ground to promulgate the ordinance through which his term was cut short from five to three years.

Mr. Kumar said the "impugned ordinance" sought to circumvent the constitutional prescription that the SEC could be removed only through certain established procedures, by merely reducing the tenure and a condonation of that approach would affect the independence of the constitutional body. As the Advocate General defended the merits of the ordinance, Justice Maheswari interdicted him, or-

dering that he needed to reply to the petitioner's argument that there were no circumstances which warranted its issuance in a hasty manner.
Mr. Kumar argued that the promulgation of the ordinance during a medical emergency, which formed the very basis of his decision to postpone the local body elections, seemed to be actuated with an "oblique motive on extraneous grounds".

IN BRIEF



Veteran Congress leader M.V. Rajasekaran dead

BENGALURU
Veteran Congress leader and former Union Minister M.V. Rajasekaran died in Bengaluru on Monday. He was 91. The veteran leader, who was ailing for sometime, Rajasekaran, who had participated in freedom struggle was the son in law of former Karnataka Chief Minister Malingappa. He had served as Union Minister of State for Planning in the Ministry of P. Manmohan Singh.

Tigress cubs found in Wayanad sanctuary

KALPETTA
A tigress, aged around five years, was found dead in the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary on Monday. The animal, suspected to have died two to three days ago, had deep wounds on its neck, said B.N. Anjan Kumar, Chief Conservator of Forests, Wildlife, Palakkad. He said the animal could have sustained injury while trying to escape from a snare.

Two women, child found dead in Telangana

HYDERABAD
Two women, aged between 25 and 27, and a child from Karimnagar, who came to Hyderabad four days ago, were found dead under mysterious circumstances in a secluded area in Jawaharnagar on Monday. The bodies of the victims were found hanging from two different trees. The child's body was found a few feet away on the ground. A case has been registered.
Suicide prevention helpline Roshni can be reached at 40662000.

Migrant labourers attack A.P. police personnel

Circle inspector, 2 constables injured

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT ANANTAPUR

Ninety migrant labourers hailing from Madhya Pradesh, who were lodged in a quarantine facility at the SKD College in Gooty in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh, allegedly attacked police personnel on Monday asking them to allow them to go to their native places.
The police personnel accompanied the contractor, who was serving food arranged by the district administration, but the migrant labourers tried to forcibly escape from the college premises. When Circle Inspector Rajasekhar and two constables from Gooty police station tried to block their

way, they allegedly threw slippers, stones and fists injuring all three of them. The police personnel have been sent to the hospital for treatment.
Deputy Superintendent of Police Khasim Saheb arrived at the scene and pacified the migrant labourers, who initially refused to have lunch and only wanted to be released immediately.
The police officer told them that they had to serve the quarantine period till District Collector asked them to and they would be released after the lockdown was lifted. They were also told that they would be forced to stay put in the same place till further orders.

Swimming pool photo lands Karnataka Minister in trouble

Opposition demands Sudhakar's resignation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT BENGALURU

Karnataka Minister for Medical Education, K. Sudhakar on Monday drew flak from the Opposition that sought his resignation after he posted a photo of himself in a swimming pool with his children with Twitter.
"After a long time joined my children for swimming hope maintaining social distance here also...haha," he tweeted with a photograph. He, however, did not mention where and when the photograph was taken. He deleted the tweet after facing flak.
Dr. Sudhakar represents the Chikkaballapur constituency, and was taken into

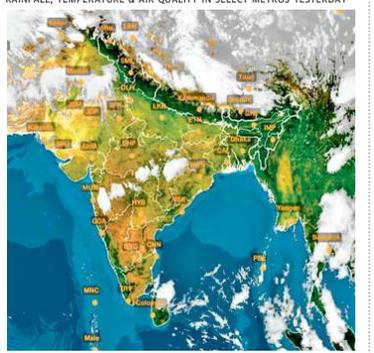


K. Sudhakar

Cabinet recently after he won the bypolls on the BJP ticket following his resignation from the Congress.
He, along with 16 others, who had resigned from the Congress and the JD(S), was responsible for the fall of the

coalition government last year. After the COVID-19 crisis erupted, he was often accused of not having coordination with Health Minister B. Sriramulu as both differed on the floor of the House as well as outside.
The tweet was criticised by KPCC president D.K. Shivakumar, who tweeted: "In the whole world is going through a health crisis, the Congress in charge Minister Dr. Sudhakar is behaving irresponsibly by spending time in a swimming pool. It's a matter of moral and ethical standards. He must resign out of his own accord and chief minister should sack him from the cabinet."

WEATHER WATCH



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)
Forecast for Tuesday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning and squall very likely at isolated places over Assam and West Bengal.

| CITY | RAIN | MAX | MIN | CITY | RAIN | MAX | MIN | |
|-------------|------|------|------|--------------------|---------------|------|------|------|
| Agartala | — | 31.0 | 19.6 | Kozhikode | — | 36.2 | 27.6 | |
| Ahmedabad | — | — | 23.5 | Kurnool | — | 35.7 | 25.8 | |
| Aizawl | — | 37.8 | 24.2 | Lucknow | — | 37.7 | 20.8 | |
| Allahabad | — | 41.8 | 21.0 | Madurai | — | 37.8 | 26.0 | |
| Bangalore | — | 33.7 | 20.5 | Mangaluru | — | 36.5 | 24.9 | |
| Bhopal | — | 39.2 | 22.5 | Mumbai | — | 35.7 | 25.2 | |
| Bhubaneswar | — | 40.2 | 26.2 | Mysuru | — | 33.9 | 22.6 | |
| Chandigarh | — | 33.8 | 19.1 | New Delhi | — | 37.2 | 24.3 | |
| Chennai | — | 33.4 | 26.0 | Patna | — | 36.2 | 23.6 | |
| Coimbatore | — | 36.1 | 23.0 | Port Blair | — | 31.1 | 25.7 | |
| Dehradun | — | 35.0 | 18.0 | Puducherry | — | 34.0 | 25.0 | |
| Gangtok | — | 22.0 | 13.1 | Pune | — | 32.2 | 24.3 | |
| Goa | — | 33.6 | 26.5 | Raipur | — | 38.5 | 22.0 | |
| Guwahati | — | 33.6 | 17.7 | Ranchi | — | 36.9 | 20.0 | |
| Hubballi | — | 36.0 | 22.0 | Shillong | — | 20.9 | — | |
| Hyderabad | — | 37.8 | 24.2 | Shimla | — | 24.0 | 16.6 | |
| Imphal | — | 32.8 | 15.0 | Srinagar | — | 25.6 | — | |
| Jaisalmer | — | 38.4 | 24.6 | Thiruvananthapuram | — | 33.8 | 27.5 | |
| Kochi | — | 32.2 | 27.2 | Tiruchirappalli | — | 38.1 | 25.6 | |
| Kohima | — | 24.2 | 13.2 | Vijayawada | — | 34.0 | — | |
| Kolkata | — | 0.6 | 34.0 | 26.6 | Visakhapatnam | — | 34.0 | 27.0 |

Books at the doorstep to beat lockdown blues

A bibliophile in Kerala has opened up his personal collection to children and women

SAM PAUL A. ALAPPUZZHA

When the Kerala and Union governments imposed the lockdown three weeks ago to tackle the spread of COVID-19, one of the things that struck 64-year-old S. Jatheendran from Mankombu in Kuttanad was the challenge of keeping normally active children engaged.
As a bibliophile, he thought of the age-old system of delivering books at the doorstep as an option. Mr. Jatheendran, a member of the Kerala State Library Council, wasted no time in implementing the idea at Pulinkunnu and nearby

Ever since the restrictions came into force, he has been busy home-delivering books, including children's fiction, short stories, novels and so on, to more than 1000 readers, mostly children and women, from his own collection. His efforts introduced several children to the world of reading and revived the habit for older people.
Good response
Mr. Jatheendran says the response is immense. "I have a personal library with a good collection, including children's books. When I got the idea, I approached the police and they granted permission. Apart from



Books on the move: Some of the young readers with Jatheendran. ***SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT**

children, women, including retired officials and mothers, are asking for books. I deliver books every other day and have asked children to review the books they read," he says.
Princy Joseph, an undergraduate student, says home-delivery of books helps her use the lockdown productively. "There is nothing much to do during the lockdown. The books

are turning out to be a big solace, helping beat boredom too," she says.
Apart from Pulinkunnu, the 'librarian at the doorstep' gets calls from other parts of Kuttanad for books now. "I get calls from Ramankary, Kavalam, Nedumudy and other parts. As I cannot travel to these places due to the lockdown, I have contacted local libraries there and initiated steps to provide books," Mr. Jatheendran says.
A retired official of the Department of Post, Mr. Jatheendran is a Kudumbashree Balasabha State faculty. He takes classes for students across the State.

Pollutants in the air you are breathing
Yesterday

| CITIES | SO ₂ | NO ₂ | CO | PM2.5 | PM10 | CODE |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|----|-------|------|------|
| Ahmedabad | 31 | 25 | 19 | — | 26 | 61 |
| Bengaluru | 04 | 08 | 42 | 58 | — | — |
| Chennai | 03 | 25 | 45 | 46 | — | — |
| Delhi | 42 | 22 | 20 | 181 | 157 | — |
| Hyderabad | 02 | 32 | 06 | 75 | 75 | — |
| Kolkata | 02 | 32 | 06 | 75 | 75 | — |
| Lucknow | 04 | 31 | 55 | 168 | — | — |
| Mumbai | 07 | 17 | 12 | 55 | 82 | — |
| Pune | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Visakhapatnam | 34 | 12 | 51 | 43 | 42 | — |

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.
NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.
PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.



Sacking by subterfuge

Removal of A.P.'s top election official through ordinance route is a case of abuse of power

The legality of the removal of the Andhra Pradesh State Election Commissioner (SEC) is seriously in doubt. That it was the culmination of an open conflict between the Election Commissioner, N. Ramesh Kumar, and Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy makes it a glaring instance of misuse of power. The State government got the Governor to issue an ordinance to cut the SEC's tenure from five to three years, and amend the criterion for holding that office from being an officer of the rank of Principal Secretary and above to one who had served as a High Court judge. This automatically rendered Mr. Kumar's continuance invalid. Last month, just days before the local body polls were to be held, the SEC postponed the elections, citing the COVID-19 outbreak. The State government approached the Supreme Court, but the court declined to interfere. Having exhausted its legal remedy, the government should have waited for the ongoing fight against the disease to be over. Mr. Reddy's allegation that the SEC, an appointee of his predecessor N. Chandrababu Naidu, postponed the polls to prevent a sweep by the YSR Congress may or may not be true. However, the Chief Minister has no legal right to terminate the SEC's tenure, as the Constitution makes the holder of that post removable only in the same manner as a High Court judge. If courts uphold this means of dislodging the head of an independent election body, it would mark the end of free and fair elections.

The State government seems to have gone by legal opinion that cited *Aparnita Prasad Singh vs. State of U.P.* (2007) in which the Allahabad High Court ruled that cessation of tenure does not amount to removal, and upheld the State Election Commissioner's term being cut short. The Supreme Court, while dismissing an appeal against the order, kept open the legal questions arising from the case. The judgment seems erroneous, as it gives a *carte blanche* to the State government to remove an inconvenient election authority by merely changing the tenure or retirement age. This was surely not what was envisioned by Parliament, which wrote into the Constitution provisions to safeguard the independence of the State Election Commission. It is a well-settled principle in law that what cannot be done directly cannot be done indirectly. Therefore, the removal of an incumbent SEC through the subterfuge of changing the eligibility norms for appointment may not survive judicial scrutiny. Further, the Constitution, under Article 243K, prohibits the variation of any condition of service to the detriment of any incumbent. Even if the State government argues that a change of tenure does not amount to varying the conditions of service, the new norm can only apply to the successor SEC, and not the one holding the office now.

Google, pay

The French template for the search engine paying for reuse of news holds promise

Last week's ruling by France's competition regulator that Google must pay news publishers and agencies for re-use of their content marks a significant turn in what has been a see-saw battle between European regulators and publishers on the one hand and the tech giant on the other. How this ends and what this leads to could set the template for not just the news industry in France and Europe but also the rest of the world. For the time being, the ruling gives the beleaguered news industry in France a rare edge in its dealings with the tech giant. Over the last two decades, even as publishers across the world struggled to make a commercially meaningful transition to the digital world, Google became the primary gateway for readers. While this worked well for the readers and for Google, which as a result could build a mammoth advertising business, it never worked well enough for news publishers, notwithstanding the increase in traffic they experienced. Many publishers are, hence, now in a position where they can neither let go of their dependence on the tech giant nor make monetary sense from this arrangement. Also, individually, they are too small to challenge Google's might. It is by recognising the skewed nature of this copyright marketplace that the European legislators amended rules in April last year – something which France then gave force to in July.

The genesis of the order by the French competition regulator was a complaint filed against Google by unions representing publishers. They charged Google with abusing its dominant position in response to the law, which seeks to create fairer grounds of negotiation. This it does by allowing for the possibility of publishers to be paid for article extracts picked up by aggregators. The complaint was that Google, on the grounds of complying with the new law, decided it would not display the extracts and other elements unless publishers authorise free usage. The regulator said it found that Google's practices "were likely to constitute an abuse of a dominant position, and caused serious and immediate harm to the press sector." It could be argued that the French case will do little to shake up the existing framework. Previous legislative attempts by other European Union constituents, such as Germany and Spain, to allow for such extracts to be monetised by publishers have proved counterproductive. For instance, Google ended up shutting down its news service in Spain. But the French attempt promises to end differently. That is because, built in in the regulator's order is a requirement that negotiations "effectively result in a proposal for remuneration from Google." Where will this go from here? Publishers across the world will be watching.

Staying at home on planet earth

The pandemic tells us that the right to shelter and habitat is an urgent and essential one, for humans and other creatures



ANAND PANDIAN

Right now, more of humanity is likely at home than at any other time in history. From India and China to the United States, from Norway and Denmark to South Africa and Argentina, governments have told their people to stay at home, to slow the spread of the coronavirus. Billions held in place for an indefinite time: the implications of these radical measures will take time to unravel. What does home actually look like for different people? And what will come of our relationships with the wider world outside our doors?

Home means many different things, as does the command to remain there. Lately I've been talking often with a family of textile workers in the industrial town of Tiruppur. The lockdown came so suddenly that they lost the chance to go back to their native place. Each family in their worker colony has one tiny room of their own. The children have been playing in the common courtyard. With police wielding batons on the streets, everyone is afraid to set foot outside. The factories are shuttered, wages suspended, and people are getting by as best as they can.

Staying at home brings into focus the question of whom we consider our own, whom we take shelter with. A community checkpoint has gone up on the edge of a village I know well in the Cumbum Valley. Panchayat workers are taking turns at the wooden gate, asking everyone to wash with soap and water, turmeric and neem, before they enter the village. The post is near the Dalit quarter on

the outskirts of the village: isolated and disparaged in almost every matter, but included within this new collective boundary of cleanliness.

Migrants caught in impasse

Governments around the world assert home as a place of safety and shelter. This idea assumes that one has a viable home in which to stay put, that food and fresh water are accessible, that survival doesn't require one to leave or flee. In recent weeks, many countries have seen a surge in domestic violence. And lockdowns at national and regional borders have caught millions of migrants in an existential impasse. The coronavirus may ravage densely packed refugee camps around the world, but people have nowhere else to go. The United States is turning refugees away now at its own borders, without giving them the chance to appeal for asylum.

Within America, where I live with my family, many rely on on-line portals to the world beyond, juggling virtual meetings with lessons for kids, peering by video into the homes of others. Such distance is a privilege. Others, especially minorities and the poor, must still expose themselves: caring for the ill, harvesting food and delivering necessities, maintaining the infrastructure that lets the rest of us hunker down. The pandemic has also brought homelessness and eviction into focus, the simmering crisis of affordable housing in so many American cities.

"Shelter in place" orders now govern many American localities. The language recalls the nuclear terrors of the Cold War era; people are advised to 'shelter in place' when the environment itself is hazardous, when simply being outside risks exposure. This idea helps explain why some in America, including the President, have



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blamed the pandemic on a "foreign virus." There is racism in such language, akin to the way that Muslims have been blamed on social media for the spread of the virus in India. There is also a certain way of thinking here about the world beyond: as a space of uncertainty and threat, home as refuge from a dangerous world.

Recent lockdowns come on the heels of an intense drive for security in everyday life. On a daily level, wealthy Americans and others elsewhere have already been arming up: retreating to fortress-like homes, moving about in tank-like SUVs, walling themselves off in many ways. "Americans are in fear," the security manager at a Florida told me a couple of years ago. The streets there were already strangely isolated and still. When the current pandemic passes, how many will remain afraid to go outside?

Kinship beyond family circle

In my urban neighbourhood in Baltimore, social life sputters on. Here, staying at home hasn't meant just staying indoors. People seek out parks and open space with kids and dogs, calling out to each other from a distance. It's springtime; with the cars and machinery idle, you can hear the songbirds more clearly, even the toads chirping from the flood con-

trol ponds that they've recently occupied. For the American toad, *Bufo americanus*, it's mating season. Just as social restrictions have ramped up for us, they've begun to congregate by the water.

It's hard not to feel wistful, seeing these knots of toads clamber over each other with such abandon. Our own instincts pull us now in contrary directions, together for solace at this harrowing time, apart with concern for our most vulnerable kin. This may prove one of the most serious social challenges of our lifetimes. But it is also a chance for us to reflect on kinship and connection, beyond the span of the family circle. For it isn't enough, we are learning, just to take care of our own, as if we were islands in the world.

Epidemic diseases like COVID-19, avian influenza, and Ebola are zoonotic, crossing to humans from other animals. They are often sparked by ecological instability, by the destruction of natural habitat and the cramming of animals into wildlife markets and scarcely inhabitable factory farms. They are symptoms, in other words, of a crisis of homelessness in the animal world, magnified by global networks of trade and resource exploitation. As economic activity slows to a crawl, pollution has been clearing in the industrial centres of Asia, Europe, and North America. Gutting environmental regulations to kick-start the economy – as the United States and China have done now – will only make the world more dangerous to everyone's health.

Sense of a common fate

The COVID-19 pandemic is a boot camp in ecological awareness, a reminder that the well-being of any one person is tied up with ever so many others, both family and neighbours and those we'll never meet or know. This sense of a com-

mon fate, a truly planetary predicament, is a rare and crucial thing. It is manifest in the many mutual aid networks and progressive political measures that have taken shape to meet the needs of vulnerable populations. Such resources will matter for other serious problems like the climate crisis, which will provoke new waves of homelessness and displacement. So much will turn on our ability to dwell on the deep ties between our lives and others elsewhere, the forms of kinship that we may nurture.

In April 1970, the first Earth Day was inspired by a photograph from Apollo 8, an image of the Earth as a fragile blue ball in the vastness of space. Many hoped this vision of a vulnerable world would catalyse environmental consciousness and bring a planetary healing, dissipating the rancour of social and political antagonism. As the 50th anniversary of this moment nears, in 2020, we seem to be edging even closer to ecological catastrophe. And yet the alternative remains, the chance to take the earth itself as a place of collective shelter.

In a world of stark inequality, this will have to be more than the idea of a common planetary home. We need to think carefully about what home has been for particular people, and how to build and maintain more generous structures of belonging. The pandemic tells us that the right to housing, to shelter and habitat, is an urgent and essential one, for human beings and the countless other creatures we share this planet with. Securing this right will help to avert the ecological crises to come, and we may find ourselves again at home in the world once again.

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Re-imagining our economic choices

For decades, human beings have chosen profits over lives. The time has come to jettison this approach



KAUSHIK BARUA

The COVID-19 pandemic will reshape all our economic choices. Nations have made a crucial choice in recent weeks, choosing human life over economic growth. Governments including ours have mandated lockdowns to slow the pandemic, relieve the pressure on their hospitals and save lives. On the one hand, there will be massive economic costs. Fitch Ratings have halved their 2020 growth forecast. The volatility is unprecedented. A *Forbes* assessment started with the pithy disclaimer "Last week's economic forecast is out of date." On the other hand, updates land in our phones on a minute-by-minute basis, invoking both our empathy and our fear. Our choice is obvious – human life over economic growth. To choose otherwise would be inhuman. Surely, we have always made the same choice. Hardly.

For decades, we have chosen profits and growth over human lives. The World Health Organiza-

tion (WHO) estimates that 4.2 million lives are lost annually due to air pollution. These deaths occur in dispersed locations, through varying illnesses and outside our frenzied social media feeds. Therefore, the choice is not as clear to us. It is a choice between 4.2 million lives and the marginal returns from industries choosing polluting vs. non-polluting technologies. This is not a Luddite call to replace our cars with carriages. Cleaner technologies are available, and not only for Prius owners. For instance, through our IFAD programs, low-cost technologies are being developed even for small-holder farmers.

Saving lives

Surely, we are finally saving all lives now? The recommendations are clear. Practice social distancing? This is hardly viable for the 2% of the global population who are homeless or the 20% who lack adequate housing. Social distancing will also take a disproportionate economic toll on the informal sector, employing up to 60% of the working population globally and 90% in India. The cure could trigger deep poverty and a food security crisis, actually endangering more lives. In this context, the first ₹1.7 lakh crore relief package was encouraging in its focus on ensur-



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

ing food security and cash transfers for the vulnerable.

Was your hands? What about the 35% who lack access to sanitation? According to UNICEF, even prior to COVID-19, diseases directly linked to lack of safe water killed 1,400 children under five every day, globally over half a million a year. There has been a renewed focus on sanitation in recent years. More is needed, but long-term measures might expand the fiscal deficit.

Economics is about choices, a study of 'human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means'. Trade-offs are central to these choices. On the one hand: 4.2 million, 0.5 million, 1,15,000 (and counting) lives. On the other: lower GDP rates, more expensive technologies, higher fiscal deficits. Such comparisons might not pass our usual aesthetic standards. But this pandemic will

test our imagination. Binaries between left and right are collapsing. A Republican Treasury Secretary in the United States is suggesting cash transfers for all workers. The Confederation of Indian Industry is advising pay cuts for senior management while ensuring workers do not lose jobs. Liberal democracies are competing to curtail individual rights and movement. Citizens are supporting (even demanding) these restrictions. We have embraced a suspension of laws, a near-global 'state of exception'.

Changing the metrics

These states of exception might be the new normal as black swans, highly improbable events with extreme impact, now spread rapidly. The pace and volumes with which we can move across territories and transport the virus have deepened our fragility. Perhaps it is time to shift from indices of economic growth and speed (such as rates of GDP growth) to those that build on lives and living conditions. Many organisations, including the one I work for, have already shifted their focus from mere incomes to resilience. Relevant indices already exist. The Human Development Index measures life expectancies as a proxy for long and healthy lives, education and national in-

comes per capita. The Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index builds on capabilities, captured through health, education and living standards. The difference between standard economic targets and these welfare-based indices is their clear focus on lives over profits.

In Netflix's new dystopian offering, *The Platform*, inmates are randomly assigned a level in a giant vertical tower. Food passes through a central chute from top to bottom. If the prisoners at every level took their reasonable share, there would be enough for everyone. That never happens, and those at the lower levels are forced to adopt brutal strategies to stay alive. This is a harsh representation of our economies. Maybe too harsh. But the undeniable fact is that we do not live in separate worlds. We inhabit a building with overlapping loops, where our rooms vary in size and comfort but are all linked. We face a common enemy, and there may be more in the future. One life undetermined is a threat to everyone. What is the price we are now willing to pay for others' lives?

Kaushik Barua is the Cambodia Country Director at the UN International Fund for Agricultural Development. Views expressed are personal

At the 1945 United Nations Conference on International Organization, Szeming Sze, a delegate from the Republic of China (modern-day Taiwan), proposed the creation of an international health organization under the auspices of the new United Nations. Alger Hiss, the Secretary-General of the conference, recommended using a declaration to establish such an organization.

Sze and other delegates lobbied and a declaration passed calling for an international conference on health. The use of the word "world", rather than "international", emphasized the truly global nature of what the organization was seeking to achieve.

The constitution of the World Health Organization was signed by all 51 countries of the United Nations, its affiliates and by 10 other countries, on 22 July 1946. It thus became the first specialized agency of the United Nations to which every member subscribed.

The **Luddites** were a secret oath-based organization[1] of English textile workers in the 19th century, a radical faction which destroyed textile machinery as a form of protest. The group was protesting against the use of machinery in a "fraudulent and deceitful manner" to get around standard labour practices.[2] Luddites feared that the time spent learning the skills of their craft would go to waste, as machines would replace their role in the industry.[3] Over time, the term has come to mean one opposed to industrialisation, automation, computerisation, or new technologies in general.[4] The Luddite movement began in Nottingham in England and culminated in a region-wide rebellion that lasted from 1811 to 1816. Mill and factory owners took to shooting protesters and eventually the movement was suppressed with legal and military force.

The **United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund** is a United Nations agency that is responsible for providing humanitarian and developmental aid to children worldwide. It has a wide reach through its sponsorship program and the celebrity endorsements of the same, it is among the most widespread and recognizable social welfare organizations in the world, with a presence in 192 countries and territories.

Origins of UNICEF

UNICEF at first began as the International Children's Emergency Fund (ICEF), formed in 1946 by the U.N. Relief Rehabilitation Administration to provide immediate relief and healthcare to children and mothers devastated by World War II. The United Nations General Assembly established the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) to for better facilitation of its post-war relief effort. In 1950, UNICEF's main objective was extended to address the long-term needs of children and women, particularly in newly-free former colonies, whose economy was in its infant stages of development. In 1953 it became an affiliate of the United Nations. The agency's name was eventually changed to its current form – United Nations Children's Fund – though it retains the original acronym.

India's rank- 129. Last year's rank- 130.

- HDI RANKING

Despite lifting 271 million people out of poverty between 2005-15, India still remains home to 28% (364 million) of the world's poor.

Between 1990 and 2018, India's HDI value increased by 50 per cent (from 0.431 to 0.647), which places it above the average for countries in the medium human development group (0.634) and above the average for other South Asian countries (0.642).

This means that in the last three decades, life expectancy at birth in India increased by 11.6 years, whereas the average number of schooling years increased by 3.5 years. Per capita incomes increased 250 times.

India is only marginally better than the South Asian average on the Gender Development Index (0.829 vs 0.828), and ranks at a low 122 (of 162) countries on the 2018 Gender Inequality Index.

India's neighbours:

Sri Lanka (71) and China (85),

Bhutan (134), Bangladesh (135), Myanmar (145), Nepal (147), Pakistan (152) and Afghanistan (170).

Global scenario:

Norway, Switzerland, Ireland occupied the top three positions in that order.

Globally, there are 1.3 billion poor people.

Around 661 million of these poor people live in Asia and the Pacific.

South Asia constitutes 41% of the world's poor.

Changing nature of inequality:

As the number of people coming out of poverty is increasing, the world is veering towards another type of poverty.

The old inequalities were based on access to health services and education whereas the next generation of poverty is based on technology, education and climate.

What is HDI?

Published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), it is a statistical tool used to measure a country's overall achievement in its social and economic dimensions. The social and economic dimensions of a country are based on the health of people, their level of education attainment and their standard of living.

It is part of the Human Development Report.

The other indices that form the part of the 2019 Report are:

Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI),

Gender Development Index (GDI),

Gender Inequality Index (GII) and

Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).

HDI measures average achievement of a country in three basic dimensions of human development:

A long and healthy life.

Access to knowledge.

A decent standard of living.

Find out about GDI, GII & MPI.

Article 39A of the Indian Constitution contains provisions for free legal aid to the weaker and poor sections of the society in order to ensure justice for all. Also, articles 14 and 22(1) of the Constitution make it obligatory for the State to ensure equality before law and a legal system which promotes justice on the basis of equal opportunity to all. Therefore, the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) was constituted under the Legal Services Authority Act, 1987 for the provision of free legal services to the weaker sections of the society (defined under section 12 of the Act) and to organize Lok Adalats for speedy and amicable resolution of cases, in 1995. NALSA is also involved in monitoring & evaluating the implementation of legal aid programmes and laying down principles & policies for making legal services available under the Act.

To give effect to the directions of NALSA, State Legal Services Authority in every state, High Court Legal Services Authority in every High Court, Taluk Legal Services Authority in most of the Taluks and District Legal Services Authority in most of the Districts have been constituted. Supreme Court Legal Services Authority has been constituted to implement and administer the legal services programme insofar as it relates to the Supreme Court. NALSA lays down guidelines, principles, policies and is involved in framing effective and economical schemes for the State Legal Services Authorities to execute the Legal Services Programmes throughout the country. Primarily, all these authorities have been constituted to discharge the following functions regularly:

- Provision of free and competent legal services to eligible persons.**
- Organization of Lok Adalats for speedy resolution of cases in an amicable manner.**
- Organization of legal awareness camps in rural areas.**

Lok Adalats:

Lok Adalats are alternative mechanisms for dispute resolution. They are organized in order to settle the civil & criminal compoundable cases in the pre-litigation stage and those cases which are pending in the courts in an amicable manner. They are organized under section 19 of the Legal Services Authority Act, 1987 and are given statutory status under the Act. The Legal Services Authority Act has been amended in order to provide for a mandatory pre-litigation mechanism for the cases related to Public Utility Services, thereby establishing Permanent Lok Adalats with jurisdiction over Public Utility Services.

was no scarcity of any item.” The police said Ms. Yadav had been booked for murder, arrested and produced in a court. The police posted photographs purportedly of Ms. Yadav’s house showing food prepared there. The portion of the Jahangirabad ghat where the alleged incident occurred is deep and

hai. *Haal theek hai* [They had no such problem. They even own land. Their financial situation is sound], he said. The woman had a ration card and just a week ago received several kg of grains, said Mr. Yadav, who claimed to be in regular touch with the family.

Mr. Sharma cited an ILO report to say that 40 crore workers would be pushed to below poverty line.

I write to you to consider a few suggestions. Firstly, the provision of 10 kg grains/person to NFSA beneficiaries

to the lockdown. This is tragic given that India has large buffer stock of food grains precisely for exigencies like

for determining each State’s entitlement under NFSA. The above measures are critical to safeguard people

not fall under @nsitharaman’s plan and are without any money for the last 21 days”.

side, Kashmir, Ladakh and the Kargil region were the first to be affected by the virus outbreak.

‘Floor test is Governor’s discretion’

This is how the system of parliamentary governance operates, says SC judgment

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

A Governor can call for a floor test any time he objectively feels a government in power has lost the confidence of the House and is on shaky ground, the Supreme Court held on Monday.

In a judgment, a Bench of Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and Hemant Gupta concluded that a Governor can call for a trust vote if he has arrived at a *prima facie* opinion, based on objective material, that the incumbent State government has lost its majority in the Assembly.

“The idea underlying the trust vote is to uphold the



Justice D.Y. Chandrachud

balance towards the party possessing a majority at the time the trust vote is directed. All political parties are equally at risk of losing the support of their elected legislators, just as the legislators are at risk of losing the vote of the electorate. This is how the system of parliamentary governance operates,” Justice Chandrachud observed.

The intention behind a trust vote was to enable the elected representatives to determine if the Council of Ministers commanded the confidence of the House. It was the MLAs, and not the Governor, who made the ultimate call whether a government should stay in power or not, the court said.

It said that a Governor’s power to call for a floor test is not restricted only before the inception of a State government immediately after elections, but continues throughout its term.

The court clarified that the Governor’s requirement to have a trust vote does not “short-circuit” any disqualification proceedings pending before the Speaker.

It said a Governor need not wait for the Speaker’s decision on the resignation of rebel MLAs before calling for a trust vote.

Two assailants kill, injure policemen in Kishtwar

They also took weapons from the SPOs

PEERZADA ASHRAF
JAMMU

Two assailants, including an undertrial recently freed on parole in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak, killed a policeman and injured another in the Chenab Valley’s Kishtwar district on Monday. Weapons were also stolen, officials said.

A spokesperson said the two assailants attacked the two Special Police Officers (SPOs), Basit Iqbal and Vishal, near the post set up at Tander Dachin, around 60 km away from Kishtwar town, with axes and injured them seriously at around

1.30 p.m on Monday.

“SPO Iqbal succumbed to his injuries. The other officer is seriously injured. Both the assailants have been identified and a search is on under the supervision of the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Kishtwar. The suspected terrorists also took away two weapons from the SPOs,” the spokesperson said.

Officials said the duo was on patrol duty at the time of the attack. According to police sources, one of the attackers has a FIR filed against him and was granted bail a few weeks ago.

Free tests only for the poor, clarifies SC

A bench led by Justice Ashok Bhushan recorded in its 10-page order that the court’s intention was never to make testing free for all. “We make it clear that the benefit of free testing by a person can be availed only when he or she is covered under any scheme like the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana. We are also of the view that looking into the plight of persons belonging to economically weaker sections of the society, the government may consider as to whether any other categories of persons belonging to economically weaker sections of society can be extended the benefit of free testing of COVID-19. We are conscious that framing of the scheme and its implementation are in the government domain, who are the best experts in such matter,” the court said in its order.

The court further directed the Health Ministry to identify beneficiaries among the weaker sections of society, including workers belonging to low income groups in the informal sectors and beneficiaries of Direct Benefit Transfer who can be made eligible for free testing. It directed the Ministry to issue appropriate guidelines in this regard within a week.

MGNREGA jobs crash to 1% of normal

No exceptions from restrictions were provided for the MGNREGA under the lockdown, although States were asked to continue implementing the scheme while following social distancing guidelines.

most States have closed down MGNREGA worksites to curb the spread of COVID-19.

“This is a collapse of the employment guarantee given to rural Indians at a time when it is most needed,” said Nikhil Dey, an activist with the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, who has filed a Public Interest Litigation petition in the Supreme Court on the issue along with Magasaysay award winner and RTI activist Anjana Roy.

As *The Hindu* had reported then, this relief is meaningless at a time when

Plans to construct new Parliament on track

Consultants working digitally: contractor

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

The Centre’s plan to construct a new Parliament building by August 2022 is on track and the tender for the project would be floated after the lockdown is lifted, according to the architects of the project.

The design, which is proposed to be triangular and located near the Parliament House, as of now is sufficient for issuing tenders, while the process for the detailed design would run concurrent with the selection of a contractor, HCP Design, Planning and Management said in a written response to a query by *The Hindu*.

struction agency, the Central Public Works Department, in October 2019 to be its consultant for the revamp of the Central Vista and construction of the new Parliament and the Central Secretariat.

Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri had said the building would be ready before the Independence Day, 2022.

Asked if the project had been delayed due to the pandemic, the HCP said the CPWD, the MoHUA and the consultants were able to work digitally and that there were no major disruptions.

The initial deadline for completing the building would be met. The tendering process was underway, it said.

Free extension of foreign visas till April 30

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The number of foreigners that expired during the lockdown period would be extended till April 30 on *gratis* (free) basis after they apply online, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said on Monday.

The regular visa, e-visa or stay stipulation of foreigners who had been stranded because of COVID-19 and consequent travel restrictions and whose visas had expired from February 1-March 30, “would be extended till April 30” on *gratis* basis after they apply online, the MHA said.

India had suspended operation of all flights on March 23 and came under a 21-day lockdown on March 25.

Re-think pro-U.S. stance, CPI(M) urges govt.

Party flags diversion of kits from China

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Embracing the U.S. as the top-most priority cannot provide any help or relief to Indian people in strengthening the struggle against the pandemic, the CPI (M) said in a statement on Saturday. It was reported that the diversion of kits after it was reported that the consignment of rapid testing kits from China, bound for Tamil Nadu, was diverted to the U.S.

International media has widely reported how several countries have been hauling up the U.S. for its attempt to block PPE and testing kits from reaching their designated destinations and diverting it for dealing with its domestic health emergency. Sharpest among countries who have flagged the U.S.’s rogue behaviour are Germa-

ny, France, Canada, Brazil and even Barbados, the CPI (M) pointed out.

The party’s Polit Bureau strongly condemned what it called the U.S.’s unilateral strong arm methods to subvert the sovereign rights of independent countries. “This U.S. intransigence is clearly against the repeated pleading of the WHO for international cooperation in battling the global pandemic,” the statement said.

It urged the Modi government to draw proper lessons from this “obnoxious behaviour of U.S. imperialism,” the statement said. The statement once again flagged the capitulation by the Indian government in lifting the ban on export of hydroxychloroquine on humanitarian grounds.

Journalists condemn FIR against editor

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A group of over 200 journalists has condemned the FIR filed against Siddharth Varadarajan, founding editor of the news portal *The Wire*, by the Uttar Pradesh police, which accused the outlet of “spreading panic”. The group, consisting of journalists from both print and electronic media, termed it a brazen attempt to muzzle the media.

The State has an extra responsibility to exercise restraint in use of its powers when citizens are restricted in exercising many of their usual democratic rights, a statement said. “We demand that such politically motivated harassment of media persons should stop immediately,” it added.

Odisha govt. modifies lockdown guidelines

Relaxation made to kick-start agriculture, horticulture

PRAFULLA DAS
BHUBANESWAR

Set to enter the second phase of the lockdown imposed to fight the COVID-19 outbreak from April 15 to 30, the Odisha government has made relaxations to kick-start activities relating to agriculture, horticulture, fisheries, forest, drinking water and e-commerce.

One more COVID-19 positive case was detected in Bhubaneswar on Monday, taking the State's total to 55. Active cases now stand at 41 as 13 have recovered and one has died.

Announcing modifications in the lockdown guidelines on Monday, State Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) Pradeep Jena said social distancing norms would be strictly followed while facilitating activities that were related to livelihood of people.

E-commerce activities would function during the extended lockdown period when companies engaged in home delivery of goods and services would be allowed to operate without any hindrance.



No transport: Women walking back home with firewood on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar. • BISWARANJAN ROUT

Restaurants could carry out home delivery but could not allow people to eat inside.

The SRC said farmers could resume all agricultural activities, including harvesting, selling their Rabi crops and activities relating to preparing their fields for the coming Kharif season. The shops and establishments engaged in selling agricultural implements, cattle feed, fish feed and food processing and packaging would also be allowed to remain open.

The procurement of Rabi crop would be resumed and all cold storages and godowns would be allowed to carry out their activities by maintaining social distancing.

Farmers could also purchase agricultural implements. The cooperative banks and other such institutions would disburse loans to farmers during the lockdown period, said Mr. Jena.

Activities relating to MGNREGA, Swachh Bharat and rural housing schemes would go on and the Panchayati Raj Department would also facilitate construction and repair of drinking water facilities.

People engaged in fishing, floriculture, tendu leaf plucking and collection of non-timber forest produce could carry out their work.

INTERVIEW | PALA B. RAJESH

'In U.K., we are offering supportive treatment'

We don't know yet what will work against the novel coronavirus, says senior NHS surgeon

RAMYA KANNAN
CHENNAI

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's fulsome praise for the U.K.'s National Health Service (NHS) for his treatment for COVID-19 has raised the profile of the public-funded healthcare service. A senior member of the NHS and alumnus of the Madras Medical College Pala B. Rajesh details the protocols to combat the pandemic:

How helpful is a lockdown in containing the spread of the infection?

The decision that has been made in the U.K. regarding this unprecedented epidemic has been binary. Public safety and economic backing have been the two considerations. In the United Kingdom, we took a decision in late March that the lockdown would be total and we would have a review in three weeks. Public health experts have recommended the three-week lockdown based on the experience of China, Italy, Spain and Singapore.

What we follow here is quite simple. Step 1: If you have fever, cough, muscle pain, stay at home. A high viral load usually lasts five days, but you may get a second peak which is why we recommend the two-week isolation period. You may feel well in a week but please do not go out. If any one was

in quarantine with you, your family, this applies to them as well. Step 2: If you are still ill, go to a hospital. In the NHS, you will be tested for COVID-19.

What about non-COVID treatments/surgeries?

Hospitals in the U.K. have a primary triage in place – COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 sections. I know there is a confusion in India that elective surgeries must be stopped. I both agree, and disagree. In the U.K., since the outbreak, we have prioritised surgeries as per the level.

Priority level 1 is divided into emergency (Surgery must be done within 24 hours), and urgent (surgery in 72 hours); in Level 2, patients can wait for up to four weeks; in Level 3, the surgery can be delayed for three months, and Level 4 comprises of people whose surgery can be delayed for over



COVID-19, I'm sure, will remain in the community, like perhaps dengue or chikungunya.

three months.

Every speciality has been given guidelines as to what constitutes an emergency. Every hospital in the U.K. has ensured a few operation theatres remain reserved for non-COVID-19 surgeries. The rest of the theatres have become extensions of intensive care units.

COVID-19 theatres have intensive care specialists, anaesthetists and general medicine practitioners. But at the moment, we have not been overwhelmed in our hospitals, possibly because 90% of the population has been following the lockdown.

India has done very well

with the lockdown as well. There is infrastructure in State government health systems. Perhaps, the government may think of forming out non-COVID-19 patients to the private sector, as has been done in Assam, according to experts there.

What about treatment options for COVID-19?

We are collecting a lot of pre-publication material. At the moment, whatever we are doing is speculative measures taken by each group in their circumstances. In the U.K., we have begun to use hydroxychloroquine with antibiotics on a trial basis, of course, because frankly, we don't know yet what exactly will work.

Meanwhile, BCG seems to offer some kind of protection mechanism.

In the U.K., we are mainly offering supportive treatments, something that is appreciable during this pandemic is that everyone is freely exchanging information, so that other nations do not make the same mistakes.

In U.K., we seem to be on the upward crest of the curve; and experts are saying

we should remain there for a couple of weeks. We will know the effect of the lockdown in a week's time. So far, we have been recording only the COVID-19 deaths, but there may be others who do not come into hospital. The assumption now is that everyone is COVID-19 positive unless he or she tests negative.

We have reports from America of the particular vulnerability of African American people. Are you seeing some thing similar in the U.K.?

What we are noticing, however, is a certain predilection among doctors from overseas working here. There have been 39 deaths among NHS doctors and nurses so far in the epidemic. These include people from India, Pakistan, Sudan and Egypt, for instance.

COVID-19, I'm sure, will remain in the community, like perhaps dengue or chikungunya. It will raise its head during winters in this country. Once a vaccine is ready, recommendations may be made for vulnerable populations, including senior citizens.

IN BRIEF



Adhere to lockdown rules during Ramadan'

NEW DELHI
Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on Monday appealed to Muslims to strictly follow social distancing and the lockdown guidelines during the holy month of Ramadan, in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak. The Minister urged members of the community to offer prayers and perform other religious rituals like the 'iftar' (breaking of the fast) inside their homes during the month of Ramadan, which will begin from April 24 or April 25. PTI

Five Europeans raise alarm in Guwahati

GUWAHATI
Angry neighbours virtually laid siege to a guest house in Guwahati's Bejola area on Monday after five Europeans checked in. The police were forced to intervene for the people to leave the five — three French, an Italian and a Spanish — alone. The foreign nationals reached Guwahati from Manipur. They completed their quarantine in Manipur and have the approval of the Ministry of External Affairs to travel to Delhi via Siliguri. Asst. Director-General of Police (Law and Order) G.P. Singh said.

3 held for provocative social media messages

CHANDIGARH
The Punjab police arrested three persons for provocative social media messages inciting religious hatred, in the wake of the attack on a police officer in Patiala on Sunday by a group of Nihangs. Dinkar Gupta, DGP, said those arrested include Bhushinder Singh of Hoshiarpur, Davinder Singh of Batala and Kuljeet Singh Bhullar of Muktsar Sahib districts. These men, said the DGP, had been indulging in hate propaganda through social media posts.

First case of COVID-19 surfaces in Nagaland

IMPHAL
The first case of COVID-19 in Nagaland came to light around midnight on Sunday. An emergency meeting of top officials was held at 12.30 a.m. on April 13. Health and Family Welfare Minister S. Pangu Phom presided over the meeting and senior officials, who are the members of the special committee for the pandemic, were present. Asst. Health Minister Himanta Bora said the patient, a 30-year-old man, had been found with symptoms of the disease.

Maharashtra virus cases cross 2,000

Mumbai records more than 60% of the State's toll

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUNE

The COVID-19 outbreak continued to wreak havoc in Maharashtra as a staggering 352 persons — the highest single-day surge yet — tested positive on Monday. The State's cumulative tally exceeded well past the 2000 mark, surging to 2334, while its death toll rose to 160 with 11 deaths occurring during the day.

The State recorded a jump of nearly 50% in the number of positive cases since Sunday, with Mumbai alone reporting 242 new cases as its tally alarming rise to 1,540 cases.

Of the 11 deaths, nine occurred in Mumbai city, taking the city's death toll to 101 — more than 60% of the State's death toll. One death was reported from Pune,



New normal: Hundreds of daily wage earners waiting for their afternoon meal in Mumbai. • VIVEK BENDRE

taking the district death toll to 30, while Mira Bhayandar, which saw a rise with seven new cases, reported its second death. Till date, 229 patients in the State have been discharged following full recovery.

Fresh cases were also re-

ported from Thane (9) and Vasai Virar (5).

In Pune, the number of positive cases continued to surge with as many as 55 new cases being reported from the district, taking the total tally to 337 with Pune city reporting 295 of these

Worli makes up for 20% of Mumbai's cases

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Dharavi reported two new cases on Monday evening, bringing the total to 49. One is a 51-year-old resident of Murugan chawl while another is a 21-year-old man residing in Kalyanwadi. The latter is a wardboy at the Breach Candy hospital. The G South ward consisting of Worli saw another surge in numbers, going from 246 to 280. Bandra East and

Andheri East also saw a hike. Ten wards have more than 50 cases in the city.

Figures up to Sunday show that Worli (G South) continued to leap ahead of all city wards in terms of the cases. It saw a sharp rise, going from 246 cases to 280 cases, making up for 20% of Mumbai's 1,392 cases. BMC officials have attributed the rise to aggressive testing in Worli Koliwada, BDD chawl and Jijamata Nagar areas.

In Nashik district, which is rapidly emerging as a virus hotspot in north Maharashtra, reported 14 more cases, taking its tally to 29.

The State has the highest death toll as well as the highest number of positive cases in the country.

Bhopal police check into hotels

Deployment strategy in place to avert further risk of infections within ranks

STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

In an attempt to contain the coronavirus spread within its ranks, the Bhopal police have moved 2,100 personnel — the entire city police — to hotels near their place of work. The department has also rejigged its deployment strategy, with a focus on dealing with curfew violations and quelling apprehensions about quarantine, as the incidence of normally reported crimes has come down.

"Police men were getting infected at the workplace, and taking the illness to their families, who were then spreading it in the neighbourhood. This way, other places could get infected, too. So, it became important to break the chain of contact between workplace and home," said Upendra Jain,



Drastic measures: As cases spiral in Bhopal, 12 policemen and their family members have been infected. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Bhopal Additional Director General of Police.

Declared hotspots
As cases spiral in Bhopal, 12 policemen and their seven family members have been infected too. The police believe the personnel contracted the illness while on duty within the Jahangirabad and the Aishbagh Police Station

limited, where most of the 20 infected members of the Tablighi Jamaat, who had returned from the meeting at the Nizamuddin centre, were found. Their contact is yet to be conclusively established, but the stations have been declared hotspots.

Enforcing the lockdown, supplying food to the poor

and dispelling rumours, as the threat of infection looms large on each personnel on duty, has sprung a novel challenge for the police. This has prompted an overhaul in the approach, to ensure safety of citizens, while ensuring they don't get infected themselves.

Averting risk

To avert the risk of contracting the illness, personnel can directly reach the heat from hotels instead of reporting at stations first and must observe strict social distancing at police stations, which are sanitised regularly. During patrolling, only one official can ride a two-wheeler and at most two can drive a vehicle. Officials above 55 years, who are more vulnerable, have been deployed at back-up jobs, and not on the frontline.

One death, 22 new cases in Indore

STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

A 42-year-old man died of COVID-19 in Indore on Monday even as 22 new cases were detected in the city, said Pravin Jadia, Indore Chief Medical and Health Officer.

"The overall count in the city has climbed to 328. And with the man's death, 33 persons have succumbed to the disease in the city so far," said Dr. Jadia.

In a bid to detect more cases, Dr. Jadia said the government is conducting surveys in containment areas of the city.

Madhya Pradesh has so far reported 584 cases and 45 deaths owing to the illness. As of April 13, Indore has reported a case fatality rate of 10%, the highest for any city in the country.

Remove fear from mind, says recovered nurse

'I want to help others combat it,' he says

STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

After trumping the coronavirus, Rajesh Aswara is eager to return to the isolation ward of the M.Y. Hospital. He has defeated with grit the fear evoked by the disease. And going back to duty as a male nurse now, he can tell others how he became the first in Indore to do it.

"Now that I have overcome corona, I am more confident and want to help others combat it," said Mr. Aswara.

To all eyes across the world, he says, "First of all, remove fear from your mind. Second, treat a patient only with a personal protective equipment (PPE) kit on. Don't work without it."

Not wearing a kit, while treating a COVID-19 patient, proved him dear. "I wore just a mask and gloves," he said. The patient was among the first cases to be reported from Indore on March 22. Until March 25 each day, when the patient died, he helped her put on a face mask, checked vitals and fed her.

On March 26, his worst fear came true.

After being told he had tested positive for the illness, his limbs trembled for a good 15 minutes. Passing the first day at the ward was the toughest, as his cough turned a sombre blackish. And with two-three patients dying of the coronavirus at



Rajesh Aswara

the hospital every day, he feared: *Kahi agla number mera toh nahit?* (Am I going to be the next?)

When he began losing hope, doctors motivated him to not give up, nurses prayed for him, he prayed for himself, ate heartily and just followed proper, every instruction of doctors.

Doctors told him: "*Ghabrana nahit* (don't fitter). Just follow our instructions." Being admitted to the sister hospital of another ward where he had worked for 12 years, he knew almost every nurse. "Brother, you have to go out only after getting fine," they told him.

When he got better by March 4, he could lend the kind of support to patients, who began filling the ward, that he is used to giving as a nurse: the will to fight it out, and survive; better at it now having done it himself.

On April 6 at 5.30 p.m., Mr. Aswara became the first patient in Indore to overcome the illness. His mantra to do it? "I just didn't let my confidence lose."

ANDHRA PRADESH TECHNOLOGY SERVICES (APTS)
Tender call notice for selection of Service Provider for Provision of Bandwidth Services to APSDWAN Project for ITE & C Department, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh
14.04.2020
Time schedule of various tender related events:
Last date for clarifications by mail: 21-04-2020 (No pre-bid meeting)
Issue of clarifications on RFP: 24-04-2020
Bid submission closing date / time: 30-04-2020, 03.00 PM
Bid Document Fee: Rs. 50,000/- (Online)
APTS Contact Person: Mr. Sreedhar Reddy, Manager (IP & Proc-3) Mobile: 9963029412 Mail-ID: sreedharreddy.a@gov.in
Reference: (TC51-18021/31/1/2019-IP-APTS-(Computer No. 8337140)
If your firm is interested in participation, please ask the contact person for details or visit our web site at <http://www.apts.gov.in> or www.apscprocurement.gov.in. The documents to be purchased by firms for participation, shall be available at the above mentioned website.
Managing Director, A.P. Technology Services Ltd.

TAMILNADU CIVIL SUPPLIES CORPORATION
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Short e-Tender Notice
No.: BS3/13393/2020 Dated: 13.04.2020
Short e-Tender No.: TNCS/20-21/ET-01
Online electronic tender for "PURCHASE OF 468 LAKH NUMBERS OF FORTIFIED RBD PALM OIL IN 1 LITRE POUCHES (910 gms)"
Complete e-tender document can be viewed and downloaded through <https://www.msccommerce.com/sprochome/tnpsc> and also available in www.tenders.tn.gov.in
The bidders have to participate online bidding only with Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) of Class-II or Class-III
For Registration and further details contact MSTD LIMITED, Phone:25222842/25251910/25261005 e-Mail: mstcstro@msctcindia.co.in
Last Date for Online Submission: 22.04.2020.
DIPR/1610/Tender/2020 MANAGING DIRECTOR.

E+PA

Govt. urged to revoke patent on cancer drug

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Cancer Patients Aid Association (CPAA) has written to the Health Ministry to revoke the Indian patent on Remdesivir, a potential anti-viral drug under testing for COVID-19 patients. Remdesivir is produced by Gilead Life Sciences.

The efficacy of the drug in curing extremely sick COVID-19 patients, particularly those requiring ventilator assistance, is still being investigated.

The CPAA said the patent on the drug would make it unaffordable and this would include cancer patients who are at heightened risk of

complications from the viral infection.

The CPAA provides for the treatment and rehabilitation of cancer patients. The Indian patent on Remdesivir was granted as recently as February 18. The Association said the patent ought to be revoked not only on the grounds that it could incen-

tivise other manufacturers to make the drug and offer it cheaply but also on the grounds that the drug wasn't "novel."

"We urge you to revoke the patent No. 332280 granted in A.No./821 under Section 66 of the Patents Act, 1970, in public interest, immediately. In any event, we

have cogent grounds to state that the said application ought not to have been granted a patent as it lacks novelty and inventive step, and that the learned Controller erred in not taking cognizance of the prior art available in the public domain," the CPAA letter noted.

PA

Army to help out stranded personnel

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In view of the 21-day nationwide lockdown to contain COVID-19 ending on April 14 midnight and the possibility of it being lifted partially, the Army has issued instructions on the movement of personnel who were on leave or sick leave and retired and held back at regimental centres due to the lockdown.

Personnel whose sanctioned leave expired during the lockdown period will report to the nearest station headquarters, ad hoc station headquarters or units on April 15. They will be housed in quarantine hubs created under arrangements of Command headquarters. Thereafter, they would be despatched under arrangements to OL directorate to their respective formations or units," the Army said in a letter.

Shah's intervention made ICMR increase testing

After the first case was detected on January 30, all samples were sent only to NIV, Pune, but now more labs are on the job

VIJAYTA SINGH
JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) expanded the number of laboratories that could conduct COVID-19 tests on an intervention by the Union Home Minister, *The Hindu* has learnt.

After the first COVID-19 positive case was detected on January 30, all samples were sent only to the National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune. As cases surged and a need was felt to ramp up testing, the ICMR was asked to enable more laboratories to conduct the tests.

Due to multiple factors, including paucity of kits, the ICMR follows strict guidelines before samples are collected from a person showing symptoms.

At a meeting in March, Home Minister Amit Shah asked ICMR Director-Gen-



Quick action: Medics collecting a swab sample of a boy at Sadar in Lucknow on Monday. PHOTO BY AP/WIDEWORLD

eral Balam Bhargava to include more facilities that could carry out the tests, or else the responsibility would be given to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). On March 17, the ICMR activated 72 more laborato-

ries to test for COVID-19 and revised the testing criteria for the same.

On March 23, it fast-tracked approval for Indian COVID-19 testing kits for commercial use in the ICMR approved government and

private laboratories.

The ICMR is the apex body for "formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research" and is one of the oldest medical research bodies in the world.

With India's confirmed cases approaching the five-digit mark and positives doubling every four or six days, there was criticism that the ICMR's strategy appeared to be focused on border control and applying a restrictive testing criteria.

Until March 20, it had tested only around 1,000 samples of those hospitalised with severe acute respiratory illness (SARI). This was to check prevalence of the disease in the wider population.

This was in addition to those who displayed symptoms and had a travel history or had contact with someone who had. It expanded testing to non-hospitalised

SARI only after mid-March, and found several instances where patients did not have a travel history or history of contact.

Low number of tests

While the organisation now conducts nearly 11,000 to 13,000 tests a day, India still has a low number of tests, about 100 per million population.

The low testing is also due to a reliance on imported kits, which is influenced by global supply chains, inadequate lab facilities to analyse a sufficient number of samples simultaneously and fewer trained personnel to conduct these tests. While it has roped in private labs, many say they are unable to conduct tests simply because the Supreme Court has ordered tests to be done for free and the government hasn't detailed a plan on how it would compensate compa-

nies for these tests.

On January 17, flights from China and Hong Kong were placed on surveillance at three airports and screening of passengers arriving from all international flights began on March 4 when the first-time the number of positive case jumped from six to 24. The first case was reported on January 30. As on March, there was only one district in Maharashtra, where more than 10 cases were reported and by April 4, the number of such districts spiked to 70. Till Sunday, the number of affected districts stood at 354.

On March 27, Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba wrote to all the States to monitor 15 lakh passengers who arrived at the international airports from January 18-March 23 and stressed that despite details of all passengers shared with the States, there was a gap in effective monitoring.

19 Indians stuck in Dubai hope for leniency

They are among the thousands of citizens stranded overseas after India went into lockdown

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

As the government prepares to announce plans for the next phase of the lockdown on Tuesday, 19 Indians stuck inside Dubai airport for three weeks have renewed their pleas to India as a special case. The 19 Indians, some of whom were in transit from Europe, and others who had checked in for flights from Dubai, had been turned away at the boarding gates on March 20 and March 21 by airlines officials after India put a series of travel bans in place. After spending several days sleeping inside the departure terminal, the group



Nowhere people: A group of Indians stranded inside the Dubai airport since March 21. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

was taken for COVID-19 tests, and once they were cleared, allowed to check into the airport hotel, said officials.

"We have been in constant touch with some of them and

with local authorities and Emirates airlines, who have put them in the airport hotel. We had also given some financial assistance when they initially got stranded. If

there is any requirement of medicine, etc., we will provide to help as well," India's Consul General in Dubai Vipul said.

However, members of the group stuck inside the Dubai airport say the only thing that will bring comfort is knowing when they can return. "For 25 days, I haven't been out in the sun or felt fresh air. The airport is mostly shut down, and except for short trips to one restaurant for food, we are confined to our rooms," said Deepak Gupta, a professional with a multinational corporation in Gurgaon, who worries most for his wife back home as she is pregnant.

On April 9, the UAE government sent a note verbale to all Embassies in Abu Dhabi, asking them to repatriate their citizens who needed to return. "We are offering to help with flight arrangements, ensuring COVID-19 tests for them all, and hospital treatment for those found to be positive.

"This includes travellers, naturally, but also any nationals who seek to go back to their homes and families," UAE Ambassador Mohammad Al Banna told *The Hindu* on Saturday. India's Ambassador to the UAE Pavan Kapoor said that no Indian could be repatriated until after the lockdown had ended.

SC agrees to hear pleas on Tablighi incident

'Stop media from communalising it'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to hear petitions filed by the Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind and other minority organisations for a direction to the Centre to stop the media from communalising the Tablighi Jamaat incident.

A Bench led by Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde directed the Press Council of India to be impleaded and posted the case for hearing after two weeks. The petitions said certain sections of the print and electronic media are spreading bigotry and communal hatred in relation to the Tablighi Jamaat

conference held in the Nizamuddin Markaz area.

The Jamiat writ, filed through advocate Ejaz Maqbool, sought a direction to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to identify and take strict action against sections of the media which are communalising the Nizamuddin Markaz incident.

The petition said the "unfortunate incident of the Tablighi Jamaat was used to demonise and blame the entire Muslim community." Certain sections of the media, instead of exercising restraint, reported the incident with communal

Envoys told to adhere to lockdown

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The limited number of curfew passes issued to foreign diplomats has created difficulties in carrying out the consular work during the lockdown. The issue came up at the capital's diplomatic circle as India reminded foreign missions to adhere to the lockdown rules.

"We have issued a very limited number of curfew passes for essential work. We will continue to advise the diplomatic community to adhere to the lockdown guidelines as it is in the interest and well being of each and everyone," said an official source.

The statement came a day after a diplomat from Uruguay was found to be flouting the rules. Valentina Obispo, a senior official of the Embassy of Uruguay, was intercepted by the police when she was found cycling in her neighbourhood.

Centre issues advisory for senior citizens

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry on Monday issued an advisory to senior citizens about how to remain safe.

Ministry secretary R. Subrahmanyam wrote to chief secretaries of all States, asking them to publicise the advisory.

The advisory said senior citizens should stay at home, avoid visits, but maintain one metre distance if necessary and remain vigilant.

INTERVIEW | MADHUKAR PAI

'No proof yet on BCG benefits'

Focus must now be on testing and contact tracing, says epidemiology expert

VARGHESE K. GEORGE

Madhukar Pai is Canada Research Chair in Epidemiology & Global Health and Director, McGill Global Health Programs and Professor at McGill University. In an e-mail interview, he explains the debate on BCG vaccine's purported effectiveness against COVID-19 and how global approaches to communicable diseases might change.

You have advised against over-optimism with regards to the link between BCG and COVID-19 immunity. What are your reasons?

■ As a TB researcher who was born in India, I would be thrilled if BCG worked against COVID-19. It is a cheap, readily available, safe vaccine. But we are not there yet. Currently, what we have are a few ecological studies (not peer-reviewed) which take country-level BCG and COVID-19 data, and report a correlation that countries that give BCG to children have a lower rates of COVID-19 cases and deaths. Based on this early signal and based on our prior knowledge that BCG does have non-specific immune-boosting properties, it is perfectly fine to conduct trials to confirm the hypothesis.

But the current ecological evidence is far from sufficient for any immediate public health or clinical use during this crisis. Ecological studies offer a very weak level of evidence because correlations that are true at the country level might not hold true at the individual level. For example, we know not everyone who lives in a low-income country is poor - some individuals are very rich. Same logic applies to ecological comparisons. In addition, ecological studies have been done at a time when the epidemic is ex-

ploding in many low/middle income countries. Repeating the studies in a month might produce different results. We also know many low/middle income countries, including India, are seriously under-testing for COVID-19. Lastly, there is also bias due to confounding - countries that give BCG are mostly in Asia, Africa and Latin America, with much younger populations than Europe or North America.

So, until trial results are out, countries like India must focus on interventions such as large-scale testing, isolation, contact-tracing, and physical distancing (where feasible).

TB continues to kill thousands of people in India. How might coronavirus affect TB services in India and what can be done about that?

■ This is my biggest worry - even without COVID-19, TB kills 1,000 Indians every day. No country has more TB patients than India. And now, with the lockdown, things are going to get much worse. Already, there are preliminary reports of a 80% decline in TB case notifications. People on TB treatment are struggling to get their medicines on time, and people with new TB symptoms are unable to access medical care. TB patients and survivors often have lung damage and if they get COVID-19, they could be at higher risk of complications. I worry about an increase in TB mortality in the coming months, and that will be so sad. There is also the risk of running out of anti-TB medicines, since India relies heavily on China for raw materials.

What can be done to avert this disaster? Right now, all known TB patients could be supported via remote or tele-consultations using call centres, or other digital tech-



I don't think any country in the world was adequately prepared for COVID-19

nologies. Drugs could be sent to their homes via couriers or through local pharmacies (that are still open). For any new TB patient, TB medicines could be given for a longer duration (e.g. 2 or 3 months) to ensure they have enough.

Has the TB programme lessons for the COVID-19 response? Or vice versa?

■ Yes, TB programmes are known for public health interventions such as active case finding, contact investigations, respiratory isolation, and community-based patient support. These skills and expertise could be leveraged to tackle COVID-19. Also, some of the existing TB technologies could come in handy. For example, India has two molecular technologies in use (GeneXpert by Cepheid and TrueNat by Molbio) that are used for TB testing and both can now be used to test for COVID-19. India is already using digital adherence technologies such as 99DOTS and Everwell Hub and these could be repurposed to also work for COVID-19. India has shown great commitment to tackling COVID-19 in a short period of time. I wish some of that commitment would be shown to tackling TB.

How can a country prepare for a pandemic?

■ I don't think any country in the world was adequately prepared for COVID-19. Even the richest countries in the world are struggling right now. A big lesson for India and many other countries is that no country can prepare for a crisis within days or weeks. Being prepared means having a robust healthcare system, especially primary healthcare. In short, universal health coverage is a prerequisite for real preparedness.

We know India has failed to invest in health for decades, barely spending 1.5% of the GDP on health. Even the bare minimum recommended health spend of 2.5% of GDP has not been realised. This chronic under-investment has left the public health system weak, and has allowed the private and informal health sectors to thrive. This means, access to healthcare is not equitable - the rich and the middle class will manage, but what happens to the millions below the poverty line?

If any good comes out of this crisis, then it will be India waking up to the reality that investing in health is paramount for economic growth and security.

How do you think COVID-19 will/should change global policy approach towards communicable diseases?

■ COVID-19 will change global health in many ways. The optimist in me hopes all countries will learn from the pandemic and invest in universal health coverage and re-affirm health as a human right. Global health must be more than just fighting one epidemic after another. I hope investments in public health and developmental assistance will no longer be viewed as a drain on resources. I hope countries will understand the need to build a social safety net for all.

Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccine is a vaccine primarily used against tuberculosis (TB).

In countries where TB or leprosy is common, one dose is recommended in healthy babies as close to the time of birth as possible.

In areas where tuberculosis is not common, only children at high risk are typically immunized, while suspected cases of tuberculosis are individually tested for and treated.

How can TB vaccine help fight COVID-19?

The BCG vaccine contains a live but weakened strain of tuberculosis bacteria that provokes the body to develop antibodies to attack TB bacteria.

This is called an adaptive immune response, because the body develops a defense against a specific disease-causing microorganism, or pathogen, after encountering it.

Most vaccines create an adaptive immune response to a single pathogen.

Unlike other vaccines, the BCG vaccine may also boost the innate immune system, first-line defenses that keep a variety of pathogens from entering the body or from establishing an infection.

But, what's the concern now?

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

They say, it is premature for India, that has had a consistent TB vaccination policy since 1968, to take comfort from the study.

'Online child porn traffic rises by 95%

Millions of paedophiles have migrated online, making Internet extremely unsafe for children: ICPF

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Online child pornography traffic after the lockdown in the country has gone up by 95% with online data monitoring websites showing an increase in demand for searches like "child porn", "sexy child" and "teen sex videos."

"Traffic from India increased by 95% between March 24 and 26, as compared to average traffic before the lockdown," the India Child Protection Fund (ICPF) said in a statement citing data from Pornhub, the world's largest pornography website.

The ICPF was set up in January 2020 and aims to sup-

Unhealthy trend

Consumption of child pornography online increased nearly two-fold after the lockdown was imposed

- Traffic to child pornographic websites from India increased 95% between March 24 and 26 compared to that before the lockdown

- Keyword searches for "child porn", "sexy child" and "teen sex videos" increased significantly

- In a survey conducted on demand for child

pornography in 100 cities in December 2019, it was found that there were 5 million downloads on average per month

- Under Section 15 of the POCSO Act, a person who stores child porn for commercial purposes shall face imprisonment for up to 3 years or will have to pay a fine or face both punishments

have migrated online, making the Internet extremely unsafe for children. Without stringent action, this could result in a drastic rise in sexual crimes against children," says Nivedita Ahuja, spokesperson for ICPF.

Unseen threat

As children spend more time online during the lockdown, international agencies like Europol, the United Nations and ECPAT (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking) have reported that paedophiles and child pornography addicts have increased activity to target children online to 'groom' them - befriending them on social media, building an emotional connection

and luring them to perform sexual activities through photos and videos.

In a survey conducted in December on demand for child pornography in 100 cities, the ICPF found that on an average there were 5 million downloads per month. It also pointed out there was an increase in demand for violent content involving children.

It demands an urgent crackdown on child pornography through a pan-India tracker through the use of artificial intelligence which can monitor hosting, sharing, viewing and downloading of child sexual abuse material and provide the information to the government agencies.

Don't free prisoners who test positive: SC

It allows release of Assam detainees

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prisoners who test positive for COVID-19 should not be released on interim bail or parole, the Supreme Court ordered on Monday.

A Bench led by Chief Justice S.A. Bobde said appropriate tests for COVID-19 should be conducted on prisoners scheduled for release.

However, the court agreed to a plea that prisoners or detainees who have been under detention for two years in the foreigners' detention centres in Assam should be released on account of the pandemic.

Despite objections by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that their release would see them mix with the local population again, the court modified its May 2019 order to allow these detainees to furnish a bond of ₹5,000 instead of ₹1 lakh. They need to also furnish two Indian citizens as sureties.

Decongesting prisons

The Bench passed these orders during a suo motu hearing on measures taken to decongest prisons, correction homes and detention centres. On March 23, the Bench had ordered the States and the Union Territories to set up special committees to examine the cases of prisoners and shortlist those who could be granted bail or parole.

On Monday, however, Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal, for the Centre, raised



The SC said the order is applicable to correctional and protection homes too.

the spectre of released prisoners transmitting the virus to the outside population.

Tests mandatory

Taking this into consideration, the Bench directed that "no prisoner shall be released if he/she has suffered from coronavirus disease in communicable form hereafter. For this purpose, appropriate tests will be carried out."

"If it is found that a prisoner who has been released is suffering from coronavirus after the release, necessary steps will be taken by the authority concerned by placing him/her in appropriate quarantine facility."

The court directed that transportation of prisoners would be done in full compliance of the rules and norms of social distancing.

The court said the order would also be applicable to correctional homes, detention centres and protection homes.

Universalise PDS, say activists

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

With the COVID-19 lockdown leading to lakhs of poor and working people losing jobs and livelihoods, the Right to Food campaign has written to Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan appealing for a universalisation of the Public Distribution System for the next six months to avoid widespread hunger and starvation.

The activists said the measures announced in the Centre's relief package were "hugely inadequate", as free foodgrains are being provided only to those who already have ration cards under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), thus excluding a large number of people, including migrant communities, homeless and elderly, nomadic tribes and other vulnerable communities.

The free ration announced on March 26 has also not reached beneficiaries in most States and starvation deaths have been reported in Bihar, Hyderabad, Jharkhand, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh, said the letter.

Equal quota

The activists demanded that the PDS be expanded to cover every individual, irrespective of whether they have a ration card, providing 10 kg grain, 1.5 kg pulses and 800 gm cooking oil per month per person for at least six months.

Water from Ganga, Yamuna being tested

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

Has the lockdown had a measurable impact on the water quality of the Ganga and Yamuna, rivers that have a history of battling pollution?

The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) - the arm of the Water Ministry tasked with directing the ₹20,000 crore clean-up of the Ganga - and the Central Pollution Control Board are expected to find out in 10 days, officials told *The Hindu*.

Water samples have been collected from Delhi (Yamuna) and all Ganga basin States, and are in the process of being analysed. While this was also part of the routine water quality monitoring in the river, there was a "special focus" on the impact of lockdown, said D.P. Mathuria, senior NMCG official in charge of water quality management.

Lockdown impact

Measuring the degree of chemical oxygen demand (COD) and ammonium nitrate would point to whether the lockdown had had an impact. Effluents from industries as well as sewage discharge would impact COD levels, Mr. Mathuria added. "There are some preliminary indications that the water looks cleaner but a proper analysis is awaited," he added.

The stoppage of industrial pollutants has definitely had a positive effect on water quality in the Yamuna, Delhi Jal Board vice-chairman Raghav Chadha had said last week.

An official said tests were under way and results were likely later this week.

(Inputs from Nikhil Babu)

1.27 lakh volunteers offer services

Modi-led NDMA monitoring operations at the ground level to fight pandemic

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

More than 1.27 lakh individuals and 5,300 organisations have so far registered themselves as volunteers with the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) for the fight against COVID-19.

The NDMA has also received donation offers for more than 8.35 lakh items including digital infrared thermometers, digital thermal scanners (full body), masks, gloves, sanitisers and personal protective gear.

The donated articles, be-

sides the medical equipment and other goods being produced by the public and private sectors, are being supplied to the States as per requirement.

The Authority, through its subordinate and State bodies, is monitoring all the operations associated with the measures being taken at the ground level.

The NCC students have been helping the local administrations in extending help to the needy and spreading awareness about the preventive measures to be taken to arrest the spread.

Over 30,000 Civil Defence

volunteers have been carrying out relief works and maintaining order in the affected areas. About 11,500 NGOs have been organising food camps and 3,900 NGOs have set up temporary shelter homes for the stranded.

Online courses

The Department of Personnel and Training, in coordination with the Ministry of Human Resource Development, has already come up with online courses on the pandemic for the frontline workers. These courses are meant for doctors, nurses, paramedics, hygiene work-

ers, technicians, auxiliary nursing midwives, State government and civil defence officials. The Health Ministry has also been issuing specific guidelines on healthcare facilities and treatment.

The Integrated Government Online Training (iGOT) courses are available on the Diksha platform, both for the laptop/desktop and mobile phone users. The launch of iGOT platform was fast-forwarded as requested by the respective Empowered Group of Officers to prevent the spread of infection among, and through, the frontline workers.

Muslims conduct Hindu man's funeral rites

Communal harmony to the fore in Jaipur locality, which is under COVID-19 curfew

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

In a display of communal harmony, Muslim neighbours of a 37-year-old Hindu man, who died of throat cancer, carried his bier and performed the funeral rites here on Monday when his relatives could not come to the city because of the nationwide lockdown enforced to control the COVID-19 pandemic. The area where the man resided is under an indefinite curfew.

Rajendra Bagri, who died on Sunday night after suffering from cancer for a long time, is survived by his younger brother and an aunt, who ekes out a living by collecting scrap. While the family did not have enough money for funeral, there were no other relatives or family members living nearby who could come to help them.

The locality, Bajrang



Shoulders to rely on: Muslim neighbours carrying the bier of Rajendra Bagri in Jaipur on Monday. *SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Nagar in Bhatta Basti, where the family resides, is dominated by Muslims, most of whom are drivers, factory workers and daily wage earners. Rajendra Bagri's Muslim neighbours collected contributions and made arrangements for taking the body to the crematorium on Monday.

The Muslim neighbours chanted 'Ram Naam Satya Hai' and carried the bier on their shoulders from Bagri's

house to the main road of Bhatta Basti from where a pickup truck took them to the Chandpole cremation ground. Only eight persons were allowed to go for the funeral because of the curfew. Bagri's brother lit the pyre and the cremation was done as per the Hindu rituals.

Those who attended the funeral included Hamid Kayamkhani, Fahim Qureshi, Hanif Shah, Irfan

Qureshi and Abdul Waheed. They also bought food and grocery items for the bereaved family.

Pappu Qureshi, a neighbour who helped organise the funeral, told *The Hindu* that Muslims in the locality had come forward to help the Hindu family as a humanitarian gesture. "It was our duty as neighbours, as they had no relatives here... We have got immense satisfaction by helping them out."

Rajasthan Nagrik Manch general secretary Basant Hariyana said the gesture of Muslim neighbours was a befitting reply to those who were targeting the community after the spread of novel coronavirus among some Tablighi Jamaat members. "This is a perfect example of our composite culture, in which the bonds uniting us are so strong despite the attempts to create divisions and hatred."

Law enforcers worried as Deep Nude makes a return

Cyber agencies tracking complaints of morphed photos

GAUTAM S. MENGLE
MUMBAI

A controversial website that was in the news for all the wrong reasons last year being shut down has now gone operational once again. Not only that, this time it seems to have caught the attention of Indian cybercriminals, who are using it to prey on women.

Cybercrime agencies in Maharashtra and the country are currently tracking Deep Nude, a website that uses a simple Artificial Intelligence algorithm to generate nude pictures of clothed people. The website requires a user to upload any picture and within seconds generates a nude version of the subject of the picture, which are typically of women.

What is more worrying, officials said, is that there are several versions of Deep

Nude on the Internet, including an app and a Twitter Handle; one page even seeks donations from users.

"This is a serious crime and we have a team to monitor this and take stringent action," Superintendent of Police, Maharashtra Cyber department, Baling Rajput, said.

Blackmailing victims

Experts said that once a nude of any woman was generated, the possibilities for misuse were endless. Already, information about some women being targeted had started trickling in.

"We have received information about pictures of women being morphed using Deep Nude and being used for nefarious purposes like blackmail, pornography and creating catfish accounts on dating apps. Information is being shared with the rele-

vant police agencies and we are tracking this trend further," civilian cyber expert Shubham Singh said.

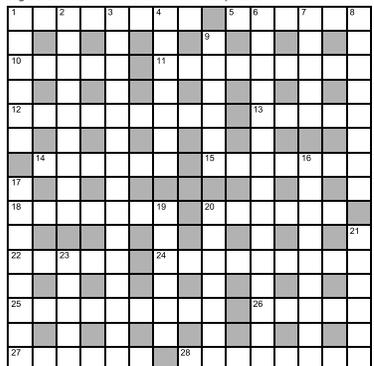
Catfish accounts are accounts made and managed by criminal elements using alluring pictures of women to ensnare men into committing acts that set them up for blackmail later.

Typically, elements who use such websites thrive on the fact that the victims are reluctant to register complaints for fear of the stigma attached to it. Officers stress on the importance of reporting such cases.

"Recent trends like the Saree Challenge, where women upload their pictures on their social media accounts and tag their friends, creating a chain, present endless opportunities to criminal elements to prey on them using websites like Deep Nude," an officer said.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12909

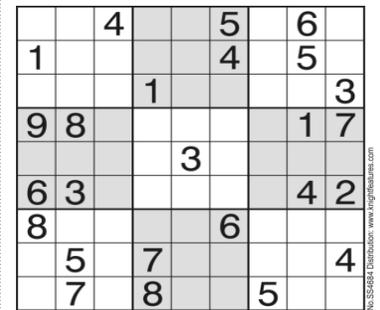
Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



- (set by Dr. X)
- 13 Women patch up wound (5)
 - 14 Intends to smuggle ecstasy in jets (6)
 - 15 Mafia boss holds gun angrily against head of enemy in cell (7)
 - 18 Contacted doctor about tackling ultimately bothersome itch (7)
 - 20 Had terrible trouble around plant (6)
 - 22 Defraud small company (5)
 - 24 Tricky to grip the item used by acrobat (9)
 - 25 Lassitude in Indian state over new introduction of identities (9)
 - 26 Wife irritates and complains (5)
 - 27 Hate execution of soldiers in atrocity (6)
 - 28 Violent act of trainee overwhelmed by low wages (4,4)
 - 1 Mistake to turn traitor (6)
 - 2 Censure couple of amateurs consuming grass in cigar (9)
 - 3 A mild punishment that might break bangles? (1,4,2,3,5)
 - 4 Prepares to catch eels swimming around (7)
 - 6 Argument in fine bar - drag scoundrel outside to admit defeat (5,2,3,5)
 - 7 Time for conservative guy to propose (5)
 - 8 Excellent toss to win! Score many in session (8)
 - 9 Entertained by creative influence in advertisement (6)
 - 16 Ideal perhaps to restrain one putting up rubbish in newspaper article (9)
 - 17 Primitive desire to inhale a joint, wants a bit of weed (8)
 - 19 Worried about brouhaha over arrest (6)
 - 20 Eat eagerly in party after consuming one drink at bar (3,4)
 - 21 Vivacious one in gala beginning to yodel (6)
 - 23 Raise money to equip with new weapons (5)

- ACROSS
- 1 Perverts rushed back to host orgy (8)
- 5 Protest at USA carries importance (6)
- 10 Decisive part of proof in a lawsuit (5)
- 11 Fine naval officer penning book on latest in warfare (9)
- 12 A bug concealed in parties reveals flings (9)
- DOWN

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12908

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Light of consciousness

Vedanta texts explain that the self in each jiva is pure consciousness and always exists as a witness. It has the power to reveal and illumine whatever is manifest as the entire universe, said Swami Anubhavananda in a discourse.

Consciousness as the witness in each jiva integrates all the experiences both within and outside. But it remains distant from all these while revealing simultaneously the agent, the action and the external objects. This truth is illustrated with the analogy of the light in the theatre hall during a stage performance, say a dance or a stage play. The light illumines all the various objects, persons, etc. on stage and outside it as well. The light itself is not affected by all the things that happen during the performance. So too consciousness manifests all things, the ego, the intellect, the objects, etc. and continues to shine even when none of these are present. The mind is the instrument of action and is known as the antakarana. The actions of the mind have two types of modifications, internal and external.

The internal modification makes one the agent as for instance, when a jiva thinks "I am," he becomes the agent. Likewise the external modifications are owing to the mind's interactions with the world through the senses. The 'I sense' is present in the antakarana or mind. When the mind interacts with the world, it tends to believe in the experiences thus derived as real. But it is the same antakarana that can reject these if it understands that the self is blissful in nature but owing to bondage to samsara is not able to realise this truth. If and when the self is able to abide in its true nature, it is said to be liberated. This process involves long and arduous practice of devotion and repeated reflection and enquiry through the powerful Maya and its effects are overcome.



Measurement of Inflation in India

Wholesale Price Index WPI

It is the most widely used inflation indicator in India.

Published by the Office of Economic Adviser, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

All transactions at the first point of bulk sale in the domestic market are included.

Major criticism for this index is that the general public does not buy products at wholesale price.

The base year of All-India WPI has been revised from 2004-05 to 2011-12 in 2017.

Consumer Price Index CPI

It measures price changes from the perspective of a retail buyer.

It measures changes over time in the level of retail prices of selected goods and services on which consumers of a defined group spend their incomes.

Four types of CPI are as follows:

CPI for Industrial Workers (IW).

CPI for Agricultural Labourer (AL).

CPI for Rural Labourer (RL).

CPI (Rural/Urban/Combined).

Of these, the first three are compiled by the Labour Bureau in the Ministry of Labour and Employment. Fourth is compiled by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) in the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

Base Year for CPI is 2012.

CPI vs. WPI

WPI, tracks inflation at the producer level and CPI captures changes in prices levels at the consumer level.

Both baskets measure inflationary trends (the movement of price signals) within the broader economy, the two indices differ in which weightages are assigned to food, fuel and manufactured items.

WPI does not capture changes in the prices of services, which CPI does.

In April 2014, the RBI had adopted the CPI as its key measure of inflation.

ing healthcare systems and crippling the world economy.

residents sharing videos showing abandoned bodies in the streets.

para medical staff have been infected so far across the country.

grappling with fast-growing outbreaks in many States.

Imported cases accounted for most of the total, the National Health Commission said, underscoring why the government has been so focused on preventing new outbreaks stemming from international arrivals.

China only recently lifted the lockdown in the city of Wuhan, where the virus first emerged in December.

The World Health Organization, however, has warned countries against lifting lockdown restrictions too early.

tions in Sri Lanka have sought immediate investigation and urgent action on "the continued hate-mongering against the Muslim community", in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a letter addressed to the acting Inspector General of Police, the organisations cited social media posts and audio recordings in circulation that, they said, violated laws on hate speech.

"It is also important to investigate whether any organ-

hatred to destabilise the country at a time when the government's fullest attention is on controlling and eliminating the deadly COVID-19 here in Sri Lanka," said the letter dated April 12, and signed by organisations, including the Muslim Council of Sri Lanka and the Colombo District Mosques' Federation.

The letter refers to appeals made by anonymous persons in the audio clips, urging the public to refrain

community of trying to spread the coronavirus. The "racist appeals", the organisations said, were similar to those circulated ahead of earlier instances of violence targeting the community in 2018 in the central Digana town, and soon after the Easter terror attacks last April.

Muslims have already raised concern over Sri Lanka making cremation compulsory for COVID-19 victims, as it goes against their beliefs.

Cautious optimism

Yet there is cautious optimism the virus may have reached its peak.

Spain's death toll fell again on Monday with 517 fatalities, the lowest daily figure of new confirmed infections since March 20.

France and the U.S. also saw a drop in daily COVID-19 deaths, along with Italy,

which reported its lowest fatalities in three weeks.

But Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez warned his country was "far from victory", with the lockdown restrictions for the rest of the nation's 47 million people remaining in place.

"We are all keen to go back out on the streets... but

our desire is even greater to win the war and prevent a relapse," he said.

Police in Madrid handed out face masks to commuters at a train station, where life appeared to be creeping back to normal, as workers in protective gear wiped down turnstiles.

Governments in many

countries continued to warn citizens to stay indoors on public holidays for Easter Monday as they grapple with a virus that has even infected national leaders.

In Britain, Prime Minister Boris Johnson was resting at his official country residence Chequers a day after being discharged following "a

+ North Korea's Kim Jong-un reshuffles top governing body

Over a third of State Affairs Commission's members replaced

Pakistan Army aircraft crashes, two pilots killed

Routine training mission turns fatal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA LAHORE/ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Army and Pakistan Air Force.

Storms sweep U.S. south, killing at least 19 people

Hundreds of homes destroyed, power disrupted across States

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.

MARKET WATCH

13-04-2020 % CHANGE

| | | |
|-----------|--------|-------|
| Sensex | 30,690 | -1.51 |
| US Dollar | 76.27 | 0.00 |
| Brent oil | 31.77 | -3.87 |

NIFTY 50

| PRICE | CHANGE | |
|-------------------|----------|---------|
| Adani Ports | 262.85 | 10.85 |
| Asian Paints | 1680.85 | 29.50 |
| Axis Bank | 418.95 | -1.20 |
| Bajaj Auto | 2397.55 | -38.40 |
| Bajaj Finserv | 4491.40 | -328.85 |
| Bajaj Finance | 2287.30 | -264.55 |
| Bharti Airtel | 512.20 | 23.50 |
| BPCL | 350.10 | 5.20 |
| Britannia Ind | 2706.15 | -95.55 |
| Cipla | 592.85 | 13.25 |
| Coal India | 145.90 | 5.10 |
| Dr Reddys Lab | 3746.60 | 125.05 |
| Eicher Motors | 13400.55 | -341.75 |
| GAIL (India) | 86.05 | -1.70 |
| Grasim Ind | 544.50 | 13.95 |
| HCL Tech | 458.25 | -10.80 |
| HDFC | 1655.20 | -47.90 |
| HDFC Bank | 895.35 | -29.70 |
| Hero MotoCorp | 1919.05 | -71.85 |
| Hindalco | 113.80 | 6.25 |
| Hind Unilever | 2346.45 | -25.80 |
| ICI Bank | 330.65 | -12.05 |
| Indian Bank | 410.40 | 15.00 |
| Infra InfraTel | 177.50 | 3.60 |
| Infosys | 637.40 | 1.15 |
| Indian Oil Corp | 83.15 | -0.25 |
| ITC | 181.60 | -3.65 |
| JSW Steel | 167.65 | 1.35 |
| Kotak Bank | 1250.90 | -22.00 |
| L&T | 865.45 | 52.65 |
| M&M | 362.85 | -18.55 |
| Maruti Suzuki | 5283.15 | -43.50 |
| Nestle India Ltd. | 11659.95 | -239.75 |
| NTPC | 88.65 | 1.55 |
| ONGC | 75.05 | -2.25 |
| PowerGrid Corp | 159.95 | -4.50 |
| Reliance Ind | 1189.15 | -30.80 |
| State Bank | 183.50 | -4.25 |
| Shree Cement | 17301.10 | 365.80 |
| Sun Pharma | 462.35 | 7.90 |
| Tata Motors | 74.25 | -0.35 |
| Tata Steel | 282.55 | -2.30 |
| TCS | 1759.25 | -6.90 |
| Tech Mahindra | 526.85 | -18.40 |
| Titan | 966.85 | -47.00 |
| UltraTech Cement | 3466.10 | 100.05 |
| UPL | 324.95 | 5.95 |
| Vedanta | 78.30 | 1.50 |
| Wipro | 189.20 | -7.50 |
| Zee Entertainment | 137.10 | -12.75 |

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on April 13

| CURRENCY | BUY | SELL |
|--------------------|-------|-------|
| US Dollar | 76.07 | 76.39 |
| Euro | 83.05 | 83.41 |
| British Pound | 94.86 | 95.37 |
| Japanese Yen (100) | 70.44 | 70.74 |
| Chinese Yuan | 10.78 | 10.83 |
| Swiss Franc | 78.65 | 79.00 |
| Singapore Dollar | 53.74 | 53.98 |
| Canadian Dollar | 54.44 | 54.67 |
| Malaysian Ringgit | 17.57 | 17.66 |

Source: Indian Bank

Retail inflation eases to 5.91%

Drop in food prices keeps CPI rise under check; data collection hit by COVID-19

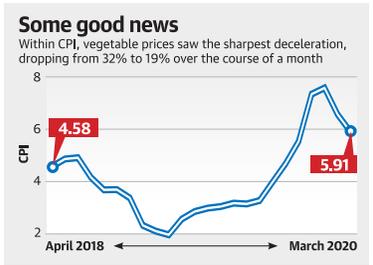
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Retail inflation dropped to 5.91% in March from the 6.58% in February, mostly on a drop in food prices, according to the Consumer Price Index data released by the National Statistical Office on Monday.

Food inflation fell to 8.76% in March, in comparison with the 10.81% in February. Vegetable price inflation saw the sharpest fall, dropping from 32% to 19% over the course of a month. Spices and prepared food, snacks and sweets were also a slight increase in prices.

Retail inflation has been easing off since hitting an almost six-year high of 7.59% in January, and analysts expect the trend to continue over the next few months.

"With low crude oil prices and sharp slowdown in the economy, CPI inflation is expected to fall further," said Rajani Sinha, chief economist and head, research, at



though the NSO said the overall impact of missing price data on CPI estimates was within acceptable limits.

"Keeping in view the preventive measures taken by NSO and announcement of a nationwide lockdown..., field work for price collection of CPI was suspended... from 19th March, 2020 and about 66% of price quotations were received," said an official statement. For assessing the price behavior of remaining price quotations, NSO follows well established and internationally accepted methodology and practices."

Price data is usually collected from selected 114 urban markets and selected 1,181 villages by the Field Operations Division of NSO in a uniform weekly roster.

Oil prices edge higher after output cut pact

Demand worries still weigh

REUTERS
LONDON

Oil prices edged higher on Monday in a muted response to a global deal on record output cuts amid concerns over whether the pact will head off an oil glut as the COVID-19 pandemic hammers demand.

The OPEC+ group of oil producers, comprising the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, Russia and other countries, agreed over the weekend to cut output by 9.7 million barrels per day (bpd) in May and June, representing about 10% of global supply.

Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said nations in the G20 group had pledged to cut



about 3.7 million bpd and that strategic reserves purchased would reach roughly 200 million barrels over the next couple of months, bringing the total reduction to about 19.5 million bpd.

Brent crude futures were up 53 cents, or 1.7%, at \$32.01 a barrel at about 8 p.m. IST, having opened at a session high of \$33.99.

Gold futures surge on local demand

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Gold prices on Monday rose ₹771 to ₹46,065 per 10 gm in futures trade as speculators indulged in creating fresh positions on firm spot demand. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, gold contracts for June traded higher by ₹771, or 1.7%, to ₹46,065 per 10 gm on a business turnover of 17,577 lots.

The yellow metal for August delivery edged up by ₹737, to ₹46,223 on a business turnover of 1,986 lots. Fresh positions built up by participants on spot demand mainly led to rise in gold prices, analysts said. Globally, gold prices fell 0.61% to \$1,742.10 an ounce in New York.

Indices in red as virus spooks markets

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

A negative trend in Asian markets coupled with concerns related to lockdown being extended in India pulled the benchmark indices down on Monday.

The 30-share Sensex lost 469.60 points, or 1.51%, to close at 30,690.02. The Nifty ended the day at 8,993.85, down 118.05 points, or 1.30%.

Incidentally, the India VIX index, after cooling off in the last few sessions, again surged, this time by more than 3% on Monday.

Elsewhere in Asia, Nikkei lost over 2% while Kospi was down by 1.88%. The benchmarks of China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore also ended in the red after coun-

A March of doom for the auto industry

Production, sales at near-standstill; SIAM says in talks with Centre to help rev up sector

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Total wholesale dispatches of vehicles slumped 45% to just over 10.5 lakh units in March 2020 as manufacturers halted production and sale in the last week amid the lockdown due to the outbreak of COVID-19.

The automobile industry had dispatched over 19.08 lakh units to dealers in March 2019, as per data released by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM). Production of vehicles across segments also fell by 33.6% to about 14.47 lakh units, compared with over 21.8 lakh units in March 2019.

"The month of March 2020 was one of the most challenging months for the auto sector as the 21-day



Revenues took a severe hit, and OEMs struggled to balance finances, says SIAM's Rajan Wadhwa. — V. V. KRISHNAN

lockdown [brought] the production and sales of vehicles to a standstill in the last week. As revenues took a severe hit, OEMs struggled to meet fixed cost and working capital requirements," Rajan Wadhwa, president, SIAM, said. Stating that before the lockdown the industry had

already been reeling under severe degrowth and pressure of a disrupted supply chain, he said the auto industry was losing an estimated ₹2,300 crore in production turnover for each day of closure. Wholesales of passenger vehicles stood at over 1.43 lakh units last month, down 51% from over 2.91 lakh units, while production fell 38.14% to 2.07 lakh units from 3.34 lakh.

While domestic sales of cars fell 52.12% to 85,229 units, those of utility vehicles and vans declined 44.67% to 51,569 units, and 69.88% to 6,216 units, respectively. For commercial vehicles, domestic sales nosedived 88.05% to 4,027 units from over 1.09 lakh in the same period. Production was down 82.2% to 18,057 units from over 1.05 lakh units in March 2019.

The sale of two-wheelers fell close to 40% to 8.66 lakh units versus 14.40 lakh units in the year-ago month. Production was down by 28.21% to 11.61 lakh units, down from 16.18 lakh units. While scooter sales fell 32% to 2.63 lakh units, sales of motorcy-

cles was down 41.89% to 5.7 lakh units during the month under review.

"The auto industry is engaged in a dialogue with the government. There would be challenges on the supply side; demand side and also on the issue of availability of finance which would all need to be addressed to bring back growth in the sector," Mr Wadhwa added.

For the full year 2019-20, total domestic vehicle sales stood at over 2.15 crore units, down 18% from more than 2.62 crore units dispatched in March 2019. Passenger vehicle sales last year fell 17.82% to over 27.75 lakh units, while those of commercial vehicles was down 28.75% to 7.17 lakh units. Two-wheeler sales were lower by 17.7% to 1.7 crore units.

'About \$250 billion lost so far, post economic shutdown'

Non-essentials to see deep compression

MINI TEJASWINI
BENGALURU

Most businesses in non-essential products and services will have to report to scaling down of operations in the range of 25-75% in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant lockdown.

Automobile, high-end consumer goods, consumer durables, fancy FMCG items, expensive clothing, gems and jewellery, leisure holidays, restaurants and star hospitality will be some of the sectors that will witness deep down compression, while essential services such as food companies, pharmaceuticals and healthcare providers will continue to do business as usual, industry experts and trade body representatives said.

The compression will lead to the loss of millions of jobs across segments in the country by the end of May, although data as of now is 'the most fragile factor'. Businesses will embark on stringent austerity measures as reducing people and minimising the use of real estate will be critical in this regard.

Pradeep Bhargava, president, Mahatma Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Agriculture (MCCIA) said the COVID-19-driven uncertainty had resulted in erosion of income at all levels.

All non-essential, luxury, high-end, lifestyle products and devices will be impacted at least for a year. These include luxury cars, super bikes, lifestyle accessories, leisure holidays, premium clothing and high-end mobile phones.

Vinnie Mehta, director general at Automotive Component Manufacturers' Association of India (ACMA) termed the current situation



'confusingly fluid.'

"We had asked all our member companies not to employ any employee and allow them to go home. We are happy to see 100% compliance to our advisory in March and we expect that to continue until April 15. But post that we are not sure of the future. The SMEs are in dire straits; the industry has no working capital to operate further."

Automobile industry is the largest employer in the country and currently provides 38 million jobs. It accounts for 49% of the country's manufacturing GDP of which auto component industry has a share of 25%.

"India, as a country, has lost straight \$250 billion after a month-long economic shutdown. We are starting at a flat or negative economy. Demand compression has led to serious cash flow issues. Our SME sector employs 107 million people. Unless the govt. provides a cash flow relief, pretty soon, things are going to be ugly. The U.S. has a \$350 billion fund for SMEs, a grant to support salaries and save jobs," V. Balakrishnan, former CFO, Infosys, said.

Mr. Bhargava was of the opinion that India has to put at least 4% of GDP towards COVID-19 relief, and not just a mere 1.7%, as that could bring an additional 3 lakh cash into the system.

COVID-19 travel curbs hit forex players

They now rely on transactions for those living abroad, or with kin overseas

LALATENDU MISHRA
MUMBAI

The sealing of international borders, the resultant travel restrictions imposed by most countries and the fear of catching the COVID-19 infection have severely impacted the foreign exchange industry, which is deeply integrated and works like an ancillary to foreign travel.

Sudarshan Motwani, founder & CEO, BookMyForex.com, said, "The April to July summer holiday season is when a large number of people travel abroad, especially to Europe and U.S., to avoid the hot weather in India. This season could witness a near-complete washout."

"It is hard to see business as usual or imagine people going out and enjoying themselves on a beach or in restaurants abroad," he said.



We are seeing a near-zero-business situation, says an industry executive.

Businesses even if the lockdown is lifted, due to the fear-filled environment, he said. Economic conditions will leave lesser disposable income in the hands of the people and that will impact foreign travel.

Currently, foreign exchange players are relying mainly on the money transfer business and card re-loads for people who are either abroad or have their close relatives living overseas, for daily expenses.

These businesses have also seen some downturns.

There are over 2,000 full-fledged money changers (FFMGs) registered with RBI in India. However just about 2% of these registered players are mid-sized to large organisations including a few fintech online players.

While the large players in this sector would be strug-

gling to stay afloat due to high expenses on account of rentals and employee costs, the very small stores have their own share of struggle.

Shravya Dhingra, Director of Moneybox Hub India Pvt. Ltd. who runs two stores in Delhi/NCR said, "We are seeing a near-zero-business situation. People started selling their unspent or surplus forex due to a considerable increase in the rates of currencies such as the US dollar and Euro when the crisis started."

"Many money changers purchased currencies from customers but there's not enough market to sell these as there is no demand right now due to travel restrictions. All this has led to a large holding of stocks or sell-off, sometimes even booking small losses," he said.

Provide handholding to MSMEs, AIMO tells govt.

Calls for hastening GST refunds

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

In the last one month, COVID-19 has literally wiped out the present and future plans of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and they have to be provided handholding to emerge successful, said the All India Manufacturers' Organisation (AIMO).

MSMEs face two operational issues viz. working capital and cash flow.

Relaxing payments

To tackle them, the government should release all the payments due to them immediately. These include Goods and Services Tax refunds and tax-deducted-at-source refunds. The units must be allowed to defer payments such as GST,



EMIS, interest etc. by six months, said K.E. Raghunathan, past national president, AIMO. "COVID-19 not only killed the (MSMEs) plans but also made them dependent on government for orders, subsidy, incentives and refunds. Right now, MSMEs are struggling to figure out how to restart business once normalcy returns," he said.

FRAI urges PM to allow petty shops to open

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Federation of Retailers' Association of India (FRAI), a representative body of about four crore micro, small and medium retailers selling soft drinks, mineral water, biscuits, cigarettes, pan and bidis across India, has appealed to the Prime Minister to allow their members to open their shops.

Ram Asre Mishra, president, FRAI, said, "We appeal to the Prime Minister to empathise with the hardships faced by our poor and helpless individual members and allow them to open their shops immediately."

"We also appeal to the PM to immediately announce an economic package to compensate for the losses of petty retailers in daily income," he said.

All policy tools at disposal to fight virus impact: RBI

Inflation may ease sooner and faster; agriculture expected to remain resilient: MPC meeting minutes



Grim prognosis: The near-term growth outlook for India has deteriorated sharply due to the lockdown, says Mr. Das. — PTI

continue to remain vigilant and will not hesitate to use any instrument - conventional and unconventional - to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, revive growth and preserve financial stability," Mr. Das said.

Commenting that there was a rising probability of a global recession, which may be deeper than the one experienced during the global fi-

ncial crisis, Mr. Das said the near-term growth outlook for India had also deteriorated sharply due to the 21-day nationwide lockdown. The RBI had refrained from making any growth forecast during the policy review meeting.

He said prior to the outbreak, some high frequency indicators such as manufacturing, railways freight traf-

fic, exports and imports in January/February had improved after several months of contraction/deceleration.

"With COVID-19, however, industry and service sector activities are likely to be severely impacted and the extent of the adverse impact would depend upon the intensity, spread and duration of COVID-19," he said, while adding the only silver lining is likely to be agriculture, which is expected to remain resilient, with foodgrain production for 2019-20 estimated at a record 292 million tonnes.

While the setback to economic activity could be cushioned to an extent, by the collapse in crude oil prices, there could be certain downsides in the form of decline in remittances from oil-producing countries.

Indicating there was further scope for policy action to boost economic activ-

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) constituted by the Central Government under Section 45ZB. The MPC determines the policy interest rate required to achieve the inflation target.

Composition of Monetary Policy Committee

The 6 member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) constituted by the Central Government as per the Section 45ZB of the amended RBI Act, 1934. The first meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) was held on in Mumbai on October 3, 2016.

The composition of the MPC as on April 2019 is as follows;

1. Governor of the Reserve Bank of India – Chairperson, ex officio; (Shri Shaktikanta Das)
2. Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, in charge of Monetary Policy – BP Kanungo (Member, ex officio)
3. One officer of the Reserve Bank of India to be nominated by the Central Board – Member, ex officio; (Dr. Michael Debabrata Patra)
4. Dr. Ravindra H. Dholakia, Professor, Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad – Member
5. Professor Pami Dua, Director, Delhi School of Economics – Member
6. Shri Chetan Ghate, Professor, Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) – Member

Except ex-officio members all members will hold the office for a period of 4 years or until further orders, whichever is earlier.

Instruments of Monetary Policy;

The instruments of monetary policy are of two types:

1. Quantitative Instruments: General or indirect (Cash Reserve Ratio, Statutory Liquidity Ratio, Open Market Operations, Bank Rate, Repo Rate, Reverse Repo Rate, Marginal standing facility and Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF))
2. Qualitative Instruments: Selective or direct (change in the margin money, direct action, moral suasion)

Foreign Portfolio Investment

Foreign portfolio investment (FPI) consists of securities and other financial assets passively held by foreign investors.

It does not provide the investor with direct ownership of financial assets and is relatively liquid depending on the volatility of the market.

Foreign portfolio investment is part of a country's capital account and is shown on its Balance of Payments (BOP).

The BOP measures the amount of money flowing from one country to other countries over one monetary year. The investor does not actively manage the investments through FPIs, he does not have control over the securities or the business. However, since the investor's goal is to create a quick return on his money, FPI is more liquid and less risky than Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

In contrast, FDI lets an investor purchase a direct business interest in a foreign country. The investor's goal is to create a long-term income stream while helping the company increase its profits.

The investor controls his monetary investments and actively manages the company into which he puts money. However, because the investor's money is tied up in a company, he faces less liquidity and more risk when trying to sell his interest.

Ginting and Jonatan Christie – are ranked much higher than him at 6 and 7, Sugiarto said he was nevertheless trying his best.

"For now, the main thing

from March 11 to 15.

"I noticed social distancing rules were not enforced. That's what makes me wonder why they organised the tournament in the first place

"The Indian players, especially the juniors are very excited to take part in PBL because they can feel the atmosphere of competing with world-class players."

situation improves," AFI president Adile Sumariwala said after an online interaction with athletes, coaches and support staff on Monday.

IN BRIEF



Portugal football team's boost to amateur clubs

LISBON Cristiano Ronaldo and his Portugal teammates have donated half of their bonus for qualifying for the Euro 2020 finals to help amateur football in the country that has been hit by the coronavirus shutdown. The Portuguese football federation said on Monday the money would go towards a fund that it hopes will reach €4.7 million to help amateur clubs survive the crisis. AFP

Sehwag reveals his batting inspiration!

NEW DELHI Virender Sehwag has stated the real inspiration behind his swashbuckling batting technique was Angad, the character from *Ramayana*. Sehwag, known for his great hand-eye coordination with minimal footwork, on Sunday shared a screen-shot of Angad from a TV series on Twitter and said: "So here is where I took my batting



inspiration from. Pair hilana mushkil hi nahi, namumkin hai. #Angad Ji Rocks." IANS



Sport a moustache or not? Akram asks fans

LAHORE Pakistan great Wasim Akram, rarely seen with a moustache,

has asked his fans as to whether he should sport one or not. "Moustache or no moustache? Things you do when you have nothing to do I suppose Grinning face#isolationcreation .Mooch nahi, tey kuch nahi..." former Pakistan allrounder and captain Akram said in a tweet with two photos – one with a moustache and another without facial hair. IANS

Nadal, Murray confirmed for virtual tennis event

NEW YORK Rafael Nadal and Andy Murray are among 12 players confirmed to play in the virtual Madrid Open tennis tournament this month. David Goffin, John Isner, Karen Khachanov, Eugenie Bouchard, Kristina Mladenovic and Kiki Bertens will also participate from their homes in the April 27-30 online competition that is expected to be broadcast live on TV and social media channels. AP



predictions for the economy.

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