



Congress is with the people in fight against COVID-19, says Sonia  
page 8



U.S. State Department approves sale of missiles to India  
page 8



India's growth rate to dip to 1.9% in 2020 due to pandemic, says IMF  
page 13

Sanders backs Biden as ex-rivals join forces in fight against Trump  
page 12



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## NEARBY



### Quarantine space for 10,000 created

CHENNAI  
The Chennai Corporation has created "safe quarantine spaces" for 10,000 persons in various parts of the city. The facilities will have controlled medical supervision.  
CHENNAI • PAGE 3

### Private players to make rapid kit tests soon

CHENNAI  
Quite a few healthcare players have come forward to manufacture COVID-19 rapid test kits following the announcement of special package for such industries by the Chief Minister.  
TAMIL NADU • PAGE 2

### Man released from quarantine traced

VILLUPURAM  
A week after a COVID-19 patient went missing after he was released from quarantine from the Villupuram Government Hospital due to a "clerical error", the police on Tuesday traced him to Pattalam in Chengalpet.  
TAMIL NADU • PAGE 2

# PM extends lockdown till May 3; tougher restrictions at hotspots

Not time to relax despite cost, says Modi; Centre will announce details today

NISTULA HEBBAR  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday announced the extension of the current nationwide lockdown till May 3, with intensive containment measures at hotspots till April 20 in order for areas to qualify for any relief measures and freedom of mobility, especially for hawkers and daily-wage workers.

He added that detailed guidelines on the contours of this extended lockdown would be issued by the government on Wednesday.

Addressing the nation via a televised broadcast, Mr. Modi said while the efforts to fight the novel coronavirus were keeping the situation under control, it was not time to relax one's guard, adding that the economic cost "may appear big, but is not so when compared to the lives of our citizens".

### Inputs from States

"After speaking to all States and even based on suggestions from our citizens, the lockdown has been extended to May 3. Till April 20, identified hotspots will see even more strict checks and only when there is some success in dealing with the outbreak in designated hotspots

Till April 20, hotspots will see more strict checks and only when there is some success in dealing with the outbreak in designated hotspots, will some freedom of mobility be granted, that, too, under strict conditions

Try and help out the poor and indigent, be sympathetic to colleagues and avoid retrenchments. Accord respect and dignity to corona warriors like doctors, health workers, sanitation workers, police and others

NARENDRA MODI, Prime Minister



will some freedom of mobility be granted, that, too, under strict conditions," Mr. Modi said.

"I keep in my mind our poor brothers and daily-wage workers when I speak of opening spaces, but even if one case emerges from these hotspots, the lockdown will be back in place again," he stressed.

He said Indians had displayed exceptional discipline and resolve during the lockdown and managed to keep the number of cases at a level that was favourable compared to several rich countries.

"Even before our first case, we had put in place screening at airports for international travellers and quarantine measures; when

we hit 550 cases, we went in for a strong lockdown, and if you compare where we are at with the number of our cases, our situation - is still better than other, richer countries," he said.

### Help for farmers

He mentioned that the government was making all efforts to help farmers with the ongoing rabi harvest and procurement and said the country had adequate stocks of both food and medicines.

He said he wanted the country to follow seven steps or a new set of *saptapadi* (traditionally associated with a Hindu wedding ceremony).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

## Trains, flights stay suspended

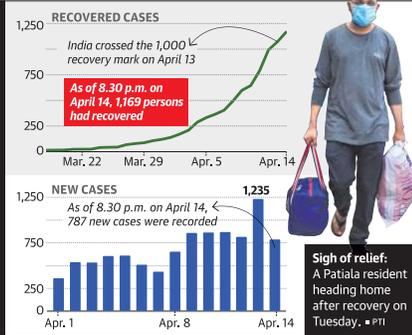
The Railways on Tuesday said all passenger services, including premium trains, mail/express trains, suburban trains and the Kolkata Metro Rail, will continue to remain suspended till May 3. In addition, advance reservation will not be allowed "till further notice". The ban on domestic and international flights was also extended till May 3. • PAGE 8

## Not enough testing; Rahul

India delayed the import of COVID-19 testing kits, the key to fighting the pandemic, and is now "nowhere in the game" of mass testing, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi said on Tuesday. Taking to Twitter, Mr. Gandhi claimed the testing levels rank among the lowest, even lower than the least developed countries like Laos, Niger and Honduras. • PAGE 8

## Recoveries increase, cases too

The number of people who recovered from COVID-19 crossed the 1,000 mark on Monday. More than 45% of the patients were from Maharashtra, Kerala and Telangana. However, Monday also recorded 1,235 new cases, the highest daily rise yet



Sigh of relief: A Patiala resident heading home after recovery on Tuesday. • PTI

# Longer lockdown essential to break chain of infection: govt.

1,211 new cases in 24 hours put nationwide total at 10,363

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN  
NEW DELHI

India on Tuesday registered an increase of 1,211 COVID-19 cases and 31 deaths in the past 24 hours, making it the largest spike in cases since January.

The total number of cases stands at 10,363, with 339 deaths. As many as 1,036 persons have been discharged after treatment, the Union Health Ministry said.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement of extension of the lockdown till May 3, the Ministry said the move was essential to break the chain of transmission. "As per the World Health Organization data,

76,498 confirmed cases and 5,702 deaths were reported across the world on Monday and it is due to our collective effort that in a large country like India, we have been able

### COVID-19

to restrict the numbers," Joint Secretary in the Health Ministry Lav Agarwal said.

According to reports from the State Health Departments, the death toll rose to 390, with 11,350 cases overall of which 9,791 are active ones.

Mumbai alone reported 204 cases, taking the total number of affected people

in the city to 1,753, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation said. The death toll in the city stood at 111 with 11 more fatalities.

### More beds

"Health Ministry is continuously working with States/UTs to strengthen the health infrastructure in the country," Mr. Agarwal said.

"As of now, a total of 602 dedicated COVID-19 hospitals with 1,06,719 isolation beds and 12,024 ICU beds have been developed," he added.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8  
MORE REPORTS ON PAGES 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12

## + Bandra standoff



Future tense: Migrant workers gathered outside the Bandra West railway station in Mumbai on Tuesday, demanding that the government make transport arrangements so that they can return to their native places. • PTI (REPORT ON PAGE 9)

## Teltumbde, Navlakha surrender to NIA +

Case booked for Bhima-Koregaon riots; SC had refused them anticipatory bail

SONAM SAIGAL  
VJAYANTA SINGH  
MUMBAI / DELHI

Civil rights campaigner Gautam Navlakha and scholar and activist Anand Teltumbde surrendered to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday in New Delhi and Mumbai respectively for their alleged involvement in the Bhima-Koregaon riots of 2018.

Mr. Teltumbde, an engineer and IIM graduate who taught at IIT-Kharagpur, was booked for his alleged links to the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist) and remanded to NIA custody till April 18 by a special NIA court in Mumbai.

The NIA court in Mumbai, however, did not take up Mr. Navlakha's remand application because of jurisdictional issues, and he will be produced before a Delhi court on Wednesday.

The Supreme Court had



No relief: Scholar Anand Teltumbde arriving at the NIA office in Mumbai on Tuesday, and, right, activist Gautam Navlakha outside the agency's office in New Delhi. • VIVEK BENDRE & ANI



on April 8 ordered Mr. Navlakha and Mr. Teltumbde to surrender after rejecting their anticipatory bail pleas. The case against them was transferred from the Pune police to the NIA in January. Both have been charged under the draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

Earlier, in 2018, the Pune police arrested activists Sudha Bharadwaj, Shoma Sen,

Surendra Gadling, Mahesh Raut, Arun Ferreira, Sudhir Dhawale, Rona Wilson, Vernon Gonsalves and Varavara Rao, for their alleged involvement in the Bhima Koregaon riots.

### Hope for speedy trial

Before surrendering to the NIA, Mr. Navlakha said in a statement, "My hope rests on a speedy and fair trial for myself and all my fellow co-

accused. This alone will enable me to clear my name, and walk free, having also used the time in jail to rid myself of acquired habits."

He also referred to concerns expressed by those close to him about having to surrender at a time when the pandemic was raging and the courts were releasing many detainees from jail.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

## Bhopal gas survivors left in the lurch

Four people who died due to COVID-19 were victims of the 1984 tragedy

SIDHARTH YADAV  
BHOPAL

Four of the five patients who died of COVID-19 in Bhopal were survivors of the city's 1984 gas tragedy, and were suffering from respiratory illnesses that made them more vulnerable to the disease.

One of the patients was denied ambulance service and admission by two private hospitals, another by one private hospital and the third by both a private and a government-run hospital. While two of them could be admitted to a private hospital at the last minute, one died on way to hospital.

"If the BMHRC had been open for us, we could have gone there," said Gaurav Khatik, son of the first patient to die of COVID-19 in Bhopal, aged 52, on April 6. He had managed to collect



The Bhopal Memorial Hospital and Research Centre was converted into a dedicated COVID-19 hospital.

790,000 with friends' support for the brief treatment of his father, who was asthmatic, at a private hospital.

### No option

After the State government converted the ICMR-run Bhopal Memorial Hospital and Research Centre

(BMHRC) into a dedicated COVID-19 hospital on March 23, the facility closed its doors to the survivors of the methyl isocyanate leak from a pesticide plant in the city in 1984, which killed thousands and caused deformities and congenital diseases in lakhs.

They are now left with no other government-run superspecialty hospital. Tens of patients, including 28 from the pulmonary ward, the most from any department, were shunted out.

According to the eight community health centres of the BMHRC, from 1998 to 2016, 50.4% of gas-affected patients suffered from cardiovascular problems, 59.6% from pulmonary problems and 15.6% from diabetes, illnesses that make patients susceptible to the coronavi-

rus. The Principal Secretary of Public Health and Family Welfare had said alternative arrangements had been made for them at the six State government-run hospitals.

Yet, Aman Yadav's 52-year-old father was sent away by the Pulmonary Medicine Centre, one of the six hospitals he approached after being denied admission by a private hospital.

The next day on April 11, he walked till the ward of the government-run Hamidia Hospital, gasping for breath, and died.

"He had earlier undergone treatment for tuberculosis at the gas relief hospital. His situation worsened every year with the change of season," said Mr. Yadav.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

## Corpn. to test 40,000 samples by May 3

Civic body to set up 35 collection centres for exercise

STAFF REPORTER  
CHENNAI

With 211 COVID-19 cases in the city limits as on Tuesday, the Chennai Corporation plans to go in for widespread testing, collecting over 40,000 samples by the time the extended lockdown ends on May 3.

"As many as 10,000 samples will be taken from residents of 80 containment zones where positive cases have been reported," said Chennai Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash.

Pointing to the need to also collect samples from residents across the city, he said that the civic workers would collect 40,000 samples in all by the end of April. "A total of 30,000 samples will be taken from residents of areas where positive cases have not been reported. This



A screenshot of the GCC Corona Monitoring app.

sample size of 40,000 is 0.5% of the city's population. The sample strength is good and it will give good results in terms of finding trends," he said. "At least

600 samples were collected earlier. On Tuesday, 800 more were collected. Our goal is to achieve 2,000 samples per day," he said, requesting residents not to consider testing a taboo. "Once our test results indicate an improvement, we will be able to tackle this medical emergency," he said.

"The Corporation will set up 35 centres for sample collection. We have already started 16 centres. Doctors and technicians on deputation have been trained for the purpose," he added.

Meanwhile, the Corporation made it possible for residents to view containment spots in the city through the GCC Corona Monitoring App.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

## 31 fresh cases in T.N.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu reported 31 new cases of COVID-19 on Tuesday, the lowest since the start of April. The total number of COVID-19 patients in the State now stands at 1,204.

The day also saw 23 patients discharged across the State, taking the total number of cured persons to 81. So far, 12 patients have died due to COVID-19. The number of samples lifted for testing increased by 6,509 since Monday, the highest so far. Till date, a total of 19,255 samples have been tested in the State. For the first time, the Health department gave out details of the number of individuals tested for COVID-19 - 15,502.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

FROM PAGE ONE

## Tamil Nadu records 31 new cases; lowest count since start of April

Health Secretary Beela Rajesh said that of the 31 patients, 21 were connected to the "single source event", one had an inter-State travel history and nine were contacts of COVID-19 patients.

Dindigul recorded the highest number of cases with nine.

Six patients were sick but none required ventilator support. In the last 24 hours, 69 patients hospitalised for severe acute respiratory infection were screened for COVID-19, and none tested positive, Dr. Rajesh said. Among the COVID-19 patients, 33 were under the age of 10.

**Containment measures**  
Dr. Rajesh clarified that persons were discharged only after completion of the 14-day quarantine period.

She said that containment activities continued wherever persons tested positive for COVID-19. "Zonal teams have been formed. Twelve senior IPS and IAS officials have been posted for monitoring the implementation of containment measures, check-

ing for proper lifting of samples, contact tracing and adherence to physical distancing," the Health Secretary said.

With the State awaiting approval of the Indian Council of Medical Research for trial of convalescent plasma therapy, she said that T.N. was framing protocols for the trials. When asked about higher testing numbers in States such as Maharashtra and Kerala, Dr. Rajesh said that Tamil Nadu recorded its first COVID-19 case in early March and it was important to take into account when other States first reported cases and look at the testing numbers over a period of time. "We started by screening travellers from Wuhan. When COVID-19 spread to other parts of China, those coming from other provinces of China were screened as per the travel advisory. This is an imported disease. As far as Tamil Nadu is concerned, after we had cases from the single source cluster, we have traced their primary and secondary contacts. All international tra-

vellers and their contacts were also traced and tested. Now, whoever has influenza-like illness is also being tested," she said.

On masks, Dr. Rajesh said that triple layer masks, N95 masks and personal protective equipment were for hospital staff. "Among the public, persons in the vulnerable group, such as those above 60, those with diabetes and hypertension, or undergoing cancer treatment, or persons who underwent organ transplant, should wear triple layer masks. Healthy individuals can wear reusable masks made at home."

She said dialysis was required by nearly 15,000 patients across the State, and measures to ensure that they underwent dialysis thrice a week had been taken by involving the 108 ambulance service.

As of date, a total of 38,139 persons were under home quarantine and 135 in government quarantine facilities. A total of 1,870 persons were admitted to isolation facilities.

## Private firms race against time to manufacture rapid test kits

'We hope to be able to produce them in large numbers by next month'

DENNIS S. JESUDASAN  
CHENNAI

Quite a few healthcare players in Tamil Nadu have come forward to manufacture the much sought-after COVID-19 rapid test kits and other medical equipment, following Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami's announcement of a special package for such industries.

"We are in the final stage of R&D for rapid test kits and we hope to hit the market soon. Our test kits should be out by May," said G.S.K. Velu, chairman and managing director of Tritivron Healthcare, which is also into manufacturing ventilators, PPE and hand sanitisers.

With manufacturing units in Chennai, Visakhapatnam and Mumbai, Tritivron aspires to end the country's dependence on China for rapid test kits. "By May, we hope to be able to manufacture these kits in large numbers. We have also identified suppliers for raw materials," Dr. Velu told *The Hindu*.

M. Arumugam, managing director of Broadline Tech-



Key task: Health workers collecting a sample from a woman at a COVID-19 testing centre in Chennai on Tuesday. AFP

nologies Private Ltd., said his company was working on an automated ventilator model. He has also been collaborating with CSIR-Central Electrochemical Research Institute, Karaikudi, and the National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research. "We are in the testing stage now, and after obtaining certification from the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories, our product should be out

soon," Dr. Arumugam said. Private players had commenced work on the manufacture of ventilators, PPE, rapid test kits and N95 masks, a senior official in the State government told *The Hindu*. Besides, there were other players manufacturing sanitisers, regular masks, etc.

"Since it is not mandatory to inform the government before production, we don't know the actual number of players who have commenced operations," he said. At least three major automobile companies have tied up with smaller players to manufacture ventilators, as the smaller players offered specific technical expertise, while the larger ones offered overall support and space. "Besides, there are some who have commenced operations in Coimbatore," the official said.

Around eight players have commenced operations for manufacturing PPE.

## 96-year-old man dies of COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

A 96-year-old man, who had tested positive for the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), died at the Government Medical College Hospital in Karur on Tuesday. With this, the State has reported 12 deaths of COVID-19 patients.

In a statement, the Health Department said the patient, a resident of Dindigul, was admitted to the hospital on April 9. He developed severe breathlessness, and did not respond to treatment.

He died at 6.40 a.m. on Tuesday.

Doctors at the hospital said the patient was disoriented and unable to talk since his admission. His condition worsened over the last two days, hospital authorities said.

The patient had contracted the virus from his grandson.

## Samples lifted from 40 police personnel after social worker tests positive

Man engaged in food distribution in Thudiyalur had visited police station

STAFF REPORTER  
COIMBATORE

The Health Department collected swab samples of around 40 police personnel and a few medical professionals at a primary health centre (PHC) in Coimbatore on Tuesday, after a 61-year-old social worker, who had interacted with them, tested positive for COVID-19 on Monday.

The swab samples of around 40 police personnel attached to the Thudiyalur police station and staff of a PHC in the same area were collected on Tuesday, Health Department sources said.

The social worker, a resident of Kothari Nagar, had flown from Delhi to Coimbatore on March 23. A few persons from Coimbatore, who had attended a religious conference at Nizamuddin, one of the largest sources of COVID-19 infection in the State, were his co-passengers. The man was engaged in the distribution of food to the needy in Thudiyalur area, allegedly after he test-

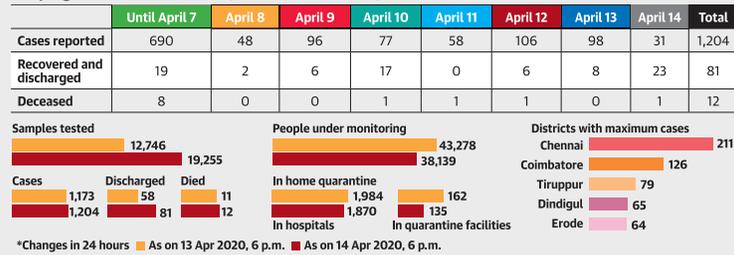
ed negative for COVID-19 twice. It was also alleged that he distributed food to police personnel.

An official from Thudiyalur police station said the man served food packets to migrant workers in the area and not to the police. However, the officer said that a few policemen took a selfie with the social worker, who also visited the station.

Collector K. Rajamani said it was being verified whether he had also visited the Coimbatore Collectorate. The Health Department was yet to identify the migrant workers who received food packets from the social worker.

An official said, on condition of anonymity, that the swab sample of the social worker had been subjected to COVID-19 testing only once, and the result returned positive on Monday. This means the man was engaged in food distribution without undergoing home quarantine for 28 days, starting March 23 — the day he returned from Delhi.

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



## Arrivals from other States ensure sufficient stock of rice in T.N.

Agriculture department officials have made arrangements for steady supply

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

Despite panic-buying by consumers during the COVID-19 lockdown, adequate stock of rice is being maintained in the State, thanks to arrivals from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha and Karnataka.

The secretary of the Tamil Nadu Rice Mill Owners and Wholesale Dealers' Federation, A.C. Mohan, said Tamil Nadu was getting paddy during the first week of April following the timely intervention of agri-

**Tamil Nadu requires an estimated 91 lakh tonnes of rice per year, of which 65 lakh tonnes are produced in the State**

culture officials. The southern parts of the State would get rice from Thanjavur; areas like Tiruppur, Kangeyam and Arani from Karnataka; and Chennai and the surrounding areas from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Odisha.

"The officers spoke to

their counterparts in other States and ensured trucks carrying paddy/rice and even empty trucks going to pick up supplies were given passes and travelled smoothly between various points," he said.

The State requires an estimated 91 lakh tonnes of rice per year, of which 65 lakh tonnes are produced in Tamil Nadu. The rest comes from outside.

"Due to transport restrictions, we are unable to get paddy from West Bengal and Gujarat. But the

present arrivals are enough to ensure supply during lockdown," Dr. Mohan said.

D. Thulasingam, federation president, said they also ensured that the prices would not be increased due to higher demand.

"Families have been buying even two to three times in this situation. We also request supermarkets to sell at nominal prices," he said.

Most mills in the State are managing with half their labour strength.

## Delhi-based man who tested positive traced

He was released from GH due to a 'clerical error'

S. PRASAD  
VILLUPURAM

A week after a Delhi-based COVID-19-positive man went missing after he was released from quarantine from the Villupuram Government Hospital due to a "clerical error", a special police team from Villupuram traced him to Pattalam in Chengalpattu district on Tuesday.

A team led by Superintendent of Police S. Jayakumar found him at a lorry terminal situated between Madurathakam and Pattalam. The man, handling from Patel Nagar in New Delhi, had come to Pudukcherry to attend an interview last month. He was involved in a road accident, following which he was arrested and remanded in the Kalapet Central Prison in Pudukcherry.

After coming out on bail, he reached Villupuram, and was staying in a facility operated by the local Red Cross when he developed fever and was admitted to the GH. After he was released from quarantine on

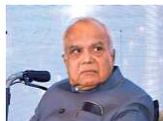
April 7, the authorities realised that he was COVID-19-positive. But he was untraceable.

Mr. Jayakumar said that immediately after the man was discharged from the Villupuram GH, he boarded a lorry. He had been staying with a few lorry drivers at the terminal in Pattalam due to the restrictions on movement of vehicles during the lockdown.

The police had issued a nationwide alert and had constituted seven teams to trace him. Mr. Jayakumar said the police had put up posters in Tamil, Hindi and English with photographs of the man all along the highway from Ulundurpet to Chennai. "The posters also had the contact number of an Inspector and called upon the people to alert the team if they spotted him. A lorry driver from north India, who saw the poster in a lorry terminal, alerted another lorry driver from Tamil Nadu who, in turn, informed us," he said.

The man is being brought back to Villupuram, while four lorry drivers who had stayed with him have been handed over to a police team in Chengalpattu district, Mr. Jayakumar added.

IN BRIEF



Follow PM's 7-point formula: Governor to T.N.

CHENNAI  
Governor Banwarilal Purohit on Tuesday said everyone should follow the seven-point formula proposed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to fight the spread of COVID-19, and Tamil Nadu should lead the battle as a 'model State'. Mr. Purohit exhorted everyone to take care of their families, especially the elders, follow social distancing norms and wear a mask.

Ensure that the poor don't go hungry: PMK

CHENNAI  
While the lockdown extension announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is necessary to contain the spread of COVID-19, it is the duty of the Central government to ensure that those who have lost their livelihood don't go hungry during the extended shutdown, PMK founder S. Ramadoss said. The State government should give a weekly financial aid of ₹1,000 to the poor, he said.

## Prime Minister's speech was a disappointment, says Stalin

'It didn't cover the issue of relief to be rendered during lockdown'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

DMK president M.K. Stalin said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the nation on Tuesday was "as usual a disappointment to the people", since it did not cover the issue of relief to be rendered during the period of the COVID-19 lockdown, which has been extended till May 3.

"People are not expecting advice alone from the Prime Minister. They need relief material, essential commodities and financial assistance to sustain themselves," Mr. Stalin said in a statement.

He said a majority of the Indian population were reeling from poverty and unemployment, facing caste discrimination and eking out a livelihood as daily wagers. "Their lives have been shattered by the lockdown, and what assistance has the PM extended to them? Doesn't the government have a responsibility to save them?" the DMK leader asked.

He said former Union Finance Minister P. Chidamb-

**People are not expecting advice alone from the Prime Minister. They need relief material, essential commodities and financial assistance**

aram's argument that the Prime Minister could allocate ₹65,000 crore of the ₹30-lakh crore Budget to help the poor was justified.

"Is the Prime Minister not able to understand the truth even 21 days after the lockdown [began]?" he asked.

Mr. Stalin said that while the Centre had not sanctioned the funds sought by the State government, it had also suspended the MPLADS for two years and prevented the State governments from purchasing medical equipment directly.

"These decisions are not in the interest of the people. They want to know when you (Mr. Modi) are going to supply medical equipment. When are you going to give a speech that will answer the people's question?" the DMK leader said.

Tamil Nadu Congress Committee president K.S. Alagiri has questioned the country's rate of testing for COVID-19.

In a statement after the Prime Minister's address to the nation on Tuesday, Mr. Alagiri said India was testing only 105 persons per 10 lakh population, whereas South Korea's figure was 6,931, Italy 6,268, the U.K. 1,469 and the U.S. 1,480. "It looks like Mr. Modi is not bothered that India is among the nations with the lowest testing rates," he said.

Mr. Modi had addressed the nation four times so far, but had not made any announcement about investments to increase and upgrade medical infrastructure or financial measures to protect crores of people who had lost their livelihood due to the lockdown, he said.

Mr. Alagiri said that while the U.S. had set aside \$2 trillion — 10% of its GDP — for the fight against COVID-19, India had allocated just ₹15,000 crore. "This is not even 1% of our GDP," he said.

## 'Will raise funding issue with BJP leadership'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu BJP president L. Murugan on Tuesday said he will take up the issue of additional funds sought by Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami to combat COVID-19 in the State with the party leadership in Delhi.

Speaking to the media, Mr. Murugan said the Centre had approved the use of funds such as local body funds and mineral funds, among other sources, for the purpose of flattening the curve of COVID-19.

He said, "The Centre has allotted funds and has also approved the use of other funds. But we will bring this issue (shortage of funds) to the attention of the Central leadership and ask them to consider the State government's request."

He said BJP cadre had distributed food packets, "Modi kits" that contain rations, and masks to over 37 lakh people so far.

## Dedicated fleet of ambulances caters to suspected COVID-19 cases

120 vehicles transporting 300 persons a day on an average

SERENA JOSEPHINE M.  
CHENNAI

A dedicated fleet of ambulances has been transporting persons with suspected symptoms of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) across the State. These vehicles, numbering 120, transport 300 persons a day on an average. They are disinfected after each trip.

The Health department had earmarked ambulances to cater to COVID-19 patients and those with symptoms of the disease. Accordingly, a separate team of pilots and emergency medical technicians (EMT) was created for the purpose, officials said.

"As of now, we have 120 ambulances earmarked for COVID-19. This is likely to increase depending on the requirement. Each of these ambulances has adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) for the pilots and EMTs. We have provided each vehicle with kits containing sprayers and disinfectants, including hy-



A health worker disinfecting an ambulance. B. JOTHIRAMALINGAM

pochlorite. After admitting someone to a hospital, the staff disinfect the ambulance. It takes about half-an-hour to one hour," said M. Selvakumar, State head of operations, GVK EMRI, which operates the ambulance service in T.N.

Both the pilot and the EMT dispose of the PPE as per protocol and get ready for the next trip, he said, adding, "The team members have been trained to use PPE and carry out disinfection work. We work closely with the district

authorities, and they are also trained locally by government doctors and health authorities."

None of these ambulances are deployed for any other purpose, he said. "If persons with suspected symptoms of COVID-19 are at a primary health centre or a government hospital, our ambulances pick them up and take them to the government medical college hospital. Also, those who test negative for COVID-19 are dropped home," he added.

**Timings**  
CHENNAI

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

FRIDAY, APR. 17  
RISE 05:56 SET 18:22  
RISE 02:17 SET 14:03

**Chennai Weather** max min

Thiruvallur 38 21  
Chennai Airport 35 25  
Chennai City 34 25

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

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

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**L&T supplies ventilators**

Chennai Larsen & Toubro Ltd has supplied 100 beds with mattress, 2 ventilators, 7 Bipap ventilators, and 20 multiparameter monitors to the King Institute.

# Safe quarantine spaces created to accommodate 10,000 across city

Chennai Trade Centre and institutions such as IIT and Anna University readied

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

The Chennai Corporation has created "safe quarantine spaces" for 10,000 persons in various parts of the city.

Launching the safe quarantine facilities at the Chennai Trade Centre on Tuesday, Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash said that these spaces would have controlled medical supervision.

"The safe quarantine spaces at IIT Madras, Anna University and other major Central government institutions in areas like Guindy will house persons who have symptoms. We have 10,000 beds ready. Four urban community health centres of Chennai Corporation have also been converted into safe quarantine spaces," he said.



Nearly 500 beds meant for COVID-19 isolation wards have been set up at the Chennai Trade Centre. •B. VELANKANNI RAJ

The Corporation has also identified marriage halls and other private buildings for creating safe quarantine spaces in the city, in addition to spaces in major institutions, he added.

Replying to a query on the

kerchief as a mask by modifying it a bit. We have asked all our 20,000 conservancy workers to wear masks at work. There have been cases of violations which should not be generalised," he said.

"The Chennai Corporation has discontinued the practice of spraying chemicals on buildings and spraying chemicals on persons for disinfection. It will give a false sense of security against the pandemic," he said.

Answering a query on the permission for an all-party meeting on Wednesday, Mr. Prakash said that civic officials would hold discussions with the Chennai Police Commissioner on the meeting and its impact on the spread of COVID-19 in the city.

# More camps in pipeline for testing in containment zones

14 additional camps to be set up today, says Health Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

There are plans to increase the number of camps from 26 to 40 to draw samples from residents for COVID-19 testing in containment zones in Chennai on Wednesday, said Health Minister C. Vijayabaskar.

**COVID-19**

The Minister, shortly after inspecting COVID-19 facilities readied at the Communicable Diseases Hospital (CDH) in Tondiarpet on Tuesday, said, "The Chief Minister has instructed us to test more. Accordingly, the Health Department, along with the Chennai Corporation, has set up 26 camps in the city. The Corporation's doctors and paramedical staff are drawing samples from residents at these camps, as per protocol, with adequate protective gear."

With the ongoing containment plan, family members of persons who have tested positive and all their contacts have been identified with help from the police and the Revenue Department, he said. "We are en-



Show of gratitude: Residents of Nollambur felicitated conservancy workers on Tuesday. •M. VEDHAN

couraging them to come to the camps and get tested. The results will be available the next day. The works is being expedited," he said. "As the number of camps increases, we will be able to carry out the containment plan effectively and lift samples from everybody," he said.

**Facilities scaled up**

At the CDH in Tondiarpet, individual rooms have been readied, with a total of 200 beds, for treating COVID-19 patients. They will be utilised if the need arises. The

The CDH in Tondiarpet has scaled up its facilities to accommodate 200 patients

C. VIJAYABASKAR  
Health Minister

hospital has scaled up its facilities to accommodate 200 patients, the Minister said.

"The number of beds has been increased at CDH as a precautionary measure," he said. Overall, adequate isolation facilities for COVID-19 are being set up across the State, he added.

**FROM PAGE ONE**

# Corporation to test 40,000 samples by May 3

**Door-to-door monitoring**

Zone	Households identified in the zone	Persons identified with symptoms	Persons reported cured	Persons with symptoms being followed up
Royapuram	1,11,471	463	332	131
Kodambakkam	2,19,705	581	484	97
Anna Nagar	1,81,000	659	580	79
Teynampet	2,26,557	643	568	75
Valasaravakkam	97,251	285	233	52
Tiruvottiyur	87,418	288	256	32
Tondiarpet	1,69,432	217	186	31
Thiru Vi Ka Nagar	1,94,500	129	102	27
Sholinganallur	98,236	114	96	18
Madhavaram	69,261	101	83	18
Ambattur	1,81,481	211	195	16
Manali	25,540	91	80	11
Alandur	81,131	60	51	9
Adyar	1,77,126	29	21	8
Perungudi	99,102	15	7	8

\*Symptoms do not necessarily include COVID-19-related features, but any fever, cough and cold. Status as on April 13.

The updated app now has a map that shows an embedded view of the areas that have been identified as containment zones. The app, launched early this month, gives residents the options of reporting symptoms as well as crowded spots, based on which action can be taken.

As part of its door-to-door survey, the Corporation has identified 12,047 containment blocks across 15 zones and, for verification, nearly 11,678 persons had been appointed. As part of the monitoring plan in place for containment zones in the city, the civic body had surveyed over 81 lakh houses, officials said.

As part of its door-to-door survey, the Corporation has identified 3,886 persons with symptoms across 15 zones in the city as on April 13.

The Corporation had identified 12,047 containment blocks across 15 zones and, for verification, nearly 11,678 persons had been appointed. As part of the monitoring plan in place for containment zones in the city, the civic body had surveyed over 81 lakh houses, officials said.

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# Over 1,000 new tenements being readied for health workers, migrant labourers

Construction work completed in NTO Kuppam, Periamet on a war-footing

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

Hectic activity is on at NTO Kuppam near Tiruvottiyur for the past one week with workers erecting electricity poles, installing overhead cable and fixing electricity meters.

The maintenance staff of the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (TANGEDCO) have been giving finishing touches to the new tenements belonging to the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board (TNSCB) at Tiruvottiyur.

The TNSCB is getting more than 1,000 tenements in the city ready for accommodating health workers, migrant labourers and stranded travellers.

"Many nurses and doctors who are residing on the out-



All set: The tenements have been provided water and electricity connections. •FILE PHOTO

skirts of the city and are providing medical treatment for COVID-19 patients do not want to go home. They wish to stay within the city. Hence, it was proposed to get ready our new tenements for the Greater Chennai Corporation to use the facility," said a senior official of

the TNSCB. The board has finishing construction work in NTO Kuppam near Tiruvottiyur and K P Park in Periamet on a war-footing and has provided water and electricity connections to the tenements in case the civic body or any other government department needs for

using them as part of coronavirus preventive measures.

The slum board official said that migrant labourers and other homeless people were housed in temporary shelters without adequate personal distancing.

In case, the civic body wants to house the migrant labourers and homeless people, the tenements could be used.

A senior Tangedco official said all new electricity connections have been stopped, but based on the request of the TNSCB, a large number of electricity staff were pressed into the job of providing power connections to the tenements within a fortnight with senior officials in the northern region directly monitoring the work at the tenements.

# Motorists without mask fined ₹500

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

The city police on Tuesday began imposing ₹500 fine on motorists who were moving without wearing masks. Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash on Monday announced that under the relevant provisions of the Epidemics Control Act and the Public Health Act, all persons are required to wear masks when they step out of their houses. A senior police officer said, "We were conducting special drive at all check points from Tuesday morning. We book cases under section 179 of Motor Vehicles Act (Disobedience of orders, obstruction and refusal of information) and ₹500 was imposed as fine on motorists who did not wear masks."

# Govt. allows fishing, but not direct sale to consumers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

Though fishermen using traditional craft and motorised boats have been allowed to fish during the lockdown, selling directly to consumers has not been allowed.

Issues pertaining to sale of fish have created problems in many villages, including in Kasimedu, from where fishers of 14 hamlets operate.

M. D. Dayalan of Indian Fishermen Association said there were discrepancies in the information passed on to villages and the local officials, which led to villages deciding to not go fishing.



Fishermen staging a protest on Tuesday. •B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

per day would do. They need cash in hand for which they have to sell their catch," he said.

To avoid crowding An official of the Fisheries department clarified that the idea was not to allow consumers come to the fishing harbours or fish landing

centres to avoid crowding. "Local vendors are tying up with traders who will supply fish in different localities. Wholesalers can also buy fish, those tie ups too are being made," he said.

A total of two lakh fishermen are directly employed in traditional and motorised sector and another two lakh labourers indirectly depend on this sector.

Minimum crew Fishing is being permitted with minimum crew members on a rotational basis, without auctioning.

In major fishing harbours and fish landing centres, where congregation of boats is higher, only a maximum of 300 motorised boats would be allowed and they could return only in a staggered manner.

**राजस्थान सरकार**

**अपील**

**#राजस्थान\_सतर्क\_है**

प्रिय प्रवासी बंधुओं,

कोरोना महामारी से आज पूरा विश्व संकट में है। पूरे देश में लॉकडाउन के कारण सभी परिवहन एवं आवागमन प्रतिबंधित है। ऐसे में राजस्थान प्रदेश के निवासी जो किसी अन्य राज्य में व्यापार, नौकरी, मजदूरी, पर्यटन या किसी अन्य कारण से लॉकडाउन के कारण फंसे हुए हैं, वे जहां हैं वर्तमान परिस्थिति में वहीं रहें, अपने घरों को लौटने का प्रयास न करें।

साथियों, आपकी समस्याओं के समाधान के लिए राजस्थान सरकार संबंधित राज्य सरकारों के साथ समन्वय स्थापित करके आपके लिए आवश्यक व्यवस्थाएं, भरण-पोषण व ठहरने की उचित व्यवस्था करवाने के लिए लगातार प्रयास कर रही है। मैं विश्वास दिलाता हूँ कि परेशानी के इस दौर में हमारी सरकार मजबूती के साथ आपके लिए काम करती रहेगी। किसी भी समस्या के लिए नीचे दी गई हैल्पलाइन अथवा नामित नोडल अधिकारी से संपर्क करें। मेरा आपसे अनुरोध है कि कुछ समय धैर्य और संकल्प शक्ति को बनाये रखें।

**- अशोक गहलोत, मुख्यमंत्री**

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## IN BRIEF

## MLA booked again

**PUDUCHERRY**  
The territorial police on Monday evening registered a case against ruling Congress legislator A. John Kumar for the second time for defying the lockdown. The Orleanpet police registered a case against Mr. Kumar for distributing rice to a large gathering of people near his house. According to the police, around 150 persons gathered near his house on Monday evening, to collect rice bags.

## 22 liquor licences revoked

**PUDUCHERRY**  
In a crackdown on illegal sale of alcohol, the Excise Department has revoked 22 liquor licences. The drive was directed by Lt. Governor Kiran Bedi after AIADMK MLA A. Anbalagan lodged a complaint about the illegal sale. On directions of Shurbir Singh, Excise Secretary, a team conducted the drive undertook stock verification at the outlets. Ms. Bedi said enquiry was on and the crackdown would continue.

## Police take ser to spread com

## DGP instructs officers to tak

**S. VIJAY KUMAR**  
CHENNAI

Stung by reports that attempts were being made to discriminate against Muslims by linking them to the spread of novel coronavirus in some districts, the Tamil Nadu police issued an alert to all commissioners and superintendents of police to take *suo motu* cognizance of the "inflammatory situation". According to police sources, senior police officers across the State were told to initiate stringent action against those spreading "communal hatred".

Acting on specific inputs that a common pathway was closed to prevent Muslims from entering a village in Tenkasi district and another instance where some families were asked to vacate their rented houses in Erode district, Tamil Nadu Director-General of Police J.K. Tripathy instructed the police officers to take firm action in consultation with the district administration and ensure communal amity, sources said.

At Panboli near Sengottai

## Handicrafts experts in dire straits

15 lakh skilled workers in the State depend on the trade for their livelihood

**B KOLAPPAN**  
CHENNAI

Makers of handicrafts in Tamil Nadu are in dire straits as the market for their products have vanished in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. They have also lost their customers from foreign countries since the lockdown is in force.

"In Tamil Nadu 40-types of handicrafts are made and around 15 lakh artisans depend on the trade for their livelihood. The annual turnover is ₹200 crore and earns good foreign exchange. But the pandemic has changed our life upside down," said 'Erode' R. Radhakrishnan, general secretary of Shrusti, Tamil Nadu Artisans Welfare Association.

The manufacturing and sale of bronzes, stone and wood carvings, Natchiarcoil lights, brass pates, lace embroidery,



Manufacturing and sale of bronzes, stone and wood carvings, Vadasery temple jewellery have come to a standstill.

jewellery, coconut shell carvings and musical instruments have come to a standstill.

"Tamil Nadu is in the forefront when it comes to exporting these products. Now the artisans do not know from where the next meal will come," Mr Radhakrishnan said.

mari have borne the brunt more since 30 of the 40 handicrafts are made in the district. A total of 5 lakh people get employment directly and indirectly from the trade and the district earns ₹12 crore every year.

"The mainstay of our customers are tourists who visit Kanniyakumari regularly.

us of our livelihood and the government should extend assistance to the artisans," said Jeya Cruz, an award-winning artisan from Kanniyakumari district.

He said the artisans had registered themselves with the Tamil Nadu Handicrafts Development Corporation and the government could easily identify them to release monetary assistance.

Mr. Radhakrishnan said the Centre could allot grant through the Office of the Development Commissioner for Handicrafts and it should be done immediately for the benefit of the artisans.

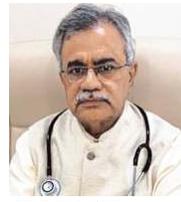
"There are a lot of other artisans who have not registered with the government body. They also need the government's support. In normal times we can reach out to them. The lockdown has prevented us from travelling," Mr Radhakrishnan

## COVID-19: Breathing hard

On one hand, COVID-19 infections are on the rise, and on the other, people with chronic lung diseases are worried. This is because the presentation of COVID-19 is with nasal symptoms, loss or decrease in smell, chest pain and breathlessness. This is always associated with fever, body pains and fatigue. Most of the bronchial asthma and COPD patients too are present with these symptoms, when they get an infective exacerbation.

In bronchial asthma, the symptoms are sporadic and patients respond well to inhaled bronchodilators and if necessary, they respond to antibiotics rapidly unlike in serious COVID-19. The lungs get affected in serious COVID-19 when a cytokine storm occurs with stiff lungs, small clots in lung vessels and the oxygen carrying capacity of the blood becomes low.

The combination of these



**DR. R. NARASIMHAN,**  
Senior Respiratory Physician

## COVID-19

tive exacerbations have come down significantly and most of them do well with telephonic advice. I have not found any increase in admissions due to this problem.

**Cancer and COVID-19**  
This is in contrast to people who have suffered from lung cancer or had treatment for cancer with chemotherapy or are on treatment with biologicals, or those who have

had any patient who had treatment for tuberculosis regularly call me and ask me whether he should undergo any tests for COVID. A lot of talk about the correlation between BCG immunisation and vulnerability to COVID-19 is going on. For example Italy, U.K., Spain, U.S., who do not administer BCG as a part of the mass immunisation programme, have more COVID-19 cases and mortality rates. On the other hand, in countries like India, Pakistan, Brazil, Japan, Portugal the effect is relatively less although not completely absent.

Although there may be an argument that we are not doing enough tests to pick up more infections we have not seen any unusual increase in mortality during this season in hospitals both government and corporates put together. Mortality rates cannot be hidden though there may be some undetected asymptomatic infec-

**Crowdfunding is a method of raising capital through the collective effort of a large number of individual investors. This approach taps into the collective efforts of a large pool of individuals, primarily online via social media and crowdfunding platforms and leverages their networks for greater reach and exposure.**

## Types of Crowdfunding

**The 3 primary types of crowdfunding are donation-based, rewards-based, and equity-based.**

**Donation-Based Crowdfunding: Donation-based crowdfunding is a way to source money for a project by asking a large number of contributors to individually donate a small amount to it. In return, the backers may receive token rewards that increase in prestige as the size of the donation increases. For the smallest sums, however, the funder may receive nothing at all.**

**Rewards-Based Crowdfunding: Rewards-based crowdfunding involves individuals contributing to a business in exchange for a "reward," typically a form of the product or service which company offers. Even though this method offers backers a reward, it's still generally considered a subset of donation-based crowdfunding since there is no financial or equity return.**

**Equity-Based Crowdfunding: Unlike the donation-based and rewards-based methods, equity-based crowdfunding allows contributors to become part-owners of the company by trading capital for equity shares. As equity owners, the contributors receive a financial return on their investment and ultimately receive a share of the profits in the form of a dividend or distribution.**

**Defence offset is the compensations that India seeks from the foreign defence equipment seller for the purchase of military equipments.**

**Offset Policy is to leverage capital acquisitions to develop Indian defence industry by:**

**Fostering development of internationally competitive enterprises, Augmenting capacity for Research, Design and Development related to defence products and services**

**Encouraging development of synergistic sectors like civil aerospace and internal security Indian offset policy is applicable for contracts worth more than Rs. 2000 crore. Offset clause mandates that a foreign company should invest 30% of the contract value back in India with a view to bring in technology.**

**Issues with effective Implementation**

**2012 CAG report points of lack of effective monitoring mechanism. There are no clear cut definition and role of various stakeholders.**

**CAG also pointed out that this policy was only a paper exercise as there was no visible impact either on Defence production or on domestic manufacturing sector.**

**The domestic contractors and manufacturers (i.e Indian Offset Partners) were chosen by the foreign investors / vendors in arbitrary manner and in some cases the IOP was a 100% owned subsidiary of the foreign vendor.**

**Elevation of the offset threshold limit to Rs. 2,000 crore from Rs. 300 crore has reduced the avenues for the local industries.**

**India can learn from the offset policies of Brazil which always viewed the growth of arms industry as a significant long-term goal. The Brazilian government has been able to leverage its defence buys to get state-of-the-art military technology from outside through licensed production and joint ventures**

## Man dies after drinking methanol

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
CUDDALORE

One person died and four others were admitted to the Cuddalore Government Hospital in a critical condition after drinking methanol as a substitute for liquor in Alapakkam on Tuesday.

According to police sources, Kumaresan, a contract labourer had procured methanol and handed it to one Chandrakasu, 55, of Alapakkam on Sunday.

With liquor shops closed due to the lockdown, Chandrakasu and Kumaresan along with three others diluted the methyl alcohol with water and lime and consumed it, the police said.

The five started vomiting and were rushed to the Cuddalore GH where Chandrakasu succumbed.

## Four held for murder

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI

The K.K. Nagar police on Tuesday arrested four persons for allegedly murdering a 20-year-old youth who is suspected to have stolen a high-end bike from their area in Kannigapuram.

Police said that the bike owned by Ramachandran, 20, went missing. After lodging a complaint, he and his friends searched for the bike.

Recently, Ramachandran learnt that a youth had circulated a photograph posing with the bike. They traced the youth to Kattupakkam. The youth claimed that the bike was used by his friend.

With that clue, Ramachandran and his friends caught Akash who allegedly stole the bike. According to police, Ramachandran and his friends took Akash to a house and brutally attacked him to find out where the bike was. The attack resulted in death of Akash, police said.

IN BRIEF



**Vishu celebrated in Sabarimala temple**

**PATHANAMTHITTA**  
Kerala's annual harvest festival, Vishu, was celebrated at Sabarimala on Tuesday, strictly adhering to lockdown norms. For the first time in its history, pilgrims were denied entry into the hill shrine against the backdrop of the nationwide lockdown as part of the COVID-19 prevention drive. The Ayyappa temple was opened on Monday for the five-day monthly rituals. Only five persons were permitted to enter the temple for darshan.

**Tirumala temple closed for darshan till May 3**

**TIRUMALA**  
The hill temple of Lord Venkateswara will be kept out of bounds for pilgrims till the termination of the lockdown period — May 3. However, the daily rituals being performed inside the hill temple will be observed without any deviation in the laid down traditions. According to retired TTD officials, the 45 days between April 20 and May 3 will ever remain in the history of the hill temple as the longest known period wherein no devotee was permitted to worship the presiding deity.

Road diaries



**Shades of life:** (clockwise from top) Geese strolling on a deserted highway on the outskirts of Hyderabad; a rapid response team on its way to a testing lab after collecting samples from a 'red zone' in Visakhapatnam; and a worker from Chennai Corporation spraying disinfectant on the arterial Anna Salai on Tuesday. ■ NAGARA GOPAL, K.R. DEEPAK & R. RAVINDRAN



More deaths in A.P.,  
Telangana, Karnataka

Guntur remains hotspot in Andhra Pradesh

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
VIJAYAWADA/BENGALURU/  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Officials confirmed five deaths due to coronavirus of people from Andhra Pradesh, two in Karnataka, and one in Telangana on Tuesday.

Andhra Pradesh reported five more deaths and 44 fresh cases on Tuesday evening, a bulletin issued by the Health department and official district data said. So far, 483 positive COVID-19 cases and 12 deaths have been reported, while 16 persons recovered. There were a total of 455 active cases.

Two people died in Guntur and one each in Krishna, Kurnool and Nellore districts.

A 55-year-old man of Vijayawada admitted to Government General Hospital on April 5 died on April 12, after three days on a ventilator. He was a contact of another positive patient who has a history of travel to Punjab. He was a diabetic and asthma patient.

A 35-year-old doctor in the microbiology laboratory at Anantapur tested positive. Guntur district which has turned into a major hotspot crossed the 100-mark and reported 114 cases in all. In the past day alone, 21 fresh cases were reported.

The neighbouring Krishna district reported eight new Covid-19 cases and Kurnool which, another major hotspot, reported seven cases. Anantapur had five new cases and Nellore one more case. Kadapa also reported two new cases.

Meanwhile, four patients recovered and were discharged. Two of them were from Visakhapatnam and close contacts of patient number 7, a foreign returnee. The other two patients from East Godavari district also recovered. Both were Delhi returnees.

**Tough task**

While providing shelter to the homeless during the pandemic, the government has to make sure that they get enough space to maintain physical distance



**Temporary home:** Migrant labourers staying in a shelter home in Vijayawada on Tuesday. ■ K.V.S. GIRI

State	Total number of cases	Active cases	Discharged cases	Deaths
Andhra Pradesh	483	455	16	12
Karnataka	260	179	71	10
Kerala	386	173	211	2
Tamil Nadu	1,204	1,111	81	12
Telangana	644	516	110	18

So far, Guntur reported 114 cases and followed by Kurnool (91), Nellore (56), Krishna (44), Prakasam (42), Kadapa (33), West Godavari (23), Chittoor (23), Visakhapatnam (20), Anantapur (17), Guntur district which has turned into a major hotspot crossed the 100-mark and reported 114 cases in all. In the past day alone, 21 fresh cases were reported.

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Also, 1,06,511 people were under observation, 564 in various hospitals. The samples of 16,235 people, who had symptoms, were sent for testing, of which results of 15,488 had shown negative results, an official statement said. In Kasaragod, 84 people were being treated for the infection in and 9,641 were under observation, while in Kannur there were 43 cases and 7,758 people under observation.

Deaths in Karnataka

Karnataka reported its second COVID-19 fatality on Tuesday, with the death of a 76-year-old man in the city, taking the State death toll to 10. The patient tested positive on April 12 and had Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI), officials said.

Earlier in the day, a 69-year-old man died in Vijayapura, becoming the ninth COVID-19-related fatality. (With PTI inputs)

Kerala to further tighten lockdown restrictions

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala will further tighten its COVID-19 lockdown restrictions at least till April 21.

Officials said here on Tuesday that the police would impose stricter curbs on the active movement of people and insist that they wear face masks mandatorily when venturing out.

The State government's decision is in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call on Tuesday for extra watchfulness for the next several days. After the Centre spells out its containment strategy, the State Cabinet on Wednesday will chart out its course of action.

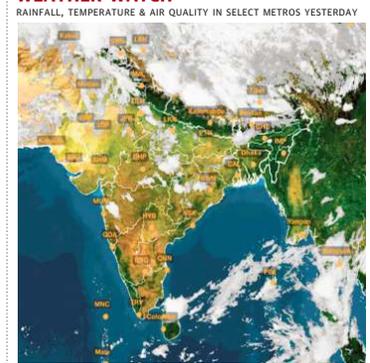
A senior official said it was a long shot to expect people to get back to work or business any time soon. The bar on inter-district and inter-State travel would continue. So would the embargo on commercial air, rail, road and sea travel. Only the movement of essential freight is exempted. Similarly, farmers, pharmaceutical companies and producers of medical equipment will continue to enjoy exemption. The State hopes to support door-to-door delivery of services, including legal liquor in limited quantity and on specific days. It wants to ensure that the lockdown did not spawn black markets and illicit supply chains, the official said.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had on Monday flagged the possibility of bootlegging capturing the market for legal liquor. He said the lockdown had not doused the demand alcohol.

**Distancing norms**  
Health Minister K. K. Shylaja said experts and data suggested that the number of cases in Kerala had plummeted. However, the epidemic tended to resurge and Kerala had no choice but to be part of the national containment strategy. Social distancing norms should remain in place and be observed with more rigour. Ms. Shylaja said the situa-

tion in Kasaragod district, a "high risk" region, had improved by leaps and bounds. In Pothencode in Thiruvananthapuram, the transmission was not as widespread as feared initially. Finance Minister T.M. Thomas Isaac said the country had to go in for widespread testing to gauge the spread of the epidemic accurately. Only then could State governments make an informed decision on when to lift the curbs on economic activity.

WEATHER WATCH



**Forecast for Wednesday:** Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning, hail and squall very local at isolated places over Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...	36.7	...	Kozhikode	...	36.2	...
Ahmedabad	...	42.5	...	Kurnool	...	41.0	...
Aizawl	...	31.7	...	Lucknow	...	38.7	...
Allahabad	...	42.0	...	Madurai	...	38.4	...
Bangalore	...	34.8	...	Mangaluru	...	36.6	...
Bhopal	...	39.7	...	Mumbai	...	30.7	...
Bhubaneswar	...	41.5	...	Mysuru	...	33.7	...
Chandigarh	...	36.0	...	New Delhi	...	40.4	...
Chennai	...	33.8	...	Patna	...	37.6	...
Coimbatore	...	36.8	...	Port Blair	...	32.7	...
Dehradun	...	35.0	...	Puducherry	...	34.7	...
Durgam	...	20.6	...	Pune	...	0.4	...
Goa	...	33.9	...	Raipur	...	40.0	...
Guwahati	...	36.5	...	Ranchi	...	37.3	...
Hubballi	...	38.0	...	Shillong	...	24.4	...
Hyderabad	...	38.2	...	Shimla	...	29.0	...
Imphal	...	33.0	...	Srinagar	...	25.6	...
Jaipur	...	40.0	...	Thiruvananthapuram	...	33.6	...
Kochi	...	33.2	...	Thiruchirappalli	...	38.8	...
Kolkata	...	37.0	...	Vijayawada	...	32.2	...
				Visakhapatnam	...	33.9	...

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**  
CITIES: SO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>2</sub>, CO, PM<sub>2.5</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub> CODE  
Ahmedabad... 21 33 15 ...49 ...71  
Bengaluru... 04 09 30 ...67 ...09  
Chennai... 15 32 ...12 ...54  
Delhi... 38 30 21 ...204 ...183  
Hyderabad... 03 32 18 ...80 ...09  
Kolkata... 04 06 20 ...46 ...52  
Lucknow... 06 21 30 ...223 ...09  
Mumbai... 07 16 14 ...53 ...83  
Pune... 40 16 54 ...58 ...51  
Visakhapatnam... 07 38 06 ...32 ...65  
Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Indicates average AQI)  
SO<sub>2</sub>: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.  
NO<sub>2</sub>: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.  
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.  
PM<sub>2.5</sub> & PM<sub>10</sub>: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.

A walking expedition to join their families

3 embark on foot to Chennai from A.P.

**SANTOSH PATNAIK**  
VISAKHAPATNAM

Undeterred by the distance or the difficulties involved, three workers have decided to go back home in Tamil Nadu by foot from here. "We came from Chennai to fix PVC windows at a laboratory in the Siripuram area here. On completing the job, we booked train tickets. However, we got stuck here due to the lockdown," said Anand Babu, one of the workers.

Mr. Babu, along with Baburaj of Coimbatore and Mohanraj of Erode, embarked on the walking expedition on Tuesday. They are in touch with their families on mobile phones. They plan to buy fruits and biscuits during morning hours, when the lockdown is relaxed, to keep them going as they cover the distance of 800 km.



The three workers who set off to Chennai on foot. ■ C.V. SUBRAMANYAM

Corporator serves food to hungry monkeys

He has taken permission from the police in Jagtial district for the work

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
JAGTIAL

The countrywide lockdown has resulted in pilgrims keeping away from the ancient Sri Anjaneya Swamy Devasthanam in Kondagattu of Jagtial district in Telangana. Because of this the monkeys living on the hillocks there are suffering from hunger and have turned violent. Moved by their plight, Karimnagar corporator Bonala Srikanth, an ardent devotee of Lord Hanuman, has taken up the task of serving food to the monkeys every day. He has taken permission from the Karimnagar police to travel to the temple in Jagtial district and is providing food to the monkeys for the last two weeks.

Every day, he collects around 60 kg of tomatoes and other vegetables and 50 dozens of bananas from the vegetable market and also several hundreds of chapathis and serves them to the monkeys. The falling prices of vegetables has made his task easier. The monkeys have so got used to him that the moment they notice his vehicle coming, they arrive in hordes and patiently wait for the distribution of the food. Interestingly, they neither pounce on him to snatch the food from his hands nor crowd around him. The animals collect the food in a disciplined manner, he claimed.



**Patient wait:** Karimnagar corporator Bonala Srikanth feeding monkeys at the temple in Kondagattu. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

He promised to arrange vegetables twice a week for each family and started the distribution to the households from Monday. "I am really thankful to God for helping me serve food to the monkeys, which are worshipped in our country. I will continue serving food to the monkeys at the temple till the lockdown is lifted completely," he said.

Girl raises ₹6.2 lakh for the needy

After tapping friends and relatives, she used crowdfunding

**STAFF REPORTER**  
HYDERABAD

A 11-year-old girl from Hyderabad has collected ₹6.2 lakh to buy food for the less fortunate during the lockdown.

Moved by a video of a hungry person breaking down on being given food, Ms. Ridhi dug into her savings and also put across a request to relatives and friends seeking donations. She drew up a plan to supply kits worth ₹650 containing six items — 5 kg rice, 1 kg salt, 1 litre cooking oil and two soap bars. "I requested my near and dear ones because I wanted them to know that many people are struggling for food," said Ms. Ridhi, a grade 6 student of an English medium school here.



Ridhi Thanking donors who supported 'Care-Ona'.

The project was titled 'Care-Ona'. With support of family and friends, she managed to collect ₹1.2 lakh to pack 200 kits. Her mother V. Shilpa Rao and father N. Ram Kumar donated the food kits in Serilingampally locality with the help of the Cyberabad police. "When we came back, she was curious to know how it went. When we said there were a lot of people who did not get the kits, she asked why can't we raise more money," said Ms. Rao. That's when they learnt about crowdfunding website, Milaap, and floated an online appeal eight days ago to help daily wage workers who have lost their jobs during the lockdown and do not have money to buy essentials. Responding to her appeal, donations worth ₹6.2 lakh were raised. The money will be used to buy more food supplies for the less privileged. Volunteers from an NGO are helping pack the kits.

'Domestic and wild animals in Kerala are free of COVID-19'

Nothing untoward has been reported till date, say officials

**K.S. SUDHI**  
KOCHI

Domestic as well as wild animals of Kerala remain free of COVID-19 thus far, said wildlife officials. The State was put on high alert following reports of a tiger in a U.S. zoo developing the disease last week. The State had earlier stepped up vigil in its wildlife habitats and zoos, besides bringing thousands of domestic animals in various districts under observation. The State Wildlife Warden issued an advisory to all Field Directors, Circle Heads of Territorial and Wildlife Forest Divisions, Wildlife Wardens and Divisional Forest Officers to watch out for animals in distress.

Tiger habitats and other forest areas are being regularly monitored using camera traps. So far, there have not been any reports of illness in the wild animal population in the State, said Sunderkumar, Chief Wildlife Warden, Kerala. Veterinarians alerted The State Institute of Animal Diseases, Thiruvananthapuram, had alerted its veterinarians and officials across the State to watch for any diseases and deaths in animals. No reports of any animal developing the disease have come in so far, said R. Jayachandran, Chief Disease Investigation Officer of the Institute. On media reports related to the isolation of coronavirus in bats caught from Kerala last year, Dr. Jayachandran said that there was no confirmation that the isolated pathogens were the ones that caused the COVID-19 outbreak. There are other pathogens in the coronavirus family that can cause disease in animals and humans, he said. Thousands of domestic animals, including cattle, cats and dogs, have been under observation in the district in their usual habitats. The owners of these animals have been asked to report on any drowsiness or illness in the animals, said O.P. Raj, Deputy Director, Department of Animal Husbandry, Pathanamthitta.



## A narrowing window

The extension of the lockdown should lead to precise plans for an orderly exit

It appeared inevitable, and the Centre has accepted the view of several States to extend the national lockdown for the novel coronavirus until May 3. The decision provides comfort and continuity to those in charge of containing the pandemic, but it is a small window within which an orderly exit must be planned. While announcing the extension, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke of incentivising areas that avert a spike in cases – over 10,000 nationally – through rigorous enforcement of the restrictions. These areas are to be allowed limited exemptions in activity after April 20, once they pass the ‘litmus test’ and are not at risk of becoming hotspots. Such a scheme naturally presumes that everyone can get a free or highly affordable confirmatory test for viral infection or recovery, which could place them in a green territory. Again, this has to be aligned with well-recognised protocols on healthy behaviour to stop new infections. The Centre’s lockdown is the most rigorous globally, but it has witnessed severe gaps in implementation. Although the Home Ministry’s original 21-day order and subsequent enabling amendments on farming had clear clauses, many States did not abide by them. So much so, the Union Home Secretary has had to restate the order’s provisions allowing inter- and intra-State movement of goods vehicles. Active follow-up with State governments and clear instructions to enforcement agencies are necessary to help the public adhere to a curfew. The Prime Minister, who has affirmed the need to make full use of the rabi harvest, must ensure that intentions translate into results, and produce reaches the market. Failed communication – States are partly responsible – has resulted in distressing instances of arbitrary and often violent policing.

Further extensions of a lockdown appear less and less feasible, as pressure builds up in an economy rendered moribund by the coronavirus. Millions of workers are already dependent on meagre income substitution measures and food donations, and many face escalating private debt. The Finance Ministry’s welfare schemes need to be reviewed, and enhanced relief provided to all workers rendered unemployed through funds infusion and provision of food for at least six months. Those who have lost jobs, and senior citizens, should be able to enrol in the PDS online immediately. A gradual reopening of activity after May 3, going beyond essential services will require classification of infection risk for various groups, such as school and college students, teachers, and workers. The reality of COVID-19 is that there cannot be a return to normal overnight, and governments must plan for a sequential restoration of activity. The effort should be to enable the workforce, ensuring its health and safety.

## Corona bond

A Eurozone consensus on a new financial debt instrument is crucial for the bloc

Deliberations on the €540-billion emergency rescue package that Eurozone Finance Ministers agreed on Thursday underscore the difficult road ahead to chart the economic recovery from the coronavirus crisis. They also decided to open an emergency credit line in a fortnight, raise the lending capacity of the European Investment Bank and back the European Commission’s €100-billion unemployment insurance scheme. Separately, the European Central Bank in March decided to expand its asset purchase programme by €750-billion over the next nine months, even as its President, Christine Lagarde, pledged to do whatever it took to save the single currency. Thursday’s steps have been hailed as swift and substantial. But the current formula has stoked controversy, like during the economic meltdown, over burden-sharing between the richer members in the north and the poorer states in the south. The Netherlands initially opposed demands from Italy, the country worst affected by the virus outbreak, that the pandemic credit to be issued by the European Stability Mechanism be stripped of any conditionalities. Rome’s reasoning that the public health emergency was universal and symmetrical may have influenced the final deal, which allows governments borrowing from the bailout fund to spend up to 2% of GDP on direct and indirect costs of the pandemic without strings attached. All the same, the emergency package has drawn furious opposition from the populist Five Star Movement in Italy’s ruling coalition as also the far-right and Eurosceptic Northern League, linked to apprehensions about intrusive EU inspections. But a key concern is the frustration among Rome’s pro-European elites with what they regard as reluctance by Brussels to extend meaningful support.

France, Italy and Spain, the bloc’s three largest economies, with six other members in the euro area wrote in late March to the European Council President, renewing calls for joint issuance of Eurobonds, now dubbed corona bonds. Ms. Lagarde has backed such a move. The idea of mutual issuance of debt has drawn only a lukewarm response from Berlin, Amsterdam and the bloc’s other members. Significantly, cracks have appeared in the Netherlands’ ruling coalition over the government’s orthodox fiscal stance, where the opposition Labour and Green parties already advocate Eurobonds. With the Eurozone’s three largest economies after Germany throwing their weight behind the new financial instrument, it may not be long before the bloc’s fiscal hawks rethink their stance. The economic and political consequences of failure on this count would hamper the post-pandemic recovery, and could affect European solidarity. European leaders would do well to address this fact when they formulate an economic recovery after the crisis.

# Halting the march of rumours

Community leaders and democratically elected office holders must play a key role in preventing dangerous rumours



RAJEEV BHARGAVA

In 1984, just as Delhi was engulfed by a pogrom against the Sikhs, the city was rife with the rumour that they had poisoned the entire water supply. Such rumours are not new. For centuries, European Jews were falsely accused of poisoning wells during wars, epidemics or civic unrest. Late 18th century Paris, witness to deep polarisation along class lines, was replete with the rumour that the rich had distributed lethal, contaminated food to the poor.

It is no surprise then that during the current COVID-19 pandemic, the rumour mill has Muslims deliberately throwing infected ₹2,000 notes on the road or Muslim street vendors spitting on vegetables and fruits. Periods of social stress or natural disasters are fertile ground for rumours, which not only spread like wild fire but have grave consequences – scapegoating, social boycott, violence and arson, even lynching and murder.

### The anatomy of rumours

Where do rumours spring from and why and how do they spread so fast? Why do they thrive in a crisis? Not all rumours are pernicious. Some are potentially harmful, but like meteors in the sky, they disappear without much impact. But the ones that concern us here are toxic, occur with cataclysmic events and have devastating results. How must such rumours be checked?

For a start, a rumour is an untested piece of information, opinion, report or story. Therefore, its veracity is doubtful. This unver-

ified, ambiguous status is at the heart of a rumour, making it largely what it is. The moment an account is publicly demonstrated and accepted to be true or false, it ceases to be a rumour. In a sense then, a rumour’s truth or falsity is irrelevant to its efficacy or impact. Yet, every unconfirmed account is not a rumour. To become one, it must have other features. First, it must have a ring of truth. Something in it must make it contextually plausible for the listener or the reader. If an account is obviously bizarre – the sun will freeze overnight – or instantly falsifiable – Sachin scored a thousand runs in an ODI – it cannot become a rumour. Second, it short-circuits reason. Laced with passion, it works by seizing the collective psyche of victims. Suddenly, many start to believe it. This also lends it a third important feature – it circulates rapidly. Fourth, it manifests itself through an event. It is a passing gust, sometimes a tornado that leaves devastation in its wake but is ephemeral. Fifth, even when deliberately planted by only a few, it derives authority largely from the mob. Indeed, expert-authority is helpless against its seductive power. So, a rumour is a useful half-truth with strong emotional overtones that spreads fast, gripping individual minds to create a common consciousness and agency, often with grave social consequences.

Rumours are efficacious in societies already prepared to receive them. What then are the conditions that beget them? First, a context where there is either an information void or an information overload. Unable to satisfactorily make sense of their world in these uncertain contexts, humans become cognitively unstable and anxious. To meet their cognitive needs, they are forced to rely on bits and pieces of available knowledge, on a patchwork of half-



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truths, a rag bag of allusions that together provide a fragile, uncorroborated framework for interpreting events. Rumours feed on this mythic framework. Add emotional anxiety to this cognitive framework, and one has a ready-made arena for rumours to flourish. An overheated mind burns all evidence that comes its way and surrenders to rumours, often in the service of emotional needs. Recall how, during demonetisation, amidst despair and anxiety at losing their own money, the poor still found emotional satisfaction in the rumour that crores of rupees secretly stored in cash by the rich were rendered worthless.

### Why they circulate

Jamuna Prasad, a psychologist at Ranchi and Patna Universities, was among the first to establish a link between high levels of anxiety and the easy spread of rumours. Typically unrecognised when alive but posthumously celebrated as a pioneer in the social psychology of rumours, he did so by studying the social impact of the deadly Bihar-Nepal earthquake of 1934. Others have shown that, in times of acute crisis, people lean on knee jerk speculation and prejudice. A group consisting of ‘outsiders’, already distrusted and disliked, becomes an easy target, ready to be blamed for the current mess. Rumours succeed in societies ridden

with an us-them syndrome, already polarised. Indeed, by binding people, creating temporary solidarities against a perceived enemy, they only deepen polarisation. No wonder they come in handy to those who benefit from such divisions.

With uncertainty, fear, and the radical other already firmly in place, the last piece in the jigsaw puzzle is provided by a vivid story of grave wrongdoing by an ‘enemy’ who has allegedly unleashed the calamity. A rumour is that story. And the more horrifying, outrageous and disgusting the story, the greater its emotional resonance and quicker its spread. But as mentioned, to get kickstarted, it must already be believable. Some factual detail needs to be added to the fiction to give it plausibility that it otherwise lacks.

It is a fact that the 1984 carnage compelled Sikhs to go to gurdwaras in large numbers. But then a baseless rumour surfaced that they were stockpiling arms, planning to attack and plunder posh colonies. The truth, altogether different, is that they went there seeking refuge. So, in the entire narrative, one detail was factually correct – and this little truth alone made a giant lie plausible. Likewise, it is a fact that many Muslims have experienced arbitrary violence, stigma and ostracisation in contemporary India. Given this threat, panic-stricken Muslims in Indore unjustifiably beat up a team of doctors who had come to test them for COVID-19. They easily succumbed to the rumour that it was not medical quarantine but needless, malicious separation from their families that motivated the visit.

In polarised societies, fear and vulnerability make rumour-mongering easy. But there are other reasons for why they get widely entrenched. Three of them stand out. First, the desire to conform

gets the better of a questioning mind. Rather than face sanction and ostracisation for sticking out, people find it safer to emulate members of their group. Second, ironically, a belief gets entrenched after like-minded people discuss it among themselves. Discussion has a cascading effect; the more one talks about it, the more the biased rumour grows. Third, a denial by a mistrusted outsider, no matter how great her expertise, only ends up solidifying rumours. Group dynamics in polarised societies works with a logic all of its own; every person is necessarily partisan. A neutral ground for impartial voices is simply unimaginable.

### Unwarranted fatalism

So here in brief is the conundrum: Since societies can never be fully informed or secure, rumours are inevitable and in times of acute crisis, they are a menace. Yet, providing rational rebuttal or furnishing relevant information is unable to stem the tide. Must rumours then be viewed like a tsunami before which we are helpless?

This fatalism is unwarranted. Transforming conditions conducive to rumours can reduce their efficacy. Depolarising society, loosening the grip of prejudice and calmly addressing the collective anxieties and obsessions of a group are deterrents, but, alas, only in the long run. In the short run, regulatory laws to check rumours are imperative. As also, the need to have critical insiders, those with authority within a community, deny injurious rumours, not least on the ground that eventually they harm even those who propagate, spread and exploit them. Community leaders and democratically elected office holders must play a crucial role in halting the march of dangerous rumours.

Rajeev Bhargava is Professor, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi

# The pandemic and the contours of a health response

A measured approach with community participation will aid the fight against the virus



J.V.R. PRASADA RAO

India is facing the worst public health crisis in its independent history which pales the earlier ones such as AIDS, SARS and H1N1 into insignificance. The speed at which the virus entered the country and the multiple challenges it has posed before the people and the government are unprecedented.

While the initial response of the government was quick in restricting the entry and the quarantine of travellers from China and other South East Asian countries, the subsequent wave of international travellers has completely caught everyone off guard.

### Time to strategise

The 21-day national clampdown following the janata curfew – and now extended – was and will be a timely step to stem the tide of rising infection levels. While this has confined the pool of infected persons to their homes, the aftermath of the lockdown when they will start moving out will pose enormous challenges. Central and State Governments should plan to adopt a public health approach to

address the situation and use days ahead to ready with the strategy and tools for rolling it out.

We should realise that despite the best response, the epidemic will not be going away for all time to come. It is a novel virus and people have no immunity to protect themselves. Prevention, care and support are the only strategies that will succeed in mitigating the crisis. This will need a carefully planned public health approach which identifies the risks based on evidence and pro-actively intervenes to mitigate them.

The foremost task is to identify people and the households of those who returned from abroad in the last two months and who have turned symptomatic. They need to be immediately quarantined either in their homes or in community care centres identified by the State and district authorities. Civil society should be invited to be partners in organising the care centres and managing them.

Only the serious cases among them should be referred to hospitals for treatment. The intermediate step of quarantine will check a huge rush of patients even with minor symptoms to hospitals, choking health-care facilities and depriving the more serious and needy cases of emergency medical care.

To supplement this effort, large-scale supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) including gloves



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and face masks would become necessary. Community organisations can be mobilised to procure and supply such equipment to complement government efforts. Ventilator demand will also go up very soon and advance planning for emergency procurement would be necessary.

### Focus on counselling

As the flood of patients starts increasing in hospitals, counselling services for patients and members of their families would be of utmost necessity. Large number of counsellors can be mobilised at short notice from existing national programmes and communities which have the necessary experience in counselling.

Trained counsellors in care centres and hospitals can relieve the huge pressure on doctors and nursing staff and will make a huge difference to the quality of care to infected persons.

Families of infected persons

show a challenging task. Until they show symptoms of COVID-19, they need to remain in isolation and at the same time look after their wards who are admitted in care centres and hospitals. Local communities are best suited to provide support to the families of infected persons and ensure that they are not stigmatised in the locality or neighbourhood. In metropolitan cities, resident welfare associations and mohalla committees can play a very proactive role in addressing this need. In the smaller towns and villages, the district administration can mobilise local communities to provide supporting services.

### On testing

A critical gap in the level of response is the limited testing facilities available for people to know their COVID-19 status. Current testing procedures which depend on viral tests are expensive and time consuming. It is high time that rapid testing is introduced on a large scale in the country using the window of opportunity the lockdown provides.

Rapid test kits should be made available in care centres and people who test negative should be asked to remain in isolation at home. As these test kits become available in large quantities at a lower cost, community-level testing can be introduced to enable people to check their COVID-19

status if they get accidentally exposed to the risk of infection. This measure will also help in normalising the disease in the community and lift the stigma and fear surrounding it to a great extent.

Large-scale migration of daily wage earners and construction workers from metropolitan cities, in the aftermath of the lockdown, has resulted in enormous challenges for the administration. Providing shelters and protecting them from loss of employment is a socioeconomic problem, where community involvement can ensure that the benefits governments are announcing actually reach the needy and those who deserve them. Community-based organisations should also help in mobilising Corporate Social Responsibility, or CSR, funds for mitigating the misery migrant families now face and for no fault of theirs.

The fight against COVID-19 can only be won when we get a preventive vaccine or a therapeutic drug on hand. Until then, the threat of the virus returning when conditions are conducive to its spread cannot be ruled out. Only a measured public health approach with community participation will help the government in ensuring a sustained response to stem its tide.

J.V.R. Prasad Rao is a former Health Secretary, Government of India. The views expressed are personal

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

### Different hardships

The interview with G.V.S. Murthy of the Indian Institute of Public Health, Hyderabad, on COVID-19 and people with disabilities, has shown the importance in providing preventive messages in an accessible format to this section of the population (Inside pages, “People with disabilities have special issues during virus outbreak”, April 13). During a crisis, it is very important to ensure that containment and mitigation activities do reach all sections in society. While international agencies and various governments are developing innovative guidelines to manage the pandemic among the elderly, people with chronic diseases and pregnant women, people with

disabilities appear to be alone. This is all the more important as the visually handicapped depend upon touch for most of their activities. Many of the current dos and don’ts of safe practices in the pandemic affect the handicapped in numerous ways. International and national agencies working for disability rights should coordinate with the Indian government to overcome the hurdles and reach out to the disabled.

D. SAMBHU RAMESH, Edanadu, Kottayam, Kerala

### Made useful

As the pandemic wreaks havoc around the globe, no one is safe – the rich or the poor, the haves or the have-nots. The underprivileged are the worst hit especially in

India. The migrant labour population has taken a beating in our country, with stories of men and women and even children walking miles to go home across States. They have lost their jobs and their livelihoods and governments are extending help with dollars which are grossly inadequate. Cannot authorities use their labour locally by employing them in conservancy work, unskilled maintenance work in hospitals (if they are willing) and other locally available government-supervised work temporarily and with all the safety precautions? They can even be diverted to help agricultural operations where there is no ban, so that they will get their wages and will not go hungry. This will help ease

inter-State migration pressure and the risk of disease spread. This will also lighten the financial burden of governments.

P.K. SUBRAMANIAN, Chennai

### Lockdown and studies

As the pandemic has affected children’s education to a large extent, governments must make it mandatory for all government and private schools to go in for online teaching. A particular timing needs to be fixed for the teaching of every subject and for each class so that at least some 40% of the curriculum is covered and students are kept engaged. A scheme needs to be thought of for rural students too.

K.V. RAMESH NAIR, Chennai

While all of us have to accept the lockdown and the purpose behind it, I wish to highlight another issue. Students of professional courses such as medicine, engineering, agriculture and the arts and sciences have now been given a lot of assignments, tests and lectures – all online. Some are even being graded based on these online tests. This is where the problem lies. Unfortunately for them, networks, either mobile data or wifi of all service providers including BSNL, are very slow or intermittent especially in a rural area where I live, creating a lot of stress and fear. Parents are worried too. The media should ensure that the problems in the rural areas are addressed.

DR. PREMKUMAR THOMAS, Tiruthuraiipoondi, Tamil Nadu

### No change

The Editorial, “Malpractices in Elections” (“The Hindu-From the Archives” – Fifty years ago, April 14, 1970), has highlighted the deficiencies in our electoral rules of that day. Though five decades have lapsed, we have done precious little to make our election procedures any better. On the other hand, it is more difficult today, if not impossible, for an honest and sincere citizen to enter our legislative bodies if one can make a comparison with the past. It is time for urgent electoral reforms to make it easy for competent and honest individuals to make a difference in our law-making bodies.

M.V. NAGAVENDER RAO, Hyderabad

To read more letters online, scan the QR code



# Economic liberalisation and its faults

The virus reveals how dependence on private sector-led economic growth has proved to be disastrous



K.M. GOPAKUMAR & RANJA SENGUPTA

Dr. Manmohan Singh's 1991-92 Budget speech marked the beginning of the end of the 'Licence Raj' in India. The Budget also announced the reduction of import duties and paved the way for foreign-manufactured goods to flow into India. Following this, most of the manufacturing sector was opened up to foreign direct investment. India's industrial policy was virtually junked, and policymakers and the political leadership became contemptuous of the idea of self-reliance.

## A disastrous model

In the late 1980s, transnational corporations started shifting the production base to smaller companies in developing countries, especially Asia, in search of cheap labour and raw materials. Developed countries supported the move because shifting the polluting and labour-intensive industries suited them as long as ownership remained with their companies. Thus, the world witnessed the development of global supply chains in many products starting with garments, wherein huge companies with massive market power dictated the terms to smaller manufacturers down the value chain to produce cheaply.

Though many developing countries participated in the global production/value/supply chains, the substantial value addition in developing countries happened in a few production hubs, of which China emerged to be a major one. Manufacturing shifted from a decentralised production system spread across different countries to just a few locations. However, countries like China defied the logic of supply/value chains ensuring substantial value addition for themselves. They even carried out backward integration and thus emerged as global manufacturing hubs for certain products. In the case of health products, China became the global supplier of active pharmaceutical ingredients (API), personal protective equipment



"India is not able to get required quantities of test kits, PPE and parts of ventilators through importation." Central Reserve Police Force soldiers stitch personal protective equipment suits for health workers in New Delhi. \*AP

(PPE), and medical devices diagnostics.

This has major implications for the COVID-19 outbreak. The resultant loss of manufacturing base has affected the ability of many governments, including of developed countries, to put up an effective response to the crisis. The U.K. Prime Minister asked the country's manufacturers to produce ventilators in order to provide care for critical COVID-19 patients. Similarly, the U.S. President invoked the Defense Production Act of 1950 to ramp up N95 mask production. Under this legislation, the U.S. President can direct U.S. manufacturers to shift from their normal manufacturing activities to produce goods according to the directions of the government. Similarly, the French Health Minister stated that the country may nationalise vaccine companies if necessary. Spain nationalised all its private hospitals. Israel and Chile issued compulsory licenses to ensure that medicines are affordable. In an indirect show of power, Chinese billionaire Jack Ma sent a flight containing 5.4 million face masks, kits for 1.08 million detection tests, 40,000 sets of protective clothing and 60,000 protective face shields to the U.S. This exposes the poor state of preparedness and dependence on imports for essential goods required to meet the challenge of any major disease outbreak. This shows that what is good for the company may not be good for the country in all circumstances. So, the overwhelming objective of private sector-led economic growth has proved to

be disastrous.

In India, economic liberalisation has damaged the government's capacity in two ways. First, it incapacitated the government to respond to emergencies based on credible information. The dismantling of the 'Licence Raj' resulted in the elimination of channels of information for the government, which is crucial to make informed policy choices. For instance, as part of the removal of 'Licence Raj', the government stopped asking for information from the manufacturer to file the quantity of production of various medicines. As a result, it has taken weeks now and a series of meetings for the government to gather information about stocks and the production capacity of pharmaceutical companies. Similarly, there were difficulties in finding out India's production capacity of PPE, medical devices and diagnostics. The only government data available in the public domain is with regard to the production of vaccines.

Second, the logic and policies of economic liberalisation seriously undermined the manufacturing capabilities of health products in India. The short-sighted policy measures, with the objective of enhancing profitability of the private sector, allowed the import of raw materials from the cheapest sources and resulted in the debasing of the API industry, especially in essential medicine. According to a report of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), nearly 70% of India's API import is from China. The CII report lists nearly 58 API where the dependence is 90% to

100%. The disruption in the supply of API due to the COVID-19 outbreak has impacted the production of not only medicines required for COVID-19 patients, but also of other essential medicines in India. As a cost-effective producer of medicines, the world is looking to India for supply, but it cannot deliver due to its dependence on China, which has also forced India to impose export restrictions on select medicines.

## The dangers of dependency

Similar dependency exists with regard to PPE, medical devices and diagnostic kits. The 100% dependence on Reagents, an important chemical component for testing, is limiting the capacity of the government from expanding testing because the cost of each test is ₹4,500. A population of 1.33 billion requires a large number of tests. Dependence on imports affects the ability of Indian diagnostic companies to provide an affordable test for all those who want to test for COVID-19. There are only a few domestic manufacturers who can produce PPE and medical devices like ventilators. Now the country is not able to get required quantities of test kits, PPE and parts of ventilators through importation. In the name of economic efficiency, India allowed unconditional imports of these products and never took note of the dangers of dependency.

Global supply/production chains not only destroyed the manufacturing base in developed and developing countries; they also resulted in loss of jobs and poor working conditions in these sectors. Developing countries were asked to ease their labour protection laws to facilitate global production and supply chains popularly known as global value chains. As a result, people were forced to work in precarious working conditions without any social security net. This created an unorganised army of labourers and is preventing many developing country governments from effectively offering relief.

A virus has made us rethink our obsession with the economic efficiency theory. It implores us to put in place an industrial policy to maintain core capacity in health products so that we can face the next crisis more decisively.

K.M. Gopakumar and Ranja Sengupta work with the Third World Network

# Invasive, alien, most fearsome

With so little known about its origin and pathogen emission rate, SARS-CoV-2 is the greatest challenge to mankind



T.V. SAJEEW

Given the little knowledge we have about its origin, and given its rapid spread and massive impact on our lives, novel coronavirus is the most fearsome invasive alien species mankind has ever had to confront. Invasive alien species are species of plants, animals and microbes which move out of their native location into alien locations and cause economic, ecological and health damage.

## Features of an alien invasive species

All invasive alien species remain unproblematic in their land of origin where natural enemies limit their population increase. But when a species arrives at a new location, it escapes from the control of its natural enemies and its population explodes. In the case of SARS-CoV-2, the individual body of each and every host is a landscape in itself. Unlike in the case of SARS, where the virus jumped from bats to civet cats to humans, the intermediate host for SARS-CoV-2 remains unknown. The host is devoid of immunity against the pathogen. With no prior exposure to it and no antibodies, the body initiates a violent response against the new intruder, which could prove fatal.

In its new location, the invasive species can grow and reach the reproductive stage. One way of controlling biological invasion is to slow the spread. The idea of imposing lockdowns originated from this logic of slowing the spread. Unlike plants and animals which can be visually encountered, we need to contact-trace and test people to find out the extent of spread of this pathogen.

A salient feature in the pattern of the spread of invasive alien species is the formation of satellite populations. SARS-CoV-2 has established the largest number of satellite populations in the shortest period of time. Every satellite population has the potential to spread the virus on its own. This spread is a function of the reproductive rate of the virus (R<sub>0</sub>), which is defined as the number of cases, on average, an infected person will cause during the infectious period. For SARS-CoV-2, the pathogen emission rate from an infected person is yet to be computed. The dispersal ability is closely linked to social contact, which is influenced by the level of urbanisation. The susceptibility of new landscapes (new human bodies) is a function of health, which again is a function of age, disease history, and how much the respiratory

system has been challenged by ways of air pollution, respiratory diseases or smoking.

R<sub>0</sub> is a critical value in the case of all invasive alien species. If it is less than 1, the disease will vanish without causing an epidemic. As it goes above 1, the probability of an epidemic increases. In the absence of precise data for computing the R<sub>0</sub> of SARS-CoV-2, the estimated value is somewhere between 1.5 and 3.5 and is zeroing in on 2.2. There are mainly four reasons for not arriving at a precise value. First, the basic properties of this viral pathogen, such as the infection period, are unknown. Second, we don't know how many mild cases of infections that do not result in symptoms have been missed but are spreading the disease. Third, we don't know about the precise susceptibility of a wide range of communities with different social structures. Fourth, no one knows the future impact of measures such as travel restrictions, social distancing and self-quarantine and how they influence the virus's continued spread. This means that our understanding of SARS-CoV-2 transmission is data-deficient.

The SARS-CoV-2 outbreak has brought the global economy to its knees. The virus has infected 1.9 million, killed more than a lakh and put a huge strain on health systems. But its impact on the ecology is positive. Carbon emissions have decreased, and nitrogen dioxide emissions in northern Italy, Spain and the U.K. have faded. The sustainability of improved air quality will be seen soon.

## The question of herd immunity

The critical question is how long the pandemic will last. It will probably continue until the pathogen reaches the point of naturalisation, i.e., when it stops being invasive. This means that the quicker the 'herd immunity', the faster the pandemic will end. Since we don't have a vaccine yet, the only other way to build immunity is to do so naturally, which is happening in the recovered cases. Herd immunity has to rise to a level at which disease transmission will reduce considerably or become impossible. Until then, the lockdown will ensure that the R<sub>0</sub> value is maintained as low as possible. We will know only when the lockdown is lifted whether keeping the R<sub>0</sub> value well below 1 for a reasonable period of time will really help us. The length of the period during which infected ones, with and without symptoms (we don't know the length of this period yet), spread the disease will decide how best we move out of the pandemic and how much time nature will get to repair itself.

T.V. Sajeew is former coordinator, Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network, and Senior Principal Scientist, Kerala Forest Research Institute

# Polls during a pandemic

While some leaders are capitalising on the COVID-19 crisis, South Korea stands in stark contrast

GARIMELLA SUBRAMANIAM

Even as elected leaders in some countries are using the COVID-19 pandemic as a pretext to clamp down on citizens' basic freedoms, South Korea is shining a bright light on Asia and beyond by holding its parliamentary polls on April 15.

The National Election Commission is replicating the government's successful disease-control measures in the quadrennial elections for the 300-member unicameral National Assembly. Voters are required to wear face masks and gloves, maintain social distancing, and pass a temperature check before casting their ballot. Those who fail the screening will vote in adjacent booths. Provisions have been made for those under quarantine to exercise their franchise by post. A quarter of eligible voters are said to have cast their ballot over the weekend. In a sign of a return to normalcy, the proportion willing to vote this time is higher than it was in the run-up to the 2016 election. While many expatriates are unable to vote due to the restrictions around the world, some are reportedly even planning to mount a legal challenge against this deprivation.

## A different approach

South Korea's approach marks a stark contrast to the stance of other governments in Southeast Asia. Last week, Cambodian lawmakers approved legislation authorising a state of emergency to contain the spread of the virus despite widespread concern that this would give unchecked power to Prime Minister Hun Sen. In March, Thailand Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha restricted reporting on the epidemic, ostensibly to prevent the spread of public fear. The President of the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte, warned violators of the lockdown that they would be shot by the police. He has also seized control of the country's hospitals, transport and the media.

South Korea's impressive record in tackling the COVID-19 outbreak also holds important lessons for the free world. In the U.S., many states have deferred their presidential primaries

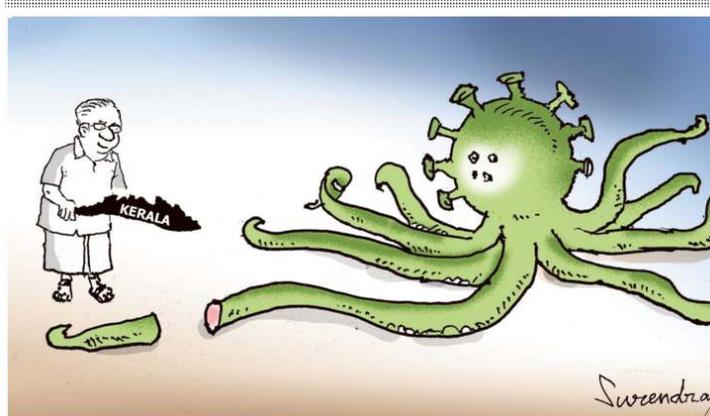
ahead of the November U.S. elections. In a narrow majority decision, the U.S. Supreme Court overruled a lower court ruling that extended the deadline in Wisconsin for voters to submit absentee ballots. "Extending the date by which ballots may be cast by voters — not just received by the municipal clerks but cast by voters — for an additional six days after the scheduled election day fundamentally alters the nature of the election," said the court. Wisconsin had sought a deferment of the date to submit postal ballots due to a surge in applications for this alternative means of voting, as well as severe staff shortages and insufficient personal protection equipment. As citizens weigh the potential implications for personal health and exercising their constitutional right to free suffrage, there is a growing danger of disenfranchisement of millions of U.S. voters.

## An unpredictable election

It is possible to view Seoul's general election either as a referendum on the government's handling of the public health emergency or as a non-issue given that the country has fast returned to normalcy. Either way, President Moon Jae-in's poll ratings, as also of his Democratic Party, have surged in recent weeks. The main opposition party, the conservative United Future Party, is reeling from the effects of the 2017 impeachment of former President Park Geun-hye. The government's handling of trade tensions with Japan following the raging controversy last year over Seoul's demand for additional reparations for Japan's Second World War atrocities have receded to the background.

Yet, the ruling party cannot necessarily count on a comfortable majority, as surveys point to strong political partisanship among voters, as also large numbers of undecided voters. The strength of the mandate will crucially determine Mr. Moon's ability to realise his aim of rapprochement with North Korea and to implement his unfinished social welfare agenda at the end of his single-term tenure in 2022.

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## DATA POINT

### India's case progression

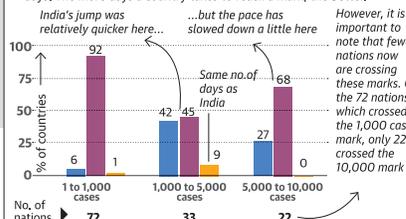
Twenty-two countries have more than 10,000 COVID-19 cases each and India is one among them. But India's case progression has been slower compared to some of these countries. India's testing rates are still among the lowest in the world. By The Hindu Data Team

**LAGGING BEHIND** | India's testing rates continue to be poor compared to other countries. The table compares tests per million population in select countries as of March 24, April 3 and April 13. India's testing rate as of April 13 was still behind the listed countries' March 24 rate, except Pakistan's

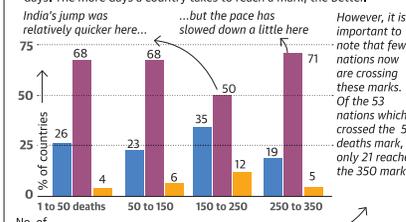
Country	Mar. 24	Apr. 3	Apr. 13
Israel	3,900	11,700	18,600
Italy	4,915	10,259	17,327
Australia	5,600	10,900	14,300
S. Korea	6,751	8,585	10,046
Belgium	2,974	6,315	10,042
U.S.	1,054	4,270	8,971
U.K.	1,361	2,615	4,374
Malaysia	700	1,300	2,500
Ecuador	200	600	1,400
S. Africa	300	900	1,400
Japan	193	312	622
Pakistan	28	200	300
India	17	51	161

Source: Johns Hopkins Univ., Nations' health ministries

**PROGRESSION OF CASES** | The chart shows the % of countries that took more days or fewer days than India to cross a certain number of cases. For instance, 27% countries took more days than India to jump from 5,000 to 10,000 cases, while 68% countries took fewer days. The more days a country takes to reach a mark, the better.



**PROGRESSION OF DEATHS** | The chart shows the % of countries which took more days or fewer days than India to cross a certain number of deaths. For instance, 19% countries took more days than India to jump from 250 to 350 deaths, while 71% countries took fewer days. The more days a country takes to reach a mark, the better.



## The Hindu

### FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO FROM APRIL 14, 1970  
(THERE BEING NO ISSUE ON APRIL 15)

#### King Mahendra heads Nepal Ministry

Kathmandu: King Mahendra of Nepal today (April 13) accepted the resignation of the Prime Minister, Mr. Kirti Nidhi Bista, and formed a new ministry under his own chairmanship. This is the first time that the King has formed a ministry under his own chairmanship since the Panchayat system was introduced in the Kingdom in earlier sixties. Within hours of the announcement of the new 13-man Council of Ministers, King Mahendra administered the oath of office to the incumbents at a special ceremony at the palace. The new ministry does not include Mr. Kirti Nidhi Bista and the Home Minister Mr. Kharta Bahadur Singh who have submitted their resignations and are now seeking re-election to the Rashtriya Panchayat having finished their previous term of five years.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 15, 1920.

#### Punjab tragedy.

Bombay: At the Nation Week meeting yesterday (April 13), the President announced that poet Rabindranath Tagore was unable to be present, but had sent a message which he called upon Mr. C.F. Andrews to read. The message ran as follows: A great crime has been done in the name of law in the Punjab. Such terrible eruptions of evil leave their legacy of wreckage of ideals behind them. What happened in Jallianwalla Bagh was itself a monstrous progeny of a monstrous war which for four years had been defiling God's world with fire and poison, physical and moral. The immenseness of sin through which humanity had waded across its blood-red length of agony has bred callousness in the minds of those who have power in their hands with no check of sympathy within, or fear of resistance without. The cowardliness of the powerful who owned no shame in using their machines of frightfulness upon the unarmed and unarmed villagers, and inflicting unspeakable humiliations upon their fellow beings behind the screen of an indecent mockery of justice, and yet not feeling for a moment that it was the meanest form of insult to their own manhood, has become only possible through the opportunity which the late war has given to man for constantly outraging his own higher nature trampling truth and honour under foot. This disruption of the basis of civilization will continue to produce a series of moral earthquakes.

FROM PAGE ONE

## Tougher curbs in hotspots, says PM

"I want you all to take care of the elderly in your home, especially those with comorbidities, as they are especially vulnerable. To be vigilant in maintaining the lockdown and social distance, use face masks, especially home-made face masks. The advisory issued by the Ayush Ministry of measures to boost immunity should also be followed, and please download the AarogyaSetu App, and encourage others to do so, as

well. Try and help out the poor and indigent, be sympathetic to colleagues and avoid retrenchments in this challenging time. Accord respect and dignity to corona warriors like doctors, health workers, sanitation workers, police and others. Your efforts exemplify what is meant by the phrase 'We the People of India' in our Constitution. It is true homage to Babasaheb Ambedkar on his birth anniversary," he said.

## 'Longer lockdown key to breaking infection chain'

He added that the Ministry has now issued guidelines to control COVID-19 spread in high density areas. "The Office of Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India has issued guidelines for controlling spread of COVID-19 in densely populated areas. The emphasis of this manual is to bring frugal sanitary and hygiene solutions & measures with focus on community shared toilet, washing or bathing facilities," noted the Ministry. "218 Lifeline Udan flights carrying 377.50 tonnes essential medical cargo have been sent to different parts, particularly in North-east region, hilly States and Island territories," said Mr. Agarwal.

R. Gangakhedkar, the Indian Council of Medical Research's head of the Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases-1, said that over 2.31 lakh persons have been

tested so far. He said India has received its first batch of testing kits and added that it would be "getting another 37 lakh rapid test kits soon which should have us covered".

"We have mentioned earlier that we have kits that could last for 6 weeks. This new consignment of RT-PCR kits will be more than sufficient," said Dr. Gangakhedkar.

Responding to a question on whether India was doing enough tests, Mr. Agarwal said, "We are doing COVID-19 testing as per our sampling criteria. Non-criteria based testing can result in sub-optimal use of testing kits." "Besides, we are progressively widening our sampling zone, we are testing those who have severe acute respiratory illness (SARI) or influenza-like illnesses," he said. (With PTI inputs)

## Teltumbe, Navlakha surrender to NIA

"Draconian provisions of UAPA are not accompanied by stricter procedures regarding evidence, especially electronic, considering the stringent punishment provided for under the Act; the procedures, which otherwise provide tighter rules regarding evidence, are instead made elastic. Under this double whammy, jail becomes the norm, and bail an exception. In this Kafkaesque domain, process itself becomes punishment," Mr. Navlakha stated.

In Mumbai, Prakash Shetty, special public prosecutor for NIA, sought Mr. Teltumbe's custody for 10 days stating that the agency needed to probe the role of the accused in detail.

In its remand application, NIA claimed that Mr. Teltumbe's call data record of his mobile phone showed that he was in contact with people accused in the case and that "he was present at the place of offence on relevant period". The agency al-

so claimed that Mr. Teltumbe was the convener of the programme, and that he had received funds from the CPI (Maoist), and also claimed that electronic articles seized showed his complicity.

The agency also pleaded that they may be allowed to handcuff the accused because of COVID-19 pandemic to avoid physical contact.

Defense lawyer Arif Siddique opposed NIA's plea stating that Mr. Teltumbe has been out since a year and half and under the protection of courts from arrest, and stated that Mr. Teltumbe had not done anything illegal during this period so his custodial interrogation was not necessary.

Mr. Teltumbe's lawyers also contested that the accused was not arrested but had surrendered before the court.

After considering the arguments the court remanded Mr. Teltumbe to NIA custody till April 18.

## Bhopal gas survivors left in the lurch

On April 8, even Sanjay Maithil's 80-year-old father, asthmatic, was denied admission by a private hospital. Earlier he was treated at the BMHRC. "We faced a lot of trouble getting him admitted to both private and government hospitals," he recalled.

Gas tragedy survivors and those with lung ailments are the most vulnerable to the coronavirus, said Tarun Kumar Pithode, Bhopal Collector. "We have designated the BMHRC as the COVID-19 hospital for the survivors only. We have appointed a nodal officer for their too. And private hospitals can't deny admission. We will act against them." Two of them died even before they tested positive for COVID-19, and the third wasn't shifted to the BMHRC even after testing positive.

Group for Information and Action filed an application for urgent hearing with the Madhya Pradesh High Court regarding the denial of medical facilities at the BMHRC to the survivors, which had reportedly caused deaths of three survivors suffering from non-COVID-19 ailments.

Confirming that four of the deceased were the tragedy's survivors, Purnendu Shukla, member of the Supreme Court Monitoring Committee, said its chief, retired Madhya Pradesh High Court Judge V.K. Agarwal, had informed the court that the arrangements for survivors at the BMHRC should not be disturbed.

Rachna Dhingra of the group said, "What we feared is happening now. If the government doesn't focus on the survivors, there will be more deaths."

# Ban on trains, flights to stay until May 3

Railways will not accept bookings till further notice; cargo trains and planes allowed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Indian Railways on Tuesday said all passenger train services, including premium, mail, express and suburban trains and the Kolkata metro rail, will continue to remain suspended till May 3. In addition, advance reservation, including e-tickets, will not be allowed "till further notice".

A Railways official said that the move will lead to the cancellation of about 39 lakh tickets booked from April 15 to May 3.

The temporary ban on domestic and international flights on Tuesday was also extended until midnight of May 3. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) had banned international flights from March 23 and the ban on domestic flights came into effect two days later, that is, March 25.

The suspension follows



Cooling their wheels: Trains stationed at a yard in Santragachi in Howrah. •PTI

the announcement by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to extend the nationwide lockdown by almost three weeks.

For all the cancelled trains, full refund will be given to the passengers. On-line facility for cancellation of tickets will remain functional. The Railways added that a full refund will also be given to those passengers who cancel their advance bookings for trains that have not been cancelled yet "as a goodwill measure".

For passengers who had bookings on the cancelled trains, refunds will be automatically remitted by the Railways online. However, for a booking done over counters, refunds can be taken up till July 31.

"Resumption of train services as may be warranted in consideration of public safety, keeping in view the emergent situation, shall be announced in due course," the Railways' statement said.

"All counters for booking

of rail journey tickets for reserved/unreserved travel at railway stations and outside railway station premises shall remain closed up to 24:00 hrs of May 3, 2020," it added. However, to ensure the flow of essential supplies in various parts of the country, movement of goods and parcel trains will continue.

No word on repatriation

The government is yet to announce measures for repatriation of Indians stranded around the world. There have been demands from within the aviation sector to stop airlines from allowing advance booking until the lockdown is lifted, so that passengers don't get their money stuck with airlines. But the government is yet to release any guidelines on this issue.

There is no restriction on cargo flights. The government has taken the help of

passenger airlines like Air India, IndiGo and SpiceJet, apart from BlueDart, for the transportation of essential medical supplies within the country as well as to Shanghai, Hong Kong and Colombo.

IndiGo has announced that it would resume flights from May 4. It said it will be initially operating with a slightly curtailed capacity, which will increase in the subsequent months, including to international routes.

Former Railway Board Chairman Ashwini Lohani, during a video conference of the travel and tourism industry, said, "Railways stopped for one or two days when Gandhiji died. After that, during the railway strike of 1974, in some pockets, services were affected. But this is the first time [after the assassination of Gandhiji] that Railways has stopped across the country."

## Livelihood issues ignored, says Yechury

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Extending lockdown without concrete measures to tackle the spread of COVID-19 and without addressing the grave issues of livelihood and hunger is meaningless, the CPI(M) said on Tuesday.

"The PM listed tasks that the people should implement during the extended lockdown. But nothing concrete on what the government will do. People were waiting for much needed relief for a large number of our poor, marginalised and migrant labour," CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said.

"The rescue package announced by the Modi government is merely 1% of the total GDP while even a far smaller country like Malaysia is spending 16% of the GDP," he said.

# We are nowhere in the game: Rahul

Congress leader says mass testing is the key to fighting the novel coronavirus

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

India delayed the import of COVID-19 testing kits, the key to fighting the pandemic, and is now "nowhere in the game" of mass testing, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi said on Tuesday.

Taking to Twitter, Mr. Gandhi said the testing levels ranked among the lowest, even lower than the least developed countries such as Laos, Niger and Honduras.

Though he didn't refer to Mr. Modi's speech, he sought to counter the Prime Minister's claim that India took preventive steps even before a single case was reported in the country.

"India delayed the purchase of testing kits & is now critically short of them. With just 149 tests per million Indians, we are now in the



India delayed the purchase of testing kits & is now critically short of them. With just 149 tests per million Indians, we are now in the company of Laos (157), Niger (182) & Honduras (162)  
RAHUL GANDHI, Congress chief

company of Laos (157), Niger (182) & Honduras (162). Mass testing is the key to fighting the virus. At present we are nowhere in the game," Mr. Gandhi tweeted hours after Mr. Modi's address to the nation.

Addressing reporters through video conferencing, senior Congress leader Manish Tewari said Mr. Modi didn't spell out the steps taken by his government during the three-week lockdown and only mentioned what he expected the citizens to do until May 3.

supply chain and action against employers who are sacking staff during such a crisis.

"The first thing which we expected the Prime Minister to address was: what does his government intend doing with regard to these millions of migrants who are stuck on various borders or various States? Are you going to allow them to go back to their homes? Is there a calibrated plan to facilitate their travel?" asked Mr. Tewari.

In a series of tweets, former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram also targeted Mr. Modi's speech.

"It is obvious that livelihood for the poor - their survival - is not among the priorities of the government. The poor have been left to fend for themselves for 21+9 days," Mr. Chidambaram said.

## Lockdown norms can't be diluted: NDMA

Order issued to the States and UTs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Tuesday issued an order under the Disaster Management Act directing Chairman, National Executive Committee, that existing lockdown measures be continued to be implemented in all parts of the country till May 3.

Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla is the chairman of the committee.

Road map soon

Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba will hold a videoconference on Wednesday with Chief Secretaries of all States to discuss the road map in the wake of the extended lockdown.

The Ministry has issued

an order to all States and UTs on the lockdown measures imposed. According to the order, with the extension of the lockdown, all restrictions that have been imposed in various sectors, and on various activities, will continue to remain in force.

The communication says that as per the orders issued by the MHA under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, the States and Union Territories cannot dilute restrictions imposed via the guidelines.

The first set of such guidelines to be followed by States for "containment of COVID-19 epidemic" was issued on March 24 under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, invoked for the first time in the country.



Repelling danger: A Harpoon Block II missile. •BOEING

## U.S. approves 2 missile deals with India

'No known offset agreements yet'

SIRIAM LAKSHMAN  
CHENNAI

The U.S. State Department has approved two potential missile deals with India, for an estimated \$92 million and \$63 million.

The first deal, for which Boeing is the contractor, is for 10 AGM-84L Harpoon Block II air-launched missiles and related equipment. These missiles can be fitted onto Boeing's P-8I (Poseidon-Eight India) maritime patrol aircraft, and are intended to enhance India's capability in anti-surface warfare while defending its sea lanes.

The second deal, for \$63 million and principally contracted with Raytheon Integrated Defense System, is for 16 MK 54 All Up Round Lightweight Torpedoes (LWT); three MK 54 Exercise Torpedoes (MK 54 LWT Kit procurement required); and related equipment. Also included are MK 54 spare parts, torpedo containers, two Recoverable Exercise Torpedoes (REXTORP) with containers and related equipment and support from the U.S. government and contractors.

The torpedoes are expected to enhance India's anti-submarine warfare capability and can be used with the P-8I.

There are no known off-

set agreements for both deals, the State Department said, and any offset agreement will be defined in negotiations between India and the contractors.

The Defense Security Cooperation Agency delivered the required certification to the U.S. Congress, notifying it of the possible sale. Under the U.S.' Arms Export Control Act, Congress has 30 days to raise objections to the sale in the case of India.

Delay in delivery

The Indian Navy operates eight P-8I long-range maritime patrol aircraft procured under a \$2.2 billion deal in 2009. In 2016, the Navy exercised an optional clause for four more aircraft in a deal worth over \$1 billion. The first of the four aircraft was to be delivered in May and the deal completed by January 2022. However, the initial delivery is expected to be delayed by a couple of months due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Boeing was to deliver the first aircraft slightly early in May, but due to the current situation it is expected to be delivered as per the original schedule in July," a source told *The Hindu* on Tuesday.

(With inputs from Dinakar Peri)

## Sonia lauds frontline workers in the fight against COVID-19

Discrimination against doctors is wrong, says Cong. chief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Hours before Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the nation on Tuesday to extend the nationwide lockdown until May 3, the Congress party released a video in which party president Sonia Gandhi lauded the citizens for showing restraint by staying indoors.

She also expressed confidence that India will emerge victorious in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic soon. "Today, your support in dealing with the crisis due to coronavirus is not less patriotism. The country is able to fight this virus only because of your help and support. I do not have words to thank you," she said.



Sonia Gandhi

Highlighting the efforts of the "corona warriors" like doctors, health workers, sanitation workers, police and security personnel and government officials, in fighting the pandemic despite inadequate personal protection, Ms. Gandhi also referred to reports of discrimination against doctors.

"This is quite wrong and our civilisation and culture

doesn't allow it," she said in her message.

The Congress chief also extended her party's solidarity in the fight against COVID-19.

"I assure you that whether the Congress party is in power or in opposition, we will stand by you in this battle. I am confident that, with a high morale, we will emerge from this crisis very soon. You stay at home and be safe," she said.

"Stay in your houses. Wash your hands repeatedly and step out only if it's absolutely essential. And always cover your face with a mask or *gamcha* (towel) or a *chunni* (stole). All of you should co-operate in this fight," she added.

## Govt. targeting critics, says Amnesty

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Amnesty International India has said that the surrender of activists Anand Teltumbe and Gautam Navlakha to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in the Rhima-Koregaon case was an extension of the government's crackdown on dissent.

Avinash Kumar, executive director of Amnesty International India, said: "Even during a pandemic, the government is targeting those critical of the government. When rights to expression and peaceful protest are weakened, everyone stands to lose."

## PM silent on measures for workers, says CITU

'Keep the focus on unorganised sector'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address on Tuesday to announce the extension of the lockdown was silent on what the government was doing for the welfare of workers hit by the economic impact of the pandemic, the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) said in a statement.

"He [the Prime Minister] remained tragically silent on what his government is going to do to facilitate the success of the lockdown period and ensure physical and human survival of the poorest section of working

people running into several crores," the statement issued by CITU general secretary Tapan Sen said.

The union demanded urgent steps to ramp up testing for COVID-19, protection of livelihoods of workers and immediate transfer of money to workers in the unorganised sector.

Chandan Kumar of the Working People's Charter said while the Prime Minister said certain measures would be announced on Wednesday, the need of the hour was the prioritisation of migrant and daily wage workers in all government schemes.

## Cong. ignored Ambedkar, says Nadda

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

BJP president J.P. Nadda on Tuesday accused the Congress of denying due respect to Constitution framer B.R. Ambedkar, adding that it was the Modi government that followed and "fulfilled his vision".

Mr. Nadda was addressing party workers in a video message to mark the 129th birth anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar.

Despite severe opposition, Ambedkar never compromised on his values and raised issues of social inequality and discrimination, Mr. Nadda said.

"It is unfortunate that during the lifetime of Babasaheb when the Congress was in power, it never gave him the respect due to him," he added.

## 'Media freedom is under attack'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Over 3,500 jurists, academics, actors, artists and writers in a statement expressed shock at the action of the Uttar Pradesh government and police against news portal *The Wire* and its founding editor Siddharth Varadarajan for an "entirely factual story" related to COVID-19 and religious events.

The action is a direct attack on freedom of the media, the signatories said. They called upon the U.P. government to drop all criminal proceedings against Mr. Varadarajan and withdraw the FIR.

# Migrants protest outside Bandra station

Thousands demand help to return to villages: Chief Minister appeals to workers to maintain calm

GAUTAM S. MENGLE  
MUMBAI

Over a thousand migrant workers gathered outside the Bandra railway station on Tuesday afternoon, demanding that they be sent home at the earliest as they are unable to sustain themselves during the lockdown. The police had to resort to a lathi charge to disperse them.

In an address to the State on social media in the evening, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray appealed to migrant workers to maintain calm.

## CM's address

In his Marathi and Hindi address, Mr. Thackeray said a rumour about the resumption of outstation train services could have led to the crowding. The Chief Minister said the State was investigating the incident, and those playing politics during a pandemic would be punished.

"The reason is that they felt trains would start from April 14 and they can go home. Someone must have put this in their mind," he said. The State government is in talks with the Centre to help migrant workers return home, the Chief Minister added.

The Bandra police said, people started gathering outside the Jama Masjid near



Tough stance: Mumbai police dispersing workers outside the Bandra West railway station in Mumbai on Tuesday. • ZOYA LOBO

Bandra station around 4 p.m. The numbers soon swelled to around 1,500. "The people mostly were workers from other States and they demanded that they be sent home as the lockdown, which was supposed to end on Tuesday, had been extended. Personnel from the Bandra police station, including senior officers, immediately rushed to the spot," Mumbai Police spokesperson Pranaya Ashok said.

An officer with the Bandra police said the numbers grew even as senior police officers tried to explain that

there were no means of transport available. The workers, mostly daily wagers, said they were unable to survive without work and income.

## 'Cannot defy orders'

"They said they were getting tired of surviving on the kindness of strangers. We told them that we understood their plight, but could not defy orders issued by the Central and State governments and certainly not at a moment's notice. Even as we were trying to disperse the gathering, some of them became physically aggressive, and the sentiment spread

throughout the crowd," the officer said.

Another officer said when repeated announcements on loudspeakers failed to calm the workers and the situation was getting out of hand, the police resorted to lathi charge. "We suspect that this was an instigation as it is hardly possible for such a large group to gather at short notice. The fact that they gathered at a spot far from Bandra Terminus, where outstation trains depart from the city, suggests that the intention was to create disturbance rather than seek help from the government. We

are conducting inquiries to verify this," he said.

Mr. Ashok said strict ban on banast has been put in place in and around the area to prevent another flare-up. Preliminary inquiries have indicated that most of the workers are residents of localities near Bandra station. Officers said a truck was distributing rations to migrant workers in the area before the numbers swelled. "We have CCTV footage of the incident and are registering an FIR in connection with the matter," Joint Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Vinoy Kumar Choubey said.

# Workers face heat, hunger as lockdown is extended

Construction labourers and families face more uncertainty

SOBHANA K. NAIR  
NEW DELHI

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the extension of the countrywide lockdown by another 19 days, there is only one question resonating among the 300-odd construction workers living in sheds in the shadow of under-construction luxury apartments near the Noida Expressway: why couldn't the government arrange transport for them to return to their homes?

The workers haven't been paid since the one-day 'Janta Curfew' of March 22. Their days stretch empty between arrival of the vehicle that delivers food — once around 1 p.m. and then at 7 p.m.

"It's the government's wish, to extend or end the lockdown, we really don't care. The least they could have done is to take us home instead of leaving us here to slowly roast in this kiln," says Shantkula, a worker, pointing at the tin roofs of the labourers' sheds. She holds a plate of rotis and a steel bowl of watery dal. "Who do I feed this to — my children or my husband or myself," she asks.

Next to her, Halki Bahu, from Damoi, in Madhya Pradesh is also carrying food



Hard times: People standing in a queue to collect food on the banks of the Yamuna on Tuesday. • SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

back to her shed. As we speak, the rotis wrapped up in the *palu* (end) of her saree fall down; she picks them up, dusts them and tucks them back into her saree. "This is all the food that my children will get today," she says. "How can I throw it away?"

Children from the workers' colony run towards the rare car that passes by on the Expressway, hoping that it is someone bringing food. When the car drives away without stopping, they still linger on near the entrance to the construction site till the security guard herds them back into the shanties with his baton.

The two meals have been arranged by the builder. The labourers complain that

they haven't got even a kilogram of food grains promised by the government.

"He [the Prime Minister] announced *notebandi* (demonetisation) just like this one fine day. He stands at a pulpit and lectures. He says stay at home, I will stay here locked up under this tin roof for three months if he provides food for me and my family," says Tahir, who hails from Kathiar in Bihar.

A supervisor at the site, who didn't want to be named, said the builder had been providing food hoping that the construction activity would resume from Wednesday as the lockdown was to end on Tuesday. But now he is not sure how long the builder can continue providing for the workers.

## IN BRIEF



**Patnaik says infections 'going down' in Odisha**  
Bhubaneswar  
Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday expressed satisfaction over the containment of the COVID-19 outbreak in the State and said that the number of new infections was on the decline. "I am pleased to see that the coronavirus [infection] statistics are levelling in the State and going down," said Mr. Patnaik. The State has recorded a total of 56 positive cases so far.

**Fall kills man in hospital where one tests positive**  
Guwahati  
A 26-year-old man undergoing rehabilitation from drug addiction fell to his death from a Meghalaya hospital that was sealed on Monday night after a doctor there tested positive for COVID-19. Police in Meghalaya capital Shillong said the man died on the spot after falling from the window of Bethany Hospital on Tuesday morning. He was from Mawkyrat in South West Khasi Hills district.

**'Industries can't pay full wages during lockdown'**  
Chandigarh  
Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh has urged the Centre to reconsider its directive to industrial and commercial establishments to pay full wages to workers during the lockdown. He has asked the Centre to hit upon an innovative solution to protecting the interests of workers without causing industry any irreparable damage. He said the directive would have huge financial implications for such establishments, which might go bankrupt with no income.

**'If no case in 3 days, Goa can become green zone'**  
Mumbai  
Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Tuesday said if the State managed to continue with no new COVID-19 case over the next three days, then by April 17 it could well become a green zone, and restrictions could be eased with caution and social distancing. Announcing the deferment of the opening of government offices by five days to April 20, Dr. Sawant said that out of the seven COVID-19 cases detected in Goa earlier, five patients had recovered from the viral infection while two are undergoing treatment.

# Mumbai records 216 more cases, 11 deaths

Tally touches 1,756 and death toll stands at 112; rapidly rising fatalities pose a major concern

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Mumbai has recorded 216 new COVID-19 cases and 11 more deaths on Tuesday. The total tally has now touched 1,756 and the death toll stands at 112, making the city the COVID-19 hotspot of the country with the highest number of cases as well as fatalities.

On Tuesday, nine of the 11 victims had co-morbid conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, asthma, heart disease and obesity.

Among them, a 52-year-old man had a past history of tuberculosis while a 65-year-old woman had active tuberculosis.

While co-morbid conditions have been a common



Checks intensify: A health worker conducting a thermal screening test in Dharavi on Tuesday. • VIJAY BATE

threat among the COVID-19 fatalities in the city, the rapidly increasing death toll has become a major cause of concern for the State. Mumbai alone contributes nearly 62% of Maharashtra's deaths. This has led the State

government to form a seven-member committee to look into the high death rate in the city.

Avinash Supe, former dean of civic-run KEM Hospital who is a part of the committee, said the first meeting

## Six new cases in Dharavi

STAFF REPORTER  
MUMBAI

Dharavi reported six new cases and two deaths on Tuesday. With this, Dharavi has reported 55 cases, with seven deaths. Meanwhile, cases in Mumbai's G South ward consisting of Worli, Prabhadevi crossed the 300 mark with a total of 308

cases. Of the two who died in Dharavi on Tuesday, one is a 52-year-old man from Kalyanwadi who died on Saturday. Another is a 52-year-old man from Muslim Nagar. Among the other new cases are a 27-year-old man from Muslim Nagar, a 19-year-old woman and a 55-year-old man.

had been scheduled on Wednesday. Milind Nadkar, Head of Medicine department of KEM Hospital; Nitin Karnik, Head of Medicine from Sion Hospital; Chaya Rajguru from JJ Hospital's Community Medicine department; Vi-

dya Nagar from JJ Hospital's Medicine department and Subhash Salunke, Technical Adviser to the State on pandemic control, are part of the committee headed by Sadhana Tayde from the Directorate of Health Services.

# Migrant workers in Surat speak to the streets again

They demand to be allowed to return

MAHESH LANGA  
AHMEDABAD

For the second time in less than a week, hundreds of restless migrant workers in Surat came out on the road, complaining about the lack of food and demanding that they be allowed to return to their home towns, even as the authorities extended the lockdown to contain the coronavirus pandemic till May 3.

More than 500 workers, mostly engaged in textile and embroidery work in factories, came out on Tuesday evening, asking police and other officials to allow them to go back to their villages. Most of the workers are from Odisha, Uttar Pradesh,

Bihar and Tamil Nadu.

"They are restless and anxious to return to their villages," a police official from Surat told *The Hindu*.

After being persuaded by the authorities, the crowd that had gathered in the Varachha area, a hub for migrant workers employed in the diamond factories and textiles units of the city, dispersed amidst shouting that they wanted to go back home.

Meanwhile, Congress legislator Iman Khedawala, who attended a review meeting held by Chief Minister Vijay Rupani regarding imposition of curfew in the city, tested positive for the virus on Tuesday night.

# 78 new cases, 2 deaths in Gujarat

Tough curbs on Ahmedabad hotspots

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
AHMEDABAD

Gujarat's tally of COVID-19 infection cases has jumped to 650 with 78 new cases recorded on Tuesday. The death toll rose to 28 with two more deaths Vadodra and Bhavnagar.

So far 59 patients including 11 on Tuesday have been discharged from the hospitals after treatment. As per the State Health Department's data, 555 patients are under treatment and stable while eight are said to be critical and on ventilator support.

In Gujarat, so far 15,984 samples have been tested, of which 650 have tested positive and remaining 15,334 tested negative.

Ahmedabad has the largest number of cases with more than a dozen infection hotspots in the city where so far 14 people have already died and 373 have found infected.

## Complete lockdown

To control the spread of virus in the city, the State government has decided to bring enter walled city area and Danilimda under strict curfew from Wednesday to April 21.

During the curfew period, only women will be allowed to go out for buying essentials like grocery, milk and vegetables between 12noon and 4 p.m.



Rapid Action Force (RAF) personnel patrolling the streets in Ahmedabad. • PTI

No men or children will be allowed to leave their homes.

The decision to impose curfew as a special measure to enforce lockdown more forcefully was taken after Chief Minister Vijay Rupani held a review meeting in which Congress party legislators representing those hotspots were also invited to seek their cooperation.

"It is necessary to enforce the lockdown completely in those pockets in the city," CM said in the meeting.

Earlier, the civic body had declared the walled city area as a buffer zone and had hardened lockdown measures by completely regulating entry and exit in those parts from where large number of cases have been recorded, triggering fears of community spread of the viral disease.

# Army doctor tests positive for virus in Delhi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

An Army doctor, a Lieutenant Colonel, posted in Delhi has tested positive for COVID-19. His family and several people who had contact with him have been quarantined, Army sources said.

"After one person tested positive, actions as per protocol like quarantine of other residents, sanitation of common areas in the Block and contact tracing are in progress," an Army source said on Tuesday.

The doctor was part of the team involved in the preparation of Army quarantine facilities and coordination of the COVID-19 relief efforts, another source stated.

The first case in the Army was a 34-year-old jawan from the Ladakh Scouts regiment, based in Leh. The jawan has since fully recovered.

Later, two personnel tested positive — a Colonel (doctor) based in Kolkata and a junior commissioned officer (JCO) based in Dehradun.

# Indore records 105 cases in a day

Yet another IAS officer tests positive for the illness in Madhya Pradesh

STAFF REPORTER  
BHOPAL

Indore recorded 105 new positive cases of COVID-19 on Monday, the steepest hike for the most populous city in Madhya Pradesh in a day.

The new cases included two residents of Assam, said Pravin Jadia, Indore Chief Medical and Health Officer. While the condition of 13 patients who were undergoing treatment remained critical, 37 had died of the illness so far, Mr. Jadia said.

According to the officer,



Strict measures: Security personnel talking to shop owners in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. • PTI

37 patients have recovered from the illness in the city.

On Tuesday, 45 new cases were recorded in Madhya Pradesh, taking the count to

ness in Bhopal on the same day.

Meanwhile, 13 persons from the State Health Department and their family members tested positive in the past two days, taking the count relating to the Department to 87.

This makes up more than half of the total 158 cases in Bhopal.

On Monday, the Deputy Secretary in the Madhya Pradesh Directorate of Medical Education had tested positive. He is the fourth bureaucrat in the State to have contracted the disease.

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU  
**PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**  
Tender 2<sup>nd</sup> Extension Notice  
Tender Notice No.: 12-2 SE/Buildings (C&M) Circle / Madurai / 2019-2020 / Date: 13.04.2020.  
This office Tender Notice No.12SE/Buildings (C&M) Circle / Madurai / 2019-2020 / Date:10.03.2020 already called for 7 (Seven) works the last date for receiving the tender schedules has been extended from 17.04.2020 to 15.05.2020 - 03.00 PM for further details visit the website [www.tenders.tn.gov.in](http://www.tenders.tn.gov.in) and [www.tntenders.gov.in](http://www.tntenders.gov.in)  
Superintending Engineer, (i/c) PWD., Buildings (C&M) Circle, Madurai.  
DIPR/1606/TENDER/2020

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU  
**PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**  
TENDER 2<sup>nd</sup> EXTENSION NOTICE  
NIT No. 4-2/2019-20 / P&D Circle (Bldg) / Chennai, Dated : 13.04.2020  
Last date for receipt of Tenders invited in this office NIT No. 4/2019-20/P&D Circle (Bldg)/Chennai, dated 25.02.2020 for two works is extended upto 07.05.2020 upto 15.00 hours. Further details are available in the Website <http://www.tenders.tn.gov.in> (or) <http://www.tntenders.gov.in>.  
Superintending Engineer, PWD., Planning and Design Circle (Buildings), Chepauk, Chennai - 600 005.  
DIPR/1609/Tender/2020

In Memoriam

Shri T. S. Santhanam  
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# ICMR suggests testing of pooled samples

Council's advisory is aimed at increasing the numbers of tests conducted by laboratories

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Stating that the number of COVID-19 cases in India is rising, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is now advising the feasibility of using pooled samples for molecular testing of patient samples.

The council has said that it is critical to increase the numbers of tests conducted by laboratories.

"Positivity rate in cases is still low. Hence, it may help to use the pooled samples for screening. A pooled testing algorithm involves the PCR screening of a specimen pool comprising multiple individual patient specimens, followed by individual testing (pool de-convolution) only if a pool screens positive. As all individual samples in a negative pool are regarded as negative, it results in substantial cost savings when a large proportion of pools



**New strategy:** Pooled testing can be done only in areas with low COVID-19 prevalence. •AP

tests negative," it noted in a one-page advisory.

The advisory is aimed at increasing capacity of the laboratories to screen increased numbers of samples using molecular testing for COVID-19 for the purpose of surveillance.

"But pooling of sample is

not recommended in areas or population with positivity rates of >5% for COVID-19. Preferable number of samples to be pooled is five, though more than two samples can be pooled, but considering higher possibility of missing positive samples with low viral load, it is

strongly discouraged to pool more than five samples, except in research mode," the advisory says.

The ICMR has noted that a feasibility study was conducted at DHR/ICMR Virus Research and Diagnostic Laboratory (VRDL) at King George's Medical University (KGMU), Lucknow.

### Feasibility scenario

"It has been demonstrated that performing real-time PCR for COVID-19 by pooling five samples of TS/NS (200 ul/sample) is feasible when the prevalence rates of infection are low. All individual samples in a negative pool to be regarded as negative. Deconvoluted testing is recommended if any of the pool is positive. Pooling of more than five samples is not recommended to avoid the effect of dilution leading to false negatives," the advisory said.

It has now recommended sample pooling for real-time RT-PCR screening for COVID-19 (based on the KGMU study).

The study has recommended that it should be used only in areas with low prevalence of COVID-19 (initially using proxy of low positivity of less than 2% from the existing data).

Still, a watch should be kept on increasing positivity in such areas. In areas with positivity of 2-5%, sample pooling for PCR screening may be considered only in community survey or surveillance among asymptomatic individuals, strictly excluding pooling samples of individuals with known contact with confirmed cases and health care workers (in direct contact with care of COVID-19 patients). Sample from such individuals should be directly tested without pooling.

# India to get 15 million PPE kits from China

Orders placed amid concern over export regulations

ANANTH KRISHNAN  
CHENNAI

Indian companies and government entities have placed orders for 15 million personal protective equipment (PPE) kits and 1.5 million rapid testing kits from China, officials said on Tuesday.

The Indian government is calling on China to fulfil those orders, amid concerns over tightened regulations on exporting such equipment by Chinese authorities following criticism from several European countries over the quality of exports.

"We are in the process of, or have already completed, contracting for 15 million PPE kits, consisting of gowns, masks, gloves, goggles, etc. and nearly 1.5 million rapid testing kits of all kinds, some of which have already been delivered," India's Ambassador to China Vikram Misri said at an online press briefing from Beijing.

A substantial amount of India's national PPE supply is coming from China. These orders, both from the government and private sectors, were placed on a commercial basis.

China had separately donated 170,000 PPE coveralls, the Health Ministry said on April 6, which would add to the 387,473 PPEs available in the country as of that date.

**Test kits delivered**  
More than 5,00,000 testing kits from China have already been delivered to various entities, while a further 1 to 1.5 million test kits are at different stages of procurement and production.

India has since tried to ramp up production and im-



**Full shield:** Relatives in protective gear prepare to bury the body of a man who died of COVID-19 in New Delhi. •REUTERS

ports, including from China, which is a major producer of both PPEs and testing kits.

Mr. Misri called on China to ensure that supply chains remained open and for all placed orders to be fulfilled. While India "appreciate[d] efforts by China to ensure the quality of goods exported", it also called on Beijing to fulfil previously placed orders with companies that were licensed by Indian authorities to export to the Indian market. China imposed new regulations to tighten checks on April 10, following concerns over the quality of exports expressed in several countries.

"In some cases, some of the orders placed recently were placed before regulations came into effect that limited and restricted the number of companies from China that can export to India," Mr. Misri said.

"Given that the products are licensed for import to India, it will be a welcome step for Chinese authorities to expedite the registration of these products. Our expectation is that these well-established companies will fulfil their contractual obligations."

Mr. Misri said there were "more than half a dozen" or-

ders in different stages of processing, and India's current understanding was delivery schedules remained on course.

"We have a schedule that stretches from deliveries starting tomorrow [April 15] until the end of the month, when half a dozen consignments ordered by different entities in India will be delivered," he said. "Our understanding is the registration process has been initiated and we have requested the Chinese government to expedite the registration process of companies so that export orders already processed and ready to ship can be sent on their way to India. We hope this request can be facilitated by the Chinese government."

### T.N. order

There have also been concerns over some orders being diverted. The Tamil Nadu government said this week that 50,000 testing kits it had ordered from China were diverted to the U.S. "We have seen media reports but not come across authoritative reports of supplies intended for India having been diverted," Mr. Misri said.

# Hits to Health Ministry, ICMR websites soar

Citizens look up to a source of genuine information on the COVID-19 pandemic, says NIC official

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA  
NEW DELHI

The average daily user visits to the websites of the Health Ministry and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) have skyrocketed from 8.04 lakh in the first week of March to 3.24 crore in the last week of the month as people look for updated information on the COVID-19 pandemic.

"...In such challenging times, citizens look up to a source of genuine information. As the current situation is unveiling, the traffic on the websites of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and the ICMR has gone up significantly as people look for in-

formation about the pandemic," a senior official from the National Informatics Centre (NIC), the IT arm of the government, told *The Hindu*.

During March itself, the count of visitors on these websites increased from approximately 56.3 lakh in the entire first week of the month to 22.68 crore during the last week of the month, the official added.

### Tracking portals

Additionally, the official said that various State centres of the NIC are working with the State governments to develop "tracking and management portals to help the



State and the district administration to combat the pandemic", similar to those already launched in Kerala and Meghalaya.

On enabling work from

home for the entire government during the lockdown, the official said there were some challenges such as configuring virtual private network (VPN) access - core to enabling government employees to work from their homes, to large number of employees in a span of three or four days was a herculean task.

### Work from home

"Keeping in mind the safety of our own people, most of our team members at NIC were also working from home, hence executing change at different levels was difficult with a limited manpower in the office. Availabil-

ity of laptops or a home desktop for every resource was another challenge," the official added.

### Videoconferencing

With social distancing norms in place, NIC's videoconferencing service was extensively used by government officials, including President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, besides Union Ministers, Governors and Chief Ministers.

"In the month of March, the NIC helped in facilitating over 2,300 videoconferencing sessions of over 60,000 hours across the country, held at all levels of governance," the official said.

## IN BRIEF



### Deadline for paying ESI contribution extended

NEW DELHI  
The Employees' State Insurance Corporation has extended the deadline for employers to file ESI contributions for February and March to May 15, the Union Labour and Employment Ministry said in a statement on Tuesday. "The country is dealing with a very challenging situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many establishments are temporarily closed and workers are unable to work," the Ministry said.

### WHO lauds India's 'tough and timely' actions

NEW DELHI  
The World Health Organization on Tuesday lauded India's tough actions against the spread of COVID-19. "A six-week lockdown to facilitate effective physical distancing, coupled with the expansion of core public health measures such as detection, isolation and tracing contact of coronavirus positive people, would go a long way in arresting the virus spread," said WHO's Southeast Asia regional director Poonam Khetrapal Singh.

### Kishor questions lockdown extension

PATNA  
Poll strategist and former Janata Dal (United) leader Prashant Kishor on Tuesday questioned the Centre's decision to extend the nationwide lockdown for another 19 days. "It's pointless to endlessly debate the rationale & modalities of the #lockdown2. The real question however is what happens if we don't get the desired result even by staying the course on our chosen path till 3rd May? Do we have an alternative plan or will to course correct?" Mr. Kishor tweeted after the Prime Minister's announcement.

# Local bodies told to give gear to sanitation workers

NSFDC issues advisory to municipalities, panchayats

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC) has asked local bodies to ensure that all sanitation workers are provided personal protective equipment (PPE) to remain safe during the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Union Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Thawarchand Gehlot said on Tuesday that the NSFDC, which is a government undertaking under the Ministry, had issued an advisory to all municipalities and panchayats for ensuring safety of sanitation workers and waste collectors.

The April 7 advisory said sanitation workers and



Sanitation workers have been working to prevent COVID-19.

waste collectors, including informal workers, were among the "silent groups of people who are working tirelessly to prevent the spread of the coronavirus."

"When it comes to risking

their lives for the protection of others, in the present times, they are at par with doctors, healthcare workers and policemen," the advisory said.

### Mandatory orientation

All local bodies were asked to put in place a standard operating procedure for the safety of sanitation staff. There should be mandatory orientation for sanitation workers on COVID-19, social distancing norms and precautionary measures, it said. The local bodies were asked to provide equipment, including masks, gloves, gumboots and jackets, as well as soaps and hand sanitisers for helping maintain hygiene.

# Ordnance Factory Board to make 1.1 lakh coveralls

Initial order from HLL will be completed in 40 days

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) has started making coveralls, conforming to the ISO Class 3 exposure standards, to combat COVID-19, the Defence Ministry said on Tuesday. An initial order of 1.1 lakh from HLL Lifecare Ltd. (HLL) will be completed in 40 days.

"The manufacture of hand sanitiser is on a war footing, and more than 70,000 litres has already been supplied to different agencies," the Ministry said in a statement.

The OFB has also developed and started supply of special two-metre tents, made up of waterproof fabric, mild steel and aluminium



**Full protection:** A suit made by the Golden Rock Railway Workshop in Tiruchir. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

alloy. These tents can be used for medical emergency and quarantine. Two facilities have been established in

Chennai and Kanpur for blood penetration tests. The OFB is also trying to produce face masks.

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# SoI maps add heft to Arogya Setu app

This could improve geospatial data and help develop maps customised to COVID-related applications

JACOB KOSHY  
YUTHIKA BHARGAVA  
NEW DELHI

To "complement" the Arogya Setu App, a government endorsed application that helps trace the contacts of those who may have been infected by COVID-19, the Survey of India (SoI), the country's apex map maker, has made public a trove of maps.

This could improve geospatial data as well as help develop maps that could be customised to a variety of 'COVID-related applications' such as healthcare facilities, infection clusters and disaster management, according to officials associated with the project.

## Geospatial information

"The platform is initially expected to strengthen the public health delivery system of the State and Central governments and subsequently provide the necessary geospatial



**Boost to data:** The application is meant to collect COVID-19-specific geospatial datasets through community engagement.

information support to citizens and agencies dealing with the challenges related to health, socio-economic distress, and livelihood challenges," the Department of Science and Technology, which oversees the SoI, said in a press release. "The mobile application has been

customised to collect COVID-19 specific geospatial datasets through community engagement to augment the response activities by government to the pandemic."

Officials said that the maps wouldn't be directly useful to the general public and was aimed at govern-

ment agencies which require geospatial information. "If a response team needs location specific data on a hot-spot that information can be given by Sahyog (the SoI's mobile application)," Pankaj Mishra, Deputy Surveyor General (Technical) told *The Hindu*.

In his address announcing the extension of the lockdown on Tuesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged Indians to use the Arogya Setu application and "inspire others to download the app as well".

To be effective, it requires users to keep their device's Bluetooth and location history 'on' as much as possible. Users will be alerted, without disclosing identity, if they are in the vicinity of someone who's tested positive. It also helps the government trace contacts of those infected to execute quarantining.

Critics say that Arogya Setu and applications like Sahyog that link it to, could infringe privacy as there wasn't clarity on how data would be shared between the two applications.

"If location data from Arogya Setu is transferred to the other application, then it is a problem. But if it is a one way transfer from Sahyog to Arogya Setu, then it is more about privacy protection within the latter application," said Prasanth Sugathan, Legal Director, Software Freedom Law Centre, India.

Arogya Setu's terms of use were unclear on several aspects including how long data would be stored, what would happen to it once the pandemic ceased, who else the data was being transferred to, he added.

The government has said that data would be collected only for managing the pandemic.

# You could end up in jail for spitting tobacco in Bihar

It poses a threat to public health amid COVID-19, says govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PATNA

The Bihar government on Monday passed an order that said anyone caught spitting tobacco or *pan masala* in public places would invite imprisonment of six months or a penalty of ₹200.

"Spitting tobacco in public places poses a threat to public health in view of the COVID-19, encephalitis, tuberculosis, swine flu or other viral diseases. Under Section 268 and 269 of the IPC, the offender will be punished with either six months in jail or a penalty of ₹200," said the Health department.

## Centre's directive

Earlier, the Central government had urged the State governments to ban the use of tobacco in public places as a step to contain the spread of



District Magistrates have been asked to ensure strict implementation.

"Bihar, by and large, has a rural base and many people here use smokeless tobacco in the form of *khaini*. It will be very difficult for officials to restrict people from using it," said village youth Deepak Kumar.

North Bihar's Vaishali, Samastipur and Sitamarhi districts are the largest producers of tobacco in the State.

## More patients

The number of COVID-19 patients has gone up to 66 in the State. A 40-year old man from Nalanda tested positive on Monday night.

Along with Siwan, Begusarai and Nawada, the Health Department has started home screening of people in Nalanda district as well.

These four districts have been marked as COVID-19 hotspots in Bihar.

# A tale of trauma that ended well for this Srinagar mother

Her girls contracted viral infection from grandfather

PEERZADA ASHIQ  
SRINAGAR

Irfan Masrat, 35, a mother from Srinagar's Natipora area, offered to stay round the clock with her COVID-19 positive daughters, one four-year-old and the other seven-year-old, for 19 days and described nursing them as "the most traumatic experience of her life".

Ms. Masrat was crestfallen when the two minor daughters in the family tested positive for COVID-19 on March 26. It was just two days after the test on Ms. Masrat's 58-year-old father-in-law, who had returned from Saudi Arabia on March 16, turned out to be positive.

"My daughters are very much attached to their grandfather and would spend time with him. When the test reports came positive, it shook the earth beneath me. My children were down with a disease which has no cure and no medicine to rely on. The word 'positive' sounded unbearable," Ms. Masrat said in an interview.

She pledged to be with her daughters, whose bodies were hosting the novel coronavirus but without any major symptoms, in the isolation ward of the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial (JLNM) Hospital for 19 days.

"It comes naturally to mothers to shield their children. I wished I could have contracted the virus and that my children could instead have been safe. My elder daughter did feel feverish for some time but it



**Precautionary measure:** A residential area in Srinagar was cordoned off on Tuesday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

subsided with paracetamol. It was traumatic to wake up every day and pray that no COVID-19 symptoms should take over my kids," said Ms. Masrat, who would sleep on a bed nearby in the quarantine ward wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) even through the night.

Always in a mask, she worked on a routine for her children and took all necessary precautions: disposing of used tissues, changing masks and ensuring hand hygiene.

"I prepared them mentally as if I was infected with the virus and they needed to stay away from me. I did not even touch or hug my four-year-old daughter. My daughter kept asking 'if she was well why isn't she allowed to go home'. It was painful. But they cooperated," Ms. Masrat said.

Ms. Masrat's family was split up by the COVID-19 infection. Her father-in-law was in the Chest Disease Hospital battling the virus and other family members were isolated in a quaran-

tine centre set up in the National Institute of Technology. She was all alone nursing the children in the JLNM hospital.

"The staff, including doctors of the hospital, made us feel comfortable. They joined me in my prayers for my children's well being. I took it as Allah's test on us. Thankfully, we passed it with all patience," she added.

Tabasum Shaw, Deputy Medical Superintendent of the JLNM Hospital, said the minor girls were counselled on not touching surfaces. "Toys, crayons and drawing sheets were provided for distraction and to prevent any mental trauma," Dr. Tabasum added.

The medical official said the mother was also tested before being discharged from the hospital on Monday, with all the staff members joining to cheer them as they left. "The father of the girls has also tested negative. The girls will now spend 14 days in home quarantine," she added.

# Doctors step in as fear stalls woman's funeral

Odisha villagers refused to allow her remains to be brought to her house, suspecting COVID-19

SATYASUNDAR BARIK  
BHUBANESWAR

Three doctors in Odisha's Sambalpur district came forward to help perform the last rites of a woman, who died of tuberculosis, after villagers refused to allow her remains to be brought to her house, suspecting COVID-19 infection.

Following a prolonged illness, Shanti Tanti, 50, died of tuberculosis at the VSS Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR), the premier government-run facility in western Odisha, on Monday.

## No cash left

Being a daily wageer, her husband Suresh Tanti did not have enough cash to hire an



**Good Samaritans:** The doctors called for more awareness so that deaths are not stigmatised.

ambulance to take the body to their native place.

Three young doctors - senior resident Shankar Ramchandani and postgraduate students Tuskar Behera and Rajesh Meher - crowd-funded ₹4,600 needed for the ambulance.

However, when Mr. Tanti reached his village Kumarmunda in Sundargarh district, 220 km away from Burla, he was stopped by the villagers.

"My wife's body was not allowed to enter the village. My fellow villagers suspected

that she had died of COVID-19 and her body could spread coronavirus," said Mr. Tanti.

While returning, he tried to abandon the body, but the ambulance driver dissuaded him from doing so.

## Moved to Sambalpur

The driver informed the doctors at VIMSAR and Mr. Tanti was advised to go to the public crematorium at Sambalpur.

However, in a cruel twist, the last rites couldn't be performed there as Mr. Tanti was not carrying his wife's Aadhaar card.

"Death is itself a big tragedy. We could not stand like mute spectators when a man forced by circumstances was

found running from pillar to post. We decided to intervene. We went to the crematorium. In our presence, Mr. Tanti conducted the last rites," said Dr. Ramchandani.

Earlier, the Odisha government had announced that the last rites of all those who died of COVID-19 would be performed under government supervision so that the chances of infection could be nullified.

"The awareness has not percolated to the ground. People should have known that when a premier institute like VIMSAR had allowed a body to be cremated in village, the death could not have been related to COVID-19," said Dr. Meher.

# Amid lockdown, hunters eye rhino horns

Officials thwart six poaching attempts in a week around Assam's national parks

RAHUL KARMAKAR  
GUWAHATI

The COVID-19 lockdown has activated poachers who had been forced into lying low for more than a year. At least six thwarted attempts have been made within a week in and around Assam's national parks.

Wildlife officials have not ruled out the possibility of the poachers trying to strike while the demand for animal body parts, specifically the rhino horn, remains low due to the impact of the pandemic on the grey market and make a killing later when it rebounds.

And the lockdown has inadvertently made it easier



**Waiting game:** Officials say poachers are trying to strike while the demand for rhino horn remains low and make a killing later.

for the poachers by thinning the ranks of the network of local people who had hitherto been a critical part of the anti-poaching campaign by tipping off forest officials on any suspicious movements

near the parks.

On April 11, a member of the Special Rhino Protect Force received bullet injuries during an encounter with a group of poachers in the Biswanath division of the

Kaziranga National Park (KNP). The police in Biswanath district arrested six people for attempted poaching and assault two days later.

The police in Sonitpur district arrested five people on April 13 involved in attempted poaching at the Nameri National Park.

Officials said eight people had so far been arrested in five cases of attempted poaching.

While two people with a track record were arrested in Golaghat district for trying to kill a rhino that had strayed out of the KNP, the six arrested after the encounter in Biswanath district were first-timers.

# Special plane to fly out Brazilians

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

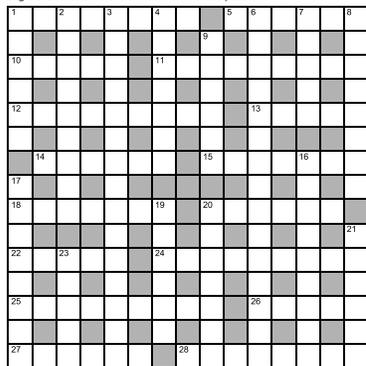
More than 350 Brazilians and foreigners will be flown out of India on Tuesday night on an Ethiopian airline-chartered aircraft, several sources confirmed.

The flight will depart from New Delhi at 11 pm, and stop over in Mumbai en route to Sao Paulo.

More than 50 special flights have been operated to at least 17 countries since March to repatriate foreigners, including nationals of Australia, Germany, the U.K., Switzerland, Canada, Qatar, Israel and Malaysia.

## THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12910

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



- State in America where most want to cheat and go astray (9)
- Father's glib talk - waste of time (5)
- Feel the heat, discarding shade in confusion (6)
- Calmed by action limiting trouble largely (7)
- Arresting holy man in India concealing deceit (7)
- Criminal helps to smuggle cocaine in arduous journey (6)
- Mate with maiden enthralled by excellent spirit (5)
- Ex-wife overwhelmed by bitterness starting to rage! Be reasonable (4,5)
- One transporting cargo and soldiers in military aircraft (9)
- Right topples Left, plunders bases (5)
- Unobtrusive operation around northern border kills many (6)
- Lockets in conclusion found in drawers (8)

- Poor dude has good intentions (5, 4)
- Mistake by kind husband to tackle insolence with essentially sweet talk (4,2,3,6)
- One cutting ironic rogue hiding a little scam (7)
- Where a mountaineer summiting Mt. Everest might be ecstatic (2,3,2,3,5)
- Smaller map of states nicely put up (5)
- Commotion after revolutionary character steals diamond in a place of fabulous wealth (2,6)
- Admonished, groom ran in to get married (6)
- Despite eating small slice of tasteless vegetable (5,4)
- America rose to tackle final horrific pandemic in 1957 (5,3)
- Knocking out criminal finally, detective seizes smack in Pacific island (6)
- Pat on vacation in rush to spend extravagantly (7)
- Whines about small troubles (6)
- Articles by one member in revolutionary group (5)

## ACROSS

- Private detective mostly eats some fresh carrot at the end (8)
- Sadly, I've no competence to begin with (6)
- Ascetic took a dip on island (5)
- Pinching model's rear? Hounded and flogged (9)

## DOWN

- Turn your back on uproar over broadcast (6)

## SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

## Solution to puzzle 12909

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

## Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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



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

# Virus infections have 'certainly' not peaked yet, warns WHO

90% of cases are coming from Europe, U.S.; Britain, France extend restrictions

REUTERS  
MADRID/LONDON

Spain and Austria allowed partial returns to work on Tuesday but Britain and France extended lockdowns to try to rein in a pandemic which the World Health Organization warned had not yet peaked.

Nearly 2 million people globally have been infected and more than 1,20,000 have died in the most serious pandemic in a century. The epicentre has moved from China, where the virus first emerged in December, to the U.S., which now has the highest death toll at 23,568.



**Finding solace:** Health workers in tears as they pay tribute to a co-worker who died of COVID-19 in Leganes, Spain. • REUTERS

## Balancing act

World leaders, in considering easing curbs, have to balance risks to health and the economy, as the lockdowns strangle supply lines and bring economic activity to a virtual halt.

The world economy is expected to shrink by 3% this year, the International Monetary Fund said, marking the steepest downturn since the Great Depression.

The World Health Organization said the number of new cases was easing in some parts of Europe, including Italy and Spain, but outbreaks were growing in Britain and Turkey.

## COVID-19

"The overall world outbreak, 90% of cases are coming from Europe and the United States of America. So we are certainly not seeing the peak yet," WHO spokeswoman Margaret Harris told a briefing in Geneva.

But world stocks gained after Chinese trade data

## '17 mn children face measles risk'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
PARIS

Around 117 million children worldwide risk contracting measles because dozens of countries are curtailing their vaccination programmes as they battle COVID-19, the United Nations warned on Tuesday. Currently 24 countries, including several already dealing with large measles outbreaks, have suspended widespread vaccinations, the World Health Organization and the UN's children's fund UNICEF said.

came in better than expected and as some countries partly lifted restrictions.

Some Spanish businesses, including construction and manufacturing, were allowed to restart. Shops, bars and public spaces are to stay closed until at least April 26. Spain was flattening the

## 'Govt. support must for media'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW YORK

The UNESCO has said news media should be recognised and supported by all governments as an "essential service" to stop the COVID-19 spread of disinformation. It has urged governments "not to impose restrictions on freedom of expression that can harm the essential role of an independent press, but to recognise journalism as a power against disinformation..." said Guy Berger, Director for Freedom of Expression and Media Development, UNESCO.

curve on the graph, representing the rate of growth of the outbreak, Health Minister Salvador Illa said.

The overnight death toll rose to 567 on Tuesday from 517 a day earlier, but the country reported its slowest increase in new cases since March 18. Total deaths

climbed to 18,056.

Some workers expressed concern that the relaxation of restrictions could trigger a new surge. But for Roberto Aguayo, a 50-year-old Barcelona construction worker, the restart came just in time.

"We really needed it, just when we were going to run out of food we returned to work," he told Reuters.

Italy, which has the world's second highest death toll of 20,465, maintained some tight restrictions on movement.

Denmark will reopen day care centres and schools for children in first to fifth grade on April 15.

Thousands of shops across Austria reopened on Tuesday, but the government said it was "not out of the woods".

The death toll in U.K. rose to 12,107 on Monday. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has said there would be no easing of lockdown measures when they come up for review this week. The *Times* newspaper said on Tuesday he would extend them until at least May 7.

French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday extended lockdown till May 11.

**Russia may call in Army** Russia might need to call in the Army to help tackle the crisis, President Vladimir Putin said on Monday.

China's northeastern border province of Heilongjiang saw 79 imported cases on Monday, all Chinese citizens returning from Russia, State media said. Heilongjiang's provincial authority said on Tuesday it would reward citizens as much as 5,000 yuan (\$710) for handing over or reporting illegal immigrants.

# Testing time as Sri Lanka fights virus

Strategy includes contact-tracing, quarantining and breaking links, say officials

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

On Sri Lanka's Health Promotion Bureau portal, the total number of COVID-19 positive cases, updated in real time, was 219 on Tuesday evening. Of those, 151 are active.

Seven patients who contracted the virus have died, while 61 have recovered, according to the official bulletin. Compared to most other countries in the neighbourhood, the cases in Sri Lanka appear to be relatively under control, even as some within the medical community here call for more testing.

Sri Lanka reported the first case of coronavirus late January, when a visiting Chinese tourist tested positive. Weeks after the patient recovered and left the country, authorities reported the first confirmed case of a Sri Lankan national, a tour guide.

He tested positive on March 10, after he came in contact with a group of Italian tourists.

Since then, Sri Lanka is focused on detecting infections, referring identified patients for treatment to dedicated COVID-19 centres, senior officials from the Health Ministry said.

According to Dr. Deepa Gamage, consultant epidemiologist, Epidemiology Unit, Ministry of Health, the country's main strategy includes contact-tracing, quarantining exposed persons, an active case search among close contacts through testing at the appropriate time after exposure, follow-ups and breaking links from the index cases.

The current nationwide curfew, which came into effect on March 20, has proved crucial, in her view. "It helped the Health Ministry in controlling the community transmission and active



**Many fronts:** People maintaining physical distance outside a mobile ATM machine in Colombo. • REUTERS

curfew vs lockdown

Despite its said effectiveness, however, the curfew has raised concern. Lawyers have repeatedly questioned the legal basis for the curfew even as police continue arresting "violators" on a daily basis. The State-run *Sunday Observer* newspaper on Tuesday reported that as many as 26,600 persons have been arrested for allegedly violating curfew regulations since March 20, when President Gotabaya Rajapaksa announced the nationwide curfew.

Further, the strict curfew has meant that daily wage-earners, much like in India, have had little or no income for over three weeks.

*Ceylon Today*, an English daily, reported that on April 6, Jaffna police arrested 37 persons for entering town amid a curfew, claiming they didn't have food. This, while Sri Lanka's tea and garment exports and remittances from domestic workers abroad – all key foreign exchange earners – have been

hit very badly.

It is the apparent economic costs of the curfew, especially for Sri Lanka's poor, that worry social health experts such as Dr. Prasanna Cooray. "We saw how, when the curfew was lifted even briefly, people panicked and rushed to the shops, greatly increasing the risk of transmission. A lockdown, on the other hand, is a widely accepted time-tested public health approach to controlling a pandemic. It gives us time to build public awareness and confidence, and is more sustainable," he told *The Hindu*, adding that providing support and a steady supply of essentials would help the poor cope with the situation.

## Time to test more?

While arresting spread of the pandemic is one aspect, going forward, Sri Lanka would need to test a lot more than it is currently doing, argue public health experts and doctors, including the influential Government Medical Officer's Association (GMOA).

There is no official figure for the number of tests conducted so far, but Dr. Gamage at the Epidemiology Unit said the plan was to raise testing to about 1,500 a day in the coming weeks. Last week, Sri Lanka received a

donation of 20,000 testing kits from the China-based Alibaba Group's founder Jack Ma. "We have been very carefully implementing the strategy best suited for our country and our context, with existing limited resources," she said, adding that in the past week all symptomatic cases tested were negative.

Dr. Manuj C. Weerasinghe, head of Department of Community Medicine, University of Colombo, concurred: "People are misunderstanding the WHO's recommendation of test, test and test. It really depends on the context, and our resources. We cannot waste testing kits by testing more people arbitrarily. We have to reserve the tests for those linked to the clusters currently identified. So far Sri Lanka has effectively prevented leakage into community."

## Poll prospects?

Meanwhile, Health Minister Pavithra Wanniarachchi has said that if Sri Lanka's curfew is in place until April 19, the country could get "rid of COVID-19", the *Sunday Observer* reported. Government critics read the comment as a precursor to the general elections that President Rajapaksa earlier said would be held as per schedule, but was later postponed due to the pandemic.

"It is absurd to even think of elections now. How can we even predict when the infections will stop spreading?" asked Dr. Cooray, a former manager for South Asia, for the Global AIDS programme. "The election fever seems to have preceded the government's COVID response, as poll nominations went on from March 12-19, even as our first few cases were being reported."

# + Trump is not a king, says Cuomo

He slams President's claim of 'total' authority, says States can't be forced to reopen

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
NEW YORK

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo took to morning TV shows on Tuesday to push back against President Donald Trump's claim of "total" authority to reopen the nation's virus-stalled economy, noting that a President is not an absolute monarch.

"We don't have a king," Mr. Cuomo told NBC. "We have a President. That was a big decision. We ran away from having a king, and George Washington was President, not King Washington. So the President doesn't have total authority."

The Democratic Governor, whose State has become the epicentre of the COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S., was reacting to Mr. Trump's



Andrew Cuomo

assertion on Monday that "when somebody is President of the United States, the authority is total."

"Nope," Mr. Cuomo said.

## 'I wouldn't do it'

When asked on CNN's "New Day" what he would do if the Republican President ordered him to reopen New

York's economy, Mr. Cuomo said "If he ordered me to reopen in a way that would endanger the public health of the people of my State, I wouldn't do it. And we would have a constitutional challenge between the state and the federal government and that would go into the courts and that would be the worst possible thing he could do at this moment."

Mr. Trump made his comments in reaction to moves by governors on both coasts Monday to form multi-State compacts to coordinate reopening society amid the global pandemic.

More than 10,000 people in New York State have died from the coronavirus, Cuomo reported Monday.

New York City's overwhelmed 911 system is now seeing a more normal volume of medical calls, a sign the crisis could be ebbing and people are heeding messages to call only in a life-threatening emergency.

The fire department, which runs the city's EMS system, said it received 3,932 calls requesting ambulances on Sunday, down from a record high of 6,527 on March 30. The average volume last March and April was just over 4,000 calls.

Sunday was the sixth straight day that the city's medical call volume was lower than the previous day. Numbers for Monday will be released later Tuesday.

The fire department said it's too early to know exactly why volume has dropped.

overwhelmed 911 system is now seeing a more normal volume of medical calls, a sign the crisis could be ebbing and people are heeding messages to call only in a life-threatening emergency.

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# North Korea fires missiles ahead of elections in South

Move comes amid stalled N-talks, virus outbreak reports

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
SEOUL

A barrage of North Korean missiles fired from both the ground and fighter jets splashed down on the waters off the country's east coast on Tuesday, South Korea's military said, a show of force on the eve of a key State anniversary in the North and parliamentary elections in the rival South Korea.

The launches were the latest in a series of weapons tests that North Korea has conducted in recent weeks amid stalled nuclear talks and outside worries about a possible COVID-19 outbreak in the country.



A file photo of a cruise missile in Pyongyang, North Korea. • AP

North Korean troops based in the eastern coastal city of Munchon first launched several projectiles on Tuesday morning. The weapons flew more than 150 km at a low altitude off the

North's east coast, a South Korean defense official said. Later on Tuesday, North Korea launched several Sukhoi-class fighter jets that fired an unspecified number of air-to-surface missiles toward the North's eastern waters, the defence official said.

The launches came a day before North Korea marks the 108th birthday of the country's late founder, Kim Il-sung, the grandfather of Kim Jong-un. They also came a day ahead of South Korean parliamentary elections, in which President Moon Jae-in's liberal ruling party is expected to defeat the conservative opposition.

# China approves trials for two more vaccines

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BEIJING

China has approved clinical trials for two more experimental vaccines to combat the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), officials said Tuesday, as the world's scientists race to beat the pandemic.

China's state food and drug administration on Monday approved one vaccine developed by a Beijing-based unit of Nasdaq-listed Sinovac Biotech, said Wu Yuanbin, an official from China's Ministry of Science and Technology.

Another vaccine, being developed by the Wuhan Institute of Biological Products and the Wuhan Institute of Virology, was approved, he added.

## ELSEWHERE



## 'Barack Obama set to endorse Biden'

WASHINGTON  
Former President Barack Obama plans to endorse Joe Biden in a video on Tuesday, giving the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee a boost from the party's biggest fundraiser and one of its most popular figures. The move was confirmed by a person familiar with the situation, who requested anonymity. • AP

## ASEAN leaders meet online to tackle virus

HANOI  
In an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit held online on Tuesday, leaders of the virus-hit region warned of the crippling economic cost of COVID-19, calling for trade routes to reopen to protect jobs and food supplies, as well as the stockpiling of medical equipment. • AFP

# Sanders backs Biden in fight against Trump

Senator says greater priority for all Democrats should be defeating the President

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON

Bernie Sanders has endorsed Joe Biden's presidential campaign, encouraging his progressive supporters to rally behind the presumptive Democratic nominee in an urgent bid to defeat President Donald Trump.

"I am asking all Americans, I'm asking every Democrat, I'm asking every independent, I'm asking a lot of Republicans, to come together in this campaign to support your candidacy, which I endorse," the Vermont Senator said on Monday in a virtual event with Mr. Biden.

The backing came less than a week after Mr. Sanders ended his presidential campaign, which was centred around progressive policies such as universal health care. There were early signs that some leading progressives weren't ready to fully follow Mr. Sanders'



**Common goal:** A file photo of Joe Biden with Bernie Sanders, right, during the Democratic presidential debate in Iowa. • NYT

lead. And Mr. Trump's campaign was eager to use the endorsement to tie Mr. Biden more closely to Mr. Sanders, whose identity as a democratic socialist is objectionable to Republicans and some Democrats.

Still, Mr. Sanders' embrace of Biden was crucial for someone who is tasked with bridging the Democratic Party's entrenched ideological divides. Democratic disunity helped contribute

to Hillary Clinton's loss to Mr. Trump in 2016.

**Early endorsement**  
Perhaps eager to avoid a repeat of that bruising election year, Mr. Sanders offered his endorsement much earlier in the 2020 campaign. Mr. Sanders backed Ms. Clinton four years ago, but only after the end of a drawn-out nomination fight and a bitter dispute over the Democratic platform that extended to

the summer convention.

Mr. Biden and Mr. Sanders differed throughout the primary, particularly over whether a government-run system should replace private health insurance. Mr. Biden has resisted Mr. Sanders' 'Medicare for All' plan and has pushed instead a public option that would operate alongside private coverage.

Mr. Sanders said there's "no great secret out there that you and I have our differences".

But Mr. Sanders said the greater priority for Democrats of all political persuasions should be defeating Mr. Trump.

"We've got to make Trump a one-term President," he said. "I will do all that I can to make that happen."

The coronavirus prevented Mr. Biden and Mr. Sanders from appearing together in person. But they made clear they would continue

working together.

Mr. Biden, 77, has already made some overtures to progressives by embracing aspects of Mr. Sanders' and Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren's policies. The day after Mr. Sanders exited the race, Mr. Biden came out in support of lowering the Medicare eligibility age from 65 to 60 while pledging to cancel student debt for many low- and middle-income borrowers.

Mr. Trump's campaign, meanwhile, seized on Mr. Sanders' endorsement to underscore Mr. Biden's embrace of some of his plans. In a statement, Trump campaign manager Brad Parscale said that "though Bernie Sanders won't be on the ballot in November, his issues will be."

"Biden had to adopt most of Bernie's agenda to be successful in the Democrat primaries," Mr. Parscale said.

# McDonald's says sorry for 'racist' ban by China store

Sign said black people were not allowed

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BEIJING

U.S. chain McDonald's has apologised after a sign telling black people they were banned from entering a branch in southern China prompted outrage online, following reports of discriminatory treatment towards Africans in the city.

Tensions have flared between police and Africans in the southern metropolis of Guangzhou after local officials announced a cluster of COVID-19 cases in a neighbourhood with a large migrant population.

As the row escalated, posts widely shared online showed a sign at fast food chain McDonald's saying black people were not allowed to enter the restaurant.

The chain apologised and a spokesman said the notice was "not representative of our inclusive values".



Many Africans said they were forcibly evicted, and arbitrarily quarantined. • AP

In an emailed statement, McDonald's said it removed the sign and temporarily closed the Guangzhou restaurant "upon learning of an unauthorised communication to our guests".

Several Africans said they had been forcibly evicted by the police from their accommodation, were refused service at shops and restaurants, and were subject to mass testing and arbitrary quarantines.

## Clear MSME dues, Gadkari tells India Inc.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday asked India Inc. to clear huge outstanding payments to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) at the earliest in order to ease the distress in the sector and inject liquidity into the market.

In a discussion with senior industry members of FICCI via video conferencing, Mr. Gadkari also assured them of full cooperation from the government in restarting their enterprises after the lockdown is lifted. "We were earlier considering framing a law entailing stringent rules regarding such payments. However, now is not the right time for this. We do not wish to go down that road," the Minister said.

## RIL's ₹9,000-cr. NCD issue on April 16

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

To cash in on cheap funds flooding the debt market via targeted long-term repo operations (TLTRO) route, Reliance Industries (RIL) will raise ₹9,000 crore through an NCD sale to refinance the existing high-cost rupee debt.

RIL is sitting on a debt pile of over ₹1.54 lakh crore as of March 2020.

According to a filing, RIL is launching a ₹9,000-cr. NCD issue on April 16 and the proceeds will be used to repay existing rupee debt. If it raises the targeted ₹9,000 crore, it will be almost a tenth of the ₹1-lakh-crore liquidity the RBI promised to pump into the debt market via TLTRO.

# World economy to contract by 3%: IMF

India's growth projected to rebound to 7.4% in 2021 from 1.9% in 2020

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN  
CHENNAI

THE COVID-19 pandemic is having a 'severe' effect on the world economy which is expected to contract by 3% in 2020, "much worse" than the 2008-09 financial crisis, as per the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) World Economic Outlook (WEO).

India's growth is expected to dip to 1.9% in 2020 and rebound to 7.4% in 2021, as per the WEO released by the IMF on Tuesday. India's growth projection for 2020 is 3.9% less than what was projected in the January update to the WEO while its rebound in 2021 is 0.9% higher than the January projection (for India, forecasts are on a fiscal year basis). World growth rates have been revised downwards by more than six percentage points since the January WEO update.

"As countries implement



**Pack of cards:** Magnitude of collapse in activity is unlike anything seen in our lifetimes, says Gita Gopinath. • REUTERS

necessary quarantines and social-distancing practices to contain the pandemic, the world has been put in a great lockdown," the IMF's chief economist, Gita Gopinath, said in a statement. "The magnitude and speed of collapse in activity that has followed is unlike anything ex-

perienced in our lifetimes," she said.

Assuming the pandemic fades in the second half of this year, with containment efforts gradually easing up, the world economy is projected to grow at 5.8% in 2021 as economic activity normalises, aided by policy, the IMF

said. The recovery in 2021 is partial, Ms. Gopinath said, and below the pre-virus estimates for 2021.

"The cumulative loss to global GDP over 2020 and 2021 from the pandemic crisis could be around \$9 trillion, greater than the economies of Japan and Germany, combined," she said.

The global forecast is characterised by 'extreme uncertainty,' the IMF warned.

The economic impact of the disease depends on a number of factors and their unpredictable interaction, including the pandemic's pathway, the intensity and effectiveness of containment efforts, significant tightening of global financial market conditions and so forth.

"Necessary measures to reduce contagion and protect lives will take a short-term toll on economic activity but should also be seen as

an important investment in long-term human and economic health," the IMF said, calling on policymakers to make targeted fiscal, monetary and financial sector interventions to support impacted households and businesses. Fiscal measures should be two-fold, cushioning the impact on the most-exposed households and businesses and reducing firm closures, i.e., preserving economic relationships.

Emerging Asia is projected to be the only region that grows in 2020, at a rate of 1% — still more than 5 percentage points below the previous decade's average. In China, where the coronavirus's impacts were first recorded this year, the first quarter economic activity could have contracted by 8% year-on-year. China is projected to grow at 1.2% in 2020 and 9.2% in 2021.

## Gold at a 7-year high on economic concerns

Fed stimulus also propels prices

REUTERS

Gold prices rose to a more than seven-year high on Tuesday on rising fears of a steeper economic downturn and amid massive liquidity measures undertaken by global central banks.

Spot gold gained 0.6% to \$1,724.72 per ounce by 1.34 p.m. IST, having touched its highest since November 2012 at \$1,726.85 earlier in the session. U.S. gold futures rose 0.6% to \$1,772.20. "The concerns about the economic outlook are particularly supportive for gold. Liquidity (from the Federal Reserve) combined with the background of lower interest rates makes gold a much more attractive proposition," said Michael McCarthy, chief strategist at CMC Markets.

But he warned that in the absence of new news, there

could be "modest pull backs as investors and traders reposition themselves".

Reflecting appetite for bullion, holdings in SPDR Gold Trust, the world's largest gold-backed exchange-traded fund (ETF), rose 1.6% to 1,009.7 tonnes on Monday, the highest since June 2013.

**Safe haven**

"Gold as a safe-haven has gained traction as currencies are being devalued by massive stimulus programs. This has also increased physical demand of gold (such as ETFs) to hedge against the debasement of fiat currencies," said Avtar Sandu, a senior commodities manager at Phillip Futures, in a note.

Silver gained 0.6% to \$15.54 while platinum was up 2.5% to \$766.70.

## Welspun's Gujarat unit resumes operations

Company to scale up gradually

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Welspun Corp Ltd. on Tuesday said it has partially resumed operations at its plant in Anjar, Gujarat.

The company said it has resumed manufacturing of LSAW pipes at the facility. These pipes are used in the petroleum and natural gas industries.

"With the requisite permission granted by district administration at Anjar, we have partially resumed our operations at our plant at Anjar, with full compliance with the conditions of operation as stipulated in the permission to avoid any infection due to COVID-19," it



said. This is a partial restart, and operations will be scaled up gradually, the company said.

Welspun Corp Ltd. (WCL) is one of the world's leading welded line pipe manufacturers and the flagship company of the Welspun Group.

## Parekh for easing 90-day NPA deadline norm

Better to renegotiate payment timelines than getting into legal tangle of force majeure: HDFC chairman

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

HDFC Ltd. chairman Deepak Parekh has suggested a relaxation in non-performing assets (NPA) classification to a period of six months.

Instead of 90 days, a loan should be classified as NPA if repayment is due for 180 days, he said, speaking at a knowledge series webinar organised jointly by real estate industry bodies NAREDCO and CREDAI.

He also suggested that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) approve one-time restructuring of loans.

"It is a better solution to renegotiate payment timelines rather than getting into a legal tangle of force majeure. Unwinding from this



Realty developers should liquidate unsold inventory instead of going for costly borrowings, Mr. Parekh said. • PAUL NORONHA

legal mess will be very painful," he said.

Mr. Parekh also said despite the rate cut by RBI, bond yields had not fallen as the markets expected that the government would soon intervene for funding.

He also said since banks were averse to risks, recommendations had been made to the RBI to directly purchase corporate bonds/commercial papers, as primary markets had died down.

"All this, is for a short pe-

riod of time. RBI needs to act quickly," he said.

"We don't need to be gloomy. Firstly, we have enough foreign reserves. India is one of the top countries receiving foreign funds from NRIs. This helps to balance our currency," he said. Mr. Pa-

**COVID-19**

rek advised real estate developers to liquidate unsold inventory to generate funds rather than going for costly borrowings to deal with the COVID-19 crises.

As per a recent report by JLL, developers are sitting on unsold inventory worth ₹3,70,000 crore.

"A bit of compromise in

the prices by developers will revive the real estate sector on demand stimulus in the next six months. Buyers who are in liquidity should buy properties now and the inventories will be available on good price," Mr. Parekh was quoted as saying in a statement issued by the developers' bodies.

"Post the lockdown scenario, it won't be a situation where the entire work force would want to work from home. People would still need to meet others; so in the long run, the demand for commercial real estate will not evaporate," he said.

Mr. Parekh has asked State governments to waive stamp duty for a limited time period to help revive demand.

## India Inc. welcomes decision on lockdown extension

Expects stimulus measures to put industry back on track

PIYUSH PANDEY  
MUMBAI

Chiefs of India Inc. on Tuesday welcomed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to extend the lockdown in the country till May 3, 2020. Anil Agarwal, chairman, Vedanta Resources, in a tweet said, "As per our PM's address, if we all keep patience and follow the rules, we can defeat a pandemic like Corona. The country will stand together by 7 commitments sought by our Prime Minister."

Naveen Jindal, chairman of Jindal Steel and Power Limited (JSPL) said, "Lockdown till 3rd May is a well-thought out and much-needed plan in the wake of the threats posed by #COVID19. The PM's decision to moni-

tor the effectiveness of implementation and then gradually offer relaxations post April 20 must be welcomed." Pawan Munjal, chairman, Hero MotoCorp, said, "The decision to allow graded relaxation and partial opening of certain areas from April 21 that show improvement is also welcome. While continuing to play its role in supporting the government through various means and measures, Corporate India looks forward to a suitable stimulus package from the government that will give a boost to our economy."

"At Hero MotoCorp, we remain committed to extending our resources to support the government and also safeguarding everyone

in our larger ecosystem, including our employees and their families."

Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII, said, "The COVID-19 curve trajectory as of now required a fitting containment response and Prime Minister's decision for continuation of the lockdown is necessary to avert a larger humanitarian crisis. His attention to ensuring that harvesting of the rabi crop continues and to taking care of distressed persons is very appropriate." CII had submitted its recommendations targeted at providing relief specifically to MSMEs, to the government, and hopes that support measures would be announced for the industry to tide over the crisis.

## NFL ensuring unhindered supply of urea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The Centre on Tuesday said state-owned National Fertilizers Ltd. (NFL) is working at over 100% capacity and ensuring unhindered supply of urea to farmers during the lockdown, now extended till May 3, to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

NFL CMD Manoj Mishra said production at its five units is "going on in full swing," making more than 11,000 tonnes daily and dispatching them regularly to the market.

The nodal fertilizer ministry said NFL maintaining optimum operations of the plants in difficult times is a big success story, especially towards fulfilling the government's commitment to the farming community.

## Sanofi, GSK partner for COVID-19 shot

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Sanofi and GSK have signed a letter of intent to develop an adjuvanted vaccine for COVID-19.

Sanofi will contribute its S-protein COVID-19 antigen, which is based on recombinant DNA technology. This technology has produced an exact genetic match to proteins found on the surface of the virus, and the DNA sequence encoding this antigen has been combined into the DNA of the baculovirus expression platform, the basis of Sanofi's licensed recombinant influenza product in the U.S.

GSK will contribute its proven pandemic adjuvant technology which can reduce the amount of vaccine protein required per dose.

## Criminals use COVID-19 for phishing, says KPMG

Remote-working staff must be careful

MINI TEJASWI  
BENGALURU

COVID-19 pandemic has people worried, and with that concern comes an urgent need to keep data safe and secured. Organised crime gangs are exploiting this fear, uncertainty and doubts to target individuals and businesses in myriads of ways.

Many existing organised crime groups have changed their tactics to use COVID-19 related materials on health updates, fake cures, fiscal packages, emergency benefits and supply shortages.

Since mid-February, global professional network KPMG said in a paper, member-firms have seen the rapid build-out of infrastructure by cybercriminals to launch COVID-19-themed spear-phishing attacks.

These are aimed at luring the targets to fake websites seeking to collect Office 365 credentials.

KPMG cited the examples of campaigns, including COVID-19-themed phishing e-mails, attaching malicious Microsoft documents which exploit a known Microsoft vulnerability to run malicious code.

On safeguards, Akhilesh Tuteja, global cybersecurity practice co-leader and partner at KPMG India, said, "A firm must provide remote workers with clear guidance on how to use remote working solutions, including how to make sure they remain secure and tips on identification of phishing while calling to ensure that all provided laptops have up-to-date anti-virus and firewall software."

## Hindalco seals \$2.8 billion Aleris deal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Hindalco Industries Ltd. has completed the acquisition of Aleris Corporation by its wholly owned subsidiary Novelis Inc. for an enterprise value of \$2.8 billion.

The acquisition of the U.S.-based rolled products company, Aleris Corporation, positions Hindalco Industries as one of the world's largest aluminium companies, with a global footprint spanning 49 manufacturing facilities in North America, Europe and Asia.

"The closure of this deal amidst challenging market conditions, reflects our conviction in the Aleris business and its value to our metals portfolio," said Kumar Mangalam Birla, chairman, Aditya Birla Group.

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You may note that for a bank, the loans given by the bank is considered as its assets. So if the principle or the interest or both the components of a loan is not being serviced to the lender (bank), then it would be considered as a Non-Performing Asset (NPA). Any asset which stops giving returns to its investors for a specified period of time is known as Non-Performing Asset (NPA). Generally, that specified period of time is 90 days in most of the countries and across the various lending institutions. However, it is not a thumb rule and it may vary with the terms and conditions agreed upon by the financial institution and the borrower.

### Categories of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs)

Based upon the period to which a loan has remained as NPA, it is classified into 3 types:

Categories of NPAs	Criteria
Substandard Assets	An asset which remains as NPAs for less than or equal to 12 months.
Doubtful Assets	An asset which remained in the above category for 12 months.
Loss Assets	Asset where loss has been identified by the bank or the RBI, however, there may be some value remaining in it. Therefore loan has not been not completely written off.

The IMF, also known as the Fund, was conceived at a UN conference in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, United States, in July 1944.

The 44 countries at that conference sought to build a framework for economic cooperation to avoid a repetition of the competitive devaluations that had contributed to the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Countries were not eligible for membership in the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) unless they were members of the IMF.

IMF, as per Bretton Woods agreement to encourage international financial cooperation, introduced a system of convertible currencies at fixed exchange rates, and replaced gold with the U.S. dollar (gold at \$35 per ounce) for official reserve.

After the Bretton Woods system (system of fixed exchange rates) collapsed in the 1971, the IMF has promoted the system of floating exchange rates. Countries are free to choose their exchange arrangement, meaning that market forces determine the value of currencies relative to one another. This system continues to be in place today.

During 1973 oil crisis, IMF estimated that the foreign debts of 100 oil-importing developing countries increased by 150% between 1973 and 1977, complicated further by a worldwide shift to floating exchange rates. IMF administered a new lending program during 1974–1976 called the Oil Facility. Funded by oil-exporting nations and other lenders, it was available to nations suffering from acute problems with their balance of trade due to the rise in oil prices.

IMF was one of the key organisations of the international economic system; its design allowed the system to balance the rebuilding of international capitalism with the maximisation of national economic sovereignty and human welfare, also known as embedded liberalism.

The IMF played a central role in helping the countries of the former Soviet bloc transition from central planning to market-driven economies.

In 1997, a wave of financial crises swept over East Asia, from Thailand to Indonesia to Korea and beyond. The International Monetary Fund created a series of bailouts (rescue packages) for the most-affected economies to enable them to avoid default, tying the packages to currency, banking and financial system reforms.

Global Economic Crisis (2008): IMF undertook major initiatives to strengthen surveillance to respond to a more globalized and interconnected world. These initiatives included revamping the legal framework for surveillance to cover spill-overs (when economic policies in one country can affect others), deepening analysis of risks and financial systems, stepping up assessments of members' external positions, and responding more promptly to concerns of the members.

## Music from the string quartet that raised the level of Indian cricket

Technically sound and blessed with imagination, Prasanna, Venkat, Chandra and Bedi were so different, yet so similar



**BETWEEN WICKETS**  
SURESH MENON

India have had more successful spinners since the last of the spin quartet played his final Test in the 1980s; two of them, Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh have claimed more wickets than the four of them put together in nearly the same number of Tests combined. Yet, the quartet had a romance and a vulnerability that has ensured their charm has wafted over generations.

Three of the four celebrate significant milestones over the next few weeks. The oldest (and possibly craftiest), Erapalli Prasanna turns 80 next month, five days after his Karnataka teammate Bhagwat Chandrasekhar turns 75. Srinivas Venkatraghavan turns 75 too – next week, in fact. The baby of the lot, Bishan Bedi celebrates his 74th birthday in September.

### Winning combination

From January 1962, when Prasanna made his debut, till September 1983 when Venkatraghavan played his final Test, one or more of the quartet played in 98 matches. India won 23 of them. Which was huge for a team which had won only seven of their preceding 76 Tests.

Till they came along, India had not won a Test abroad, in Dunedin, 1968. Three years later, Venkatraghavan's five for 95 was India's best in Port-of-Spain as they beat the West Indies for the first time. Chandrasekhar's six for 38 wrapped up the Oval Test and the series in England.

When India beat Australia for the first time, Chandrasekhar had figures of six for 52 and six for 52 in Melbourne in 1977-78. The only player to be a part of all these teams was Bedi who claimed 16 wickets in those victory Tests.

**Poetry in motion**  
To speak of the finest only in terms of numbers does them a disservice; it somehow diminishes the sport too.

Those who never saw Bedi bowl missed one of the great sights of the game. It wasn't just poetry in motion, it was a specific kind of poetry – a love sonnet perhaps, where you had to display the beauty, splendour, longing, and sheer allure of the form within a specific number of lines. Discipline is an unacknowledged companion of artistry; here art cannot lose sight of its objective: to take wickets.



**Legends of spin:** The craft and feats of geniuses B.S. Chandrasekhar, Bishan Singh Bedi, E.A.S. Prasanna and S. Venkatraghavan continue to fascinate cricket aficionados. \*FILE PHOTO: SUSHANTA PATRONIBISH

Shorter than the others, Prasanna flighted the ball more and made it do things in the air that seemed to indicate he had it on a string and could make it dance.

It is said of the best batsmen that they own the 22 yards they play on. Prasanna owned the air above the 22 yards, inviting batsmen to step out only to realise the ball hasn't reached, or to play back to an innocuous-looking delivery only to have it crash through.

**Unpredictable**  
Chandrasekhar was a law unto himself, although that sounds far too aggressive for this most gentle of men ("I see god in Chandra," Bedi once said). When he was on song

(literally, as he loved to hum his friend the playback singer Mukesh's best), he was well nigh unplayable. Viv Richards has said that the only bowler who gave him nightmares was Chandra.

One of the great cricketing occasions of the time was Chandra bowling to a full house at the Eden Gardens and the crowd going 'bowled' in step with his run-up. He claimed 35 wickets against England in 72-73, which remains an Indian record for the most wickets in a series.

Chandrasekhar often said he just needed a slip and short legs – the others could field wherever they wanted.

"When I am bowling well, the catches go there; if I am bowling

badly, 22 fielders wouldn't be enough." Self-deprecatory humour was a speciality; yet that said something about the man. He was self-contained to a degree unusual in international sportsmen, seldom needing others for his own validation.

### Astute and versatile

Had Venkatraghavan, tall and spare, been born a generation earlier or later, he might have been a long-term captain of India, and one of the best.

He is a student of the game, something he emphasised when he returned as an umpire for 73 Tests after bowling off spin in 57. His reserve was mistaken for aloofness. But in a closed group he was unguarded, funny and had sharp views on most things. He was in the classical mould and bowled a mean leg-cutter.

For such a passionate cricket man, Venkatraghavan had time for other interests too. Classical music, history – he was the one player to visit Mohenjo-daro on India's tour of Pakistan – and in the early days, movies.

He was too the fittest of the four, a brilliant catcher at gully, and had a first class century to his name.

Four men, so different, yet so similar; technically sound, and blessed with imagination. Generous too. Coming together at roughly the same time to lift Indian cricket to a level we now take for granted.

... have been training really hard," said the 10th standard student, who has the privilege of continuing her daily routine at home, thanks to the shooting range and gym set up by father-cum-coach Sachin Singh.

"I do believe that I have a chance to realise my dream of making it to the Olympics if the trials are held again,"

... no fear of competitions. It is fun shooting now with no pressure," said Esha.

What about ammunition? "We normally buy ammunition for the whole year. When the stock got over this February, my father purchased the next year's quota and hence there are no issues on this front," she said.

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Indian Institute of Technology Palakkad invites applications for the following Non-Teaching positions:

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Candidates with requisite qualification and experience may apply online. The online portal for applications will be active from 0900 hrs on 20 April 2020 onwards. Eligibility criteria regarding age, qualification, experience and instructions to the candidates are available in the website <https://iitpkd.ac.in>.

**Last date for receipt of completed application ONLINE is May 15, 2020.**

**REGISTRAR**