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## NEARBY



**Rich people brought COVID-19, says Edappadi**  
CHENNAI  
Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Thursday said that it was the rich who "imported" COVID-19 by visiting foreign countries and other States. "Where did the poor get this [COVID-19]?"

**TAMIL NADU** ▶ PAGE 2

**Free rice for Ramzan feast in mosques**  
CHENNAI  
The State government will deliver 5,450 tonnes of raw rice to 2,895 mosques by April 19 for Ramzan. The mosques will distribute the rice among people, Chief Secretary K. Shanmugam said.

**TAMIL NADU** ▶ PAGE 2

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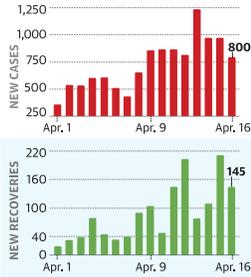
**FRIDAY REVIEW** ▶ 4 PAGES

# Fresh cases rise by over 800; govt. pegs fatality rate at 3.3%

420 deaths recorded; 1,541 patients recover; active cases estimated at 10,824

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**  
India registered over 800 COVID-19 positive cases on Thursday, with the tally touching 12,759 cases and 420 deaths. These include over 10,824 active cases. A total of 1,541 people have been cured and discharged and one had migrated. The total number of cases include 76 foreign nationals. The Health Ministry noted that India's case fatality rate is 3.3% and percentage of people recovered is 12.02.

**Status check**  
The Indian Council of Medical Research said over 3 lakh samples from over 2.8 lakh individuals were tested as of Thursday. The graph depicts India's new cases and recoveries from April 1



**Peeking out:** A family looks on during police patrol in Khanmam in Telangana on Thursday. • GUN RAO

**COVID-19**  
According to reports from the State Health Departments, the total number of COVID-19 cases in India are 13,339, of which 11,289 are active ones. A total of 452 people have died of the disease. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has said the rapid testing kit is not for diagnosis but for surveillance, especially in hotspots.

A total of 3,02,956 samples from 2,86,714 individuals have been tested as on Thursday. "We are not testing less" "Working in one shift, more than 42,400 samples can be tested per day; if we work in two shifts, we will be able to test more than 78,200 samples per day," said ICMR spokesperson R.R. Gangakhedkar. Refuting allegation that India is not conducting enough coronavirus tests,

the ICMR said, "India tests 24 people for one positive case, while Japan tests 11.7, Italy 6.7 and the U.S. tests 5.3. So, one cannot say that India is testing less." The spokesperson confirmed that India has on Thursday received 5 lakh rapid test kits for COVID-19 from China. "These have a sensitivity of over 80% and are serology kits which is not to be used for early diagnosis but for surveillance purpose, especially in hotspots," said Dr. Gangakhedkar.

He added that there was no need to be concerned over the efficacy of the rapid antibody testing kits. "If an antibody test of a person turns out to be positive, one cannot necessarily be sure the person would not get infected ever again. This means, even if antibody is present, that doesn't mean it will necessarily be effectively able to fight the virus."

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# Mumbai runs out of beds in ICUs, patients suffer

200 beds for intensive treatment under COVID-19 pressure

**JYOTI SHEKHAR MUMBAI**  
A 42-year-old Unani practitioner from Mumbai's Govandi area with severe breathlessness, diarrhoea and failing kidney function had to wait nearly 30 hours to get an Intensive Care Unit bed with dialysis facility. By the time he got it on Thursday morning at the SL Raheja Hospital in Mahim, his condition was critical.



**Mounting vigil:** A doctor taking a swab of a resident at Kalyan Wadi in Dharavi on Thursday. • VIJAY BATE

The family's ordeal continued even after getting a bed as no ambulance was ready to ferry a patient who had potentially been exposed to SARS-CoV-2 exposure. "One driver eventually agreed but he said that we cannot use the bi-level positive airway pressure (BiPAP) machine [for intensive breathing assistance] from his ambulance. So, we took the risk and shifted him merely on oxygen support," said the patient's brother.

Nearly 40 days after the SARS-CoV-2 hit Mumbai, the city's health infrastructure is crumbling with persons suffering from other diseases scurrying for beds. The city has 1,900 isolation beds and nearly 200 ICU beds. The city reported its first positive case on March 11. On Thursday, the total number of cases had gone up to 2,073, and the death toll in the city to 117.

In another case, a 49-year-old man from Agripada who was admitted to the Kasturba Hospital died on Wednesday night waiting for a better facility. "We tried at least five hospitals, including Seven Hills and Saifee, but none had any vacant ICU beds," said Samajwadi Party legislator Rishi Shaikh who was helping the family.

**CONTINUED ON** ▶ PAGE 8

# All residents of Indore set to be screened for COVID-19

Fatality rate shot up to 12%, the highest in the country

**SIDHARTH YADAV BHOPAL**  
As Indore grapples with a high fatality rate from COVID-19, the city administration is surveying all residents for Influenza-Like Illness and Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARIs) to check the spread of the novel coronavirus. The rate had shot up to 12% recently, the highest in the country.



**Making amends:** Residents of Tatpatti Bakhhal in Indore apologising for the attack on health workers recently. • PTI

U.S. based Zoom video communication has seen an exponential rise in usage in India as office-goers remain at home owing to the present lockdown. The software used in the online platform is said to be made in China and some calls were being routed through servers in China. The Cyber Coordination Centre of the MHA issued a set of guidelines for its safe usage. It was not for use by government officials and officials, the MHA noted.

Of the 28 lakh residents of the largest and most populous city of Madhya Pradesh, health workers have already screened seven lakh. The rest will be surveyed in five days. With 707 COVID-19 cases as of Thursday, Indore has the third highest number of cases in the country, after Mumbai and New Delhi. With most patients having no contact or travel history, health workers are yet to locate the source of the outbreak. In the past four days, the number of cases grew by

Most of the 39 people who died in the city suffered from bilateral pneumonia, which worsened to Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome that caused the death. The novel coronavirus hastened the process. "Most of those who died had not revealed their illnesses before. They reached us very late carrying a heavy viral load, their lungs severely affected," Chief Medical Health Officer Pravin Jadia said.

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## Life as usual



**Daily grind:** Migrant labourers working at a brick kiln in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh despite the COVID-19 lockdown. Workers in this remote village are yet to get any government aid. • B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

# 25 fresh COVID-19 cases in T.N.

CM hopeful of further decline in new cases in days to come

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI**  
A total of 25 patients tested positive for COVID-19 on Thursday, taking the overall tally to 1,267 in Tamil Nadu, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami said.



**A jumbo message:** A model of an elephant with a mask is taken around Chennai to create awareness about prevention of COVID-19. • B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

The State has now reported under 40 new COVID-19 cases for the third consecutive day. At a press conference in the Secretariat, Mr. Palaniswami maintained that Tamil Nadu was still in Stage-2 and hoped that fresh COVID-19 cases would decline. "Some 150 persons have returned home after medical treatment. In the next few days, positive cases would become negative cases and we hope to see them return home," he said. The spread of the pandemic "has reduced" due to the efforts taken by the State government, he said, and added that COVID-19 continued to pose a "major challenge" for Tamil Nadu. A total of 15 persons had died due to COVID-19 in the

State, including one death on Thursday. Tamil Nadu could now undertake 5,590 tests a day at its 27 testing labs, he said. Asked about the delay in procuring rapid test kits from China, Mr. Palaniswami said that his government had been continuously taking steps to get them. "None of the States in the country has received the kits so far," he added. Mr. Palaniswami also rejected the Opposition par-

ties' claim that the State government had not geared up in advance to procure medical equipment. He said orders had been placed to procure over 5 lakh rapid test kits though the State had sufficient stock of medical equipment. Listing out efforts being taken by his government, he also rejected the claim of the Opposition parties that there was a rise in the prices of vegetables.

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# Seafarers may return in three phases

**JAGRITI CHANDRA NEW DELHI**  
The government is working on a plan to allow seafarers to return to India in three phases.

This includes allowing mariners on ships that are already at Indian ports to disembark when the lockdown is partially eased on April 20. The standard operating procedure to facilitate return of seafarers is likely to be finalised by Friday, a top source at the Shipping Ministry told *The Hindu*. "In the first phase, we will allow seamen on ships docked at the Indian ports to disembark and sign off. In the second phase, those on ships in deep sea will be allowed to return by sea. And in the final stage, we will permit those who have disembarked from their ships and signed off in a foreign country," the source said.

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# Army special trains to meet operational needs on borders

Fresh orders issued on work in compliance with lockdown

**DINAKAR PERI NEW DELHI**  
To meet the operational requirements on the northern and eastern borders during the lockdown period, the Army has decided to run two military special trains on April 17 and 18, Army sources said on Thursday.



Only the personnel providing essential services have been allowed to move.

Separately, the Army issued fresh instructions to personnel on work and movement in compliance with the extended lockdown. "Only personnel due to rejoin units deployed on the northern and eastern borders and have undergone the mandatory quarantine period and found medically fit will be accommodated," a source said. The train on April 17 would run between Bengaluru-Belgaum-Secunderabad-Ambala-Jammu and the one the next day would run between Bengaluru-Belgaum-Secunderabad-Gopalpur.

With lockdown extended till May 3, the Army issued separate instructions to personnel up to April 19 and from then to May 3. As per the instructions, all military establishments, cantonments, formation headquarters and units would observe strict "No Movement" till April 19, the sources said. Only personnel connected with provision of essential services would be allowed to move. A second source said that within the Army headquarters, only Military Operations, Military Intelligence, operational logistics and strategic movement branches would function to carry out operational and COVID-19 related tasks while keeping the duration of the stay and strength at bare minimum. All other branches have been asked to work from home till April 19.

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**  
There is some relief for air travellers as the government on Thursday asked airlines to refund air fares instead of blocking passengers' money in credit shells. But this will benefit only those who booked flight after the lockdown came into force three weeks ago for travel post April 14. "If a passenger has booked a ticket during the first lockdown period and the airline has received the payment for booking of air ticket during the first lockdown period (March 25 to April 14) for travel during the second lockdown period (April 15-May 3) for both domestic and international air travel, the airline shall refund the full amount with levy of cancellation charges," said an order issued by the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

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# 62 persons discharged after treatment at various hospitals

In all, 180 persons cured so far; testing facility opened in Kanniyakumari

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

	Until April 9	April 10	April 11	April 12	April 13	April 14	April 15	April 16	Total
Cases reported	834	77	58	106	98	31	38	25	1,267
Recovered and discharged	27	17	0	6	8	23	37	62	180
Deceased	8	1	1	1	0	1	2	1	15

Persons tested		People under monitoring		Districts with maximum cases	
17,835	21,410	34,841	24,061	Chennai	217
Active cases	Discharged	In home quarantine	In quarantine facilities	Coimbatore	127
1,110	118	1,876	107	Tiruppur	80
1,072	180	1,882	41	Erode	70
				Dindigul	65

\*Changes in 24 hours ■ As on April 15, 2020, 6 p.m. ■ As on April 16, 2020, 6 p.m.

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI**

On Thursday, 62 persons who had tested positive for coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and underwent treatment in various hospitals, were discharged across the State. This took the number of patients discharged after treatment to 180.

This included five persons — four residents of Chennai and one from Kancheepuram — who were discharged from Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital.

Of the 25 persons who tested positive for COVID-19

## COVID-19

on Thursday, five persons (all contacts of COVID-19 patients) were from Namakkal. Three persons each from Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Vellore and Chennai, two from Salem and one person each from Villupuram, Coimbatore, Tiruppur, Tirunelveli, Tiruvallur and Thanjavur reported positive, according to the bulletin issued by the Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine.

Chennai accounted for 217 positive cases, while Coimbatore had 127 cases. Tiruppur had 80 patients, while there were 70 patients in Erode.

### Testing facility

With the addition of a testing facility at Government Kanniyakumari Medical College Hospital, the State has 27 laboratories — 17 in government and 10 in private.

So far, 26,005 samples were sent for testing in the State.

Apart from the 1,267 persons who tested positive,

18,743 samples returned negative. While 4,595 samples were repeat samples of the same patients, testing of 1,400 samples were under process.

A total of 75,421 persons have completed 28-day home quarantine till date. Another 24,061 persons were under active home quarantine and 41 persons were in government quarantine facilities.

A total of 1,882 persons suspected to have symptoms of COVID-19 were admitted to isolation wards in various hospitals.

# Committee formed to work out an exit strategy

Panel's report will guide govt.'s action after April 20

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI**

The State government on Thursday constituted an expert committee to formulate guidelines for a phased exit from the restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 lockdown in the State. Whatever action the State government takes after April 20 and once the lockdown is lifted will be guided by the panel's report.

Senior IAS officer and Finance Secretary S. Krishnan will head the 18-member committee, which will "consult stakeholders and generate suggestions" before submitting a report to the government on the way forward.

At a press conference, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami said the committee will identify industries that could be allowed to operate after April 20, within the norms laid down by the Centre, and submit a report. After getting permission from the Centre, the State government will take a final call, he added.

"In order to revive the economy and provide a livelihood to the large number



A civic worker spraying disinfectant on a street in Coimbatore on Thursday. ■ M. PERIASAMY

of families that have been deprived of their income due to the prohibitory orders, it is essential to plan for a phased removal of restrictions, taking into account the impact of COVID-19 and its trend," a Government Order issued by Chief Secretary K. Shanmugam said. Besides the Secretaries of the Revenue, Law, Health, Industries, MSMEs, Housing, School and Higher Education and Transport departments, the committee comprises the Director-General of Police, the Director of Public Health and representatives from the Indian Medical Association,

the Private Nursing Home Board, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

Former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Madras S.P. Thyagarajan and former Chennai Corporation City Health Officer Guhanandam are also part of the committee.

Officials indicated to *The Hindu* that the exit strategy was going to be a "long-haul exercise", and a balance had to be attained to contain the spread of the virus and revive the economy at the same time.

## Rich people brought COVID-19 to State: CM

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI**

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Thursday said that it was the rich who "imported" COVID-19 by visiting foreign countries and other States.

Asked whether the government had been considering granting any solatium to families of those who died of COVID-19, Mr. Palaniswami said: "Only the rich have got this disease. Where did the poor get this [COVID-19]? It was them [the rich] who brought this."

He said: "One could talk freely with the poor and there is fear only on seeing the rich. Because they visited foreign countries and imported the disease."

"Also, many persons visited other States and there is a disease here because of that," Mr. Palaniswami said.

"However, it did not originate from here," the Chief Minister added.

## IN BRIEF

### Indonesian nationals sent to Puzhal jail

SIXTEEN persons, including 11 Indonesian nationals, were sent to Puzhal prison from Salem for judicial remand on Thursday. The Salem city police recently charged 11 Indonesian nationals and five local contacts under seven sections based on a complaint of Village Administrative Officer of Kitchipalayam for indulging in religious preaching violating visa norms.

### Hate campaign worrying: Prince of Arcot

THE Prince of Arcot Nawab Mohammed Abdul Ali, has expressed serious concern over the rising communal hatred across the country. In a statement, Nawab Abdul Ali said such hate campaigns had resulted in businesses run by Muslims being boycotted. He commended DGP J.K. Tripathy for his strict instructions to senior police officers to initiate action against those spreading "communal hatred".

### Paramakudi, Kilakarai come under scanner

AT LEAST 7,500 houses in Paramakudi and another 7,000 in Kilakarai came under heightened medical surveillance after seven persons tested positive for COVID-19 virus. District Collector K. Veera Raghava Rao told reporters here on Thursday that the COVID-19 patients, who were under treatment at Sivaganga Government Medical College Hospital were recovering. Two persons were discharged on Wednesday.

### Alagiri welcomes High Court ruling

TAMIL Nadu Congress Committee president K.S. Alagiri welcomed the Madras High Court order allowing various organisations, volunteers to distribute food and other relief material during the lockdown. Mr. Alagiri said the High Court's directions made it clear that the government had banned voluntary distribution of food due to political vendetta.

### Stay at home to be safe, Ramadoss urges youth

PMK founder S. Ramadoss on Thursday urged the people and youth to stay at home during the extended period of lockdown till May 3 for the sake of their own interest as well as public interest. In a statement, he expressed concern over reports of people gathering in huge numbers in market places and roaming about on streets without maintaining physical distancing.

# Ramzan: mosques to get free rice

Chief Secretary holds meeting to discuss modalities

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI**

The State government will deliver 5,450 tonnes of raw rice to 2,895 mosques across the State by April 19 for the Ramzan feast and the mosques will distribute the rice directly among beneficiaries at their homes, Chief Secretary K. Shanmugam said.

The Chief Secretary held a meeting with Muslim leaders and the Chief Kazi Salahuddin Mohammed Ayub at the Secretariat to work out modalities of rice distribution and the Ramzan feast traditionally held at mosques.

Following the meeting, Mr. Shanmugam said the government will ensure that the raw rice will reach the mosques by April 19, and the mosques will distribute the rice in small packets to the doorsteps of the beneficiaries.

The government held meetings with various Muslim organisations as well in the past two days. During the interaction with the re-



K. Shanmugam

presentatives of the organisations, some put forth the view that the mosques will prepare rice gruel and distribute it to the beneficiaries.

"We explained to them that this would require movement of vessels, rice gruel every day to the beneficiaries' homes. This would require movement of volunteers every day and increase the chances of contracting the disease. Hence, we requested them to provide rice to beneficiaries once at their doorsteps," he said.

It was accepted by everyone and the decision was

## SDPI moves HC

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI**

The Madras High Court on Thursday directed the Centre as well as the State government to respond to a public interest litigation petition which sought to restrain media houses which "communalise" the spread of COVID-19 by using terms such as "Corona Jihad", "Corona terrorism", "Islamic Insurrection" and "Corona bombs".

Justices R. Subbiah and R. Pongjiappan ordered notices on the petition filed by ASA, Umar Farooq, State general secretary of Social Democratic Party of India.

unanimous. The Muslim organisations can take the help of volunteers to deliver the rice at the doorstep and complete the process by April 22, Mr. Shanmugam added.

# Lockdown deepens farm labour shortage

Govt. adopting multi-pronged strategy to address issue: official

**T. RAMAKRISHNAN CHENNAI**

The extended lockdown has aggravated the problem of labour shortage in farm sector.

K.S. Subramanian, director of research & NABARD chair, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, said the government was

adopting a multi-pronged strategy to address the problem of manpower shortage.

**Painful experience**

As for the general impact of the lockdown on farmers raising other crops, Mr. Subramanian pointed out that banana farmers had abandoned fruits in the fields or sold them at throwaway prices. It was also "painful" to see watermelons being dumped on roadsides, he said.

He said that farmers

should take advantage of the infrastructure available by using cold storage in districts. If efforts are intensified for procuring the entire produce, keeping it under cold storage and selling it through regulated market, it will offer "reasonable prices" for both farmers and consumers, he added.

Meanwhile, the TNAU has designated 23 faculty members and assigned them to different districts for advising farmers, according to an official release.

## FROM PAGE ONE

# 25 fresh COVID-19 cases in T.N., says CM

"The State government has kept the prices of vegetables in control for the benefit of the needy and the poor," Mr. Palaniswami assured.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Palaniswami chaired a video-conference meeting with District Collectors to take stock of the situation.

Hitting out at DMK president M.K. Stalin for criticism against the AIADMK government, Mr. Palaniswami said the Opposition leader could not accept the fact

that the State government had efficiently tackled the pandemic.

Mr. Palaniswami questioned the steps taken by the 38 Lok Sabha MPs of the DMK and its allied parties in getting financial assistance from the Centre. Unlike other States where there was political unity in the face of adversity, "only in Tamil Nadu, there are parties that do not cooperate with the government even during these times," he claimed.

# Officials to keep an eye on migrant labourers

**DENNIS S. JESUDASAN CHENNAI**

In the wake of Tuesday's incident when hundreds of persons landed at the Bandra railway station in Mumbai, the Tamil Nadu government has instructed officials to remain vigilant.

Chief Secretary K. Shanmugam has issued a communication to all District Collectors directing them to remain vigilant to any mass movement of migrant labourers towards transport terminuses.

A senior government official said: "District Collectors have been asked to ensure

# Protocol in place for pregnant patients

Separate isolation rooms allocated to each of the II women: Beela Rajesh

**SERENA JOSEPHINE M. CHENNAI**

Eleven pregnant women have tested positive for coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in State till now. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of hospitals have earmarked separate facilities for pregnant women with suspected symptoms or confirmed COVID-19, and have rolled out protocols for management of pregnant women.

Health Secretary Beela Rajesh said so far, 11 pregnant women had tested positive for COVID-19 in the State and were admitted in COVID-19 designated hospitals.

Of them, two mothers have delivered babies.

The official said there were protocols in place for management of pregnant women in the COVID-19 pandemic, both State-specific and recommendation of the Indian Council of Medical Research was being followed.

Separate single isolation



The Institute of Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Chennai.

room/labour room is allocated for each of the women admitted in COVID-19 designated hospitals.

The Health Department, in March, identified 1.5 lakh pregnant women who had their expected date of deliveries in these two months. Of these, nearly 35,000 women had been delivered of babies.

All the identified women were followed up by village health nurses.

At two of the government maternity hospitals in Chennai — Government Kasturba Gandhi Hospital for Women and Children, Triplicane, and Institute of Obstetrics and Gynaecology and Hospi-

tal for Women and Children, Egmore — doctors said separate facilities were earmarked for pregnant women reporting with fever. There were fewer clinics and separate wards, labour rooms, operation theatres and intensive care units for pregnant women with suspected symptoms and confirmed COVID-19. Required safety kits such as personal protective equipment and N95 masks were available.

**Extra care**

A senior obstetrician said pregnant women do not appear to have a greater chance of getting sick from COVID-19 than the general public. Unlike Influenza (A/H1N1), COVID-19 did not pose a high risk to pregnant mothers. Still, it was important to stay safe. "We screen women with suspected symptoms of COVID-19, quarantine or isolate them in hospitals. If she tests positive, we need to follow all safety protocols," she said.

N.S. Kanimozhi, senior

obstetrician and gynaecologist, Cloumine Hospitals, said, "Teleconsultation during the antenatal period is good but we have to mandatorily see some of these expectant mothers. Many of them have invariably gone into stress due to concerns such as reaching hospital on time. We are seeing instances of intrauterine growth restrictions," she said.

If a pregnant woman tests positive, she could deliver mostly through a caesarean section under spinal anaesthesia without allowing for a longer period of labour, she said.

Deepa Hariharan, senior neonatologist, Sooriya Hospital, said if a mother tested positive for COVID-19, she can wear a mask, wash hands and express milk.

"An unaffected member of the family can feed the expressed milk to the baby. This is the recommendation in the Indian setting whereas in some centres in China, they were giving donor milk to the babies," she said.

# Political parties, officials come to grips with technology

State units of Congress, BJP first off the block

**DENNIS S. JESUDASAN T.K. ROHIT CHENNAI**

With the COVID-19 lockdown forcing people indoors, political parties and State government offices are now getting used to holding virtual meetings, sometimes with hilarious initial consequences, as people figure out how these apps work. Political parties, especially, face such a challenge as their cadre on the ground are not familiar with such technology.

The Tamil Nadu Congress Committee and the BJP units seem to have embraced this change quickly during the lockdown.

While the Congress held a meeting of its district presidents, MPs, MLAs, and other wings of the party, with their State president K.S. Alagiri on April 6, the BJP took to video conferencing from the day Section 144 was imposed in the State.

"It was a big challenge, bringing everyone together at a specific time. The meeting with Mr. Alagiri started at



The BJP workers have been finding it easy to embrace video-conferencing. ■ M. SRINATH

11.30 a.m. and continued till 3.45 p.m. Initially, the challenge was to teach our people how to use the app. So, we had a test run for two days with various people in our party so that we were prepared for the meeting on April 6. Since some of our leaders are also quite elderly, they had to be taught how to use the app, and some of them have only normal mobile phones, not smartphones. So, those issues had to be fixed." Lakshminathan, IT cell chairman, TNCC, told *The Hindu*.

**'Big success'**

Mr. Lakshminathan said the meeting was a big success as more than 120 members, including MPs and MLAs, participated. "For

some, it was emotional, as they were able to see many of their fellow party cadre in one place for the first time since the lockdown was imposed," he said.

The BJP, however, has found the going a bit easy as the party had leveraged the potential of video conferencing with Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing cadre and holding meetings through this way regularly.

**Govt. departments**

In the State Secretariat too, a few departments have already taken to the video conferencing app.

"It's not just Ministers holding VC [video conferencing] with officials in remote locations. Even the lower rung of the Secretariat staff has joined the bandwagon already," a Section Officer said.

But what do they discuss when the State is in a lockdown? "Many of our projects with funds to be sanctioned from the Centre have to be finalised," the officer said.

Santhosh Babu, Chairman & Managing Director, Tamil Nadu Handicrafts Development Corporation Ltd, said he was already holding virtual meetings with staff members.





The GCC is a political and economic alliance of countries in the Arabian Peninsula.

It was established in 1981 to foster socioeconomic, security, and cultural cooperation. Members of GCC: United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait.

# Karnataka reports spurt in COVID-19 cases

One more death in Bengaluru, Kerala prepares to open two districts for restricted activity, 9 test positive in A.P.

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
BENGALURU/VIJAYAWADA/THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/CHENNAI  
A total of 36 new COVID-19 cases – the biggest jump in a day in Karnataka so far – were reported on Thursday. North Karnataka accounted for 28 of them, and the day's numbers pushed up the State tally to 315.

One more patient succumbed to COVID-19 taking the toll to 13. The Department of Health and Family Welfare said the 66-year-old man from Bengaluru died on Wednesday. The patient was admitted to Victoria hospital and was on ventilator support since April 10, after being referred from a private hospital.

**Spurt in Belagavi**  
Belagavi district in North Karnataka, with 17 cases, accounted for 47% of the cases reported on Thursday, followed by Vijayapura, with seven cases. Five cases were reported from Bengaluru and three each from Kalaburagi and Mysuru. There was one case from Gadag district.

Primary and Secondary Education Minister S. Suresh

Kumar said that the number of positive cases in Belagavi and Vijayapura was on the rise. "In Vijayapura, all of the 17 cases are reported from two families," he said.

Of Thursday's 36 positives, five of the cases were less than 16 years old and six were senior citizens. While the majority had come into contact with positive patients, some patients with a history of domestic travel also tested positive.

A total of 82 patients had been discharged as on Thursday. The most number of active cases were in Mysuru at 49, followed by 38 in Bengaluru Urban and 35 in Belagavi.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday said Kottayam and Idukki districts would take their first steps towards restoring normalcy on April 20.

These districts reported no new COVID-19 positive cases. Other epidemiological indicators also qualified the regions for a calibrated return to regular life, he said.

However, people must wear masks when they venture

## Gearing up

The government is taking all measures to meet the challenges thrown by the COVID-19 virus. One of the steps is to set up more centres for testing the samples



**Swift act:** A laboratory has been readied at the Govt Medical College Hospital in Ernakulam, Kerala, on Thursday. The lab can test 180 samples everyday. ■ THULASI KARKKAT

State	Total number of cases	Active cases	Discharged cases	Deaths
Andhra Pradesh	534	500	20	14
Karnataka	315	220	82	13
Kerala	394	147	245	2
Tamil Nadu	1,267	1,072	180	15
Telangana	700	496	186	18

out and adhere to social distancing norms. The ban on social and religious events would continue.

Hotels and restaurants could return to regular working hours. But the government was yet to decide if the establishments could serve customers inside their premises. Takeaways and door delivery were allowed.

The government would evaluate how Kottayam and Idukki recover. The observations would help the State form a template to help other regions. The district administrations would determine the path ahead.

## Telangana and A.P.

In Telangana, the total of COVID-19 positive cases stood at 700, and among them, 496 were active. The number of patients discharged was 186 and the death toll was 18. There was no death on Thursday.

Andhra Pradesh reported nine new positive COVID-19 cases as of Thursday morning and the tally went up to 534 cases in 11 districts. Three cases each were reported in Krishna, Kurnool and West Godavari districts.

Although the Department of Health had claimed that it would be testing over 3,000 samples in a day for the first time on Thursday, there was no reporting bulletin.

Events said at least 15 persons including 13 from Kurnool and two from Anantapur had recovered and were discharged.

son. We are relieved to know the source and will intensify our contact tracing efforts," he said.

sought to clarify that none of its employees, who had tested positive, had travelled overseas recently.

## Migrants' tales



**In contrast:** Police distributing under a bridge in Visakhapatna



**Telemedicine is the use of telecommunications and information technology to provide clinical healthcare at a distance.**

## Opportunities for telemedicine

Telemedicine is helpful for people living in rural areas. This is very crucial for India, since 70% of the population lives in rural areas. Telemedicine helps overcome the shortage of health professionals. India currently has only 0.7 physicians per 1000 people while China and Russia have 5 and 1.5 respectively.

Telemedicine is a better option while dealing with particularly infectious diseases like swine flu. Developments in Telemedicine

The Indian government has launched the SEHAT initiative to connect 60,000 common service centres nationwide and provide health care services to citizens. This will dovetail with the Digital India Initiative. In 2009, KIDROP programme was launched in Karnataka to screen infants for retinopathy of prematurity (ROP), a leading cause of childhood blindness. Its success has led to it being replicated in two more States.

Telemedicine is a very useful way for the government to provide affordable healthcare to all, with the help of private players and NGOs.

## IN BRIEF



### Involve SHGs in making of masks, says Jagan

VIJAYAWADA  
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy ordered that self-help groups be involved in the making of masks and priority given to distribution of three masks per head in hotspots. Mr. Jagan also instructed the officials to extend a financial assistance of ₹2,000 each to people from weaker sections being sent home from quarantine centres, to enable them to buy nutritious food thereby develop immunity.

### Fatwa issued; no Iftar party, Taraweeh at home

HYDERABAD  
Islamic seminary Jamia Nizamia on Thursday issued a fatwa stating that Taraweeh, the Ramzan special night prayers, be offered at home and not in congregation in mosques. The fatwa stated that the suspension of congregations due to the lockdown to control the spread of coronavirus is valid. Not being a part of a congregation is not a sin, it stated. Later in the day, the Jamia Nizamia appealed to Muslims to not host any iftar during Ramzan.

### TTD to refund darshan ticket amount

TIRUMALA  
Devotees who have booked their darshan tickets in advance for the period between March 13 and May 31 will be paid back their ticket amount, the TTD in a note said. The TTD on Thursday appealed to pilgrims to mail the details of their darshan tickets along with bank account number, IFSC code to helpdesk@tirumala.org to facilitate the payment. Refunds will also be made to those who booked tickets online or at post offices.

## Karnataka govt. withdraws Labour Department order

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
BENGALURU

Karnataka's Labour Department was to have set up a helpline to assist those in distress within 48 hours of issuing a notification on April 13 asking factories not to reduce wages or retrench employees. However, in a volte face, the government instead withdrew the notification within 48 hours, on Wednesday.

Trade unions are set to meet Chief Secretary T.M. Vijaybhaskar on Friday to register their protest against the withdrawal of the order, and seek security for industrial labour.

Meanwhile, Labour Minister A. Shivaram Hebbur,

who met a delegation of trade union leaders on Thursday, convened a tripartite meeting on April 23 to discuss the issue. "We will discuss income and job security for labourers," M. Satyanand, secretary, AITUC, Bengaluru unit, said.

Citing a March 29 Union government directive, the State government withdrew the earlier order, which had brought some solace to factory employees, especially those on contract or working as casual labour.

According to sources, the employer organisations had petitioned the government to withdraw the order.

## WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)  
**Forecast for Friday:** Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning, hail and gusty winds very likely at isolated places over Uttarakhand; with lightning and gusty winds at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Delhi, West Bengal and Arunachal Pradesh.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	20.1	34.3	20.0	Kozhikode	...	37.0	27.2
Ahmedabad	...	40.0	24.6	Kurnool	...	41.1	27.8
Aizawl	...	29.6	16.9	Lucknow	...	37.9	24.1
Allahabad	...	43.7	24.6	Madurai	...	39.4	26.7
Bengaluru	...	34.5	23.0	Mangaluru	...	34.8	21.4
Bhopal	...	39.8	23.0	Mumbai	...	33.7	26.0
Bhubaneswar	...	39.7	25.7	Mysuru	...	34.9	21.8
Chandigarh	...	37.9	00.0	New Delhi	...	40.3	23.6
Chennai	...	33.8	26.8	Patna	...	35.5	23.0
Coimbatore	...	37.0	25.2	Port Blair	...	1.4	32.6
Dehradun	0.1	...	20.6	Puducherry	...	35.8	25.6
Gangtok	...	18.2	13.7	Pune	...	1.5	40.2
Goa	...	34.2	28.0	Raipur	...	39.2	26.8
Guwahati	17.6	33.1	19.4	Ranchi	...	37.1	21.7
Hubballi	...	36.0	23.0	Shillong	...	42.8	21.2
Hyderabad	...	29.2	22.5	Shimla	...	27.4	17.4
Imphal	0.6	27.0	15.5	Srinagar	...	1.8	16.3
Jaipur	...	40.2	28.0	Thiruvananthapuram	...	33.8	26.9
Kochi	...	33.4	25.8	Tiruchirappalli	...	39.6	26.6
Kolkata	...	24.2	12.8	Vijayawada	...	...	...
Kolkaata	0.6	34.1	23.5	Visakhapatnam	...	32.8	26.8

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

CITY	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE	Yesterday
Ahmedabad	...	34	14	56	79	...	...
Bengaluru	...	10	21	85	117	...	In observation made at 6:00 p.m., Baidashah, T. T. Prasad recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 317 indicating a dangerous level of pollution.
Chennai	...	10	22	23	65	...	In contrast, Thiruvananthapuram recorded a healthy AQI score of 27.
Delhi	...	30	30	98	270	...	...
Hyderabad	...	05	29	24	79	...	...
Kolkata	...	02	11	27	76	100	...
Lucknow	...	06	21	30	204	...	...
Mumbai	...	08	53	94	37	53	...
Pune	...	31	26	51	58	38	...
Visakhapatnam	...	15	46	06	39	78	...

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)  
**SO<sub>2</sub>:** Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

**NO<sub>2</sub>:** Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

**CO:** Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

**PM2.5 & PM10:** Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.

## In the time of pandemic, couple will tie the knot online

Lockdown affects bride-to-be's travel to Kerala from Uttar Pradesh, where she is now employed

**SAM PAUL A.**  
ALAPPUZZHA

The lockdown or the distance of over 2,500 km between them do not prevent this couple from getting married as per schedule.

P. Anjana, 28, from Pallippad, near Haripad, who is staying in Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh, and Sreejith Nadesan, 30, from Changannery in Kottayam will tie the knot, albeit in a virtual setting on April 26.

Ms. Anjana, an analyst in an IT company in Uttar Pradesh, was to reach Pallippad on April 18 for the wedding. "The COVID-19-induced lockdown has prevented me from travelling to Kerala, but it is

not going to stop our marriage. Despite both of us being at different places, our families have decided to go ahead with the wedding as planned," she said.

On the big day, Mr. Nadesan, along with his parents and close relatives, numbering five, will reach the bride's house at Pallippad, where her father stays. Ms. Anjana, her mother and brother will join them from Lucknow via a video calling app. Between 12.15 p.m. and 12.45 p.m., the bridegroom will symbolically put a wedding chain (mangalsutra) around the bride's neck on the screen.

Following this, Anjana's mother will tie a locket with



**Transcending distances:** P. Anjana and Sreejith Nadesan during their engagement ceremony in November last.

thread on her neck. The couple got engaged on November 9, 2019. "The marriage was originally planned in January, but it

the marriage. Both of our families later agreed to conduct the marriage over a video call as there are no auspicious dates for conducting our marriage in the next two years," said Mr. Nadesan, an employee of a bank in Kumbanad.

**As per lockdown norms**  
According to Pankajakshan Achary, father of Ms. Anjana, the marriage will be held in compliance with the restrictions imposed in the view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Nadesan said that once the lockdown ends and Ms. Anjana is able to join him, a wedding reception will be organised for relatives and friends.



## Across the gulf

India must do all it can to help the migrant workers stranded in West Asia

Around eight million people in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries constitute a unique cohort among Indian diaspora communities around the world. Around 50% of them are unskilled and another 30% are semi-skilled. Only a small minority of 20% of them are skilled and lucratively employed, but all these migrant workers together form the backbone of India's ties with the region. Their contribution of nearly 40% of the total foreign exchange remittances to India is critical to its economy. Their labour is vital for the GCC economy. With no option of assimilation into their host countries, their link to the home country remains intact, unlike Indian immigrants to the West. The vast majority of them who are on subsistence wages are facing a tough situation in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. From the little information available, it appears that Indians are badly hit by the disease. Living and working conditions make it extremely difficult for them to practise social distancing or get treatment if infected. Many of them suffer from preexisting medical conditions and are used to procuring medicines from India, which is now impossible. Vast sectors of the economy are shut, rendering many of them jobless. Thousands are without documentation. Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Doha being important transits for international travel, thousands of Indian travellers are also stuck in the region.

India cannot abandon them to their helpless fate. It must work closely with governments of the region to bring them succour. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has nurtured good relations with all rulers of the region but the ongoing crisis is testing the endurance of India's ties with some of the GCC countries. The UAE government has said it might revise current partnerships concerning labour relations with nations refusing to cooperate with measures to repatriate private sector expatriates who wish to return home. The country's ambassador to India Ahmed Al Banna has promised only those who are tested negative for the virus would be repatriated. Some of these migrants want to be evacuated, while many might want to remain where they are. Pinarayi Vijayan, the Chief Minister of Kerala which is home to more than two million Indian immigrants in the Gulf, has said the State is prepared to receive returnees and provide them care. Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Punjab have a significant number of people in the Gulf. The Centre must take the initiative to bring together State governments, and work out arrangements with national governments in the region in a manner acceptable to all. It will certainly take some effort to arrive at what is doable and desirable at this juncture, but there is no excuse for not doing that. That is the least India can do for these people whose search for a livelihood has done the country so much good.

## Virtual reality

Telemedicine can help reach patients where access to medical care is difficult

The world has very few devices left to fight COVID-19 with, but technology remains one of them. Whether it is the employ of state-of-the-art technology in the discovery of cures or vaccines, or traditional technology services to enhance health care and consultations, or even tools that keep people at home occupied/productive, it is clear that technology will serve humanity at one of its darkest moments. The pandemic has contributed, in no small measure, to the understanding of the myriad ways in which available technologies have not been put to better use, and presented people with multiple opportunities to harness these devices, techniques and methods to get on with life in the time of lockdown. Among the primary uses is telemedicine, rendered inexorable now, by the temporary paralysis brought on by a freeze on movement.

The Centre's recent guidelines allowing for widespread use of telemedicine services came as a shot in the arm for telehealth crusaders in the country, among them the Telemedicine Society of India that has long been battling to use the technology in its complete arc to reach remote areas in India. This move finds consonance with the rest of the world where several nations, also deeply impacted by the pandemic, have deployed telemedicine to reach people who have been unable to come to hospital, to reduce footfalls in hospitals, and to even provide medical and mental health counselling to countless people. It was way back in 2000 that telemedicine was first employed in India, but the progress has been excruciatingly slow, until the pandemic. However, it does seem as if the medical community was only held back by the lack of legislation to enable teleconsultations. For no sooner was the policy announced, than hospitals and clinicians hurried to jump onto the bandwagon, advertising contact information for patients. The advantages are peculiar in the current context, when putting distance between people is paramount, as teleconsultations are not barred even when health care professionals and patients may have to be quarantined. The advancement of telecommunication capabilities over the years has made the transmission of images and sound files (heart and lung sounds, coughs) faster and simpler. Pilot telemedicine experiments in ophthalmology and psychiatry have proven to be of immense benefit to the communities. Telemedicine's time is here, finally. While unleashing the full potential of telemedicine to help people, experts and government agencies must be mindful of the possible inadequacies of the medium, and securing sensitive medical information; such cognisance should guide the use of the technology.

# A blueprint to revive the economy

A carefully crafted economic proposal for consideration of the Indian government to help our fellow citizens



P. CHIDAMBARAM & PRAVEEN CHAKRAVARTY

"We have no food, no home, no income. My children are starving," cried Prachi to a TV anchor on April 14. Prachi, a migrant worker from Bihar, is one of the roughly 400 million workers in India who are dependent on daily wages for their survival. She has lost her source of livelihood because we are under a lockdown and economic activity has stopped. A lockdown is necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19. But we need not make a choice between saving lives and protecting livelihoods. We can achieve both through a 'smart' lockdown and careful economic management.

The phrase 'Greater Depression', which has entered the vocabulary of economists, highlights the gravity of the humanitarian and economic crisis confronting us today. Every sector of the economy in every nation has come to a screeching halt. We extend our sympathies and wishes to all the leaders of the world, including our Prime Minister, for the enormous responsibility of steering their respective nations through this pandemic. In the spirit of non-partisanship, here is a carefully crafted economic proposal for consideration of the Indian government to help our fellow citizens.

### Demand, supply challenges

First, it is important to diagnose the scale of the economic crisis accurately. Prachi has lost her job because her employer has been forced to stop commercial activity. It is important for the government to feed Prachi and help her employer to restart activities so that he can re-employ her soon. The economic crisis needs a demand side and a supply side response. It

is morally imperative that we immediately address the miseries of the poor and vulnerable by providing money as well as food. The bottom half of all households (13 crore out of 26 crore families) must be given ₹5,000 per family in their bank account within a week. The list of households and the bank details (largely Aadhaar-seeded) are available in the government's various schemes such as PMJAY and MGNREGA. Besides, the States have their 'below poverty line' lists. This will cost a maximum of ₹65,000 crore. Further, depending on the need, for the month of May, these families can be given ₹3,000 each. This will cost an additional ₹39,000 crore.

More than cash, scholars like Jean Dreze have observed that it is food that people need most urgently. India has far in excess of the buffer stock requirement. The Central government has already announced distribution of free food, but reports suggest that there is either lack of food supplies at the local ration shop or identity requirements of ration cards are proving to be a roadblock. The government must universalise food distribution immediately, to remove identity requirements, and work with State governments to rush supplies to every ration shop so that every family gets free grain.

Next, the April 15 guidelines allow MGNREGA work, which was stopped due to the lockdown, to be restarted while observing social distancing norms. District collectors should be given the freedom to start and expand works under MGNREGA. If work cannot be given for some reason, 10 days' wages every month should be paid to the registered MGNREGA workers in the panchayat/block until the scheme is resumed. This will ensure some livelihood support. Economists Amartya Sen, Raghuram Rajan and Abhijit Banerjee have also called for urgent implementation of these measures.

The next step is to help Prachi's employer to resume commercial activities, which can be done by



G. NARAO

re-opening the economy gradually. The key to reopening is our ability to identify sensitive COVID-19 hotspot areas and containment zones. The Central and State governments must work in tandem to identify hotspots, preferably at the level of the block/mandal and not just at the district level. This can be done with the help of public health experts and epidemiologists through strategic testing.

### Planning ahead

Starting May 4, the new guidelines must be expanded to permit all economic activity (with a few exceptions) in non-hotspot areas. Economic activity requires labour and capital, which are significantly diminished due to the lockdown. Continuous testing and monitoring will be needed as new areas may turn into hotspots and hotspots may become non-hotspots.

Let small shops, service establishments and the self-employed start commercial activity in their areas. Three-quarters of the 80 million enterprises are establishments that operate in local areas. As long as they observe the usual precautions, they will not add to the risks. This will boost local economic activity.

The new guidelines permit agricultural activity during the rabi harvest season. This is a step in the right direction. However, the constraint for all these commercial and agricultural activities will be the availability of labour for which re-opening of travel and transport is crucial. But it is also the riskiest. Mass rapid transit as well as private transport must be gradually opened in non-hotspot areas. It is necessary to open up rail and bus

transport with adequate precautions such as temperature checks and social distancing norms inside buses and trains. One strategy could be to reduce the number of passengers in each bus and train by increasing the frequency of the vehicles or by running them at half-capacity. There will be trade-offs, but each local transport authority can choose the right policy and tweak it from time to time.

### Funding the revival

The other essential ingredient for resumption of economic activity is access to capital, especially working capital. A majority of the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) would have run out of cash and lost significant revenues. No bank is likely to lend to them. The government must step in to provide credit guarantees that can incentivise banks to SMEs. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has already instructed banks to issue a moratorium on loan obligations for three months. If needed, this can be extended by another three months.

For the formal sector, we can take a leaf out of the U.S.'s Paycheck Protection Program. The idea is for the government to help formal sector businesses to keep workers on their payroll without resorting to retrenchment or layoffs. The 2017-18 Economic Survey estimated, using the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) data set, that there are 40 million employees earning less than ₹15,000 per month who are employed in firms registered under the Goods and Services Tax (GST). It is likely that they are vulnerable to retrenchment. The government could 'protect their pay cheques' by funding their employers to pay them for one or two months. This can be implemented using data from the EPFO and GST databases.

The RBI, and through it the banks, should be encouraged to make capital available liberally to sectors such as tourism and manufacturing, which need specific interventions. External trade will continue to be tepid. India must

do whatever it takes through export incentives and strategic use of foreign exchange reserves to capitalise on the export opportunity arising out of this crisis and stimulate exports dramatically over the next few years. Exports can be the key to jobs for hundreds of millions of skilled and unskilled workers, as it was during the boom years 2004-2010.

Fiscal stimulus measures on the demand and supply side must be supplemented by monetary stimulus from the RBI with re-designed measures such as moratorium, loan forgiveness, regulatory forbearance, revised NPA regulations and easing the cycle of credit flow.

### Money versus myth

Do we have the money to indulge in such a revival and recovery package? It is our estimate that the total fiscal package will cost ₹5-6 lakh crore. That amount is available. The Centre and the States have a total expenditure budget of over ₹70 lakh crore for 2020-21. The Centre alone has budgeted to spend ₹4 lakh crore on capital expenditure this fiscal year. In a crisis, much of the capital expenditure may not be possible at all, and even if it is, must be deferred to the next fiscal year. Besides, more savings can be identified by axing wasteful expenditure. Further, the Centre can borrow money during times like this without crowding out private investment or pushing up interest rates. As a final resort, the government can monetise part of additional deficit, otherwise known as 'printing money'.

A microorganism has brought humankind to its knees. As health scientists have said, we must learn to live with the virus. We need to act now to ensure that Prachi and millions like her can live through this and experience the new normal.

P. Chidambaram is former Finance Minister of India and a sitting Member of Parliament; Praveen Chakravarty is a political economist and a senior officer of the Congress party

# A case to use JEE-Main instead of JEE-Advanced this year

It would not only reduce stress for applicants, but also enable college admissions to the IITs to take place earlier



P.J. NARAYANAN

The pandemic has thrown the world, including academic institutions, into turmoil. College admissions, a stressful process even in normal circumstances, will be affected everywhere. Unfortunately, the virus struck India before many Class 12 board examinations were completed. National entrance examinations like the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE)-Main, JEE-Advanced and National Eligibility cum Entrance Test have not yet been held. While all college admissions are affected, I focus on admissions to engineering institutions. The JEE-Advanced exam is the sole prerequisite for admission into the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs). Students spend two years or more being coached for entrance examinations.

### Two advantages

My suggestion to the IITs for admitting B.Tech students this year is that they use the JEE-Main to admit students and cancel the JEE-Advanced in the light of the pandemic. This would not only reduce stress for a large number of applicants

as they would not be required to write one more high-pressure exam, but would also enable college admissions to the IITs and other institutions to take place 6-7 weeks earlier. Since the IITs are among the most sought-after institutions in the country, admissions to the next level of institutions — the National Institutes of Technology (NITs), Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs) and others — effectively happen only after the IIT list is published. The chain of dependency extends to other institutions, naturally.

Let us look at the history of admissions to the national-level engineering institutions, starting with the IITs. The IITs admitted undergraduate students through the IIT-JEE for decades. From 2002, other national institutions selected students based on their performance in the All India Engineering Entrance Examination (AIEEE). The JEE and AIEEE were conducted in parallel, independent of each other. In 2013, the AIEEE was effectively renamed as the JEE-Main. All national-level institutions, except the IITs, and some State institutions, admit students to the B.Tech course based on their rank in the JEE-Main. Another new examination called JEE-Advanced, a modified version of the old IIT-JEE, was created for the IITs and a few other institutions. However, a



G. VIJAYA BHASKAR

high rank in the JEE-Main became the criterion to even register for the JEE-Advanced. Thus, under the current scheme, a student has to perform well in the JEE-Main and the JEE-Advanced to secure a seat in an IIT.

### Impacting schedules

What was most inconvenient was that this scheme impacted the schedules of admissions into all the engineering institutions. In 2012, the IIT-JEE was held early in April and the AIEEE was held towards the end of April, independent of each other. The rank lists of both were available by mid-May. Seat allotments began in early June and were completed by end-June. But in the present scheme, which started in 2013, the JEE-Main is held in early April and the JEE-Advanced, now available to those with high JEE-Main ranks, in late May. The JEE-Advanced results are published in the third week of June and seat allocations start only in early July. By design,

the JEE-Advanced can be held only 6-7 weeks after the JEE-Main. Consequently, classes in the IITs and other institutions can start only 14-16 weeks after the JEE-Main is held.

Everything has turned topsy-turvy this year. Some of the Class 12 board exams are yet to be completed. The JEE-Main has been delayed at least till early June. Classes cannot start earlier than end-September. Further delays are possible based on the spread of the virus. We can't conduct national entrance exams until all regions of the country are reasonably safe.

Let us come back to my proposal of using JEE-Main ranks instead of JEE-Advanced ranks to admit students this year. The JEE-Advanced need not be held. Imagine facing the uncertainties imposed by the pandemic, then writing the remaining board exams, then the JEE-Main and then the JEE-Advanced! Without the JEE-Advanced, classes in all institutions can also start 6-7 weeks earlier than usual, as seat allocations can start 4-5 weeks after the JEE-Main. The JEE-Main and JEE-Advanced test different skills, we are told. I contend that the performance of students in JEE-M and JEE-A are very similar statistically. The IITs have the data from at least 2013 to analyse this. For instance, one can study the difference in the

ranks of individual students in the JEE-Main and JEE-Advanced. Some will get better JEE-Main ranks and others, better JEE-Advanced ranks. Statistics on the fraction of students with a big rank difference will help us understand the impact of writing the JEE-Main in the place of the JEE-Advanced. My estimate is that over 90% of the students have a rank difference of less than 100 places.

If we announce now that JEE-Main ranks will be used for IIT admissions, students awaiting the JEE-Main and JEE-Advanced will get 6-7 weeks to prepare for it. We would also be able to answer their doubts and questions better.

I request those in charge of the JEE-Advanced and IIT admissions to consider this proposal. To be clear, IIT-Hyderabad admits about 50% of its undergraduates through the JEE-Main and the rest through other means. Our admissions calendar is very closely aligned to the IITs/The Joint Seat Allocation Authority by necessity. The proposed change will enable an early start of classes in the IITs, NITs, IIITs, etc. Let us reduce the pain of those aspiring to go to these colleges by reducing one entrance exam they have to write and by enabling admissions much earlier.

P.J. Narayanan is Director, IIT Hyderabad

## 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.

### Kept out of PDS

It is unfortunate that as many as 10 crore people have been kept out of the PDS ("Outdated census data keep 10 cr. out of PDS: economists", April 16). With the 2021 Census postponed, revision of the existing data will not be possible given the circumstances. However, there is still a sliver of hope. Governments could implement the Rajasthan model, for instance, where the government is supplying ration to those not covered by social security schemes.

ABHISHEK SURESH,  
Kozhikode

### State without a Cabinet

It is very frustrating to see that at a time when coordination is required between various Ministries in a State to fight the virus, Madhya Pradesh still finds itself without a Cabinet, and especially a Health Minister. To make matters worse, several health officials have tested positive for the virus in the State. It is disheartening that innocent lives are bearing the brunt of political manipulations.

G. SIVA CHAITANYA,  
East Godavari District

### Masking his own failing

Even assuming for the sake

of argument that the World Health Organization (WHO) belatedly informed the world about the severity of the novel coronavirus, it is puzzling how a country such as the U.S. failed to prepare to tackle it ("Disastrous decision", April 16). In this technologically advanced world, where information-gathering is so easy, it is not necessary for a superpower to wait for instructions from a world health agency to prepare itself for a pandemic. It is obvious that the U.S. was caught napping. Mr. Trump is refusing to take responsibility for his

inaction and is instead shifting the blame. If at all he had genuine grievances with the WHO, he should have taken up those issues at a later stage and not at a point when the world is at its wits' end to contain the spread of the virus.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,  
Chennai

Given his rejection of the Paris Agreement, the Iran deal, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, etc., it comes as no surprise that Mr. Trump is now targeting the WHO. The irony is that when the WHO was issuing warnings to countries on containing COVID-19, Mr.

Trump was praising the WHO and China for containment efforts. He changed his tune only when the virus reached the U.S. When the rest of the world is lambasting Mr. Trump for his decision, it is inexplicable why New Delhi is refraining from joining the fray.

NALINI VIJAYARAGHAVAN,  
Thiruvananthapuram

### Public health hazard

It is heartening that spitting in public spaces is now a punishable offence ("Industries operating in rural areas to reopen on April 20", April 16). However, another public

health hazard is the ubiquitous practice of urinating in public places. In the context of Swachh Bharat, it is imperative to put a stop to this practice. Since people urinate everywhere — on roads, in street corners and near garbage dumps — people, especially health and sanitary workers, are at a higher risk of contracting all kinds of diseases. The Tamil Nadu government should consider taking action against those urinating in public places.

R. KANNAN,  
Chennai



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# Will the aviation industry recover from the pandemic?

PARLEY

In a time like this, you need professionals, not bureaucrats who lack knowledge of the sector

*The aviation industry, like several other sectors, is facing a crisis in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. With travel restrictions, grounded fleets, benched staff, schedule uncertainties, ticket liabilities and cash burn, questions are being raised on whether the civil aviation sector can survive the epidemic. Aviation experts Mohan Ranganathan and Jitender Bhargava weigh in on the steps needed for a recovery, in a conversation moderated by Murali N. Krishnaswamy. Edited excerpts:*

**The International Air Transport Association (IATA)'s Director General and CEO has said that the association, which represents some 290 airlines, or about 82% of global air traffic, is working on a scenario of severe travel restrictions lasting a few months. This could cut industry revenues by a projected \$252 billion in 2020. In terms of the bottom line, this is expected to translate into a \$39 billion net loss in the second quarter. The industry will also burn about \$61 billion in money in the second quarter. This is a dimension beyond anything that the industry has experienced.**

**Mohan Ranganathan:** Even though IATA has projected this only for one year, I would go more by what Singapore Airlines had announced, like when they announced the grounding of 96% of their fleet. You have Changi Airport shutting down one complete terminal for a year, where they have said they don't expect traffic to grow for a year. And it may extend to the end of the second year. For us in India, it is going to definitely take more than a month even to start. And then it is going to take at least a couple of years to come back to at least 50% of what we were. And that depends on how many airlines survive.

**Jitender Bhargava:** The crisis confronting the aviation industry is not only unprecedented but also that no one who is working in the industry

has any clue on how to put the industry back on track. If you recall the previous instance of 9/11 and what happened subsequent to that, it took a lot of time for the aviation industry to come back. Captain Ranganathan is very right about the time to recover. It's not a question of only restrictions, visas not being allowed, travel not being allowed, airlines not being allowed. Even after all these are allowed, there will be apprehension. The first is the economic aspect. Will people travel, either for leisure or on business? The answer is clearly no. It will take a long time for this to happen. Then the question is of people going out to destinations and being apprehensive. So, the first casualty will be the airline industry. How many flights will you operate? The fact is that a plane on the ground costs the airline enormously. In India, for example, out of the 650 planes you have with all the airlines, 50% of them have been taken on lease. So even while they're on the ground the lease rentals are being paid. It is not only employees who are being unproductive but also the machines. So both men and machines are taking a heavy toll on the aviation industry. Now when you look at just the revenue loss, which was mentioned in the introductory comments, this was on a certain presumption that the grounding of the fleet or airline would last only a maximum of three months. If it lasts much longer, the revenue loss will be higher and, subsequently, the losses will be higher. In the meantime, if certain airlines are not able to sustain their operations, there will be a question mark on the airline's future. There is also another IATA statement which projects 25 million people losing their jobs. Imagine a scenario when you have a large chunk of airline employees losing jobs, including pilots, who are otherwise difficult to get. So the future is bleak. It is very difficult for anyone to visualise how the situation will unfold.

**A point mentioned is on aviation's recovery being linked to the willingness to travel. So how can governments**



**and airlines facilitate this process to be smooth?**

**JB:** If you've been reading the newspapers and the recent statements of the DGCA [Directorate General of Civil Aviation], even when the flights are put back into operation, the concept of social distancing will be imposed on the airlines. If you are only going to be flying one-third of your capacity, look at the kind of fares that an airline will have to charge to sustain its operations. And as we have seen, India is a price-sensitive market. We are perhaps getting back to the era of the 1940s and the 1950s where only the elite could afford to travel. So, it's a difficult situation. But let me also make one significant point. Indian aviation is in a unique position. Also, most of the airlines that came up 10-15 years ago have only seen the good times. Otherwise, we've always seen that in the aviation industry, it's a cyclical thing. You have a boom period followed by a trough period. So, they have placed orders for a large number of planes. They haven't built cash reserves, barring Indigo. Once you are chasing market share at the cost of profitability, how are they, airlines, going to sustain it? It is basically a very scary scenario.

**MR:** Apart from what Mr. Bhargava said, now what the government forgets is that apart from the fares, which will have to be phenomenal, the days of family travel are finished in India. I am talking about domestic travel. If you're going to be charging ₹10,000 to ₹20,000, you can forget about any holiday for a family.

**As long as the airlines are driven by promoters and by their personal egos, you will not have a good chapter for the industry**

**JITENDER BHARGAVA**  
Aviation expert

Rail travel is what is going to gain. The second thing is that there are a lot of other areas which are connected with aviation. Most of them are going to become bankrupt. Can the government pump in money to push up an elite industry at the cost of others? It will result in a political boomerang. And the first thing that Indian aviation has to give up is ego. In a time like this, you need professionals with a clear mind, not bureaucrats who know nothing about aviation.

**The U.S.'s \$2-trillion package has provision for a few billions for airlines and staff. Australia, China and Singapore have undertaken specific relief measures. Aviation research agency CAPA predicts that airlines will need three stages of relief. How would you relate this to an Indian context?**

**JB:** The question that begs an answer is: can the government of India with its limited finances only concentrate on the revival of the aviation industry at the expense of other sectors? It cannot do so. They may come forward and give some kind of financial aid. But to expect large-scale aid to put the airline industry back on track is an impossibility. Certain countries may do it

because they may have plenty of money. CAPA has also said that 250 aircraft will be surplus to our needs. My estimate is that we will not need even 50% of the 650 planes that all our airlines currently have.

**MR:** If the government wants to pump in, they have to nationalise all the airlines, and they will just be committing hara-kiri if they do that. Also, look at the UDAN airlines. They are not sustainable. They are subsidising them and none of them is making money. So how many ventures are you going to support?

**Business models are sure to have to undergo a radical change. How would you see this affecting established carriers? What about the low-cost carriers?**

**JB:** The business model that our Indian carriers followed is this: garner market share at the expense of profitability, which in other words was no business model at all. They were looking at today, not looking at tomorrow. You rightly said there is a low-cost airline and there is a high-cost airline, the legacy carriers. Now the unfortunate part is that in India, there is really no low-cost airline. The fact remains as long as the airlines are driven by promoters and by their personal egos, you will not have a good chapter for the aviation industry. Perhaps the first thing the government can do is to put the Aviation Turbine Fuel, or ATF, in GST. My suggestion is to let the government have a hands-off policy on the aviation industry. Let the aviation industry learn the lessons and they will come out much better after this pandemic is over.

**MR:** We have to rebuild aviation. The only way we can do it is to move slowly, understand where the flights are essential and move away from fixing the schedules based on a Delhi-centric focus and politicians. You must understand that it is the public which makes the airline and not the freeloaders.

**As far as manufacturers are concerned, that is another major area in this whole pandemic story. So, what happens to manufacturer programmes?**

**MR:** Post-pandemic, you are going to have more use of the 350 and the 787 categories. Manufacturers are going to face a big problem for the next 10 years. I am not talking about one or two years. It's 10 years because for finances to build up, for airlines to place the orders... the industry is not going to start reviving before five years.

You will not be going to have business travel. You are going to have more and more people online because they don't want to get stuck somewhere. Airlines, if they want to fill up aircraft will have to sell cheap tickets which will see them going deeper in the red. It's a Catch-22 situation. So as far as manufacturers are concerned, you can forget about trying to sell a craft for the next five years.

**And the final picture?**

**JB:** One can only wish that airlines come out of the current situation faster and without much damage, but that will be wishful thinking. The realistic picture is dismal. We know about it. We also know it will take a very, very long time for the industry to get back the traffic. Another thing that has come out is that in this lockdown condition, a lot of people have found alternative means of working, especially with video-conferencing. So it's going to be a major change that we will see not only for the aviation industry, but for the way we've looked at the world and the way we have worked so far.

**MR:** My advice, as my English professor said, is 'hasten slowly'. I don't think that at a drop of a hat we can get back to the pre-pandemic situation. Right now, we are in quicksand. So, it requires clear thinking, you need professionals. And the most important thing is that if you have made an error, admit that you've made an error and learn from it. Whether it is aviation, or all travel-related, tourism-related industries, it is going to be in a shambles for the next two years. So they have to plan on how to mitigate the suffering. And pull out of the rut two years from now. If you think that you're going to be back to normal in six months, you're making a mistake again. They have to move very, very slowly to try and revive the industry.



**Mohan Ranganathan** is a retired airline instructor pilot and an aviation safety expert



**Jitender Bhargava** is a former airline executive director and an aviation expert



Scan the QR code to listen to the full interview online

## Optimism was a duty for him

Former Attorney General Ashok Desai was at the forefront of the fight for civil liberties

SRIRAM PANCHU

Ashok Desai was one of the country's most highly regarded and much-loved lawyers. He held the offices of Solicitor General and Attorney General, and was later called upon to advise Presidents and Prime Ministers. He appeared in major constitutional, tax and company matters of the times.

Mr. Desai was at the forefront of the fight for civil liberties and public causes. Among the earliest PILs was the Bombay Backbay reclamation scam and the allotment of cement by A.R. Antulay, Chief Minister of Maharashtra. One wonders how public interest would have taken root if it had not been for leaders of the Bar like him to espouse these causes. Over the years, he continued to appear in PILs. Among these were the fodder scam involving Lalu Prasad and the arming of private militia Salwa Judum by the State of Chhattisgarh. There are many such cases but that would take up several columns.

I have seen few lawyers prepare for their case as well as him. He listened carefully to the instructing lawyer and pored over his briefs to achieve mastery over facts. Assessing the judge he was to appear before was part of the preparation. In court, he brought in a larger perspective and a focus which went far beyond what the instructing lawyer had presented to him. Appearing with him, you would think you knew all there was to know and could be said in the case, and yet watch in admiration as he gave it a further dimension. He was indeed a lawyer par excellence.

**Convincing the Lordship**  
Each great lawyer has a distinctive style. Mr. Desai was sweet reasonableness, having a mellifluous voice and low-pitched presentation, never taking or giving offence. He had this knack of turning the judge around. His Lordship would express strong disagreement with the proposition, and Mr. Desai would bring on his special skills, and sure enough the judge would be lulled not just in accepting

the proposition but sometimes also treating it as his own.

Mr. Desai was a genius in the art of living. With his deep and abiding faith in Buddhism, he had cultivated the quality of equanimity and a perfectly drawn line of detachment. There was an inner core which would not be ruffled at all. For sage advice, you could do no better than to go to him. He would give you clear and unclouded advice, tell you where you went wrong, and then would come the remedy and balm. I think in all things he managed to hold the balance even.

He was the ever-welcoming host. "Come along in the evening but don't make it late," was the standard invitation and injunction. The day's work would be done and the next hour and a half was for friends, conversation and a meal. Sitting in his low sofa he, and all else present, enjoyed evenings of eclectic conversation. He never put his erudition on display but you couldn't miss it. He was amazingly well read in literature, history and politics among other fields; he enjoyed music, both Hindustani and Western classical, and the opera. Yoga he would do regularly, and in his later years saw to it that he never missed the daily swim. One must be religious about it, he would say. He was perhaps overpitching the point, but achieved the desired result.

He could hold strong opinions, but avoided harshness in language. "I think he is an undesirable element," was sufficient to indicate disapproval. The man's nature and spirituality made him forgiving of human frailty, instead looking to see where it could be mended and improved. He was deeply concerned about the grim realities in the country's politics, economic and social fabric; he yet never gave up hope of change and improvement. I once asked him if his optimism was misplaced. His answer stunned me. "Sriram, optimism is not an option; it is a duty."

**Updates from States**  
*The Hindu* (apart from volunteer-run trackers such as covid19india.org) has tried to address this by relying on our reporter network, who provide updates from various States (and their health departments), which have been recorded daily in a spreadsheet maintained by our Internet desk. The spreadsheet has acted as the basis of two online live stories — one featuring a map that shows

the State-wise cumulative number of cases, active infections, recoveries and deaths; and the other, a State-wise tracker that shows case progression, increase in fatalities over time, besides comparing testing rates and positive rates for the States. Except for Telangana, this information is available for all major States and Union Territories on a regular basis. The article featuring the interactive map is the most-read article on the paper's website in the last three months with nearly 2.9 million page views, showing how readers have valued this information.

These two web-based "live" articles, besides a number of data-driven visualisation stories featured on the Op-Ed page (as Data-point) have helped us understand the Indian story of the COVID-19 spread. One area where we could do better is in covering the economic impact of the



NOTEBOOK

## Data-driven reporting during COVID-19

The paper has relied on our reporter network to gather State-wise numbers

SRINIVASAN RAMANI

The chief scientist of the World Health Organization, Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, said in an interview to *The Hindu* that "data is key to the control of this pandemic". Indeed, in the weeks since the COVID-19 outbreak, the use of the terms, "exponential growth", "flattening the curve", "testing rates", etc. have risen exponentially in the public domain, thanks largely to robust data-driven reporting.

Daily graphs of the novel coronavirus spread across countries in terms of the number of cases, the fatalities caused and testing rates, based on data diligently collected and provided in an open source format by Johns Hopkins University (and the WHO of course) have helped us understand the comparative effects of the strategies used by different countries. In *The Hindu*, we have

tried to mirror some of the work done by other data journalists in newspapers such as *Financial Times* by trying to understand the spread of the virus and its effect in India's States. Unlike national data, provincial and State data is not easy to come by. The Indian Council of Medical Research provides us with nationwide data, and the Ministry of Health's daily totals seem to lag the actual number of cases.

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The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 17, 1970

## What Went Wrong with Apollo-13?

The malfunction, which forced the Apollo-13 astronauts to abandon their moon landing plans and head back home, occurred in their spacecraft's electric generating system. The system is known as a "fuel cell." It manufactures electric energy by chemical reactions between hydrogen and oxygen. These reactions simultaneously produce water and heat. In the spacecraft, this water replenishes the astronauts' reservoir for drinking. The astronauts said they heard a "bang" just before two of their fuel cells stopped furnishing electricity. Though the cause of this malfunction is not known, it is believed to have been a rupture in a pressure tank containing oxygen or hydrogen, or in a connecting line or in one of the associated valves, switches or other plumbing fixtures of that system. This, in turn, could have been caused by a hit by a micro-meteorite. Unmanned spacecraft have recorded numerous such hits, but there has been no record of any manned spacecraft being damaged or otherwise affected by meteorites.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 17, 1920.

## Intensive Kultur.

(From an Editorial)

There is good reason to believe that the only conspiracy in the Punjab during the period under review was one on the part of the officials, with the "Saviour of the Empire" at their head, to teach India a lesson that shall be second only in its retaliatory vindictiveness, if not in its initial provocation, to the horrors of the Mutiny. General Dyer went to Amritsar to massacre and he achieved it. The Lieutenant-Governor, we know, was an accessory after the event to this crime. Sir M. O'Dwyer was prepared to issue blank cheques to his lieutenants if they chose to ask for them. Now in the whole Punjab episode there has been nothing more scandalous than the employment of aeroplanes for bombing towns and villages and machine-gunning groups of people. To one who remembers the vast volume of virtuous indignation wasted over the German air-raids there is something outrageously cynical in Sir M. O'Dwyer's disregard of the most elementary principles of humanity and civilisation. The vicious cult of efficiency has so sapped the moral fibre of a certain type of official that to him Kipling's suggestion that "there ain't no Ten Commandments" east of Suez has become an article of faith. If General Dyer held Indian life cheap, his collaborators broke not only the Decalogue but all canons of decency and civilisation.

FROM PAGE ONE

## Fresh cases rise by over 800; fatality rate at 3.3%

"Rapid antibody tests are for monitoring surveillance, not for diagnosis. Hence there is no concern with respect to the testing kits being faulty, that concern was with respect to immune response alone," ICMR spokesperson R.R. Gangakhedkar said.

The ICMR added that there is currently no evidence to suggest that hot weather can have a slow-down effect of the virus.

The Health Ministry has said that 325 districts have not reported any coronavirus case so far because of the actions initiated at field level.

The implementation of containment strategies in

some districts which earlier had reported COVID-19 cases has yielded positive results. One of such place is Puducherry's Mahe district, where no case of the infection has been reported in the last 28 days. There are 27 other districts also where no positive case has been reported in a fortnight.

The Ministry added that the Central government has amended the Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2006, to ramp up availability and production of bulk drugs.

All projects or activities in respect of bulk drugs and intermediates have been re-categorised, to fast-track their appraisal.

## Mumbai runs out of beds in ICUs, patients suffer

The State government has identified—Nanavati, St. George, Saifee, Wockhardt, HBT Trauma Care and Seven Hills Hospitals—as critical care hospitals for COVID-19.

Nanavati has 20 ICU beds for COVID-19, running at full occupancy.

Three beds were vacant on Thursday evening after the patients were discharged. Saifee activated 63 beds for COVID-19 patients of which 26 are ICU beds.

All were occupied on Thursday.

Seven Hills has eight ICU beds managed by HN Reliance Foundation Hospital, and all have been full since

the past several days. The HBT Trauma Care and St. George hospitals have five and 10 ICU beds respectively.

However, St. George Hospital is yet to start admitting COVID-19 patients. The Wockhardt Hospital was shut after 52 healthcare workers tested positive and it was declared a containment zone.

"Those who require critical care spend about 8-10 days in the ICU. Some patients get worse in the second week which prolongs their ICU stay," said an infectious disease expert, adding that the city has always been short of ICU beds.

## All Indore residents to be screened for virus

Under the treatment protocol, the illness of a patient is first classified into one of the four categories—uncomplicated illnesses such as fever or sore throat, mild pneumonia, severe pneumonia and ARDS. Then, the treatment begins.

The survey, said Jyoti Bindal, Dean of the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Medical College, is to ensure that the patient doesn't reach a critical stage. "Spot it early so that mortality reduces," she said.

Early spotting of respiratory illnesses, whose symptoms are identical to those of COVID-19 in the initial stages, may help to pre-

empt the disease load in patients. As part of the door-to-door surveys, teams of health workers and teachers identify symptoms with an application-based questionnaire. Ten teams report to a doctor, who checks suspects and takes samples. For backup, a medical mobile unit is stationed in each area. "Only when we identify patients can we focus on certain areas and contain the spread there," Indore Divisional Commissioner Akash Tripathi said.

The survey initially focussed on 10 hotspots, but is being widened to areas where at least one case has been found.

## Seafarers may return in three phases

"Those in deep sea have already been quarantined in the vessel and they can be allowed to return earlier," the official explained.

He said seafarers on foreign land would be allowed to return to India only when the government lifted its ban on flights and allowed other Indians stranded abroad to return.

According to estimates, there are nearly 3,000 seafarers on ships at Indian ports, while 20,000 are on

various cruise liners around the world.

"The government's decision on allowing those at Indian ports to disembark at the earliest will benefit coastal shipping companies and offshore vessels with Indian seafarers heading for foreign countries. It will also be an opportunity for cruise liners to halt at Indian ports for crew disembarkation," said Sanjay Parashar, chairman, International Maritime Federation.

## Refund fares to passengers, airlines told

Airlines will have to issue refunds within three weeks of receiving a request.

The order comes two days after the government extended the lockdown till May 3 and follows demands to protect interests of passengers.

The Ministry had earlier held a meeting with airline CEOs on the matter. Importantly, passengers who had booked their tickets before the lockdown period kicked in will not benefit from the decision. Their money will

be parked with the airlines and can be redeemed when they make a fresh booking.

**Credit shell**  
Following the ban on international travel from March 22 and domestic travel from March 25, Indian airlines offered passengers a credit shell where their fare amount would remain parked up to a period of one year.

Passengers could then re-book a flight with that credit amount on any route.

# Lockdown only a pause button: Rahul

The former Congress president cautions govt. on potential 'social unrest' over migrant workers' issue

SANDEEP PHUKAN  
NEW DELHI

Lockdown is only a "pause button" and not a solution to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus, and the government should adopt aggressive and extensive testing to "defeat" the virus, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi said on Thursday.

In a virtual press conference, Mr. Gandhi said that though he had many disagreements with the government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, "today is not the time to fight with each other but to unite the country and take on the virus".

To a query if the nature and structure of democracy would change post COVID-19, he said though there was a possibility right now, the priority was to fight the virus.

He cautioned the government on the migrant workers' issue, saying it should



A virtual address: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi at a press conference on COVID-19 via a video link in New Delhi. >PTI

act quickly or there would be "social unrest".

Mr. Gandhi offered suggestions such as creating a safety net for the poor by offering free rations, putting money into the accounts of 20% of the poorest families in India, preparing a survival plan for the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and protecting the interests of strategic industries, among others.

"First thing to understand is that a lockdown is like a pause button, it's in no way a solution to coronavirus. When we come out of the lockdown, the virus will start its work again. So, it's important that we have a strategy to come out of it," he said. "The biggest weapon to fight the virus is testing."

Mr. Gandhi pointed out that India right now was testing 199 persons for every one

million people or 350 tests every district.

"If you have to fight the virus, you have to increase testing dramatically and your testing has to go from chasing the virus to moving ahead of it. That means you have to move into random testing," he said.

### 'Create 2 basic zones'

Asked if he favoured partial lifting of the lockdown, he said, "It should be a strategic opening. You open particular key areas, use testing to identify and this is where the point of ramping up testing is important. You use testing to identify dynamically which are the hot spots and you clamp down on those hot spots. You create two basic zones in India—a hot spot zone and a non-hot spot zone."

Besides managing health-care infrastructure, the economy needed urgent atten-

tion as there would be a "financial backlash" because of COVID-19. "You are going to see the first waves of unemployment and then that will start to spiral, you will see massive pressure coming on our financial system."

The government needed to set up structures to manage funding to avoid a financial crisis in a few months, he said.

### Food and assistance

On migrants getting restive to return to their native place, he said, "There are some people who have suggested moving the migrant people, some people are suggesting don't move them. Give them food and assistance where they are. Whichever choice the government chooses, they need to act on it quickly. They don't act on it quickly, social unrest will develop quickly in the country."

# India eyes record food production

Target of 298.3 million tonnes of foodgrain set after normal monsoon forecast

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

On the back of a normal monsoon forecast, the Agriculture Ministry is targeting a record foodgrain production of 298.3 million tonnes for 2020-21, higher than the 291.95 million tonnes estimated for 2019-20.

According to a presentation made by Agriculture Commissioner Suresh Malhotra at a National Conference on Agriculture-Kharif 2020 Campaign on Thursday, both rice and wheat production targets are minimally higher than the previous year. However, the focus is on driving the growth in pulses, coarse cereals and oilseeds.

Due to the travel restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Agriculture Ministry's annual meeting to review the ongoing rabi or winter season harvest and layout prospects for the coming kharif or summer cropping season is being held via video conferencing. Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar also interacted with State agriculture departments, briefing them on the mea-



Staple crops: Both rice and wheat production targets are minimally higher than the previous year. >AKHILESH KUMAR

sures taken to ensure a smooth and safe rabi harvest in the midst of the lockdown.

### Normal rainfall

On Wednesday, the India Meteorological Department issued its first forecast for the monsoon, predicting normal rainfall, with a change of above normal rain in August and September.

The main kharif season crop is rice, and the Agriculture Ministry is targeting a harvest of 102.6 million tonnes, slightly higher than the last kharif season harvest of 101.95 million tonnes. However, it has lowered its rice production target for the

next rabi season to 14.9 million tonnes. This means that the total rice production target for 2020-21 is 117.5 million tonnes, barely higher than the previous year's target of 117.47 million tonnes.

Wheat production is also expected to remain steady, with a 2020-21 target of 106.5 million tonnes, in comparison to the previous year's estimate of 106.21 million tonnes.

The Agriculture Ministry hopes to ramp up production of coarse cereals this year, but admits that the challenge is how to create demand for nutriceals or millets. It is targeting a har-

vest of 48.7 million tonnes in comparison to the previous season's 45.24 million tonnes.

With regard to pulses, the target is 25.3 million tonnes compared to the previous season's estimates of 23 million tonnes, with the entire increase projected to come from the kharif season.

### Oilseeds major priority

Oilseeds are a major priority, especially due to the disruption in edible oil imports caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The targeted harvest is 36.64 million tonnes, in comparison to the last season's estimates of 34.19 million tonnes. One challenge could be a shortfall in supply of soyabean seeds to the tune of 3.2 lakh quintals, due to unseasonal rains at the time of harvesting the seed crop.

The Ministry has also created an action plan for oil palm plantation, given the disruptions in imports. It hopes to cover 31,500 hectares with about 45 lakh seedlings this year, with the bulk of the plantation in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

## Home Ministry warns against use of Zoom

VIJAYTA SINGH  
YUTHIKA BHARGAVA  
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has cautioned against use of Zoom video conferencing stating that it was not a safe platform.

The advisory said the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) issued two advisories on February 6 and in March, cautioning on the use of Zoom for office meetings.

The March 30 note on the CERT-In website said, "Zoom is a popular video conferencing platform. Insecure usage of the platform may allow cybercriminals to access sensitive information such as meeting details and conversations."

Another note posted by the CERT-In on April 2 said that multiple vulnerabilities had been reported in the video conferencing platform "which could allow an attacker to gain elevated privileges or obtain sensitive information."

The Ministry asked the users to set strong passwords and enable "waiting room" feature so that call managers could have a better control over the participants. It also asked the users to avoid using personal meeting ID to host events and instead use randomly generated meeting IDs for each event and asked to not share links on public platforms.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Civil rights campaigner Gautam Navlakha was sent to a seven-day police custody by a city court on Wednesday.

Mr. Navlakha, accused of involvement in the Bhima-Koregaon riots of 2018, surrendered to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in New Delhi on Tuesday.

NIA had appealed for a ten-day custody of Mr. Navlakha on the ground that custodial interrogation was required for analysing the data and documents retrieved from electronic devices that were recovered during the investigation.

Mr. Navlakha's counsel opposed the application, stating that he was 67 years old and had been falsely im-

## Police get 7-day custody of Navlakha

The civil rights campaigner had surrendered before the NIA on Tuesday

placated in the case. Additional District Judge Sumena Sharma said that considering the nature of allegations, custodial interrogation was indeed required. The Judge then granted the police Mr. Navlakha's custody for seven days.

The court told the investigating officer that Mr. Nav-

lakha must be medically examined every 48 hours.

It said that in the wake of the public health emergency due to COVID-19 outbreak, the officer should take "extra precautions."

The accused being a senior citizen was more prone to infections. A Supreme Court bench had rejected the anticipatory bail pleas of Mr. Navlakha and Anand Telumbde, an engineer and IIM graduate who taught at IIT Kharagpur, on March 16 and ordered them to surrender.

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).

The court told the investigating officer that Mr. Nav-

Dr. Telumbde surrendered in Mumbai on Tuesday. Mr. Navlakha could not travel to Mumbai due to the ongoing COVID-19 lockdown and surrendered in Delhi.

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 co-accused. This alone will enable me to clear my name, and walk free..."

### Previous arrests

The Pune police had earlier 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.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh on Wednesday announced that action would be taken against English news channel Times Now for airing fake news about Maharashtra Minister Jitendra Awhad's daughter testing positive for COVID-19.

In a letter addressed to Maharashtra's Director General of Police, Mr. Deshmukh said that Mr. Awhad had sent him a letter regarding the news telecast by the channel.

**PIL in SC against job cuts in media**

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A public interest litigation petition was filed on Thursday in the Supreme Court stating that certain media organisations have issued termination notices, imposed wage cuts and unpaid leaves to their employees during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A joint petition filed by the National Alliance of Journalists, the Delhi Union of Journalists and the Brihanmumbai Union of Journalists said this amounted to an "inhuman and illegal treatment".

## AICTE asks colleges to not demand fees

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Colleges should not demand fee payments from students until the ongoing COVID-19 lockdown is lifted, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) said on Wednesday.

"It has come to knowledge of AICTE that certain standalone institutions are insisting that students should pay the fees, including admission fees, during the lockdown," said a letter to all AICTE institutions from Member Secretary Rajive Kumar.

"It is clarified that colleges/institutions should not insist on payment of fees till the ongoing lockdown is lifted and normalcy is restored," he added.

Professor Kumar said the AICTE would issue guidelines on the revised fee payment timelines.

## Ministry issues SOP for sowing of kharif crops

Farmers asked to follow guidelines

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The Union Agriculture Ministry on Thursday laid down the standard operating procedure (SOP) to guide farmers on safety precautions that need to be strictly followed during planting of kharif crops amid the threat of COVID-19 pandemic.

"Transplanting of paddy and vegetables are labour-intensive activities. Hence, it is important to strictly follow guidelines on social distancing, sanitizing and wearing masks," the SOP released by the ministry during the national video conference on kharif crops said.

Workers should wash their hands, legs and face with soap when coming out of the field for meal or rest, it added.

For preparing land for sowing of kharif crops, the ministry said, farmers should minimise labour and use tractor. Farmers should use seed-cum-fertiliser drills and reduce the number of workers in the field.

As per the SOP, social distancing and sanitization

norms should be followed during field preparation, sowing and fertiliser application.

"Maintain social distance of at least 1-2 metre during farm operations. Workers should be assigned separate duties with regard to farm activities," it said.

### Sanitisation important

"All farm equipment from seed drill, plough to tractor should be sanitized before use. Those working in the farm field should wear masks or cover their face with three layers of 'chunni, gamucha or towel,' it added. Each worker should have a separate utensil and clean it with soap after use, the SOP said.

For operations like weeding and spraying of fertilisers and pesticides, the Ministry asked farmers to "Burn or bury in soil empty packets of pesticides. Sun dry empty bags of seeds, fertilisers for two days for re-use."

It also advised that farmers take bath and wash clothes with soap and sundry after the day's work.

## Minister plans action against news channel

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh on Wednesday announced that action would be taken against English news channel Times Now for airing fake news about Maharashtra Minister Jitendra Awhad's daughter testing positive for COVID-19.

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IN BRIEF



Doctor laid to rest after row over last rites

**GUWAHATI**  
The body of a 69-year-old doctor, who died of COVID-19 complications on Wednesday, was laid to rest on Thursday after localities in Shillong and beyond disallowed his last rites for fear of contagion. The doctor's body was interred at the Riatsamthiah Presbyterian Church cemetery in Lawmali area about 3 km from the hospital where he died less than 48 hours after testing positive.

Police, medical team attacked in Bihar

**PATNA**  
Villagers in Bihar have attacked police and medical teams who were out to enforce the lockdown and for COVID-19 screening in the past few days. At Jagapakk village in East Champaran, at least nine officials were injured in an attack by a group of villagers on Wednesday. Similarly, a medical team and some policemen were attacked at Akauin village in Aurangabad when they went there for screening.

PPE testing lab shifted from Gwalior to Delhi

**NEW DELHI**  
To overcome delays and ensure swift delivery of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and masks to combat COVID-19, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has shifted the PPE testing facility at the Defence Research Development Establishment (DRDE) in Gwalior to the Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS) in Delhi. "INMAS is fully operational for testing of body suits and masks," the DRDO said.

West Bengal records 3 deaths, 24 new cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA

The West Bengal government on Thursday confirmed three more deaths due to COVID-19, taking the toll in the State to 10. "Twenty four new cases were reported in the State in the past 24 hours," Chief Secretary Rajiva Sinha said.

With 170 new cases, Mumbai crosses 2,000 mark

Maharashtra tally goes past 3,000, with 194 deaths

STAFF REPORTER PUNE

The number of COVID-19 positive cases and deaths continued to rise in Maharashtra as the State crossed the 3,000-case mark on Thursday, with 286 new cases being reported. The tally went up to 3,202, while the death toll surged to 194 with seven new deaths.

Maharashtra has the highest death toll (more than 40%) and the highest number of positive cases in the country, accounting for a fourth of India's total positive cases.

Three of the new fatalities were reported from Mumbai, taking the city's death toll to 117. The majority of the new cases in the State - 170 of the 286 - were reported from the city, followed by Pune district, which reported



Living hand to mouth: Migrant workers sitting in their small room at Kherwadi in Bandra East, Mumbai, on Thursday. \*ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWHURY

66 fresh cases, including three from Pimpri-Chinchwad. With the new cases, Mumbai city's tally of COVID-19 positive cases alone has crossed the 2,000-mark to reach 2,073.

Pune reported four deaths, taking its death toll to 46. According to Pune divisional authorities, three of

the dead were women. A 65-year-old woman from the Wakdedwadi area, who was suffering from high blood pressure, a 54-year-old woman from Ganj Peth, and a 47-year-old woman from Kondhwa who had a kidney ailment, said Divisional Commissioner Dr. Deepak Mishra.

Pune district's cumulative tally has touched 473 cases, with 435 of these from Pune city, around 40 of them from Pimpri-Chinchwad, and the rest from the district's rural parts.

Solapur district in the Pune division witnessed a sharp spike, reporting ten new cases. Nine of them

26 new cases in Dharavi

STAFF REPORTER MUMBAI

Dharavi on Thursday reported 26 new cases taking the total from Asia's largest slum to 86. The area also reported its ninth death, a 58 year-old man from Laxmi chawl. He was the first from Dharavi to test positive.

Of the new cases, a majority are from areas that had already reported COVID-19 cases in the past, while a few are from new parts of Dharavi.

On Thursday, Dharavi's Mukund Nagar reported four new cases, thus totalling 18. Mukund Nagar is becoming one of the largest clusters within Dharavi. A total of 11 new cases were reported from Muslim Nagar, including a 13 year-old boy. Besides, newer areas of Dharavi reported cases on Thursday including Ramji chawl, Suryoddy Society, Sairaj nagar, and Shiv Shakti nagar.

from Malegaon in Nashik district in north Maharashtra, and fresh cases were reported from Panvel, Vasai-Virar and Navi Mumbai, as well as the Ahmednagar and Chandrapur districts. State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate said that 300 patients across the State had been discharged till date.

Pizza man has COVID-19, 89 quarantined

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

A 19-year-old pizza delivery man has tested positive for COVID-19 in Delhi, prompting authorities to quarantine 89 people, including 72 in houses of South Delhi where he made deliveries.

"A total of 17 people, including the owner of the shop and other delivery boys, have been put under institutional quarantine," officials said.

"72 people in houses where he made the delivery have been put under home quarantine," they added.

The delivery man was currently under treatment in Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital, they said.

17 arrested for attacking officials in U.P.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT LUCKNOW/ GHAZIABAD

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday instructed officials to recover the cost of damage to property from the persons accused of attacking health officials in Moradabad on Wednesday. "If they don't [pay up for the damage], their property should be seized," a spokesperson said, quoting the Chief Minister.

Three persons, including a doctor, were injured when a crowd attacked a Health Department team that went to take samples for checking COVID-19 infection in the Nawabpura area of Moradabad on Wednesday, police said. So far, 17 persons have been arrested, they added.

Bihar to step up testing

The total number of positive cases has gone up to 80

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT PATNA

Bihar with an estimated population of 123 million people has had far fewer sample tests done for COVID-19 compared to other States, but health officials said tests would be increased in the days to come. The State government has announced a "pulse polio pattern drive" like door-to-door screening of all those residing within a 3-km radius of a patient.

According to Principal Health Secretary Sanjay Kumar, till April 16 Bihar has done 8,846 sample tests at six centres with 607 under process. "Two more positive cases came from Buxar district on Thursday. The total number of COVID-19 positive cases in Bihar has gone up to 80 with samples of six persons - two males and four females of a family - having tested positive," he said in a tweet.

The two persons found positive had travel history from Assam in West Bengal. On Thursday, eight persons whose samples earlier



Ready for action: Medical personnel at the Nalanda Medical College and Hospital in Patna. \*RANJEET KUMAR

tested positive however were released from the Nalanda Medical College and Hospital (NMCH), which is designated as COVID-19 special hospital. Out of the eight, six were from Siwan (the red zone hotspot district) while one each are from Gaya and Gopalganj districts.

"Earlier the testing was done according to Central guidelines which did not suggest taking samples of those who were asymptomatic... but now we have started door-to-door screening and the sample tests will be increased in the days to come," Ragini Mishra, Bihar's COVID-19 nodal officer, told *The Hindu* over phone.

Recovery rate

"Besides, the number of sample tests are population-based and Bihar's rank is way above so many other States," said a Health department official. He added that the "COVID-19 recovery rate in Bihar is 51.30%, which is much higher than several States." Earlier, the sample tests in Bihar were done only at two places but now it is being done at six places. "We are equipped to do more sample tests on a daily basis," said the Health Department official.

U.P. starts pool testing COVID-19 samples

Number of deaths in State climbs to 13

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government on Thursday said it had started pool testing COVID-19 samples in the State.

Meanwhile, the number of deaths due to COVID-19 in U.P. climbed to 13 and the positive cases stood at 805, according to the State Directorate of Health Services.

After experimenting with pool testing, which allows testing several samples together, in Agra, the State would now expand it to other districts.

The first batch of 150 samples from Agra, tested in 30 pools of five samples each, turned out negative, said Amit Mohan Prasad, Principal Secretary, Health Department. "The testing was quite encouraging," he said.

Agra has turned out to be a major hotspot in the State with the most number of positive cases, 167, as well as deaths, five. For the pool testing, the administration collected samples from "buffer zones" outside the containment areas in Agra, said Mr. Prasad.

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**  
(Re-Accredited With A Grade by NAAC)  
ABISHEKAPATTI, TRUNELVELKOTTAI, TAMIL NADU Phone: (0) 0462-2338632  
Fax: 0462-2334932 Email: registrar@msuniv.ac.in Website: www.msuniv.ac.in  
Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli has sealed tenders, under two-bid system, for Supply, Installation and Commissioning of the following equipments.

Sl. No	Name of the Equipment	Tender Number and Date	Last date for receipt of Tender	Opening Date of Tender
1	Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Spectrometers with Accessories	No.MSUNIR/P&D/GO259TN/CIF/MSR/2020, dated 17-04-2020	26.05.2020/26.05.2020 4.00 p.m., 5.00 p.m.	26.05.2020/26.05.2020 3.00 p.m., 4.00 p.m.
2	MALDI-TOF/TOF with Accessories	No.MSUNIR/P&D/GO259TN/CIF/MALDI/TOF/TOF/2020, dated 17-04-2020	26.05.2020/26.05.2020 3.00 p.m., 4.00 p.m.	26.05.2020/26.05.2020 3.00 p.m., 4.00 p.m.

Tender Document, eligibility criteria, important dates, details about tender document fee, earnest money deposit, instructions, terms and conditions can be downloaded from the University website [www.msuniv.ac.in](http://www.msuniv.ac.in).  
Date: 17.04.2020 DIPR/1629/TENDER/2020 REGISTRAR

AWADA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION (VMC) Tender Notice No.CE-02/VMC/AE/2020-21, Dt.16-04-2020

Name of the work	No. of call	Estimate Amount Rs. in Lakhs
of BT road with Hot Mix process to ads and Drains connecting Bandar Eluru Road Ali Baig Street, Museum Nakkala Road, Dornakal Road, III Street, Rajagopalachari Street and ads in Governor peta & Surya Rao 3 <sup>rd</sup> 21 <sup>st</sup> Division.	1 <sup>st</sup> Call	712.00
BT Roads, Drains & Paver Blocks at Press Road, Kamataka Ram Mohana ol Road, Gangaraju Kalyanamandapam urna Hospital Road, Boyapativari Balaji Street, Vemuri Vari Street, n Vari Street and Govinda rajulu reet in Suryarao Peta 19 <sup>th</sup> division.	1 <sup>st</sup> Call	250.00
ion of old dump site into park with wall, Site, Play Courts, Children play t etc., at Ajith Singh Nagar (12.00 Acres)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Call	500.00
<b>works)</b>		<b>1462.00</b>

lo. 1 & 2 - S.E(W), VMC, Vijayawada - 98665 14183.  
lo. 3 - S.E(P), VMC, Vijayawada - 99639 95283.  
s can be seen @ 'e' procurement market place [procurement.gov.in](http://procurement.gov.in)  
bid documents starts from : 17-04-2020 from 03.30 P.M.  
ne for receipt of tenders : 01-05-2020 upto 04.00 P.M.  
Sd/- XXXX  
CHIEF ENGINEER

GOVT. OF N.C.T. OF DELHI  
:CUTIVE ENGINEER (RPC),  
RLOL BAGH, NEW DELHI:-110005  
01 of (2019-2020) for the work of Procurement  
ding monitoring software of global positioning  
f Delhi Jal Board.

been extended upto 03-05-2020 in India i/c Delhi, so  
tended as below

Date & Time
08/05/2020 at 11:00 A.M.
15/05/2020 upto 3:00 P.M.
any
der Documents.
on of tender
Part-A)
Part-B)

After completion of Technical bid.

BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE Office of the Executive Engineer, Projects-Mahadevapura, Old Madras Road, K.R. Pura, Bengaluru-560036

No.: BBMP/E(P)/MZ/TN/01/2020-21 Date: 15.04.2020 INVITATION FOR TENDER (IFT)

(Short Term Tender Notification) (Two Cover) (Through GOK e-Procurement Portal Only)

The Executive Engineer (Projects-Mahadevapura) invites Item Rate tenders from eligible tenderers for the works details in the table given below. The Tenders may submit tenders for any or all of the works given in the table in appropriate class registered in Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike / CPWD / KPWD / Railways / MES / any State or Central Govt. organization.

Sl. No.	Name of the Work	Approx. value of work (Rs. in Lakhs)	EMD (in Rs.)
1	Providing borewell pipeline and other development works at Swathanthra Nagara Park in Ward No. 53.	100.00	2,00,000/-
2	Repair & Maintenance of footpath of arterial roads in K.R. Puram Constituency.	75.00	1,50,000/-
3	Repair & Maintenance of footpath of sub arterial roads in K.R. Puram Constituency.	75.00	1,50,000/-
4	Desilting & cleaning of all arterial and sub arterial roads in Mahadevapura Constituency.	175.00	2,62,500/-
5	Maintenance & repairs to drains and footpath of Non DLP arterial and sub arterials roads in Mahadevapura Constituency.	175.00	2,62,500/-
6	Emergency repair works pertaining to RI Mahadevapura Division in Mahadevapura Constituency.	75.00	1,50,000/-
7	Developmental works in Doddanekkundi, Tharahalli, Kundalahalli colony, Seethrampalya Burial Ground in Ward No. 85.	100.00	2,00,000/-

Calendar of events : (1) Availability of RFP documents : 18.04.2020 onwards. (2) Pre bid meeting will be held on 24.04.2020 at 11:30 a.m. in the Chief Engineer office, K.R. Pura. (3) Last Date for submission of tender documents : on or before 01.05.2020 at 5:00 p.m. (4) Technical Bids will be opened on the website : <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in> in the office of the Executive Engineer, K.R. Pura Division on 04.05.2020 at 4:00 p.m. Further details may be obtained from the above office during office hours or website <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>.  
Sd/- Executive Engineer, Projects - Mahadevapura, BBMP  
"Pay Development Charges, Help to Develop Bengaluru"

Types of crops in India Kharif Season in India (kharif means autumn in Arabic)

**July - October Harvest - September to October A.k.a Monsoon Crops**  
Such crops require a lot of water  
Example: rice, sorghum, maize, Tea, rubber, coffee, guar, Sesame, cereals such as Arhar Dhal, pearl millet, soybeans, cotton, oilseeds, etc.  
RABI CROPS IN INDIA

**Sowing between October and November Harvest - February to April A.k.a Winter Season Crops**  
Need cold weather for growth  
Need less water  
Example: wheat, oats, barley, pulses, cereals, oilseeds, linseed, etc.  
ZAID SEASON

**Sowing between March and June (between Kharif and Rabi) Requires warm & dry weather for growth and a longer day-length for flowering**  
Example: Seasonal fruits and vegetables

# New normal: more airport time, no frills and higher fare

To ensure physical distancing of passengers, airlines will encourage check-in through mobile applications or automated kiosks

JAGRITI CHANDRA  
NEW DELHI

Passengers taking a flight must prepare to spend more time at the airport, temperature checks, fewer frills on board and possibly higher air fares, as airlines, airports and the government work to ensure physical distancing, hand hygiene and a sanitised environment to keep the COVID-19 infection at bay once the lockdown is lifted.

"The key aspect we have to keep in mind is the safety of passengers by ensuring social distancing so that the infection does not spread. This means travel time will increase. Where passengers were asked to report 45 minutes before the departure time (for domestic flights), they will now have to report two hours earlier. We will encourage passengers to use automated modes as much as possible to avoid human

contact. For example, they may be asked to check in through the mobile application or self check-in kiosks, which will undergo frequent cleaning." Vistara chief commercial officer Vinod Kannan told *The Hindu* in a telephone interview.

GoAir, however, requires its passengers to report three hours before a flight.

### Norms being finalised

"The Ministry of Civil Aviation, the Airports Authority of India (AAI), the safety regulator DGCA and the aviation security watchdog Bureau of Civil Aviation Security are finalising guidelines for airports and airlines. Several airports have already started marking circles and squares at various contact points on their premises," AAI Chairman Arvind Singh said.

The CISF has submitted its recommendations on security

### Safer flights

A look at how airlines would operate post the lockdown

- Check-in time likely to increase from 45 minutes to 2/3 hours before flight departure
- Air fares likely to go up, but if demand is low, airlines will make attractive offers
- Self check-in through mobile apps or mobile kiosks preferred
- Full service carrier Vistara to offer meals, budget airlines to discontinue



In queue: Passengers line up for check-in at the Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru in this file photo. ■ SAMPATH KUMAR G P

protocol to the Ministry of Civil Aviation, which include measurement of body temperature at the airport entrance, filling up of a questionnaire on health conditions by passengers, only alternate check-in coun-

ters being opened and security personnel equipped with protective gear. CISF airport in-charge M.A. Ganapathy said that at the time of entering the terminal building, passengers would be asked to remove their mask for

identification by security personnel and CCTV cameras.

Once you board the flight, the middle row seat is likely to be left empty, in accordance with the DGCA guidelines, or possibly four out of

six seats in a row could be left empty. While low-cost airlines IndiGo and GoAir will discontinue meals on board, Vistara will continue to provide them, with some changes in the delivery.

"In order to ensure a superior quality of service, our cabin crew members interact with passengers several times and explain the menu. We will limit the number of interactions. We will offer pre-packaged cold meals to minimise contact," Mr. Kannan said.

Passengers must also be prepared for a costlier travel so that airlines can operate flights in a cost-efficient manner despite being required to leave 33%-50% of their flights empty.

"If we are operating only two-thirds of our flight capacity, the cost per ticket will go up. But airfare is a function of supply and demand

and we can't predict the nature of demand. We know that in the first few days, there will be a lot of demand from passengers, but what happens thereafter is uncertain," Mr. Kannan said.

Vistara and other airlines have already announced that they will remove all reading materials from seat-back pockets, clean the aircraft after every flight and deep clean the aircraft after every 24 hours and provide passengers with hand-sanitisers and masks.

With multiple agencies involved in minimising the risk of infection, Mr. Kannan advises passengers to travel free of stress. "This is not an easy time, but air travel is the safest mode. The air inside the plane is re-circulated through HEPA filters to minimise infection. Just remember to wear your mask and factor in extra time."

## Copter makes precautionary landing

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A Cheetah helicopter of the Indian Air Force (IAF), going to Chandigarh with COVID-19 test samples of Leh, made a precautionary landing on the Outer Ring Road just outside Hindon in Ghaziabad on Thursday morning after developing a technical snag.

"Approximately 3 NM out of Hindon, aircraft developed technical snag and carried out safe a precautionary landing on Outer Ring Road highway. The actions taken by the pilots were prompt and correct," the IAF said in a statement.

A recovery aircraft was launched immediately from the Hindon airbase, the IAF said. The helicopter was rectified and recovered back promptly and safely at Hindon, it added.

## 80 radio jockeys of Delhi FM Gold out of work

They have not been called since Mar. 20

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI



Despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi's repeated pleas to employers not to lay off workers during the lockdown, 80 radio jockeys of All India Radio's FM Gold in Delhi are out of work.

The state broadcaster Prasar Bharati, which oversees the AIR and Doordarshan, has decided that in cities that has three FM channels, one will be dedicated to news about the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, FM Gold, mostly an infotainment channel, has suspended its usual shows.

All 80 jockeys who anchor the shows in Delhi are casual workers, and are paid for the shows they anchor.

These 80 jockeys have not been called to work since March 20, five days before the lockdown was imposed nationwide. Harikrishnan Sharma, president of AIR Casual Announcers and Compères Union, sent multiple e-mails to Prasar Bharati CEO Shashi Shekhar Vempati, but has got no response.

In his e-mail, Mr. Sharma has flagged two circulars. The first one is the March 20 advisory issued by the Labour Secretary to the Chief Secretaries of all the States. It asked them to reach out to private as well as public enterprises and ensure that no worker is laid off.

The Department of Expenditure, under the Ministry of Finance, issued a circular on March 23. It said, "In order to avoid any undue hardships under the prevailing extraordinary cir-

Many AIR stations across the country have cancelled the booking of casual radio jockeys. This is a stark example of unbridled and arbitrary functioning of AIR...

RAMA SHARMA  
a radio jockey

cumstances, it has been decided that wherever any contractual, casual and outsourced staff member of the Ministries/Departments and other organisations of the Government of India is required to stay at home in view of the lockdown... they shall be treated as 'on duty' during such a period of absence and necessary pay/wages would be paid accordingly."

"FM Gold Delhi is not alone in this situation. In fact, many AIR stations across the country have cancelled the booking of casual radio jockeys. This is a stark example of unbridled and arbitrary functioning of AIR, which shows how the country's biggest radio broadcaster is ignoring the Prime Minister's repeated appeals, and the instructions issued by the Union government," said Rama Sharma, a radio jockey working with FM Gold.

## Most COVID-19 positive Indians abroad are in the Gulf

Of the 3,336 infected Indians spread across 53 countries, 2,061 are in Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, UAE, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
KALLOL BHATTACHARJEE  
NEW DELHI

The majority of Indians who tested positive for COVID-19 infection abroad are located in the Gulf countries, a source familiar with the figures said on Thursday.

The official maintained that India had sufficient quarantine facilities to house the affected individuals. However, a decision was taken not to evacuate the affected nationals spread across the world because of the highly contagious nature of the novel coronavirus that causes the infection.

"There is no shortage of quarantine facilities in India. In fact, the nature of the virus is such that it spreads ve-

ry fast. Therefore it is good that they remain where they are to avoid further spreading the virus, both in their host countries as well as in India," said the source.

The official said that a total of 3,336 Indians spread across 53 countries have tested positive for the novel coronavirus and 25 Indians have died in the consequent COVID-19 infection. Out of the total, around 2,061 are in Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, UAE, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. On the northern coast of the Gulf, Iran also continues to host around 308 affected Indians, mainly in the cities of Qom and Tehran.

**UAE's offer**  
Prime Minister Narendra Mo-



Home away: Foreign nationals waiting to be screened for COVID-19 at a hospital in New Delhi on Thursday. ■ PPT

di has been in frequent contact with the Arab leaders of the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council over the last two months as the cases increased among the blue collar Indian expats. The health related issues of

the Indian workers in the region had been taken up most recently by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who wrote to Mr. Modi expressing concern about the "well being of Indian diaspora" in the region, especially in Dubai.

The United Arab Emirates has extended an offer to evacuate all affected Indian nationals following required medical tests, though New Delhi is yet to respond to that gesture. Earlier, on April 13, India sent a Rapid Response Team to Kuwait which held interactions with officials there, as the Gulf monarchy emerged as the largest host of Indians affected by the novel coronavirus abroad. The United Arab Emirates is also among the 54 countries where India is supplying the anti-malarial drug Hydroxy-Chloroquine which is being tried in COVID-19 treatment. Apart from the Gulf nations, Singapore with 634 Indians is the other big hotspot. Italy (91), Malaysia (37), Portugal

(36), Ghana (29), U.S. (24), Switzerland (15) and France (13) are some of the other countries on the list.

**Ministry's control room**  
To deal with the emerging situation, the Ministry of External Affairs set up a COVID-19 Control Room in March to serve as the nodal body for dealing with the Indians and their families living abroad. The official said that around 18,000 emails have been answered by the COVID-19 Control Room in the last few weeks. That apart, 5,000 phone calls and 2,000 public grievances were also addressed regarding the welfare of Indians who are abroad in the current difficult circumstances.

## Major batch of testing kits coming from China

They are expected to boost testing

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A large consignment of testing kits for COVID-19 is scheduled to reach from China on Thursday, sources have confirmed. The kits are expected to boost India's testing capacity in a major way.

According to available information, 5.5 lakh Rapid Antibody Testing Kits sourced from Guangzhou Wondfo and Zhuhai Livzon and 1 lakh RNA Extraction Kits from MGI Shenzhen are among the consignment, which is a part of a total order of 15 million personal protective equipment (PPE) kits and 1.5 million rapid

testing kits that India had ordered from China.

*The Hindu* had reported that India had called upon China to fulfil those orders amid concerns over tightened regulations on export of such equipment after several western countries complained over the quality.

India's Ambassador to China Vikram Misri, in an online interaction with reporters on Tuesday, said deliveries of the medical supplies for India would be stretched until April-end. Around six consignments of vital medical supplies were expected to reach India in the next fortnight.

## J&K govt clarifies on testing kits

'No interruption in testing because of shortage'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR

The Jammu and Kashmir government clarified on Thursday that the Kashmir Valley is not facing any dearth of testing kits.

"There is no truth that a testing kit consignment was diverted to Jammu. It was first delivered in Jammu and the next day it was received in Srinagar. There was no interruption in the testing process because of any shortage," said Dr. Samia Rashid, Principal of the Government Medical College (GMC), Srinagar.

The clarification came after *The Hindu* published a report on a consignment of 5,000 testing kits being di-

verted to Jammu. They were shifted to Srinagar only after the intervention of senior officials in the Union Territory. Ms. Rashid said a third testing centre was being established at the Jhelum Valley Medical College, Bemina. Testing centres are there now at GMC, Srinagar, and the Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences hospital.

A government spokesman said doctors at the SKIMS hospital confirmed that it was not facing any shortage of test kits and had ramped up the number to 1000 tests a day. However, the hospital has not clarified as how many fresh samples from the Directorate of Health, Kashmir, were received on Wed-

nesday, due to the delay in testing kits arrival.

On the role of Dr. Jitender Mehta, Divisional Officer, National Health Mission, the spokesman said the former was actively involved in COVID-19 "mitigation and management". "Dr. Mehta had no role in the procurement process," the spokesman added.

Dr. Samir Mattoo, Director of Health Services, said his department was carrying out sample collection across the Valley aggressively.

Civil society groups and traders' bodies have called for transparency in the mitigation plan pursued by the government to manage the crisis.

## EPFO clears 3.31 lakh claims

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) had processed 3.31 lakh claims disbursing ₹946.49 crore in 15 days under the special pandemic withdrawal scheme, the Labour and Employment Ministry said on Thursday.

As a part of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, the scheme had been notified on March 28 to provide relief to workers hit by the lockdown. "In addition, ₹284 crore has been distributed by the exempted PF trusts, notable among them being TCS," the Ministry said.

### THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12912

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10				11				
12					13			
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- (set by Spinner)
- 13 Quarantined indefinitely, a lot die around first of September (8)
  - 15 Ridicule royal essentially smuggling fine gemstones (9)
  - 16 Restrain knight in stable (4)
  - 20 Reduce rent on losing money (4)
  - 21 Person who may invent a solution as sit-in sect comes to grief (9)
  - 24 Intensify smell in plastic closet (8)
  - 26 Dish falsely portrayed as cure (6)
  - 28 Same touch differently applied for facial hair (9)
  - 29 Go along with girl's tirade (5)
  - 30 Carefully raises limit on buying some indispensable common stuff (12)
  - 5 Protective guard to secure doctor initially before test (10)
  - 6 Spinner's squad has no room, basically for cold person (6)
  - 7 Mighty vigilante not exactly dispelling evil, for a change (5)
  - 8 Hard, very overwhelming time at New York! (5)
  - 9 Big day of partners on vacation deciding to embrace chaos? (7)
  - 14 At first, convict gangster - After, decide on punishment involving current! (10)
  - 17 Link cases to a gaffe involving Indians, primarily (9)
  - 18 Clue about country free of new condition (7)
  - 19 Neat spot hosting unconventional art (8)
  - 22 Boy saw upwards in lowest point (6)
  - 23 Summons energy to keep in touch (5)
  - 25 Serves soup cooked with a bit of ramen (5)
  - 27 Raise tail (4)

### SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

**Solution to puzzle 12911**

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

**Solution to yesterday's Sudoku**

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

### FAITH

## Waking up to reality

The Kenopnishad stresses the unique chance given to each human being to get spiritually evolved and recognise the freedom that self realisation confers on one. It also warns people that failing to avail themselves of this opportunity to realise the self is destructive, pointed out Swami Sashishikhandanda in a discourse. Sadana is practice and upasana is individual effort that is to be directed inwards by which one can avoid future births and be determined to know the self in this very birth itself. No amount of spiritual classes can be effective unless there is an inner transformation. The effectiveness and value of the sadana depends on the sincerity of the sadaka and the intensity of the practice.

The greatest hurdle is the world of experience that takes hold of our entire being and invades one's thought and word and deed. Our attention is caught in the unreal. In truth, Maya creates and manifests the world. It is the appearance and it influences most of our lifetime. Precious time is spent on many unrelated issues. Like watching cinema for instance, we should know that has no connection with us. To understand that the self in each individual is not attached in any way to one's personal ego/identity, the example of the presence of the self in the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep is often quoted. The personal ego is present in the waking state and dream states. But the personal identity is annihilated in the deep sleep state.

Once the personal ego or the sense of 'I' and 'Mine' pertaining to the body is removed, one automatically realises the self as the witness/consciousness existing without any relation to the three states that one experiences. Like the dream world experience vanishes when we get up, we have to wake up to the reality of our self existence.

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

**A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) is introduced in a court of law not by the aggrieved party but by a private party or by the court itself.**

PILs have become a potent tool for enforcing the legal obligation of the executive and the legislature. The chief objective behind PILs are ensuring justice to all and promoting the welfare of the people. It is generally used to safeguard group interests and not individual interests, for which Fundamental Rights have been provided.

The Supreme Court of India and the High Courts have the right to issue PILs.

The concept of PILs stem from the power of judicial review.

The concept of PILs have diluted the principle of locus standi, which implies that only the person/party whose rights have been infringed upon can file petitions.

It has most ideally and commonly been used to challenge the decisions of public authorities by judicial review, to review the lawfulness of a decision or action, or a failure to act, by a public body.

PILs have played an important role in India's polity. They have been responsible for some landmark judgements in India such as the banning of the instant triple talaq, opened up the doors of the Sabarimala and the Haji Ali shrines to women, legalised consensual homosexual relations, legalised passive euthanasia, and so on.

Any Indian citizen or organisation can move the court for a public interest/cause by filing a petition:

**In the SC under Article 32**

**In the High Courts under Article 226**

The court can treat a letter as a writ petition and take action on it. The court has to be satisfied that the writ petition complies with the following: the letter is addressed by the aggrieved person or a public-spirited individual or a social action group for the enforcement of legal or constitutional rights to any person who, upon poverty or disability, are not able to approach the court for redress. The court can also take action on the basis of newspaper reports if it is satisfied with the case.

### History of Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in India

In 1979, Kapila Hingorani filed a petition and secured the release of almost 40000 undertrials from Patna's jails in the famous 'Hussainara Khatoon' case. Hingorani was a lawyer. This case was filed in the SC before a Bench led by Justice P N Bhagwati. Hingorani is called the 'Mother of PILs' as a result of this successful case. The court permitted Hingorani to pursue a case in which she had no personal locus standi making PILs a permanent fixture in Indian jurisprudence.

Justice Bhagwati did a lot to ensure that the concept of PILs was clearly enunciated. He did not insist on the observance of procedural technicalities and even treated ordinary letters from public-minded individuals as writ petitions. Justice Bhagwati and Justice V R Krishna Iyer were among the first judges in the country to admit PILs.

### Significance of Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in India

The original purpose of PILs have been to make justice accessible to the poor and the marginalised.

It is an important tool to make human rights reach those who have been denied rights.

It democratises the access of justice to all. Any citizen/agency who is capable can file petitions on behalf of those who cannot or do not have the means to do so.

It helps in judicially monitoring state institutions like prisons, asylums, protective homes, etc.

It is an important tool in judicial review.

### Criticism of Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in India

Off late, PILs have become a tool for publicity. People file frivolous petitions which result in the wastage of time of the courts. People have used them with a political agenda as well. They unnecessarily burden the judiciary. Even if the petition is eventually dismissed, the courts spend time and effort on them before dismissing them.

At present, only judges have the power to dismiss a petition. The Registry of the SC or HC only ensures that the technical requirements of filing a petition are fulfilled. As a result of which petitions are admitted to the court irrespective of the merits of the case.

क ब्राच म हा ।

#### अन्य महत्वपूर्ण बातें -

- लाभार्थी के फोटो (सेल्फी) का मिलान आधार डेटाबेस के फोटो से किया जायेगा अतः आधार का फोटो साफ होना चाहिए ।
- एक आधार संख्या पर एक ही रजिस्ट्रेशन होगा ।
- मोबाइल नंबर पर प्राप्त ओ.टी.पी. मोबाइल एप पर करना होगा ।
- इससे संबंधित सहायता सिर्फ बैंक खाता में ही भेजा जायेगा ।

0651-2490055

0651-2490058

0651-2490083

0651-2490092

0651-2490104

0651-2490125

0651-2490127

0651-2490128

झारखण्ड सरकार की ओर से आपकी परेशानियों में यथासंभव सहायता पहुंचाई जाएगी।

कोरोना से जुड़ी जानकारी या समस्या बताने के लिए **राज्यस्तरीय टोल फ्री नंबर 181** पर कॉल करें।

सूचना एवं जनसंपर्क विभाग, झारखण्ड सरकार

# Trump pushes for reopening economy

President says crisis has peaked; union and business leaders caution against early lifting of curbs

REUTERS  
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump plans to announce new guidelines to reopen the economy after a monthlong shutdown over the coronavirus outbreak, despite concerns from health experts, Governors and business leaders about a resurgence in cases without more testing and protocols in place.

Mr. Trump announced his decision to push States to lift stay-at-home and other restrictions that were imposed last month to halt the spread of the highly contagious disease as the number of deaths in the U.S. approached 31,000 on Wednesday — more than any other nation.

States' orders have also crushed the nation's economy to levels not seen since the Great Depression nearly



**Rising anger:** Demonstrators marching outside the Kentucky State Capitol against the current social distancing requirements. • REUTERS

## Europe still 'in eye of the storm'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON

Parts of Europe moved cautiously to reopen their streets and economies on Thursday but the pandemic was far from beaten and the World Health Organization warned the continent was still in the "eye of the storm".

"We remain in the eye of the storm," the WHO's regional director for Europe, Hans Kluge, said.

Positive signs in Spain, Italy, Germany, France and

Switzerland were overshadowed by sustained or increased levels of infections in other countries, such as Britain, Turkey, Ukraine and Russia, he said.

"It is imperative that we do not let down our guard." More than two million people have been infected with the virus around the world and 1,37,000, including 90,000 in Europe, have died.

Hard-hit parts of Europe have seen a slowdown in infections and deaths in recent

days, with Spain recording 551 new deaths on Thursday, almost half of the daily toll at its peak.

After weeks on strict lockdowns, Spain and Italy have begun to ease restrictions, allowing some businesses to reopen. Germany on Wednesday also announced initial steps to reopen some shops and gradually restart schools, Denmark began reopening schools for younger children after a month-long closure and Finland lifted a blockade of Helsinki.

needed to guarantee safety, according to media reports.

### Strong place

"We're in a strong place, and I can assure you that the guidance being put out today is in line with what the experts are saying, it's in line with what the data is showing and it's a plan to put this economy back on track," White House press secretary Kay-

leigh McEnany told Fox News on Thursday.

More than 6,35,000 total U.S. cases have been reported across all 50 States. But not all States have been struck equally, as New York and others have been hit particularly hard. Even within States disparities are being seen in more urban and poorer areas.

That divide has inflamed

## Japan extends emergency

REUTERS  
TOKYO

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe expanded a state of emergency to include the entire country on Thursday. Mr. Abe said that the emergency would be in place until May 6. The government said it was considering cash payouts of ¥1,00,000 (\$930) for everyone, an attempt to cushion the blow from the pandemic to the world's third-largest economy.

## 'U.S., Russia can join forces'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin believes the global pandemic is an opportunity for his country to work together with the U.S., the Kremlin has said. "President Putin believes this pandemic is the time to help each other," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said after U.S. President Donald Trump offered to send ventilators to Russia.

political divisions as political leaders debate how and when to begin unwinding unprecedented lockdowns and prompting protests organised by conservative and pro-Trump groups against some State leaders who opted to keep residents at home.

States, meanwhile, are seeking \$500 billion more in fiscal relief from Congress.

# China says no plans to limit export of anti-virus supplies

It says goods will be inspected to ensure quality standards

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BEIJING

China will not restrict exports of medical goods needed to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, a government spokesman said on Thursday, amid global tension over scarce masks and ventilators.

China, the biggest maker of surgical masks and other products, announced last week it would start inspecting exports to make sure they meet quality standards following Western complaints some test kits and other products were faulty. "China has not and will not restrict the export of epidemic prevention materials," said a Commerce Ministry spokesman, Gao Feng.

The government hasn't responded to questions about whether inspections might increase the time required to fill foreign orders, but Mr. Gao said Beijing has



**In full swing:** Employees working on a surgical mask assembly line in Nanchang, China. • REUTERS

taken steps to "speed up customs clearance" while "ensuring the export quality of epidemic prevention materials."

U.S. President Donald Trump said this month he would try to block manufacturing giant 3M Co. from exporting N95 masks. 3M warned other governments might retaliate and said later an agreement was reached to allow foreign sales.

The Chinese customs agency said last week it would start treating masks, ventilators, surgical gowns, goggles and other supplies as medical goods.

That requires exporters to submit proof that their products are approved by regulators in destination countries. The government said goods will be inspected to confirm they meet quality standards.

## Extend Brexit transition, says IMF

REUTERS  
LONDON

Britain should ask for an extension to its post-Brexit transition period to ease uncertainty at a time when the world economy is being hammered by the COVID-19 pandemic, the head of the International Monetary Fund said.

"It is tough as it is. Let's not make it any tougher," Kristalina Georgieva told BBC radio.

"My advice would be to seek ways in which this element of uncertainty is reduced in the interests of everybody, of the U.K., of the

EU, the whole world."

The transition period is due to end on December 31, and barriers to exports and imports will go up if a new trade agreement is not reached by then, a challenge which has been made harder by the pandemic.

Ms. Georgieva was speaking after the IMF warned on Tuesday that the world economy is heading for its steepest downturn this year since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

She praised the emergency measures taken by Britain's Finance Ministry and the Bank of England (BoE),

which she said had been taken "early" and were well-coordinated. "That very strong package of measures is helping the U.K., but given the U.K.'s sizeable role in the world economy, it's actually helping everyone," Ms. Georgieva said.

The government has increased spending and cut taxes in measures that Britain's budget office estimates will cost £100 billion (\$125 billion). It has also offered guarantees for £330 billion of company loans.

The BoE has cut interest rates to 0.1%.

## + Israeli President asks Parliament to pick PM

Netanyahu, Gantz fail to strike a deal

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
JERUSALEM

Israel's President on Thursday asked the Knesset to choose a new Prime Minister, giving Parliament three weeks to agree upon a leader or plunge the country into an unprecedented fourth consecutive election in just over a year.

President Reuven Rivlin made the move after his Prime Minister-designate, former military chief Benny Gantz, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu failed to reach a power-sharing deal by a midnight deadline.

The bitter rivals had pledged to form an "emergency" government to steer the country through the co-

ronavirus crisis, which has ravaged the economy and sent unemployment to record highs. But after weeks of talks, including a final 48-hour extension granted by Mr. Rivlin, the President said he had lost confidence in their chances of striking a deal.

"I am informing you that I do not see the possibility of forming a government and I request the formation of a government to the Knesset," he wrote in a letter to parliament. "I hope that the Knesset members will be able to form a majority in such a way that a government can be formed as soon as possible and to prevent a fourth round of elections."

## China may have conducted N-test: U.S.

Beijing denies accusations, says it is committed to a moratorium on tests

REUTERS  
WASHINGTON

China may have secretly set off low-level underground nuclear test explosions despite claiming to observe an international pact banning such blasts, the U.S. State Department said in a report on Wednesday that could fuel U.S.-Chinese tensions.

The finding, first reported by the *Wall Street Journal*, may worsen ties already strained by U.S. charges that the global COVID-19 pandemic resulted from Beijing's mishandling of a 2019 outbreak of the coronavirus in the city of Wuhan.

U.S. concerns about Beijing's possible breaches of a "zero yield" standard for test blasts have been prompted

by activities at China's Lop Nur nuclear test site throughout 2019, the State Department report said.

### 'Zero yield'

Zero yield refers to a nuclear test in which there is no explosive chemical reaction of the type ignited by the detonation of a nuclear warhead.

"China's possible preparation to operate its Lop Nur test site year-round, its use of explosive containment chambers, extensive excavation activities at Lop Nur and a lack of transparency on its nuclear testing activities... raise concerns regarding its adherence to the zero yield standard," the report said, without providing evidence of a low-yield test.

Beijing's lack of transparency included blocking data transmissions from sensors linked to a monitoring centre operated by the international agency that verifies compliance with a treaty banning nuclear test explosions.

The 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) allows activities designed to ensure the safety of nuclear weapons.

A spokeswoman for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization, which verifies compliance with the pact, told the *Journal* there had been no interruptions in data transmissions from China's five sensor stations since the end of August 2019 following an interruption that

began in 2018.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said that China was committed to a moratorium on nuclear tests and said the U.S. was making false accusations.

### Chinese compliance

"China has always adopted a responsible attitude, earnestly fulfilling the international obligations and promises it has assumed," he said.

"The pace and manner by which the Chinese government is modernising its stockpile is worrying, destabilizing, and illustrates why China should be brought into the global arms control framework," said a senior U.S. official.

## South Korea's ruling party scores a landslide victory

Its pandemic response turns the tide

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
SEOUL

South Korea's left-leaning ruling party won a landslide election victory, results showed on Thursday, after the pandemic turned the political tide in President Moon Jae-in's favour.

His Democratic party secured the largest absolute majority in the National Assembly since the advent of democracy in 1987, on a turnout of 66.2% — the highest at a parliamentary election for 28 years.

Just a few months ago Mr. Moon was threatened by scandals over power abuse and sluggish economic growth, while critics called his dovish approach to



Moon Jae-in

wards North Korea unrealistic.

But the South's relatively quick and effective handling of the epidemic — it has also exported test kits to at least 20 countries — was a boon for Mr. Moon and his party ahead of the polls, largely seen as a referendum on his performance.

## Wuhan's 'wet markets' reopen, face heat

China has banned sale of wildlife for food, but the reopening has drawn global ire

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
WUHAN

At a large food market in the Chinese city of Wuhan, signs forbid the selling of wild animals and live fowl, while announcements calling for "victory" over COVID-19 play on a loop from speakers.

China's "wet markets" have been slammed internationally as the coronavirus roils the world, with the disease having seemingly emerged from stalls selling live animals in Wuhan late last year.

The government has since banned the sale of wildlife for food, but the reopening of markets has drawn criticism from around the world as the death toll from the pandemic continues to mount.

Shut down during the lengthy quarantine that sealed off Wuhan until April 8, the city's markets are now fighting for survival as customers have not been rushing back.



**Back to business:** Vendors selling prawns at the Wuhan Baishazhou market in China's central Hubei province. • AFP

"There's no question, we're doomed this year," spice seller Yang, who runs a stall at the massive Baishazhou wholesale market, told AFP. "There have never been so few people at our market."

Mr. Yang, whose sales have fallen by a third from before the lockdown, dismissed criticism of markets as virus hotbeds as "unnecessary panic".

One market remains closed: The Huanan Seafood Market that sold a range of exotic wildlife and is suspected to be the cradle of the virus that jumped from animals to humans.

Wet markets are popular venues to buy fresh meat, vegetables and fish across Asia — most selling common, everyday produce to locals at affordable prices.

Most don't sell live ani-

mals, although some do.

During visits to three Wuhan markets this week, AFP saw live turtles, frogs, fish and crustaceans for sale, but no fowl or mammals blamed for past diseases.

Workers at Baishazhou said they were now required to disinfect their stalls several times a day. Yang keeps multiple bottles of disinfectant in her small office, alongside a box of masks.

'Decision unfathomable' Nevertheless, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said this week the decision to reopen wet markets was "unfathomable".

"We need to protect the world against potential sources of outbreaks of these types of viruses," he told Australian TV.

The top medical specialist for the U.S. government, Anthony Fauci, told Fox News earlier this month that wet markets should be shut down "right away."

## Minorities are hit hardest in U.K.

They represent a third of the patients in ICU with COVID-19

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON

When Amer Awan's father died of COVID-19, mourners congregated with little thought of social distancing. But cultural practices alone do not explain why Britain's ethnic minorities have been hardest hit by the outbreak.

"Visitors to the house... were not wearing any masks or gloves. They wanted to hug me," the 44-year-old property developer from Birmingham, said.

"And I'm not, I'm sorry, I'm not gonna hug you. You know, you need to understand I've just lost my dad because of coronavirus and you are not taking this seriously."

Britain's black and minority ethnic communities appear to have been hardest hit by the virus sweeping the country — an issue that public health authorities are now looking into.

Despite only making up 14% of the population of En-

gland and Wales, they represent a third of the patients in intensive care with coronavirus, according to the Intensive Care National Audit and Research Centre (ICNARC).

Chaand Nagpal, head of the British Medical Association, said this was "extremely disturbing and worrying".

### First victims

The first ten doctors who died with coronavirus in Britain were from ethnic minorities, including Alfa Sa'adu, Jitendra Rathod, Mohamed Sami Shousha and Syed Haider.

In a letter to the government, several opposition Labour MPs said deaths represented "serious concerns" and called for an urgent investigation.

Sunder Katwala, the head of thinktank British Future, also said that a large number of Filipino nurses, hospital porters and other staff had been affected by COVID-19.

"Tragically, a disproportionate number of those in the NHS who died are people who came to make their lives here and to work in the NHS," Health Secretary Matt Hancock said recently.

Non-British staff make up 12% of the U.K. healthcare workforce, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

In London, the epicentre of the coronavirus outbreak in Britain, this rises to 23%.

'Unequal treatment' Two nurses hailed by Prime Minister Boris Johnson following his admission to a London hospital with coronavirus were from overseas — one from New Zealand, the other from Portugal.

But the letter from the Labour MPs suggested that "ethnic minority doctors have too often struggled for equal treatment" — and says the fact that they were among the first NHS deaths is simply "not a coincidence".

## ELSEWHERE



**Kim's no-show at key event sparks speculation**

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's conspicuous absence from celebrations for his grandfather Kim Il-sung's birth anniversary, which fell on April 15, suggests he could be looking to emphasise his own authority over his family's legacy, analysts pointed out. The North's founder's birthday is the most important celebration in the country's political calendar. • AFP

Greece to move migrants out of island camps

Greece will this month begin moving hundreds of elderly and ailing asylum seekers out of congested island camps to protect them from COVID-19, the Migration Ministry said on Thursday. The ministry said 2,380 "vulnerable persons" will be moved out of camps on Aegean islands. • AFP

**MARKET WATCH**

16-04-2020 % CHANGE

Sensex	30,603	0.73
US Dollar	76.87	-0.56
Brent oil	27.50	0.00

**NIFTY 50**

PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	267.60 -1.30
Axis Bank	422.25 5.25
Bajaj Auto	2333.55 -1.60
Bajaj Finserv	469.60 100.50
Bajaj Finance	2220.00 37.55
Bharti Airtel	500.45 -10.05
Bharti Int'l	355.40 1.55
Britannia Ind	2836.80 -0.55
Cipla	600.45 8.10
Coal India	147.40 0.55
Dr Reddy's Lab	3860.65 53.05
Eicher Motors	13371.35 56.45
GAIL (India)	89.25 2.65
Grasim Ind	543.75 8.35
HCL Tech	459.75 -19.00
HDFC	1623.75 29.45
HDFC Bank	879.75 16.45
Hero MotoCorp	1782.65 -41.45
Hindalco	120.55 5.45
Infosys	2430.10 -51.45
KFC Ind	342.00 14.65
IndusInd Bank	435.40 11.30
Bharti Infratel	171.50 -2.30
Oil Mills Corp	623.85 -15.20
ONGC	1892.90 31.50
ITC	186.35 -3.00
JSW Steel	170.65 -0.75
Kotak Bank	1130.85 -42.90
TCS	1716.05 -39.10
M&M	356.70 3.55
Maruti Suzuki	5130.80 36.50
Nestle India Ltd.	17895.25 569.35
NTPC	95.10 5.20
ONGC	75.45 1.10
PowerGrid Corp	164.40 3.85
Reliance Ind	1168.05 18.20
State Bank	188.50 6.15
Sri Cement	1892.90 790.25
Sun Pharma	463.70 14.50
Tata Motors	74.65 1.75
Tata Steel	288.90 3.75
TCS	1716.05 -39.10
Tech Mahindra	517.65 -21.00
Titan	985.25 33.20
UltraTech Cement	3539.10 -61.05
UPL	363.20 12.65
Wedanta	82.70 4.10
Wipro	187.85 1.30
Zee Entertainment	135.55 1.80

**EXCHANGE RATES**

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on April 16

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	76.66	76.98
Euro	83.40	83.75
British Pound	95.76	96.17
Japanese Yen (100)	71.21	71.51
Chinese Yuan	10.84	10.89
Swiss Franc	79.15	79.65
Singapore Dollar	53.72	53.96
Canadian Dollar	54.33	54.58
Malaysian Ringgit	17.51	17.59
Australian Dollar	48.31	48.51



**Infosys to announce Q4 results on April 20**

BENGALURU Bengaluru-headquartered information technology services major Infosys will announce the results for its fourth quarter and year ended March 31, 2020 on April 20. Usually it is Infosys, among domestic tech players, that shares quarterly earnings numbers first with the market, but this quarter, it has faced a week's delay.

**Pruned market hours to continue till April 30**

MUMBAI The RBI has said that curtailed business hours for markets such as government securities and currency will continue till April 30. May 1, 2 and 3 are bank holidays. The shortened market hours came into effect from April 7. These markets are now open only between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. "In view of the order that the lockdown will continue to be in force till May 3, it has been decided that the amended trading hours for various RBI-regulated markets will continue till the close of business on Thursday, April 30, 2020," the RBI said.

**Allow home delivery by all retailers: RAI**

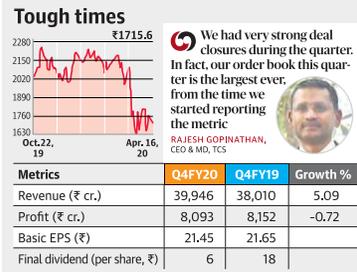
NEW DELHI The Retailers Association of India (RAI) on Thursday urged government to 'strongly consider' allowing all forms of retailers, not just e-commerce players, to operate home deliveries during the extended lockdown period. Supporting the move to extend the lockdown to curb the pandemic, RAI said home deliveries by all players will facilitate availability of all goods at the doorstep of customers while supporting economic revival. "We urge the Centre to strongly consider (the suggestion that all) retailers be allowed the benefit of doing business via contactless home delivery," RAI said.

# TCS net drops as momentum reverses

Firm to honour campus offers; rules out retrenchments as also increments; promotions on track

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

India's largest information technology services exporter Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) reported a marginal dip in its fourth quarter net profit to ₹8,093 crore compared with ₹8,152 crore in the year-earlier period as the COVID-19 pandemic completely reversed the positive momentum that the company had started seeing in some of its biggest verticals in the first half of the quarter. The fall in profit came on a 5.09% growth in revenue to ₹39,946 crore in the quarter. Rajesh Gopinathan, CEO and MD, said, "We had very strong deal closures during the quarter. In fact, our order book this quarter is the largest ever, from the time we started reporting the metric. Organisations across the world are realising the need for operational and systems



resilience. Many of the large deals we signed during the quarter address precisely that need. They are core transformation programmes that leverage the power of technology to make our customers' operations leaner, faster and more resilient." The IT major will honour all commitments with respect to campus hiring, without any layoffs and will also offer promotions. However, the company will not offer increments to its 4.4 lakh employees this year. "All offers made will be honoured; we don't see any form of retrenchment. Our talent model is proven and we are proud of our 4.4 lakh

employees," he said. TCS hired 24,179 employees on a net basis in FY20, taking the total headcount to 4,48,464 as of March 31, 2020. "We have made 40,000 campus offers this year and we will honour all the offers made. We will start onboarding from June. Promotions this year will continue; however, there will be no increments at this point of time," said Milind Lakkad, Global Head, Human Resources.

N. Ganapathy Subramaniam, COO and ED, said: "COVID-19 has presented us with an operational challenge of scale, speed and complexity. Switching from a long-established infrastructure model of an organisation of over 4,48,000 employees in a matter of days is pushing the boundaries of location independence as well as agility to their limits. Geographically, growth was led by Europe (11.9%) and U.K. (5.4%), Latin America rose 3.9%, Asia Pacific grew 3.5% and MEA, 1.3%. North America inched up 0.2% while growth from India declined 1.9%." Paras Bothra, president, equities, Ashika Stock Broking, told *The Hindu*, "TCS' Q4FY20 results were a tad below estimates. Also, the management stated that the positive momentum they were witnessing in their largest verticals reversed because of the pandemic. On the positive side, TCS had strong deal closures during the quarter."

# SBI to extend additional term loan facilities to borrowers, including NBFCs

To be offered on a case-to-case basis to investment grade firms

MANOJIT SAHA MUMBAI

State Bank of India, the country's largest lender, has decided to extend term loan facilities to non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) as well as other companies to help tide over the liquidity mismatch these entities are facing due to the nationwide lockdown.

"We are working on a case-by-case basis on assessing the requirement of all companies including NBFCs. We will see what kind of support (term loan) we can give them. This will be on a case-to-case basis and on proper appraisal," a highly-placed

source in SBI told *The Hindu*. "This is not an omnibus scheme," the source said. SBI has over 100 NBFCs as its customers and whoever applies for the loan, a decision will be taken on extending the term loan facility after reviewing the company's financial position. The loans will be extended to firms having investment grade rating. The official clarified there was no limit, upper or lower, as to the quantum of loan to be extended to these firms, and would depend on the requirement of the firm. "There is no set amount as to how much we will extend," the official said, adding that this was an additional immediate liquidity support to the firms facing cash crunch. NBFC borrowers of SBI have a good financial profile, except may be in one or two cases, as no such entity has faced a liquidity problem in the last one-and-a-half years, that is, since the IL&FS crisis. "Most NBFCs [that had borrowed from SBI] have an investment grade rating," the official said. Last month, SBI opened emergency credit lines for working capital loans for all its clients, which was 10% of the existing facilities, provided the asset classification was standard. This facility was offered to

all customers. However, NBFCs typically do not opt for working capital loans. Banks generally extend term loans to these entities. The NBFC sector faced a double whammy when RBI announced a loan moratorium for three months. While banks have not offered a moratorium to NBFC borrowers, these entities had to offer the moratorium to their customers who had taken a home or car loan, resulting in a liquidity mismatch for NBFCs. Crisil had said NBFCs rated by it would face ₹1.75 lakh crore of debt obligation maturing by the end of the April-June quarter. Fear of delay in economic revival weakens currency

# Rupee hits a new low

Fear of delay in economic revival weakens currency

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

The rupee hit a new low against the dollar as it dropped to 76.87 on Thursday amid concerns of a delay in economic revival following the spread of COVID-19.

After opening at 76.75 a dollar as compared with Wednesday's closing of 76.44, the rupee slipped to 76.87 per dollar at close of day, depreciating 43 paise, or 0.56%, on Thursday. The domestic unit weakened with the dollar strengthening against various currencies.

According to dealers, the rupee will continue to be under pressure till signs of the pandemic peaking emerge. The government has now ex-



tended the nationwide lockdown, which started on March 25, with another 18 days to May 3, with stricter restrictions. Currency traders see the rupee slipping to 77.50 to a dollar in the near term. The central bank has not been aggressive in stemming the rupee depreciation, dealers said. "Rupee traded weak

again as we enter the second day of the second lockdown, wherein the rules have become stringent. There is volatility in dollar-index trading. Rupee shall keep trading weak on the back of higher gold prices, along with a slowing economy," said Jateen Trivedi, senior research analyst (commodity and currency) at LKP Ratings.

Rating agency Moody's said some firms in south and southeast Asia could be vulnerable to the dollar's surge. "Depreciation of the Indonesian rupiah and Indian rupee increases risks for some companies with currency mismatches and heavy reliance on U.S. dollar debt," it said in a research note.

# Textile and clothing exports drop in FY20

Sector bats for stimulus package

M. SOUNDARIYA PREETHA COIMBATORE

Textile and clothing exports have dropped 6% during the 2019-2020 financial year, with a major fall in March.

According to data available, textile and clothing exports in 2018-2019 were worth \$35.9 billion and from April 2019 to March 2020 it was worth \$33.8 billion. In March 2020, exports fell 32.2% compared with the same period last year. Apparel exports, which were about \$16.1 billion in 2018-19, fell almost 4% to \$15.4 billion, with the March exports alone dropping almost 35% compared with the same month last year.

**COVID-19 impact**

The fall in exports is because of the impact of COVID-19. In April, it is expected to be worse. However, demand is expected to rebound in July, said A. Sakthivel, chairman, Apparel Export Promotion Council.



There will be several opportunities then, he said. Apparel exports had grown only during four months during the last financial year and this is because the industry did not get benefits under several schemes meant to promote exports, he said.

According to Siddhartha Rajagopal, executive director, Cotton Textiles Export Promotion Council, businesses are expected to be pick up after September. He also said a special stimulus package was needed from the government to help the industry get back on track, he said.

# India's stock surge only a bear market rally, say global majors

'Rising COVID-19 cases to significantly hit corporate earnings'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

Global financial majors believe the recent surge in the Indian stock market is only a 'bear market rally' as concerns continue on the rising number of COVID-19 cases leading to a significant contraction in economic activity, thereby causing a huge dent in corporate earnings.

Goldman Sachs, in its latest report, has lowered India's rating to 'market weight' with a Nifty target of 9,600 by June 2021.

"We view the current rally as a bear market rally, which are common in history," Goldman Sachs stated in a report released on Thursday.

**Domestic risks**

"While global tail risks may have reduced, we see significant domestic risks in India. The spread of the virus has escalated sharply in recent weeks. The extension of the nationwide shutdown for



another three weeks and social distancing measures are likely to cause significant contraction in economic activity," it said, highlighting that fiscal easing in India had been limited so far compared to many other regional and global economies, though it said it expected more easing.

Goldman Sachs added that earnings estimates were likely to see a steep fall and, as market valuations are still looking 'optimistic,' it seemed early to say that the equity market had discounted all the negatives. Similarly, UBS has estimated a Nifty

target of 10,000 by March 2021 with an upside and downside target of 11,500 and 6,000, respectively.

This assumes significance since this is a huge drop since December, when UBS had estimated a base case target of 12,300 for the Nifty by June 2020. "We believe Q4 FY20 earnings will take a big hit due to COVID-19-driven mobility restrictions. Consensus expects headline Nifty earnings to grow 3%, while we expect a sharp decline of 12%," a UBS report said.

"However, these numbers may not matter for markets, and investors are likely to focus more on job losses/furloughs, as these may provide key insights for the shape/timing of the recovery and evolution afterwards, commentary on supply chain disruptions and recovery capabilities and commentary on financials' asset quality and overall liquidity conditions," it said.

# Nationwide lockdown may be bitter for sugar

Drop in global prices affects exports

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT COIMBATORE

The country-wide lockdown is likely to have an impact on domestic sugar consumption this season (October 2019 to September 2020).

According to the Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA), sugar sales and despatches have been affected because of the lockdown. Almost 65% of the sugar consumption in the country is by bulk buyers.

**Increase in demand**

The supply chain pipeline usually holds one million to 1.5 million tonnes. This will dry up during the lockdown and there may be an increase in demand when the lockdown is lifted. However, the domestic consumption this season may be 25 million tonnes, which is slightly less than the expected demand, association sources said. Exports have also been affected because of the drop



in global sugar prices. Meanwhile, Indonesia is opening up its market for Indian sugar, giving preferential duty and this will create demand for Indian sugar in that country, the ISMA added. There were problems in ethanol offtake when the lockdown came into force. Now, ethanol supplies have shifted to other States and depots where there is hardly any or nil supply. Further, a majority of the sugar mills have started making hand sanitizers, using part of the ethanol available with them, the ISMA said.

# Insurers' capital, liquidity may be adversely impacted, says IRDAI

Align dividend payout to capital, rationalise expenses'

N. RAVI KUMAR HYDERABAD

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) wants insurance companies to critically examine their capital availability and solvency margin for the current financial year (2020-21).

Advising their boards to undertake such an exercise, the regulator said they need to devise strategies for ensuring that the insurers had adequate capital and resources available with them. Two more measures it urged the boards to initiate were: to align the dividend

payout for financial year 2019-20 in conformity with the adequate capital and resources strategy; and to rationalise the expenses of management for fiscal 2020-21, also in line with the strategy.

The IRDAI advisory, coming in the backdrop of the COVID-19 outbreak, said that the spread of the virus and further extension of the lockdown were likely to have a significant impact across various sectors of the economy.

"Indian insurers need to prepare strategies and action plans for business conti-

nunity to ensure enhanced protection to policyholders. Due to the stress experienced by the economy, sufficiency of capital and liquidity position of the insurers may be adversely impacted and all insurers need to guard against the same," the regulator said.

"It is critical in these difficult times for all the Indian insurers to ensure that at all times they protect the interests of policyholders and provide necessary financial security to them," Pravin Kumbhe, Member - Finance and Investment, said in a circular.

# SBI report sees FY21 real GDP growth at 1.1%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

State Bank of India (SBI) has estimated the real GDP growth for the current financial year at 1.1%. "With the lockdown now being extended till May 3 and simultaneously, the government providing some relaxations from April 20, we estimate the overall loss for FY21 at about ₹12.1 lakh crore or 6% of the nominal GVA (gross value added), taking the nominal GVA growth for entire year to be around 4.2%," the SBI report, authored by Soumya Kanti Ghosh, group chief economic adviser, SBI, said.

"Nominal GDP for FY21 could be lower/closer to 4.2%, as there is a strong possibility of subsidies outstripping tax collections. However, taking nominal GDP growth at 4.2%, the real GDP growth for FY21 would be around 1.1%," the report said. The earlier forecast for GDP growth for FY21 was 2.6%.

The report said a 4% slippage in nominal GDP is equivalent to ₹8 lakh crore of fiscal support.

# In today's world, branding is very personal

Why and how should brands think local?

It is extremely important for us to talk to the consumers in their local language. In 2019, we introduced Flipkart in Hindi and are also working towards other vernacular offerings as a part of our inclusive strategy, to build on accessibility to reach out to the next 200 million Indians, where solving for language barrier is critical and technology is the solution.



**Vikas Gupta**  
Vice-President - Marketing, Flipkart

You can read the full interview in *The Hindu BusinessLine* today or scan the QR Code.

This article is part of a brand initiative by *The Hindu BusinessLine* to profile marketing professionals from across India.

The UK stopped being a member of the European Union (EU) after 23:00 GMT on 31 January 2020.

## What is the European Union?

The EU is an economic and political union involving 28 European countries. It allows free trade, which means goods can move between member countries without any checks or extra charges. The EU also allows free movement of people, to live and work in whichever country they choose.

The UK joined in 1973 (when it was known as the European Economic Community) and it will be the first member state to withdraw.

## What happens after Brexit day?

After the UK formally leaves the EU, there is still a lot to talk about and months of negotiation will follow.

While the UK has agreed the terms of its EU departure, both sides still need to decide what their future relationship will look like.

During the 11-month transition period, the UK will continue to follow all of the EU's rules and its trading relationship will remain the same.

## What needs to be agreed?

The transition period is meant to give both sides some breathing space while a new free trade agreement is negotiated.

This is needed because the UK will leave the single market and customs union at the end of the transition. A free trade agreement allow goods to move around the EU without checks or extra charges.

If a new one cannot be agreed in time, then the UK faces the prospect of having to trade with no deal in place. That would mean tariffs (taxes) on UK goods travelling to the EU and other trade barriers.

Aside from trade, many other aspects of the future UK-EU relationship will also need to be decided. For example:

Law enforcement, data sharing and security.

Aviation standards and safety.

Access to fishing waters.

Supplies of electricity and gas.

Licensing and regulation of medicines.

What caused Brexit to happen?

So far, there seem to be three theories for what drove so many people to vote Brexit:

**Immigrants:** Faced with rising immigration locals worried about their jobs and the erosion of the English way of life wanted their government to clamp down on immigration. This was a revolt against unrestricted immigration from poorer Eastern European states, Syrian refugees residing in the EU and millions of Turks about to join the EU.

**Elites:** Faced with decades of economic malaise, stagnant real wages and economic destitution in former industrial heartlands ever since the rise of "Thatcherism" and the embrace of Neoliberal policies by Tony Blair's New Labour the non-Londoners have decided to revolt against the elite. This isn't just about being against the EU as it stands, and its free market and free movement of peoples.

**Bureaucracy:** Faced with Brussel's asphyxiating amount of red tape the English people decide to "take back control" of their country's bureaucracy.

The three theories are obviously intertwined at times and contradictory at others, that's why it matters who is going to be negotiating the post-Brexit relationship between the UK and the EU.

## What is the Brexit deal?

The transition period and other aspects of the UK's departure were agreed in a separate deal called the withdrawal agreement.

Most of that was negotiated by Theresa May's government. But after Mr Johnson replaced her in July 2019, he removed the most controversial part – the backstop.

The backstop was designed to ensure there would be no border posts or barriers between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland after Brexit. If needed, it would have kept the UK in a close trading relationship with the EU.

Under Mr Johnson's deal, a customs border will effectively be created between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. Some goods entering Northern Ireland from Great Britain will be subject to checks and will have to pay EU import taxes (known as tariffs).

These would be refunded if goods remain in Northern Ireland (ie are not moved to the Republic of Ireland).

on one of the tents in the camp as well as a puppet show that summarises the global catastrophe in three minutes," said volunteer Samir Gohary.

According to an alert issued on the basis of satellite imagery of SNPP (Suomi National Polar-orbiting Partnership)-VIIRS (Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer

as "extremely fire prone", 7.73% as "very highly fire prone", 13.32% as "highly fire prone", 19.96% as "moderately fire prone" and 56.17% as "less fire prone".

new phase in his life and career. He went on to become a familiar presence in many South Asian-American diaspora films and can be counted as one of the pioneering

ning the script of *Salaam Bombay* (1988) with Sooni Taraporevala – for the role of Chillum, played by Raghuvir Yadav – and eventually got to work with him on *Mis-*

I knew it was Shakespearean in its scope. The other aspect of dark comedy was tragedy in his case. And that's what made him unique. He lived the enigma."

Arunachal pit viper, India's fifth brown pit viper but with a reddish tinge, and a natricid burrowing snake similar to the shieldtail snake found in the Western Ghats.

found in the northeast before the Salazar's pit viper, collected from the Pakke Tiger Reserve in Pakke-Kesang district, was identified as a separate species.