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NEARBY



Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami requested those who had participated in a religious conference in Delhi to come forward so that they can be tested for COVID-19. He also said that many of those who had participated in an event conducted by Isha Foundation were found displaying symptoms, they would also be subjected to testing.

TAMIL NADU • PAGE 2

State takes steps to curb vegetable shortage

Anticipating a shortage of vegetables in the next couple of months as a fallout of the COVID-19 crisis, the State Agriculture Department has initiated preventive measures. The department, through its main arm - the horticulture wing - is motivating farmers to produce more vegetables.

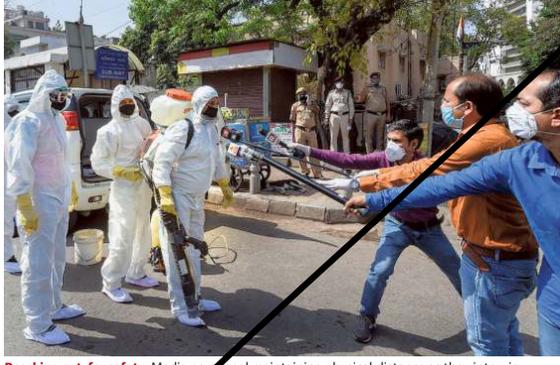
TAMIL NADU • PAGE 2

METROPLUS • 4 PAGES

Tablighi Jamaat headquarters cleared

29 more occupants test positive, taking the total in Delhi alone to 53; contact tracing under way

NIKHIL M. BABU SAURABH TRIVEDI NEW DELHI
All occupants of the Tablighi Jamaat headquarters, at the centre of an extensive net of the novel coronavirus transmission, were evacuated by early Wednesday, even as the authorities scrambled to identify and quarantine visitors who had returned home to various parts of the country.



Reaching out, for safety: Media personnel maintaining physical distance as they interview health workers sanitising an area near the Nizamuddin mosque in Delhi • PTI

At least 29 more occupants tested positive on Wednesday, taking the total in Delhi alone to 53. Of around 310 delegates from Kerala, only 60 have returned to the State, and are under quarantine.

COVID-19

Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba held a videoconference with the Chief Secretaries of all the States. "Most of them are testing positive. We have so far got only about 15 negative cases. If you put 2,000 people in a closed building, everyone is bound to have it," a Delhi government official told *The Hindu*. The official said they were coordinating with other States and evacuating people

from different mosques in the city. "People who have visited the centre are present in other mosques. We have visited at least 15 such mosques in the city," said the official.

2,346 evacuated
The Delhi police Special Branch and the Delhi government shifted 275 foreign nationals to quarantine from various mosques and places in and around the national capital. They were associated with Tablighi Jamaat.

A total of 2,346 people were evacuated from the Markaz (centre), which serves as the international

headquarters of the sect, at Nizamuddin, and 536 of them were sent to hospitals and 1,810 were sent to quarantine facilities, the Delhi government said in a statement in the evening.

The evacuation was completed around 4 a.m. on Wednesday, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said.

"The operation lasted for three-and-a-half days, and extensively in the last 36 hours." He said the Delhi government prepared a list of the people evacuated, along with their phone numbers, and the police were looking into it. "The cyber cell will investigate the numbers and

Phones to be tracked

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday announced that the mobile phones of all those who have been asked to home quarantine themselves will be tracked by the Delhi police to keep a check on their movement. Several other countries have used this technology to contain the spread of COVID-19 and it was one way to ensure that people abide by quarantine norms, Mr. Kejriwal said. • PAGE 9

look into who all they met and where are the rest of them. And where are the people who met them," he said. The asymptomatic people, who have been moved to the quarantine facilities, are not being tested immediately, but will be closely monitored, officials said. Mr. Sisodia requested all visitors to the centre in March to report to the authorities. "If you do not come forward or if you are ill and are hiding it, action will be taken against you," he said.

'Too early to detect impact'

The impact of the lockdown on arresting the spread of COVID-19 can be gauged only after two weeks, government and independent experts suggest. "The incubation period of the virus is 14 days. Therefore, the cases we are seeing are older cases (from before March 24). So only once these old cases are discounted can we judge the impact of the lockdown," Raman Gangakhedkar, Chief Scientist, ICMR, said. • PAGE 9

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FOOD CRISIS • PAGE 11

110 new cases from Delhi event in T.N.

No Stage-3 transmission, says govt.



Intensive checks: Coimbatore Corporation workers checking houses in Ukkadam on Wednesday. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI
Tamil Nadu's tally of confirmed coronavirus cases (COVID-19) crossed the 200-mark on Wednesday. With 110 more persons who attended the Tablighi Jamaat conference at Nizamuddin in Delhi testing positive for COVID-19 in 15 districts, the total number of cases in the State increased to 234.

Health Secretary Beela Rajesh said the 110, one person was from Myanmar and another from Indonesia. "The 80 persons who attended the Delhi conference tested positive for COVID-19. With today's count, a total of 190 who attended the conference have tested positive in the State," he told reporters. However, it was not clear if the count

of 80 included the contacts of these travellers. The 110 persons were in the following districts - 28 in Coimbatore, 20 in Theni, 17 in Dindigul, nine in Madurai, seven each in Tirupattur and Chengalpattu, six in Tirunelveli, five in Sivaganga, two each in Kancheepuram, Tiruvallur, Erode and Thoothukudi and one each in Karur, Tiruvannamalai and Chennai. Till Tuesday, the Health department had tracked 515 persons, who had returned to various parts of the State after attending the conference.

Ms. Rajesh added that Tamil Nadu had not progressed to Stage-3 transmission as all these cases belonged to one particular group.

CONTINUED ON • PAGE 8

India sees a sharp spike in infections

376 new cases registered in past 24 hours



J & K domicile rules gives effect to unity and integration of nation as enshrined in preamble. It is in alignment with A.14, 15 and 16 of Indian Constitution.



Hunger pang: Workers waiting for meals being distributed at the Koyambedu Market in Chennai. • B. VELANKANNI RAJ

took the death toll to 38. One hundred and thirty two persons have been cured/discharged from hospitals after recovery, the Union Health Ministry said at its daily press briefing, which was the shortest in a month as questions were restricted to a couple of media outlets. Reports from the State Health Departments put the number of positive cases at 1,897, with 1,702 active ones. The number of deaths stood at 55. An official of the Indian Council of Medical Research

(ICMR) said 47,951 tests had been conducted so far, including 861 by private laboratories, and 126 ICMR laboratories were involved in testing. Days after the lockdown began on March 24, several migrant workers were out on the streets of Delhi and other cities, trying to return home to Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and West Ben-

gal. The Home Ministry ordered the States to prevent their travel and provide them with food and shelter. "The situation is under control," a Home Ministry official said. "21,486 relief camps have been set up and 6,75,133 persons are being sheltered." The Health Ministry issued an advisory for proper quarantine and "psycho-so-

cial measures" for migrants on Tuesday. Under this, trained counsellors and/or community group leaders of im de a ne ne fy-ate

80,000 isolation beds. Twenty-four categories of medical devices would be regulated as "drugs", according to a decision by the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority. This would prevent suppliers from hiking rates to more than 10% of their prices. The Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy also recommended measures for self-care in preventive healthcare to boost immunity, especially for respiratory health.

Centre defines J&K domicile rules

Move aimed at protecting jobs in Group D category



OMAR ABDULLAH, National Conference leader

VJAIFTA SINGH NISTULA HEBBAR NEW DELHI
The Union government has issued a notification defining "domiciles" in the new Union Territory (UT) of Jammu and Kashmir for protecting jobs in the Group D category and entry-level non-gazetted posts for the domiciles.

On August 6 last, the Centre withdrew J&K's special status under Article 370 and Article 35A of the Constitution and bifurcated it into the UTs of J&K and Ladakh.

Changes in PSA
Tuesday's notification of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) makes changes to the Public Safety Act (PSA) by removing a clause that prohibited J&K residents booked under the Act to be lodged in jails outside.

This order is a casual attempt, cosmetic in nature, to hoodwink the people of J&K who genuinely believed that post October 31, 2019 their rights and privileges in the matter of employment and other rights would remain as it was

ALTAF BUKHARI, JKAP leader

The notification scraps all pension benefits such as car, driver, accommodation, phones, electricity, medical facilities and rent-free accommodation to former J&K Chief Ministers. The order says the domiciles will be eligible "for the purposes of appointment to any post carrying a pay scale of not more than Level 4". The Level 4 post comprises

"This is according to the norms in other UTs and States. Recruitment by the UPSC expands the search for talent across the country," the official said.

Vacancies in posts
According to the MHA's reply to a parliamentary panel on February 18, there are more than 84,000 vacancies in J&K, of which 22,078 pertain to Class IV employees, 54,375 to non-gazetted and 7,552 at the gazetted level.

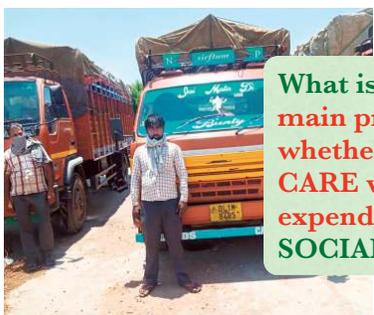
The order defines a domicile as one "who has resided for a period of 15 years in the UT of J&K or has studied for a period of seven years and appeared in Class 10th /12th examination in an educational institution located in the UT of J&K or who is registered as a migrant by the Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner (Migrants)."

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KASHMIR PARTIES OPPOSE NEW DOMICILE RULES • PAGE 8

Police intercept container trucks packed with migrants

Five drivers arrested for attempting to ferry 250 workers out of State to Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan

STAFF REPORTER COIMBATORE



Risky ride: The seized lorries in Coimbatore on Tuesday.

The Coimbatore police have arrested five truck drivers for attempting to illegally take 250 migrant workers in container trucks to their native places in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, violating the nationwide COVID-19 lockdown.

Three trucks bearing Haryana registration numbers and two with Delhi registration were seized. The workers were employed in Pollachi, Sulur, Paladani and Dharapuram and were out of work following the lockdown imposed a week ago. They were mostly working in the construction sector on daily wages. They had, through an agent, agreed to pay a specified amount for the transportation, a trade union source said.

All the workers have since been shifted to employee camps. The police said that the trucks were stopped by a team from Singanallur station at A.G. Pudur around 2

197 persons were bound for Rajasthan, two others bound for Madhya Pradesh had 53

touch with the drivers through their contacts. Coimbatore Collector K.

What is CSR? Google it. Write its main provision and find out whether contributions made to PM CARE will be considered as CSR expenditure. CSR : CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Hunt on for agent
Assistant Commissioner of Police, Coimbatore East, M. Somasundaram, said that the district administration was providing food and essentials to the workers. Sub-Inspector Kumar said that the trucks were returning empty from Kochi and the group of workers got in

for providing them food. N. Murugesan, secretary, Coimbatore Lorry Owners Association, said that fleet operators here always obtained due permission before using vehicles for transportation. (With inputs from Wilson Thomas, M. Soundariya Preetha and R. Akilesh in Coimbatore)

India welcomes foreign contributions to PM-CARES

Individuals and organisations can pitch in, says official

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI



Narendra Modi

India welcomes foreign contributions to the PM-CARES fund to fight the threat posed by the novel coronavirus, a source said here on Wednesday. The official highlighted the shortage of ventilators and personal protective equipment for medical professionals, which needs to be addressed urgently. "The pandemic is unprecedented. In view of this, India has taken a decision to accept foreign contributions to the PM-CARES fund," said a source. The PM-CARES fund, a public charitable trust, was set up in response to the emerging requirement for

prompted Indian diplomatic teams to look for reliable supplies from different parts of the world. "We are working with our ambassadors to deal with the huge shortage of ventilators and other equipment," the official said. The issue also featured during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's video discussion with 130 Indian envoys on March 30.

The official said the bulk of the equipment and relief materials were flowing in through independent organisations as special contributions, while the government was purchasing the items that were in short supply in the health sector.

CONTINUED ON • PAGE 8 A CHIEF

588 report to officials overnight

In all 1,103 persons linked to Tablighi Jamaat event have come forward

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

	Until	March 25	March 26	March 27	March 28	March 29	March 30	March 31	April 1	Total
Cases reported	26	3	9	4	8	17	57	110	234	
Recovered and discharged	1	0	1	0	3	1	0	0	6	
Deceased	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	

Monitoring*		Capacity*		Testing*	
Persons screened at all airports	2,10,538	Beds in isolation wards	22,049	Samples collected	2,726
Persons under home quarantine#	77,330	Ventilators	3,371	Tested positive	234
Persons in isolation wards/hospitals	995	*Status as on date; #Includes only Health and Family Welfare Department figures. People under home quarantine as per Bureau of Immigration advisory not included			
Persons in quarantine facilities	81				

TAMIL NADU BUREAU

After the State government made an appeal to those persons who had attended the Tablighi Jamaat conference in Nizamuddin, Delhi, but remained untraceable, to voluntarily report to the authorities on Tuesday evening, 588 people approached district officials overnight. This took the total number of persons who had come forward to 1,103.

"We used multiple methodologies. Religious leaders were contacted. We involved revenue officials and utilised police intelligence. As soon as the appeal was made, phones started buzzing, and people started coming in voluntarily overnight. Teams from the respective Collectorate brought them to the isolation facilities. Containment plans were immediately chalked out," Health Secretary Beela Rajesh told reporters.

"The containment plan was centred around all 1,103 persons in question, and involved District Collectors demarcating a 5-km radius as a containment zone and another 2-km radius as a buffer zone

to take up door-to-door checks to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This would be the focus for two days," she added.

In Tirupattur district, 22 persons who had attended the conference were traced and placed under hospital quarantine. Collector M.P. Sivaraj said five of them were from Tirupattur, seven from Vaniyambadi and 10 from Ambur.

The Karaikal administration sealed the house of

COVID-19

one of the six persons from the district who had attended the meeting, after the man, in his mid-fifties, developed symptoms of COVID-19. In Tiruchi, nearly 90 persons had been admitted to the COVID-19 isolation ward at Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Government Hospital since Monday night. Nearly 30 identified persons were brought to the hospital on Monday night, while another 50 were brought in during the early hours of Tuesday, R. Venganathan, Medical Superintendent,

MGMGH, said.

In Coimbatore, the district administration, the city police and the Corporation officials were on the lookout for 11 persons who had returned to the city. Sources said the administration had identified 82 persons. It had located and quarantined over 70 of them from Mettupalayam, Anamalai, Annur and a few in the city at various hospitals. Ukkadam, Saiba Colony (K.K. Pudur) and Podanur were declared containment zones.

Twenty-five persons from Cuddalore district were admitted to the isolation wards at Cuddalore Government General Hospital, Rajah Muthiah Medical College and Hospital in Chidambaram and General Hospital Vriddhachalam. Quarantine zones were set up in parts of Udhamandalam, Coonoor and Kotagiri as the test results of eight persons from the Nilgiris who attended the Tablighi Jamaat event in Delhi were awaited.

One person, who had returned from Nizamuddin on March 23, was quarantined along with his family members in Krishnagiri.

More cases in Pudukcherry The number of COVID-19 cases in the Union Territory has gone up to four, with one more person who returned after attending a religious conference at Nizamuddin in New Delhi testing positive for the virus.

The 54-year-old person, hailing from Thiruvandapur, has been admitted to the Indira Gandhi Government Medical College.

From 13 districts at the beginning of this week, COVID-19 has spread to many more districts in the State. Tirunelveli and Coimbatore topped the list with 29 positive cases each, followed by Chennai and Erode with 26 cases each.

As on date, 77,330 persons continue to be under home quarantine, while 4,070 persons have completed the 28-day quarantine period. A total of 2,726 samples have been lifted till date. A total of 995 persons have been admitted to isolation wards, according to the bulletin issued by the Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine.

CM urges those who attended Delhi conference to come forward

'Govt. will provide medical treatment to those affected'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Wednesday requested those who had participated in a religious conference at Nizamuddin in Delhi to come forward so that they could be tested and treated for COVID-19, if necessary.

Mr. Palaniswami also said that if any of those who had participated in an event conducted by Isha Foundation were found displaying symptoms, they would also be subjected to testing.

Amma Unavagam

The CM inspected an Amma Unavagam at Santhome on Wednesday morning. He checked if the people there were following social distancing norms and also interacted with a few of them.

"Of the nearly 1,300 persons from Tamil Nadu



Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami tasting the food at an Amma Unavagam.

who participated in the meeting in Delhi, 515 have been identified and are being tested for COVID-19. Of these, 45 tested positive yesterday. We are trying to trace the remaining participants who had returned to the State, but have been unable to obtain their addresses. They should come forward, considering the intensity of the spread of the virus, which will affect not only them,

but their families and wider society as well," Mr. Palaniswami said.

The CM said the government would provide the individuals concerned adequate medical treatment to help them recover, and it would be easier to treat the virus if the symptoms are identified at the initial stage itself. "Many of those who tested positive are recovering," he added.

Don't attribute political motive to Nizamuddin cases: Murugan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu BJP president L. Murugan on Wednesday urged people not to attribute any political or religious motives to those who had attended a meeting at Nizamuddin West in Delhi and were later found to have contracted COVID-19.

In a statement, Mr. Murugan said, "I request those who had attended the meeting, their family members and those who had come into contact with them to come forward and get themselves tested at government hospitals. Kindly do not take this lightly, and do extend your full cooperation to the government as it takes measures to combat the spread of the disease," Mr. Murugan said. He said the government should test everyone who comes forward from this cluster, in the interest of people's welfare.

Donations pour into CM's relief fund

Corporates, other organisations and the public contribute ₹36.34 crore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

As of March 31, the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund has received contributions to the tune of ₹36.34 crore from corporates, other organisations and the public to aid the battle against COVID-19.

TVS Motor Company and Sakthi Masala have contributed ₹5 crore each; Asian Paints and Simpsons ₹2 crore each; DMK Foundation, Tamil Nadu Govern-

nor's Office and Tamil Nadu News Print and Papers Ltd ₹1 crore each; and Gold Jewellers and DLF Foundation ₹50 lakh each, among others.

Former Union Minister M.K. Alagiri, Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham and Madras Talkies, among others, have contributed ₹10 lakh each, according to a press release.

IT major HCL will donate 500 ventilators worth ₹37.5 crore to the Tamil Na-

du government to help treat those affected by COVID-19, another press release said.

Kanimozhi's gesture DMK MP Kanimozhi on Wednesday released ₹50 lakh from her MPLADS fund for setting up a lift in the government hospital in Thoothukudi.

"When I visited the hospital, the doctors told me that a lift was necessary for the ward for treating pa-

tients who tested positive for COVID-19. I met the district collectors and handed over the money to them," said Ms. Kanimozhi, who was elected from the Thoothukudi Lok Sabha constituency.

She has already contributed ₹1 crore for combating the disease.

Earlier, Ms. Kanimozhi gave personal protective equipment and sanitisers to doctors, nurses and other medical staff.

Medicos write to Health Minister seeking adequate protective gear

Govt. urged to postpone exam for medical officers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

With the one-year Compulsory Rotatory Residential Internship (CRR) having been extended by a month for interns of the 2014 MBBS batch, the Tamil Nadu Medical Students' Association (TNMSA) has requested the State government and hospital administrations to provide them with, and ensure the availability of, adequate protective gear such as personal protective equipment, N95 masks and hand sanitisers to combat the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

In a memorandum to the Health Minister, the association requested the government to ensure the availability of necessary protective

gear in the workplace without any compromise. They suggested that the 2014-batch interns could be kept as a reserve medical team for managing the disease.

Noting that the global pandemic may last a few more months, the association urged the government to postpone the upcoming Tamil Nadu Medical Services Recruitment Board exam for medical officers and recommend that the Union government postpones NEET PG 2021.

TNMSA also requested college and hospital administrations to issue the CRR completion certificates at the end of the original period of posting without any delay, provided the candi-

dates have received no negative remarks during their internship, get them registered with the State Medical Council and issue university degree certificates.

This is because any delay would affect their seniority when it comes to registration with the Tamil Nadu Medical Council as their counterparts in private medical colleges have completed their CRR, the memorandum said.

The association also urged the government to sanction salaries and ensure that its members would benefit from the incentives announced for healthcare providers involved in COVID-19 management.

Two-pronged strategy to tackle veggie shortage

Agriculture dept. motivating T.N. farmers to boost production and co-ordinating with supplier States

T. RAMAKRISHNAN CHENNAI

Anticipating a shortage of vegetables in the next couple of months as a fallout of the COVID-19 crisis, the State Agriculture Department is adopting a two-pronged strategy to tackle any such eventuality.

The department, through its main arm - the Horticulture wing - is motivating farmers to produce more vegetables in the State. The fact that the current period happens to coincide with the season for the cultivation of vegetables in the State has come in handy for the authorities.

Simultaneously, the Agricultural Marketing and Agri Business Directorate - another arm of the Agriculture Department - is in



The current period happens to coincide with the season for the cultivation of vegetables in the State. • M. PERIASAMY

touch with officials of supplier States such as Maharashtra and Karnataka to ensure the steady supply of vegetables.

As Tamil Nadu receives an

average of 250 truck loads of big-sized onion (around 6,250 tonnes) every day from Nashik, Maharashtra, the officials of the western State had, at an inter-State

conference coordinated by the Centre on Tuesday, assured their counterparts in T.N. that there would be no shortage of onions, a senior official of the Agriculture Department said. Karnataka is another supplier State, which provides tomato, potato and carrot. Agra in Uttar Pradesh has been a consistent provider of potato to Tamil Nadu's markets.

As for the domestic production of vegetables, Tamil Nadu, on an average, produces 50 lakh tonnes of vegetables annually, of which tapioca accounts for about 27 lakh tonnes; tomato 3.2 lakh tonnes; onion 2.2 lakh tonnes; and brinjal 1.2 lakh tonnes. Seventy Uzhavar Sandhais (farmers' markets) in different districts have been relocated to bigger sites

outside the limits of cities and towns so that the norms of social distancing could be followed.

In the meantime, the Agriculture Department is overseeing the distribution of urea to the Cauvery delta, where there are plans to raise paddy over 50,000 hectares. Called 'summer paddy', this crop will cover 30,000 hectares initially. On Wednesday morning, a consignment of 1,200 tonnes of urea reached the Thanjavur railway junction. The State will get nearly 14,000 tonnes more shortly. Ordinarily, the summer paddy is not encouraged. But given the present circumstances, the authorities are willing to give latitude to the farmers, who have been advised to adhere to social distancing norms.

No sunny prospects for folk artistes this summer

All temple festivals have been cancelled due to the COVID-19 threat

B. KOLAPPAN CHENNAI

The summer season is normally a time when there is no dearth of opportunities for folk artistes to perform at temple festivals. But this time around, with all the programmes booked for Kodai Thiruvizha - summer festival at temples of folk deities - having been cancelled due to the COVID-19 threat, folk artistes in Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi and Kanniyakumari districts have been deprived of their livelihood.

Unlike other sections of society, folk artistes depend primarily on Kodai Thiruvizha to eke out a living, and the money they earn during the season helps them sustain themselves for the rest of the year.

"There will be more than 2,000 artistes in these



The possibility of postponing the festivals at temples of folk deities is ruled out since the rainy season will not allow any celebrations. • A. SHAIKHMOHIDEEN

districts who will now be unable to run their families. The government should supply essential commodities and extend financial assistance to us," said Kaniyan Koothu artiste V. Muthuperumal, who was forced to cancel his

daughter's wedding due to the lockdown.

The possibility of postponing the festival is ruled out since the rainy season will not allow any celebration after May. Villages do not organise festivals after the schools

re-open. Usually, right from the beginning of March, these artistes would have programmes lined up from Monday to Wednesday and again between Thursday and Saturday. It would be a tightly-packed schedule for artistes of Kaniyan Koothu,

Naiyandi Melam, Villu Paatu, Thappattam and Karagam. "Artists generally borrow from money-lenders. Now, the pandemic has closed the prospect of borrowing money too," said Nagaswaram player and Naiyandimelam artiste Panakudi R. Siva.

While Naiyandi Melam artistes - who play Nagaswaram and Thavil - could perform at weddings, other artistes don't get such opportunities.

Mr. Siva said he was not sure whether the economic slowdown caused by the disease and the lockdown would affect his prospects next year as well.

"Organisers of the festival will not be in a position to collect the money as they do in normal times. The trend will reflect in our salaries and we will be forced to perform for lower amounts," he said.

Find out to which category does each of the vegetables belong

1. Kharif
2. Rabi
3. Zaid

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

People can contact the animal helpline to report about animals in distress or for related queries, the State government has said. The government has also advised District Collectors to ensure that cattle, street dogs and pets abandoned by their owners are fed and taken care of by animal lovers and NGOs.

K. Gopal, Principal Secretary, Animal Husbandry & Fisheries Department, said arrangements are in place to provide food and treat sick animals. "People can contact the toll free number 1800-425-5880 and 1962 or mail anh.tn@nic.in," he said.

Mr. Gopal explained that the government had also directed the district



Lending a hand: A policewoman offering food to stray dogs. • R. RAVINDRAN

collectors to allow the movement of vehicles carrying poultry products and materials for making poultry feed.

'Chicken and eggs safe' Describing as misleading a rumour that eating chicken and eggs would cause COVID-19, he said staying away from poultry pro-

ducts would on the one hand deprive people of the protein content in their food and on the other cause enormous loss to the poultry farmers.

"Poultry products offer cheap, but high quality protein. They will boost immunity, which is the need of the hour," he added.

Timings
CHENNAI

THURSDAY, APR. 02
RISE 06:05 SET 18:21
RISE 12:46 SET 01:04

FRIDAY, APR. 03
RISE 06:04 SET 18:21
RISE 13:46 SET 02:00

SATURDAY, APR. 04
RISE 06:03 SET 18:21
RISE 14:46 SET 02:53

Chennai Weather max min

Thiruvallur 38 24
Chennai Airport 34 25
Chennai City 33 27

Chennai Airport Today
34°C A warm morning lies ahead. The sky is likely to remain partly cloudy over the region.

Chennai Airport Tomorrow
34°C A partly cloudy sky is likely to persist over the city. A warm morning lies ahead.

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THE HINDU
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Curfew passes for caregivers

STAFF REPORTER
CHENNAI

The Office of the State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities has given instructions to all District Collectors to issue curfew passes to caregivers of differently-abled persons.

A letter said that as physically challenged persons were facing difficulties in getting essentials like food, ration and medicines due to the absence of caregivers, passes should be liberally given to the caregivers.

Ten lakh flats, houses to come under containment zone

The houses will be monitored by Corporation workers on a daily basis

ALOYSIUS XAVIER LOPEZ
CHENNAI
The Chennai Corporation has planned to expand COVID-19 containment zones across the city, said Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash.

Currently, just 25,000 houses are covered in the containment zones. Once containment zones are expanded to cover the entire city, across 426 sq.km., at least 10 lakh apartment complexes and individual houses will be included in field-level operations to control COVID-19.

Doctors will further examine the residents who have symptoms. The field-level containment plan for the entire city is ready. We will get 100 doctors, in addition to the 200 doctors in Corporation hospitals. Thirty doctors are already at work, containing COVID-19 in the city," said Mr. Prakash.

Many doctors who have received appointment orders have requested a few days to join duty. The Corporation is also planning to use services of primary schoolteachers for implementing the plan.

COVID-19

"The Corporation has launched COVID-19 containment-related exercises in all locations where positive cases have been reported. Currently, 10 containment zones have been earmarked in 21 locations across Chennai. COVID-19 positive cases have been reported in the 10 zones," said Mr. Prakash.

"Each containment zone has 2,500 houses. The houses will be monitored by Corporation workers every day, checking if residents have symptoms. The exercise will continue for a month," said Mr. Prakash.

"Over 15,000 personnel, including SHG members, will be used by the Corporation to scan the containment zones, every day. The term 'scan' means workers will note down symptoms of residents in each household," said Mr. Prakash.

"As many as 10 lakh locations, including apartment complexes and individual houses, will be monitored daily by the 15,000 workers.

Vacancies in posts

Currently, the civic body has around 50% vacancies in posts of sanitary inspectors, who play a key role in pandemic response. The civic body has just 110 sanitary inspectors in 200 wards of the city. Each sanitary inspector is in charge of one ward, with an average of 50,000 residents. But most sanitary inspectors are handling additional charges of the neighbouring ward, affecting containment-related exercises.

Some women belonging to SHGs have reportedly agreed to join containment-related exercises, said officials.

Many SHGs have already started manufacturing masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Some wards have at least 120 SHGs, with 20 members each. But such SHG members have said that they would carry out containment operations only after the Corporation provides personal protective equipment. "The Chennai Corporation has not even supplied masks for Amma canteen staff," said an SHG member.



Hosed down: Fire and Rescue Services personnel spray disinfectant on the facade of the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital on Wednesday. *B. JOTHIRAMALINGAM

After two positives, staff of store in mall put under quarantine

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

After two staff members of a store at the Phoenix mall in Velachery tested positive for COVID-19, public health authorities have brought all employees of the store under their direct watch, and have asked them to quarantine themselves at home.

In case of any symptoms, they have been asked to call local health authorities or contact the COVID-19 control rooms.

On March 27, a 25-year-old woman, who worked at the store, tested positive for COVID-19. She is undergoing treatment at the Government Hospital in Ariyalur.

On Tuesday, her co-worker, a 28-year-old man, also tested positive and was admitted to the Government



Two staff members of a store at the Phoenix mall have tested positive for COVID-19.

Medical College Hospital in Tiruvannamalai.

An official of the Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine said that all staff of the store were already under home quarantine, and disinfection measures had been taken.

"We have traced all contacts. All staff of the store are

under our direct watch, as they reside in multiple districts. We did not want to create panic. So we told the store management to get details of persons who visited the store from their database. Their phone numbers will be available in the billing database, and we told them to send individual messages, asking them to contact the health authorities in case of symptoms," a health official of the Chennai Corporation said.

He added that the management has reached out to nearly 360 persons using details from the database, through broadcast messages.

The officials said that the safety advisory had been sent personally to all of them.

Corporation launches 'Corona Monitoring App'

Users can report symptoms

STAFF REPORTER
CHENNAI

The Chennai Corporation launched a 'Corona Monitoring App' that can be downloaded from its website.

Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash said that if any resident has symptoms, including fever, dry cough and breathlessness, he/she has to take a photo of their door or a selfie from their house and send it in "It will



The app can be downloaded from the Corporation's website.

Using technology to fight pandemic. Note down this example.

The app gives users three options - quarantine capture, general fever symp-

tom and report provided in-un-ide with oto op-

tom. If a resident comes across a crowded spot, they too can send in a picture.

Curbs extended

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Police Commissioner A.K. Viswanathan on Wednesday extended the prohibitory orders, already in force in the State since March 24, till 6 a.m. on April 15.

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, the CM announced restrictive measures from March 24. The Commissioner then issued the order under Section 144 of the Cr.PC from 6 p.m. on March 24 to 6 a.m. on April 1. As the period came to an end, he extended the curbs.

Help to deal with stress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The Department of Public Health, in association with the National Health Mission, has come out with helplines to support people battling isolation and distress due to the lockdown.

It has prepared a chart with helpline numbers in various districts. The department has asked people to stay clear of negative thoughts.

The numbers for Chennai are: 9444297058, 9940211077 and 9840244405.

Kothwal Chavadi shifts base

Broadway bus stand converted into market

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The Chennai Corporation on Wednesday shifted the market at Kothwal Chavadi to the Broadway bus stand. Corporation officials clarified that while all retail shops at Kothwal Chavadi were shifted to Broadway bus stand, wholesale outlets were not disturbed.

Just 20 wholesale shops at Kothwal Chavadi were open on Wednesday. Most wholesale traders were unable to open shops because of restrictions on the movement of vehicles.

Gathering of crowds

A few days ago, Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash had inspected the Kothwal Chavadi market and ordered its shifting due to the gathering of huge crowds in the area.



Over 4,000 people can visit the market without violating the norms of social distancing. *R. RAGU

"At least 200 retail shops on Anna Pillai Street and Malaya Perumal Street were shifted to the Broadway bus stand on Tuesday night. The market started operations on Wednesday. Over 4,000 people can visit the market without violating the norms of social distancing," said a civic official.

People started visiting the market on Wednesday by 4.30 a.m., and most products were sold

before noon. The Broadway bus stand, a famous landmark in the city, is expected to attract a large number of people wanting to purchase vegetables at an affordable price, said officials. On Wednesday, many retail outlets reported a sharp increase in the retail prices of vegetables.

Corporation officials have made arrangements for parking and garbage clearance at the market.

Friends come together to help

R. SUJATHA
CHENNAI

Over the last few days, the footfall at the Amma Unavagam on Sivagnanam Road in T. Nagar has increased significantly.

Initially, the customers were mainly security personnel posted outside the apartment complexes in the area. The queue has been getting longer since Friday.

Jayalakshmi, in charge of the Unavagam, said that more people sought the canteen facility, as they had no other place to go to eat.

According to the employees, usually, around 120 people visit the facility. But in the last week, the number has jumped to 200, as word spread that food was being offered for free.

Ms. Jayalakshmi said



People queuing up at an Amma Unavagam in T. Nagar.

that a person had offered to pay for all those who ate at the canteen - be it breakfast, lunch or dinner.

"I issue tokens and give him the numbers. He pays for the customers," she said.

S. Balasubramanian, who is funding the food, said it was a team effort by a group of school friends. The initial plan was to distribute cooked

Why do people step out of their homes? Police collate reasons

Stern action on the cards, based on the data collected

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

It looked like rush hour on Padi flyover on Wednesday morning as close to a hundred vehicles clogged the roads after the police conducted a surprise check on motorists flouting the lockdown.

The men and women in uniform stopped every vehicle and noted down registration numbers. "We wanted to find out how many people step out of their houses for essentials

and medical emergencies and how many just to roam the streets. We are also checking to find out how many are going around the city with curfew passes," said a senior officer.

Further action will be taken based on the data collected. "We will decide if we have to reduce the number of curfew passes or take measures to prevent people from leaving their locality," the officer added.

The checking led to a jam on the flyover, a junction for vehi-

cles coming from Villivakkam, Thirumangalam, Korattur and Retteri. "There were too many people. Since we checked each vehicle, there was a pile-up," said an officer.

M. Balaji, a motorist who was on the way to a hospital with his mother, said: "They checked our papers and took down details. The police did their duty as people are roaming the streets without realising the seriousness of the pandemic."



Lockdown farce: The checks led to a jam on Padi flyover on Wednesday morning. *M. VEDHAN.

A mad rush for kabasura kudineer

PON VASANTH B.A.
CHENNAI

Many pharmacies selling AYUSH medicines have been witnessing long queues of people looking to buy *kabasura kudineer*, in the belief that it will help keep COVID-19 at bay.

However, experts have clarified that *kabasura kudineer*, a Siddha concoction, was only suggested to the government for possible use as a complementary medicine in the treatment of COVID-19 or for those considered highly vulnerable.

Usman Kani, a resident of Vetuvankeni, who visited the Indian Medical Practitioners' Co-operative Pharmacy and Stores Ltd in Adyar, was disappointed that *kabasura kudineer* was not



Demand for the concoction went up after the PM met AYUSH practitioners. *R. RAVINDRAN

available. "I was, however, told about another drug that will help in boosting immunity," he said.

While Mr. Kani said he was going to use this as an additional precaution, apart from maintaining hygiene and distance, a few others who came to buy the drug

seemed to strongly believe that it would prevent COVID-19. C. Dinsh Kumar, who runs an AYUSH pharmacy, said that he had sold 2,000 bottles of *kabasura kudineer* and other Siddha drugs which he termed as 'immunity boosters' on Monday alone.

He said the demand went up after the PM's meeting with renowned AYUSH practitioners.

G. Sivaraman, a Siddha practitioner and managing director of Arogya Healthcare, said that *kabasura kudineer* was never suggested as a drug to prevent or cure COVID-19.

Felicitated at home

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Senior MTC officials gave colleagues who retired on March 31 a pleasant surprise by visiting their homes and presenting them pension certificates, work appreciation

certificates and sweets.

The corporation said that it usually organises a meeting to felicitate retirees at Pallavan House. But due to the lockdown, officials were asked by the MD to visit the homes of 71 retired employees.

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Siddha medicine is a traditional medicine originating in Tamil Nadu, India and practiced over centuries. The Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy of the Government of India regulates training in Siddha medicine and other traditional practices grouped collectively as AYUSH copy and paste the below link to get more details.

<https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=200005>

Tiruppur gets a 'disinfection tunnel' to fight COVID-19

'The device sprays sodium hypochlorite and can work for 16 hours'

R. AKILESH TIRUPPUR

Tiruppur Collector K. Vijayakarthy inaugurated a 'disinfection tunnel' as part of the precautionary measures against COVID-19 at the entrance of the Uzhavar Santhai in Thennampalayam on Wednesday.

This initiative might be the first of its kind in the State, Mr. Vijayakarthy told *The Hindu*. It was set up by the district administration in collaboration with Young Indians, the youth wing of the Confederation of Indian Industry.

Two sets of three nozzles will spray 1% sodium hypochlorite solution as people walk past, for a duration of three to five seconds inside the tunnel.

"Upon contact [with surfaces], it is efficient enough to kill the virus," the Collector said.

Workers and members of the public were advised to raise their hands with their palms facing



The disinfection tunnel at the Uzhavar Santhai in Tiruppur.

front while entering the tunnel to ensure efficient disinfection.

However, this disinfection tunnel is only a supplement to precautionary measures such as frequent handwashing, he said.

The total cost of the tunnel was around ₹90,000.

With a capacity of 1,000 litres, the disinfection tunnel will work uninterrupted for 16 hours, hence requiring refilling only once a day.

More such tunnels will be set up across the district in the future, Mr. Vijayakarthy said.

Tiruvallur district quarantines 250 villages

Village committees formed to supply essentials

VIVEK NARAYANAN CHENNAI

In a move to contain spread of COVID-19, the Tiruvallur district administration has quarantined 250 villages and has made them self-sufficient by forming village committees to supply essentials.

There are nine taluks - Gummidipoondi, Ponneri, Uthukottai, Tiruvallur, Tiruttani, Athipattu, R. K. Pettai, Poonamallee and Avadi - in Tiruvallur district, in which there are over 525 villages. As on date, close to 2,000 people, who have either returned from abroad or have shown symptoms of COVID-19, have been placed under quarantine in the district. To prevent people from leaving their villages and getting infected, the district administration has decided to quarantine all such villages.

"As of now we have quarantined 250 villages. In each hamlet, we have formed committees headed by the Village Administrative Officer and comprising the panchayat president, vice president, anganwadi worker, teacher and five youngsters from each street in the village. In the city limits, ward-level committees have been formed," said Collector Mageswari Ravikumar. She said that one team will be allotted for 150 houses. The team has a WhatsApp group. The



The villages have been made self-sufficient, officials said.

youngsters will go door-to-door and create awareness about COVID-19.

In case a house needs vegetables or medicines, the team will get it. "Besides if anyone shows symptoms, the medical team will be brought to the village. The team will also take steps to prevent stigmatising. They will take care of the welfare of migrant labourers too," she added. The remaining villages will also be quarantined. The local vegetable and meat sellers will be roped in to provide essentials to the residents. "No one will be allowed to enter or leave the villages. The village entry and exit points have been barricaded," said R. Sridhar, assistant director, panchayats, Tiruvallur.

For details Tiruvallur residents can check <http://stopcorona.tiruvallur.com/>.

DMK sends legal notice to BJP and Twitter

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

The DMK has sent a legal notice to the BJP leadership in Tamil Nadu and the Centre as well as micro-blogging site Twitter for "spreading malicious" news on social media that the party had not made any contribution towards combating COVID-19. DMK organisation secretary R.S. Bharathi, in the notice, said the DMK Trust donated ₹1 crore and all the MLAs and MPs of the party had donated one month's salary besides releasing money from their constituency development fund. The notice was sent by party MP and senior advocate P. Wilson on behalf of Mr. Bharathi to BJP's national president J.P. Nadda, state president L. Murugan, CEO of Twitter Inc., and MD of Twitter India.

"Our president (M.K. Stalin) has written to the Corporation Commissioner to make use of Kalaingar Arangan as an isolation ward to treat patients tested positive for the disease. Our party leaders in many districts have come forward to give their hotels and educational institutions for the treatment of patients," Mr. Bharathi said.

Demanding an unconditional apology from BJP leaders, Mr. Bharathi said they should jointly pay ₹100 crore towards the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund. He urged Twitter to remove the offending tweets.

Managing pregnancy and childbirth

"Doctor, I am in my 31st week of pregnancy; neighbours and friends tell me that I am more prone to get the infection. I am afraid. What should I do?"



Dr. A. JAISHREE GAJARAJ Senior obstetrician and gynaecologist

As obstetricians taking care of mums-to-be, we have received many a phone call seeking help and reassurance. The fear and anxiety is understandable. Thorough knowledge of the infection and its consequences will certainly help allay this fear and anxiety.

Does pregnancy make a woman more susceptible to coronavirus infection? Although pregnancy is an immuno-compromised state, we know from years of experience that most pregnant women go through pregnancy without any major compromise. Compared to the general population they are more likely to contract the infection and hence categorised as a high-risk group. There is, therefore, a need for more strict measures to be followed by both the pregnant women and their caregivers.

Sneezing, running nose, sore throat, fever and sometimes cough - extremely common symptoms. Then, how does one differentiate the common cold from a possible corona infection? Common treatment for such symptoms would be steam inhalation, paracetamol and antihistaminics (for cold).

In the absence of exposure to or contact with a known COVID suspect or history of travel within close contacts, the initial treatment should contain

There is insufficient evidence at present to support vertical transmission from mother to baby in utero, during delivery or breast feeding. Reports of miscarriage, growth restriction in the baby, especially when the infection occurs in the last trimester and induced preterm labour, though occasional, should be kept in mind.

Routine Antenatal (pregnancy) Care

You may be at various stages in your pregnancy. Trimester 1 or upto 12 weeks, after pregnancy confirmed on ultrasound scan, there is no need for an urgent AN visit.

Certain scans i.e., the first trimester scan, anomaly scan and growth scan are time-bound and you should contact your doctor. Please do not panic as this may still not be indicative of a COVID infection. Kindly ascertain from your doctor regarding the place of consultation. It may not be the clinic where you regularly visit.

The need for social distancing and self isolation cannot be overemphasized. Pregnant women should stay indoors, not participate in social gatherings and postpone "baby showers". If a family member develops a cough or cold you should isolate yourself for a minimum of two weeks in a separate room or till he/she recovers.

Our knowledge of the infection itself and its spread is limited. Given the limited information currently available, it would be prudent to strictly adhere to social distancing, especially beyond 28 weeks of pregnancy.

even if you are not a COVID suspect. If an emergency caesarean section is required, your doctor will advise you accordingly.

You can breastfeed your baby. Isolation may be advised only if there is suspicion or history of exposure.

Home Delivery

We have had requests for "home delivery" as it is presumed to be a "safer" place than a maternity unit in a hospital. Delivery at home certainly has many attendant risks and should be strongly discouraged in the current scenario. Monitoring of the mother and fetus may be sub-optimal. Access to emergency care, if it becomes necessary, i.e., transport, availability of blood and maternity units and personnel may be very difficult to organise.

Working women

Working women without any co-morbid factors can continue to work but must follow social distancing. If you are more than 28 weeks pregnant or have any risk factors it is best to coordinate with your workplace and your doctor and make a decision.

Delivery and immediate post partum

Your obstetrician and maternity unit may not be able to comply with all aspects of care you may have agreed to in your birth plan. Safety is of utmost importance and this will be definitely ensured. Risks of airborne transmission is high during normal delivery and precautions will be taken

Remember, my dear parents to be. Our priority should be reduction of transmission and safety first. My wishes to all of you for a smooth, safe pregnancy and delivery.

It has been raining bail orders in HC

MOHAMED IMRANULLAH S. CHENNAI

The Madras High Court has been lenient in granting interim bail to the accused even in murder, attempt to murder and corruption cases by taking into consideration various factors including the threat posed by the pandemic COVID-19.

Justices A.D. Jagadish Chandir and P. Rajamanickam have ordered the release of many accused on interim bail after observing, in their individual orders, that the interim relief was being granted in view of the extremity of the present situation.

When a bail petition filed by K. Appu came up for hearing, Justice Rajamanickam found that the petitioner had been accused of being part of a gang that had abducted an individual and murdered him due to personal enmity. The judge granted interim bail till April 27 to the present petitioner too.

The court passed similar orders with respect to lorry driver Ramesh who has been booked by Kalaspakam police in Tiruvannamalai district for attempting to murder a SSI of Police when the latter attempted to prevent smuggling of river sand on January 7. Justice Chandir granted interim bail till April 28 to R. Elavarason, SE in Regional office of the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways in Chennai and M. Murugaboopathi, Divisional Engineer of State Highways department. However, the court desisted from granting any relief to a person booked under POCSS Act.

Change in fishing ban dates likely

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

The annual fishing ban for mechanised boats in the State is likely to be advanced this year.

It usually begins on April 14 and goes on for 61 days. However, since fishermen have already been asked to abstain from fishing, the government has written to the Central government, urging

ing that the ban be considered from March 23 till May 23, instead of June 14.

Fisheries Department director G.S. Sameeran said that the Chief Secretary had written the letter and several other States too had followed suit.

If the suggested change is implemented, the fishing ban date is likely to be paid in April itself.

Stranded French tourists take special flight to Paris

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT PUDUCHERRY

A group of French tourists stranded here due to the global lockdown following the COVID-19 pandemic returned home on a special flight from Chennai to Paris on Wednesday.

A group of 138 tourists were taken to Chennai airport in four buses from here at 12.45 p.m.

Their return was facilitated by the Consulate General of France in Puducherry and Chennai.

300 nationals

In a press note, the Consulate General of France in Puducherry and Chennai said it had organised the return of 300 French nationals stranded in Puducherry, Auroville and various places in Tamil Nadu.

With the authorisation of the Government of India and the assistance of local authorities, buses and shuttles were organised for the transfer of the French nationals to the Chennai airport.

A special flight chartered by the French Government was arranged to take the tourists to Paris on Wednesday evening.

CINEMA • ARTS • EVENTS

MUSIC DANCE DRAMA

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Interested Manufacturers of Ventilators are requested to visit www.icf.indianrailways.gov.in, download ANNEXURE-ICF-EOI and submit duly filled in along with attachments, if any, by email to cdemc@icfmail.com.
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WESTERN RAILWAY-RATLAM DIVISION
CORRIGENDUM-IV
No. RTM-MECH-2020-02. Date: 31.03.2020. Subject: Mechanized cleaning & housekeeping services at Ratlam Station including housekeeping Garbage collection and Removal RAG, Litter picking & street sweeping within the premises for the period of 4 years (48 MONTHS). Ref: NIT of even No. Dated 11.03.2020. The following corrigendum may please be incorporated in the NIT of above subject work.

S. No.	Detail of Tender Document	For	Read as
01	Date & Time for submission and opening of tender	Closing Time: 03.04.2020 at 15.00 Hrs Opening Time: 03.04.2020 at 15.30 Hrs	Closing Time: 20.04.2020 at 15.00 Hrs Opening Time: 20.04.2020 at 15.30 Hrs

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As per the Constitution of India, Articles 214-231 deals with the provisions of the High Courts in India. At present, we have 24 high courts in the country, which includes 3 common high courts. Article 217 deals with the appointment of judges. However, there is also a procedure for removal of Judges of the High Court.

BIJU JOHN
27 Feb 1963 - 31 March 2020
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T. JAVARAMAN ADHAMANGALAM
M/s. Shriram Group of Companies, Chennai, passed away on 1st April, 2020. Cremated immediately thereafter. Deeply mourned by Family Members

SAD DEMISE
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(21.09.1935 to 31.03.2020)
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Ph: 91-44-2323231

SAD DEMISE
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Aged: 87 Years
Passed away on 1st April 2020
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V.N. VENKATESAN
Deeply mourned by Smt. Lakshmi Venkatesan IIT, Chennai (Retd.), and other members of the Family

IN MEMORIAM
Smt. K Jayalaxshmi
(W/o late N. Krishnaswami)
17.8.1926 to 24.3.2020
Passed away at Bhubaneswar
Deeply mourned by: Rajagopal & Indira, Atreya Srinivas & Geetha, Amritha Ravi, Krishna Vidya & Srivathsan, Aishwarya Friends and relatives

IN FOND REMEMBRANCE
Dr. P. N. PARAMESWARAN
18th Anniversary Day 29-10-1950 - 02-04-2002
Your Life & Deeds Continue to Inspire & Guide us
Fondly Remembered by: Family Members & Staff of Devi Academy School Chennai - 600 087

OBITUARY
"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." II Tim. 4:7
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It is with profound grief we announce her demise.
Deeply mourned by children, grandchildren & dear ones.
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REMEMBRANCE
Remembrance Day
Smt. K. Saraswathi, MA., B.T., D.S.M. 1927 - 2013
Founder Chairman and Principal Saraswathi Vidyalaya Group of Institutions April 02, 2020
In Loving Memory of our Founder Staff, Students, Alumni & Parents
SARASWATHI VIDYALAYA SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL Vadapalani, Chennai - 26
SARASWATHI VIDYALAYA Nursery and Primary School Nanganallur, Chennai - 61
SARASWATHI VIDYALAYA Matriculation School Enathur, Kanchipuram
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DEATH
FIRST YEAR ANNIVERSARY
M. VENKATACHALAPATHY
Senior Advocate and Former President MBA D.O.B: 04/12/1944 D.O.D: 02/04/2019
It has been a year since you left us. Life rolls on but the vacuum your absence has created still remains strong. Your smiling face, kind heart and pleasant ways is missed by all every passing day.
Fondly Remembered by: Family, Friends & Members of Legal Fraternity

IN FOND REMEMBRANCE
SHRI. JAIGOPAL GARODIA
31.03.1931 - 02.04.2010
PHILANTHROPIST & FOUNDER CHAIRMAN OF JAIGOPAL GARODIA VIVEKANANDA VIDYALAYA TRUST & JAIGOPAL GARODIA FOUNDATION
A true visionary, a pioneer in education, love for nation and religion dedicated his life to the service of the people with his patriotic fervour. "He was a precious jewel of the country!"
"He was a legacy of service and goodness, championed the cause of the poor and continues to inspire us."
REVERENTIAL REMEMBRANCE BY: MANAGEMENT, STAFF AND MILLIONS OF STUDENTS AND BENEFACTORIES OF JAIGOPAL GARODIA GROUP OF INSTITUTIONS

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES
NINTH ANNIVERSARY
Mrs. SUNDARI MANI
1925 - 2011
FONDLY REMEMBERED BY: P.K. Ramakrishnan - Karpagam Santhi - P.S. Subramanian and Host of Friends and Relatives Cell: 94330 27484

IN FOND MEMORY OF
Late D. ANNALAKSHMI AMMAL
(Wife of Late V.S.K.D. NADAR)
TWENTY SIXTH ANNIVERSARY
02.04.2020
Ever Loving
D. ANANDA RAJAN'S Family Members
D. MANOHARA RAJAN & Family Members
D. GUNASEELA RAJAN & Family Members

REMEMBRANCE
Remembrance Day
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In Loving Memory of our Founder Staff, Students, Alumni & Parents
SARASWATHI VIDYALAYA SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL Vadapalani, Chennai - 26
SARASWATHI VIDYALAYA Nursery and Primary School Nanganallur, Chennai - 61
SARASWATHI VIDYALAYA Matriculation School Enathur, Kanchipuram
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REMEMBRANCE
Remembrance Day
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60 from Jamaat in quarantine in Kerala

CM warns against stigmatising religious groups

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday said at least 60 persons who returned to Kerala from the Tablighi Jamaat centre at Nizamuddin in New Delhi early in March had been quarantined. Mr. Vijayan said there was no cause for panic. The State had foreseen their re-



Following up: An officer collecting details of preachers from Indonesia who had attended the Tablighi Jamaat Markaz, in a quarantine facility in Belagavi on Wednesday. **SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT**

turn and ensured their quarantine. The police had helped identify and trace them. The centre had organised meetings before the national lockdown. Scores of people from Kerala had visited the centre as part of their religious beliefs and the situation was the same in places of worship of other faiths in the country.
He said COVID-19 recognised no religion or geographical boundaries. The government had found that attempts were being made

by some divisive elements to stigmatise people of a particular faith for the pandemic. The State would not tolerate such divisive attempts. It would prosecute those who indulged in such malicious propaganda.
Mr. Vijayan said the German government had conveyed its appreciation of Kerala's efforts to trace 232 of its citizens in various locations during the epidemic. The country had informed that these citizens had reached Germany safely.

Nearly 1,500 attended from Karnataka

AFSHAN YASMEEN
BENGALURU
About 1,500 people from Karnataka may have attended the Tablighi Jamaat in Nizamuddin. Of these, the State has been able to trace 800 people and 143 of them have been found to be symptomatic.
Jawaid Akhtar, Additional Chief Secretary, said the Centre had sent the list of 1,500 people to the State. "We cannot say if all these

Kerala Cabinet nod for 'salary challenge' for govt. employees

Initiative to collect a month's pay to fight COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
The Kerala Cabinet has given the go ahead to the 'salary challenge' for State government employees.

The Cabinet on Tuesday decided to collect one month's salary from government employees compulsorily to meet the financial burden incurred by the spread of COVID-19. The funds would be routed to the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund. Ministers would contribute ₹1 lakh each to the fund.

A final decision on the mode of implementing the 'salary challenge' would be made after eliciting the response of the employees, sources said.

The Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) flayed the "unilateral" decision of the Cabinet. "The Chief Minister counsels people to be spartan during the



Cleaning drive: Fire service personnel spraying disinfectant at the Thiruvananthapuram Sub Treasury. **S. MAHINSHA**

Staff may face salary cut

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
A drastic reduction in non-plan expenditure, mainly rationalisation of salary bills of the Kerala government, is being seriously explored to mitigate the impact of the fiscal shock rendered by

COVID-19. The State Planning Board is understood to have discussed a cut in the salary of government employees and has concluded that none should be spared of the onus of sharing the impact of the virus outbreak.

lockdown," said leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala. "He wants to confiscate the salary of government staff but he has no qualms in sanctioning ₹2 crore at this juncture to hire a helicopter for VIP travel. There is a dichotomy between what this government sermonises and what it practices."

COVID-19

High alert in Guntur district

GoI has done away with plan and non plan distinction with the setting up of NITI Aayog. However state governments continue to use it. Find out what comes under non plan expenditure. Fiscal policy is the policy formulated by the government (central/state/local) and is associated with the management of its revenue and expenditure. So what is fiscal shock? It's an unprecedented increase in expense in parallel with a drastic reduction in income.

IN BRIEF



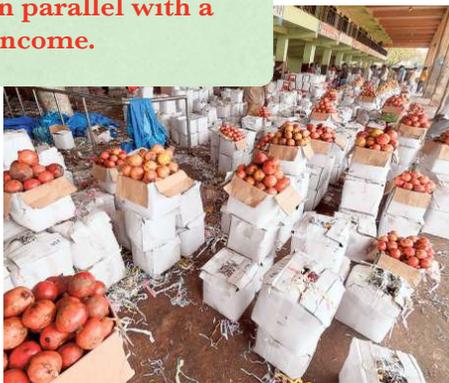
IISc. researchers building ventilator prototype

BENGALURU
As India races to overcome the possibility of a shortage of ventilators in its battle against COVID-19, a team of engineers at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) is building a prototype of an electro-mechanical ventilator from scratch, using only components found or made in India. It is expected to be ready within the next few weeks. The project is aimed at countering the challenge of manufacturers being unable to source key components from abroad due to the current disruption in global supply chains.

Business as usual



Despite the lockdown some things hardly change. The chief priest and his assistants are on their way to do the daily rituals at Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala; and, right, seasonal fruits on display at a market in Hyderabad on Wednesday. **S. GOPAKUMAR & NAGARA GOPAL**



One dead, 4 hospitalised after consuming sanitiser

WEST GODAVARI
A youth died and four others were hospitalised after they reportedly consumed a sanitiser chemical as liquor shops were closed owing to the lockdown in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. The deceased has been identified as D. Naven Murthy Raju, 20. Four others were admitted to various private hospitals and their condition is stated to be critical. The victims were addicted to alcohol. A case has been registered, the police said.

No 'Vishukani' for devotees at Guruvayur

THIRUVARUR
Against the backdrop of COVID-19, the Sreekrishna temple in Guruvayur will conduct Vishu celebrations with rituals alone. Devotees will not be allowed to witness the 'Vishukani' this time. 'Vishukani' will be limited for half an hour from 2.30 a.m. on April 14. Only temple officials, workers and management committee members will attend the ritual. The Vishu Namaskaram in the afternoon too will be held without rituals. Thousands of devotees used to witness the 'Vishukani' at the temple every year.

Now, Rythu Bazaar is just a call away

HYDERABAD
To help people remain in their houses during the lockdown imposed to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Telangana government has arranged mobile Rythu Bazars on call for residential colonies, apartment complexes. Residents can dial 7330733112 to register their locality or apartment name for the arrival of mobile Rythu Bazaar, Minister for Agriculture and Marketing S. Niranjan Reddy said here on Tuesday. Besides, youth willing to run mobile Rythu Bazars can dial the number to take up the business.

Tipplers fall prey to prank in Karnataka

They queued up in front of a shop

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BENGALURU
Tipplers facing a long dry phase in view of the COVID-19 lockdown fell prey to an apparent April Fool's day prank on social media - that liquor outlets would open for a day on Wednesday - and thronged a shop in Karnataka's Gadag town, only to be driven away later.
People queued up at the shop on Mulagund Road, apparently hoping to purchase some liquor, unaware that it was a prank.
The crowd included women, youth and senior citizens.
While queuing in a disciplined manner, they failed to observe social distancing and stood in close proximity to each other.

Requesting anonymity, a person who saw and shot a video of the incident said, "The tipplers were speculating that the shop would open on April 1 and a person stood in the queue. Soon, others started following him. Thus a long queue was formed but to no avail."
He said those in the queue could be heard cursing the authorities for the lockdown.
Learning of the incident, Gadag police personnel rushed to the spot and asked the people gathered to disperse.
Liquor shops in Karnataka have been shut since Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a lockdown to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Man held for spreading rumours

Man held for spreading rumours

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MANGALURU
A man was arrested in Mangaluru for allegedly spreading malicious content and rumours on social media against Karnataka government functionaries engaged in the work against COVID-19. He has been identified as Nizam alias Neeza.
He was produced before a local court and remanded to judicial custody on Tuesday. Police Commissioner P.S. Harsha said in a tweet.
Nizam has been accused of spreading malicious content and rumours about government functionaries involved in the anti-pandemic work using the social media platform "Idhu namma diwani".

Film crew stuck in Jordanian desert

STAFF REPORTER
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Malayalam filmmaker Blessy has written to the government and the Kerala Film Chamber to take steps to bring back a 58-member film crew, including actor Prithviraj, stranded in Jordan after shooting for the movie *Aadujeevitham*. Responding to the appeal, Culture Minister A.K. Balan has promised to take all necessary actions.
The crew had been shooting the second schedule of the film at the Wadi Rum desert in Jordan for the past weeks. According to a Facebook post by Prithviraj, the Jordanian authorities, who had earlier given a go-ahead for the shoot, revoked the same on March 27 as the prevailing restrictions in the country had to be further

strengthened.
"We have now been told that an immediate permission for shoot to resume is unlikely due to the situation and hence our next best option would be to return to India at the first available opportunity. As we had originally planned to stay and shoot in Wadi Rum till the 2nd week of April, our accommodation, food and supplies are taken care of now," wrote Prithviraj.
Mr. Balan said Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has been in touch with Union Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan soon as he came to know about the issue. Mr. Muraleedharan has informed necessary steps had been taken to extend their visa period, Mr. Balan said.

A.P. bites the bullet, defers salary payments

It is 100% for top brass, partial for others

STAFF REPORTER
VIZAGAPATNAM
With its revenue streams drying up owing to the lockdown imposed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and containment measures entailing an additional burden on the exchequer, the Andhra Pradesh government has resorted to deferment of salaries and pensions to salvage the situation. The deferment is in respect of the payments for March 2020 payable in April 2020 and it will be in force till further orders.
According to a G.O. dated

March 31, the deferment is 100% in respect of the Chief Minister, Ministers, MLAs and MLAs, chairpersons and members of corporations, elected representatives of all local bodies and people holding equivalent posts.
It is 50% for All-India Service Officers, 10% for all other government employees and persons engaged in direct individuals through third parties, except Class-IV employees.
The deferment is 10% for Class-IV, outsourcing and contract employees.

Mark the desert in your atlas. If you come across any region or place which you have never heard off immediately open your atlas and mark them.

Also underline the water bodies surrounding the region and make a note of landlocked countries



WEATHER WATCH			
RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY			
Kochi	33.4	25.8	39.3
Bengaluru	26.45	13.0	20.0
Delhi	36.2	26.1	34.6
Mumbai	04	14	32
Pune	25	09	30
Visakhapatnam	06	40	06
Tiruchirappalli	39.3	23.4	20.0
Vijayawada	36.2	26.1	34.6
Visakhapatnam	34.6	27.0	20.0

Now, a tonsorial 'challenge' to beat the lockdown blues

With salons closed, people are shaving their heads; some have joined 'Home Quarantine Shave' challenge

MITHOSH JOSEPH
KOZHIKODE
The snip of scissors is barely audible in the corridors of the city's comfy salons these days.

With the closure of salons, served by hundreds of migrant labourers, in the wake of the lockdown, many are now forced to do a haircut themselves, with some finishing touches from kin or friends. For men, the safe option now is to try a tonsure, without worrying about the mirth it will evoke among family and friends.
"It was the first time in the past 40 years that we tried it together. It was a



Clean shave: Four East Hill residents who recently shaved their heads following the closure of salons in Kozhikode.

surprise for our family members too," say Biju Yedoothaman and his friend Shibu Mannil.
These East Hill residents say many of their friends are now planning to follow suit.
M. Krishnadas, an auto driver from Pavangad, feels that the shave had fed is quickly catching up in the city.

"The closure of salons is creating an unexpected challenge, though it is still not being taken as serious. This was the easy option to manage and still look fashionable," he says.
According to him, his shaved head is now a favourite 'plaything' for his grandchildren.

Awareness campaign
Though many do it for convenience and some others for fun, there are also a few who do it as part of the COVID-19 awareness campaign like the one shown by Australian batsman David Warner.

Mostly, IT professionals are taking it up as a social media campaign.
"In Kozhikode city alone, we have 15 such IT professionals who have joined the Home Quarantine Shave (HQS) challenge. All of them are directors of various IT ventures in Kozhikode," says Abdul Gafoor, secretary, Calicut Forum for IT. The challenge will be complete only when one makes a contribution to the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund after posting an image of the shaved head in the HQS Facebook page and challenging another friend, he adds.

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE	Yesterday
Ahmedabad	31	22	18	39	80	Good	25.6
Bengaluru	07	21	22	57	57	Good	26.6
Chennai	04	26	45	86	86	Good	25.9
Delhi	01	87	46	104	96	Good	23.5
Hyderabad	02	25	24	107	92	Good	26.8
Kolkata	13	23	21	120	83	Good	24.0
Lucknow	03	13	55	180	180	Good	20.0
Mumbai	04	14	10	32	72	Good	9.5
Pune	25	09	50	32	31	Good	2.6
Visakhapatnam	06	40	06	48	68	Good	25.6

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



Uncritical endorsement

SC must ask more probing questions on the way the government is handling the pandemic

There are two aspects to the Supreme Court's limited intervention in response to the humanitarian crisis set off by the exodus of migrant workers, following the announcement of a country-wide lockdown. In a brief order, the highlight of which is its full endorsement of the Centre's response to the pandemic, the Court has, first, underscored the need for kindness by the police and the authorities in the way they treat the workers and their families. Second, it has uncritically accepted the official narrative that "fake news" about the duration of the lockdown being "three months" caused a panic reaction from migrant workers across States. In the light of this finding – if it can be described thus – the Court has chosen to "direct the media to refer to and publish the official version about the developments", with a disclaimer that it does not intend to interfere with the free discussion about the pandemic. It has noted an offer from the Solicitor-General to bring out a daily bulletin to clear people's doubts. It recorded its expectation that the media, including social media, would "maintain a strong sense of responsibility and ensure that unverified news capable of causing panic is not disseminated". Significantly, the order flags the penal provisions in the law for punishing those who disseminate information amounting to false alarm or disobedience to a public servant's instructions.

It would be an exaggeration if anyone sees in this direction or appeal to the media for responsible journalism any attempt at censorship, but it is disappointing that the Court finds credible the government's claim about "fake news" being the main factor behind the exodus. It was quite obvious that the short notice of just four hours for the lockdown to take effect, the lack of planning and coordination with the States, the fears of the people about being left without cash and running out of food, and worries about their families back home were the principal reasons. A welcome feature of the Court's approach is that it did not concede the government's ill-advised request for a direction to restrain the media from reporting or publishing "anything" without ascertaining the factual position from the government. Implicit in this prayer was an attempt to control information, the very antithesis of the current need for the government to ensure proactive disclosure and dissemination of accurate data. To an extent, the Court's restraint is understandable; as, dealing with a pandemic, be it in the form of framing a strategy for prevention and treatment, or limiting its devastating economic fallout, is primarily the duty of the executive. However, as it has chosen to examine the humanitarian dimension to the crisis, it would be in the fitness of things if it asked more searching questions of the government and ensured greater accountability in these distressing times.

Beyond the blame game

India must use the lockdown for full contact tracing, especially after the Nizamuddin scare

Nizamuddin in Delhi has turned into a large cluster of novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) cases after a big religious congregation was held in mid-March by the Tablighi Jamaat at the Alami Markaz Banglawa Masjid. More than 400 people showing symptoms have been hospitalised in Delhi alone and nearly 240 have tested positive; at least 10 have died. The spectre of large-scale community spread by a few hundred attendees from different States cannot be ruled out. That the three-day event began on a day when the Health Ministry said that it did not consider the novel coronavirus as a health emergency despite 81 cases being reported cannot be an excuse. After all, WHO had called COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11. The organisers should have been very much aware that a similar congregation organised by them in Malaysia in end-February led to a spike in cases there and the attendees had carried the virus to other countries. But the Delhi government is equally culpable as nothing was done to stop such a meeting except issuing an order on March 13 prohibiting the assembly of more than 200 people. What prevented the State government from following the Centre's March 6 advice to States to avoid or postpone mass gatherings till the pandemic was contained? There have been several such large gatherings, religious and non-religious, in the country after India reported its first case, beginning with the Namaste Trump rally in Ahmedabad, to migrants gathering in a few cities including Delhi a few days ago. Until the lockdown began, many places of worship were open and political events held. Each such event could have potentially seeded the virus into the population and should have therefore been cancelled or prevented. But India failed despite being aware how large congregations – some linked to religion – had led to an alarming spread of the virus, examples being the large outbreaks in South Korea, Singapore, southern Italy and Spain.

States that already have cases with a link to the Nizamuddin event should now use the lockdown period to actively engage in finding everyone who has attended the event, trace their contacts, quarantine, test and treat them without losing time. Both South Korea and Singapore have demonstrated how meticulous tracing of contacts of a church event, isolation and aggressive testing helped prevent the highly infectious virus from spreading widely in the community. Ideally, the remaining period of the shutdown should be used to expand the testing to at least limited community level to find every suspected case linked to the attendee. The last thing that India can afford in the war against the virus is the disease acquiring a religious or class colour. Community leaders have been irresponsible, but those in the government have been lax too.

The return of the expert

An unintended benefit of the pandemic is the return of facts, truth and experts



RAJEEV BHARGAVA

The expert is back in public discourse. Dismissed until recently as an enemy, a self-indulgent blabber, an arrogant armchair intellectual, he returns now as a valuable adviser and ally, someone we cannot do without. The flamboyant display of ignorance has been suspended. Populist leaders who had openly berated experts, and spoke of their tyranny, are now singing their praise. Though forced by the coronavirus, this is an extremely welcome change. Why? Are experts blameless or exempt from criticism? Is the criticism of experts never justified? What is expertise anyway?

What is an expert

Humans realised quite early that an individual cannot lead his life doing everything by himself. He must rely on others who occupy different social roles. But mere division of labour does not yield a society of experts. To have the competence or technique of doing something is not the same as having expertise in it. One may be able to ride a bicycle or play cricket but not do either of these well. Expertise comes with doing something extremely well, which in turn relies on developing more than technical skills. It comes when skills are nurtured patiently and constantly honed. Their acquisition is impossible without continuous, time-consuming practice and their growth depends on making mistakes and learning from them, and on listening to constructive criticism by others. Thus, to become an expert, one must imbibe the broader culture surrounding good work.

This brings me to a preliminary

specification of an expert: she is not just a role-occupant or bearer of mere technique but, by investing time on developing special skills, by understanding the standards of excellence in her field, trying to measure up to them and hoping to raise the bar, she becomes a role model for others, an authority, someone who can teach others. A person may occupy the position of a gardener but become an expert only with experience, incessant learning, imaginative self-improvement and with the ability to pass on her skills to others. In short, experts are people with special skills and virtues, with legitimate authority in their own field and the stature to advise and teach their skills. This distinguishes them from non-experts, from competent fellow-workers and novices.

Skills may be primarily learnt informally or formally. Those trained informally, working predominantly with their bodies, particularly their hands, include farmers, gardeners, cooks, carpenters, potters, *mistris*, *vaidyas* and healers, traditional musicians and dancers. However, the enormous complexity of contemporary social and economic life necessitates that everyone be literate and have a bare minimum of formal schooling. This would have been sufficient in the past to make experts out of them but today this is merely one enabling condition of expertise. To become experts in some domains now, long years of formal training and education are required. The feature that distinguishes modern professionals – medical doctors, engineers, architects, lawyers, micro-biologists, physicists, historians, economists, sociologists – from their informally trained counterparts is their prolonged formal education. In such domains today, experience is necessary but not sufficient.

Denigrating experts

If it is good to have experts in society, why have they been devalued recently in public discourse?



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Two long-standing reasons come to mind. First, not long ago, expertise in our society was firmly believed to be inherited. But while shastric knowledge was overvalued, the practical knowledge of the informally trained was denigrated. They were not recognised as experts. However, a contemporary scientist does not genetically transfer science to his child. Why then is shastric knowledge a birth-related privilege of a few brahmins? And how many of us acknowledge the expertise of the *mali* who tends a beautiful garden? Why is he less of an expert in his field than a doctor is in his? Though some change in this mindset has occurred, it is not enough. (For instance, *vaidyas*, *nats* and *nartakis* were once considered lowly and socially stigmatised. Today's medical doctors, actors and dancers are not.)

In one sense then, an understandable disaffection with the expert is part of a continuing democratic revolt against the very idea of inherited shastric expertise. This revolt will not cease if inherited expertise is merely replaced by epistemic arrogance, a sense of superiority stemming from delusional infallibility. Indeed, unless experts cultivate the virtues of humility and corrigibility in an atmosphere of equality and solidarity, their relevance will remain under a cloud.

A second reason is the easy translation and transfer of authority from one field to another, enabling experts in a few fields to wield power and authority over others. The traditional Brahmin

may have been a shastric expert but how come this narrow expertise yielded a general social authority over others? Besides, experts jealously guarded their knowledge as a secret and refused transparency or accountability. A challenge to such translation and transfer of authority from one specific field to others is justified. So, part of the blame for the gradual fall of the expert lies with the historically transmitted culture surrounding him. Expertise must be disentangled and rescued from this hierarchical culture.

Education and expertise

However, the real roots of today's specific problems lie elsewhere, in the current mindset of the populace at large. The main trouble comes paradoxically from the very condition of general literacy and education in our society. All of us are encouraged by our generalised education to conflate expertise with competence and to believe that knowledge comes easy. In this age of fast speed, the very idea of patient learning is severely threatened. For quick fixers, skill acquisition is a waste of time. If everything can be swiftly self-taught, why bother with experts who slog. Just consider the recent trend to self-medicate. The situation is worse in the social sciences and humanities. I am astounded by the gumption of super-confident, self-styled "historians" or pop statisticians who, without an iota of doubt, claim to know the past or the respective percentage of minorities in the overall Indian population. This is independence and equality gone berserk.

This problem is exacerbated by Wikipedia, Google and WhatsApp. The Internet allows us to treat every information and opinion as equally true. People simply view evidence selectively and with prejudice, confirming whatever it is this they already believe in, disregarding all evidence or argument against it. Abused easily, the Internet turns truth into falsehood and

opinion into dogma. This is mobocracy in the world of the intellect. Everyone has a licence to kill objective or inter-subjectively validated knowledge. This climate is hardly conducive to the survival of experts who seek validation for their claims. Moreover, it helps the political and economic exploitation of their difference from non-experts. With the expert's scrutiny out of the way, the avaricious capitalist can easily sell his well-advertised goods, the wily politician, his false promises.

The arrival of COVID-19 has changed something, at least on television. Both the Prime Minister and the Health Minister were recently seen imploring us to shun "andh-vishwas" (blind faith, superstition), disregard rumours and continually fact-check. A good beginning! Doctors from the best medical colleges are seen providing scientific answers to questions by laypersons. The word "evidence" is heard frequently. Statistical data is cited from Johns Hopkins University, and Imperial College London. People seem passionately interested in research on vaccines by the best Indian institutes. Fake news is officially having a bad time! One Hindi channel even has a Truth index – what it calls "sachai ka senser". This "sachai", the source of facts and evidence, comes from, guess who? Experts! One unintended benefit then of the current pandemic – if one looks for a silver lining in our gloomy world – is the return of facts, truth and experts. One can only hope that the restoration of respect for expertise will not be confined to medical doctors and researchers but extend to expert historians, social scientists and socially grounded intellectuals – all badly needed to check the mayhem that has followed the announcement of the lockdown and its dreadful impact on migrant workers.

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

Still no bullseye, in volume and value

India's defence model faces challenges despite the positive trends generated by 'Make in India'



HARSH V. PANT & KARTIK BOMMAKANTI

The emergence of evidence of a rise in Indian defence exports, also accompanied by a decline in imports, is a welcome development though the reasons for both are not identical. Based on the latest estimates released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in the period between 2009-13 and 2014-18, Indian defence imports fell even as exports increased.

Broadly, two factors appear to be driving this shift. The first is the 'Make in India' initiative, as part of which a number of components from Indian private and public sector enterprises have been prioritised by the government. The second set of factors is extraneous to India in the form of delays in supplying equipment by vendors and the outright cancellation of contracts by the Indian government or at least a diminution of existing contracts.

Under the Narendra Modi government's 'Make in India' initiative, the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) lays out the terms, regulations and requirements for defence acquisitions as well as the measures necessary for

building India's defence industry. It created a new procurement category in the revised DPP of 2016 dubbed 'Buy Indian Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured' (IDDM). The 'Make' procedure has undergone simplification "earmarking projects not exceeding ten crores" that are government funded and ₹3 crore for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) that are industry funded. In addition, the government has also introduced provisions in the DPP that make private industry production agencies and partners for technology transfers. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) until 2016 accounted for a 17.5% share of the Indian defence market. According to government of India data for the financial year 2018-19, the three armed services for their combined capital and revenue expenditures sourced 54% of their defence equipment from Indian industry.

Public sector driven

Among arms producers, India has four companies among the top 100 biggest arms producers of the world. It is estimated, according to SIPRI, their combined sales were \$7.5 billion in 2017, representing a 6.1% jump from 2016. The largest Indian arms producers are the Indian Ordnance Factories and the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), which are placed 37th and 38th, respectively, followed by Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Bharat Dynamics Limited



FILE PHOTO/SHANKAR CHAKRABARTY

(BDL). All four of these companies are public sector enterprises and account for the bulk of the domestic armament demand.

Explaining falling imports

To be sure, not all this growing indigenisation and reduction in imports can be attributed to 'Make in India'. Indian defence acquisitions have also fallen due to the cancellation of big-ticket items. Take for instance the India-Russia joint venture for the development of the advanced Su-57 stealth Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft (FGFA). India cancelled involvement in 2018 due to rising dissatisfaction in delays with the project as well as the absence of capabilities that would benefit a fifth generation fighter jet. In 2015, the Modi government also reduced the size of the original acquisition of 126 Rafale Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MMRCA) from Dassault to 36 aircraft, which is also responsible for significantly driving down the import bill. That apart, the delays in the supplies of T-90 battle tanks, and Su-30 combat aircraft from

Russia and submarines from France, in 2009-13 and 2014-18, also depressed imports.

Further, India's defence model faces challenges despite the positive trends generated by 'Make in India'. SMEs still face stunted growth because India's defence industrial model is at odds with global trends in that it tends to create disincentives for the private sector. Governments, including the incumbent, have tended to privilege Defence Public Sector Units (DPSUs) over the private sector, despite 'Make in India'. This model is highly skewed, undermining the growth of private players and diminishes the strength of research and development.

Export trends

Nevertheless, on the exports front, trends do look promising. Indeed, the period between 2012 and 2019 saw Indian defence exports experiencing a considerable jump sourced from Indian public and private sector enterprises. In the last two fiscal years, 2017-18 and 2018-19, exports have witnessed a surge from ₹7,500 crore to ₹11,000 crore, representing a 40% increase in exports. While this initial increase started during the previous United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government, the sharpest rise in defence export products can be attributed to the measures introduced by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government under Mr. Modi, which in 2014, delisted or re-

moved several products that were restricted from exports. It dispensed with the erstwhile No Objection Certificate (NOC) under the DPP restricting exports of aerospace products, several dual-use items and did away with two-thirds of all products under these heads. According to the Ministry of Commerce and the Industry, Export-Import Data Bank export of defence items in the aerospace category has witnessed an increase in value. Small naval crafts account for the bulk of India's major defence exports. However, export of ammunition and arms remain low. As a percentage of total Indian trade, defence-related exports for the fiscal years 2017-18 and 2018-19 were 0.8 and 0.73%, respectively.

Thus, from a volume and value standpoint, Indian defence exports, while showing a promising upward trend, still remain uncompetitive globally. It is likely that Indian defence exports will take several years before they are considered attractive by external buyers. But green shoots are emerging in a sector that has long been devoid of any dynamism and Indian policymakers should make the most of the opportunities this represents.

Harsh V. Pant is Director, Studies at the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi and Professor of International Relations at King's College London. Kartik Bommakanti is an Associate Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi

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.

Public health is the responsibility of

1. Individual
2. Government
3. Judiciary
4. Legislature

What do you think? Elaborate your answer with points taken from the articles in this page.

new or exposed issue. by analogy, if people with cough wear masks, droplet expulsion is drastically curtailed.

When a person who is hale wears a mask, the chances

engaged in activities that require conversations – shop staff, cashiers, police, etc. If medical shops are out of stock, we can make make-shift masks. A mask can be removed and kept,

or burst droplets falling on the eye, the exposed part of which – called conjunctiva – is mucous membrane, which is as vulnerable to virus entry as nasal mucosa. This is why

personal protective equipment for "education" is not proper govt. A visitor suitor-bikers who is incorrect to people buy surplus will be a 95 masks, un-

nflated the two. It is sad at for this simple matter why WHO guidance. member we are in April; problem had started in January. Let there be no more disagreements at the top level. Sufficient knowledge is available, just for the asking, in the country.

Dr. T. JACOB JOHN, Vellore, Tamil Nadu

Except the name of political parties the above article is very important. Make a note of it under the title Indian Defence.

concerned to solve the crisis. (Page 1, "Treat migrants humanely, SC tells officials", April 1). If the images of the spraying of disinfectants on migrants are downright appalling, the sight of thousands of them being packed like sardines in godowns and elsewhere too smacks of undignified behaviour by those to whose care these

announcing the abrupt lockdown the Centre had probably not envisaged a crisis of such a high magnitude involving migrants. But it would be ludicrous to believe that they would have been able to stay on in their workspots with income drying up.

C.V. ARAVIND, Bengaluru

Thinking national, acting local

A planning institution must be a systems reformer and a force of persuasion, not just a control centre



ARUN MAIRA

The attack by the SARS-CoV-2 virus has highlighted, once again, both the bad shape of the Indian economy and the precariousness in the lives of millions of people. Citizens have been ordered to stay in their homes to prevent the pandemic. But many have no homes. They are being urged to wash their hands frequently, when many do not have access to enough clean water to drink. The public health system is woefully inadequate. GDP growth rates may have been good for sometime. But many systems in the country are fragile.

National planning, by which name it is called (Planning Commission or NITI Aayog), has failed to guide all-round development of the Indian economy so far. An all-plan for recovery from the pandemic is required. As Einstein said, "cannot solve intractable problems with the same thinking that created the problems". Therefore, it is time to consider the weaknesses of the national planning.

Any planning institution in a liberal and democratic system faces two basic challenges when it comes to performing a long-term role: a constitutional challenge, an institutional challenge, and a challenge of competence.

The constitutional question
The fundamental issues a national plan must address, such as the environment, the state of the economy, and pace of human development, need consistent attention over decades. Therefore, plans must continue beyond the terms of governments that change in shorter spans in electoral democracies. Moreover, the planning body does not have constitutional status independent from that of the government, it will be forced to bend to the will of the latter. Planning in China does not face this disruption.

Short-termism in policymaking is a weakness of electoral democracies everywhere, as citizens of California have realised. California is suffering from great environmental stress. Its



vaunted public education system has been underfunded for years. A group of elected governments in the States are accountable to the people.

been advising policymakers do not have comprehensive models of socio-environmental systems. Their models are inadequate even to explain economic growth, because they have not incorporated the implications of economic growth on inequality, for example, which has become a contentious issue.

An economy is a complex system, which sits within an even larger and more complex system of human society and the natural environment. The globalisation agenda has been driven by an economic agenda, with policies promoting global trade and finance to maximise global economic output. It has paid too little attention to the impact of the 'GDP agenda' on the well-being of communities where employment declines when production moves to lower cost sources elsewhere. Or to the total environment

Another very important article make a note of it under the head trade wars. Under that write sub topic 1. Saudi RUSSIA Oil war. Always remember whenever supply is more than demand prices will drop. This is what has happened to the crude oil prices. Saudi has done this to eliminate the competition from shale gas producers based out off USA. It is good news for India as the import bill will reduce. By raising the duty the government has not passed on the benefit to the Indian consumer. Why do you think the government has not reduced the price of petroleum and diesel even though crude oil prices are at an all time low?

institutions that allocate public money in democracies. A fundamental principle of democratic governance is that the power to allocate public money must be supervised by elected representatives. Therefore, a planning body that allocates money must be backed by a constitutional charter, and also accountable to Parliament.

India's national planning process must address the constitutional relationship between the Centre and the States. In India's constitutional struc-

Need for competence

Whether a planning institution allocates money, or advises others how to, it must have the necessary competence. A national planning institution must guide all-round progress. It must assist in achieving not just faster GDP growth, but also more socially inclusive, and more environmentally sustainable growth. For this, it needs a good model in which societal and environmental forces are within the model. Economists who have

governments, and, within them, to State governments, and even to the third tier of city and district governance, have implications for the role and competencies of a national planning institution for India. It must be a systems reformer, not fund allocator. And a force for persuasion, not control centre. Because its role must be to promote local systems solutions to national problems.

Arun Maira is a former member of the Planning Commission

The battle to set oil prices

Russia's move to reject production cuts is driven by its strategy of denying market share to U.S. shale producers



PINAK RANJAN CHAKRAVARTY

The global economy, grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic, is now facing an energy war, with crude oil prices crashing in the international market. Crude oil prices tanked, as the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its alliance partners failed to reach any consensus on cutting back production to levels that would enable prices to remain stable. The U.S., as the largest oil producer today, has stayed away from the OPEC-plus arrangement, hoping that production cuts by OPEC-plus countries will help it increase its market share.

Russia refused any production cuts, unleashing an energy war with Saudi Arabia. There has been a spectacular fall of around 30% in crude oil prices. The International Energy Agency (IEA) has scaled down global demand for oil, a move not taken by the energy watchdog since 2009. Demand for oil had already weakened owing to the global economic slowdown, and this weakening has become more pronounced due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has hit China's economy and reduced consumption by the world's largest importer.

Russia's decision to reject any production cuts is driven directly by its strategy of denying market share to American shale oil producers. The latter rely on higher prices in the range of \$50-\$60 to remain profitable because of higher production costs. At \$31 per barrel, not more than five American shale oil producers can remain profitable.

Sanctions on Rosneft

Russia also remains resentful of sanctions imposed on Rosneft, which is building the gas pipeline project Nord Stream 2 across the Baltic Sea, carrying Siberian gas to Germany, a major consumer. This pipeline was delayed due to opposition from Denmark's environmental activists and could not be completed before the U.S. sanctions kicked in. Moscow has accused Washington of using geopolitical tools for commercial reasons.

Russia had promised to retaliate at a time of its own choosing. The energy war over prices is Russia's revenge, to cripple the American shale oil industry. President Donald Trump has scrambled to put together a rescue package for the shale oil companies. Russia is also signaling to Saudi Arabia that

its American patrons can do little to protect its oil interests and it would be prudent for Saudi Arabia to reach some understanding with Russia. Both Saudi Arabia and Russia depend heavily on oil revenues – upwards of 80% of export revenues accrue from crude oil. Both are also fighting to retain market share. It has been reported that Saudi Arabia has agreed to supply crude oil at lower rates to refiners in India and China, two primary customers, but refused to supply to other refiners in Asia. This will impact on India's oil procurement from the U.S..

Benefit to importing countries

Lower crude oil prices are not necessarily bad news for oil importing countries like India, which is the world's third-largest importer of crude oil and the fourth largest importer of LNG. There are, however, collateral adverse consequences like the battering of the stock markets worldwide. The global economy, already impacted by President Donald Trump's trade war with China and other countries, including India, and the COVID-19 pandemic, may find lower energy costs helpful in overall growth.

From a high of \$147 per barrel in 2008, crude oil prices have fallen to around \$24 per barrel and may even go further southwards. India, with 80% of its energy requirements met by imports from the international market, stands to save ₹10,700 crores for every \$1 drop in prices. While this may help manage the current account deficit, fiscal deficit and inflation, there are non-oil related collateral factors that can cause countervailing adverse economic impact.

There is no doubt that India will benefit from lower oil prices, if the cost of fuel at the pump is passed on to consumers. It will reduce transportation costs and boost demand. The consumer, however, may not benefit much since the government may choose to use this financial windfall for other purposes, like bailing out banks which have been hollowed out by NPAs to leading Indian companies.

Can Russia and Saudi Arabia sustain the energy war for long? Unlikely. Saudi Arabia's production cost is the cheapest in the world and it can ramp up production to around 12 million barrels a day. By offering discounts, it can undercut other producers, including Russia. Domestic considerations also matter.

Meanwhile, oil importing countries, like India, can enjoy a breather and cushion the adverse impact of COVID-19 and other factors.

The author is a former Ambassador and Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs. Views are personal

Lessons from Hubei

A lockdown, followed by aggressive screening testing and hospitalisation, brought results

MUKUL SANWAL

Success in conquering SARS-CoV-2 is best defined in terms of ensuring that there is no community spread. The nature and scale of the effort calls for fresh thinking, as it reverses established approaches. The messaging from the Central and State governments must bring this out, and not leave it to the local bureaucracy and police to interpret as a curfew.

The Prime Minister has taken a bold political decision. However, India faces an unprecedented implementation challenge and must combine the lockdown with community involvement, and technology-based interventions.

Wuhan provides lessons, but not a template. The United States, European countries and even Singapore have not instituted a complete lockdown. Their focus is on those who need hospitalisation. Earlier, China relied extensively on technological tools to enforce the lockdown. India's comparative advantage lies in the fact that the District Magistrate has the legitimacy and authority to mobilise the local population. Changing public behaviour, from one defined by panic and anxiety to one characterised by acceptance will not be easy without community involvement.

Catching them early

The key takeaway from the experience of Wuhan is quite obvious but the devil, as always, is in the detail. Dr. Zhong Nanshan, a leading epidemiologist, emphasised a few "earlylys" – early protection, early detection, early diagnosis, and early isolation. The goal of the lockdown should not just be to keep the people indoors but to ensure that patients with symptoms are hospitalised and not just placed under home isolation, to make sure that the virus does not spread to the members of the infected individual's family.

Second, we need all the support we can mobilise from the healthcare workers. In Hubei, some 42,600 healthcare workers from all over China were deputed. Among them, 19,000 were from the critical care department, which was 10% of the country's ICU doctors.

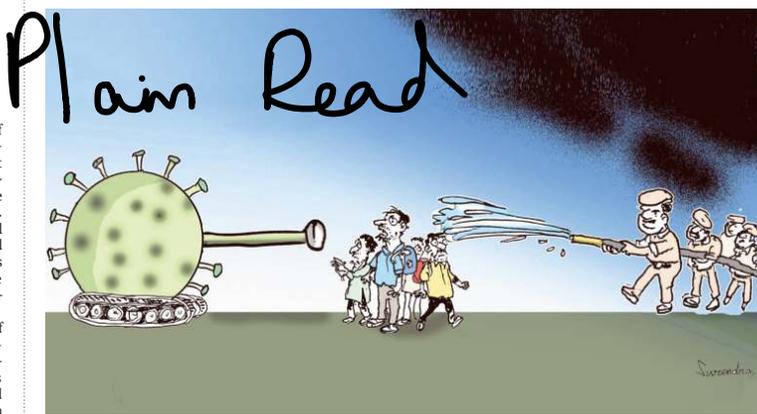
vides important lessons, in view of the migration patterns in the country. Around five million people left Hubei to other parts of China to celebrate the New Year just prior to the lockdown of Wuhan on January 23. Thereafter, the number of confirmed cases doubled every three days and the numbers reached 30,000 cases in a fortnight, by February 9. The spread peaked at 70,000 cases on February 16.

The experience of Wuhan, a city of 11 million, is relevant for our hotspots. The city was shut down on January 23. Residential complexes were sealed-off on February 8, and transport was put off the roads. With intensive testing, next week, Wuhan registered over 15,000 positive cases in a single day. In response, more than 20,000 health workers were deputed from outside, providing free testing and putting the infected people in quarantine. Doorstep delivery of essential supplies was ensured, with residential complexes monitoring body temperatures. A telephone-based app reported the vitals. Four weeks after the lockdown, the number of new cases drastically dropped. This is an optimum strategy for our hotspots.

The media, especially local media, should be encouraged to highlight successful and replicable community action to build public confidence. District Control Room numbers for each local area to communicate all concerns must be widely announced, including by the health workers and NGOs.

Infectious disease is in the Concurrent List and the Government of India has invoked the National Disaster Management Act, devolving the national duty onto District Magistrates. While the Army and the police forces are 'deployed', the District Magistrate has to identify, bring together the needed resources and 'improvise'. They would require real-time sharing of emerging good practices by the Central Government, and even hand-holding, to avoid a demonstration like outcome.

Mukul Sanwal is a retired diplomat and was recently in Wuhan on an official invite

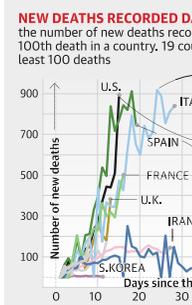


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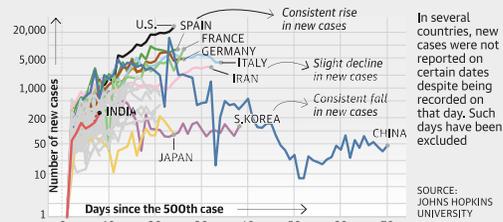
America's bane

United States and Spain continue to bear the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic with consistent increases in the number of new cases recorded in the past week. The U.S. is also witnessing an exponential increase in the number of new deaths recorded along with Italy in the same period. On the recoveries front, Germany, France and Spain are faring better.

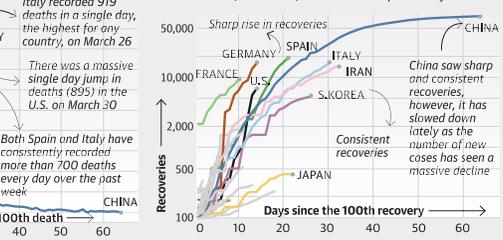
By Sumant Sen and Naresh Singaravelu



NEW CASES RECORDED DAILY | The chart shows the number of new cases recorded each day since the 500th case in a country. U.S. recorded over 1.2 lakh cases between March 25-31, the highest seven-day increase in cases for any country. Italy has managed to turn the corner, with a consistent decline of new cases since March 27



CUMULATIVE NUMBER OF RECOVERIES | The chart shows the day-wise progression of the number of people who recovered since the 100th recovery. Germany, with more than 70,000 cases, recorded a sharp recovery curve



The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 2, 1970

Unnecessary visit by foreign expert

A U.S. engineer, Mr. J.D. Edmonds of Western Knapp Engineering Company, the U.S. consultants of the Rs. 90-crore public sector project, Hindustan Copper in Khetri, Rajasthan, was summoned by the project authorities to carry out an emergency job recently. But when he arrived in India, he discovered that his visit was unnecessary since the job had been accomplished already by Indian engineers. The project authorities, it is learnt, had failed to inform him that he need not come even after the Union Ministry of Petroleum and Chemicals, Mines and Metals had disapproved of their decision to summon the U.S. engineer, and assigned the job to Indians. The result was that Mr. Edmonds found there was nothing for him to do, but to return to the United States. What is even more surprising is that the other consultants of Hindustan Copper, Vendt Plc of France, who were also asked to depute their experts, had a better understanding of the nature of the emergency job than the project authorities. This has caused considerable embarrassment to the Department of Mines and Minerals. This is cited as one of the many instances of public sector undertakings to summon foreign experts without taking the trouble to find out whether it is necessary.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 6, 1920

Discoveries in Poona

(The issue of April 2, 1920 is not available) Some interesting archaeological discoveries have been made in the most thickly populated parts of the old city of Poona. The Peshwa's Wada in Sanibherpeth which once contained the palace of Brahmmin Peshwas who were de facto heads of the Maratha confederacy in India in the 19th century still stands there surrounded by high walls on all sides. Since the burning down of the palace buildings within the walls in the year 1840, it was converted into a parade ground for the police and mud huts were constructed within the walls to accommodate the city police. Some 30 to 40 years after the fire the Police lines were abandoned and a Court building was erected on the plinth of the old palace and is used as such even now. Almost a year back, the place attracted the attention of Sir George Lloyd, Governor of Bombay who evinced a personal interest in the matter and invited the Viceroy to inspect the place. The latter sanctioned Rs. 5,000 for clearing and removing the debris. The Archaeological Department took work in hand and as a result of it, an elaborately laid out garden has been discovered all round the plinth of the palace.

FROM PAGE ONE

Tablighi Jamaat headquarters evacuated

The Delhi police said Maulana Saad, the head of the centre, remained untraceable. He has been charged with defying restrictions on gatherings. Thousands had gathered at the centre and dispersed between March 13 and March 24 when the nationwide lockdown came into force. Those who remained at the centre could not leave as all transport facilities came to a halt.

A senior police officer said personnel from the local police station had visited the building on March 23

and earlier to communicate the restriction on gathering of over 50 people. We have got to know from the media that there is an FIR. But we haven't got a copy of the FIR. We are ready to cooperate with the police if they summon us or if they come to us," Fuzail Ahmad Ayubi, advocate for the centre, said.

"The authorities have sanitised the Markaz and closed it. We have offered it to be used as a quarantine facility, but it is up to them," he said.

110 new cases from Delhi event emerge in TN

"After we made a fervent appeal asking persons who had attended the conference to come forward and report to officials, this number has increased to 1103 persons. We have admitted them to isolation wards in hospitals, and we have lifted samples from 658 of them so far. We will test samples from the remaining persons in the next 24 hours," the

Health Secretary said. The department had earlier mentioned that 1,500 persons had travelled to Nizamuddin from TN and it was a "dynamic figure". It appeared that around 300 to 400 persons are still in Delhi, and many of them have tested positive after laboratory testing. But the exact numbers were not clear, she said.

Centre defines J&K domicile rules

The two constitutional provisions that were withdrawn — Article 370 and Article 35A — let the legislature decide the "permanent residents" of the state, prohibiting a non-J&K resident from buying property there and ensuring job reservation for its residents.

business or other professional or vocational reasons but their parents should fulfil any of the conditions provided". Another official said, "All posts that are up to the rank of junior assistant and below are open only to domiciles, the entire non-gazetted services has been reserved. Only a few positions such as police sub-inspectors are directly recruited at a higher level than junior assistants."

The Jammu and Kashmir State Legislature Members' Pension Act, 1984, has been amended by the MHA. It fixes the pension for former legislators and councillors at ₹75,000 a month.

On Tuesday, the MHA issued the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Adaptation of State Laws) Order, 2020, through which it amended 109 laws and repealed 29 laws of the erstwhile State and inserted the "domicile" clause in the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services Decentralisation and Recruitment Act, 2010. The order was issued at 11.07 p.m. Under the 2010 Act, the clause for "permanent resident of the State" has been substituted by "Domicile of the Union Territory. The Act pertains to employment in the civil services, comprising "strict, divisional and State" cadre posts. Only permanent residents of J&K were eligible to apply for the gazetted and non-gazetted posts. The amendment allows non-domiciles to apply to these posts.

"Children of Central Govt. officials All India Services, PSUs, autonomous body of Centre, Public Sector Banks, officials of statutory bodies, Central Universities, recognised research institutions of Centre who have resided in J&K for a total period of 10 years" will be domiciles.

The domicile status applies to "children of such residents of J&K who reside outside J&K in connection with their employment or

Changes in PSA
The MHA order has also made amendments to the PSA, 1978. It changes the criteria for appointing the PSA advisory board on the recommendation of a search committee headed by the Chief Secretary instead of the Chief Justice of the J&K High Court. It also bars sitting High Court judges to be made part of the board without the Chief Justice's consultation. The board has a crucial role to play in release of detenus. The order scraps a clause that dealt with the power to regulate place and conditions of detention.

There are 12 States, including Himachal Pradesh, where provisions of special status under Article 371 apply. The provisions pertain to regulation of ownership and land transfer in order to conserve the limited resources and to ensure that the State preserves its unique identity.

Expedite tracing of Tablighi attendees, Centre tells States

Enforce quarantine, says govt.; PM to hold video call with Chief Ministers today



The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, earlier known as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was passed on 7th September 2005 to augment employment generation and social security in India. It covers all districts of India except the ones with 100% urban population.

As per the latest announcement made by the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on March 26th, 2020, the workers under the MGNREGA would get a hike of Rs. 2000 each on an average. It was also announced that three crore senior citizens, persons with disabilities and widows will get one-time additional amount of Rs 1,000 in two installments which will be provided through DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) over a period of three months. This announcement was made as an initiative towards the loss caused by the Covid-19 outbreak. The 21 days lock down is expected to cost the Indian Economy a cost of around 9 lakh crores. Funds worth Rs 31,000 crore are also to be provided to augment medical testing, screening and providing better healthcare facilities to those who have been affected financially due to the

body loses their life while serving any COVID-19 patient, be it sanitation workers, doctors, nurses or any other staff, temporary or permanent, from government or private sector, their next of kin would be given ₹1 crore as a mark of respect for their service.

Mr. Kejriwal announced the honorary compensation while holding a video conference with Delhi government's medical staff on COVID-19 duty. He said the

were on the front line fighting the virus, putting their lives at risk, to save others.

"Your contribution is no less than a soldier's... if any healthcare personnel, including government or private doctor, nurse and sanitation worker, dies while serving coronavirus patients, the government will give ₹1 crore for their families," he said. The CM thanked the medical staff on behalf of the people of Delhi and across India

lockdown without prior information "precipitated an unprecedented humanitarian crisis" for migrant workers, resulting in their exodus to their home towns.

The petition said the lockdown caused widespread panic across the country and led to job loss for millions of migrant workers.

It was mentioned by advocate Prashant Bhushan before a Bench led by Justice L. Nageswara Rao, which agreed to take up the plea

employed by other establishments, contractors or self-employed. It also sought a direction from the court to the Central and State governments to immediately activate the National and State Advisory Committees of experts in the field of disaster management and public health to deal with COVID-19.

"The order, for which no prior intimation was given, created a panic across the country and led to the instantaneous loss of jobs and

the Centre and the States should ensure payment of wages to such workers within a week, says the petition.

wages of millions of migrant workers employed in establishments or self-employed as street vendors, rickshaw pullers, domestic home helps, petty job workers, etc. This led to the large-scale exodus of migrant workers to

ter-State borders, potentially exposing them to the virus."

Mr. Mander and Ms. Bhardwaj criticised the Ministry of Home Affairs communication that employers should continue to pay the wages to their workers. They said the communication does not take into account the harsh realities that establishments that employ migrant workers are mostly small themselves and can ill-afford to pay their wages during a lockdown.

'Pay MGNREGA workers in advance'

Job scheme a critical lifeline for the rural poor, says Sonia in third letter to Modi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI
Congress president Sonia Gandhi wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday to consider paying advance wages to workers who are registered under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). This is Ms. Gandhi's third letter to Mr. Modi since the announcement of the lockdown.

Stating that the MGNREGA has been a critical lifeline for the rural poor during economic distress, Ms. Gandhi said, "However, so-



cial distancing norms have rendered all work unfeasible during the lockdown. Furthermore, even after the works commence, the MGNREGA workers have to wait for more than a month to receive wages. Given the urgency... the government may consider immediate advance payment of wages for 21 days to registered and active MGNREGA workers."

The Congress president suggested that the advance wages can be adjusted

against the work to be done after the MGNREGA sites are opened up for regular work.

Seeks rollback
The party slammed the government for reducing the interest rates on small savings and the Public Provident Fund (PPF) amid fear of income loss because of the pandemic.

"In times of acute distress and uncertainty about income, people depend on the interest income on their savings," former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram tweeted, demanding a rollback.

Kashmir parties oppose new domicile laws

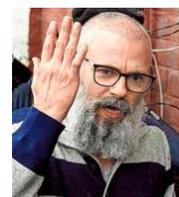
Insult is heaped on injury, says Omar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR
Regional parties, including the recently floated J&K Apni Party (JKAP) that met Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently, the National Conference (NC) and the Peoples Conference (PC), deplored the Centre's move to bring in new domicile laws to the Union Territory of J&K.

"This order is a casual attempt, cosmetic in nature, to hoodwink the people of J&K who genuinely believed that post October 31, 2019, their rights and privileges in the matter of employment and other rights would remain as it had been," JKAP president Altaf Bukhari said. He termed it "most unfortunate".

Mr. Bukhari said the order was totally unacceptable to his party. "In the matter of employment, non-gazetted, gazetted posts in the service and admissions to professional colleges, a tangible legal and constitutional mechanism was supposed to be put in place to safeguard and protect these privileges of the people of J&K, who had been the permanent residents. The new notification regarding domicile rule is not immune to any judicial review."

There were sections of the order that were antithesis to what was promised by the Prime Minister and the Home Minister on the floor of Parliament of "a better



Omar Abdullah
domicile law for the residents of J&K," he stated and demanded that it should be put in abeyance.

India welcomes foreign donations to PM-CARES

The issue of the short supply of essential items made the headlines after nurses and doctors sent video messages to Mr. Modi, urging for lifesaving devices. However, at the last weekend, Serbia purchased medical items from India, prompting a debate.

The official, however, clarified that the supplies to the Serbian government did not include the prohibited items.

Along with the other countries of the SAARC region, India has set up the SAARC COVID-19 Emergency Fund for helping the front-line health workers with the personal protective

equipment. Mr. Modi took up similar issues and urged for a global approach at a video-conference with G20 leaders.

The official indicated that India would be open to having the issue discussed at the United Nations Security Council. "However, it is a matter to be taken up by the members of the Security Council," he said.

The Ministry of External Affairs has set up a dedicated wing for communications with the Indians abroad, many of whom are eager to return home. The wing has so far received 3,300 phone calls and 2,500 emails.

The hand of another Indian

Kerala is known for its high literacy rate and high HDI. However off late Kerala has also gained notoriety as a hot spot for terrorist recruitment. What do you think is the reason for this and what measures will you take as the district superintendent of police?

Mr. M... year-old man from Kerala's Kasaragod, is suspected to be one of the three attackers. A senior official said there were indications that

that he was missing. This is the first instance of the NIA registering a case for a terror attack committed outside India. The NIA Act

"Proscribed terrorist organisation the Islamic State in Khurasan Province claimed the responsibility for this terror attack," the NIA said.

Anti-people move: CITU

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI
The Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) on Wednesday termed the government's decision to cut interest rates on small savings an "anti-people" decision that would adversely hit senior citizens.

"This is the second reduction in interest rate on small savings in a span of less than one year, last being in June 2019. This will affect financially the mass of the populace, the superannuated, income-less several crores of senior citizens, in particular, who survive mainly on the meagre return on savings," a CITU statement said.

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Mr. Mander and Ms. Bhardwaj criticised the Ministry of Home Affairs communication that employers should continue to pay the wages to their workers. They said the communication does not take into account the harsh realities that establishments that employ migrant workers are mostly small themselves and can ill-afford to pay their wages during a lockdown.

Regional parties, including the recently floated J&K Apni Party (JKAP) that met Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently, the National Conference (NC) and the Peoples Conference (PC), deplored the Centre's move to bring in new domicile laws to the Union Territory of J&K.

Mr. Bukhari said the order was totally unacceptable to his party. "In the matter of employment, non-gazetted, gazetted posts in the service and admissions to professional colleges, a tangible legal and constitutional mechanism was supposed to be put in place to safeguard and protect these privileges of the people of J&K, who had been the permanent residents. The new notification regarding domicile rule is not immune to any judicial review."

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States warned against exemptions

Centre says it violates lockdown

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla on Wednesday wrote another letter to the States cautioning that "some States are allowing exceptions beyond what has been allowed under lockdown measures by the MHA [Ministry of Home Affairs]."

Mr. Bhalla said the exceptions amounts to violation of the lockdown measures under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 and might defeat the overall objective of containing the spread of COVID-19.

On March 24, when the 21-day lockdown was announced, the Ministry issued a slew of guidelines to be followed by the States for "containment of COVID-19 epidemic", and asked all "enforcing authorities to note that these strict restric-



Ajay Kumar Bhalla

tions fundamentally relate to movement of people, but not to that of essential goods."

Minister of State for Home G, Kishan Reddy contributed a month's salary to the Prime Minister-CARE fund that has been set up to collect money to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Reddy also allocated ₹1 crore from his MPLAD fund to the PM-CARE account.

It's too early to detect lockdown impact

As incubation period is 14 days, the cases emerging now are older and they have to be discounted

JACOB KOSHY NEW DELHI

The impact of the lockdown on arresting the spread of COVID-19 can be gauged only after two weeks, government and independent experts suggest.

On the evening of March 24, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a nationwide 21-day lockdown to arrest "community transmission" of the novel coronavirus, or SAR-CoV-2. Between March 24 and April 1, the number of COVID-19 positive cases has more than doubled - from 606 on March 25 to 1,637 on April 1. This, however, was slower - about half the rate of growth from the week before when only 151 cases were confirmed on March 18.

The growth in number of positive cases in India is slower than in many countries that are doing with the worst of the pandemic.



Empty spaces: A deserted highway near the Akshardham Temple in New Delhi on Wednesday. •R.V. MOORTHY

On March 8, the U.S. recorded 541 cases in two days, and the figure nearly doubled to 994 cases. In the last week, however, it has risen by 75%.

Indonesia, which as on March 31 had 1,528 cases and therefore roughly in the league of India, is also recording a similar growth

rate. It had 686 cases on March 24 or a little fewer than half the cases from today. Though it has laws restricting movement, there is no lockdown.

Government experts and independent researchers concur that it is early to estimate the impact of the lockdown on slowing down the spread of the virus. "The incubation period of the virus is 14 days. Therefore, the cases we are seeing are older cases (from before March 24). So only once these old cases are discounted can we judge the impact of the lockdown. Whatever models and statisticians say, nobody can really predict the outcome of the epidemic," Raman Gangakhedkar, Chief Scientist, Indian Council of Medical Research, and spokesperson for COVID-19 communication, said at a press briefing.

Sujatha Rao, former Secretary of the Health Ministry, tweeted on Tuesday: "Impact of lockdown can only be known after April 5. Today's infections are of the situation two weeks ago."

However, both of these reflect the extreme outer limit of the incubation period - defined as the time taken to contract the virus and an infected person manifesting symptoms. The World Health Organization says incubation is commonly five days.

For more testing

Girdhar Babu, an epidemiologist and physician associated with the Public Health Foundation of India, said it would take a minimum of three weeks and a lockdown would be useful only with heightened testing, particularly to catch those who might be carrying the virus but were not yet manifesting symptoms. "Lockdown alone, without an increase in finding the new cases either through a syndromic approach or increased rate of testing, is not enough to break the chain. Also reviewing of the States with silent areas [where very few cases are reported] is important," he said in an e-mail.

'Phones of quarantined to be tracked'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday announced that the mobile phones of all those who have been asked to home quarantine themselves will be tracked by the Delhi police to keep a check on their movement.

Several other countries have used this technology to contain the spread of COVID-19, and that tracking mobile phones was one such way to ensure people abide by quarantine norms, he said.

"The government has given 14,375 phone numbers to the Delhi police on Wednesday to track them, in addition to 11,084 numbers it had shared on Tuesday. Strict action would be taken against those not adhering to the government's order on home quarantine," Mr. Kejriwal said.

IN BRIEF

Will help stranded women students: NCW

NEW DELHI Women students stranded in different cities away from their homes due to the lockdown can contact the National Commission for Women (NCW) for help, its Chairperson Rekha Sharma said. Ms. Sharma assured them that the NCW would work with State governments to ensure that "help reaches them". On Tuesday, Ms. Sharma held a meeting with NCW members to discuss the matter. "Had meeting with @NCWIndia members and discussed how we can help girl students who got stranded in different cities and couldn't go home. Will be reaching out to universities to get the details," Ms. Sharma said in a tweet. PTI

Seven Tablighi Jamaat members booked in J&K

SRINAGAR Seven people associated with Tablighi Jamaat were booked for hiding their travel history on Tuesday. The Chairman, District Disaster Management Authority, Kathua, ordered the filing of a FIR against seven locals who belong to the Tablighi Jamaat for hiding their travel history. "These seven people have a travel history to Nizamuddin and were hiding the same. All others not disclosing their travel history will be booked soon," said an official. The administration also quarantined the entire escort of Srinagar Mayor Junaid Azim Mattu after the brother of a police personnel tested positive for COVID-19.

Arm's length



Safety first: (From top): Women cover their faces at ration shops in Beawar and Guwahati; and children cleaning hands in Mumbai on Wednesday. •PTI, RITU RAJ KONWAR & ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY

Baby out of quarantine in Srinagar

Seven-month-old boy was among 236 released after compulsory 14-day stay

PEERZADA ASHIQ SRINAGAR

In a glimmer of hope, more than 230 people, including a seven-month-old baby, were discharged from administrative quarantine centres in Kashmir on Wednesday after two weeks. Meanwhile, seven more people tested positive for COVID-19 in J&K, taking the total to 62.

Travelling with his wife and two children, Mudassar Ahmad Bhat of Sundoo village in Gulgam said he was frightened when he heard the announcement made on March 19 as their flight landed at the Srinagar airport.



To freedom: Zaid Mudassar with his mother, Romi Khan, after completing the 14-day quarantine in Srinagar on Wednesday. •NISSAR AHMAD

Shock news

"It was after eight months my family and I were returning home from Leh. It took us time to absorb the announcement made about our quarantine. I was not carrying enough clothes and blankets. I was worried about my seven-month-old son Zaid Mudassar and seven-year-old daughter. Thankfully, we had a comfortable stay. Our son became everyone's favourite on our discharge day on Wednesday," Mr. Bhat told *The Hindu*. "We ensured that the baby, for being the youngest in quarantine, is well fed and attended on time," Mir Manzoor, Executive Magistrate, said at Srinagar's Silver Star Hotel where 56 people tra-

We ensured that the baby, being the youngest, was well fed and attended

MIR MANZOOR Executive Magistrate

velling from Leh were quarantined since March 19. "We have advised all these discharged families to spend two more weeks in home quarantine so that the chain is broken further. None of the quarantined persons have tested positive during their stay," he said. An official said 236 people had been shifted from the administrative quarantine centres after successfully completing their 14-day period. An official said none of

them showed any symptoms. By World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, many infected people show symptoms within two weeks.

"These locals were kept in well-equipped hotels and government accommodations. They had come from COVID-19-affected parts of the country and overseas," said Additional Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar, M. Haneef Balkhi. "Today, special buses were provided to them to reach their districts," he added. Another batch of 370 people will complete their quarantine on Thursday. Meanwhile, seven more patients tested positive for COVID-19, taking the total number of cases to 62.

3 labourers die after trekking in snow

SRINAGAR Three persons died on Wednesday while walking through a mountain pass in Banihal to reach home, in a bid to avoid the stringent implementation of lockdown on the National Highway in Kashmir. An official said around seven people, all labourers, decided to avoid using the Srinagar-Jammu Highway to reach Banihal from Ramban and trekked a mountain pass full of snow. Only three managed to reach home and informed the locals about four others being trapped in snow. A rescue team reached the spot. "One was declared dead on his arrival at hospital. Two succumbed later," they said.

Nine people in same locality of Indore test positive

Madhya Pradesh city has recorded 63 COVID-19 cases so far

STAFF REPORTER BHOPAL

Indore, the largest and most populous city of Madhya Pradesh, bears an overwhelming burden of 63 of the 86 COVID-19 cases in the State. Three persons from the city, two from Ujjain and one from Khargone had died from the illness. A man in Bhopal had escaped from quarantine in Indore.

As many as 19 residents of Indore tested positive for COVID-19 on Tuesday night and 17 earlier during the day, the steepest spike in cases on a day, according to the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Medical College, Indore.

The samples of a 65-year-old man from Khargone, who died while undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Indore on March 29, tested positive. Among the new cases in Indore, nine patients live at the same postal address in Tanzim Nagar. They include six women aged 45, 21, 30, 36, 23 and 30, two toddlers aged three and five, and a boy aged eight. A man aged 39 and a woman 66 also share an address at another location in Indore.



In the up: The Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Medical College, Indore, which has reported a spike in cases. •A.M. FARUQUI

"Two men aged 24 and 74 living in one address in Indore have a contact history. They were home quarantined by health officials. This means they may have had contact with someone positive within the family," said Rahul Rokade of the college. A woman aged 24 also had contact history. Most cases earlier didn't have a contact or travel history. In addition, said Dr. Rokade, a man aged 22 visited New Delhi.

"The rest of the patients don't have a travel or contact history." Meanwhile, Khargone be-

Five Delhi doctors test positive for COVID-19

One has been confirmed to be infected

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

At least three doctors of different Delhi hospitals and two doctors from Aam Aadmi Mohalla Clinics have tested positive for COVID-19 in the city, according to officials.

But only one of the doctors has been confirmed to be infected while treating patients.

A resident doctor from the Biochemistry Department of the Safdarjung Hospital tested positive for COVID-19 on March 26, according to hospital sources. Her husband, a senior resident doctor in Saurabh Vallabhji Patel Hospital, Pusa Road, later tested positive. He works in the Paediatrics Department and they are residents of South Delhi.

While it is alleged that the doctor working at the Safdarjung Hospital contracted the infection while treating COVID-19 patients, the hospital hasn't confirmed it. According to sources, she is a third year postgraduate student of the Biochemistry Department.

Also, another doctor working at the Delhi State Cancer Institute has tested



A view of an Aam Aadmi Mohalla Clinic in New Delhi. •SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

positive for COVID-19, officials said on Wednesday. The hospital has been shut and is being sanitised.

"A senior resident from Delhi State Cancer Institute has tested positive. His brother had come back from the U.K. a few days back and had met him. We are looking into the reason behind his case," Health Minister Satyendra Jain said.

Apart from these, earlier this month, a 49-year-old male doctor, who works at an Aam Aadmi Mohalla Clinic (AAMC) tested positive.

Later the doctor's wife, a 48-year-old woman, who is also a doctor at an AAMC, tested positive for the virus.

No need for additional spectrum for now, say telecom operators

'A flattening of demand seen due to various measures'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Telecom operators on Wednesday said they had seen a flattening of demand on their networks due to various measures, including streaming services reducing the video quality to standard definition (SD). Hence, they did not require additional spectrum to maintain quality of networks amid the 21-day nationwide lockdown.

"Over the past few days, the industry, in concert with actions coordinated with the DoT, has seen a flattening of traffic demand on members' networks," Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) director-general Rajan S. Mathews said.

Mr. Mathews added that some of these actions related to streaming services reducing their content from HD (high definition) to SD,

local municipalities working with operators to bring sealed towers back on line and some redistribution of traffic on the network, among other things.

"We believe there is no such present need and operators remain confident that the steps they have taken presently can maintain the reliability and quality of their networks and services," he added.

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OPENING DATE FOR ONLINE REGISTRATION FOR FILLING UP OF ONLINE APPLICATION ON PGIMER'S WEBSITE www.pgimer.edu.in	04.04.2020
CLOSING DATE FOR ONLINE REGISTRATION & SUBMISSION OF ONLINE APPLICATIONS	26.04.2020
DATE FOR COMPUTER BASED TEST (CBT) FOR 75 MARKS	29.05.2020
EXAMINATION CITY	4 CITIES IN INDIA (BENGALURU, CHANDIGARH, DELHI/NCR & KOLKATA)

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The candidates can deposit the above application fee through online payment gateway available at the ONLINE APPLICATION portal w.e.f. 04.04.2020 to 26.04.2020 using Debit/ Credit Card/ Net Banking.

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D I R E C T O R

DGCA allows flights to carry cargo in cabin

Move helps to meet demand for more supplies

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Director General of Civil Aviation on Wednesday allowed airlines to carry cargo within passenger cabin and on seats, apart from the aircraft belly, in order to enable them to accommodate more freight in view of the lockdown and manage cost-efficient operations.

Airlines will have to obtain permission from the DGCA and ensure that the cargo is restrained and will not interfere with emergency evacuation. Aircraft manufacturers such as Airbus and Boeing allow their airplanes to be used in this manner and have detailed guidelines to ensure safety.

In order to stop consignments on and below passenger seats, airlines will have to



Essential cargo: IAF aircraft being loaded with medical supplies to be flown to various parts of the country as part of the assistance to the civil administration. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

obtain additional permission. "Operations without passengers and with cargo in the passenger compartment will require suitable number of crew member/ personnel

survey and access all areas of the cabin during all phases of flight," says the latest DGCA advisory. So far, 74 cargo flights have been operated in the past one week by Air In-

dia, Alliance Air, IAF, Pawan Hans, IndiGo and SpiceJet. Passenger airlines like Air India, SpiceJet and IndiGo have conducted a total of 64 flights among them.

All safety measures being taken for crew: Air India

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Air India said on Wednesday that it has taken adequate measures to protect the health and safety of its crew. The statement was in response to criticism from pilots' unions that complained of poor precautionary steps taken by the airline when operating special flights to repatriate foreign citizens stranded in the country. "All possible measures have been taken towards

their health and safety as the safety of our air crew is paramount to us at Air India. Best available Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are procured for our crew including masks, gloves, apron, hazmat suits, sanitisers. Aircraft are fumigated and disinfected as per Ministry and Manufacturers SOP," said the statement. The airline also said that its doctors were available for its crew and employees.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has airlifted supplies 25 tonnes of medical supplies in the last three days from Delhi, Surat, and Chandigarh to Manipur, Nagaland and the Un-

ion Territories of J&K and Ladakh, a statement said. The IAF's C-17, C-130, An-32, AVRO & Dornier aircraft are being used for the assistance.

CBSE to give 10 days notice for fresh exams

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI/KOLKATA

Out of the 40 papers for Class 10 and 12 board examinations that the Central Board of Secondary Education was forced to put on hold due to the situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, only papers in 12 key subjects for Class 12 will be rescheduled. The remaining examination will not be held, CBSE said in a statement on Wednesday evening.

The Board has not announced fresh dates for the rescheduled examinations. Instead, it promised to give students, schools and all stakeholders at least 10 days notice as and when it is in a position to hold the examinations again.

Class 10 students had almost completed their exams, with only two subjects - Information and Communication Technology, and

JEE-Advanced postponed
NEW DELHI

IIT Delhi, the organising institute for the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE-Advanced) 2020, on Wednesday announced that it has postponed the examination that was scheduled to be held on May 17. The exam will be rescheduled after JEE (Main).

Computer Applications - remaining. Both of those exams will not be held now, and the Board said it would provide instructions for assessing those students.

For Class 12 students, the CBSE has said it will reschedule papers in 12 subjects: Business Studies, Geography, Hindi (both Elective and Core), Home Science, Sociology, Computer Science (old and new), Informatics Practicals (old and new), Information Technology and Biotechnology.



Mizo boy donates ₹333 from savings

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

A seven-year-old boy in Mizoram has donated his entire savings of ₹333 to a

Use these types of examples in GS IV. It will show that you are reading the papers and your answer is original.

DRDO to make five-layer masks

It will modify ventilators to raise capacity

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A laboratory under the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has made arrangements to make 20,000 five-layered masks a day and the DRDO was also engaged in minor modification of ventilators so that one machine could support four patients at a time, its Chairman Satheesh Reddy told Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday.

At a review meeting of the Ministry held through videoconferencing, the three Service chiefs and other officials too appraised the Minister of their efforts, a statement said.

Mr. Reddy said that 50,000 litres of sanitiser made by the DRDO labs were supplied to various security entities, including the Delhi Police and another one lakh litres distributed all over the country. "A five-layered nanotechnology mask N99 is being made on a war footing. A total of 10,000 have already been made and soon per day production will be extended to 20,000," the statement said.



Priming the forces: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh conducting a review via videoconferencing on Wednesday. •PTI

Chief of the Defence Staff Gen. Bipin Rawat said that separate hospitals have been identified to exclusively deal with COVID-19 and more than 9,000 hospital beds were available.

COVID-19

"Over 1,000 evacuees are quarantined at facilities in Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Chennai, Manesar, Hindan and Mumbai. Their quarantine period will end by April 7," he said. Besides airlifting tonnes of medical supplies, regular airlift of COVID-19 test samples from Ladakh to Delhi was being undertaken, said Air Chief Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria. Army chief Gen. Manoj

Karavane informed the Defence Minister that more than 8,500 doctors and support staff were available to extend necessary assistance to the civilian administration. On providing assistance to neighbouring countries, he said that "assistance to Nepal in the form of medical equipment will be delivered shortly".

Navy chief Admiral Karambir Singh said naval ships were on a standby to extend any assistance.

Retired health professionals have been kept in readiness, said Lt. Gen. Anup Banerji, Director General Armed Force Medical Services (AFMS). Approximately, 25,000 National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets are being mobilised for local assistance.

Plea in SC to ensure fair sale of goods

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Union and Delhi governments to respond to a petition for a direction to ensure fair and equitable sale and distribution of masks, hand sanitisers and liquid soap among the public to deal with COVID-19.

A Bench, led by Justice L. Nageswara Rao, issued notice to the governments on the petition filed by the NGO, Justice For Rights Foundation, that the prices of these protective items had increased manifold.

The petition said the notifications that the government had issued on the prices of face masks and hand sanitisers had little effect. "...even after the issuance of such notification and orders, several chemists throughout the country have not reduced the prices or [were not] deterred from selling the essential commodities at a higher price," the petition said. It called for guidelines and a task force to enforce the price control orders.

Industry eyes manufacture of 50,000 ventilators a month

Big companies are getting together to ramp up production

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
NEW DELHI

The Association of Indian Medical Device Industry (AiMed) is looking at the production of 50,000 ventilators a month by May, particularly with companies such as Maruti Suzuki and Mahindra & Mahindra committing support to help scale up production of medical devices.

"Huge efforts are being put to increase medical device manufacturing capacity by the manufacturers ... big companies like Maruti Suzuki, Mahindra & Mahindra, Kalyani, Tata Motors, Hyundai, etc. will possibly offer to collaborate with our members to rapidly scale up production of ventilators. The aim is to produce 50,000 ventilators per month by May," Rajiv Nath, forum coordinator at AiMed, said.

The press statement issued by the association noted that as per a Brookings report, the country might need anywhere between 1,10,000 and 2,20,000 ventilators by May 15 in the worst-case scenario and the number of ventilators avail-



Need of the hour: There is a huge disparity in the availability of ventilators across the country. •AFP

able today in the country is about 57,000. "There is a pressing need for ventilators in India and a huge disparity in their availability in various States. For instance, Mumbai has 800 to 1,000 ventilators, while States such as Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh have 1,500 and 1,800 respectively. Bengaluru has approximately 400 ventilators, whereas Kerala has 5,000," the statement said.

AiMed said seven of its member manufacturers have confirmed that the current production capacity of ventilators is 5,500-5,750

pieces per month, compared with production of about 2,700 units in the previous month.

SkandRaj, the leading ventilator manufacturer, has created a consortium with BEL, BHEL and Mahindra & Mahindra to ramp up production from 2,000 units per month to 5,000 units per month, and to 30,000 pieces per month by May.

Likewise, AgV Healthcare has tied up with Maruti Suzuki to scale up production from 400 units per month to 4,000 units in April and 10,000 units per month by May.

Masks and thermal scanners among 5.38 lakh items donated

One lakh people, 4,100 organisations register as volunteers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has received offers for more than 5.38 lakh items, including over 1,000 digital thermal scanners and 100 full-body thermal scanners, in donation to fight COVID-19. As of Wednesday, the donated items included 8,275 N95 masks with exhalation valves, 43,000 triple-layer surgical masks, about 230 personal protective cover garments, 8,770 face shields and 2,638 personal protective goggles that can be used by doctors.

About 30,000 examination gloves of large and medium sizes, close to 23,000 Nitrile gloves of various sizes, and more than 60,000 bottles of sanitisers of 100 ml and 500 ml packaging



Screen test: Full-body scanners can depict body temperatures with colours on a computer monitor. •REUTERS

sizes, have also been donated.

In all, 469 donation requests have been initiated. Close to one lakh individuals and more than 4,100 organisations have registered as volunteers till Wednesday. The volunteers have

come forward to contribute in the areas of health services; communication and public awareness on the precautions to be taken; assistance in producing personal protection equipment and offering tech-based solutions.

Former Chief Justice of India and former Kerala Governor P. Sathasivan has donated 11 lakh to the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund.

SC judges give ₹50,000 each for relief

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

All the Supreme Court judges, including Chief Justice of India (CJ) Sharad A. Bobde, have contributed ₹50,000 each to the PM-CARES fund to aid the nation's fight against COVID-19.

Earlier, Justice N. Ramana, the senior-most judge after the CJ, had donated ₹1 lakh each to the PM-CARES fund and the funds of the Andhra Pradesh and Telangana Chief Ministers.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi thanked the judges via Twitter for their "exemplary and inspiring gesture" to strengthen the fight against COVID-19.

Former Chief Justice of India and former Kerala Governor P. Sathasivan has donated 11 lakh to the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund.

SC declines to hear Michel's bail plea

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday did not intervene in a plea for bail filed by Augusta Westland VIP chopper scam accused Christian Michel Jambou. The accused had said he was vulnerable to COVID-19 infection while in custody as an undertrial.

A Bench led by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud asked Michel to first present a bail plea before the High Court. The accused had cited the recent order passed by the Supreme Court to de-congest crowded prisons in a bid to stop infection from spreading within and from prisons.

"The ageadness and a pre-existing ill state of health will make the applicant's (Michel) body more susceptible to the infection than any other ordinary prisoner with a normal health condition," the plea argued. The CBI had said that he should not be given bail as he could influence witnesses.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH SAMAGRA SHIKSHA STATE PROJECT OFFICE
KBC BOY'S HIGH SCHOOL CAMPUS, OPP. RAITHU BAZAR, PA. AMATA, VIJAYAWADA, ANDHRA PRADESH
e-procurement notice No. SSA-160214/2019-MIS SEC-SSA, dt.01-04-2020
Request for Proposal
Samagra Shiksha, Andhra Pradesh is inviting Request For Proposal for procurement and supply of 3 (Three) pairs of uniform cloth under the scheme 'Jagananna Vidya Kanku' to all the students (approximately 40 lakhs in number) studying classes 1 to X in Government/MPF/ZPP/Municipal/KGBV/Model Schools/Asram Schools/ Residential Aided Schools of Education and welfare departments in the State of Andhra Pradesh during the year 2020-21. For details please visit <https://tender.approcurement.gov.in> from 03-04-2020. Tender/RFP form can be downloaded from website. Eligible firms shall upload the prescribed format as per the schedules given in the above said site. Contact No. 0866-2428593, Sd/- Vaidyan Chinaveerabhadru, IAS, State Project Director, Samagra Shiksha, Andhra Pradesh.
DIPR 01PPCL, DT: 01/04/2020

TRANSMISSION CORPORATION OF TELANGANA LIMITED e-PROCUREMENT NOTIFICATION
TSTRANSCO invites tenders under Local Competitive Bidding for Design, engineering, manufacturing, testing before dispatch, loading, supply for destination including transportation, civil & construction works, erection, testing and commissioning of the following on Turnkey basis through e-procurement as detailed below: **Specification No.:** (i) e-HVT/0419-20, Name of Work: Erection, Testing and Commissioning, on turnkey basis under Yadadri Thermal Power (5 x 800MW) Evacuation Scheme of the following: (i) 400/220/132KV Choutuppal Substation (ii) 400KV OMDC Line from Yadadri TPP Switchyard to proposed 400/220/132KV Choutuppal Substation (iii) 400KV OMDC Line from Yadadri TPP Switchyard to 400/220 KV Dindi SS (115kMs approx.) (iv) Double circuit LLD of existing 400KV Khammam - Mamidipudi TMDC Line to proposed 400/220/132KV Choutuppal Substation (v) 2 Nos, 400KV Quad Moose Bays at 400/220KV Dindi SS, (2) e-HVT/0519-20: Erection, Testing and Commissioning on turnkey basis under Yadadri Thermal Power Scheme of the following: (1) 400/220KV Damaracherla Sub-Station, (2) 400KV Quad Moose DC Line from Yadadri TPP Switchyard to proposed 400/220KV Damaracherla SS (6.12kMs) (3) 400KV OMDC Line from proposed Yadadri Thermal Power Plant (TTP) Switchyard to 400/220KV Jangaon SS - 150KM(Package 1 & II) (4) Two (2) Nos, 400KV Quad Bays at 400KV Jangaon SS. The interested bidders may enroll themselves in e-procurement at www.procurement.telanganagov.in. The tender documents are available at the web site www.procurement.telanganagov.in. For details visit our website: www.tstransco.in. Contact Nos: 040-23323933, 040-2339000-3500, 3635, 3801, 3586, 3588. E-MAIL: enr@tstransco.in Sd/- CHIEF ENGINEER / 400KV D.I.No. 0121

DIRECTORATE OF BASIC EDUCATION U.P.
Vidhya Bhawan, Nishatganj, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh-226017
Tel: 0522-2782282, Email: basicedu@up.gov.in
Website: www.prennup.in, www.basiceducationup.com, www.tenderup.nic.in
Corrigendum for Tender number 2020 upbed 432559 2
PRERNA Digital System Project for Elementary Schools of Uttar Pradesh
This is for information of all the bidders, bidding for supply, commissioning of Android based Tablet integrated with biometric identification device and related services that due to CORONA Virus related 21 days lockdown, the bid submission date has been extended till 20 April, 2020 for the tender document (Ref. Tender Notice No. 2020 UPBED 432559 2)
For convenience and clarity, the corrigendum document has been uploaded on the below websites:
www.tenderup.nic.in, www.basiceducationup.com, www.prennup.in
Director of Basic Education

KOCHI METRO RAIL LIMITED
4th Floor, JLN Stadium Metro Station, Kadoor, Ernakulam-682017
Ph: 98485-284070
TENDER
1) Tender Name: Selection of Advisor /Arranger for Providing Technical Assistance to KMRIL in Issuing Domestic Bonds for Rs.2200 Crores
E Tender ID: 2020_KMRIL_352895_1, Date of Submission of Tender: 18.05.2020
2) Tender Name: DESIGN, DESIGN VERIFICATION, DETAIL ENGINEERING, MANUFACTURE, SUPPLY, INSTALLATION, TESTING AND COMMISSIONING OF 750 V DC THIRD RAIL TRACTION ELECTRIFICATION AND AUXILIARY SUB STATIONS (ASS) AND SHANNING SCADA SYSTEMS FOR PHASE -1 EXTENSION OF KOCHI METRO PROJECT
E Tender ID: 2020_KMRIL_352301_1, Last Date of Submission of Tender: 30.05.2020
Tender documents can be downloaded from www.tenders.kerala.gov.in/ / www.kochimetro.org
Further corrigendum & addendum will be published only on websites

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU TIRUVANNAMALAI MUNICIPALITY
Tender Notice No. 73/2019/LEI, Dated: 26/01/2020
The RFO document can be obtained on payment of Rs.10,000/- for Construction of New Bus Stand in Tiruvannamalai Municipality on Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer (DBFOT) basis.
REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION (RFQ)
EXTENSION OF SUBMISSION DATE upto 15.05.2020
Tiruvannamalai is a Temple and also known for its trading activities. The existing Bus stand of the Tiruvannamalai Municipality was constructed around 20 years back with 50 bus bays as 'A' class bus stand being operated at present to connect surrounding villages and towns. Considering the future growth of the town, Tiruvannamalai Municipal Council approved the proposal to construct a new bus stand with all required amenities in Municipality land situated at New Survey 20/1, 20/2, 20/28, 29/1, 29/3, 29/5, Esanmyy in Tiruvannamalai.
Request for Qualification (RFQ) is invited from Developers for construction of Bus Stand on Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer (DBFOT) basis for a period of 22 years. Interested Developers may apply for the proposal based on their eligibility as per eligibility criteria mentioned in the RFQ document (para 24 to 38). The bidders should be single Business Entity incorporated as a Public / Private Limited Company, incorporated under the Companies Act, 1956/2013. More details are available in the RFQ document.
The eligible bidders shall be evaluated as per the qualifying criteria and be eligible to participate in the Request for Proposal (RFP).
The RFO document can be obtained on payment of Rs.10,000/- (Non-refundable) from the Tiruvannamalai Municipality office from 10.04.2020 to 12.05.2020 up to 3.00 p.m. RFO document can also be downloaded from the following websites: <http://tenders.gov.in> and Tiruvannamalai municipal website: <http://www.tiruvannamalai.gov.in> from 10.04.2020 to 12.05.2020 up to 3.00 p.m.
The pre-proposal meeting shall be conducted on 20.04.2020 at 11.00 hrs. at the address noted below to clarify the queries that may be raised by the bidders.
The filed-in and sealed tender documents shall be submitted online or offline method on or before 12.05.2020 up to 15.00 Hrs.
Proposals will be opened on 15.05.2020 at 15.30 Hrs. at the address indicated below.
Commissioner, Tiruvannamalai Municipality, Tiruvannamalai - 606 601, Tamilnadu
DIPR/1530/Tender/2020

DELHI JAL BOARD (GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI) OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (NE) III G.T. ROAD SHADARA, DELHI-110032 E-mail: senellee@gmail.com Ph. No. 22596645

NT No. 65/19-20

S. No.	Name of work	Amount put to tender (in Rs.)	Tender/Fee (in Rs.)	EMD (in Rs.)	Date of release of tender in e-procurement system	Last date/time of receipt of tender through e-procurement system
1	Refurbishment of UGR-4 at Shastris Park near Gautampuri OHT Seelampur AC-65 NE-III (By Injection System & technology) Tender I.D. NO. 2020_DJB_190123_1	Item Rate	500/-	8500/-	31.03.2020	15.04.2020

Further details in this regard can be seen at <http://delhi.jalboardprocurement.gov.in>
Issued by P.R.O (Water) Adv. No. J.S.V. 945/19-20 EX. ENGINEER (NE-III)

Deadly pandemics

COVID-19 has spread to nearly every country in the world since it first emerged in China three months ago, drawing parallels with some of history's deadliest pandemics

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PEOPLE KILLED IN PANDEMICS (1900-2020)

1918-19
'Spanish flu'
(H1N1 virus)

At least 50 million deaths
About 500 million people were infected (one-third of the world's population)

1957-58
'Asian flu'
(H2N2 virus)
1.1 million

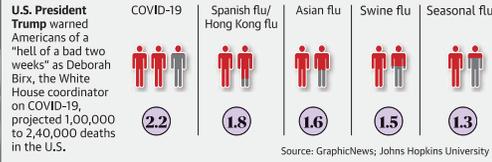
1968-69
'Hong Kong flu'
(H3N2 virus)
1 million

2009-10
'Swine flu'
(H1N1 virus)
575,000

2019
COVID-19
Over **43,000**
(as of April 1, 2020)
Over **874,000**
people infected

'Spanish flu' was the most severe pandemic. It was also caused by an H1N1 virus, with genes of avian origin, and claimed the lives of 50 million people from 1918 to 1919.

VIRUS REPRODUCTIVE NUMBER: Average number of new infections generated by each infected person



World could face a food crisis: UN, WTO

White House's COVID-19 coordinator projects a range of 1,00,000 to 2,40,000 deaths in the U.S.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE PARIS
The heads of three global agencies warned on Wednesday of the risk of a worldwide "food shortage" if authorities fail to manage the ongoing COVID-19 crisis properly.

Many governments around the world have put their populations on lockdown causing severe slow-downs in international trade and food supply chains. Panic buying by people going into confinement has already demonstrated the fragility of supply chains as supermarket shelves emptied in many countries.

"Uncertainty about food availability can spark a wave of export restrictions, creating a shortage on the global market," said the joint text signed by Qu Dongyu, head of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of the World Health Organization (WHO) and Roberto Azevedo, director of the World Trade Organization (WTO).
"In the midst of the COVID-19 lockdowns, every effort must be made to ensure that trade flows as freely as possible, specially to avoid food shortage(s)" from deve-

loping, they said in their statement.
"When acting to protect the health and well-being of their citizens, countries should ensure that any trade-related measures do not disrupt the food supply chain," they added.

U.K.'s highest daily toll
Meanwhile, Britain reported 563 deaths on Wednesday, the first time the national toll has exceeded 500, bringing the total fatalities to 2,352, according to official figures. The U.K. government came under renewed pressure to ramp up mass testing of frontline medical staff and the wider community.

In the U.S., President Donald Trump warned of a "very painful" two weeks. "This is going to be a very painful, a very, very painful two weeks," Mr. Trump told a press conference at the White House.
"I want every American to be prepared for the hard days that lie ahead," he said.

Deborah Birx, COVID-19 response coordinator at the White House, displayed a chart projecting a range of 100,000 to 240,000 deaths in the U.S., when current efforts at mitigation are taken into account.

Putin working remotely after doctor tests positive

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE MOSCOW
Russian President Vladimir Putin is working remotely from his presidential residence in Sochi, after a doctor testing positive for COVID-19, officials said.

Putin last week as the Russian leader visited the Kom-

l in Most prefers remote-work journal- Mr. Putin a Cabinet deoconfe- all precau- tion was at the presidential residence in Novo-Ogaryovo.

11-year-old Indonesian girl dies

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE JAKARTA
An 11-year-old girl has become Indonesia's youngest person to die after contracting COVID-19, officials said on Wednesday. The girl, who was also suffering from dengue fever, was admitted to hospital on Madura Island off the coast of Java on March 19.

Spain toll hits 9,053 as virus cases pass 1,00,000

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE MADRID
The COVID-19 death toll in Spain surged over 9,000 on Wednesday after a record 864 deaths in 24 hours, with the number of confirmed cases passing the 1,00,000 mark, the government said.
Spain has the world's second-highest death toll after Italy, with the virus so far claiming 9,053 lives and the

number of confirmed cases reaching 1,02,136.
But on a day-to-day basis, the rate of new infections continued its downward trend, showing an increase of just over 8.0%, compared with nearly 1% on Tuesday, Health Ministry figures showed. And the death rate has also slowed, from 27% a week ago to 10.5% on Wednesday.

Number of cases in Pak. crosses 2,000

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ISLAMABAD
The number of COVID-19 cases in Pakistan surpassed 2,000 on Wednesday, indicating an upward trend. The government said that 105 new patients tested positive for the virus in the last 24 hours, taking the number of cases to 2,039.

Sri Lanka needs to scale up testing, say govt. doctors

Number of positive cases reported in Sri Lanka so far is 146

MEERA SRINIVASAN COLOMBO



Combating the virus: A special unit of the Sri Lankan police patrolling a street during a curfew in Kalutara. AFP

A powerful trade union of government doctors in Sri Lanka has urged authorities to scale up testing to contain the spread of COVID-19 cases within the country. The number of positive cases reported in Sri Lanka so far is 146.

According to the Government Medical Officers Association (GMOA), around 80% of the patients infected by SARS-CoV-2 show mild symptoms. Hence, there is the possibility that they will remain unidentified as carriers of the new coronavirus... those who are in close contact with them too will go undetected unless they start showing symptoms. If tests are carried out, they can be identified early," the GMOA said in a statement published in the Daily FT.

Sri Lanka's state-run Medical Research Institute and eight other designated centres are currently conducting COVID-19 tests, according to health officials. So far, nearly 2,500 tests have been conducted in all.

"We are still largely testing only those with suspected symptoms," Dr. Nalinda Henth of the GMOA, which

is also known to be politically influential. "We have conveyed this to the government and hope they will scale up the tests soon," he told The Hindu.

'Don't lift curfew'
The GMOA has also suggested that the government should not lift the curfew - which it has been doing in select districts - pointing to the higher risk of transmission on days when people gather in public places. Sri Lanka has been on a nationwide curfew for over 10 days now, with the government partially lifting it in select districts for a few hours. On Tuesday, health authorities reported 21 cases, the highest number detected since

the coronavirus outbreak in Sri Lanka. According to a situation report released by the Epidemiology Unit of the Ministry of Health, Colombo district has recorded the highest number of COVID-19 cases in the country - a total of 32 of the total 146.

Direct-General of Health Services Anil Jasinghe said health authorities were planning to carry out sample testing among those in "high risk groups". "So far, we have confined testing to those who are in quarantine centres, but we want to get an assessment of the spread of the virus in the community. For this, we plan to start sample testing shortly," Dr. Jasinghe said, according to media reports.

1,367 asymptomatic cases in China

REUTERS BEIJING
China reported dwindling new infections on Wednesday and for the first time disclosed the number of asymptomatic cases, which could complicate how trends in the outbreak are read.

Almost all of Tuesday's 36 new cases involved overseas arrivals, the National Health Commission said, down from 48 a day ago, and taking total infections to 81,554.

But that figure excludes 130 new sufferers of the disease who do not show symptoms, its statistics showed.

China has decided to devote greater screening to asymptomatic sufferers and those in contact with them. In remarks during a visit to the eastern province of Zhejiang, President Xi Jinping urged better management of symptom-free cases.

As of Tuesday, there were about 20,000 people under observation, the commis-

sion said, though they may not necessarily be carriers. On Tuesday, 1,367 asymptomatic cases were under observation in China, down from 1,541 the previous day, the Health Commission said.

Citing classified data, the South China Morning Post said China had found more than 43,000 cases of asymptomatic infection through contact tracing. Seven deaths from the virus were reported on Tuesday, up from just one a day ago.

India welcomes Ghani's talk team

Govt. calls Afghan leader's decision to form a team for dialogue a 'positive step'

SUHASINI HAIDAR NEW DELHI

Welcoming Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani's decision to form a team for intra-Afghan negotiations that will include the Taliban, the government said this is a "positive step" for the process of reconciliation in the country.

"We view the formation of the team as a positive step which would lead to a peaceful and stable future for Afghanistan free from the scourge of externally sponsored terrorism," said a statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs. The statement followed a conversation between External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to discuss cooperation on the COVID-19 pandemic.

MEA sources said there had also been a "discussion



The way forward: A file photo of Taliban militants at the Pul-e-Charkhi Jail in Kabul. AFP

on the situation in Afghanistan". They said Mr. Pompeo had condoled with Mr. Jaishankar on the death of an Indian national in the March 27 Kabul gurdwara attack, and both leaders resolved to keep exchanging notes on the developing situation.

India's statement also follows similar statements by the UN's mission in Afghanistan UNAMA, other countries

and even Mr. Ghani's arch political rival former Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, that have all hailed his announcement on March 27 of a 21-member negotiating team that included five women, to talk to the Taliban.

Although the Taliban rejected the announcement initially, claiming that it was not "inclusive enough", the group sent a delegation to

the Bagram Base outside Kabul on Tuesday to talk about the release of prisoners that had been decided in the U.S.-Taliban agreement in February.

Technical measures
"They (the Taliban delegation) will pursue the issue of release of the prisoners and will conduct the necessary technical measures," Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid, tweeted.

The issue of the prisoners release, including 5,000 held by the government and 1,000 by the Taliban, has been a sticking point in the deal, and has meant that intra-Afghan talks planned for March 12 had to be put off.

India sent its envoy to witness the signing of the U.S.-Taliban deal but has been cautious in welcoming its content and sceptical of dealing with the Taliban.

Trump says ready to help end Saudi-Russian oil price war

Riyadh said it would raise exports further after talks failed

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Tuesday he was ready to help resolve an escalating oil price war between Russia and Saudi Arabia that has helped push crude benchmarks to 17-year lows.

The threat of a global recession triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic had already hammered prices when Riyadh said last month it would raise exports after a production-cut agreement among top producers flopped in early March.

On Monday, Saudi Arabia said it would increase exports further to a record 10.6 million barrels per day from May, deepening a global supply glut as crude recorded its

biggest monthly and quarterly price plunges in history.



Donald Trump

biggest monthly and quarterly price plunges in history.

Mr. Trump said he had spoken with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman by phone with the aim of halting the slide.

"The two countries are discussing it. And I am join-

ing at the appropriate time, if need be," Trump said.

Saudi Arabia had been exporting around 7.0 million barrels per day under an output reduction agreement among 24-member producer alliance known as OPEC+, which included Russia. OPEC+ failed to reach a deal on further production cuts to shore up sagging prices.

Analysts say Riyadh is engaged in a deliberate long-term strategy to capture greater market share by pressuring its high-cost rivals. "Saudi policy will not just drive more expensive forms of oil production out of the market; it will also make it harder for renewable energy to compete with fossil fuels," said Bernard Haykel, a Saudi expert at Princeton University.

ELSEWHERE



Adidas says 'sorry' after frank over rent payment

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE FRANKFURT
German sportsgear maker Adidas on Wednesday said it had made "a mistake" when it decided not to pay rent on its shuttered shops in April, after the move sparked a widespread outcry. "We made a mistake. We would like to apologise. We have paid our rent," the firm said. AFP

Iran floods leave 21 dead

TEHRAN
Flooding in Iran caused by heavy rainfall has left 21 people dead and one missing, an emergency services spokesman said on Wednesday. Mojtaba Khaledi said that 22 people had also been injured, with most of the casualties in southern or central provinces. He said 11 people had died in Fars province alone. AFP

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is a permanent, intergovernmental organization, created at the Baghdad Conference in 1960, by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela. It aims to manage the supply of oil in an effort to set the price of oil in the world market, in order to avoid fluctuations that might affect the economies of both producing and purchasing countries.

It is headquartered in Vienna, Austria. OPEC membership is open to any country that is a substantial exporter of oil and which shares the ideals of the organization. The non-OPEC countries which export crude oil are termed as OPEC plus countries.

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

Iran warns U.S. after it deploys 'Patriot' to Iraq

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE TEHRAN

Iran warned the U.S. on Wednesday that it was leading West Asia to disaster in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic after it deployed Patriot air defence missiles to Iraq.

Washington had been in talks with Baghdad about the proposed deployment since January but it was not immediately clear whether it had secured its approval or not.

Iran, which wields huge influence in its western neighbour, said that it had not.

The U.S. deployment runs "counter to the official

position of the Iraqi government, Parliament and people," a Foreign Ministry statement said.

It called for a halt to "war-mongering during the coronavirus outbreak" and warned that U.S. military activities in the region could lead to "instability and disaster".

U.S. forces should "respect the wishes of the Iraqi people and government and leave the country," the Iranian Foreign Ministry added.

The deployment of the missile system comes after a spate of rocket attacks on bases and other facilities used by US personnel.

MARKET WATCH

	01-04-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	28,265	-4.08
Brent oil	25.17	10.39

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	244.80	-6.50
Asian Paints	1603.20	-63.30
Axis Bank	358.65	-20.35
Bajaj Auto	2051.10	28.75
Bajaj Finance	4501.90	-89.30
Bajaj Finserv	2219.35	3.55
Bharti Airtel	421.35	-19.55
BPL	302.95	-13.95
Britannia Ind	2564.85	-124.10
Cipla	413.75	-9.10
Coal India	139.45	-0.60
Dr Reddy's Lab	3095.00	-25.75
Eicher Motors	13001.60	-94.30
GAIL (India)	75.75	-0.80
Grasim Ind	476.15	0.05
HCL Tech	413.55	-22.85
HDFC	1583.50	-49.60
HDFC Bank	829.65	-32.25
Hero MotoCorp	1639.65	43.20
Hindalco	91.65	-4.05
Hind Unilever	2179.65	-118.85
ICICI Bank	311.15	-12.60
Indian Bank	342.25	-9.05
Bharti Infratel	155.10	-4.90
Infosys	602.80	-38.70
Indian Oil Corp	78.95	-2.70
ITC	272.85	-5.30
JSW Steel	143.00	-3.25
Kotak Bank	1181.65	-114.40
L&T	774.35	-34.15
M&M	271.15	-12.10
Maruti Suzuki	4246.35	-41.95
Nestle India Ltd.	15654.55	-646.05
NTPC	81.00	-3.20
ONGC	65.75	-2.55
PowerGrid Corp	154.60	-4.50
Reliance Ind	1080.45	-33.30
State Bank	186.55	-10.30
Shree Cement	16549.65	-996.70
Sun Pharma	340.95	-8.75
Tata Motors	67.95	-3.10
Tata Steel	266.35	-3.25
TCS	1708.75	-117.35
Tech Mahindra	511.10	-54.30
Titan	936.05	2.35
UltraTech Cement	3140.65	-104.20
UPL	305.75	-20.75
Vedanta	62.65	-2.05
Wipro	189.50	-7.20
Zee Entertainment	120.90	-3.05

RBI relaxes export rules, allows States and UTs to borrow more

Sets up panel to review ways and means advances limit for States

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced more measures to fight economic disruptions caused by COVID-19, including extension of the realisation period of export proceeds and allowing States to borrow more.

"Presently, the value of the goods or software exports made by exporters is required to be realised fully and repatriated to the country within nine months from the date of exports.

"In view of the disruption

COVID-19

caused by the pandemic, the time period for realisation and repatriation of export proceeds for exports made up to or on July 31, 2020, has been extended to 15 months from the date of export," the RBI said. The measure will



In the interim: Pending submission of the report, RBI has raised the ways and means advances limit by 30%. • REUTERS

enable exporters to realise their receipts, especially from COVID-19 affected countries, within the extended period, and also provide greater flexibility to exporters to negotiate future export contracts with buyers abroad.

The central bank has also formed an advisory committee to review the ways and

means limit for State governments and union territories. Till the panel submits its report, the central bank has increased the ways and means advances limit by 30% for States and union territories.

"Pending submission of the final recommendations by the Committee, it has been decided to increase the WMA limit by 30% from the

Prepare an essay on why India jumped from BS IV to BS VI. What are the challenges and opportunities? Prepare a consolidated essay on GST, it's features and challenges. As always end your answer with way forward and end it in an optimistic note.

Petro prices hiked as BS-VI fuel kicks in

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

indicators, it has been decided that it is not necessary to activate CCyB for a period of one year or earlier, as may be necessary," the RBI said.

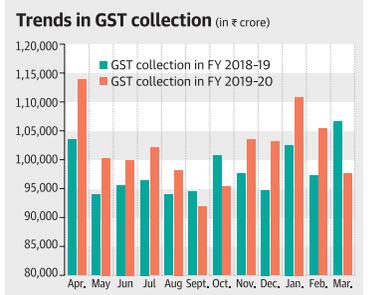
prices. The price of petrol in Mumbai has been increased from ₹72.28 a litre to ₹76.31 a litre and the price of diesel in Mumbai has been increased from ₹65.71 a litre to ₹66.21 a litre, making it the highest among the four metros.

Similarly, in Chennai, the price of petrol has been increased from ₹69.59 a litre to ₹72.28 a litre, while diesel price has been increased from ₹62.29 a litre to ₹65.71 a litre.

In Kolkata, the price of petrol has been reduced from ₹75.30 a litre to ₹73.30 a litre, while diesel prices have been increased from ₹65.21 a litre to ₹65.62 a litre.

In Delhi, the price of petrol has been reduced from ₹72.29 to ₹69.59 a litre and diesel prices from ₹64.62 a litre to ₹62.29 a litre, making it the cheapest among the four metros.

OMCs have reduced the prices of LPG or cooking gas by an average of ₹3 per 14 kg cylinder.



March GST revenue drops below ₹1 lakh cr.

COVID-19 impact to be seen from Apr.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections for March 2020 stood at ₹97,597 crore, dropping below the ₹1 lakh crore mark after four months.

Gross GST revenue for the month was 8% lower than that of March 2019, according to Finance Ministry data released on Wednesday.

For the full financial year 2019-20, gross GST collections grew 4% in comparison to the previous year.

As the March revenue collections are based on the business conducted in February, these figures do not take into account the full impact of COVID-19 and the consequent shutdown of many business sectors in India. Analysts warn that next month's revenues are likely to dip much further.

Although GST revenue from domestic transactions dropped 4% in comparison with March 2019, there was a 23% fall in the tax collected on import of goods. "Global trade was affected by COVID-19 in February itself, so we could be seeing the result of that," said Sachin Menon, national head, indirect taxes, KPMG in India.

There has also been a sharp 7% decline in the filing of February GSTR-3B returns, with only 76.5 lakh returns being filed till March 31 in comparison with the more than 83 lakh filed in the previous two months. "It seems that many businesses may not have been able to pay GST because of the liquidity issues being faced after the lockdown," said Pratik Jain, partner and indirect tax leader at PwC India.

The situation is likely to worsen. "With most businesses being non-operational for a considerable period in March and the relaxation of delayed payments allowed, collections in the coming quarter would see quite a fall," said Abhishek Jain, tax partner at Ernst and Young. Small businesses have been allowed a three-month deferment of GST payments due to the COVID-19 situation, and there is a wider industry demand for a moratorium on payments and reduction in rates.

"At this stage, it is necessary for businesses to conserve cash in order to enable resumption of operations once the lockdown ends. Any deferral of the GST payment timelines by a few months would significantly assist them in this process," said M.S. Mani, partner, Deloitte India.

ICICI Bank cuts savings interest rate by 25 bps

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Private sector ICICI Bank has reduced its savings account interest rate by 25 basis points (bps). The savings account balance below ₹50 lakh, the new rate will be 3.25% and for above ₹50 lakh it will be 3.75%. The new rate comes into effect from April 9.

ICICI Bank also reduced retail term deposit rates by 20 bps for deposits of less than ₹2 crore. The new rate will be effective April 3.

SBI, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank activate moratorium

State Bank of India to reverse March EMI if already paid

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

State Bank of India, the country's largest lender and private sector lenders ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank have started activating the loan repayment moratorium option for customers.

The moratorium was announced by the Reserve Bank of India last week in view of the financial stress faced by borrowers following the lockdown declared on account of the COVID-19 pandemic.

SBI customers who want to avail themselves of the moratorium, are required to send an email to avail the option. "No action is required. They may continue to pay in



Revoke act: SBI customers need to only send an email to avail themselves of the EMI moratorium option. • REUTERS

usual course," SBI said of customers who do not wish to avail the moratorium option.

SBI has also clarified that if a customer has already paid the EMI for March, then the amount will be reversed

if the customer sends in a request. "Interest shall continue to accrue on the outstanding portion of the term loan during the moratorium period," SBI said.

Commenting on impact in case of home loans if the EMI

is deferred, SBI said that for a loan of ₹30 lakh with a remaining maturity of 15 years, the net additional interest would be about ₹2.34 lakh, which is equal to eight EMIs.

"For a loan of ₹6 lakh with a remaining maturity of 54 months, the additional interest payable would be ₹19,000 approximately, equal to additional 1.5 EMIs," SBI said on the impact in the case of auto loans.

Both ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank have also activated the options in their websites to avail moratorium. Customers have to fill in a simple form giving loan account numbers and other details to avail themselves of the moratorium.

SBI eases settlement deadline by 3 months

Concession follows 21-day lockdown

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

State Bank of India (SBI) has decided to extend the timeline for payment of settlement amount by three months due to the 21-day lockdown.

"SBI has come forward to extend the timeline for payment of settlement amount by three months. Now, customers, on-boarded under settlement scheme SBI OTS 2019 / Rin Samadhan 19/20/ General compromise can meet payment obligation by June 30, 2020," SBI said.

Under the One Time Settlement (OTS) 2019 scheme, the extension will be available only to those customers where the first two instalments of 5% / 15% and 20% / 25% have been received within the stipulated 30 and 60 days, respectively.

The balance OTS amount can be paid by June 30, it said, while adding it would

not charge any interest on the amount for this extended period. Under the Rin Samadhan scheme, the timeline for receipt of acceptance of OTS proposal along with upfront payment from borrowers has been extended up to June 30 from the current March 31 and up to September 30 for recovery of the entire OTS amount.

Also, payment obligations for borrowers with outstanding as on March 01, 2020 under "General Compromise" category has been extended by three months, without charging any interest for the additional period. On working capital loans, C.S. Setty, MD, SBI, said because firms have to pay interest on such loans at the end of the moratorium period, banks are evaluating the option of requesting the RBI for some relief in terms of asset classification.

Maruti, Hyundai sales skid

Tata Motors, M&M too hit by nationwide lockdown

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
NEW DELHI

Already reeling under a prolonged slowdown and the transition to BS-VI fuel norms, auto sector saw its woes being compounded by the 21-day nationwide lockdown. Manufacturers witnessed a decline in sales in the range of 44%-90% in their domestic wholesales in March 2020.

The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki posted a 47.4% decline in passenger vehicles (PVs) in the domestic market to 76,240 units, compared with the more than 1.45 lakh units sold in March 2019. The company, however, said that sales during March 2020 were not comparable with that in March 2019 "due to the suspension of operations with effect from March 22, 2020, in line with national policy."

Exports during the month also fell 55% to 4,712 units as against 10,463 units in

March 2019. For the full year (2019-20), the company's domestic vehicles sales fell 18.1% to 14.36 lakh units from the previous year.

Hyundai Motor India too saw a 40.6% decline in sales to 26,300 units in March in the domestic market.

Tata Motors' domestic passenger vehicle sales fell 68% to 5,676 units. For the full year, PV sales declined 38% to over 1.31 lakh units.

Similarly, Mahindra and Mahindra sold 3,384 PVs in March 2020 in the domestic market, a decline of 88% from 27,646 units in the year-ago month. For fiscal year 2019-20, domestic PV sales fell 27% to 86 lakh.

Veejay Ram Narayan, CEO, Automotive Division, M&M Ltd. said, "Our performance in March has been muted on account of the impact of the current lockdown related to Covid-19 and the disruption in our BS-VI ramp-up plan. The latter was planned between February and March but was affected due to the challenges of parts supply from global and local suppliers. We have been able to clear our BS-VI inventory, but for fewer than 100 vehicles. However, there are many vehicles that are sold, but not yet registered because of the closure of RTOs."

Relatively new entrant Kia Motors sold 8,583 units in the retail market in March 2020.

Naveen Soni, Senior VP, Sales and Service, Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM), said, "... last month has been very challenging for us, both in sales as well as production," adding the pandemic has financially impacted all its dealerships across India. TKM reported a 55% decline in sales to 7023 vehicles in March in the domestic market. It added that March was the last month of production for the Etios series as well as the Corolla Altis.

Commercial vehicle sales fall off a cliff on COVID-19

Virus lockdown impacts operations

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI/CHENNAI

Commercial truck manufacturer Ashok Leyland has reported a 90% drop in its total international sales volume for the month of March 2020, following suspension of operations across its factories in the wake of COVID-19.

The flagship company of the Hinduja Group sold 2,179 vehicles in the domestic and international markets during March 2020, against 21,535 units sold in the year-earlier period.

In the case of medium and heavy commercial vehicles, the company's sales dipped by 93% to 918 units and in buses by 62% to 913 units. Light commercial vehicle sales declined by 94% to 348 units.

Tata Motors' domestic commercial vehicle (CV) sales tumbled 90% to 5,336 units in March. For the full

year, CV sales were down 34% to more than 3.1 lakh units. Girish Wagh, president, commercial vehicles business unit, Tata Motors Ltd. said, "Domestic sales in March 2020 [were]... deeply impacted by the COVID-19 lockdown as well as the planned transition to BS VI. Retail sales was significantly ahead of wholesales. Almost all BS IV vehicles in the ecosystem have been retailed; however, some await registration which was halted due to the lockdown."

M&M's domestic sales of CVs fell 90% to 2,325 units in March 2020. For the full year 2019-20, domestic CV sales fell 20% to about 1.99 lakh units. VE Commercial Vehicles - a joint venture between the Volvo Group and Eicher Motors - recorded sales of 1,499 units in March 2020 compared with 8,676 units in March 2019, a decline of 82.7%.

Capgemini's Altran buy may close by Apr. 8

Virus lockdown impacts operations

MINI TEJASWI
BENGALURU

The French financial market authority, Autorité des marchés financiers (AMF), announced on Wednesday that 110,571,163 Altran shares have been tendered in connection with the final reopening of the friendly tender offer of Capgemini for Altran Technologies.

Upon settlement and delivery of this reopening, scheduled for April 8, Capgemini will hold 98.15% of Altran's share capital and at least 98.03% of Altran's voting rights, as per a statement from Capgemini.

Post acquisition, Capgemini will have combined employee strength of 2.7 lakh globally. Altran has 70,000 employees of whom 15,000 are in India.

Altran's financial results will be consolidated in Capgemini Group's financial statements from April 1, 2020.

KIOCL's FY20 production at 2.375 MT

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

KIOCL Ltd., an iron ore mining central public sector unit (PSU) that manufactures iron oxide pellets for domestic and exports markets, has produced 2.375 million tonnes (MT) of pellets in the fiscal ended 2019-20 as against 2.238 MT in the previous year.

It dispatched 2.356 MT of pellets in the fiscal ended March 31 compared to 2.206 MT in the previous year.

KIOCL CMD M.V. Subba Rao said the export markets had boosted the company's performance in the fiscal.

Virus fears roil markets as indices plummet

Sensex, Nifty fall 4%, FPIs in sell mode

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Tracking a weak trend in the Asian markets, Indian benchmarks lost heavy ground on Wednesday even as a drastic fall in domestic auto sales numbers led to heightened concerns over potential economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 30-share Sensex lost 1,203.18 points, or 4.08%, to close at 28,265.31. The broader Nifty ended the day at 8,253.80, down 343.95 points, or 4%. The India VIX index, however, dropped a little over 6% on Wednesday, a day after shedding over 10%.

Elsewhere in Asia, Nikkei was down by about 4.5% while Hang Seng lost over 2%. Kospi also closed almost 4% lower as the global toll of COVID-19 neared the 45,000-mark.

Incidentally, auto sales more than halved for most auto majors in March with sector leader Maruti Suzuki reporting an almost 48% drop in sales.

The overall market breadth, however, was balanced with about 1,100 stocks on the advance and decline list. Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) were net sellers at a little over ₹1,100 crore on Wednesday.

Sugar movement resumes

No shortage of the essential commodity, assures ISMA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
COIMBATORE

Movement of sugar, which was disrupted initially when the countrywide lockdown was implemented as a precaution against COVID-19, has resumed.

Dispatches have picked up in the last four or five days, according to the Indian Sugar Mills' Association (ISMA).

"The ISMA has assured the government that there is enough sugar with the sugar mills, and therefore, there will not be any problem of availability of this essential food item for consumers," the association said in a press statement on Wednesday.



As of March 31, 2020, 457 sugar mills, which started crushing this season - from October 2019 to September 2020 - have so far produced 232.74 lakh tonnes of sugar. This is nearly 64 lakh tonnes

less than what was produced during the same period last year.

As many as 186 mills continued production, mainly in north India. The mills are taking efforts to ensure that wherever there is availability of sugarcane, it is procured and crushed so that farmers do not incur losses. During the first few days of the lockdown, there were also concerns about availability of inputs such as lime and sulphur.

The lime quarries and kilns in Rajasthan were closed down. This was taken up with the Rajasthan government and there is smooth availability of all inputs now, the ISMA said.

GSKCH, HUL merger process completed

HUL board okays Horlicks brand buy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The merger of GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare Limited (GSKCH) with Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL), which was announced in December 2018, has been successfully completed after obtaining all the necessary approvals.

In addition, the board of directors of HUL has approved the acquisition of the Horlicks brand for India from GSK for ₹3,045 crore by exercising the option available in the original agreement made between Unilever and GSK.

The other brands, which were under the ownership of GSKCH, like Boost, Malto and Viva have also come under HUL's brand portfolio by virtue of the merger, stated a release by HUL.

Incidentally, the acquisition of the Horlicks brand by the India unit of Unilever would result in savings for the Indian unit by avoiding expenses like royalty and brand royalty, said HUL chief financial officer Srinivas Phatak, in a media conference call.

He further added that owning a brand brings tax benefits as well including the option of claiming depreciation.

And now, Wimbledon also succumbs to the pandemic

The Championships cancelled for the first time since World War II

REUTERS
LONDON

The Wimbledon tennis championships were cancelled for the first time since World War II as the coronavirus pandemic wiped another blue-riband sports event off the calendar on Wednesday.

While the decision had looked inevitable for some time, since the virtual shutdown of world sport and the postponement of the Tokyo Olympics, Wimbledon had been one of the few events not to have been officially cancelled or postponed.

Emergency talks
But after emergency talks between the various stakeholders over the last few days, the All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC) announced that it was impossible for the grasscourt Grand Slam, scheduled for June 29-

“So sad to hear @Wimbledon won't take place this year. Last year's final will forever be one of the happiest days of my life!”

SIMONA HALEP
Defending women's champion

July 12, to take place.

“It is with great regret that the main board of the All England Club and the committee of management of the championships have today decided that The Championships 2020 will be cancelled due to public health concerns linked to the coronavirus epidemic,” the AELTC said in a statement.

“The 134th Championships will instead be staged from June 28 to July 11, 2021.”

Federer, Serena aghast
“Devastated,” tweeted eight-time champion Roger Feder-

er, while Serena Williams, who has won the tournament seven times, said she was ‘shocked’ by the momentous decision.

The French Open, due to be held from May 24 to June 7, has been postponed and controversially rescheduled by the French tennis federation for September 20 to October 4, shortly after the end of the U.S. Open.

Former Wimbledon champion Amelie Mauresmo doubts whether either tournament will be played though. “I think we’re going to have to draw a line under

the 2020 tennis season,” Mauresmo said on Twitter this week.

Limited options

Unlike the French Open which is played on clay, Wimbledon’s scope for re-arranging the start date was extremely limited.

While Centre Court and Court One boast a roof, playing elite level tennis outside on grass would have been extremely challenging in late summer or autumn with a lack of light and problems caused by dew forming on the surface late in the day.

Shortening the format of the tournament, or playing behind closed doors, would also have proved extremely unpopular with the players.

Wimbledon has been held every year since 1946 after a six-year hiatus because the country was at war.



Locked out: Yet another blue riband sports event became a victim of the coronavirus pandemic, with Wimbledon — the premier grass court event in the world — deciding to host it next year. • GETTY IMAGES

Nine years on, Dhoni at the crossroads

Time running out for the World Cup-winning skipper

CRICKET

S. DINAKAR
CHENNAI

The stands were a blaze of light. In the middle, though, M.S. Dhoni shone the brightest.

His bat speed and dextrous wrists had combined wonderfully as he sent a full ball from Nuwan Kulasekara for the maximum over long on in the maximum city. You can freeze the frame.

The stunning shot brought an entire nation to life. India had, on April 2, won the 2011 World Cup at Mumbai’s iconic Wankhede Stadium.

Bold move

Dhoni was captain courageous in a big game — the summit clash — promoting himself ahead of the in-form Yuvraj Singh when the contest was delicately balanced at 114 for three; India was chasing a challenging 275 against the gallant Sri Lankans.

And along with a resilient Gautam Gambhir (97), he first ran like a panther between the wickets and then cut loose in what was a brutal onslaught.

Dhoni’s 79-ball unbeaten 91 had guided India to a raucous six-wicket triumph. And the spectators swung to the rhythmic beating of the drums as if there was no tomorrow.

Outside, there were traffic jams. The skipper was the toast, made all the right moves.

That was then; Dhoni at the height of his powers. Now, the scenario is different. Time waits for no one and Dhoni is pushing 39. Deep down Dhoni realises that his best days are be-



For posterity: M.S. Dhoni’s six to bring World Cup glory is one of the enduring images of Indian sport. • FILE PHOTO: K.R. DEEPAK

hind. But then, he still has the eye of the tiger. Had not Martin Gupthil scored a sensational direct hit in the 2019 WC semifinal, he and India might have had a different story to tell.

Dhoni, on 50, was lining himself for the big hits. India was in doldrums at 92 for six, when he rallied with an inspired Ravindra Jadeja to keep the Men in Blue in the hunt. Under the circumstances, the criticism that Dhoni came under was harsh and without reason.

In the IPL, he has whipped up spectacular mo-

ments in the last two seasons, making the impossible possible. And he still possesses the fastest hands behind the stumps.

Yet, the odds are loaded against a Dhoni comeback for the World Twenty20 with the Coronavirus pandemic putting a huge question mark over the IPL and a stage for the CSK skipper to conjure blitzkriegs and put himself in India contention.

The luminous star of 2011 now finds his career at the crossroads. Will there be one final Dhoni hurrah for India?

Real Kashmir coach Robertson yearning to return home

Stranded in Srinagar, he wants to reach Aberdeen to attend to his ailing mother

FOOTBALL

ASHWIN ACHAL
BENGALURU

David Robertson has faced his fair share of challenges in his three years as head coach of Real Kashmir Football Club, but the latest predicament may be the toughest one yet.

Having endured through the security lockdown and communications blackout imposed in Jammu and Kashmir last year, Robertson is now stranded in a Srinagar hotel on account of the ongoing lockdown to tackle the coronavirus pandemic threat.

With commercial international flights suspended, Robertson, son Mason (who

plays for Real Kashmir FC) and wife Kim are waiting on the United Kingdom government to employ evacuation measures to take them back home to Scotland.

Give support

The Robertson family is particularly worried about David’s mother, who was recently diagnosed with cancer. “My mother, who lives in Aberdeen, just finished her second chemotherapy session. If anything were to happen, it would be just horrible. I want to be close to her — to support her at this tough time. My dad is caring for her, but he is not in the best of health either. My siblings drop off groceries outside their home. It’s a



David Robertson. • FILE PHOTO: NISSAR AHMAD

tough situation, all over the world,” Robertson told *The Hindu* from a Srinagar hotel run by Real Kashmir co-owner Sandeep Chattoo.

“We’ve contacted the British High Commission in New Delhi to help us return

home. It could be a few days, few weeks — it is a case of sitting and waiting. We also have (English winger) Kallum Higginbotham, four players from Africa and a few U.K. coaching staff with us here in Srinagar. All foreigners are facing a similar situation,” Robertson, a former Rangers FC and Leeds United player, said.

Tougher to handle

Robertson stated that the latest restrictions have been tougher to handle than the security lockdown and communications blackout.

“It is never easy in Jammu and Kashmir. That’s why I keep coming back — there are so many challenges to tackle. Last season was

tough (due to the security lockdown and communications blackout), as we did not have internet and could not call home. But at least the team was together, and we could play football,” Robertson said.

Grateful to owner

The 51-year-old is grateful to Chattoo for his support.

“Chattoo is staying here with us in the hotel. He is away from his family as well. There are around 20 hotel staff with us here; no one is allowed in and out. We’re all helping each other. There is a lot of responsibility placed on Chattoo. He’s doing everything possible to keep all of us comfortable,” Robertson said.

COVID-19 IMPACT

HI, AIFF to contribute ₹25 lakh each

NEW DELHI
Hockey India and the All India Football Federation on Wednesday pledged to donate ₹25 lakh each towards the PM-CARES Fund. “The love, care and support from countrymen has provided us motivation throughout. Hence, now is the time to pay back our country in whatever manner we can,” said AIFF president Praful Patel. “In these difficult times, it is the absolute need of the hour to come together as a nation to help fight the crisis and fulfil our duties as responsible citizens. It was a unanimous decision taken by the Hockey India Executive Board,” HI president Mohd. Mushtaq Ahmad said. PTI

Sourav Ganguly visits Belur Math, donates 2000kg rice

KOLKATA
BCCI president Sourav Ganguly on Wednesday visited Belur Math, the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Mission, in Howrah to extend his helping hand to the needy

people during the COVID-19 outbreak. “Visited belur math after 25 years... handed over 2000kgs rice for the needy,” tweeted the 47-year-old. Earlier, Ganguly, along with a rice company, had provided rice worth ₹50 lakh for the poor people.



Former US Davis Cup captain Pat McEnroe tests positive

NEW YORK
Davis Cup-winning former US captain Patrick McEnroe said on Tuesday he has tested positive for coronavirus but is feeling well and no longer has symptoms. The younger brother of seven-time Grand Slam singles champion John said he and his family had been self-



quarantined for more than two weeks, and advised others to do the same as a safety measure. AFP

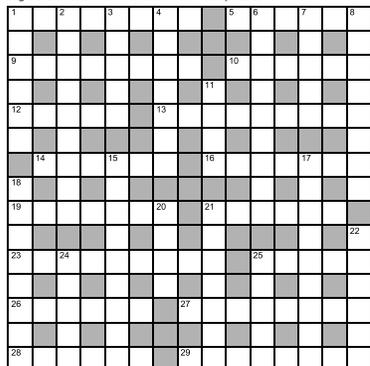
Buttler to auction World Cup final shirt for hospital appeal

LONDON
England’s Jos Buttler is auctioning the shirt he wore in last year’s dramatic World Cup final in support of hospitals treating the coronavirus. All proceeds will go to the

Royal Brompton and Harefield hospitals’ charity. “To help with their fundraising effort I’m going to be donating this shirt, which is the shirt I wore in the World Cup final last year, signed by all the players who were members of the squad,” said the 29-year-old ‘keeper. AFP

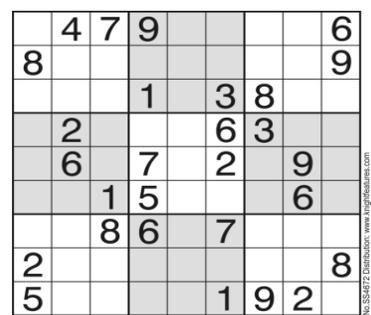
THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12899

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



- (set by Lightning)
- Change religious instruction, replacing chapter on time devoted to pleasure (9)
 - Old copper mostly abundant in round window (6)
 - Newton breaks through after some time with new light source (7)
 - Traitor’s primary motive for disloyalty (7)
 - Military unit surrounding Uruguay’s capital (6)
 - Heartless chap cutting plant to deal with rotating device (9)
 - Conduct a meeting with position of authority (5)
 - Periodically make illegal housing area (6)
 - Attack a new vision in a bad way (8)
 - Must rend your masks to be fashionable (6)
 - Certain that society can break agreement (8)
 - DOWN
 - Remember recreation with everyone (6)
 - Necessity protecting old long walrus for one (9)
 - Overly about primarily gentle push (5)
 - Gradually progresses in orbits missing radius (7)
 - Vessel’s inner coat deformed (9)
 - Machine removed end of one club (5)
 - By mistake new tenors are producing echoing sounds (8)
 - Spoken with morale partly (4)
 - Ultimate support for a military situation against overwhelming odds (4,5)
 - Auctioned building for schooling program (9)
 - Deer bitten at the tail by insect becomes motionless (8)
 - PM leaving after midday (4)
 - Rely on saint entering church to purify (7)
 - Cut partially dried fruit by diameter (6)
 - Managed grand European series (5)
 - Charge to go around a seaside land (5)

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution to puzzle 12899

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

Solution to yesterday’s Sudoku

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



Collective willpower should prevail: Yogeshwar

The wrestler shares how his determination helped him stay isolated in South Africa

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

Olympic bronze medal-winning wrestler Yogeshwar Dutt has a simple solution to the problem of staying confined at home in the time of a nationwide lockdown.

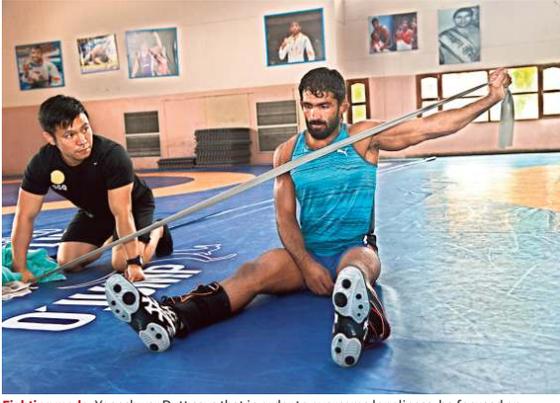
Sharing how his determination helped him stay isolated for six months in South Africa while recovering from a knee surgery, Yogeshwar said the country's collective willpower would beat the deadly COVID-19 virus.

Failure at the 2008 Beijing Olympics had made Yogeshwar hungrier for success.

He travelled to South Africa in 2009 for a surgery to fix his injured knee.

Testing times

The time required for recovery and rehabilitation tested Yogeshwar, who has bagged several medals in top level competitions, including the 2012 London Olympics.



Fighting mode: Yogeshwar Dutt says that in order to overcome loneliness, he focused on recovering from injury. • FILE PHOTO: SANDEEP SAXENA

"I spent six months in recovery and rehab. I was almost alone. In those days, it

was not easy to speak to one's family over phone. I used to watch whatever In-

dian films came on television and listened to music to pass my time.

"My only aim was to recover from the injury and become fully fit. I focused on that to overcome my loneliness.

"Right now, we should aim at beating coronavirus. This will make our stay at home easier.

"These days we have got so many facilities, including social media, to stay engaged. Spending time with family is another good option," Yogeshwar told *The Hindu*.

For Yogeshwar, who joined politics during the Haryana elections last year, social commitments have increased.

But he is monitoring all this from home.

"In our Gohana village, we are feeding about 2000 to 3000 people every day. We are also trying to extend help to all the needy people in our locality. We have a 12-member team, which is looking

into all this.

"Amidst all this, we are following the rules of social distancing. The biggest challenge at this moment is helping poor families with food and other basic needs," said Yogeshwar, who has shut down his wrestling academy to protect the trainees from the virus.

Confident

Welcoming the postponement of the Olympics, Yogeshwar expressed confidence that the Indian wrestlers would be unaffected by the one-year delay.

"All of them have been performing well for the last two-three years.

"They need to protect themselves from the virus, maintain focus and use the additional time to get back to top form again.

"They know how to do it, they just need to stay fit," said Yogeshwar.

All days are practically Sundays, says Tejaswin

'Lack of motivation to keep fit'



Tough road: Tejaswin feels the important thing is to stay sane and preserve some normalcy. • FILE PHOTO: SANDEEP SAXENA

ATHLETICS

UTHRA GANESAN
NEW DELHI

On March 14, Tejaswin Shankaar was in Albuquerque for the NCAA Division-I Indoor Track and Field Championships. The event was cancelled because of COVID-19 and Tejaswin, along with his Kansas State University teammates, moved back.

That was the last time the 21-year-old stepped out of the city he's called home for the past three years. The national high jump record-holder and Business Administration student has since been trying to keep himself fit and sane even as the pandemic took a serious turn in the United States.

Frustrating

He has been trying to improve his workouts – using rock-filled sacks as barbells and running up and down stairs – but admitted the uncertainty was frustrating.

"Olympics dates have been announced for next year but what if this goes on till September or beyond? No one knows how things will be when it does get over. There is a serious lack of motivation to keep fit."

Tejaswin, though, knows better than worrying about things he has no control over. "People forever crib about wanting a break from routine but now that they have, most do not know what to do about it. Now it's all about mental strength. The best thing is school, classes have moved online. If it was only sports, I would have maybe gone mad."

"Not too bad"

"It's actually not too bad. The important thing is just trying to stay sane and preserve some semblance of normalcy," Tejaswin told *The Hindu* from Kansas.

"For most sportspersons, life revolves around a routine of training and working out, that's how we even keep track of the schedules and days. Now, all days are practically Sundays!"

He admitted he was better off than many others. "Here, because it is a lot of farmland, things are easier.

I am confident of the car: Daruvala

MOTORSPORTS

S. DIPAK RAGAV
CHENNAI

India's Jehan Daruvala took a decisive step in his career progression to Formula One after signing as a Red Bull junior driver ahead of his F2 debut this year.

Red Bull, which has two teams in F1 – Red Bull Racing and Alpha Tauri – has one of the best junior programmes in F1 with the likes of Sebastian Vettel, Daniel Ricciardo and Max Verstappen coming through it.

Ahead of the season, Daruvala drove the F2 car in the pre-season testing held at Bahrain early in March, and topped the timesheets in two of the six sessions – the only driver to do so multiple times.

However, with the season

in limbo, the Indian is back home in Mumbai, spending some quality time with his family; something he doesn't get to do often, as he has been based out of the UK since his karting days.

Speaking to *The Hindu* about his testing, Daruvala said, "It was my first time in the F2 car and I felt good. I was coming back from knee surgery, and so the first day was about trying to get back into the groove.

"I adapted well to the car and felt quite comfortable rightaway. While it is difficult to know where we stand based on just one-lap pace, we were quite fast on the long runs. I am quietly confident that we have a good car," added Daruvala.

Despite the break, he is leaving no stone unturned to be in shape and is ready if

and when the season starts.

"I am just going to train as I usually do. I also have a new simulator that I have set up at home, though there are some connectivity issues. I hope I can fix them once the lockdown ends."

New simulator

The simulator is a very important tool for drivers to be fully prepared before going into a race weekend.

With the current situation not expected to ease until June or July, F2 faces a tough road ahead.

When asked if there are concerns that the season could be massively curtailed or even cancelled, he said, "It is unfortunate not to be racing and we have no idea what is going to happen. So, I just hope to be as prepared as possible when it starts."

ITTF's assurance to players

K. KEERTHIVASAN
CHENNAI

International Table Tennis Federation on Wednesday assured players that the ranking points that relate to events that were held in March 2020 will be taken into consideration, and that the list would be released in April.

"The ranking points corresponding to events that took place in March 2020 will be taken into consideration," ITTF said.

A. Sharath Kamal told *The Hindu*: "I am looking forward to the April rankings where I hope to equal my career-best ranking (30th) which I [last] reached in January 2019."

UEFA postpones all internationals in June

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

UEFA has made a move towards clearing the decks for the return of club football by announcing on Wednesday that all international matches that had been pushed back to June have now been postponed until further notice.

"This includes the play-off matches for UEFA EURO 2020 and qualifying matches for UEFA Women's EURO 2021," said European football's governing body. "All other UEFA competition matches, including the centralised international friendlies, remain postponed until further notice."

The decision followed a videoconference with Europe's 55 member federa-

tions as part of discussions on how to adapt the fixture calendar in the face of the ongoing coronavirus crisis.

The play-off semifinals and finals that are supposed to decide the last four qualifying berths for the next European Championship were initially postponed at the end of March and pencilled in provisionally for June.

That was "subject to a review of the situation" amid uncertainty over how the pandemic will develop and whether many European countries currently in lockdown will be able to return to some kind of normalcy.

UEFA has also stated a determination to finish all domestic and club competitions by June 30.



மாண்புமிகு பீகார் முதல்வரின் வேண்டுகோள்



ஓட்டுமொத்த மனிதகுலமும், நாவல் கரோனா வைரஸ் தொற்று நோய்க்கு உள்ளாகும் அபாயத்தில் இருக்கிறது. இதை தடுக்க சமூக விலகலே சிறந்த வழி. கரோனா வைரஸில் இருந்து தற்காத்துக்கொள்வதற்காக தேசிய ஊரடங்கு அமலில் உள்ளது.

மற்ற மாநிலங்களில் தவிக்கும் பீகார் மக்கள், அவர்கள் இருக்கும் இடத்திலேயே இருக்க வேண்டும் என்பது எனது வேண்டுகோளாகும். பீகார் அரசு உங்களுக்கு உதவ உறுதி கொண்டிருக்கிறது.

உங்களுக்கு உதவ பீகார் அரசு மற்ற மாநில அரசுகளுடன் ஒருங்கிணைந்து செயல்பட்டு வருகிறது. வாய்ப்புள்ள எல்லா வழிகளிலும் உங்களுக்கு உதவி செய்யப்படும். இதற்காக தொடர்ந்து பாடுபட்டு வருகிறோம். உங்கள் பிரச்சனை தீர்க்கப்படவில்லை எனில், கீழே கொடுக்கப்பட்டுள்ள உதவி எண்களில் நீங்கள் தொடர்பு கொள்ளலாம். கருத்துகளை கேட்டறிந்த பிறகு, இயன்றவரை விரைவாக உங்கள் பிரச்சனைக்கு தீர்வு காணப்படும்.

பீதியடைய வேண்டாம் என்றும், இந்த நெருக்கடியை வலிமையுடன் எதிர்கொள்ள வேண்டும் என்றும் மீண்டும் கேட்டுக்கொள்கிறேன். உங்கள் ஆதரவுடன் மட்டுமே இந்த தொற்று நோய்க்கு எதிராக நம்மால் வெற்றி பெற முடியும். இந்த நெருக்கடியான நேரத்தில் பீகார் அரசு உங்களுடன் இருக்கிறது.

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பேரிடர் நிர்வாக துறை, பாட்னா, பீகார்

கட்டுப்பாட்டு அறை: 0612-2294204, 0612-2294205

பேரிடர் நிர்வாகம் மற்றும் செய்தி & மக்கள் தொடர்பு துறை, பீகார் அரசு