



**India asks Pak. to look into cause of Kartarpur dome collapse**

page 8



**If WHO has limitations, these were imposed by nations: Shashi Tharoor**

page 9



**Checking food shortage priority for South Asia, says Hans Timmer**

page 10

**Donald Trump warns China could face consequences for virus outbreak**

page 12



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**NEARBY**



**HC halls to be sanitised after one tests positive**

CHENNAI  
 The Madras High Court on Sunday decided to close down all court halls for sanitisation after a staffer tested positive for SARS-CoV-2.

TAMIL NADU • PAGE 4

**Protective gear must for policemen**

CHENNAI  
 In the wake of a 52-year-old sub-inspector being admitted to hospital for the COVID-19 confirmatory test, the police have advised all personnel involved in vehicle checks to compulsorily wear masks and gloves.

CHENNAI • PAGE 3

**Two Russians rescued from Annamalaiyar hills**

TIRUVANMALAI  
 Aided by drones, the police rescued two stranded Russian nationals from the Annamalaiyar hills on Sunday. They had gone to the hilltop on a "meditation mission".

TAMIL NADU • PAGE 2

## E-commerce firms can't supply non-essential goods, says govt.

MHA issues guidelines for movement of migrant labourers within State

VIJAYA SINGH  
 NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Sunday clarified that supply of non-essential goods by e-commerce companies will remain prohibited during the lockdown.

The Ministry also issued guidelines for the movement of migrant labourers living in relief camps to their workplace, within the boundaries of a State, in areas where the lockdown will be relaxed from April 20.

The Ministry asserted that there will be no inter-State movement of labourers. They will be registered, screened and those who are asymptomatic will be transported to their places of

### Fresh guidelines

The government revised the advisory it issued earlier to allow States to decide on activities to be allowed from today

- The Ministry of Home Affairs issued guidelines on April 15 that States will decide the additional public activities to be allowed from April 20 in non-hotspot zones and rural areas
- The guidelines mentioned e-commerce firms but did not specify the products, other than essential items to be sold online
- On Sunday, the MHA clarified that supply of non-essential goods by e-commerce companies will remain prohibited
- States have to adhere to the guidelines issued under the Disaster Management Act 2005, invoked for the first time

The MHA said the movement of labourers will be allowed within the State to reach their workplace. However, no inter-State movement is allowed

would have to be based on strict compliance with the existing guidelines on lockdown measures.

As per the April 15 order, "e-commerce companies" and vehicles used by their operators had been allowed but it was not specified if it was applicable to items other than essentials.

On Sunday, the MHA wrote to the States to exclude the e-commerce category from the revised guidelines.

In another letter, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla clarified that e-commerce firms would continue to operate for home delivery of es-

sential goods, as earlier.

Commerce and Railway Minister Piyush Goyal tweeted that he was grateful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the clarification that "e-commerce companies can only supply essential goods during the lockdown". "This will create a level playing field for small retailers," he added.

The Confederation of All India Traders issued a statement claiming credit for the exclusion of e-commerce companies.

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

### Goa is now COVID free

Goa on Sunday became the first zero COVID-19 State in the country with the last seven positive cases also turning negative. This makes Goa the first green State in the country with no case of coronavirus being reported since April 3. The State had a total of seven cases, of whom six had travel history and one was the brother of a positive patient. • PAGE 9

### Centre stops flight bookings

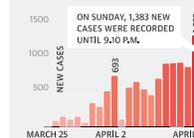
The government on Sunday directed airlines to discontinue advance bookings for travel from May 4. "No decision to commence the operation of domestic/international flights with effect from May 4 has been taken yet. All airlines are hereby directed to refrain from booking tickets," the Civil Aviation Ministry told domestic and foreign airlines. • PAGE 10

## Confusion over mismatch in Health Ministry, ICMR figures

On Sunday, ICMR reported 17,615 positive individuals

### Cases, tests touch new high

ON SUNDAY, 1,382 NEW CASES WERE RECORDED UNTIL 9.10 P.M.



■ **SUDDEN GROWTH**  
 The graph depicts the new cases recorded from March 25 to April 19

■ **MORE TESTING**  
 The graph shows the number of daily tests conducted in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu from April 3



TOTALS BASED ON STATE GOVERNMENTS' TALLIES. ICMR REPORTED A HIGHER TALLY ON SATURDAY NIGHT.

On April 18, India saw its highest single-day jump in COVID-19 cases (1,415 cases). The day also recorded the highest single-day jump in tests conducted in States with a high case load

■ **STATE-WISE SPLIT** | Maharashtra, Gujarat and Delhi accounted for the highest number of cases on April 18. A look at State-wise share of cases on three distinct days

State	April 2	April 13	April 18
Maharashtra	11%	29%	23%
Gujarat	0%	5%	20%
Delhi	24%	29%	13%
U.P.	8%	6%	9%
Rajasthan	3%	8%	9%
M.P.	3%	4%	7%
Telangana	19%	5%	5%
Tamil Nadu	15%	8%	3%

Students from Kota at a quarantine centre after they arrived in Prayagraj on buses. • P11



individuals had been confirmed positive. Of these 2,154 were confirmed on Saturday alone - the first time the daily case load breached the 2,000 mark.

However, the Health Ministry, the point-ministry for all information regarding COVID-19, reported only 14,792 cases and 957 new cases.

On Sunday, the ICMR reported that 17,615 individuals

CONTINUED ON • PAGE 8

## Pharma units still not able to operate freely

Raw material supplies are hampered

VIKAS DHOOT  
 MUMBAI

A week after the Department of Pharmaceuticals warned of an impending shortage of drugs if pharmaceutical units are not able to operate freely during the lockdown, there has only been a marginal improvement in their functioning, with employee movement, transport and raw material supplies still hampered, and courier services remaining non-functional.

Most domestic pharmaceutical producers are operating at 30%-50% of capacity, while larger research-driven players say they have hit 40%-50%.

On April 11, the Department of Pharmaceuticals told the Home Ministry that the industry was operating at just 20%-30% of capacity and called for immediate measures to bring the out-

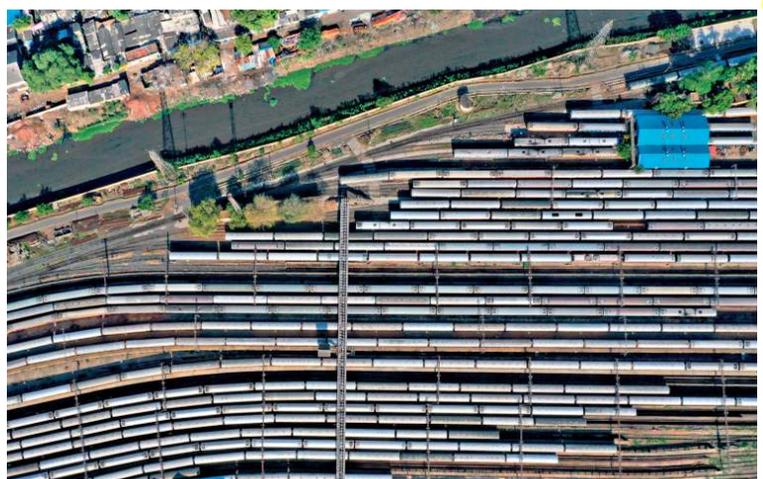
put back to the pre-lockdown level.

The Department is co-ordinating with the Ministry of Civil Aviation to bring in raw materials, finished drugs and vaccines on special flights operated by Air India. The Department of Posts and the Railways have offered pharma producers their services to help reach products to the hinterland.

"Manpower availability has improved a little, but people who have left the cities and gone back are hard to replace. Materials movement hasn't improved much and packaging also remains difficult to procure," said Daara Patel, secretary-general of the Indian Drug Manufacturers' Association, which represents over 1,000 large, small and medium companies.

CONTINUED ON • PAGE 8

### Trainspotting



**Emergency break:** With all services suspended till May 3 as part of the efforts to control the spread of coronavirus, rakes are now idling at railway yards in various parts of the country. Captured above is an aerial view of trains parked at the Basin Bridge yard in Chennai on Sunday. • B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

## PM-CARES donations cut from govt. staff salaries

Circulars were sent to all departments

PRISILLA JEBARAJ  
 VIJAYA SINGH  
 NEW DELHI

Employees from a number of government departments and agencies have donated a day's salary toward the PM-CARES fund.

While the donations, meant for COVID-19 relief, were said to be "voluntary", government circulars show that the deductions were made directly from salaries. Those unwilling to donate were asked to submit their refusal in writing.

**Revenue Dept. notice**  
 On Friday, the Revenue Department in the Finance Ministry sent a circular to all officials, including those on the boards for direct and indirect tax.

"It has been decided to appeal to all officers and staff to contribute their one day's salary every month till

March 2021 to the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situation (PM-CARES) Fund to aid the Government's efforts to fight the coronavirus pandemic," the circular read.

**'Objections in writing'**  
 "Any officer or staff having objection to it [the donation] may intimate Drawing and Disbursing Officer (DDO) in writing mentioning his/her employee code latest by 20.04.2020," the circular added.

The communication came as a surprise to the officers and staff of the department as, they say, typically requests for such contributions come through the employees' association. Further, employees were never asked to give it in writing if they did not want to donate.

STAFF UNEASY • PAGE 8

## Spare monkeys the virus, say biologists

Feeding primates could lead to mutated SARS-CoV-2 infecting hapless animals

ROHAN PREM Kumar  
 UDHAGAMANDALAM

Feeding monkeys during the COVID-19 pandemic could have profoundly negative effects in the long-term, such as helping the SARS-CoV-2 virus mutate and infect primates, biologists have said in a note, advising caution.

Honnavalli M. Kumara, principal scientist at the Salim Ali Center for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON), said it was well documented that viruses and endoparasites could transmit between humans and primates.

"The worst-case scenario is that SARS-CoV-2 mutates and infects other primate species. This could lead to many scenarios, such as the



**Hungry troop:** A forester feeding monkeys, facing a food shortage during the lockdown, near Madurai. • S. JAMES

virus affecting the health of the affected animal populations or the animals serving as reservoirs or hosts and spreading the disease to other species or human populations," another senior wildlife biologist from Tamil Nadu said.

to minimise problematic human-primate interaction. Ashni Dhawale, a researcher at the National Institute of Advanced Studies at Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, who is studying ecology and behaviour of the endangered lion-tailed macaque, said primates and humans share a complex relationship.

**A 'provocation'**  
 Monkey troops accustomed to being fed by people could view denial of food as a "provocation," leading to hostile interactions. "Monkeys start associating humans with food, and when food is denied, can attack them," she said.

CONTINUED ON • PAGE 8

## 'Community tests spot 186 cases in Delhi'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
 NEW DELHI

A spike in the number of asymptomatic COVID-19 cases detected in the capital is due to the community sampling exercise being conducted in Delhi's 77 containment zones, a State government official said on Sunday.

Earlier in the day, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said all 186 patients who tested positive on Sunday were asymptomatic. He said of the 736 test results that came in on Saturday, 186 patients who tested positive showed no symptoms. This, he pointed out, was 25% of the total results that came in on Saturday.

CM JUSTIFIES LOCKDOWN EXTENSION • PAGE 9

## One death, 105 new cases in T.N.

A cluster of 50 persons from Chennai test positive

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
 CHENNAI

A surgeon died and as many as 105 persons tested positive on Sunday, taking the total number of positive cases to 1,477 and the number of deaths in Tamil Nadu to 16.

The neurosurgeon was admitted to a private hospital. His daughter, who was also admitted to the hospital, is stable.

A cluster of 50 persons from Chennai tested positive for COVID-19 infection. Of this, 10 were from primary sources, or people who had tested positive already, and 40 others were those who had been in contact with them.

In Chengalpattu, three persons, all of whom had come into contact with positive persons, were diagnosed positive. Five from



A sample being taken from a patient in Chennai on Sunday. • B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

Coimbatore, and six from Cuddalore, contacts of positive persons, tested positive.

Ten persons in Thanjavur, who had contact with positive persons, tested positive as did five from Tiruvarur.

In Tirunelveli, two persons, who were in contact with positive persons, tested positive.

In Dindigul, five persons, who had come into contact with positive patients, con-

tracted the infection. In Kancheepuram, one person tested positive. Two from Madurai, three from Nagapattinam and four from Tenkasi, all of whom had come into contact with those who had tested positive, were infected.

On Sunday, 5,840 samples were taken, taking the total samples to 40,876. Of these, 31,853 samples tested negative.

**Results awaited**  
 The testing of 2,411 samples is under process and 5,135 are repeat samples, health officials said. Of the 2,10,538 passengers, who were screened at various airports in the State, 1,04,936 were under home quarantine as of Saturday. Officials said 85,253 passengers had completed the 28-day follow-up.

# Curbs will continue till CM makes an announcement

21-member expert committee expected to submit report today

DENNIS S. JESUDASAN  
CHENNAI

All the restrictions being imposed during the COVID-19 lockdown will continue "until an official announcement" (on the relaxation of norms) is made by the Chief Minister, based on the recommendations of the 21-member expert committee, the Tamil Nadu government said on Sunday.

The panel is expected to submit its report to the CM on Monday. "The CM will examine the recommendations and take a decision accordingly," an official press release said. It also cited the guidelines issued by the Centre on April 15, which had stated that the State governments were to announce which industries, commercial establishments and services would be allowed to function, with conditions, after April 20.

A source in the Directorate of Information and Public Relations said, "There have been reports that some private firms have instructed their employees to report for duty on April 20, since the Centre's guidelines had recommended a relaxation of lockdown measures after April 20."



**Pin-drop silence:** Chennai's Anna Salai wearing a deserted look on Sunday. M. KARUNAKARAN

lines had recommended a relaxation of lockdown measures after April 20."

## COVID-19

Meanwhile, the Southern Railway has indefinitely postponed the reopening of administrative offices and workshops across the State. In a circular issued on Sunday, it said a decision on

reopening the premises across its four divisions in the State would be taken based on the directives of the State government.

## Parcel services

However, the Railway authorities have allowed the remaining two divisions, including Palghat and Thiruvananthapuram, to reopen the offices located in Kerala.

The Southern Railway has launched an exclusive website and a mobile app for booking parcel services during the lockdown.

A senior railway official said the website will provide information on the routes for parcel services from the Chennai Central and Egmore stations, besides the contact numbers of the officials concerned for booking the service.

# Lockdown leaves electronics, home appliance retailers reeling

Godowns packed with unsold inventory; pay cuts loom

SANGEETHA KANDAVEL  
CHENNAI

The COVID-19 lockdown has left retailers in the electronics and home appliances segment with loads of unsold inventory in their godowns. A few firms have indicated that their employees may have to take a pay cut for a few months, until the situation becomes stable. Retailers say the servicing segment has also taken a huge hit due to the lockdown.

"As an industry, we have missed [out] on three big sales this year - the year-end sale that happens during the last week of March, the Tamil New Year sale and the summer sale. The stocks we have purchased from manufacturers are lying in godowns," said Vijay Vasanth, CEO of Vasanth and Co. "Most consumer electronics dealers build up stock in January and February for the year-end and summer sales. The inventory includes air-conditioners and air coolers which can be sold only during the summer," he added.

March-May is a crucial period for these retailers, as

**March-May is a crucial period for these retailers, as 30-35% of their total sales happen during these months**

30-35% of their total sales happen during these months.

Nitesh Giria, Director of Girias, said, "The government should permit us to operate in accordance with guidelines and social distancing norms. Otherwise, all our consignments will remain unsold for another year." The lockdown has wiped out nearly 40% of his business this year.

## Summer-centric goods

Vishal Bysani, Vice-President - Marketing, Viveks, said summer-centric products would remain idle for the next one year. "Our industry should be considered essential because for a housewife, buying a mixer, a grinder or a fan is essential," he said. "Retailers will also stop expanding their stores for the next few quarters. On

an average, they open three to five stores every three months," he added.

On salary cuts, retailers are evaluating their options. According to estimates, Tamil Nadu has over one lakh people employed in this segment.

Industry representatives said that if the government allowed them to resume operations post-April 20, they would get a breather. Some suggested that like e-commerce players, they could allow consumers to place orders online by visiting their website and get the products delivered to their doorstep. The industry is also seeking a reduction in GST rates to enhance affordability for consumers and profitability for retailers.

According to an analysis of the Indian appliances and consumer electronics market by CARE Ratings, the industry is likely to suffer a considerable loss in sales going forward. It may be noted that even if the spread of the pandemic is curtailed, consumer sentiment is expected to remain unfavourable and demand, muted.

# PM assures CM of supply of testing kits



Narendra Modi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday assured Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami that an adequate quantity of rapid test kits will be allotted to Tamil Nadu.

An official press release stated that Mr. Modi spoke to Mr. Palaniswami over the phone and enquired about the efforts being made to combat COVID-19. The Chief Minister apprised Mr. Modi about the situation in Tamil Nadu. "The Chief Minister also urged the Prime Minister to allot more rapid test kits to Tamil Nadu, since more testing was to be done. The Prime Minister said he will," the release added.

# Cold-shouldering the Opposition in the midst of a pandemic

CM's approach is seen as an attempt to appropriate all the credit to his party

T. RAMAKRISHNAN  
CHENNAI

The AIADMK government's handling of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic conveys too strong a political message to miss.

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami's approach has been not to give an inch of space to the Opposition in strategising and implementing measures to deal with the problem.

"Politically speaking, his approach appears to be a smart move as he wants to appropriate to his party the credit for all the steps being taken by the government," says P. Ramajayam, Assistant Professor, Centre for Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchi.

But the academician and K. Jayakumar, Tiruvallur Member of Parliament and working president of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC), feel that in a democracy, it has been a well-established practice and convention for the ruling party to take the Opposition into confidence.

"It is good for the ruling party and the people of the



Edappadi K. Palaniswami

State that the government engages with the Opposition and civil society in times of a disaster or a calamity of any type," Dr. Ramajayam points out.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

"It is not merely a health-related matter [as contended by the CM]. Most of it concerns the management of resources in times of a crisis. This is why we, in the Opposition, demand that the Chief Minister consult us. Does not the Prime Minister have a discussion with leaders of other parties? Why did the Chief Minister have a meeting of the Cabinet on the lockdown extension?" the TNCC work-

ing president asks.

Though the government appears to be in no mood to accede to the demand for an all-party meeting, over the last one month or so, it has responded favourably in its own way to some of the demands of the Opposition.

During the early stage of the COVID-19 pandemic, the DMK and the Congress had urged that the Assembly session, which was originally scheduled to go on till April 9, be brought to an end earlier than the revised date of March 31. The government, which initially rejected the request, subsequently got the session wrapped up by March 24.

## Taking a hard line

Similarly, on the issue of letting political parties and others engage in the direct distribution of relief material and food to affected persons during the lockdown, the government appeared to take a hard line at one point in time, but then toned down its position following the Opposition's strong criticism of its approach. More importantly, on the matter of extending the period of lockdown,

despite the Opposition's aggressive call for an extension, the government kept on referring to the Cabinet's resolution on April 11 of preferring to go by what the Prime Minister decides. But less than 24 hours before Mr. Modi's scheduled address on the morning of April 14, the Chief Minister announced his decision to extend the lockdown till March 31, which was later stretched further till May 3 in line with the Prime Minister's announcement.

Replying to criticism, Fisheries Minister D. Jayakumar says that from the angles of both public health and administration, the government has been following "right strategies and the right path. So, there is no need for a rethink".

Before its move to extend the lockdown, the government had consulted a host of public health and medical experts of eminence. As for the public administration, "where have we gone wrong", the Minister wonders. "We have been implementing all the welfare measures and taking steps to lessen the pain of the common man, amid severe constraints," he adds.

# Two Russians rescued from hills

STAFF REPORTER  
TIRUVANNAMALI

Aided by drones, the Tiruvannamalai police rescued two Russian nationals who were stranded on Annamalai hills on Sunday.

Superintendent of Police M.R. Sibi Chakravarthy said law enforcement officers had been conducting checks on the hills to prevent unlawful activities during the lockdown period. During one such check, a team spotted two people there.

They were brought down from the hills and, following an inquiry, were identified as Victor, 29, and his wife Tatiana. They had reached Tiruvannamalai for a "spiritual tour" a month ago. They were here on a tourist visa and had earlier been staying in a lodging house. After exhausting all their money, they had gone to the hill-top on a "meditation mission".

# Muslim neighbours help Hindu man's kin conduct his funeral

Lockdown brings out communal amity in the time of a tragedy

SUNITHA SEKAR  
UDHAV NAIG  
CHENNAI

The COVID-19 lockdown may have had a disproportionate effect on different sections of society, but every affected family has struggled with grief, more so when having to deal with the unexpected death of a loved one. There have been instances of communal amity, notwithstanding the hatred spread by some sections of social media users.

When 78-year-old Ramachandran died in Chennai a few days ago, many of his friends and relatives stayed put in their homes due to the lockdown. And when it was time to perform the last rites and the funeral, his family realised that they needed help. That's when they approached their Muslim

**Though we didn't know each other personally, I heard he [Ramachandran] was a generous and kind gentleman**

MOHAMMED ALI  
Neighbour of deceased

neighbours.

K. Santhanakrishnan, Ramachandran's brother, spoke of how glad he was to see that people had volunteered to help. "In the times that we are living in, it shows that humanity and kindness are the only things that matter at the end of the day. We all will help each other, and caste, creed or religion should never come in the way," he said.

## Last rites

Tamil Nadu Muslim Munnetra Kazhagam's Anna Nagar unit secretary Sad-

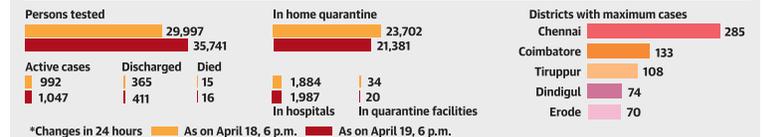
dam Hussain said Ramachandran's family had said that as per tradition, six people needed to be there to lift the body. "Mohammed, Zakir Hussain, Saddam Hussain, Mohammed Ali and Nizamuddin helped the bereaved and shouldered the body until the last rites were performed," he added.

Mr. Ali said he had heard from his acquaintances that Ramachandran was a nice person, and was more than willing to help.

"Though we didn't know each other personally, I heard he was a generous and kind gentleman. He was holding a respectable post in the government till he retired, and did some great work. We were glad that we were able to help in whatever small way we could," he added.

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

	Until April 12	April 13	April 14	April 15	April 16	April 17	April 18	April 19	Total
Cases reported	1,075	98	31	38	25	56	49	105	1,477
Recovered and discharged	50	8	23	37	62	103	82	46	411
Deceased	11	0	1	2	1	0	0	1	16



# Central govt. offers additional rice at ₹22 per kg to non-priority households

Priority household cardholders are getting it free-of-cost for three months

T. RAMAKRISHNAN  
CHENNAI

The Central government is offering to provide an additional 5 kg rice per person per month for the next three months to non-priority household (NPHH) cardholders in States and Union Territories.

But the offer carries a cost. For NPHH cardholders, the rice will be provided at ₹22 per kg, whereas for priority household (PHH) cardholders, the Centre is providing 5 kg rice per person per month, free of cost, for three months - April, May and June - under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan

(PMGKAY).

The offer has been made to Tamil Nadu as well, and the State is considering the proposal. There is a view within the State government that the cost is on the higher side. Food Minister R. Kamaraj, at a video-conference session last week with Union Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan, reminded the latter of the Chief Minister's request to the Centre for the provision of free rice to around 85.99 lakh NPHH cardholders (covering a population of around 3.07 crore).

As for the availability of rice in T.N., the Food Corporation of India's godowns

have a stock of 13.5 lakh tonnes, which can cater to the State's requirements for four-and-a-half months, at the pre-COVID-19 level of three lakh tonnes a month. Since the imposition of the lockdown, T.N. has received around 2.6 lakh tonnes of grains by train from various States, including Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. Besides, the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation has its own stock.

## Free rice component

Pointing out that the State government had lifted about 2.2 lakh tonnes of rice so far this month, R.D. Nazem, Executive Director

(South), Food Corporation of India, said the free rice component under the PMGKAY entailed around 1.78 lakh tonnes a month for Tamil Nadu. As for the latest offer, the State can get around 1.5 lakh tonnes.

The Union government has also launched a scheme of supplying rice or wheat to registered charitable institutions or non-governmental organisations that are engaged in relief operations like providing cooked meals to the needy, including migrant labourers and other vulnerable groups. The cost of rice will be ₹22 per kg and wheat, ₹21 per kg.

# Lockdown brings out the best in farmer producer organisations

They are supplying fruits, vegetables and groceries through various channels

T. RAMAKRISHNAN  
CHENNAI

The COVID-19 lockdown seems to have brought out the best in farmer producer organisations (FPOs), numbering 550 in Tamil Nadu.

The FPOs, which had been functioning in a low-key manner over the last five years or so, broadly taking care of the "back-office" operations of the State's farm sector, are now engaged in the supply of fruits, vegetables and other essentials to consumers during the lockdown, according to Principal Secretary (Agriculture) and Agricultural Production Commissioner Gagandeep Singh Bedi.

As per official data, over 100 tonnes of fruits, 447 tonnes of vegetables and 116 tonnes of groceries were supplied by 90 FPOs through various marketing channels, including 65 farmer



**Bigger role:** A file picture of a farmer producer organisation near Aruppukottai.

ers' markets (Uzhavar Sandhai), 44 wholesale markets, 125 retail establishments and 45 mobile units.

Giving select illustrations, Mr. Bedi said that several FPOs were also running 13 primary processing centres (PPCs), wherein packing and sale of the produce were taken up, along with processing.

The Pochampalli PPC in Krishnagiri district, operated by the Theni Fruits and

Producers' Group, an arm of the Tamil Nadu Banana Producers' Company, supplies packed vegetables to the Tamil Nadu Horticulture Development Agency for the e-tottam online market.

A few days ago, the group, along with Greens Agri Products India, exported 12 tonnes of tomato to Maldives.

"Today, Our Cumbum Western Ghats Banana Pro-

ducer Group [another arm of the Producers' Company], is engaged in exporting 30 tonnes of banana to Iran," Mr. Bedi pointed out, adding that FPOs in Nilgiris were engaged in online sale through a tie-up with food aggregator Zomato.

However, there is a different view about the role of FPOs.

Arupathy Kalyanam, a leading farmer of Mayiladuthurai, said that though the concept of FPOs was laudable, such organisations in the Cauvery delta were yet to make a big impact. In the name of enlisting more farmers, such organisations may stretch beyond a cluster of three or four contiguously-located villages.

"Such an approach may not serve the interests of farmers in the long-run, and should not be pursued," Mr. Kalyanam cautioned.

**Timings**  
**CHENNAI**

**MONDAY, APR. 20**  
RISE 05:54 SET 18:22  
SUNRISE 04:14 SET 16:24

**TUESDAY, APR. 21**  
RISE 05:53 SET 18:23  
SUNRISE 04:51 SET 17:09

**WEDNESDAY, APR. 22**  
RISE 05:53 SET 18:23  
SUNRISE 05:27 SET 17:55

**Chennai Weather** max min

Thiruvallur 39 26  
Chennai Airport 36 27  
Chennai City 35 28

**Chennai Airport Today**  
36°C A dry and warm weather with partly cloudy sky to continue.

**Chennai Airport Tomorrow**  
35°C A dry and warm weather with partly cloudy sky to continue.

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# Corpn. begins testing its staff

Samples of front line workers, mediapersons are likely to be taken today

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI

Chennai Corporation has started testing its front line workers, the police and mediapersons for coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The collection of samples has been taken up following reports of SARS-CoV-2 infection among those involved in fighting the pandemic.

## COVID-19

Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash said: "The entire city is considered a containment zone. The door-to-door survey of residents is under way. Areas that have reported positive cases are being monitored. Front line workers are creating awareness on social distancing. They play a key role in saving lives and helping residents during the lockdown."

Testing of front line workers was being done in centres such as Bharathi Women's College.

On Monday, the testing is



**High-risk personnel:** Police personnel undergoing tests at the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital on Sunday. • B. VELANKANNI RAJ

likely to be done at Omandur Government Multi Speciality Hospital.

The Corporation had been able to identify many residents with COVID-19 after testing centres were set up last week in various parts of the city.

"We have tested 6,300 samples. We have identified 50 positive cases. The prevalence is 0.8%," said Mr. Prakash.

"Front line workers are tracing the contacts of the

persons who tested positive. This is a very important data," said Mr. Prakash.

Chennai Corporation has created 85 containment zones in the city where positive cases had been reported in the past few weeks. The civic body had taken steps to prevent crowding in areas such as Koyambedu wholesale market where the risk of spread was high. The police had been allowing only traders holding passes issued by the Corporation and Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority into the market.

"Direct sale to residents has stopped in Koyambedu wholesale market. The crowd has reduced. People are maintaining social distancing," said Mr. Prakash. Pointing to the manpower shortage in various industries leading to reduction in supply of pulses and cooking oil in the city, Mr. Prakash said the problem would be solved immediately.

# Protective gear a must for policemen checking vehicles

Esplanade SI in hospital; his colleagues undergo test

**VIVEK NARAYANAN**  
**R. SIVARAMAN**  
CHENNAI

In the wake of a 52-year-old sub-inspector admitted to the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital for COVID-19 confirmatory test on Saturday, the police have advised all personnel involved in vehicle checks to compulsorily wear masks and gloves.

The SI was in charge of a patrol team and is a resident of police quarters at Alandur. He was initially tested at the RGGGH and the result turned out to be positive for SARS-CoV-2. But he remained asymptomatic.

He had been admitted to special ward for a confirmatory test, said police sources.

Meanwhile, all his col-



**Sanitisation drive:** Corporation personnel spraying disinfectants at the B2 Esplanade police station on Sunday. • B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

leagues in the Esplanade police station and other residents of the police quarters at Alandur have been taken for tests. "The Esplanade station premises houses law and order, crime, traffic and even the office of the Assistant Commissioner. We will be testing all and quarantining those with symptoms," said a senior police officer.

He said that as on date each station had been provided with 15 personal protective equipment (PPE). "Those attached to the government hospitals have been provided more than 100 sets. These can be used only once and have to be disposed of safely after being worn," said the officer.

**Vehicles disinfected**  
The health department has started disinfecting the patrol vehicles in the Espla-

nade station. "We are spraying disinfectant in the entire station and the quarters where he lived. All necessary precautions are being taken," said the officer.

He said that as on date each station had been provided with 15 personal protective equipment (PPE). "Those attached to the government hospitals have been provided more than 100 sets. These can be used only once and have to be disposed of safely after being worn," said the officer.

## Actor held for selling liquor

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI

The city police on Sunday arrested a junior actor for hoarding liquor ahead of the lockdown and selling them at higher prices.

Following a tip-off, a special team raided a house on Anna Main Road, MGR Nagar, and arrested Rizwan, 30. Rizwan has acted in a few films. He used to deliver liquor at the doorstep of customers.

The police also arrested two persons, M. Devaraj, 40 and Pradeep, 31.

# Doctors seek PPE kits for all healthcare workers

So far, 14 doctors have tested positive for COVID-19

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI

Three more doctors tested positive for the COVID-19 on Sunday at the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital. As of Sunday, 14 doctors have tested positive for the infection.

With the number of affected doctors continuing to

rise, the Federation of Government Doctors' Association has written to Health Secretary Beela Rajesh urging the government to provide proper protection to healthcare providers.

The federation has demanded that standard personal protection equipment (PPE) kit be adequately arranged for doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers handling COVID-19 patients.

It has appealed to the doctors' toundergo test for the infection. It demanded that



Many doctors are yet to be tested. • B. VELANKANNI RAJ

doctors and nurses be put on COVID-19 duty only for six hours and provided 14 days of quarantine on completing week-long duty. They should

be given accommodation away from the hospital to avoid spreading the infection to other staff, family and community.

This was not being done currently, a doctor said. "A cardiology PG who tested positive in the RGGGH had contracted the infection after treating a patient in COVID-19 ward. He had fever two days later and by then the infection had spread across the ward," a doctor said.

At the Government Stanley Hospital, the nurses

worked for a week in the ward and were given a week's quarantine but stayed in the hostel, according to the officials. This was a cause for worry as the nurses who worked in the COVID-19 ward should be isolated.

**Prolonged exposure**  
Doctors said nurses invariably worked longer, sometimes over eight hours and were therefore vulnerable to infection. They had been demanding that they be tested for the infection as they were in the front line. Although

doctors and nurses had greater exposure to infection, they had not undergone tests.

The federation wanted the government to keep a third of doctors as reserve. "Don't bring all of them to hospital. With all elective surgeries put on hold, we can use the resources judiciously," a doctor pointed out.

The federation wanted the government to announce a compensation of ₹1 crore for the family of Jayamohan, a doctor in the Nilgiris, who died while on duty.

## Tiruvallur PEW uses drone

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI

The Prohibition Enforcement Wing of the Tiruvallur police has deployed drones to crack down on smuggling of illicit liquor from Andhra Pradesh through Tiruvallur district.

Recently, the police nabbed a few persons bringing illicit liquor from the neighbouring State.

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami has appreciated SP P. Aravindan on Twitter for his initiative.

# Transgenders help in door-to-door survey

10 volunteers have been hired for three months

**VIVEK NARAYANAN**  
CHENNAI

Ten transgenders had been rendering help to the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC), as volunteers, in Thiruvannamiyur division to conduct door-to-door survey for coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and SARS symptoms.

These transgenders have been roped in by the Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women, under the Tamil Nadu National Urban Livelihood Mission (TNULM) scheme, to assist the GCC.

"A few of them approached me as they did not have employment. Hence I approached the GCC and



**Overcoming social barriers:** Transgender volunteers checking households in Besant Nagar. • M. KARUNAKARAN

used them as volunteers. They have been collecting data from households for the past two weeks," said S. Radha, community organiser, division 181 and 182, zone 13, Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women.

M. Nila, 34, of Perumbakkam, a B. Pharma degree

holder, has been running an NGO called PHARM Foundation for the education and empowerment of transgenders. "We cover 120 houses a day and have been doing it for the past two weeks. We check for symptoms. Till date the residents have been responding properly to our

questions and have expressed concern about our safety during the pandemic," said Ms. Nila.

All the 10 volunteers have been provided with masks, gloves and a coat. "We have identity cards. Some of the other volunteers are Rashika, Subashree and Afreen. We have to volunteer for three months and will be paid on a monthly basis," she added.

Ms. Radha said the transgenders had been working hard as they treated it as an important responsibility. "The stigma against transgenders should go. This is a first step towards it. While the government should provide more employment opportunity to their fraternity, companies should sponsor their education. This will help them come up in life," she said.

# Legal services authority to the rescue of pregnant woman

Family leaves for Kerala after intervention by top officials

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI

It is not just the State and its agencies but also the Tamil Nadu State Legal Services Authority (TNSLSA), led by Justice Vineet Kothari of the Madras High Court, which has been arranging food, groceries, medical help and travelling passes for people in the time of lockdown imposed to fight COVID-19.

According to TNSLSA member-secretary K. Rajasekar, Justice Kothari received a frantic call from the family of a pregnant woman seeking assistance to reach their native place in Kerala. Steps were taken to get a travel pass to the family which managed to reach the border but got stranded there because of the blockade by Kerala police.

"Immediately, Justice Kothari spoke to a Kerala

High Court judge who in turn alerted the Chief Minister as well as Chief Secretary of Kerala. After intervention from the highest level, the family was allowed to enter Kerala and reach Palakkad on condition that all the members of the family must remain in home quarantine for 14 days. This also led to Kerala government issue fresh guidelines on permitting pregnant women enter the State despite lockdown.

## Food distributed

Similarly, TNSLSA has arranged groceries and medical help for 30 aged farmers in Pattukottai taluk of Thanjavur district. It saved the life of an octogenarian woman in dire need of a feeding tube in Chengalpattu district," he said.

Further, the legal authority provided food to 20 Nari-

urava families at Salavakkam in Chengalpattu district and to 25 employees of a circus at Thottiyam in Tiruchi. It gave two ventilators to a government hospital in Tiruvallur with the assistance of a non-governmental organisation. It had obliged requests received regarding relief for migrant workers.

"We received requests from West Bengal and Manipur State Legal Services Authorities for the safety of nearly 500 migrant labourers. Around 90% of those people were traced and provided with food and shelter. We are providing assistance to victims of domestic violence through WhatsApp helpline in all 32 judicial districts," Mr. Rajasekar added. The WhatsApp numbers are Chennai (9443244365) and Kanchipuram (9884040488).

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IN BRIEF

75-year-old man dies in Chidambaram

**CHIDAMBARAM**  
A 75-year-old man admitted to the isolation ward at the Rajah Muthiah Medical College and Hospital, in Chidambaram, with suspected symptoms of COVID-19, died on Sunday. Sources in the Health department said that the deceased, a resident of Manjakkuppam in Cuddalore, was admitted to a private hospital here on April 14, with difficulty in breathing.

Police officer suspended for misconduct

**PUDUCHERRY**  
The Home Department has suspended Deputy Commandant of India Reserve Battalion R. Subash for allegedly abusing a woman constable while on mobile patrol to enforce prohibitory orders. Following his arrest, the police headquarters had recommended disciplinary action against the DC for misconduct. His suspension came into effect after the Lt. Governor gave approval on Friday, said a senior official.

Man hacked to death in Vellore

**VELLORE**  
A 34-year old man from SSK Maniam in Kosapat, was hacked to death on Sunday. Police said Udhayakumar was running a social club near his house. Unidentified men attacked him with sharp weapons. People who found him bleeding alerted the police. There were several cases pending against the victim in various police stations in the district. Previous enmity was suspected.

Woman from T.N. tests positive in A.P.

**VISAKHAPATNAM**  
One COVID-19 positive case was reported from the Visakhapatnam Urban limits on Sunday. According to officials, the patient, a 55-year-old woman from Tamil Nadu, was a close contact of two positive cases from Narsipatnam. The patient was among the five women who were part of 10 persons from Tamil Nadu who went to Doshi in March and returned to the city by train. Owing to the lockdown, they were stranded in the city. Later they were shifted to an isolation facility.

HC to hold proceedings through videoconferencing

Court decides to close all halls for sanitisation

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

The Madras High Court on Sunday decided that it shall close down all its court halls for sanitisation and that judicial proceedings in extremely urgent cases shall henceforth be held only through videoconferencing until further orders.

Chief Justice Amreshwar Pratap Sahi took the decision after a Law Office staff tested positive for COVID-19 after initial confusions over him having tested positive in the first test and negative in the confirmatory test.

Two judges and law officers, who were present in the court on Wednesday and Thursday, when the staff had come to court,



were tested on Saturday. Steps have also been taken to get the court employees tested on Monday.

A circular issued by Registrar General C. Kumarappan on Sunday read: "All judicial functioning by the respective honourable judges, as per the roster assigned, will take place only through video conferencing until further orders. "The court halls will not

be accessible for any judicial function during the lockdown period to keep the court halls sanitised and hygienically fit for future use." The court had already decided to extend till May 3 the restricted functioning of courts in the State.

It was also decided that the summer vacation due next month for the High Court as well as all trial courts in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry would stand postponed sine die and that the courts would function in May too to compensate loss of work hours now.

The Madras High Court has decided to commence e-filing of cases from Wednesday. It will be entertaining bail petitions along through the electronic mode.

Merchant navy engineer in troubled waters

The seafarer is among 18 crew stuck on a vessel in the Arctic Ocean

M. DINESH VARMA  
PUDUCHERRY

An Easter greeting with a photo of a Santa snowman on the deck of a ship on the Arctic Ocean landed recently on the WhatsApp number of the family of a merchant navy engineer in the city.

The electronics engineer is among the thousands of seafarers of different nationalities stuck on the high seas and unable to return home due to the COVID-19 lockdown.

As COVID-19 laws have gotten tighter across the globe in recent weeks, thousands of seafarers are stuck on their vessels with no idea when they will reunite with their family.

"We are virtually like castaways with no clear idea of when it will be possible to return home," said Upendra (name changed on request), who has not set foot on land



The ship that is stranded on the Arctic Ocean.

Norway, Denmark and Scotland. "I should have been home with my wife and one-and-a-half-year old son in normal course." But, now I am lucky if I am even able to speak to them on phone," said Upendra. "For three weeks, I survived on bread, peanut butter and cornflakes, as I don't eat pork or beef," he said.

Among the 18 crew are Russians, Chinese, Sri Lankan, Romanian and Ukrainian besides two other Indian seafarers.

Flooded with calls

According to the Indian chapter of the International Seafarers Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN), UK, the number of seafarers stranded in the seas in the lockdown could be between 30,000 and 40,000. Many have had their contracts extended as they are unable to

sign off. "Our 24/7 helpline is flooded with calls from seafarers reporting high stress levels and anxiety about their loved ones," said Chirag Bahri, Director of Chirag, ISWAN, Noida.

Many face uncertainty over when they would be able to sign off. Given the nature of trans-national navigation associated with the occupation, it is best for seafarers to stay put on the ship and to follow guidelines of respective countries until restrictions ease along a swathe of regions for a viable route home to materialise, he said.

ISWAN has submitted a memorandum to the Shipping Ministry highlighting the need for ensuring a safe corridor for seafarers to return home once the lockdown lifts and also to provide financial assistance to seafarers who have been stuck at home in this period.

'How I fought COVID-19 and won!'

As a doctor posted at the Apollo Emergency Clinic at the Chennai Airport, I was worried about the exposure to the SARS-CoV-2 virus while on duty. However, I continued to work until passenger operations stopped as part of the national lockdown, taking precautions such as wearing a mask and washing hands regularly.



Dr. ARULVEL KARTHIRAVANAN, Medical officer

My tryst with COVID-19 began on March 31 when I started to get a fever and a sore feeling in my throat. It was okay with paracetamol for a day or two but then the symptoms increased in intensity - a high fever accompanied by chills, headache, and sore throat. The headache stood out in its severity. I had never experienced such a severe headache in my life. The fever went up to 102 degrees and left me feeling exhausted.

COVID-19

avoid contact with others. I waited anxiously for the test results, which came back positive for COVID-19. I right away informed the head of my department at Apollo Hospitals, who advised me to go to our hospital at Vanagaram that had been converted into a COVID-19 specialty hospital.

Keeping in view the situation and the fact that I had been working at the airport with the potential risk of exposure to the virus from any infected passengers, I decided to get my COVID-19 testing done immediately. I had already isolated myself in my room and was taking all precautions to

take good care, I reached the hospital in Vanagaram, where I was immediately admitted to the isolation ward on 4th April. I underwent a complete medical check by a team of senior consultants across specialities, with various tests for any other existing co-morbidities. There was no other se-

rious problem and I was glad for my healthy lifestyle at 40 years of age.

Confirmatory test

The confirmatory test also came back positive for COVID-19 and my treatment began. I was prescribed hydroxychloroquine and other medicines for my symptoms as per the guidelines. The medical staff took the utmost care of me. My condition was monitored continuously. A team of doctors visited me every day and gave updates about my health. Even though they used to be dressed up in PPE with faces hidden behind masks, their visits helped me a lot, as being in isolation is not easy. With no other visitors and only a television for company, I looked forward to the doctors' visits. The staff nurses sincerely attended to me, giving me my diet, and medications administered on time without delay. The housekeeping staff ensured that my room and the surroundings were clean and tidy.

I was fortunate that my symptoms did not include any respiratory complaint and there were no other complica-

tions. I began to feel better. The fever subsided and the medication stopped after the course was completed. On 13th April, I was re-tested for COVID-19 and to my great relief, the result was negative. The test was repeated after 24 hours as per the protocol and guidelines from WHO and when that too came negative; I was discharged on 15th April, after being successfully treated for COVID-19.

It was while I was walking out of the hospital that the realisation struck! I had been one of the over two million patients around the world who were confirmed cases of COVID-19. I had been successfully treated for this infection and discharged after a full recovery. I raised a silent prayer of thanks from my heart to the doctors, nurses, lab technicians, housekeeping staff and others who took care of me. I wish them and the thousands of doctors working round the clock all the best to continue their noble job and keep saving lives! I also look forward to joining my duties again soon!

(The author works in Apollo Emergency Clinic, Apollo Hospitals Group)

Simulator gives borrowers clue about additional interest

Wizi App helps customers opting for EMI moratorium

SANJAY VIJAYAKUMAR  
CHENNAI

Wizi App, a Chennai-based start-up, has launched a simulator which helps borrowers find out how much additional interest they have to pay for loans if they opt for the EMI moratorium announced by the RBI. "We spoke to a few customers and understood that there is confusion with respect to how this will impact them. So, the extent to which the moratorium can benefit a customer was not clear," Venkatesan Anandraj, founder & CEO of Wizi App, said.



The interest calculator for opting the moratorium gave an objective cost for availing the facility and could help the customer make a conscious and diligent decision, Mr. Anandraj said.

The customers can calculate the interest charges that will be additional by opting for a deferred pay-

ment of EMI by keeping in loan parameters, such as the loan type, total tenure and pending tenure. Borrowers get the additional interest that they will be liable to pay by June 2020 as the output. The simulator can be accessed through <https://wizi.app/moratorium.jsp>. All loan products are added to the calculator as interest rates and maximum tenure permitted across these products vary widely and the customer had to make a call depending on the loan ticket size and the ageing of tenure.

Notification extending lockdown issued

Exemption for medical, fisheries, agricultural and industrial sectors

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PUDUCHERRY

The territorial administration on Sunday issued a notification extending the lockdown till May 3 while giving relaxation to medical, fisheries, agricultural and industrial sectors. Public transport will remain suspended.

Educational institutions, cinema halls, malls, shopping complexes, gymnasiums, sports complexes, bars, theatres, assembly halls and similar places will also remain closed till May 3, said an order

issued by District Collector T. Arun.

Hotels, homestays and lodges which are accommodating tourists and persons stranded due to lockdown, medical emergency staff, sea and air crew are allowed to operate, the order said.

All social gatherings in public, private places and religious activities will also remain suspended.

In case of funerals, congregation of more than 20 persons will not be permitted. Works under the Mahatma

Gandhi National Rural Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) will be allowed from Monday if social distancing is implemented.

He said industries would also be allowed to start operations subject to conditions.

A separate cell has been opened at the Collectorate to grant permission to industries.

The department will check the stock balance in all outlets and stringent action will be initiated if any deviation was found, he said.

Containment zones to end after 28 days

STAFF REPORTER  
CHENNAI

The State government has said that the coronavirus containment areas, classified as 'hotspot districts' with large outbreaks, hotspot districts with clusters and non-hotspot districts will be deemed over "when there is no case reported in 28 days from an area after the last case tests negative."

Dr. Beela Rajesh, Secretary, Health and Family Welfare Department noted: "Hotspots (designated red zones) will be assumed to be taking effective containment activities, if no case is reported in the next 14 days (designated Orange zones) and will be deemed successful in containment, if no case is reported for next 28 days." Identification of hotspots has to be done on a weekly basis (every Monday).

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The Divisional Railway Manager (S&T) Western Railway, Bhavanagar invites tenders on behalf of President of India for the following works: Tender No. 47/2019 (1) Name of Work: Supply, Installation, Programming, Testing and Commissioning of Electronic Interlocking (E.I) system at Porbandar station along with outdoor S&T work in connection with Replacement of Mechanical signaling with existing yard at Porbandar in Bhavanagar Division of Western Railway. (2) Estimated Cost: ₹ 7,11,41,295.10. The bidders have to apply on line through [www.irps.gov.in](http://www.irps.gov.in) only. For further details, please visit website [www.irps.gov.in](http://www.irps.gov.in). Last date for online apply 11-05-2020 up to 15:00 hrs. Instead of 22-04-2020.

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**GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU FISHERIES DEPARTMENT CHENNAI-35 TENDER EXTENSION NOTICE**  
The tender Notice No. 16/DB/F/14N/2020 dated: 19.03.2020 published in Newspaper (DIPR No:1504/Tenders/2020). It is informed that the due date of receiving and opening of tender fixed on 03.04.2020 upto 3.00 PM have been postponed to 3.00 PM on 13.05.2020 and will be opened on 13.05.2020 at 3.00 PM. All other conditions already published remain unaltered. Chief Engineer, Fisheries Department, Chennai-35

**GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU FISHERIES DEPARTMENT CHENNAI-35 TENDER EXTENSION NOTICE**  
The tender Notice No. 17/DB/F/14N/2020 dated: 20.03.2020 published in Newspaper (DIPR No:1505/Tenders/2020). It is informed that the due date of receiving and opening of tender fixed on 08.04.2020 upto 3.00 PM have been postponed to 3.00 PM on 14.05.2020 and will be opened on 14.05.2020 at 3.30 PM. All other conditions already published remain unaltered. Chief Engineer, Fisheries Department, Chennai-35

**TAMIL NADU WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD**  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER, TWAD BOARD, MADURAI, ADDENDUM/CORRIGENDUM (2<sup>nd</sup> Extension)  
TENDER EXTENSION NOTICE No.2 /DATED : 13.04.2020  
Ref : 1. Tender notice reference No.6 /F.O & M of CWSS IDO III /CW / 2020 - 2021 / Dt : 05.03.2020  
2. TENDER EXTENSION NOTICE No.1 /DATED : 26.03.2020  
The period of sale of tender documents and receipt & opening of tenders called for in the reference is extended as below.  
Name of : Outsourcing of Operation and Maintenance of CWSS to work at Sathankulam UTP Udankudi UTP and 308 Rural Habitations in Thoothukudi District (For the period from 01.04.2020 to 31.03.2021 - 12 Months)  
Period of sale of bid documents Upto 5.45 P.M on 06.05.2020  
Last date for receipt of tenders Upto 3.00 P.M on 08.05.2020  
Opening of tenders At 3.30 P.M on 08.05.2020  
Actual date of maintenance will be commenced from the date of taking over of the scheme. All other terms and conditions already published remain unaltered.  
DIPR/1653/TENDER/2020 Chief Engineer (I/c), TWAD Board, Madurai  
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**TAMIL NADU WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD**  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER, TWAD BOARD, MADURAI, ADDENDUM/CORRIGENDUM (2<sup>nd</sup> Extension)  
TENDER EXTENSION NOTICE No.2 /DATED : 13.04.2020  
Ref : 1. Tender Notice No. 3 /F.O & M of CWSS IDO III /CW / 2020 - 2021 / Dt : 05.03.2020  
2. TENDER EXTENSION NOTICE No.1 /DATED : 26.03.2020  
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2. Kadalah and Kamuthi Union, Sayakudi, Kamuthi and Abrahman T.P.s. components - Package - VI  
3. Narikudi and Nalluvaiyaku in Narikudi Union components in Virudhunagar District - Package - VII  
Period of sale of bid documents Upto 5.45 P.M on 06.05.2020  
Last date for receipt of tenders Upto 3.00 P.M on 08.05.2020  
Opening of tenders At 3.30 P.M on 08.05.2020  
Actual date of maintenance will be commenced from the date of taking over of the scheme. All other terms and conditions already published remain unaltered.  
DIPR/1653/TENDER/2020 Chief Engineer (I/c), TWAD Board, Madurai  
SAVE WATER, CONSERVE WATER, EVERY DROOP COUNTS

**INTEGRAL COACH FACTORY**  
TENDER NOTICE  
The following e-tenders are published in IRPS website. Firms are requested to login to [www.irps.gov.in](http://www.irps.gov.in) and quote against these tenders. Manual quotations will not be entertained for these tenders.  
Sl. No. Open Tender No. & Short Description of the Item Quantity  
1 2020499210146 - Works Contract for Fixing of Windows in EMU/DEMU/MEMU Coaches 6000 Numbers  
2 2020499210163 - Works Contract for Carrying out Complete Interior Furnishing work (Mechanical) involving Flooring, Partition Paneling, Ceiling, RMPJU Through Installation, Plumbing and Installation of Interior fittings works in LWAFAC, LWCBAC and LWFCWAC Coaches. 48-LWAFAC, 64-LWCBAC and 48-LWFCWAC Coaches  
3 2020499210164 - Works Contract for Carrying out Interior Furnishing work (Mechanical) for LWACWC and LHB AC Chair Car Coaches. 160-LWACWC Coaches and 44-LHB AC Chair Car (LWFCWAC/LWSCZAC) Coaches. 218 Coaches  
4 2020499210171 - Works Contract for Installation and Testing of Axle mounted Disc Brake System for LSLED Coaches with FIB. 500 Coaches  
5 2020499210175 - Works Contract for Carrying out Complete Interior Furnishing work (Mechanical) involving Flooring, Partition Paneling, Ceiling, RMPJU Through Installation, Plumbing and Installation of Interior fittings works in LWACWC Coaches. 500 Coaches  
Date of tender Closing : 11.05.2020 at 14.45 hrs. Date of tender Opening : 11.05.2020 at 15.00 hrs.  
Hindi version available at [www.icf.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.icf.indianrailways.gov.in)  
GREEN TCF / CLEAN TCF

**OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE**

**DEATH**  
Mrs. THANGAI NATRAJAN  
W/o late M.R. Kannan (TVS) attained  
Achyary Tiruvadi on 19th April 2020, leaving behind her Daughter Prema Raman and C.K. Raman (+919840222563) Son M.K. Surendran and Usha (+919841037782) Grandchildren - Shyam & Sashi, Sumanth & Anita and Samyukta & Bhaskar and great grandchildren. In view of the lockdown, we request you to send condolence messages over the phone.  
In memory of your loved ones To dedicate a space in this section, please contact 044-28575711 / 28575714 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. & 72990577 from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. from 5 to 7 p.m. for Monday Edition For Placing Advertisements Online log on to [www.thehinduads.com](http://www.thehinduads.com) DONATE THESE GIFTS

**DEATH**  
Shri. K.R.D. PRASAD  
B.Tech M.S.I.A. (CMU)  
"You still live in our hearts" Trustees & Staff K.R.D. Prasad Trust

**DEATH ANNIVERSARIES**  
14th ANNIVERSARY 20th April 2020  
11th ANNIVERSARY  
K.A. CHANDRASEKARAN Retd. Additional Secretary Govt. of India. In Loving Memory Wife : M. Chellamm Daughter : Kalavathi Son-in-law : Ganesh Granddaughter : Shriya

**RESPECTFUL HOMAGE ON THE FIRST YEAR ANNIVERSARY**  
SRI PRAKASH CHAND DUGAR S/o. LATE BHERUDANJI DUGAR EXPIRED: 20.04.2019  
Memories spent with you are precious and infinite wealth You have been the pillar and strength of our lives You will be always alive in our thoughts We will never forget the pathway you have shown to us  
Inserted by:- Wife, Brothers, Sister-in-law, Daughters, Sons, Daughter-in-law and M/s. BHERUDAN DUGAR FINANCE LIMITED

# Lockdown in Telangana extended to May 7

CM says all measures will be implemented strictly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrababtu Naidu on Sunday announced that the ongoing lockdown in the State has been extended to May 7.

## COVID-19

Briefing presspersons after a State cabinet meeting, he said the lockdown would be implemented in a tough manner in the State.

He also said food delivery apps would not be allowed to operate in the State from Monday.

The Chief Minister said the containment measures initiated by the government has brought down the doubling rate significantly.

Against the national average doubling rate of less than eight days, doubling



**Long wait:** People maintaining social distancing while they wait to collect relief material in Hyderabad. **PTI**

rate in the State was more than 10 days and the death rate too was significantly lower at 2.44 per cent compared to the national average of 3.22 per cent with 507 deaths reported across the country.

The State has far surpassed the national average in the recovery rate which

stood at 22 per cent as compared to 14 per cent across the country.

Tests per million population in the State stood at 375 as compared to the national average of 254.

Four districts - Warangal Rural, Yadadri Bhuvanagiri, Wanaparthy and Siddipet reported zero COVID-19 cases.

# Six die of virus in southern States

Telangana records 3 deaths and Karnataka two, A.P. reports one fatality, Kerala has 2 new cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU/VIJAYAWADA/  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Two women in Karnataka who tested positive for COVID-19 - both with Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) - died on Sunday, raising the deaths in the State to 16.

In Andhra Pradesh, Kurnool, one of the most affected districts, recorded one death and 26 fresh cases.

The Health Department in Karnataka said a 65-year-old woman resident of Bengaluru passed away. A 50-year-old woman from Bantwal died in Dakshina Kannada.

Six new positive cases were reported from across the State, taking the total number to 390. This included the 16 deaths and 311 patients discharged.

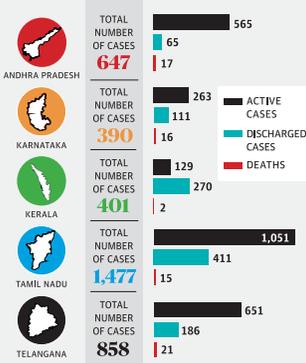
While four new cases were from Mysuru, two were from Dakshina Kannada. Of the Mysuru cases, two had a travel history to Delhi and the other two belonged to

## Grim picture

As fresh infections of COVID-19 were reported across the States, medical personnel increased the number of samples being tested



**Taking a breather:** Personnel in front of an isolation ward at the Government Medical College in Kozhikode, Kerala. **R.K. RAMESH**



the Nanjangudi cluster. As of Sunday, 10 out of the 30 districts in Karnataka had not reported COVID-19 positive cases.

More fresh cases of COVID-19 were reported in Andhra Pradesh. In the 24-hour

period till Sunday, 44 new cases and one death were reported in six districts, a State bulletin said. The case tally had gone up to 647 and the toll touched 17.

Besides Kurnool's 26, Krishna and East Godavari

districts had five new cases each while Guntur reported four cases and Anantapur three cases. Visakhapatnam reported one. There were five active cases in the city. The current active case tally stood at 565, who were being

treated in various COVID-19 hospitals.

Telangana reported 18 new positive cases on Sunday taking the total to 858. Three more deaths were reported since Saturday, taking the total casualties to 21.

## 2 cases in Kerala

Kerala recorded two more cases of COVID-19, while adding 13 persons to the list of those who had recovered, on Sunday. Both individuals had travel histories. One was in Kannur, with travel from Abu Dhabi, and the other from Dubai to Kasargod. The State's COVID-19 tally so far was 401. It had put 270 patients on the recovery list and 129 persons were undergoing treatment in hospital.

The number of people under surveillance stood at 55,590. Of these, 55,129 were on home quarantine, while 461 were in isolation in various hospitals. There were 72 new hospital admissions on Sunday.

## Under the sun



**Heavy burden:** Children carrying cans to collect water being distributed by the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board at the Borabanda slum in Hyderabad on Sunday. **G. RAMAKRISHNA**

# 'Opposition trying to get political gain'

LDF convener slams Opposition for raising unnecessary controversies

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THRISSUR

By raising unnecessary controversies, including the Sprinkler deal, the Opposition in Kerala is trying to seek political gain when the State is waging a war against the COVID-19 pandemic, LDF convener A. Vijayaraghavan said on Sunday.

The Opposition, by criticising Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who had been leading the State successfully in the prevention of the pandemic, was demeaning the State and its people, Mr. Vijayaraghavan told reporters here.

"The Opposition is not interested in people's protection from COVID-19. They are raising controversies to



A. Vijayaraghavan

make political gain and are seeking the resignation of the Chief Minister."

The world, health experts and social scientists were admiring the excellence of the State in fighting COVID-19, he said.

"But the Opposition has been intolerant towards the successful model of the State. They were not able to

tolerate the way the LDF managed to build the people's unity against the epidemics like Nipah and COVID-19 and natural disasters like floods and Okhi," Mr. Vijayaraghavan said.

The Opposition was dragging even the family of the Chief Minister into the controversy. They should not forget about the last UDF tenure, which was rocked by the solar controversy, he said. Even at the peak of the solar controversy, the families of UDF leaders were not brought into the issue.

"People will realise the intolerance of the Opposition. Sprinkler deal was part of effort to utilise the state-of-the-art technology available in the world. There is no cor-

ruption or leakage of data." People should understand the strategy of the Opposition and co-operate with the government, he said.

## 'Insulting the CM'

Meanwhile, Minister for Welfare of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes A.K. Balan said here on Sunday that the Opposition was trying to insult the Chief Minister in the name of the Sprinkler deal.

Mr. Balan said that there was nothing wrong in giving the deal to Sprinkler. The deal did not require the permission of the Law Department and that it was the prerogative of the Information Technology (IT) Department, he said.

## IN BRIEF



### APSRCT buses converted into farmers' markets

**VIJAYAWADA**  
Buses belonging to the Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRCT), which are off the roads due to lockdown, have been given a makeover. A few have been converted into mobile 'ythu bazars' (farmers' markets) and a few others into mobile supermarkets, taking vegetables and groceries to the doorstep of residents in areas identified as red zones.

### Rise in volunteer force enrolment in Kerala

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM**  
The ongoing COVID-19 relief efforts in Kerala have buttressed the government's efforts to cultivate a volunteer force that can be deployed to assist law enforcement agencies during exigencies. A clarion call by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan to the public to become active partners in the State's efforts to contain the pandemic has seen the Samoohika Sannadha Sena (community volunteer force) rapidly nearing its enrolment target of 3.4 lakh volunteers. The Sena was launched in January.

### GVMC sets up helpline numbers for the needy

**VIKASHAPATNAM**  
In an attempt to provide food or essential commodities to the needy, the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) has set up two helpline numbers 7032017389 and 8247231403. People in need of food or essential commodities can dial these numbers to approach the GVMC Command and Control Centre, GVMC Urban Community Development Project Director Y. Srinivasa Rao said on Sunday.

# Online, takeaway liquor sale put on hold in Kerala

Appeal against embargo unlikely

G. ANAND  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala is unlikely to appeal against the Centre's embargo on liquor retail before the national COVID-19 lockdown ends. For now, the State government has put on hold the proposal to buy liquor from bars as takeaways and permit consumers to purchase alcohol from State-run outlets by ordering online.

With social distancing measures likely to be in place well beyond May 3, the government might also introduce limitations on the on-premise retail and consumption of alcohol.

Officials said the non-availability of legal alcohol has spawned black markets and illicit supply chains centred around shuttered bar hotels.

On Sunday, law enforcers booked bar hotels in Thrissur, Ernakulam and Idukki for retailing liquor in bulk to black marketers. In Idukki, they found the bar management had sold a black marketer hundreds of bottles after removing the seal of the Excise Commissioner to mask the provenance of the hoard. The cases detected so far were just the tip of the iceberg, sources said.

The Excise Department had not enumerated and sealed liquor stocks in bars after the announcement of the lockdown on March 21. It has now begun the process. The emergence of domestically distilled hooch as a substitute for legal liquor is worrying enforcers. Officials said commercial level distillation of hooch has resurged in several localities.

# Congress urges Karnataka CM to step up COVID-19 testing

'Follow WHO norms of testing 10,000 per 10 lakh people'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

A Congress delegation that met Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Sunday urged him to increase testing for COVID-19 as per WHO protocols and provide salaries to frontline workers on time.

The delegation said testing of 10,000 per 10 lakh population as per the WHO guidelines had to be done. It also urged the State to meet the losses incurred by farmers who were unable to bring their produce to the market.

The delegation that included Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly Siddaramaiah, KPCC president-designate D.K. Shivakumar, and former Mi-



The Congress delegation with Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa.

nisters R.V. Deshpande, G. Parameshwara, and Dinesh Gundu Rao, also highlighted targeting of a particular community as responsible for spread of virus. They said that a few BJP MPs and MLAs had issued derogatory statements. The team drew the

Chief Minister's attention to politicians pasting their photographs on relief materials issued by the government.

"The government cannot keep quiet despite poor financial condition in the State. The Congress as an Opposition party will cooperate with the State government," said Mr. Siddaramaiah. He referred to the alleged discrepancy in relief work. "Just about 30 crore has been released from the Construction Workers' Welfare Board and so far only one lakh workers have received dry ration kits in Bengaluru. There are lakhs of workers, who do not have income nor are getting relief from government. Announce a package to safeguard them," he added.

# It's Bangalore Blue for Karnataka's grape farmers

With juice-making units and wineries shut, nearly 3,500 tonnes of fruits remain unharvested

B.S. SATISH KUMAR  
BENGALURU

Just a month ago, there was a festive mood in the house of 60-year-old Sonnappa, a farmer from Hoovegal village in Karnataka's Chikkaballapur district, as he was hopeful of earning a handsome income from the Bangalore Blue variety of grape grown on his 1.5-acre vineyard.

The farmer, who had sold the crop during the previous year for ₹3.80 lakh to some middlemen without making proper market enquiries, was optimistic of getting a higher price.

But his hopes came crashing as the COVID-19

lockdown, coupled with several other issues, meant no takers for his crop. "I have a standing crop of 15 to 20 tonnes. But so far not even a single buyer has either made enquiries or even visited my farm for buying," said Mr. Sonnappa. "I heard that some middlemen are quoting a throwaway price of ₹2 per kg. But even such people did not visit our farm," he said

"I have spent ₹1.5 lakh per acre. Forget getting some income. I now need to spend about ₹25,000 on labour to pluck the drying grape branches," said Mr. Sonnappa, whose crops are now drying up. He may have



**No end to distress:** Sonnappa and his sons at their farm in Hoovegal village, Chikkaballapur district. **SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT**

to borrow from private money lenders to take care of his family.

Mr. Sonnappa's is not an isolated case; almost all the

growers of Bangalore Blue grapes are now in dire straits as their crops have started drying up with no takers.

Nearly 3,500 tonnes of

Bangalore Blue variety of grapes still remains unharvested in the fields of farmers. This variety of grapes is mostly used for juice and wine/spirit making.

While juice centres are closed, wineries too have shut their operations, pointed out N. Narayanaswamy, a grape trader in Southern Karnataka. This variety is generally sent to Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha for juice making, and to Maharashtra wineries.

Farmers are upset as they feel that the government did not act in a swift manner to safeguard their interests.

## WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD. POLLUTION DATA: CPCB. MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18:00 HRS)

**Forecast for Monday:** Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning, hail and squal (speed reaching 50-60 kmph) very likely at isolated places over Jharkhand, coastal Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and with lightning and squal (speed reaching 50-60 kmph) very likely at isolated places over West Bengal.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	3.4	35.5	21.5	Kozhikode	...	37.2	26.8
Ahmedabad	...	39.6	26.3	Kurnool	...	39.9	28.8
Aizawl	...	28.3	16.1	Lucknow	...	37.2	23.7
Alibabad	...	41.5	24.7	Madurai	...	38.4	26.2
Bangaluru	...	34.2	24.0	Mangaluru	...	36.2	25.9
Bhubaneswar	0.1	37.4	25.6	Mumbai	...	34.9	27.0
Chandigarh	...	36.6	21.8	Mysuru	...	34.9	23.9
Chennai	...	34.6	28.4	New Delhi	...	2.2	36.3
Coimbatore	...	37.4	26.2	Patna	...	36.8	25.7
Dehradun	0.1	...	20.6	Port Blair	...	0.1	33.2
Gangtok	28.8	18.7	13.2	Puducherry	...	35.4	27.6
Goa	18.5	34.5	25.3	Pune	...	39.4	24.6
Guwahati	50.4	29.6	18.9	Rajpur	...	41.4	24.6
Hubballi	...	37.0	23.0	Ranchi	...	36.6	21.5
Hyderabad	...	36.6	26.2	Shillong	...	25.0	23.6
Imphal	...	40.6	30.0	Shimla	...	6.6	20.7
Jaipur	...	34.6	25.6	Srinagar	...	...	13.7
Kochi	...	33.4	27.4	Thiruvananthapuram	...	34.3	27.0
Kohima	5.4	20.6	11.6	Tiruchirappalli	...	39.1	28.6
Kolkata	...	34.6	24.9	Vijayawada	...	...	...
Lucknow	...	34.6	24.9	Visakhapatnam	...	33.0	27.4

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

## Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>2</sub>	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE	Yesterday
Ahmedabad	25	18	16	36	63	...	In observation made at 6:00 p.m., Singrauli,
Bangaluru	11	22	42	...	...	...	Madhya Pradesh recorded an overall 'moderate' index (AQI) score of 195
Chennai	08	02	38	...	...	...	indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In
Delhi	29	120	...	...	...	...	contrast, Aizawl, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 18.
Hyderabad	14	49	25	62	81	...	
Kolkata	05	05	13	20	35	...	
Lucknow	05	36	49	170	...	...	
Mumbai	07	04	106	33	66	...	
Pune	28	10	52	36	34	...	
Visakhapatnam	11	42	06	23	55	...	

**Air Quality Code:** ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)  
**SO<sub>2</sub>:** Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.  
**NO<sub>2</sub>:** Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.  
**CO:** Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.  
**PM2.5 & PM10:** Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heart beat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.



## Focus on the curve

Reducing the pace of new infections depends on locating hotspots through accurate data

As India prepares to partially relax the national lockdown for COVID-19 in zones that do not have high concern, from April 20, attention is focused on how successful 'flattening the curve' of infection has been. There is some evidence, based on reported cases put out by the Health Ministry that for a 48-hour cycle ending April 17, the growth in total cases was slower than during the preceding comparison period - 16% versus 28%. These data, and others indicating a slowing pace of case doubling, must be viewed against the backdrop of vastly different testing rates among States. Delhi has ramped up tests per million people and also reported a higher percentage of positive cases, compared to populous West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh which have done far fewer tests and yet find a higher share of positive cases. Kerala has managed to trace, quarantine and treat effectively, preventing new infections. The highest prevalence can be mapped to States with high economic output or significant urbanisation, or both, such as Maharashtra, Delhi and Tamil Nadu. Other factors may be driving up case numbers in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Telangana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. The most recent ICMR data appear to show a spike - 2,154 new cases in a single day reported on April 18. These are clear pointers for the Centre and States, as they try to reconcile public health and economic measures to alleviate the deep distress and damage caused to millions.

Given the uncertainties surrounding the long-term effects of SARS-CoV-2 on people, including medical outcomes for those who have recovered from severe infection, India's COVID-19 strategy has to focus on testing, containment and treatment on the one hand, and distress alleviation for vulnerable sections on the other. As the disease has demonstrated once again, pandemics have the ability to quickly expose underlying inequalities. From a medical perspective, it has laid bare the inadequacy of the public health system to roll-out enough tests in all States, to determine where containment measures would achieve the best outcomes, and also to provide intensive treatment for acute respiratory illness. Looking ahead, the need for testing can only grow when a phased exit strategy is attempted. The testing data generated by all laboratories should be complete and shared in real time transparently by the Centre to aid policy-making. As psychologists are pointing out, the response to HIV testing over two decades ago dramatically improved when people saw hope of treatment, got access to tests and were protected against stigmatisation and xenophobia. This would apply in good measure to COVID-19. Flattening the curve will require clear messages on preventive health, and steps to help people maintain strict quarantine where indicated without suffering economic losses, and carry out regular surveillance testing and symptom monitoring.

## Economy in lockdown

After the IMF's revised projections, India must adopt plans that avert the worst case scenario

Less than two months after asserting that "global growth appears to be bottoming out", the pandemic induced 'Great Lockdown' has forced the IMF to junk all its previous projections for economic output in 2020. Faced with the stark reality of sweeping shutdowns of almost entire economies worldwide, the fund last week acknowledged that the current "crisis is like no other". Forecasting the sharpest contraction in world output since the Great Depression of the 1930s, the IMF slashed its projection by 6.3 percentage points from its January forecast for 3.3% growth to a 3% decline. In contrast, the recession of 2009 saw world output contract by a mere 0.1%. That the IMF was blindsided by the comments from Chinese authorities and WHO is clear from the fact that as recently as February 22, the fund's chief, Kristalina Georgieva, told G20 Finance Ministers that "global growth would be about 0.1 percentage points lower" than forecast in January. China's GDP, she projected, would expand by 5.6% this year, 0.4 percentage points slower than assumed in January. Last week, the IMF slashed China's forecast to a growth of 1.2%, citing data on industrial production, retail sales, and fixed asset investment that, it said, suggested a contraction of about 8% in the first quarter. China reported a 6.8% first-quarter contraction. Still, in projecting an annual expansion in Asia's largest economy, the fund is rather optimistically foreseeing a sharp rebound in activity over the rest of the year.

On India, the IMF has cut its projection for growth in the fiscal year that started on April 1, from January's 5.8%, to 1.9%. This again appears predicated on the fund's baseline scenario that assumes that the pandemic would 'fade in the second half of 2020', allowing containment efforts to be unwound and economic activity to normalise. Another key assumption by the IMF's economists is the availability of policy support to nurture the revival once activity restarts. Jettisoning its storied fiscal conservatism, the fund's chief economist, Gita Gopinath, has advocated ramping up a broad-based and coordinated stimulus once the disease has been contained, a measure that would help avoid the errors of the Great Depression years when premature efforts to prune budget deficits prolonged the downturn. In this context, India's fiscal measures pale in terms of scale when compared with what several other nations have undertaken. Given the size of the informal sector in India as well as the anticipated prolonged disruption in labour supply even in more formal parts of the economy, the Centre needs to proactively commit to a substantial stimulus package in order to ensure that once the economy reopens, it has the legs to run.

# A shot of hope with a game changing vaccine

Using lessons learnt, a social vaccine can build societal immunity to the devastating effects of pandemics, now and later



PRATHAP THARYAN & T. JACOB JOHN

Over the initial phase of the national lockdown (March 24 to April 14), India reported a 20-fold increase in confirmed SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 cases (468 to >10,000), and a 36-fold increase in deaths (9 to 330). Increased testing may partly account for this; but testing is still inadequate and this data represent underestimates. The case-fatality of 2% to 3% is indicative of the large number of deaths India can expect.

Debates about the relative merits of mitigation to "flatten the curve" versus allowing "herd immunity" to build naturally are increasingly irrelevant. The failures in widespread testing for infection or for immunity imply that transmission-chains via asymptomatic, mildly-symptomatic and pre-symptomatic people remain undetected. Most countries, including India, are inadvertently employing hybrid strategies.

The lockdown (an extreme example of mitigation) has been extended to May 3. The dire socio-economic consequences and the scale of human tragedy that play out daily make a prolonged total lockdown undesirable. Alongside infection-control, a strategic plan of action to mitigate suffering and to stimulate economic recovery is urgently needed.

### As a series of measures

In a recent interview, the Union Health Minister, Harsh Vardhan, asserted that lockdowns and social distancing are the most effective "social vaccines" available to fight the pandemic. A social vaccine has far broader implications.

So what is a social vaccine? A social vaccine is a metaphor for a series of social and behavioural mea-

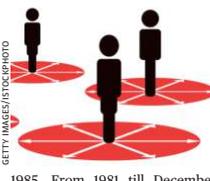
asures that governments can use to raise public consciousness about unhealthy situations through social mobilisation. Social mobilisation can empower populations to resist unhealthy practices, increase resilience, and foster advocacy for change. This can drive political will to take action in the interests of society and hold governments accountable to address the social determinants of health by adopting progressive socio-economic policies and regulatory mechanisms that promote health equity and reduce vulnerability to disease.

When applied to pandemics, the effectiveness of a social vaccine is determined by the extent of dissemination and uptake of accurate information about personal infection risk and methods to reduce the risk through consistent core messages disseminated through a variety of means. A social vaccine addresses barriers and facilitators of behaviour change, whether attitudinal, social, cultural, or economic, and supplements information, education, and communication (IEC) with targeted social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) strategies.

Uganda and Thailand used these strategies effectively during the HIV/AIDS pandemic to bring down the incidence of HIV infection, before highly active antiretroviral treatment (HAART) was introduced in 1995. They demonstrated how an effective social vaccine helped "flatten the curve" till effective treatments were discovered that dramatically reduced mortality, viral loads and infection transmission.

### Lessons from HIV pandemic

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) that causes the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) is believed to have made the zoonotic jump from monkeys through chimpanzees to humans in Africa as early as the 1920s, but the HIV/AIDS epidemic was detected in 1981 and was a pandemic by



1985. From 1981 till December 2018, around 74.9 (range: 58.3 to 98.1) million people worldwide were HIV-infected, and around 32.0 (range: 23.6 to 43.8) million died (43%, range: 41 to 45%) from AIDS-related illnesses.

The early years of the HIV/AIDS pandemic were also a time of global panic. The cause was unknown (till 1984) and diagnostic tests were unavailable (till 1985). Since there was no treatment, a diagnosis of HIV infection was a death sentence. Widespread fears of contagion rendered many infected people homeless and unemployed. Many were denied access to care. Stigma, discrimination and violence towards infected individuals, their families, social groups (sex-workers, gay men, drug users, truck drivers, migrants), and even health workers, were common. Criminalising sex-work and injecting drug use followed. Conspiracy theories, misinformation and unproven remedies were widely propagated. The blame game targeted world leaders and international agencies. The preparedness of health systems, societal prejudices and socio-economic inequities were starkly exposed.

Reducing HIV transmission centred on acknowledging that everybody was potentially infected - even those apparently healthy - and that infection occurred predominantly through sexual transmission and intravenous drug use. The core preventive messages involved being faithful to one sexual partner or 100% condom use during sexual intercourse outside stable relation-

ships; resisting peer-pressure for risky behaviours, and harm reduction for intravenous drug use. These measures conflicted with prevailing cultural, social, religious, behavioural and legal norms. IEC and SBCC activities targeted (and partnered) individuals, families, community leaders, peer-led community networks and social and health systems to change attitudes and behaviours. Religious and community leaders were key change agents. For example, the Catholic Church in Uganda did not initially support promoting condoms for safe sex since its use prevents life. After large numbers of people died of AIDS, their tacit acknowledgment that their religion did not preclude the use of condoms to prevent death was an important turning point. Thailand pioneered the effective use of social marketing of condoms for safe sex and used humour to defuse social taboos about publicly discussing sex.

These strategies and advocacy against stigma and discrimination were successfully adapted in India. These skills and experiences can be innovatively adapted for the current pandemic.

### How it can work

The core infection-control messages are available from official sources. Maintaining physical distancing in social situations (unless impossible) and wearing cloth masks or facial coverings in public (especially where distancing is impossible) by 100% of people (and 100% of the time) is key to preventing infection along with regular disinfection of oneself and one's surroundings. Effective and innovative IEC and SBCC strategies should address the barriers and facilitators to implementation. People are more likely to practise these behaviours if all leaders (without exception) promote them publicly and consistently, the whole community believes in their importance, and if proper information, support, and materials are available and accessible. Coer-

cive or punitive methods are invariably counter-productive, as was seen with HIV/AIDS.

A social vaccine also requires people to hold leaders accountable to invest in: rapidly scaling-up testing; meeting the basic and economic needs of vulnerable sections; providing psychological support where needed; not communalising or politicising the pandemic; providing adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) to front-line workers in health, sanitation, transport and other essential services; and not compromising the privacy and dignity of infected individuals and their families in the interest of public health. Building trust is key if government-imposed mitigation strategies are to be embraced by the population.

Re-purposing and funding relevant industries and small and medium businesses to produce materials such as PPE, hand sanitisers and medical equipment; community groups to supply cloth masks, soap, etc., and innovative social marketing of these are other essential components of the social vaccine. The components of the social vaccine should be in place before relaxing or lifting the lockdown.

There is still no biomedical vaccine for HIV/AIDS. Considering the limited efficacy and uptake of influenza vaccines, vaccines for SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 may not provide a panacea. Effective treatments to reduce deaths with COVID-19 may emerge, but till then, and even afterwards, a social vaccine is needed. A social vaccine can build societal immunity to the devastating effects of future pandemics by the lessons learned about addressing the root causes, and our responses to the current one.

Dr. Prathap Tharyan is Adjunct Professor, Clinical Epidemiology Unit, Christian Medical College, Vellore. Dr. T. Jacob John, a retired Professor of Virology from CMC Vellore, is Chairman, Rotary Club of Vellore TB Control Society

# Caught in the heightened arc of communal polemics

In the Tablighi Jamaat issue and its messages, it is important not to lose focus of the core subject - the pandemic fight



AMBREEN AGHA

Communal politics around the Tablighi Jamaat has been intensifying ever since this little known organisation was in the spotlight after dozens of people who attended a religious congregation the group held at its headquarters in Delhi in March tested positive for COVID-19. For a nuanced perspective on this polarising issue it is imperative to make a conscious attempt to read the history of this particular trend within Islam.

The attacks on the group by the right wing have gone as far as equating it to a case of 'health terrorism', and even urging the government to proscribe it. This impassioned suggestion is quite misplaced while at the same time dangerous as it is likely to instil fear among a section of those who follow Tablighi Islam.

This peripatetic group of preachers look at faith renewal and bringing back non-practising Muslims to the fold of 'true' Islam. Looking at their conduct suggests

that while the rest of the world was getting to know about the novel coronavirus outbreak in December 2019, the 'apolitical' Tablighis, who consciously distance themselves from 'worldly affairs', had already acquired and spread the virus among fellow travellers who were returning home after days and months of global spiritual patrolling.

While the Tablighi is responsible for not taking timely action in dispersing the gathering at the Nizamuddin Markaz, which is the global headquarters of the movement, the lack of care by the state in underplaying the threat of the novel coronavirus and the delay in initiating testing cannot be ignored. By this time, the Tablighis had travelled across the world becoming one of the major carriers of the virus in India.

The reaction of hate is both reductive and demagogic. The polemical narrative that is infused with Islamophobia is based on unfounded fears and deep-seated prejudices.

### History as pretext

The political lexicon that has evolved around the Muslim minority within a right-wing stream operates on the presumption of their otherness, which includes stereotypical attitudes towards their eat-



ing habits. As the spread of the virus turns communal it is important to take a cursory glance at history.

History has lessons for all. The Tablighi Jamaat, a transnational Islamic revivalist movement, was founded in early 1926 British India by Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Kandhlawi and spread by Ashraf Ali Thanawi, the two patriarchs of the movement. The political vicissitudes of 19th and 20th century India had a tremendous social, political and psychological impact on Muslims of the country, which led to vigorous religious expressions facilitated by the British. The 19th century was the period when a variety of new influential as well as controversial religious reform movements, both Hindu and Muslim, were emerging within India with a desire to rediscover their

'lost glory'.

In the search for this 'lost glory' and a sense of belonging and identity, the Tablighi emerged as a response to the Christian missionary and the Shuddhi Sangathan. There exist interconnected social and political patterns that led to the formation of the Tablighi with its original focus on 'detracted Muslims', and, later, evolving into a proselytising group. Though it emerged in an intensively political context, the Tablighi maintained an 'apolitical' demeanour, specifically in India.

### The message for all players

There are lessons for the paranoid mind. Tablighi lays emphasis on individual social 'reform' and revocation of the political. This clearly means that the Tablighi does not directly hanker after state power; it has adopted a "bottom-up approach" to Islamic society and claimed a complete disengagement on issues that involve politics. Since the Tablighi is about a withdrawal from the political it does not emerge as a 'security threat'.

Despite its claimed distancing from politics, the movement exists, operates and travels through political boundaries and among political communities. The persistence of being apolitical has se-

rious political implications; the price of political ignorance or apathy is quite high, as seen today in the Tablighi being implicated in the spread of the pandemic and a demonisation of the larger community.

While there are lessons for the different sets of people embroiled in the current controversy, it is important to identify the problem at the moment - the 'common enemy', which is the SARS-CoV-2 virus. In the hierarchy of priorities, any action other than this would amount to inaction against the overarching threat that looms over us. Life in the steps being taken to flatten the curve as far as the virus is concerned is difficult. The politics of hate around the Tablighi only heightens this condition of national and global anxiety with isolation taking its toll on mental health.

Is it a coincidence that the novel coronavirus, much like the cow issue, has intensified communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims? Clearly, it is not a coincidence. It is a pattern; a political design to caricature, frame and endanger one part of the nation.

Ambreen Agha is Associate Professor at the Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University. The views expressed are personal

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

### Second class netizens

August 5, 2019 will be noted as a landmark day in the annals of Jammu and Kashmir as well as the rest of India. It was on this day a promise was made in Parliament that the people of J&K were about to notice a positive change in their lives hereafter. Months have elapsed since then but there are no signs of this promise. The immediate fallout, in the form of snapping connectivity, has hurt citizens here. There has been a rise in Net shutdowns, varying in duration and extent. While the judiciary has highlighted how the authorities could apply the doctrine of proportionality before passing any order intended to restrict fundamental rights of

individuals, the acts of the administration of the Union Territories of J&K circumvent this doctrine even in times of a life-threatening pandemic. The outbreak of COVID-19 has brought along several challenges which demand the better use of technology, which can only be facilitated by faster 4G service in comparison to slower 2G. Doctors in J&K are faced with the issue of treating patients remotely to reduce the pressure on hospitals and to minimise the risk of hospitals turning into hotspots. Doctors also raise another crucial point - that disseminating safety precautions especially to those living in far-flung areas and who do not read or write, has become very difficult with mobile speed

restrictions. Video is the easiest and most crucial ally in fighting a pandemic. Also, since research and awareness about COVID-19 is still in its infancy, a lot of new information is constantly emerging on all aspects of medicine. Webinars and conferences play a key role.

BASIT AMIN MAKHDOOMI, Srinagar

### Social democracy pays

Ultimately in a crisis, a State which followed social rights and public trust could flatten the COVID-19 curve with grit and determination (Editorial page, "A virus, social democracy, and dividends for Kerala", April 18). In this context, last mile connectivity with rural areas scores, examples

being projects such as Kudumbasree community kitchens. As one associated with a rural livelihood project, namely Vaazhndhu kaatuvom, renamed Pduh Vaazhvu, in Tamil Nadu, it is unfortunate that such a crucial link was hastily wound up. Such projects with livelihood groups strong on various vocational aspects would have helped a great deal. This aspect of strength helps in rapid percolation of crisis mitigation measures to remote places which cannot be easily reached ordinarily.

D., V. PURUSHOTHAMAN, Chennai

■ This pandemic has taught us so much and we are still learning. We can examine,

learn and improve from our response to this crisis. Sectors such as health care, local-level democratic institutions, delivery apparatus to ensure government schemes have last mile coverage, coordination in a federal structure and a balance between lives and livelihoods need in-depth evaluation. All these systems cannot be upgraded overnight to deal

### CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

In "Coronavirus: South Asia remains an outlier in infections" (April 19, 2020), P.S. Raghavan was erroneously described as the convener of the National Security Advisory Board. He is the chairman of the board.

In the story headlined "To ease situation, RBI to pump in ₹1 lakh crore" (April 18, 2020), there was a reference to reduction in the reverse repo rate to 3.5%. It should have been 3.75%.

If it is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible, please specify the edition (page of publication), date and page. The Readers' Office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28525263; E-mail: readersoffice@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers' Editor, The Hindu, Kasturba Buildings, 859 B 860 Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002, India. All communication must carry the full postal address and telephone number. No personal visits. The Terms of Reference for the Readers' Editor are on www.thehindu.com



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with the crisis. Community participation and the strong involvement of local decentralised institutions are the key to making a difference. A State such as Kerala has always outperformed the rest of the country in nearly all social indices. This is a key lesson.

SALMAN MAHMOOD, Noida, Uttar Pradesh

## What is the G20?

The G20 is an annual meeting of leaders from the countries with the largest and fastest-growing economies. Its members account for 85% of the world's GDP, and two-thirds of its population.

The G20 Summit is formally known as the "Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy".

### Establishment:

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

### Presidency:

The group has no permanent staff of its own, so every year in December, a G20 country from a rotating region takes on the presidency.

That country is then responsible for organising the next summit, as well as smaller meetings for the coming year. They can also choose to invite non-member countries along as guests. The first G20 meeting took place in Berlin in 1999, after a financial crisis in East Asia affected many countries around the world.

### Full membership of the G20:

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

### Its relevance in changing times:

As globalization progresses and various issues become more intricately intertwined, the recent G20 summits have focused not only on macroeconomy and trade, but also on a wide range of global issues which have an immense impact on the global economy, such as development, climate change and energy, health, counter-terrorism, as well as migration and refugees.

The G20 has sought to realize an inclusive and sustainable world through its contributions towards resolving these global issues.

### What is G20+?

The G20 developing nations, also called G21/G23/G20+ is a bloc of developing nations which was established on August 20, 2003. It is distinct from the G20 major economies.

The G20+ originated in September 2003 at the 5th ministerial conference of the WTO held at Cancun, Mexico. Its origins can be traced to the Brasilia Declaration signed by the foreign ministers of India, Brazil and South Africa on 6th June 2003.

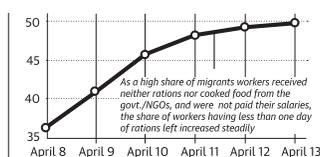
The declaration stated that the major economies were still practising protectionist policies especially in sectors they were less competitive in and that it was important to see to it that the trade negotiations that took place provided for the reversal of those policies.

The G20+ is responsible for 60% of the world population, 26% of the world's agricultural exports and 70% of its farmers.

Being on prayer for deactivation purposes. The Internet is also abuzz with some Bhojpuri singers using the COVID-19 outbreak to peddle several songs indicating what mayhem the virus might cause to the womenfolk. For anyone familiar with the raunchy lyrics of such Bhojpuri songs, the indications are obscene.

A poet colleague recently told me that this is also resistance. A catastrophe has been unleashed and there is very little that we can do other than trying to stay safe. Isolation isn't easy and may be music will keep us company through the trying times.

Kunal Ray teaches literary and cultural studies at FLAME University, Pune



The IMF is a quota-based institution. Quotas are the building blocks of the IMF's financial and governance structure.

An individual member country's quota broadly reflects its relative position in the world economy. Quotas are denominated in Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), the IMF's unit of account.

### How is it determined?

IMF quotas are distributed according to a four pronged formula that considers a member country's GDP, its economic openness, its "economic variability" and international reserves.

### Multiple roles of quotas:

**Resource Contributions:** Quotas determine the maximum amount of financial resources a member is obliged to provide to the IMF.

**Voting Power:** Quotas are a key determinant of the voting power in IMF decisions. Votes comprise one vote per SDR100,000 of quota plus basic votes (same for all members).

**Access to Financing:** The maximum amount of financing a member can obtain from the IMF under normal access is based on its quota.

**SDR Allocations:** Quotas determine a member's share in a general allocation of SDRs.

### Quota reviews:

The IMF's Board of Governors conducts general quota reviews at regular intervals.

Any changes in quotas must be approved by an 85% majority of the total voting power, and a member's own quota cannot be changed without its consent.

### Need for reforms:

Some IMF members have become frustrated with the pace of governance reforms, as the balance of economic and geopolitical power has shifted, becoming more dispersed across the world, particularly with the emergence of China and India – among the world's largest and fastest growing economies.

India's quota is 2.76% and China's is 6.41%, while the U.S.'s quota is 17.46% (translates to a vote share of 16.52%) giving it a unique veto power over crucial decisions at the IMF, many of which require a supermajority of 85%. The U.S. has resisted diluting its share, wary that it will benefit countries such as China.

cooked food

- In Karnataka, 80% did not receive cooked food; in Maharashtra, it was 58%; and in Delhi and Haryana it was 66%

- In U.P., 87% of the migrant workers had less than ₹200
- In Haryana, 76% had less than ₹300

Source: Stranded Workers Action Network

baled water out in the season. Though some of the Kole owners of the State possess engines of their own, their number is found insufficient and the cultivators have to rely on loans of machines from the Travancore side and thus take the risk of sowing late.

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

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

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

The government has set up the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM-CARES Fund) to deal with any kind of emergency or distress situation like posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This Fund has been set up owing to a number of requests made by the people to support the government in the wake of the COVID-19 emergency.

#### Key Points

#### About the Fund

The Fund is a public charitable trust with the Prime Minister as its Chairman. Other Members include Defence Minister, Home Minister and Finance Minister. The Fund enables micro-donations as a result of which a large number of people will be able to contribute with the smallest of denominations. The Fund will strengthen disaster management capacities and encourage research on protecting citizens.

#### Contribution to PM - CARES Fund will Qualify as CSR Expenditure

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has clarified that contributions by companies towards the PM-CARES Fund will count towards mandatory Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) expenditure.

Under the Companies Act, 2013, companies with a minimum net worth of Rs 500 crore or turnover of Rs 1,000 crore, or net profit of Rs 5 crore are required to spend at least 2% of their average profit for the previous three years on CSR activities every year.

The term "Corporate Social Responsibility" in general can be referred to as a corporate initiative to assess and take responsibility for the company's effects on the environment and impact on social welfare.

#### Existing Similar Fund: Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF)

This fund was instituted in 1948 by then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, to assist displaced persons from Pakistan. The fund is currently used primarily to tackle natural calamities like floods, cyclones and earthquakes. The fund is also used to help with medical treatment like kidney transplantation, cancer treatment and acid attack.

The fund consists entirely of public contributions and does not get any budgetary support. It accepts voluntary contributions from Individuals, Organizations, Trusts, Companies and Institutions etc.

The corpus of the fund is also invested in various forms with scheduled commercial banks and other agencies. Disbursements are made with the approval of the Prime Minister.

The fund is recognized as a Trust under the Income Tax Act and the same is managed by the Prime Minister or multiple delegates for national causes.

Contributions towards PMNRF are notified for 100% deduction from taxable income under section 80(G) of the Income Tax Act, 1961.

and widened the pool of people it is testing. As of April 18 (Saturday), there were 194 government or state-

cases and hotspots, with the containment action and restrictions being most stringent in the red zones.

As a nation are fighting the COVID-19 crisis on a war footing and all agencies of the government are working in close coordination. The armed forces are assisting the nation in its fight against COVID-19," Mr. Singh added.

Asked whether the pandemic has impacted operational aspects of the military, Mr. Singh said they are prepared for all contin-

Pakistan should address the deficiencies that led to the toppling of certain structures in the holy Kartarpur Sahib complex during an afternoon storm on Saturday, sources said here.

The comment came hours after India took up the matter with Pakistan as urgent repairs were carried out on the complex by the authorities in Pakistan.



Remains of the storm: A collapsed dome at Kartarpur Sahib

#### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GHAZIABAD

A video of two Dalits being mercilessly beaten by the 'pradhan' of a Meerut village surfaced on social media on Sunday. The police said that the 'pradhan' of Kaili village has since been arrested.

In the video, he was seen hitting the youth, making them squat and loop their arms behind the knees to

AVIHASHI FAHNEY, Superintendent of Police (Rural), Meerut, told *The Hindu* the incident happened on April 16 near the Kaili railway station, which falls under the Kharkhauda police station. The police had already taken note of the incident and sent the pradhan, Amit Tyagi, to jail. He said an FIR had been registered on the complaint of Ankit Kumar, a resident of village Naya Gaon

## Pharma units still not able to operate freely

The industry is hoping that and the Chennai port.

For millions of Sikhs worldwide, the inauguration of the Kartarpur corridor was a dream seven decades in the making. Ever since India and Pakistan were partitioned with an arbitrary line drawn through Punjab, the placement of Kartarpur, where Guru Nanak spent his last years, meant that while a majority of his devotees were left on one side of the border, his last resting place was left just four kilometres on the other side. Unlike the other major Sikh shrine at Guru Nanak's birthplace Nankana Sahib, Kartarpur Sahib was off Pakistan's highways and therefore fell into disuse. Those keen to see it were restricted to peering through binoculars at a border checkpoint. The inauguration of the renovated shrine in Kartarpur by Prime Minister Imran Khan, and the access to the corridor from Sultanpur Lodhi on the Indian side by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saw the fervent hopes of all those people being granted, timed with the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak.

### The Shrine – Gurdwara in Kartarpur

The gurdwara in Kartarpur is located on the bank of river Ravi in Pakistan. It is about four km from the Dera Baba Nanak shrine, and about 120 km northeast of Lahore. It was here that Guru Nanak assembled a Sikh community and lived for 18 years until his death in 1539. The shrine is visible from the Indian side, as Pakistani authorities generally trim the elephant grass that would otherwise obstruct the view. Indian Sikhs would gather in large numbers for darshan from the Indian side, and binoculars were installed at Gurdwara Dera Baba Nanak. The gurdwara was opened to pilgrims after repairs and restoration in 1999, and Sikh jathas have been visiting the shrine regularly ever since. Sikh jathas from India travel to Pakistan on four occasions every year- for Baishakhi, the martyrdom day of Guru Arjan Dev, the death anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and the birthday of Guru Nanak Dev. It is hoped that the corridor would pave the way for peace and greater progress of all people. The corridor will drastically cut down the journey pilgrims have to make from more than 200 km to just 6 km.

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INTEVIEW | SHASHI THAROOR

# 'If WHO has limitations, these have been imposed on it by nations'

The principal fault is with Beijing and not WHO, which is still a body dependent on member states, says Shashi Tharoor, former Under Secretary General of the UN

ANANTH KRISHNAN

As the World Health Organization (WHO) grapples with its greatest crisis, facing criticism over its initial response to the COVID-19 pandemic and a funding cut from the United States, Shashi Tharoor, a former Under Secretary General of the United Nations, says the situation is an indictment, not so much of the agency alone but of the member states that demand it remain beholden to them.

How unprecedented is the current challenge facing the WHO?

■ The WHO was established in 1948 and there hasn't been a worldwide pandemic with this kind of devastation that has come across its path. Something like this is calamitously challenging for the WHO. And then you have the decision of the United States [on April 15] to withhold

funding at this peak time. The U.S. contributes something like 15% of the WHO budget. That is a pretty substantial sum of money that is going to disappear from the WHO's kitty. All of that adds to the challenges it is facing.

Is the U.S. criticism valid?

■ I really think Mr. Trump is honestly trying to find a scapegoat for his own adminis-

tration failing in preparing the U.S. sooner for what has turned out to be the biggest public health emergency they have ever had. The fact is, if you look at what the WHO did or didn't do, one can certainly accept the charge that they were toiling to give China a free pass at the beginning of the crisis. I don't think it's easy to blame the WHO for it.

One of the institutional challenges for any UN body is that it tends to be beholden to its most powerful member states. I am afraid the problem is if this was something that started in the U.S., they would have probably been deferential to the U.S. also. The difference is



the U.S. being a democracy with a free press, they would have not found it easy to suppress the kind of details that are only now emerging from China.

Is it the case that WHO and most UN agencies are reliant

on the information they receive from member states?

■ We have a constitutional problem with all UN agencies that the head of the agency who is elected after all with support of powerful member states, does not enjoy the independence and autonomy that should come with a position of that stature. If we were, for example, to adopt a policy of a single, non-re-

newable term for maybe six or seven years, rather than two terms of five which is normal practice, then you might actually give a leader authority to take certain independent actions. Nonetheless, don't forget the UN is not larger or more powerful than its member states.

The principal fault is with Beijing and not the WHO, which is still a body that is dependent on member states. India is a member of every UN body and every country knows how these bodies work. The governments of the world actually want UN agencies to be beholden to governments, for the most part. When they fail to assert enough indepen-

dence and autonomy, the same governments start making these agencies a scapegoat. When I was at the UN, my then boss [Secretary General] Kofi Annan would often jokingly say about the initials SG by which we used to call him, 'I know what that stands for - scapegoat'

On one hand, we are seeing countries turning inward. On the other, the pandemic is bringing an awareness of the limitations of global institutions. Faced with two somewhat opposing impulses, which way will we go?

■ The signs are indeed for a resurgence of national sove-

reignty. This suggests we will actually go in the wrong direction and likely throw up more barriers. I believe that is the wrong way to go. India must play a role in defying this impulse of closing countries off to the international community.

We have to recognise if the WHO had limitations, these are limitations that governments have imposed upon it. If the world has to draw from this a conclusion that we actually need institutions of greater independence in all our collective interest, then maybe we can reform these institutions, to give them that independence. I hope a country like India will be a sane voice for this.

## The Way Ahead

It has, in a very limited way, formally resumed people-to-people contact between the two countries. This is incredible because both countries were till recently on the brink of a full-fledged war; tensions continue to be high. As a result, cross-border contacts between both sides have been abandoned; in fact, India's ambassador to Pakistan was asked to leave by the host country when tensions had peaked.

However, neither side has been able to build on the goodwill for the project in both countries to create an atmosphere for talks on other issues. This failure was most evident when both Mr. Modi and Mr. Khan carried out separate inauguration ceremonies, but failed to come together at the border for the launch of the project, though both leaders likened it to the "coming down of the Berlin wall".

Delhi should recognise that the footprint of Punjab and its people goes beyond India and Pakistan — it has significant influence in many parts of the world. Prime Minister Narendra Modi could add a new layer to his diaspora diplomacy if he promotes the celebration of 'Punjabiyaat'. That might help transcend the Kartarpur exception, facilitate the long-overdue collective reflection on what binds us together in the Subcontinent and how we might overcome our current divisions. For that promise to be realised, leaders will need to walk the extra mile, both literally and figuratively.

complaints of breathlessness, was about to be discharged, after his condition improved in the past few days. But he succumbed to the disease on Sunday. Offering his condolences, the Chief Minister said on Twitter, "I pay tribute to his feet. In this moment of crisis, the entire State stands by him." "We give ₹50 lakh as support to the family. His wife is being appointed as a sub-inspector in the department," he said.

positive showed no symptoms. This was 25% of the total test results. "They [the positive persons] didn't know they had the corona [virus] and were roaming here and there with the corona [virus]. This is very dangerous," he said.

Mr. Kejriwal, who on Saturday pointed to a clutch of cases in Jehangirpuri, said a volunteer who had been distributing food at a Delhi go-

positive, as the historical data across the world is showing. However, we have to be aware of this challenge. Our strategy is to monitor those who are asymptomatic and high-risk and test them. Those who are contacts and asymptomatic are advised to be in home quarantine and those at high risk ought to be in facility quarantine," Ministry spokesman Lav Agarwal said.

The committee's mandate will be to provide the migrant workers employment opportunities at the local level, which will strengthen rural economy, a government spokesperson said.

The committee will be headed by the Commissioner, Agricultural Production, and will include the Principal Secretaries of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Rural Development,

all these seafarers would be subjected to quarantine and home quarantine, he said. Goa has made available 8,000 rooms for seafarers.

1,561 patients are being treated at various hospitals. The State has so far tested 29,104 samples.

According to the Health Department, testing has in-

to 25 districts, but the worst affected is Ahmedabad, with 1,101 cases and 32 deaths. On Sunday, Ahmedabad reported 239 cases and 7 deaths. Another big cluster is Surat,

testing has just started. "Ideally, there should be more than 5,000 tests a day, whereas the average as on Sunday is around 2,500-3,000," he said.

## wants jobs for who returned

el for employment generation'



Yogi Adityanath

Panchayat Raj and Skill Development Departments.

The committee has been tasked with ensuring employment generation under the One District One Product Programme aimed at encouraging indigenous and specialised products and crafts, organise job fairs and help small entrepreneurs avail themselves of loans on

easy conditions, the government said.

The committee will explore employment opportunities in micro, small and medium enterprises.

Mr. Adityanath also instructed the district magistrates to ensure home quarantine of the 8,000 students who were brought back from Kota after they were stranded in the Rajasthan city.

He asked the district magistrates to go by the local circumstances and decide on the relaxation of the curbs for business activities from April 20. The 19 most sensitive districts with 10 or more cases have been asked to be more vigilant. But the relaxations won't apply to hotspots.

## SC switches to video mode

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Amid a lockdown till May 3, the Supreme Court has informed that short category matters, death penalty and family law cases will be

heard through video-conferencing, if parties consent.

The SC said that such cases will be heard "subject to the availability of the Bench and with the prior approval of the Chief Justice of India."

## Over 550 new cases in Maharashtra in a day

Infections soar to 4,200, with Mumbai recording 456 cases; State's death toll rises to 12

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT PUNE

Maharashtra reported a staggering surge of 552 new COVID-19 positive cases on Sunday — the State's highest single-day surge yet — as its cumulative tally rose to 4,200 cases, while 12 more deaths were reported across the State, taking the death toll to 223.

Six of these deaths were reported from Mumbai city, while four fatalities were reported from Malegaon in Nashik, which is fast emerging as north Maharashtra's virus hotspot. One death each was reported from Sola-



Grim task: Staff of Dadar crematorium in Mumbai leave after performing a victim's last rites. ■ PRASHANT NARVE

pur district (the city's second death), and Karjat-Jamkhed in Ahmednagar district.

"We have yet to receive information on whether the Malegaon fatalities

had any comorbidities. Of six of the remaining eight deaths, 75% had high-risk co-morbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, asthma and heart disease," informed State Sur-

## 20 new cases in Dharavi

STAFF REPORTER MUMBAI

Dharavi reported 20 new cases on Sunday, taking the total to 138 cases, including 12 deaths. A majority are from areas that had earlier reported cases while a few are from new parts of

veillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate.

A silver lining came in the form of the 142 patients who were discharged from hospitals today, taking the total dis-

Dharavi. As the BMC intensified screening in Dharavi, more and more cases are being reported from containment zones. More than 37,000 residents have been screened for symptoms. Of this, about 210 were referred for testing.

charged till date to 502.

Mumbai city again reported the majority of new cases — as many as 456 — taking the city's tally to 2,724 with 132 deaths.

## U.P. police say youth didn't die of beating

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh police on Sunday termed "false and baseless" the charge that a 22-year-old daily wageer died after he was thrashed by the police when he stepped out to buy food in Ambedkar Nagar district.

Rizwan Ahmed's family on Saturday said he died in a hospital three days after the police beat him up.

Ambedkar Nagar SP Alok Priyadarshi said that going by the evidence collected so far, there was nothing to show that Rizwan was assaulted by the police with batons.

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Tender Document Download Starting Date and time in <https://tender.approcurement.gov.in/> is 20-04-2020, 11.00 AM, Last date & time of submission of tenders is 24-04-2020, 3.00 PM and Bid Opening date is 24-04-2020, 4.00 PM.

Full details are available at [www.cdma.ap.gov.in](http://www.cdma.ap.gov.in). Email - [msection@cdma.gov.in](mailto:msection@cdma.gov.in), Ph: 7993317003.

Sd/- Vijay Kumar G. Srkr, IAS  
Commissioner & Director

DIPR 12PP/CL, Dt.18.04.2020

**GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU**  
**HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT**  
**TAMIL NADU ROAD SECTOR PROJECT II**

**BID NOTICE NO.TNRSP II/PPP01/2019-20/02, Dated, 20.04.2020**

- The Superintending Engineer (H), TNRSP II on behalf of Governor of Tamil Nadu invites bids for "Four Laning of Gobi - Erode Section of SH-15 ("The Project State Highway") from Km 123+000 to Km 153+600 in the State of Tamil Nadu under TNRSP-II to be executed on Design, Build, Finance, Operate, Maintain and Transfer (DBFOMT) on Modified Annuity Basis".
- The bid document is available from 20.04.2020 at 15.00 hours (IST) and should be submitted online in the website, [www.tntenders.gov.in](http://www.tntenders.gov.in).
- Kindly refer the Invitation For Bid (IFB) uploaded in [www.tntenders.gov.in](http://www.tntenders.gov.in) for details.
- Pre-bid meeting will be held on 07.05.2020 at 11.00 hours (IST) (Refer RFP for more details)
- Deadline for online submission of bids: on or before 11.00 hours (IST) on 19.06.2020.
- Date of online Technical Bid opening: at 11.30 hours (IST) on 19.06.2020.

Superintending Engineer (H),  
(For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu)  
Tamil Nadu Road Sector Project II, Chennai-28.  
TNMB Building, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, 171, South Kesavaperumal Puram,  
Off Greenways Road, R.A.Puram, Chennai - 600 028. Tamil Nadu, India.  
Telephone No: +91 44 24951072, Fax: +91 44 24952414  
Email: [tnrsp1@gmail.com](mailto:tnrsp1@gmail.com) / Website : [www.tnrsp.gov.in](http://www.tnrsp.gov.in)

DIPR/1635/Tender/2020

INTERVIEW | HANS TIMMER

# 'Preventing food shortages is high priority for South Asia'

Disruptions in the supply chain and panic buying can lead to price spikes and loss of income for the most vulnerable, says World Bank economist

SUHASINI HAIDAR

In a report released this month, the World Bank predicted a 'dire' situation for South Asia due to the economic impact of measures to counter the novel coronavirus pandemic, suggesting that the eight SAARC countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Maldives and Sri Lanka) will experience their worst economic performance in 40 years, with at least half of them falling into a deep recession. Hans Timmer, author of the report and the Bank's Chief Economist for South Asia, says managing migrant returns, service sector revenue losses and ensuring food security for the poorest are major priorities for the region.

The forecast for the South Asian economy in the WB report, with an expected drop from 6.3% growth to 1.8% - 2.8%, is quite significant. Could the drop be even bigger, given that we don't yet know when economic activity will be fully reopened?

This forecast already includes many adverse impacts. The upper and lower bounds are based on two scenarios for advanced economies: one with a two-

month lockdown of advanced economies, the other with a four-month lockdown of these economies. These scenarios translate for South Asia into sharp declines in exports, disruptions in global value chains, deterioration of investment sentiment, reversal of capital flows, and reduced remittances. Our upper and lower bound forecasts also assume sharp declines in domestic hospitality services. But the drop in growth can indeed be bigger. In the report we

ment that we calculated what we call a "worst case scenario", in which we assume a prolonged lockdown of South Asian economies: an extended lockdown for three months and a more partial lockdown in subsequent quarters. In that case, we ended up with negative growth for the region, a contraction of 1%.

I have been impressed by the reaction of the Indian government and other governments in South Asia. With limited health-care capacity, it is important to contain, or at least mitigate, the spread of COVID-19. But, with a high



Government should create conditions under which the economy can be reopened and play an active role in job creation

population density, this is a difficult task. Containment of the pandemic is especially challenging among slum dwellers, domestic migrant workers and refugees. An additional complication is that the lockdown deprives the most vulnerable people of their income. The conclusion is that the lockdown is necessary, but not sufficient. It has to be complemented

with food distribution, temporary work programmes and a system of testing and tracing, which is needed to reopen the economy. The temporary work programme could focus on food delivery, production of protective equipment, disinfection of public spaces and on the testing and tracing system. It is commendable that the Indian government is rolling out a tracing system now.

Most South Asian nations depend on migrant remittances. How much do you think layoffs abroad added to the domestic migrant labour crisis (in India, in particular), will change the labour market, and how should countries prepare for this?

It is likely that migrant workers, especially in the Gulf countries, will return home, even if many are still stuck abroad at the moment.

It is the consequence of the global recession and the sharp drop in oil prices. They will need to find work at home and will indeed compete with domestic migrant workers. That is why the government should create conditions under which the economy can be reopened and should play an active role in job creation.

How does South Asia as a region compare with other regions in the world in terms of the impact of the novel coronavirus? There are studies suggesting the pandemic has grown more slowly in South Asia than in regions such as Europe, North America, East Asia...

Fast containment action after detection of first COVID-19 cases may have helped, and evidence around the world shows that strict measures early on can help reduce contagion. In-

crease in testing will help guide future actions.

How important is food security and releasing strategic food reserves at this point? How would you rate different countries in the region on their ability to ensure distribution to the most vulnerable? We have seen massive food lines, shortages in both India and Pakistan.

This is one of the big concerns. Disruptions in the supply chain and panic buying can lead to price spikes. That, together with loss of income of many informal workers, can lead to food shortages for the most vulnerable. This is high priority. Releasing strategic reserves is one tool in the toolbox. Work programmes and food deliveries are other tools. Export bans will backfire as they will disrupt food supply chains in the region further.

The WB report identifies the service sector as worst hit and tourism, for example in the Maldives as one of the biggest revenue losses. Can South Asia consider new ways to regenerate employment in these sectors, or will it have to look at other sectors?

Probably both. Tourism will not return to normal till effective vaccines become widely available. There will be demand for safe tourism. That might be an opportunity for the Maldives that with its many atolls and high-end tourism has an opportunity to test tourists and keep them away from large crowds.

There might be also more demand for digital services like remote learning or other remote services and for delivery of e-commerce sales. It is likely that more jobs outside the tourism industry can be created.

## IN BRIEF



### Spraying of disinfectants harmful: Health Ministry

The Health Ministry has issued an advisory against spraying of disinfectants on people for COVID-19 management, saying it was physically and psychologically harmful. Spraying of chlorine can lead to irritation of eyes and skin and may cause nausea and vomiting. Sodium hypochlorite can cause irritation to respiratory tract, the advisory said. PTI

### Wildlife hunting goes up in northeast

The lockdown has led to a spike in wildlife hunting and bushmeat consumption in parts of the northeast, officials said on the basis of videos on the social media. Villagers in Arunachal Pradesh, caught on camera with a dead king cobra, said they had been hunting as vegetables had become scarce. Officials are also probing a video that showed a few persons in Nagaland displaying carcasses.

### Hydroxychloroquine tablets sent to UAE

India has agreed to send hydroxychloroquine tablets to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to be used for treating COVID-19 patients, the Gulf Arab state's embassy in New Delhi said. "The first shipment of the medicine, currently on its way to the UAE, includes 5.5 million pills for treatment of patients with COVID-19," it tweeted late on Saturday. REUTERS

## Centre stops airline bookings

No decision has been taken to commence operation of flights from May 4'

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The government on Sunday directed airlines to discontinue advance bookings for travel from May 4, following which Air India reversed its earlier decision to sell tickets.

"It has been noticed that airlines have started booking tickets for journeys with effect from May 4. No decision to commence the operation of domestic/international flights with effect from May 4 has been taken yet. All airlines are hereby directed to



Trolleys being disinfected at the Amritsar airport. \*AFP

refrain from booking tickets," the Civil Aviation Ministry told domestic and foreign

airlines. It said the airlines would be given sufficient notice for restarting flights.

The order provides much-needed clarity to both airlines and passengers and follows an outcry over the manner in which airlines continued to amass passengers' money, only to issue credit notes later when flights would be cancelled due to an extended lockdown.

Air India immediately reversed its earlier decision. "The airline is currently not taking bookings."

Several other airlines like IndiGo and Vistara, which had announced their decision to open bookings post-May 3, are expected to fall in line.

Following the Group of Ministers' meeting on Saturday, Minister of State for Civil Aviation Hardeep Singh Puri said on Twitter: "So far no decision has been taken to open domestic or international operations. Airlines are advised to open their bookings only after a decision has been taken by the government."

## He set the wheels of kindness in motion

Auto driver, who donated his meagre earnings, has now joined police relief work

RAHUL KARMAKAR  
GUWAHATI

An autorickshaw driver who donated all his cash despite not having enough to eat has helped the police in an Arunachal Pradesh district add wheels to a community kitchen concept that has become the template for others to follow.

Sanjay Kumar Sain, the Superintendent of Police (SP) of Lower Dibang Valley, was touched when the elderly Ganesh Das stepped into his office on April 16 to hand over a bunch of notes totalling ₹1,000 for an initiative the district police had launched to feed the elderly, migrant labourers and other daily wagers. "He said it was his responsibility to give back to Roing for giving him



Ganesh Das with Lower Dibang Valley SP Sanjay Kumar Sain, right, and Deputy SP Ringu Ngupok. \*SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

so much all these years. He was apologetic for not being able to donate more," Mr. Sain told *The Hindu*.

Moved, the SP dropped him home along with 20 kg of rice and other essentials.

Bihar in the 1980s and has been ferrying people to sustain his four-member family. His gesture made Mr. Sain turn his attention to autorickshaw drivers, who were among the hardest hit by the lockdown. Mr. Das and seven others were accordingly roped in for the district pol-

ice's community kitchen and ration delivery service.

Praise from CM Chief Minister Pema Khandu had lauded the service and termed it a model worth replicating in other parts.

Sushant Saurabh Jha, the nodal officer of the District Police COVID-19 Control Room, said the SP and some 300 police personnel, local MLAs and community leaders pooled in resources to start the community kitchen. A few of the SP's batchmates too contributed. "We have been feeding some 870 people daily," Mr. Jha said.

"From Monday, we will be using eight autos, including Mr. Das's for the service," he said. Each driver would be given a stipend, besides fuel.

## Islamophobia is rising in India: OIC

Protect rights of Muslims, govt. told

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Calling on the Indian government to take steps to protect Muslim minorities who are being "negatively profiled," facing "discrimination and violence" amidst the COVID-19 crisis, the 57-member Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has criticised what it called "growing Islamophobia" in India.

"[We] urge the Indian Govt to take urgent steps to stop the growing tide of Islamophobia in India and protect the rights of its persecuted Muslim minority as per its obligations under international Human Rights law," said a tweet issued by OIC's Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (OIC-IPHRC) on Sunday.

PM's call for unity The statement came on the same day Prime Minister Narendra Modi had clearly said that "unity and brotherhood" must be the response to the coronavirus, which does not see "race, religion, colour, caste, creed, language or borders before striking."

The Ministry of External Affairs declined to comment on the statement.

Last week it had reacted sharply to two similar statements on religious "stigmatisation" of minorities in India by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). In one statement, the U.S.

Commission criticised India, Pakistan and Cambodia for "failure to protect vulnerable religious communities" and "increased stigmatisation".

Patient 'segregation' In another specific statement, the USCIRF reacted to reports, which the government denied, that COVID-19 patients were religiously segregated at a hospital in Ahmedabad.

On Saturday, it also held an expert hearing on "Religious Freedom on South Asia", organised by the "Hindus for Human Rights", "Indian-American Muslim Council" and "International Christian Concern," ahead of its annual USCIRF report release on April 28, where India has been categorised as a "tier 2 country of particular concern."

Misguided reports: MEA "As if its peremptory commentary on religious freedom in India is not enough, the USCIRF is now spreading misguided reports on the professional medical protocols followed to deal with spread of COVID-19 in India," the MEA spokesperson had said.

Meanwhile, on March 30, the United Nations' Office of The Commissioner for Human Rights had issued a more general statement against the "exploitation" of coronavirus-related fears by groups and politicians to "scapegoat minorities" in various countries.

## Meerut cancer hospital's ad kicks up a row

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GHAZIABAD

A private cancer hospital in Meerut has issued an advertisement in a Hindi daily appealing to Muslim patients to come for treatment only after getting themselves and their attendants tested for COVID-19.

In the II-point advertisement in *Dainik Jagran* last Friday, Valentis Cancer Hospital said if emergency attention was required, the hospital would send the samples of the patient and the attendant for testing and charge ₹4,500 each. It held the Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Delhi responsible for the spread of the virus in the country. On Saturday, the hospital issued a clarification in the same paper expressing regret if it hurt the feelings of any community.

People say the regret is directed at the Hindu and Jain communities as one of the points in the advertisement described them as miserly, and appealed to them to contribute handsomely to the PM Cares Fund.

Chief Medical Officer Raj Kumar told *The Hindu* that he had issued a notice to the hospital. Senior Superintendent of Police Ajay Sahni told presspersons that an FIR had been registered against Ajay Jain, proprietor of the hospital, for hurting the sentiments of a community. Dr. Jain did not respond despite repeated attempts.

## The Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has criticised Government of India over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, and the Babri Masjid verdict of the Supreme Court.

### Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the second largest intergovernmental organization after the United Nations with a membership of 57 states.

It is the collective voice of the Muslim world. It endeavors to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world.

It was established upon a decision of the historical summit which took place in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco on the 25th of September 1969.

Headquarters: Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

India is not a member of the OIC. However, India was invited as a guest of honour at 46th Session of the Council of Foreign Minister in 2019. 2019 is the 50th anniversary of OIC.

### ACROSS

- 7 So, a rebel partied where studs hang out? (3,5)
- 9 Fresh deli sandwiches, black coffee finally fit for consumption (6)
- 10 Extended wish (4)
- 11 Cheapest to let around student term (3-4,3)
- 12 Pretty tidy and mostly organised (6)
- 14 Make mechanic co-passenger in a tuk tuk (8)

- 13 Steal one grand, stopping frequently, mostly at the last minute (4,2,4)
- 16 Rum crabs in their shells (8)
- 17 Somewhat sure, as one democrat thought (8)
- 19 Attacking man-eaters were met here (6)
- 20 Lifted knot to close packed material (6)
- 22 Hint about boy, possibly 8 (4)

DE	FI	GI	T	RE	V	E	N	C	E	2	4	7	1	6	5	3	8	9						
W	E	L	L	S	P	E	N	T	R	A	T	I	O	N	E	7	8	9	5	4	6	2	3	1
A	N	D	E	E	A	N	A	V	E															
C	A	N	A	S	T	A	P	E	N	A	N	C	E											
K	G	E	R	A	T	O	G	O	R															
X	I	E	L	D	S	T	R	U	N	G	O	U	T											
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ego sense as it is the greatest hurdle in path to realization. It is held that once, in an assembly of saints, another contemporary devotee, one Muktabai, wishing well for Namadev, asked a potter to test their level of maturity. Using the testing rod on the heads of all present, the potter claimed that all were fully baked except Namadev. Though hurt by this comment, through God's grace Namadev gained enlightenment and was able to win over his own ego and pride.

■ ALBERT P'RAYAN

The coronavirus pandemic has shuttered educational institutions across the globe. Closure of schools, colleges and universities, shutdown of routine life of students and teachers, disruptions in education and the education ministry remaining incommunicado, have created an unprecedented situation and thrown many unexpected challenges to administrators, educators, teachers, parents and students. The situation has created the new normal. How to cope with the new normal is the question that everyone is now asking.

It is good to carry out a SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats – analysis of the COVID-19 situation and its impact on education. This exercise can help us set new goals and objectives and move forward.

**Strengths**  
As educational institutions across India have remained closed for weeks, parents are worried about their children's education. Some parents have forced their children to take up some online courses, but students do not seem to show interest in learning online. Some educational institutions have asked teachers to prepare online material, but most teachers do not have the experience of preparing e-material. Some universities and colleges want to move classes/courses online in order to engage students, but do not know how to go about.

The situation described above may present a gloomy picture, but it shouldn't. Why? Looking at it positively, for the first time many teachers, parents and students have thought about the purpose of education and asked some useful and relevant questions. The unprecedented situation has made

## SWOTing the situation

With the pandemic forcing everyone to seriously consider e-learning tools and resources, now is a good time to assess its strengths and opportunities, and adapt to the new normal

them look at things critically. Here are some such interesting questions: Will 'education' be defined in a different way, in the future? Is there a need to learn differently? Will the transition have a positive or negative impact on students and their learning? How should students' knowledge and skills be assessed? Will online education be successful in our country where millions of students do not own computers and have access to the Internet? How important is home learning? How important is learner autonomy? Is it good to depend on teachers and cling to the traditional way of learning? Many more questions...

The pandemic should have a positive impact on our education system. It should not be the same after the situation eases. There should be some positive changes.

**Weaknesses**  
The weaknesses in our system include lack of innovative thinking, inadequate infrastructure, untrained teachers, unequal accessibility, exam-

centric assessment, and lack of learner autonomy. How do these weaknesses act as hurdles now at the time of the pandemic and lockdown?

Remote learning, distance learning, home learning, online learning, e-learning, and webinar are the buzz-words that we hear today.

Recently, the Delhi government announced that it would conduct online classes for class XII students, but school teachers say that it is impractical since most students do not have access to the required facilities. Yes, we are challenged by these questions: Can everyone in the country afford e-learning? Is online education an elite concept in India?

Will the digital divide further cement inequality and create an academic divide in the country?

Teachers working in elite schools in cities and big towns proudly state that they conduct classes online using and help students make use of the lockdown period in a useful manner. What about teachers working in government-aided and government schools in cities and towns and private schools in rural areas?

Neither teachers nor students have access to computers and the Internet. They may neither have the awareness of online tools such as Google

Classroom available for such purposes, nor have the expertise to use them. Is it possible for such teachers to even think of conducting classes online?

Since our education system has not trained our teachers and students to think creatively and manage in a crisis situation, and has underplayed the importance of e-learning, they are unprepared for the transition from the classroom to online.

### Opportunities

All systems have strengths and weaknesses. Maximising strengths and minimising weaknesses in order not to miss the opportunity to move forward should be the goal. The three main opportunities that we have are: i) our students who belong to Gen Z, ii) numerous web resources, and iii) enthusiastic teachers.

Gen Z learners (born between 1997 and 2010) are true digital natives. They are born in the digital era and are familiar with computers, multimedia content and Internet-based activities from an early age. As they live in the online environment, they enjoy watching YouTube videos, love connecting with people through social media and speak the language of technology, they need to be taught differently. Now is the right time to move our classes to a different platform, introduce e-learning and develop learner autonomy.

The COVID-19 lockdown has enabled teachers to become creative. They can now create e-material such as YouTube videos and PPTs and share the links with their students and engage them during the lockdown period. Some

teachers are using video conferencing facilities such as Zoom and Bluejeans Meetings for online teaching. These video conference facilities have features such as one-click scheduling, screen sharing and collaboration, Cloud streaming and recording, and so on. Some educators use Google Meet.

Look up more Google resources available for distance learning at Google for Education's Teacher Center online.

### Threats

India is far behind some developing countries where digital education is getting increased attention. In countries where e-learning is popular, students have access to various online resources such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) which help students, teachers and professionals upgrade their skills. E-learning promotes learner autonomy and enables students to acquire knowledge and skills without depending on teachers. India needs to take the threat of many developed and developing countries leading the way in online education seriously and promote it earnestly.

To summarise, education must continue. Students should keep learning. The lockdown period should be productive. Educators should think creatively and introduce innovative ways of learning. In a country where access to the Internet and high-speed connectivity is a problem, and the digital divide is an issue, it is important to address the challenges. Those who are involved in education planning and administration should give a serious thought to reducing the digital divide in the country and popularise digital learning.

The writer is an academic, columnist and freelance trainer and writer. rayanal@yahoo.co.uk

### TALKING POINT

## Quality time in quarantine

Lockdown can get a little overwhelming with the family staying together indoors for long periods. How can you make the most of your time in a healthy manner?

■ NANDINI RAMAN

Many parents are having a hard time navigating our "new normal" of working from home in the current times. Being a mother of two teens, I have attempted to put together some useful tips for teens and adolescents to step up and take responsibility during such trying times.

### Discipline, discipline, discipline

"Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise."

At the cost of not sounding regimental and old school, ensure that you are able to manage a timely schedule and follow basic activities of daily living (ADLs) in a reasonable time frame. Waking up in the morning and having a fresh start is not only important but also essential as it sets the tone for the day that follows.

While keeping awake all night, watching movies, bingeing on Netflix, gaming or socialising with your cliques is thrilling at this point, there can be a tendency to stay awake till the wee hours of morning. However, not being able to have a good night's rest and lack of adequate sleep (seven to eight relaxed hours) is enough to create sleep deprivation and cause laziness, irritability, moodiness, fatigue, forgetfulness, a lack of appetite, and a depressed mood.

### Cut down the entitlement

"There ain't no such thing like a free lunch."

Given the fact the current support system in the form of paid help – maids, cooks, baby sitters (for smaller siblings), caretakers for the elderly at home is missing – we need to help out. Everybody at home, most certainty needs to chip in.

You are an integral part of the family and it is crucial that you contribute and showcase some responsible behaviour. Mum and dad really can't do much without your timely help and support.

Chores that you like (even when you really-really don't like them) and pitch in. Cooking, chopping, washing dishes, cleaning the home, drying and folding clothes, taking care of pets, – the list is rather exhaustive and endless. So, grab your pick.

### Technology / Internet / Gadget (ab)use

"The difference between technology and slavery is that slaves are fully aware that they are not free!"

India has the second largest internet users after China. Teens' continuous, incessant and relentless gadget and screen usage bordering on addiction is a huge problem today for parents and teens themselves.

Given the current quarantine and lockdown, we need to cut ourselves a little slack – given these extenuating circumstances, but beware of the time that you tend to spend on your gadgets and gizmos and the sites and activities that you are engaging in online. It is not always a safe place. It is better to be safe than sorry.

There is excessive information on social media, most of which is untrue can be harmful for your consumption. FaceTime, Zoom, Facebook video calls, Skype are all virtual tools for you to chat and catch up with your friends and extended family. TikTok, online games and many other interactive apps increase your vulnerabilities to share plenty of information that might not be necessary and warranted. Use caution. Be mindful of your language and aggression levels as, many a times, you tend to loose grounding in a virtual world. Rationing screen time is well worth it.

Excessive usage of screen time can also result in symptoms such as dysfunctional daily schedule, lack of a routine, anxiety, depression, dishonesty, avoidance of work, isolation, mood swings, fear, boredom with routine tasks, agitation and procrastination.

### Schedule time with family

"The family that prays together, stays together."

Ensure that you engage with the family and do something meaningful for at least 30 minutes to an hour, every day. These can be simple activities together beyond the cleaning rituals and the chores that can become mundane. Cards, board games, old family stories sharing time, television/show viewing of common shows and serials, yoga, meditation, chatting and/or evening prayers are examples of what can become a 'Family Ritual'. Build memories with your loved ones before you fly from the nest.

### Academic mindfulness

"The early summer break in not going to last forever"

For those who have not been able to complete their board exams, please set aside some time for reading up and revising the subjects that are pending. These holidays are eventually going to end and yes, the suspense around that can create a lot of anxiety. But, the only way around is to be prepared.

Those of you, preparing for CETs and various other entrance exams, schedule in some time for a good enough prep, so that you are not taken by surprise should the lockdown be lifted on May 3 and dates get postponed. Many virtual content and classes have commenced to keep students afloat and so get on with your tasks on time as well.

The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer.

### ETCETERA

#### ■ LSAT postponed

The LSAT-India™, a standardised test adopted as an admission criterion by multiple law colleges across India, has been rescheduled in light of the nationwide lockdown announced by the Government of India. Instead of the earlier announced date of May 17, the test has been rescheduled for June 7. The registration date is extended to May 22 to allow more time for applicants to register.

Applicants can prepare for the test using the material that is free to download from the Discover Law website (discover-law.in/prepare-for-the-test).

https://www.discoverlaw.in/prepare-for-the-test

#### ■ Sastra University-TCS iON tie-up

Sastra University, in Tamil Nadu, has decided to adopt technology to ensure that learning does not stop even though classrooms are shut, due to the COVID-19 lockdown. The university has tied up with TCS iON's 'digital classroom' and is among the first three educational institutions to sign up for it. The TCS iON Digital Glass Room is a mobile and web education platform for schools and colleges that empowers educators to engage with students in real time by sharing lessons, videos, worksheets, assignments and assessments, using interactive methods such as polls, debates, quizzes, surveys and many more tools. As an add-on, the platform also provides an embedded live classroom, which simulates live classroom teaching.

It is available to educational institutes of all types, irrespective of the medium of instruction, Board/university affiliation, or size. Interested schools and higher education organisations can register for the platform by visiting learning.tcsionhub.in/hub/glass-room/

#### ■ Beyond the classroom

Ashoka University recently launched 'Beyond The Classroom', an interactive virtual seminar series which aims to bring the best learning from the university online. A curated series, it will go live with its 45 minutes to hour-long episodes using Zoom twice a week on Wednesday and Saturday at 8:30 p.m. The episode will be broadcast simultaneously on Facebook and YouTube. In an episode, a faculty member can deliver a lecture, or participate in an interview or discussion with another panellist about a topic of his/her choice. Participants who have tuned in to watch the live episode will get the opportunity to send in questions or comments, which may be answered by the faculty member, with the help of a moderator. The sessions will be hosted by an Ashoka University student, alumni, or faculty. The faculty will cover topics from the humanities, the social sciences, to pure sciences. The live sessions are free and open for everyone to attend.

### IN CONVERSATION

## The way forward

Online classes and remote teaching have become the key to making education accessible to more than 8,000 students across the globe. Patrice Houdayer, from SKEMA Business School, sheds some light

■ MADHUVANTI S. KRISHNAN

The COVID-19 pandemic has been wreaking havoc across the globe, and has brought every sector in the world to a screeching halt. It has forced companies and organisations to rethink their way of working, especially educational institutions. At a time when classes have been unceremoniously suspended, and exams postponed, the onus of implementing innovative solutions, and going digital to combat the situation, falls on educational institutions.

SKEMA Business School, Lille, France, which has seven campuses across five continents, promptly stepped up to the situation to ensure the continuity of studies for its 8,000-plus students across the world. It is among some of the first business schools in the world to offer all its courses online to its students. As one of its campuses is in China, the country which was the epicentre of the pandemic, authorities went all out in setting up a comprehensive distance learning system for students there. Excerpts from an interview with Patrice Houdayer, SKEMA's vice-dean of programmes, who sheds light on how the institution is handling the pandemic and ensuring continued education to students.

### From-home campaign

"Since the temporary closure of our Suzhou campus in China, mid-January, we had already prepared and set up a comprehensive distance learning system for our seven campuses. Thanks to this, we were quickly able to switch to a 100% remote teaching mode," explains Houdayer. "Many B-schools are now following the same approach. Besides this, we are organising online well-being and fitness activities for students as they are essential to help them stay positive. We are also running the #SKEMAfromhome campaign, on different social media platforms, to showcase the efforts of the business school's students and faculty, and answer the queries of students."

### Tools to facilitate online courses

"We are making optimum use of the Microsoft Office resources. We have



been able to utilise various Office 365 applications such as Teams (collaborative platform for teamwork) and Stream (video streaming service), depending on teachers' needs, on a large scale. For external speakers and experts, specific online support (tutorials, webinars) and a dedicated hotline have been deployed," he explicates.

"It was essential for us to alternate synchronous (live sessions on Teams, Skype, Google Meet, and so on), and asynchronous activities. Marcos Lima, director of SKEMA's MSc International Marketing and Business Development programme, suggested the use of a little-known, but useful PowerPoint function for distance learning – the possibility to record a "screencast". This makes it possible to create interactive presentations that professors can send to students prior to the live session, which is used for discussing the content, case studies and project presentations," adds Houdayer.

### Going digital

He elaborates on how the institution is conducting online classes for around 70 different programmes, including BBA, M.Sc, double M.Sc, PhD and executive MBA, at its campuses in the U.S., France, Brazil, South Africa, and China. In total, an average of 250 different courses are being delivered every day. By the end of the semester, more than 6,000 sessions will be delivered to nearly 7,000 students. All of this is managed by the institution's Innovation Centre and the Knowledge Centre.



# Coronavirus did not come from us: Wuhan lab

Virology institute official dismisses conspiracy theories; Orthodox Christians mark Easter at home amidst COVID-19 fears

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BEIJING

A laboratory in the Chinese city at ground zero of the global COVID-19 outbreak has rejected U.S. theories that it spawned the pandemic.

The denial came as world governments were debating how and when to ease lockdowns that have kept more than half of humanity – 4.5 billion people – confined to their homes and crippled the global economy.

Many of the world's 260 million Orthodox Christians were forced to mark Easter at home on Sunday, with

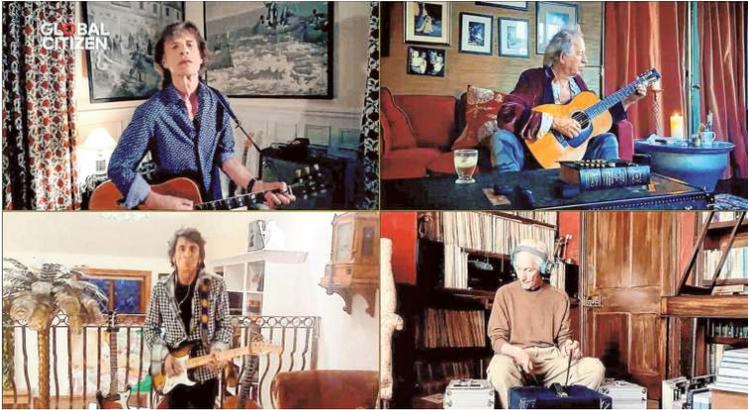
COVID-19

church leaders telling worshippers to stay indoors and conducting services online or on television. But in Belarus, President Alexander Lukashenko, who has cast doubt on the gravity of the pandemic and allowed events such as football matches to continue, defiantly visited a church without a face mask.

Virtual concert

Hoping to spread cheer to those under lockdown, the world's top musicians – from the Rolling Stones to Taylor Swift, Stevie Wonder and teen superstar Billie Eilish – joined forces for a virtual mega-concert on Saturday. The six-hour online event aimed to cultivate a sense of community during a pandemic that has killed at least 1,600,000 people worldwide, with more than 2.3 million confirmed infections.

The virus was probably first transmitted to humans at a Wuhan market where exotic animals were slaughtered, according to Chinese scientists. But conspiracy theories that the virus came



**Chords and notes of solidarity:** (Clockwise from top) Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Ronnie Wood and Charlie Watts performing during the 'One World: Together at Home' event on Saturday. • VIA REUTERS

from a maximum-security virology lab have been brought into the mainstream by U.S. government officials.

"There's no way this virus came from us," Yuan Zhiming, the head of the P4 laboratory at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, which is equipped to handle dangerous viruses, said in an interview with state media. "I know it's impossible."

The U.S. has the highest caseload of any country, with more than 7,35,000 confirmed infections, and over 39,000 deaths.

But as Americans and others around the world chafe after weeks under stay-at-home orders, resentment is rising. Anti-lockdown protests on Saturday drew hundreds of people in states including Texas, Maryland, New Hampshire and Ohio.

The small but spreading movement drew encouragement from Mr. Trump, who tweeted that three States

should be "liberated" from the stay-home orders.

Shops reopened

Elsewhere, a patchwork of countries including Switzerland, Denmark and Finland began reopening shops and schools. Germany is set to follow suit on Monday with some shops back open after declaring the virus "under control", while Italy – at one time the European epicentre of the crisis – was tentatively mulling easing restrictions.

Iran allowed some businesses to reopen Saturday despite being home to West Asia's deadliest outbreak.

Back in Wuhan, there was an emotional return to the city for the Chinese Super League football team after more than three months stranded on the road. Wearing masks, the players had bouquets of flowers thrust into their hands as supporters held banners and sang to welcome them home.

## S. Korea relaxes some norms

REUTERS  
SEOUL

South Korea extended its social distancing policy for another 16 days on Sunday but offered some relief for churches and sporting fixtures, as it reported just eight new coronavirus infections, the lowest in two months. The slightly relaxed guidelines mean high-risk venues like churches will face fewer restrictions, while sports matches such as the popular Korea Baseball Organization (KBO) League can resume without an audience.

"It is safest to maintain the intensive social distancing, but it isn't easy realistically. We need to find a middle ground," Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun told a meeting of government officials. "If we



A voter gets her temperature taken during last week's election. • REUTERS

can maintain a stable management at the current level, we will shift to 'routine social distancing' from May 6," Mr. Chung said.

Health authorities have said this would allow a reopening of the economy, while maintaining guidelines on disinfection and preventing the spread of the virus in people's lives.

South Korea in March issued an administrative

## Spain sees sharp drop in toll

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
MADRID

Spain registered a sharp drop in its daily death toll from the new coronavirus on Sunday, with the number falling to 410 from 565. The total number of fatalities in Spain, the third hardest-hit country in the world after the U.S. and Italy, has reached 20,453, the Health Ministry said. "It's a number that gives us hope," said Health Ministry Emergencies Coordinator Fernando Simon of the daily death toll, at its lowest in four weeks. Infections rose to 1,95,344, with 4,218 new cases in the past 24 hours.

## China should face consequences: Trump

'Was it a mistake, or was it deliberate?'

REUTERS  
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Saturday that China should face consequences if it was "knowingly responsible" for the COVID-19 pandemic. "If it was a mistake, a mistake is a mistake. But if they were knowingly responsible, yeah, I mean, then sure there should be consequences," Mr. Trump told reporters at a daily briefing. He did not elaborate on what actions the United States might take.

Mr. Trump and senior aides have sharply criticised China for a lack of transparency after the coronavirus broke out in its Wuhan province. This week he suspended aid to the World Health Organization accusing it of being "China-centric."

Mr. Trump also raised questions about a Wuhan virology laboratory that Fox News this week reported had likely developed the coronavirus as part of China's effort to demonstrate its capacity to identify and combat viruses. Mr. Trump has said his government is seeking to determine whether the virus emanated from a Chinese lab.

Mr. Trump also again cast doubt on China's death toll, which was revised up on Friday. China said 1,300 people who died of the coronavirus in the central city of Wuhan – half the total – were not counted, but dismissed allegations of a cover-up.



**In movement we trust:** A protest in Austin, Texas, against the partial lockdown imposed by the State government. • REUTERS

## Govt., Opposition clash over holding poll

Sri Lanka PM calls for new date after postponement of April 25 election

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

Even as Sri Lanka's health authorities continue fighting COVID-19, which has so far affected 269 persons, the government and Opposition parties have expressed conflicting views on holding a poll during the raging global pandemic.

Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa has urged the Election Commission to fix the date for the general election, after the poll scheduled for April 25 was postponed in the wake of the coronavirus. In a statement issued on Saturday, Mr. Rajapaksa said the Commission was "mandatorily required" to fix another date for the polls. "Things have to come back to normal sooner or later," he said.

The PM's message comes at a time when Sri Lanka prepares to ease the curfew this

week in select districts, after a near-total lockdown for a month. As of Sunday, as many as 96 persons have recovered, while over 100 others are being monitored under quarantine, according to Sri Lanka's Health Promotion Bureau.

EC to decide?

On the revised date for the polls, the Election Commission asked President Rajapaksa to seek the Supreme Court's opinion on the matter, citing the exceptional circumstances following the pandemic. However, President Rajapaksa has maintained that the question of seeking the apex court's ruling did not arise, when "the date for fixing the poll is the responsibility of the Election Commission". The Commission is yet to comment.

Meanwhile, Opposition parties have raised concern



A girl being tested in Colombo. • REUTERS

over holding elections in the near future, while the threat of the pandemic lingers. Former Speaker Karu Jayasuriya urged the government and the Opposition to engage with the Commission "urgently" to prevent an "unnecessary constitutional crisis", as the last Parliament was dissolved on March 2.

Reconvening Parliament

Almost all Opposition parties have sought the recon-

vening of Parliament using President Gotabaya's executive powers, while urging the Election Commission to refrain from holding poll until the health risk is eliminated. The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) said in its letter to the Commission that until health authorities and the police provide "complete clearance" for free movement throughout the country, it is not possible to publish the notice of poll, fixing the revised date for the general election. The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) said that there can be no effective exercise of democracy in the form of an election in the midst of such a pandemic.

Senior doctors in Sri Lanka earlier told *The Hindu* that a reasonable assessment of the situation was possible only at the end of four to five incubation cycles. Sri Lanka has finished two.

## Australia calls for probe into response

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
SYDNEY

Australia on Sunday called for an independent investigation into the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the World Health Organization's handling of the crisis.

Foreign Minister Marise Payne said the country would "insist" on a review that would probe, in part, China's early response to the outbreak in Wuhan, the city where COVID-19 emerged late last year.

"We need to know the sorts of details that an independent review would identify for us about the genesis of the virus, about the approaches to dealing with it (and) addressing the openness with which information was shared," she told public broadcaster ABC.

## Beijing prioritising arrests over pandemic: Hong Kong leader

Avery Ng was among the 15 protesters held on Saturday

REUTERS  
HONG KONG

Suppressing Hong Kong's democracy movement is a priority for China, even in the midst of the coronavirus crisis, a top pro-democracy leader said on Sunday, a day after police arrested him and 14 others in a surprise crackdown.

The United States and others criticised the arrest of the 15 on charges of organising and participating in anti-government protests last year, the biggest crackdown on the pro-democracy movement since the outbreak of the protests almost a year ago. "This is all happening while we are in midst of a pandemic," pro-democracy activist Avery Ng told Reuters by telephone. "The world is dealing with this vi-



Avery Ng in 2017. • AFP

rus, but this signals that Beijing still sees a political crackdown in Hong Kong is a top priority."

Those arrested included Democratic Party founder and barrister Martin Lee, 81, millionaire publishing tycoon Jimmy Lai, 71, and former lawmaker and barrister Margaret Ng, 72.

Police said those arrested were charged with organis-

ing and participating in unlawful assemblies on August 18 and October 1 and 20 last year. They are due to appear in court on May 18. Police said more arrests were possible. Avery Ng and some of the others arrested were released on bail late on Saturday.

The arrests prompted criticism from the United States and Britain, which both called for Hong Kong's rule of law to be maintained.

"The United States condemns the arrest of pro-democracy advocates in Hong Kong," U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said.

In Britain, a Foreign Office representative said the government expected any arrests and court procedures to be "conducted in a fair and transparent manner".

ELSEWHERE



U.K. will not lift lockdown now: Gove

LONDON

Britain is not considering lifting the lockdown imposed almost four weeks ago given "deeply worrying" increases in the toll, Minister Michael Gove said on Sunday. "The facts... are clear at the moment that we should not be thinking of lifting of these restrictions yet," he said. REUTERS

No letter sent to Trump, says North Korea

SEOUL

North Korea on Sunday denied a letter was sent to U.S. President Donald Trump, KCNA said, citing a Foreign Ministry press chief. The denial comes after Mr. Trump told reporters that he recently received a "nice note" from North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. REUTERS

## Afghan girls turn car parts into ventilators

The team hopes to build a prototype by May or June and submit it to the Health Ministry

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
KABUL

On most mornings, Somaya Farooqi and four other teenage girls pile into her dad's car and head to a mechanic's workshop. They use back roads to skirt police checkpoints set up to enforce a lockdown in their city of Herat, one of Afghanistan's hot spots of the COVID-19 pandemic. The members of Afghanistan's prize-winning girls' robotics team say they're on a life-saving mission – to build a breathing machine from used car parts and help their war-stricken country battle the virus. "If we even save one life with our device, we will be proud," said Ms. Farooqi, 17.

Their pursuit is particularly remarkable in conservative Afghanistan. Only a generation ago, during the rule of the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban in the late 1990s, girls weren't allowed to go to

school. Ms. Farooqi's mother was pulled from school in third grade.

Only 400 ventilators

Afghanistan faces the pandemic nearly empty-handed. It has only 400 ventilators for a population of more than 36.6 million. So far, it has reported just over 900 coronavirus cases, including 30 deaths, but the actual number is suspected to be much higher since test kits are in short supply. This has spurred Ms. Farooqi and her team members to help come up with a solution.

On a typical morning, Ms. Farooqi's father collects the girls from their homes and drives them to the team's office in Herat, zigzagging through side streets to skirt checkpoints. From there, another car takes them to a mechanic's workshop on the outskirts of the city. In Herat, residents are on-



**Quest to save lives:** A group of Afghan girls developing two types of ventilator devices using car spare parts. • AP

ly permitted to leave their homes for urgent needs. The robotics team has a limited number of permits for cars.

So far, Ms. Farooqi's father hasn't been able to get one, but the girls are in a hurry. "We are concerned about security driving out of the city but there is no other option, we have to try to save people's lives," Ms. Farooqi said. At the workshop, the

team is experimenting with two different designs, including an open-source blueprint from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The parts being used include the motor of a Toyota windshield wiper, batteries and sets of bag valve masks, or manual oxygen pumps. A group of mechanics helps them build the frame of a ventilator. Daniela Rus, a

professor at MIT, welcomed the team's initiative to develop the prototype. "It will be excellent to see it tested and locally produced," she said.

Getting funding

Tech entrepreneur Roya Mahboob, who founded the team and raises funds to empower girls, said she hopes Ms. Farooqi's group will finish building a prototype by May or June. In all, the team has 15 members who work on various projects. The ventilator model, once completed, would then be sent to the Health Ministry for testing, initially on animals, said spokesman Wahid Mayar.

Ms. Farooqi, who was just 14 when she participated in the first World Robot Olympiad in the U.S., in 2017, said she and her team members hope to make a contribution. "Afghans should be helping Afghanistan in this pandemic," she said.

## Karzai welcomes India's involvement in talks

Khalilzad made a call to Jaishankar

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE  
NEW DELHI

Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai has welcomed the American gesture to bring in India into the ongoing negotiation for sustained peace in the war-torn country. The response followed hours after U.S. Special Representative Zalmay Khalilzad discussed the state of the peace talks and the coronavirus crisis in South Asia with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.

"I have said this since the process began... I do hope India will join the peace process in support of a sovereign and united Afghanistan with a strong government, in keeping with the traditional friendship between India and Afghanistan," Mr. Karzai, who met with Indian envoy to Af-

ghanistan Vinay Kumar on Saturday, told *The Hindu*.

During his visit to Delhi in January, Mr. Karzai had also pitched for India's support to the U.S.-Taliban and intra-Afghan process in meetings with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval.

Mr. Khalilzad on Saturday made the move and said, "I reached out to Indian External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar yesterday to discuss the latest on the Afghan peace process..." He said that both sides discussed the issue of release of prisoners. "We also spent some time covering the immediate and longer-term impact of the coronavirus."

The development is significant as it came days after a six-nation talk on the Afghan scenario was held which had excluded India.

Afghanistan has been ravaged by war since 2001 when a US-led coalition overthrew the Taliban. Since October 2018, Taliban representatives and US officials have been meeting in Doha, Qatar trying to chalk out a peace treaty. **The negotiations focus on three elements:**

**Withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan.**

**To prevent Afghanistan from being used by international terrorist groups.**

**Permanent ceasefire between the Taliban and Afghanistan.**

Many security analysts in Afghanistan and elsewhere had criticised the US-Taliban talks as it had kept the Afghanistan government out. Many believe that the talks would legitimise the Taliban. The U.S. President Donald Trump had said that countries like India, Iran, Russia and Turkey would have to fight against terrorists in Afghanistan at some point of time, implying that the job against terrorism is being done only by the United States. Trump also indicated that the U.S. forces would not completely withdraw from Afghanistan and America would have "somebody there" to make sure that the Taliban does not regain control. Trump also said that the U.S. is fighting the terrorists in Afghanistan despite being 7,000 miles away, while India and Pakistan are not doing so even after being next door.

**India's Stand**

India's position has always been that it does not have any direct conversation with Taliban.

However, in 2018, India sent two retired diplomats, at the non-official level to join negotiations with Taliban at Moscow. Some experts argue that India should have an open contact with Taliban as Taliban are part of Afghanistan's political process. Also, the Taliban has never criticized India. If they come into power, they would like India to continue with the development part. It also supports India's strategic partnership with Afghanistan. India, being a good friend, is helping the Afghan state in the rehabilitation process. This has taken away the large number of youth in Afghanistan from the path of terrorism.

India has an investment of over 3 billion dollars in Afghanistan.

India wants an Afghan led, controlled, owned process in which all stakeholders have a role to play.

It stresses on the legitimate democratically elected government in Afghanistan.

India is seen as a stabilizing force by Afghanistan which can keep a check on Pakistan.

**Should India place its boots in Afghanistan?**

If India does not send boots on the ground, then those terrorists can affect its national security through the Kashmir Valley. Hence, it makes more sense that instead of fighting them in their own territory, India should fight them in Afghanistan.

However, putting boots on the ground is not sustainable. It leads to an ever increasing troop commitment.

The limitations of resource options and negative image projection that such a step may carry are other issues in increasing the military presence in Afghanistan. Also, similar intervention by the US has not brought the desired results.

What India can do?

If India wants to help Afghans militarily, it can provide them with weapons and artillery.

India also has an option of supporting a brigade worth of commandos in Afghanistan by training Afghan military. After the Wuhan process, the Prime Minister of India and the Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed on China-India plus one model in Afghanistan. Both started training the Afghan diplomats. On the same lines, both the countries can come together for security cooperation in Afghanistan. If invited, India should not feel reluctant in participating in the peace discussions.

**Other Countries' Stand**

**United States:** There is two-track Presidency within the US.

The Pentagon (headquarters of the Department of Defense) wants a permanent projection in the region for strategic reasons.

On the other hand, Trump and other populists are keen to face the domestic American electorate and maintain that the US has finally pulled out of all the costly and unwanted wars.

**Russia:** Russia has started talking with the Taliban for its own reasons.

Moscow recognizes the Taliban's territorial gains and prefers the group to ISIS.

In fact, an influential section of Russian policy makers have come to view the Taliban as a useful partner in its fight against the ISIS.

**Pakistan:** Pakistan has remained part of the US direct peace negotiations with Taliban insurgents.

Pakistan realises that once the Taliban enters a power sharing agreement with the Afghan government as part of the US Peace Process, then it will not be as pliable as it was before.

Pakistan have been providing support to the destabilising elements in Afghanistan, despite the US aid withdrawal.

In such situations, China is one country that can influence and pressurise Pakistan

China has creditor rights over Pakistan due to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

More movements such as the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) can reform Pakistan from within.

However, some experts argue that Pakistan should not be allowed to interfere in matters related to Afghanistan.

<p>"Daddy has simplified the groceries' list. Half-a-kilo each of whatever is available and five kilos each of whatever is not!"</p>	SBI Life	eShield	80	15,070	Activ assure Diamond with Super NCB	8,732	Edelweiss General	Hospital Room Eligibility		
	TATA AIA Life	Maha Raksha Supreme	100	12,980	Activ assure Diamond with Unlimited Reload	8,494	Oriental	Alternate Medicine		
<p>*Divide coverage upto 60 yrs for age 30 yrs</p>				<p>Source: www.policybazaar.com</p>		Activ assure Diamond with Super NCB and Unlimited Reload	9,287	Pre and Post Hospitalisation Coverage	Individual Mediclaim Policy	12,080
<p>For a 30-year-old male, non-smoker, for sum insured of Rs 10 lakh living in a metro city</p>										
<p>Source: www.policybazaar.com</p>										

## Peace Deal and the Possible Consequences

It is quite possible that the Peace Deal might take place soon.

The reason being that Afghanistan depends on the USA and Europe for the finances to maintain its troops vis-a-vis Taliban. The USA, thus, would pressurize the country.

Taliban has an ultimate goal of imposing Sharia in their respective regions. This is in conflict with what the people in Afghan want. Afghanistan has got its own Constitution and people want to be governed as per the Constitution. This will make any peace deal that they would have, unsustainable.

Taliban will hardly share power with the Afghan Government. Thus it is quite possible that even after the peace deal, the country will be back to civil war again.

Then, the world will face twin challenges in Afghanistan: ISIS and Taliban.

ISIS is attacking directly people on secretarial grounds unlike the Taliban which made it sound more like a broader ethnic or a nationalist movement.

ISIS is more divisive and hitting soft targets like ordinary civilians much more than Taliban.

Also, there is apparently a link between so called Pakistani Taliban on the Pakistani side of the border and the ISIS factions.

Afghanistan will become hub of all terrorists activities which is not good for any country. This will also lead to more problems in the Central Asia i.e. possibility of more attacks by Talibans in Central Asian countries such as Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, etc.

## Way Forward

Talking only with Taliban is a short-sighted policy. Dialogue needs to take place among all the stakeholders in Afghanistan.

To resolve conflict within Afghanistan, the battlefield needs to be isolated i.e. external support to the terrorist activities needs to be abandoned. Also, the countries need to keep their respective interests aside, to build peace in the region.

The US needs to made its policy vis-a-vis Afghanistan clear.

India and Central Asian Republics can help in establishing peace in the region.

More militancy is witnessed in the region where the state fails to deliver. Thus, administrative reforms within Afghanistan is need of the hour.

has worked with the Indian women's team and coached Assam in the latest domestic season, cleared seven modules to obtain the certification. The 38-year-old is already a BCCI-certified Level 2 coach and his next goal is to clear Level 3. **PH**



**Wait continues:** Camps, like the one conducted by Kedar CA, have not started because of COVID-19. **• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT**

**S. DIPAK RAGAV**  
CHENNAI

With the coronavirus pandemic bringing sports to a standstill, the spillover effects are felt far and wide. The summer vacation time is when most children take their initial steps to pursue a sport of passion, joining different camps across the city. But with their peak business season shut down, these camps are facing a tough time.

### Worried

From kids missing out on crucial time to spruce up their game and the potential drop off in the future, camp organisers are worried.

Lakshmi Kumar of Wahe Guru Cricket Academy, who has three grounds in the city at Porur, Velachery and Vandalur, says there are multiple issues to be figured out.

"On the monetary side, we will lose about ₹3-4 lakh in these two months and if things extend up to July, it could be even more.

"We run three teams in the TNCA lower division league and our selection process is also affected because we can't evaluate the players."

Future Stars Cricket Academy's V. Suresh, who has been running his camp for the last two decades, feels the bigger issue, more than the monetary aspect, is about the children who are in the cusp of selection for the TNCA in various age-groups. "This is when we can work on a kid's game. It is especially difficult for some of the under-16 boys because if they miss this window, they might have to wait for a few more years."

Financially, these two months play a huge role in getting children hooked to the game and hope they will continue to attend the annual camp during weekends once schools reopen.

### Additional expense

Kedar Cricket Academy's chief coach S. Kedarnath also points out there is additional expense that has to be incurred by the academies towards infrastructure.

"The wickets have not been watered for a while now and we don't know the condition of mats and nets as well. We will have to spend money once again to spruce things up before we start."

Africa captain Faf du Plessis.

"A great thing that CSK has done over the years, and that's credit to MS and (Stephen) Fleming the coach, is they have targeted captains – (Brendon) McCullum, myself, (Dwayne) Bravo, obviously MS, (Suresh) Raina's captained a bit – because they want thinking cricketers," the 35-year-old told CSK's website.

"So, there's a lot of leaders



**Receptive leaders:** Faf du Plessis says that CSK skipper Dhoni and coach Stephen Fleming value the inputs from international captains in the team. **• FILE PHOTO: R. RAGU**

within group, that experience of thinking cricketers is what they want and obviously it has proven to be

very successful," he added. "CSK is a great franchise to be a part of. MS has got such strong leadership.

head of Anti Corruption Unit (ACU) Ajit Singh, who says Indian players are well aware of the modus operandi of fixers and are quick to report anything suspect.

The ICC ACU head Alex Marshall, in an interview to *The Guardian*, had said players using various social media platforms during the lockdown could lead to corrupt approaches being made and that people need

approach you and their modus operandi."

"(They will) try and behave like a fan and then try to meet you through someone who may be your acquaintance," he said. "Most of them (India players), whenever it happens, they report to us," he said.

"We track whatever can be tracked online. Obviously, the physical verification part is out of question now."



### Vanessa Bryant pays touching tribute to Kobe on wedding anniversary

LOS ANGELES  
Vanessa Bryant celebrated the 19th anniversary of her wedding to her late husband Kobe Bryant on Saturday with a touching Instagram post. "My king, my heart, my best friend. Happy 19th wedding anniversary. I miss you so much. I wish you were here to hold me in your arms. I love you," she wrote, posting a picture of the couple. **AP**

### Veteran sports journalist Goswami passes away

KOLKATA  
Veteran journalist Samir Goswami, a much-liked figure in the Kolkata sports journalism fraternity, passed away on Saturday after cardiac arrest. He was 65 and is survived by wife. Loved for his amiable nature, Goswami worked for more than two decades in popular Bengali newspaper *Bartaman*. **PH**

## Bhuthia in FIFA's tribute video

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Former India captain Bhai-chung Bhuthia has joined football greats Pele, Diego Maradona and Zinedine Zidane in applauding healthcare workers and humanity's other "heroes" for putting their own lives at risk to help others during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bhuthia is among 50 past and present stars who featured in #WeWillWin campaign of FIFA, a special video to pay tribute to the efforts made by healthcare workers and other professionals who are giving their all to ensure the society continues to function in the face of the novel coronavirus. Other greats who feature include Ronaldo (Brazil) and Iker Casillas.

## Shutterbugs make the most of lockdown

SATYASUNDAR BARIK  
BHUBANESWAR

The prolonged absence of humans and associated traffic in the wake of the nationwide lockdown has provided Odisha's photographers a never before opportunity to capture nature at its pristine best.

In normal times, hundreds of boats ferry devotees to the temple on the scenic Kalijai Island in Chilika Lake every day. But, when photographs shot by drones made their way onto social media platforms, the island looked like a massive ship floating on transparent turquoise water.

Stunning photographs of the confluence of the Rushikulya River and Chilika at Rambha taken during lockdown have left people in awe. Many got to discover that actually visited places were often so beautiful.

The Twitter handle of Vijay Amruta Kulanage, the Ganjam district collector, is filled



**Scenic:** Tourist boats anchored at the Chilika Lagoon's Balugaon jetty. **• BISWARANJAN ROUT**

with photographs showing how Ganjam's places of tourist interest look when humans are not around.

In fact, according to Keerthi Vasana, a young IAS officer posted in Ganjam, the district authorities have been documenting all tourist places during lockdown period.

Professional photographers, videographers and

roads, city skylines and landmarks have made people realise how beautiful these structures appear without anthropogenic pressure.

"Documenting tourist places with or without people is a continuous process for us," State Tourism Director Sachin R. Jadhav said, when asked if Odisha Tourism was making the best use of the lockdown.

Amiya Pani, a producer at the city-based documentary agency 'Light House', said, "the lockdown has brought an unprecedented tranquillity in nature. This time may not come in future. We are tempted to capture everything – nature, people's struggles and cities – through our lens during this lockdown, but we are constrained by restrictions."

People with smartphones, however, have been endlessly clicking photographs and posting them on social media.

THE HINDU GROUP

Ring around the Rosie  
~~Ringa Ringa Roses~~  
Posies - a small bunch of flowers  
Pocket full of posies  
Atishoo! Atishoo!  
Hussha! Bussha!

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# Grapes

## Soil & Climate

### Climate

Grapes generally require a hot and dry climate during its growth and fruiting periods. It is successfully grown in areas where the temperature range is from 15-40°C. High temperatures above 40°C during the fruit growth and development reduce fruit set and consequently the berry size. Low temperatures below 15°C followed by forward pruning impair the budbreak leading to crop failure.

The fruitfulness of buds is influenced by light. Light intensity of 2,400-ft. candle is essential for optimum growth. However, low light intensities during the active growth stage (45-75 days after pruning) and fruit bud formation adversely affects the crop.

It is most successfully grown at elevations ranging from 200-250m above m.s.l.

Area with annual rainfall not exceeding 900mm well distributed throughout the year is ideal. However, rainfall during flowering and fruit ripening is not favourable as it leads to the spread of downy mildew disease.

High atmospheric humidity is detrimental during vegetative growth and fruiting. At a high humidity the vegetative growth of vines is vigorous which affects the fruit size and quality. Similarly high humidity during 30-110 days after forward pruning favours the development of fungal diseases.

### Soil

Grapes can be cultivated in variety of soils including sandy loams, sandy clay loams, red sandy soils, shallow to medium black soils and red loams. The soil should be well drained, having good water holding capacity and devoid of any hard pan or impervious layer in the top 90-cm, with water table at least 6.5m below. Grapes can also be grown successfully over a wide range of soil pH (4.0-9.5) however, soils having pH range of 6.5-8.0 are considered ideal.

Major Grape Growing Regions	Soil Types
Uttar Pradesh & Haryana	Sandy loams sandy clay loams.
Andhra Pradesh	Red sandy soils.
North interior Karnataka & Maharashtra	Shallow-medium deep black.
South interior Karnataka & Tamil Nadu	Red loams.