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Foodgrain stock comfortable to manage till next March: FCI chief
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NEARBY



CM writes to Kejriwal on treatment for T.N. people

CHENNAI
 Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami wrote to the Delhi counterpart Arvind Kejriwal on Friday, urging the latter to instruct the authorities concerned to extend best possible care to 559 persons from Tamil Nadu who attended the Tablighi Jamaat event and have been quarantined/hospitalised in the national capital.
TAMIL NADU ▶ PAGE 2

More recovered cases than active ones in T.N.

CHENNAI
 For the first time, the number of recovered cases in the State nudged ahead of the number of active cases on Friday. A total of 114 persons who had recovered from COVID-19 were discharged on Friday, taking the tally to 866. The number of active cases stood at 864 in the State.
TAMIL NADU ▶ PAGE 2

Govt. raises ₹6,560 crore through bond sale

CHENNAI
 The Tamil Nadu government has raised ₹6,560 crore through sale of bonds known as State development loans from March 30 till April 21, according to data from Reserve Bank of India.
TAMIL NADU ▶ PAGE 2

METROPOLIS WEEKEND ▶ 4 PAGES

India records largest single-day spike of 1,752 cases; toll hits 723

MHA terms situation in Chennai, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Surat 'serious'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
 NEW DELHI

Over nine lakh persons are under active COVID-19 surveillance in India, the Union Health Ministry said on Friday, as the total number of cases reached 23,452. The death toll stood at 723.

The country registered another biggest single-day spike with over 1,752 positive COVID cases since Thursday. India currently has 17,915 active cases, while 4,813 people have recovered, which puts the recovery rate at 20.57%. Joint Secretary in the Health Ministry Lav Agarwal said.

Separately, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), in a statement, said the situation in emerging and major hotspots, including Ahmedabad, Surat, Hyderabad and

COVID-19

Chennai, is serious. The statement added that violations of lockdown measures reported in some parts of the country pose a serious health hazard to the public and may lead to the spread of COVID-19.

Speaking at the daily press briefing, Joint Secretary in the MHA Punya Saliia Sri-vasvata noted that the Centre has sent five new Inter-Ministerial Central Teams (IMCTs)

Changing hotspots

The burden of COVID-19 cases has come down lately in Kerala, while it has spiralled in Gujarat. Whereas Maharashtra has consistently recorded the highest share of India's cases

Case burden. The table lists the % of cases from Jan. 30 to Mar. 24 (Period 1), from Mar. 25 to Apr. 10 (2) and from Apr. 11 to Apr. 24 (3)

State	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3
Maharashtra	19%	21%	31%
Gujarat	6%	5%	14%
Delhi	5%	13%	9%
Rajasthan	6%	7%	9%
M.P.	2%	6%	8%
U.P.	7%	6%	7%
T.N.	3%	13%	5%
Telangana	6%	6%	3%
Karnataka	7%	2%	2%
Kerala	19%	4%	1%

Death burden. The table lists % of deaths from Jan. 30 to Apr. 10 (1) and from Apr. 11 to Apr. 24 (2)

State	Period 1	Period 2
Maharashtra	44%	36%
Gujarat	7%	19%
M.P.	14%	10%
Delhi	5%	8%
A.P.	2%	5%
T.N.	3%	2%

■ Only States with considerable number of cases/deaths were chosen



to Gujarat, Telangana and Tamil Nadu to assess the situation.

IMCTs are already in Mumbai and Pune in Maharashtra, Indore in Madhya Pradesh, Jaipur in Rajasthan and Kolkata and Jalpaiguri in West Bengal.

According to reports from the State Health Departments, the total number of cases in the country stood at 24,485, with 18,257 active

cases. The nationwide death toll was 781, an increase of 62 fatalities since Thursday.

The Health Ministry said there were 15 districts that have not reported any fresh case since the past 28 days. These include three new districts - Durg and Rajnandgaon in Chattisgarh and Shivpuri in Madhya Pradesh. "Further, 80 districts from 23 States/UTs have not reported any new cases since

the last 14 days," Mr. Agarwal said.

Reiterating that the lockdown had helped India keep its COVID-19 numbers low, Chairman of the Empowered Group-1, V.K. Paul, noted that this "big decision has proved to be very timely and beneficial."

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

India must be self-reliant, says Modi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
 NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the biggest message arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic was that the country should be self-reliant and self-sufficient for the majority of its needs. This was necessary if the nation faced such a crisis again, he pointed out.

Mr. Modi was addressing sarpanches from across the country through video-conference on Panchayati Raj Day, when he launched e-GramSwaraj, for monitoring of rural infrastructure works and e-governance, and Swamitva programme, which involves mapping rural housing and land holdings via technology, including drones.

"The global coronavirus pandemic has created an unprecedented crisis but it has also given important messages with regard to the way we have lived so far. The most important message from this pandemic is that we need to be self-reliant. This self-reliance should be at the village, district, state and national level in terms of our needs and our ability to satisfy them within our own country. We should not look to other countries to satisfy our needs," he said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Total lockdown in 5 T.N. cities from tomorrow

72 persons test positive on Friday

What stays open?

A look at the services that will be allowed to operate under the new lockdown rules



WHAT IS ALLOWED

- Hospitals, ambulances, pharmacies, hears vehicles
- Govt. services: Secretariat, health dept., police, electricity, water supply
- Banks with 33% staff, ATMs
- Petrol bunks (8 a.m. to 12 noon only), ration shops, FCI godowns
- Amma canteens, home delivery of cooked food ordered over phone/apps
- Vegetable markets with restrictions. Mobile units for fruit/vegetable sales
- Print & electronic media



WHAT IS NOT ALLOWED

- Shops, supermarkets which were allowed to operate earlier
- All private establishments, including IT firms
- Registrar offices

UNDER TOTAL LOCKDOWN

- Chennai, Madurai and Coimbatore from 6 a.m. on April 26 to 9 p.m. on April 29
- Salem and Tiruppur from 6 a.m. on April 26 to 9 p.m. on April 28

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
 CHENNAI

A complete lockdown that would see the closure of shops, including grocery stores, will be enforced in Chennai, Coimbatore and Madurai from 6 a.m. on Sunday to 9 p.m. on Wednesday. This will be more intense than the current lockdown to contain the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami announced on Friday that Salem and Tiruppur would face a complete lockdown from Sunday to Tuesday. "In all areas other than these municipal corporations, the existing

restrictions will remain in place," he said. However, some essential services would be permitted.

Later in the day, District Collectors of Kancheepuram, Chengalpattu and Tiruvallur announced that the complete lockdown would be imposed in certain areas of their respective districts which are adjoining the Greater Chennai Corporation for four days.

Meanwhile, 72 persons tested positive in the State, taking the total to 1,755. The total number of deaths stood at 22.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Uttar Pradesh to bring back migrant workers in phases

CM instructs officials to prepare a working plan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
 LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh will bring back migrant workers stranded in other States and have completed 14 days of quarantine in a phased manner. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday instructed officials to prepare a working plan and come up with details, his office said in a statement after a high-level meeting.

"After screening and testing such people, the concerned State government should start the process of sending them back. After they are brought to the Uttar Pradesh borders, the State government will transport them to their districts by bus," said the government. Mr. Adityanath asked offi-



Testing times: A health worker checking the temperature of a woman at a food distribution point in Noida on Friday. ▶ PTI

cial to make preparations for keeping the migrants under 14 days of quarantine in their respective districts and to sanitise and vacate shelter homes well in time.

Additional Chief Secretary, Home Department, Awanish Awasthi, said the Chief Minister had instructed officials to send back migrants of other States who had completed 14 days of quarantine in Uttar Pradesh. The move was praised by

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. "I have been pressing this issue and this is a significant step in that direction. To make this fully successful, a plan must be made for the return of other workers. If all of us cooperate with a positive attitude in national interest, then the fight against coronavirus will get a lot of strength," she tweeted in Hindi.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Ranil calls for regional cooperation

MEERA SRINIVASAN
 COLOMBO

The SAARC Secretariat should play an active role in the region's response to COVID-19, along with "someone in-charge", according to Sri Lanka's former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe.

"I don't know if it can be handled from Kathmandu alone. If you can, well and good. But you may need another city. It can be Bengaluru, Colombo, any city," he said on Friday.

"This is a good time for a regional cooperation programme. This is a global pandemic without a global leadership. Maybe the region can't provide leadership for all. But the first virtual meeting of SAARC leaders was good, looking at the background and the problems that are there."

INTERVIEW ON ▶ PAGE 11

COVID-19 rocks Ramanagaram prison

District loses green zone tag after 5 from Padarayanapura test positive in jail

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
 BENGALURU

The Karnataka government faced embarrassment as well as political heat on Friday as five of the 121 persons, who had been shifted to Ramanagaram district jail after they allegedly indulged in vandalism in Padarayanapura in Bengaluru last week, tested positive for COVID-19. While the patients have been shifted to a government hospital, others were shifted to the Haj Bhavan in Bengaluru.

There was palpable anger in Ramanagaram against the State government for lodging those undertrial in the district, which hitherto had earned the distinction of being a green zone with no case of COVID-19.

With the undertrials from



Virus impact: Inmates being shifted from the Ramanagaram prison on Friday. ▶ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Bengaluru having tested positive, Ramanagaram has lost out on benefits allowed to rural industries in green zones of being able to resume operations. The relaxations were announced earlier in the day.

Former chief minister H. D. Kumaraswamy, whose As-

ssembly constituency falls in Ramanagaram district, squarely blamed the State government for the district losing out its green zone status.

The episode also meant that 62 police and prison officials have been designated as primary contacts and will

have to be quarantined. All 30 officials at the Ramanagaram District Prison will be quarantined based on the advice of the District Health Officer (DHO), said Director General of Police, Prisons, Karnataka, Alok Mohan.

The family members of the prison staff told Mr. Kumaraswamy that, "The prison officials were not given any protective gear like PPE suits. They were only given masks and forced to interact with the inmates brought from a COVID-19 hit area in Bengaluru."

Medical Education Minister K. Sudhakar, in-charge of COVID-19 in the State, said the decision to lodge the accused from the affected areas in Bengaluru in a green zone could have been avoided.

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Recently, Prime Minister of India proposed to set up a South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Emergency Fund (\$10 million) and formation of a Rapid Response Team (of doctors, specialists, testing equipment and attendant infrastructure) in order to combat Covid-19.

Though, this initiative may or may not fully succeed in eradicating the epidemic, in a densely-populated South Asia which has very poor public health awareness and infrastructure. However, this may have prompted the reactivation and revival of the SAARC.

Problems faced by SAARC nations vis-a-vis Coronavirus

The Maldives and Sri Lanka highlighted the massive economic impact of the dramatic decline of tourism that is a major source of revenue and employment.

Land-locked Afghanistan is struggling to cope with the open border with virus-infected Iran and Pakistan's decision to close the border through which much of the nation's trade flows occur.

Apart from this, many SAARC countries share borders with China, the place where the virus originated. Also, the population density in Indian subcontinent is very high, so there are more chances of rapid transmission of infection.

Idea of SAARC

In 1980's the idea of SAARC was initiated by General Zia Ur Rehman of Bangladesh, which resulted in the first summit of the seven leaders of the region in 1985. Later, Afghanistan joined in 2007. However, in the nearly 35 years of its existence, SAARC has not lived up to its promise of regional integration.

South Asia is the world's least integrated region; less than 5% of the trade of SAARC countries is within. A South Asian Free Trade Zone, which was agreed on in 2006, has not been materialised yet.

The 19th SAARC summit, scheduled to be held in Islamabad in November 2016, was postponed after the terrorist attacks in Uri; none has been held since then.

Why SAARC failed?

Most of the smaller states and external players believe that the India-Pakistan conflict has undermined SAARC.

The reasons for a dysfunctional SAARC:

Bilateral issues cannot be discussed in SAARC but since the organisation relies on the principle of unanimity for all major decisions, Pakistan has often vetoed the major initiatives proposed at SAARC. For example, SAARC Motor Vehicle Agreement proposed at Kathmandu summit, 2014.

For India, Pakistan's use of terror as an instrument of foreign policy has made normal business impossible. Dispute between Pakistan and Afghanistan over the Durand line, is also a reason.

Also, India's economic position vis-a vis other SAARC countries, creates an impression of India being a big brother rather than a strategic partner.

Lack of Trust in Indo-Pakistan relations: After the deadly terror attack on the Indian security forces at Uri in 2016, India refused to engage with the SAARC.

Since then, the SAARC has become almost marginal to the regions' collective consciousness and other organisations such as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) came into the forefront.

Should India continue to neglect SAARC over BIMSTEC?

The two organisations—SAARC and BIMSTEC—focus on geographically overlapping regions. However, this does not make them equal alternatives.

SAARC is a purely regional organisation, whereas BIMSTEC is interregional and connects both South Asia and ASEAN. BIMSTEC provides SAARC countries a unique opportunity to connect with ASEAN.

Further, the scope of BIMSTEC has been undermined by China. Thailand and Myanmar are now economically and strategically closer to China. Apart from it, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh also have extensive economic engagement with China and are struggling to work out balancing strategies between India and China.

The revival of SAARC will also facilitate India's neighbourhood policy in meeting the challenge of regional strategic encroachment by China through its Belt and Road Initiative.

Thus, insofar as their regions of interest overlap, SAARC and BIMSTEC complement each other in terms of functions and goals. . The success of BIMSTEC does not render SAARC pointless; it only adds a new chapter in regional cooperation in South Asia.

amount was handed over by J. Natarajan, president and chief operating officer of the bank, to M.R. Vijayabhaskar, Minister for Transport, according to a statement.

Annamalai University Engineering and Technology Alumni Association (AUE-TAA) said that it is providing food packets to daily wage workers and the under privileged.

The association said it had been providing 600 food packets every day, since the lockdown was extended, and its members had been distributing the packets in Adyar and St. Thomas Mount areas. AUE-TAA is also planning

employees' Association (AI-BEA) said that its general secretary, C.H. Venkatachalam, handed over groceries and provisions, for the next 10 days, to authorities of the Perambur Railway Hospital, following a distress call from Railways officials seeking help for 30 stranded patients and their relatives from north India.

Office bearers of the Tamil Nadu Petroleum Dealers' Association (TNPDA), representing the petroleum dealers of Indian Oil, Hindustan Petroleum and Bharat Petroleum in Tamil Nadu, contributed ₹1 crore to the PM Cares fund, according to a statement.

pretending to be a COVID-19 positive patient.

This entire video/play was staged by the police with the help of volunteers at Palladam on Thursday. The video, which runs for three minutes and 51 seconds, was uploaded on YouTube by the social media unit of the district police and garnered nationwide attention on various social media platforms on Friday.

The skit shows five youths riding bikes without masks. They are caught by the Palladam police during a vehicle check. "Do you know what will happen if you do not wear a mask?" Palladam Inspector (in-charge) G. Palani-



In the video, the youths, locked inside an ambulance, plead with the police and two of them escape through a window.

yammal asks them and ushers them into an ambulance parked nearby. In the ambulance, a person is seen lying down wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), implying that he is a COVID-19 patient. Locked inside the ambulance, the youths plead with the police to release them, and two of them escape through the open window of the vehicle.

Ms. Palaniammal address-

the awareness video. "People are still roaming on the roads. We wanted to drive home the message that [COVID-19] is everywhere," she said. All the youths, including the 'patient', were volunteers who agreed to be a part of this skit, the SP noted.

When asked whether the video inadvertently stigmatises COVID-19 patients, Ms. Mittal clarified it was "not about the patients" and rather stresses on the need for the public to be careful. "When you wake up to the reality, it should not be too late. That is the point which we were trying to drive home through this video," Ms. Mittal said.

besides exports, to resume.

During an interaction on Friday with the 21-member panel, constituted to go into the lockdown exit strategy, most representatives sought specific relaxations, even as they assured compliance with all precautionary measures, a senior official said. "They requested that the government consider opening industries in rural areas and also industries where the workers have been made to stay in hostels," the official said.

The expert committee is expected to submit its second set of suggestions to Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami next week.

down is lifted. "We have assured the government that we will do our best to create awareness among the MSMEs on the safety measures," he said.

A. Sakthivel, chairman of the Apparel Export Promotion Council, said the council sought permission for export units to operate. According to Raja Shanmugham, president of Tiruppur Exporters' Association, the garment industry has urged the government to lift the lockdown. "The industry is crippled with the developments of last quarter and cannot afford to miss forthcoming opportunities," he said.

Incineration of waste from houses of infected persons gets under way

As many as 5,768 residences in the city are part of the exercise

ALOYSIUS XAVIER LOPEZ
CHENNAI

Timings
CHENNAI

SATURDAY, APR. 25
RISE 05:51 SET 18:23
RISE 07:22 SET 20:19

SUNDAY, APR. 26
RISE 05:51 SET 18:23
RISE 08:06 SET 21:11

MONDAY, APR. 27
RISE 05:50 SET 18:23
RISE 08:53 SET 22:05

Chennai Weather	max	min
Thiruvallur	40	27
Chennai Airport	38	28
Chennai City	35	29

Chennai Airport Today
36°C The weather will be warm and cloudy. Rain and thundershowers likely.

Chennai Airport Tomorrow
35°C The weather will be warm and cloudy. Rain and thundershowers likely.

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IN BRIEF

Ten fined for playing cards in Puliyanthope

CHENNAI Police rounded up 10 persons for playing a game of cards in Puliyanthope. A team, led by Inspector Krishnamurthy, patrolling Nehru Nagar caught them sitting in the middle of a narrow street. They were booked under Sections 188 (Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) and 269 (Negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life). After being fined, they were let off with a warning.

Youth held for sharing obscene pictures

CHENNAI Suji alias Kasi, 26, was arrested in Kanniyakumari district following a complaint from a Chennai-based woman doctor alleging he circulated altered photographs and videos of her on social media. The suspect met her on social media. He then invited her and caught her on camera while she was dressing in a lodge. When she refused his demands, he circulated the pictures and videos.

THE HINDU

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No-touch handwash stations in Avadi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The Avadi Municipal Corporation installed no-touch handwash stations at various public places across the locality as a precautionary measure against COVID-19.

The stainless steel equipment, operated with a foot tap, has been installed in five places, including Amma canteens and Corporation Offices.

The equipment, which have liquid soap dispensers, cost ₹46,000 each. Officials of the Avadi Corporation said about 400-500 people are expected to use the facility daily.

There are plans to install more depending on the need.

THE HINDU

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The Chennai Corporation has started incineration of waste collected from residences of persons infected with COVID-19. Waste from houses where residents are quarantined is also being incinerated. Earlier, the waste from 'infected' homes was disposed of using the technique of 'deep burial', at designated locations in various neighborhoods.

"Chennai Corporation has started incineration of the waste from homes of the quarantined in areas such as Tiruvotiyur, Manali, Madhavaram, Tondiarpet and Royapuram. Many zones such as Sholinganallur and Perungudi have done deep burial of the waste. Incineration is safe. So we will incinerate all the waste. At least two tonnes of waste have been incinerated on Friday at the incineration plant in Manali," said a Corporation official.



A resident of Mogappair West trying to slip through the barricade on Maduravoyal Bypass Service Road. - M. VEDHAN

As many as 5,768 houses in the city have started sending waste to the incinerator in Manali. Some of these homes have residents who are on quarantine following infection of family members. Some of the residents in these homes have also been quarantined based on information received by contact tracing of COVID-19 cases.

Direct route
Officials said the residents of all 5,768 houses are cooperating with Corporation workers

in preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the city. "The conservancy workers will give the residents a yellow bag and chemicals for disinfection. The residents will seal the bag with adequate quantities of disinfectants and hand it over to Corporation workers."

The workers will take the waste directly in battery-operated vehicles to the incinerator. The waste will not go to any transfer station, to reduce the risk of infection in the neighborhood of the

transfer station," said an official.

Hand-wash facilities

On Friday, the Corporation began setting up hand-washing facilities in all neighborhoods for conservancy workers. "The workers will use disinfectant to wash hands after completion of work. Over 19,000 workers are carrying out garbage clearance along 33,000 streets. More than 90% workers are reporting for duty. We have provided masks and gloves for the workers. All workers are taken home by special transport vehicles," said an official.

Royapuram is the zone sending the largest quantity of waste for incineration. As many as 2,310 families under quarantine in the zone have handed over waste to Corporation workers for incineration. On Friday, 2.25 tonnes of waste were incinerated and 2.29 tonnes buried at designated locations.

For second day running, Anna Salai closed for traffic

Diversions on other arterial roads likely, say police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI



The barricaded entry to Wallajah Road from Anna Salai on Friday. - K.V. SRINIVASAN

The city traffic police continue to block vehicles on Anna Salai and effected diversions at important junctions to prevent motorists from making unnecessary trips during the lockdown.

Many motorists were caught unawares and found themselves stranded at important junctions such as Kotturupam, Turnbells Road, General Patters Road, Wallajah Road and Little Mount.

M.N. Mayilvahanan, Deputy Commissioner, Traffic (South), said: "As many motorists are not aware of this measure, we are guiding them to take diversions at each junction. We will experience with this on other roads also. No one has been stranded here. We are only diverting vehicular movement to other roads to reduce the traffic on Anna Salai."

People travelling from Guindy to Central can take a

U-turn at Little Mount Junction and proceed on Taluk Road, Sardar Patel Road, Gandhi Mandapam Road and T.T.K. Road.

Restricted usage

"Local residents who live adjacent to Anna Salai from Little Mount to Anna Flyover use the arterial road and we are restricting people who come from other areas," said the Deputy Commissioner.

Motorists coming from Gandhi Mandapam Road would be allowed to proceed on Turnbells Point and can reach Nandanam signatana and proceed through Venkatana-

rayana Road, Boag Road to G.N. Chetty Road. Police said as many used Anna Salai, they had now diverted them onto T.T.K. Road or Beach Road. Further diversions on other arterial roads are likely after assessing the situation, officials said.

They added that only ambulances and essential service vehicles were being allowed. The road was open in the vicinity of hospitals.

Another senior police officer said, "Many don't realise the seriousness of the pandemic. We have seized more than 1,300 vehicles on Wednesday."

18% of residents housebound in 157 containment zones of city

Curbs to be eased 28 days after last positive case is reported

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

At least 18% of city residents have been confined to their homes owing to the emergence of COVID-19 cases in various localities.

And as many as 157 locations have been cordoned off by barricades to prevent the spread of the disease. The city reported more than 400 cases on Thursday and more than 50 new cases have been reported on Friday.

Taking the initiative

Chennai Corporation officials said they were taking initiatives to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in locations where positive cases have been reported.

According to data com-

According to data compiled by the Corporation, over 3.6 lakh families all over the city are confined to their homes without permission to venture outside

plied by the Chennai Corporation, over 3.6 lakh families in the city are confined to their homes without any permission to venture out on the streets because of reports of positive cases in their area.

The city has an estimated number of 20 lakh households, all of which have been monitored on a daily basis by 15,000 workers. But the 3.6 lakh families

in the containment zones are permitted to come out of the homes only for essential services.

Essential services

All the residents will get essential services with the assistance of Chennai Corporation officials. Residents in containment zones are requested to call Corporation helpline 1913 for assistance in getting essential services.

Chennai Corporation officials said the restrictions on movement of the families will be lifted only 28 days after the last positive case in the location is reported.

The civic officials will test all samples of persons with symptoms in containment zones to offer medical assistance.

Sewage discharge into lakes dips, thanks to lockdown

K. LAKSHMI
CHENNAI

Sewage discharge into two major waterbodies in the western suburbs of the city has reduced in the past month. Samples have been lifted from the Korattur and Ambattur lakes to ascertain the current pollution level, according to the Water Resources Department.

The lakes, which were once primary freshwater sources and part of a chain of waterbodies in the western suburbs, had shrunk in size and were contaminated

with sewage. Even during summer, both lakes continue holding water and have 70% of their storage capacity.

Officials of the WRD said the sewage discharge into the two lakes had reduced by one-fifth over the past month. The decrease in industrial effluents could probably be due to closure of industrial units around the lake owing to the lockdown. Domestic sewage from surrounding localities has also reduced.

"We have lifted samples at two or three points from

both lakes. For instance, samples have been taken from near the weir of Ambattur surplus course that transports water to Korattur lake," an official said. Results were awaited and would help ascertain the water quality and pollution level.

The department was executing projects to turn lakes in Ambattur, Korattur and Retteri into eco-tourism spots. Environmental acti-

vists and residents noted that domestic sewage continued to flow into Korattur lake.

Members of the Korattur Aeri Pathukappu Makkal Iyakkam (KAPMI), who have filed a case with the National Green Tribunal (NGT), southern zone, to protect the lake, said sewage flowed through the surplus course.

After the NGT directive, the committee formed with the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board as nodal agency drafted an action plan to restore the lake.

Avain to ensure milk supply during complete lockdown

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Avain will ensure availability of milk in and around Chennai during the complete lockdown announced by Chief Minister Edappadi

K. Palaniswami on Sunday. "We will ensure additional milk availability at our own outlets and milk retail points so there is no need for panic buying," an official said.

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REAL ESTATE

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COMMERCIAL BUILDING	RESIDENTIAL HOUSE
REQ COM Land 1To3.5Cr Comm Build Income Budget 5To50Cr 9941055888	PONNAMALLE QUEENSLAND New Independent Villa Rs.19.50 L Cr. 78100 25909
RESIDENTIAL	RESIDENTIAL LAND
WANTED FLATHOUSE/BUNGALOW/Land in around PrimeSouth Chennai 9884988604	12,00,00,000 SFT TIRUVANMALAI Municipal Limit Thandrampet Main Road Rs.3500 Per Sqft Contact: 3443224558
RESIDENTIAL FLAT - 15YS	RENTAL
REQD 2/3BHK Flats up to 15yrs LIFT C/P, M.Jayapalan Mandaveli P.A. Nagar C.Jayashankara Properties 9094560044	COMMERCIAL
SELLING	OMR, KARAPAKKAM , (next to Arvind Theatre) fully furnished office space, 30 seat + 2 MD cabins, 50K rent, 1 car park, ample bike parking, call owner at 7395979430
RESIDENTIAL FLAT - NEW	THE HINDU
ADYAR VENKATRAMIN Nagar behind Coffee Day 3-BHK First Floor Construction ongoing. Ct. 98410 42906	DISCLAIMER: Readers are requested to verify and make appropriate enquiries to satisfy themselves about the veracity of an advertisement before responding to any publicised in this newspaper. THE PUBLISHING PVT LTD., the Publisher & Owner of this newspaper, does not vouch for the authenticity of any advertisement or for the advertiser's products and/or services. In no event can the Publisher, Printer, Editor, Director/s, Employees of this newspaper/ company be held responsible in any manner whatsoever for any claims and/or damages for advertisements in this newspaper.
RESIDENTIAL FLAT - RESALE	
CEEBROS SHOLINGANALLUR N: TCS SBHK Premium Apt. Seaview Semi Furn 8th Flr Lift CP Good Rental Income Brokers excuse 95 Lakhs 967700119	

AhaGuru.com
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CANTONMENT BOARD
St. Thomas Mount cum Pallavaram, Chennai-600 016. Tel: 22311718, 22332235

Applications are invited from eligible candidates for filling up of one post of System Administrator on contract basis the details of the post is as follows:

Sl. No.	Name of the Post	No. of Posts	Honorarium	Educational Qualifications
01.	System Administrator	01	Rs. 50,000/- per month	Degree in Engineering with Computer Science / Information Technology / Electronic and Communication or M.Sc., (Computer Science / IT) or MCA with Certification in Linux.

Experience: At least 3 to 5 years of experience in a reputed organization and has performed Installation of Linux Operating Systems, application of Patches in Cloud environment Maintenance of Cloud resource like Memory Storage, VCPU and to Evaluate Monitor and Enhance IT Infrastructure knowledge on AWS standard Database Administration is preferred.

01. A written test and an interview will be conducted in Chennai.
02. Interested candidates may send their detailed Bio-Data along with attested photo copies of Educational qualification, Experience, Certification and all other supporting documents to be forwarded on or before 15-05-2020 to "The Chief Executive Officer, Cantonment Board, North Parade Road, St. Thomas Mount, Chennai-600 016" and email to recruit.cbstm@gmail.com. The candidates are requested to provide Mobile numbers and email ID for communication.

03. The Applications received after the scheduled date, incomplete or without essential documents shall not be considered, whatsoever. This Office shall not be responsible for any Postal delay.

04. The date, place and time of test/interview, as the case may be, will be informed separately only to those candidates found eligible, through SMS/email. Sd/-
(HARSHA.H.E. IDEES)
Chief Executive Officer,
St. Thomas Mount, Chennai-16.
Dated: 23rd April 2020.

बिहार सरकार
बिहार राज्य भवन निर्माण निगम लि०, पटना
(बिहार सरकार का उपक्रम)
Notice Inviting Quotation NO.- 01(Cons.)/ 2020-21

1. OFFICER INVITING QUOTATION : CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER, Bihar State Building Construction Corporation Ltd. Patna.
2. DATE OF QUOTATION : 05/05/2020
3. TIME, DATE AND PLACE OF PRE-BID MEETING : 12/05/2020 Time 3.30 P.M. PLACE: BIHAR STATE BUILDING CONSTRUCTION CORPORATION LTD., PATNA.
4. LAST DATE FOR SUBMITTING THE COMPLETE QUOTATION : 22/05/2020 up to 3.00 pm By Chief General Manager, Bihar State Building Construction Corporation Ltd., Hospital Road, Shastri Nagar, Patna-800023.
5. TIME AND DATE OF OPENING QUOTATION DOCUMENTS : 22/05/2020 Time 4.00 P.M. (In the presence of bidders or their authorized representative.)

Sl. No.	Description	Qty.	Amount (Per Unit Inclusive of Tax)	Total Amount
1	Supply for Renewal of the licence of Existing Architecture Engineering & Construction Collection IC Commercial New Single-user ELD 3-Year Subscription with Basic Support or latest version.	03		
2	Supply for Renewal of the licence of Existing Auto CAD - including specialized toolsets AD Commercial New Single-user ELD 3-Year Subscription with Basic Support or latest version.	01		

Terms & condition:
1. Bidder must be an authorized Platinum partner of Autodesk and submit authorization certificate.
2. Bidder must have annual turnover of min.50 Cr. Bidder must submit financial report for the same.
3. Bidders must have valid Quality Standard Certificate for design engineering which active till date.
4. Bidder should be GST registered.
5. Rate inclusive of all taxes.
6. Date and time of opening of quotation or any correction in the regard will be published on the website www.bsbccl.bih.nic.in.
7. Delivery & installation must be completed within 2 weeks of award of the order.
8. BSBCCL reserves the right to cancel the Quotation without any information.
9. For any additional information bidder may contact to St. Architect (MOBILE NO-9534600010), BSBCCL.

Chief General Manager
Bihar State Building Construction Corporation Ltd. Patna
PR. 000355 (NI NI) 2020-21

बिहार कोशिका के संकेत में विस्तृत जानकारी एवं सहायता हेतु **104** पर संचालित कार सार्वभौम सेवा संचालनी - संकेत 104 बिहार कोशिका के संकेतों के अंतर्गत मुंबई स्थित दूरभाष केंद्रों पर संचालित किया जा सकता है।
बिना फीस के सार्वभौम सेवा संचालनी बिना फीस का Toll Free No.: 18003456138

TAMIL NADU WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD
INVITATIONS FOR BIDS - SINGLE COVER PERCENTAGE TENDER SYSTEM
TENDER EXTENSION NOTICE (AMENDMENT - III, DATED: 17.04.2020)

As per the office Bids:
1. IFB No. S-2/ Outbidding of CWSS/JOD 2019 / 4 : 04.03.2020
2. IFB No. S-3/ CWSS of Marappan, 54 Habas - Pak - HA / 23.04.2020
3. IFB No. S-4/F. Outbidding of CWSS/JOD 2019 / 4 : 04.03.2020
4. The Office Tender Extension Amendment - I Dated: 19.03.2020
5. The Office Tender Extension Amendment - II Dated: 03.04.2020

The Period for Sale of Tender documents, receipts and opening of tenders called for in the above references are hereby further extended as noted below Due to Administrative Reasons and as precautionary for COVID-19.

Name of work	Outbidding of Operation and Maintenance of CWSS. IFB No. S-2/ CWSS of Marappan, 54 Habas - Pak - HA / 23.04.2020 IFB No. S-4 - CWSS 71 Habas and CWSS 5 141 Pak - In Trichy District.
Sale of Bid Documents	Up to 5.45 PM on 04.05.2020
Bid Submission	06.05.2020 upto 3.00 PM at the office of the Tender Involve
Bid Opening	06.05.2020 at 3.30 PM at the office of the Tender Involve
Downloading (free of cost)	www.tenders.in.gov.in and www.tbaward.in.gov.in .

All other terms and conditions already published remain unaltered.
Executive Engineer, TWARD Board,
DIPK. 1683 TENDER/2020.
BID WATER CONSERVATION, EVERY DROP COUNTS.

TAMIL NADU WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD
CHIT TENDER NOTICE - SINGLE COVER - PERCENTAGE TENDER SYSTEM

Sl. No.	Name of work	Value of work put to tender	EMD (in Rupees)
1	Outbidding of Operation and Maintenance of CWSS to 1766 rural habitations in Villanville (part), Annasalai (part), Ponnaravayal, Thiruvannam, Arinam, Kumbakonam (part), Pudukkottai (part), unions of Pudukkottai District and 125 habitations in S. Andhra and Sakshita unions of Srisaigal District. Package VIII for the year 2020-21, for sewerage supply to kasanaraan gas group camps - 7 nos & related sewerage main, feeder main & habitations - 69 nos. for the period from 11.05.2020 to 31.03.2021.	Rs.33.36 Lakhs	Rs.34,00,000/-

Last date for submission of Bids is opening: 06.05.2020 upto 3.00 PM and opening at 3.30 PM on the same day.
DPR: 1684 TENDER/2020.
BID WATER CONSERVATION, EVERY DROP COUNTS.
Executive Engineer, TWARD Board,
Urban Division, Trichy.

IN BRIEF

Journalist assaulted in Ulundurpet
KALLAKURICHI
A journalist working with a private Tamil television channel was assaulted by unidentified persons at Ulundurpet near here on Thursday. Adhi Suresh, 43, reporter of Velicham TV, was intercepted by a gang and attacked. Mr. Suresh sustained cut injuries on his forehead.

Puducherry CM tests negative for COVID-19
PUDUCHERRY
Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy, his Cabinet colleagues and legislators have all tested negative for COVID-19 on Friday. Health Secretary Prasanth Kumar Panda told reporters at the Assembly that all the leaders have tested negative.

17 persons discharged from hospital
RANIPET
A total of 17 COVID-19 patients were discharged from the Government Vellore Medical College and Hospital at Adukkamparai on Friday. Among the patients, nine belonged to Ambur, one was from Vaniyambadi and seven were from Ranipet district.

Police secure 86 entry points along T.N. border
PUDUCHERRY
The administration has secured 86 entry points along the porous border with Tamil Nadu. Balaji Srivastava, DGP, said in a review meeting convened by Lt. Governor Kiran Bedi that police teams had been deployed at these points to prevent people entering Puducherry without a valid reason.

'Kodanad estate case trial in advanced stage'
CHENNAI
The Sholluramattam police in the Nilgiris district has informed the Madras High Court that trial in the 2017 Kodanad estate heist and murder case is in an advanced stage and 30 witnesses have been examined in the case.

17 leaders arrested for bid to protest
PUDUCHERRY
Seventeen leaders belonging to different parties were arrested on Friday while trying to stage a protest against the Centre for not providing financial aid to the U.T. to deal with pandemic.

HC allows DME to release merit list for PG medical admission

The court had, on Wednesday, stopped publication of the names

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

The Madras High Court on Friday recalled its own order passed on Wednesday restraining the Directorate of Medical Education (DME) from publishing the merit list for postgraduate (PG) medical admissions in the State till June 8. Justice M. Sundar took the decision after the counsel for the respondents represented that certain facts were not placed before the court on Wednesday and that any delay in publication of merit list would cause hardship to scores of meritorious candidates.

The order was passed on a writ petition filed by Dr. G.P. Arulraj who claimed that admission marks for PG medicine had not been granted to him despite him having

Plea to cancel Class X exams

A public interest litigation petition has been filed in the Madras High Court with a plea to cancel the public examinations for Class X students this year since considerable number of days have gone by under lockdown to fight COVID-19. Advocate S. Mahaveer Shivaji has filed the case contending that the government's plan to conduct the exams after the lifting of the lockdown next month may not be a right decision since it would delay the announcement of results. He claimed delay in conducting exams would lead to consequent delay in declaring the results.

served as medical officer in the cadaver maintenance unit in the Government Stanley Medical College Hospital. Hence, the judge had granted time till May 18 for the State government to consid-

er the petitioner's representation for grant of weightage marks and directed that the merit list should not be published till June 8 since the petitioner might have to file another case if his representa-

tion was rejected. Subsequently, on Friday, Special Government Pleader E. Manoharan, Medical Council of India standing counsel V.P. Raman and the standing counsel for the selection committee in DME wrote a joint letter to the High Court Registry seeking an urgent rehearing of the case. In their letter, the advocates pointed out that all-India online counselling had been completed and the State-level counselling must be completed before May 4 as per the Centre's directive.

Counsel said any delay in the State-level counselling would force meritorious candidates to join PG courses in other States and then end up paying penalty of ₹15 lakh to ₹20 lakh to get relieved from those medical colleges.

Release news portal founder: Stalin

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

DMK president M.K. Stalin on Friday condemned the arrest of the founder of a portal, SimpliCity, in Coimbatore on Thursday night, and said the AIADMK government was misusing its powers during a pandemic and called for his immediate release.

In a statement, Mr. Stalin said the portal had published a news item based on DMK MLA Karthik's statements against Local Administration Minister S.P. Velumani and for pointing out alleged shortcomings faced by government healthcare professionals and alleged corruption by some employees of a public distribution system (PDS) outlet.

Mr. Stalin said the arrest of Andrew Sam Raja Pandian was illegal and reeked of arrogance of power. The attacks on the media by



M.K. Stalin

Edappadi K. Palaniswami to take necessary action to release him immediately and withdraw all the charges. Terming his arrest as an unequivocal attack on press freedom, the journalists also requested the Chief Minister to immediately put an end to muzzling of the press and encourage reporting of facts.

The petition said the stories published on the portal, based on which Mr. Sam was arrested, were well documented and aimed at enhancing public welfare. The petition pointed out that the portal was not the only news organisation to have reported the news and it was covered by all Tamil and English dailies.

"Andrew Sam, the founder of SimpliCity, has been punished for doing his duty and maintaining his ethics," the petition said.

Journalists' plea
Journalists in Tamil Nadu and other States have condemned the arrest of Mr. Sam, in Coimbatore.

They have petitioned Chief Minister

CM misrepresenting facts, says Kiran Bedi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT PUDUCHERRY

Lieutenant Governor Kiran Bedi on Friday accused Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy of "misrepresenting facts and making false allegations" against her and the Union government.

The Union Territory of Puducherry had benefited from various Central government schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Jhan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), Kisan Samman Nidhi, Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana and Ujjwala Yojana after the lockdown was announced, the Lt Governor said in a release.

Cancer care: a war on two fronts

COVID-19 is more severe in the elderly population and people with underlying medical conditions, including cancer (present or past history). A number of studies from China and Europe have shown that the prevalence of cancer in patients with COVID-19 is 2%.

The data from the tertiary cancer institution of Wuhan University showed a two-fold increased risk of COVID-19 in comparison to the general population. Cancer patients are more susceptible to the infection. There is significantly higher incidence of death or ICU admissions.

A report from Italy states that 20% of deaths due to COVID-19 were in active cancer patients. Statistics suggest that mostly men with lung cancer are affected.

Patient management

The initial steps of outpatient management are to minimise face-to-face contact using tele consultations and medicine delivery at home. Most cancer centres have established symptom screening for all stakeholders. If suspicious symptoms arise they are referred to the triage and later to treating facilities.

Second, it is important to educate the patient and family for prevention. The new mantras are to ensure the continuum of care, get prepared for a new routine, protect healthcare workers to protect patients and reinforce support.

Several patients need imminent cancer care and it becomes imperative to tackle treatment decisions. These patients can be ap-



DR. T. RAJA
Director of Medical Oncology
Apollo Proton Cancer Centre

COVID-19

proached whether they have a COVID-19 situation or not. Cancer patients with new respiratory symptoms or with known COVID-19 exposure are highest priority for COVID-19 testing.

For those cancer patients who test positive, anti-cancer therapies are withheld for the duration of the illness.

The patient must be re-tested after symptom resolution twice and cancer treatment can go on after getting two consecutive negative results within a 48 hours.

Prioritising Anti-cancer treatment:

- L1: Curative treatment with a high (> 50%) chance of success
- L2: Curative treatment with an intermediate (20% - 50%) chance of success
- L3: Curative treatment with a low (10% - 20%) chance of success
- L4: Curative treatment with a very low (0% - 10%) chance of success
- L5: Non-curative treatment with a high (> 50%) chance

of palliation or temporary tumour control
●L6: Non-curative treatment with an intermediate (15% - 50%) chance of palliation or temporary tumour control (*L-Level)

Risk of progression

- Balancing risk from treatment delay vs. harm from exposure to COVID
- Based on low risk of progression - safe to delay for more than three months.
- Based on intermediate risk of progression - delay of three months may be acceptable.
- For patients with high risk of progression - there should be no delay in treatment for cancer patients under the age of 70

Chemotherapy guidance

- Patients in deep remission who are receiving maintenance therapy, stopping chemo can be an option
- In patients where adjuvant chemo benefit may be minimal, hormonal therapies can be considered
- Oral chemo and home infusions can be an option to consider
- Heavily infected patient: Consider altering chemo schedule so lesser visits to hospitals
- Immuno therapy: At this time no data available on the kind of impact of immunotherapy on COVID-19 infected patients. However, concern is an immune-related pneumonitis - which could increase the complications due to COVID-19
- Allogenic Hematopoietic Cell Transplantation: Prudent to test potential donors, though there is absence of evidence of blood transmission

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

SAD DEMISE
1936-2020
HEMALATA KINGER
Who LATE SRILAMARAL KINGER
Attained the Lotus Feet
of the Divine on Friday
24.04.2020 12.05 Noon
@ MYSORE
Deeply Mourned By
THE BEREAVED FAMILY

SAD DEMISE

23-04-2020
JOSHYPAPHEAL
Director
EVERBLUE SEAFOODS PVT. LTD.
Visakhapatnam
MAY HIS SOUL REST IN PEACE
In Grief
Management and Staff

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

IN MEMORY OF OUR FATHER
T. RAJALAKSHMI
B.S.C.B.L.
D.O.B. D.O.D.
6.5.1960 25.4.2008
You live in every
breath of our life
Family remembered by
N. THALAVAI SUNDARAM
S.S.C.B.L.
(Special Representative to the
Govt. of Tamil Nadu & New Delhi)
Dr. G. SHANMUGASOPATHY M.S.
25/4/2019
and
Family Members
In memory of your loved ones
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DEATH

SAD DEMISE
1936-2020
HEMALATA KINGER
Who LATE SRILAMARAL KINGER
Attained the Lotus Feet
of the Divine on Friday
24.04.2020 12.05 Noon
@ MYSORE
Deeply Mourned By
THE BEREAVED FAMILY

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

12th ANNIVERSARY
04-08-1988 25-04-2018
Mr. E. Siva Sankar B.E
(CTS: Sholinganagar, Chennai.)
Enter in your memory
Father: E. Elangovan (Retd-BHEL, Trichy)
Mother: E. Kalpani
Brother: E. Ashok Kumar & Surya
Family & Friends

16th Anniversary
Your life is an
inspiration to us.
We cherish your
memories
By Husband,
Daughters,
Sons-in-law
Grand Children
9962400376

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

4th Anniversary
D.O.B. D.O.D.
04-08-1988 25-04-2018
Mr. E. Siva Sankar B.E
(CTS: Sholinganagar, Chennai.)
Enter in your memory
Father: E. Elangovan (Retd-BHEL, Trichy)
Mother: E. Kalpani
Brother: E. Ashok Kumar & Surya
Family & Friends

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

FOND REMEMBRANCE
July 23, 1933 April 25, 2006
DR. G. RAJAKUMAR
Founder, St. John's Group of Schools, Chennai
The rich legacy you left behind
speaks volumes of your work. You still
live in the portals of St. John's
Deeply missed by
The Management, Staff & Students

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

16th Anniversary
Your life is an
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We cherish your
memories
By Husband,
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Deeply missed by
The Management, Staff & Students

बिहार सरकार
प्रचार्य कार्यालय
अनु० ना० मगध मेडिकल कॉलेज, गया
शुद्धि पत्र
संख्या- 946
प्रचार्य कार्यालय, अनु० ना० मगध मेडिकल कॉलेज, गया के द्वारा आमंत्रित निविदा संख्या-002, दिनांक-17.4.2020 विराम की जाय संख्या-00217/Health/2020-21 दिनांक-16.4.2020 से भी प्राप्त हुए एवं तकनीकी कार्यों से निविदा आमंत्रण की तिथि दिनांक-30.4.2020 से आखिरी 500 कोर तक विचारित की जाती है।
कोर साथ सूचना रहेगी। विस्तृत जानकारी एवं सों के लिए वेबसाईट www.nmmc.ac.in पर देखा जा सकता है।
प्रचार्य
अनुमद नारायण माधव बिक्रिसा महाविद्यालय,
गया
PR. 000347 (Health) 2020-21
निविदा कोरेला के संबंध में विस्तृत जानकारी एवं सूचनाएं हेतु **Toll Free No. 104** पर संपर्क कर सकते हैं।
चाय सामग्री-संबंधी किसी तरह की जानकारी अथवा सुझाव हेतु दूरभाष संख्या 0612-2217636 पर सम्पर्क किया जा सकता है।
प्रतिक्रिया के सहयोग एवं सहकार हेतु हम संचालक विभाग का **Toll Free No. 18003456138**

Govt. of Bihar
Public Health Engineering Department
EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST
EOI No -HGNJ/6B-1032/2020-01
The Public Health Engineering Department, Government of Bihar invites Expression of Interest (EOI) from Government/ Government owned institutions like IITs/NITs/CSIR/Government Engineering Colleges/PSUs for inspection and evaluation of Water Treatment Units installed under "Har Ghar Nal ka Jal" Yojna in quality affected areas of the state as a independent third-party inspection agency.
The standard EOI forms and terms of reference (ToR) will be available and can also be downloaded from the website: www.phed.bih.nic.in
The EOI shall be submitted in a sealed envelope mentioning "PHED for inspection and evaluation of water treatment units" and must reach the captioned address. Last date for submission of EOI is **15th May, 2020 upto 15:00 hrs.** Only the short listed institutions shall be invited to submit the "Request for Proposal (RFP)" for the mentioned job as per prevailing Public Procurement Act and Regulations of the state. In case the last day of submission of the EOI falls on a public holiday, it shall be submitted on the following working day. One institution is permitted to submit only one EOI, failing which such Institution(s) shall not be short listed. PHED reserves the right to shortlist or not to shortlist any or all of the Institution(s) without assigning any reasons whatsoever. Further information or clarification can be obtained from the PHED during office hours.
1 Designation and Address of Advertiser Engineer-in-Chief-Cum-Special Secretary, PHED, Vishveshwariya Bhawan Campus, Bailey Road, Patna- 800015, Bihar
Email ID: enched.patna@gmail.com
Office No. 0612-2546348
2 Date of issue of Eoi 24/04/2020
3 Period of sale (downloading) of Eoi Document From 28/04/2020 to 12/05/2020 up to 17:00 Hrs. through www.phed.bih.nic.in
4 Last date for submission of EOI 15th May, 2020 upto 15:00 hrs.
5 Date of opening of Eoi 15/05/2020 at 17:00 Hrs.
PR-00373 (PHED) 2020-21
निविदा कोरेला के संबंध में विस्तृत जानकारी एवं सूचनाएं हेतु **Toll Free No. 104** पर संपर्क कर सकते हैं।
चाय सामग्री-संबंधी किसी तरह की जानकारी अथवा सुझाव हेतु दूरभाष संख्या 0612-2217636 पर सम्पर्क किया जा सकता है।
किसी भी तरह काय की जानकारी अथवा सुझाव हेतु आमध संख्या के हेल्पलाइन नं. 1070 पर सम्पर्क किया जा सकता है।

Super Speciality Cancer Institute & Hospital
C.G. City, Sultanpur Road, Lucknow-226002
An autonomous institute of the Dept. of Medical Education, GoUP
Corrigendum to E-Tender Notice
Your attention is drawn to E-tender notice advt. no. SSCI/PRO-31/2019-20 published in National dailies on 13-03-2020, regarding E-tender floated for supply of Medical Equipments and Instruments for SSCI & H. If, you have participated in the same, please visit the e-tender portal <https://tender.up.nic.in> to see an important corrigendum regarding conduct of pre-bid meetings during the present COVID-19 pandemic. The same is also published at <https://cancerinstitute.edu.in> for reference only.
AMENDMENT TO TENDER EXTENSION NOTICE DATED: 03.04.2020
AMENDMENT TO TENDER EXTENSION NOTICE DATED: 17.04.2020
Advt No. SSCI/PRO-01/2020-21 DIRECTOR

TAMIL NADU WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD
INVITATIONS FOR BIDS - TWO COVER - PERCENTAGE TENDER SYSTEM
This Office No. 7.9.3 & 12.12. O.M. Out sourcing of CWSS/DO/47/2020 Dt: 04.03.2020
This office AMENDMENT TENDER EXTENSION NOTICE DATED: 19.03.2020
This office AMENDMENT TENDER EXTENSION NOTICE DATED: 03.04.2020
AMENDMENT TO TENDER EXTENSION NOTICE DATED: 17.04.2020
The Period Sale of Tender documents receipts and opening of tenders called for in the reference are here by further extended as noted below. As precautionary for COVID-19 and due to administrative reasons.
Name of work: Out Sourcing of O & M of CWSS from 01.04.2020 to 31.03.2021.
IFB No.7. CWSS to 306-Pig-III/IV & CWSS to Perambalur NPTV in Perambalur (Dt)
IFB No.8. CWSS to 645-Pig-I/II & CWSS to 227 Arayalur (Dt)
IFB No.9. CWSS to 1766-Pig-III/IV/VI and XI in Pudukkottai(Dt)
IFB No.12. CWSS to 706-Pig-I/II in Pudukkottai(Dt)
Sale of Bid Documents Upto 5.45 PM on 04.05.2020
Bid Submission 06.05.2020 upto 3.00 PM at the office of the Tender Invites.
Bid Opening 06.05.2020 at 3.30 PM at the office of the Tender Invites
Downloading (free of cost) www.tenders.tn.gov.in and www.twdboard.tn.gov.in
All other terms and conditions already published remain unaltered.
DIPR/ 1687 /TENDER/2020-21 Superintending Engineer, TWD Board, Trichy- Pudukkottai/Coimbatore.

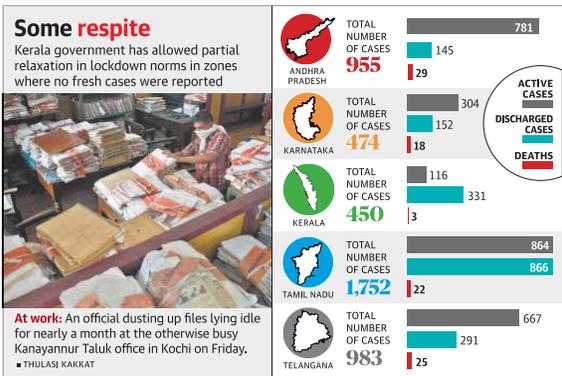
SOUTHERN RAILWAY
E-Tender Notice No. SA/OT/03/2020 Dated: 23.04.2020
Divisional Railway Manager / Works / Salem invites E-TENDERS for the following works:
Item No. Name of work Completion Period in month
1 ADEN/EN Sub Division: Cleaning and maintenance of underground sewer system in Railway colonies by Mechanized method in SSE/WED section for a period of 2 years. Twenty Four
2 ADEN/PJT Sub Division: Cleaning and maintenance of underground sewer system in Railway colonies by Mechanized method in SSE/Works/PJT section for a period of two years. Twenty Four
3 ADEN/PJT Sub Division: Proposed water supply and sewage system maintenance at SSE/Works & RWay/ONR section for a period of two years. Twenty Four
4 CBE Extension of IOH shield with one coach length pipeline in Road 3. Nine
5 MTP: 1) Provision of infiltration well with necessary pump line, Collection well, Aeration tank, sedimentation tank & auto-chlorination arrangements to the passengers water supply. 2) Repairs to the PS tank & rapid sand filter. Nine
6 SA Division: Proposed lift well at MAP, TUP stations. Six
7 Salem Division: Hiring of road vehicles for ADEN/KRR - 1 No. (One Non AC) for a period of TWO YEARS (24 months) Twenty Four
8 ADEN/PJT - Sub Division: Provision of Gabion arrangements for loose rocks in cuttings various locations between QLR-HLG station, 2. Salem Dt., Proposed construction of masonry side drain along side track in various locations between HLG-ONR stations. Twelve
Item No. Cash value (in lakhs ₹) Earnest Money Deposit (in ₹) Cost of tender form including tax (in ₹) Tender closing date at 14.00 Hrs.
1 60.56 1,21,100 5,600 27.05.2020
2 48.47 97,000 3,360 27.05.2020
3 50.29 1,00,600 5,600 27.05.2020
4 128.00 2,14,000 5,600 27.05.2020
5 97.01 1,94,000 5,600 27.05.2020
6 27.57 55,200 3,360 27.05.2020
7 12.18 24,400 2,240 27.05.2020
8 388.31 3,44,200 11,200 27.05.2020
Eligibility criteria for similar work previously executed Item No. 1, 3, 8 Any Civil Engineering Work except track works
Item No. 2, 6, 7 Not Applicable
Item No. 4 Fabrication and erection of steel works
Item No. 5 Any RCC Work
Note: It is the responsibility of the tenderers to check any Corrigendum is issued for any correction/ deletion or modifications uploaded subsequently in the website and the same shall be taken into account while uploading the tender. For further details please visit web site at www.tress.gov.in
Divisional Railway Manager, Works, Salem

Four-month-old dies in Kerala, 2 deaths in A.P.

Karnataka's new cases come from Ramanagaram jail and Bengaluru labour colony; 13 more test positive in Telangana

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/VIJAYAWADA/BENGALURU/HYDERABAD
The third COVID-19-related death in Kerala, of a four-month-old female baby, from Manjeri in Malappuram district, was reported on Friday morning. The infant, with congenital heart disease, and under treatment for pneumonia and respira-



At work: An official dusting up files lying idle for nearly a month at the otherwise busy Kanayannur Taluk office in Kochi on Friday.

COVID-19

tory problems, passed away at the Institute of Maternal and Child Health (IMCH), at the Government Medical College Hospital in Kozhikode.

Two deaths were reported in Andhra Pradesh, from Anantapur and Kurnool districts, taking the toll to 29.

In Karnataka, a total of 29 new COVID-19 cases were reported on Friday raising the total to 474.

The COVID-19 protocol

was followed when interring the baby in Kerala. Samples from the child's parents were sent for tests. Doctors who cared for her in Malappuram were asked to be in quarantine, and work was on to trace the source of infection.

Condoling the death, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said it was a matter of concern that the source of the infant's infection remained unknown. Massive efforts were on to trace the epidemiological links and to

do testing on a large scale.

On Friday, three persons tested positive in the State while 15 were declared disease-free, including a 62-year-old at Pathanamthitta who spent 47 days in hospital after testing positive.

All new cases were from Kasaragod and they contracted the disease through imported cases. Kerala had so far reported 450 positive cases. While 116 were in treatment, 331 recovered.

Kannur district has the maximum number of COVID-19 patients, with 56 persons in hospitals. Mr. Vijayan said as a stark warning that "nothing is over yet" on COVID-19. "We are looking at disease transmission projections which say we will have to arrange treatment facilities for several lakhs," he said, at the media briefing.

A.P. tests more

In Andhra Pradesh, 6,306 samples tested in a day turned up 62 fresh cases, taking the tally to 955. So far, 145 patients had recovered and been discharged, while 29 succumbed to the virus and 781 were under treatment.

Nearly 67% of cases were from Kurnool, Guntur, Krish-

na and Chittoor districts, the majority from old clusters, said Special Chief Secretary, Health K.S. Jawahar Reddy.

Bengaluru police personnel involved in quarantine and surveillance work would undergo testing for COVID-19, Primary and Secondary Education Minister S. Suresh Kumar said.

The latest cases included five from Ramanagaram district jail and 11 from the labour colony at Hongasandra ward, in Bengaluru.

GHMC area in focus

In Telangana 13 more persons tested positive on Friday, and the total was 983. In all, 29 were discharged, a category now totalling 291 people. The State had 667 active cases under treatment.

Health Minister Eatala Rajender said the Hyderabad Municipal (GHMC) area, Vikarabad, Suryapet and Jogulamba Gadwal districts were reporting cases.

PM's help sought to bring bodies from GCC nations

'Embassies seeking NOC from MHA'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has sought the intervention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the return of the remains of Keralites who died in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries due to reasons other than COVID-19.

In a letter to the Prime Minister on Friday, Mr. Vijayan said the GCC countries required the Indian embassies there to give a "clearance certificate" to local authorities as a precursor to allowing the return of the mortal remains. The embassies, in turn, were insisting that the relatives of the deceased procure a no-objection certificate (NOC) from the Minister of Home Affairs

(MHA) as a precondition for issuing the certificate. The position taken by the embassies contradicted the stance of the Central government, which had declared that a NOC from the MHA was not mandatory.

Mr. Vijayan said the coffins could be transported as cargo on freight airliners. He sought a direction from the Centre instructing the embassies to issue the necessary clearances without approvals from the MHA.

Congress leader M.M. Hassan is scheduled to protest in front of the Raj Bhavan seeking special flights to ferry Keralites back home. The party blamed the Centre and the State for doing little to help those confined to labour camps.

Mosaic of life



Hunger pangs: Children rushing to collect free food from a distribution centre in Visakhapatnam on Friday. *K.R. DEEPAK

IN BRIEF



'Arrangements in place for T.N. cancer patients'

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said here on Friday that Kerala, with the assistance of the Tamil Nadu government and the Regional Cancer Centre (RCC) here, has made arrangements to give follow-up care to patients from Kanyakumari and other border districts. A total of 560 persons from Kanyakumari and neighbouring districts in Tamil Nadu are regular patients at the RCC. It had made arrangements for the patients to get continued follow-up care.

Domestic violence: help is now just a call away

VIJAYAWADA
The Andhra Pradesh Women's Commission has launched WhatsApp and helpline numbers to protect women from domestic violence during the lockdown. Victims can contact WhatsApp no. 630141137 for assistance. They can also use Helpline nos. 9701056808 (director R. Suez) or 9603914511 (secretary M.J. Nirmla), according to Mahila Commission Chairperson Vasireddy Padma.

Kerala govt. issues orders on salary deduction

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
The Kerala government has issued orders for deferring the disbursement of a component of the salary of employees from April to August. The order issued by the Finance Department on Friday said the payment of six days' salary for employees and teachers, including those in government-aided institutions, would be deferred. Those with a monthly gross salary below ₹20,000 have been exempted.

Karnataka govt. under fire for moving riot accused to jail

No rationale in decision, says former CM Kumaraswamy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU
Soon after five Padarayanapura riot accused moved to the Ramanagaram district jail reported COVID-19 positive, the Karnataka government on Friday came under attack from the Opposition even as senior Ministers were left to defend the government's decision.

Former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy said it was not appropriate to politicise the matter, and urged the government to set right the mistake. "The government is playing around. It has committed a mistake," he said, and added that the decision had no rationale. "I had warned the government earlier," he told reporters outside the Ramanagaram jail on Bengaluru-Mysuru highway.



H.D. Kumaraswamy

In a statement, Mr. Kumaraswamy's wife and Ramanagaram legislator Anitha Kumaraswamy also slammed the government. While government sources indicated that the initial decision to move the accused to Ramanagaram jail was an administrative one, the issue assumed political colour when Mr. Kumaraswamy, expressing fears of contamination, had op-

posed the decision, blaming DGP (Prisons) Alok Mohan for it.

However, by Thursday evening, when it became clear that two of the inmates had contracted the virus, Mr. Kumaraswamy threatened to launch an agitation to get the inmates from Ramanagaram jail vacated.

In Bengaluru, Congress MP D.K. Suresh said the government would be held responsible if the virus spreads in Ramanagaram district. He asked how these people were brought in without tests. Sources in the government, however, defended the decision to shift the accused to Ramanagaram jail as "administrative" and not political, and in the larger good of prison inmates in the State.

Capital shift: HC directs A.P. govt. to file affidavit

PIL alleges it was a unilateral decision

STAFF REPORTER

VIJAYAWADA
The High Court on Friday directed the Andhra Pradesh government to file an affidavit in 10 days stating its position on the proposed shifting of the Executive Capital to Visakhapatnam.

The directive came in response to a PIL filed by Amaravati Parirakshana Samiti secretary G. Tirupati Rao. A full Bench, comprising Chief Justice J.K. Maheswari and Justices A.V. Sessa Sai and M. Satyanarayana Murthy, ordered that Advocate General S. Sriram respond to the petitioner's argument that the government unilaterally decided to shift the capital from Amaravati to three locations under the garb of "decentralisation of administration/governance," by filing the affidavit in the stipulated time.

Mr. Sriram said the Bills pertaining to the shifting of the capital - A.P. Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions and the A.P. Capital Region Development Authority Repeal Bills - were passed by the Assembly in January, but referred to a select committee by the Legislative Council.

Appearing on behalf of the petitioner, advocate U. Muralidhar Rao cited the minutes of an executive committee of the A.P. Secretariat Employees' Association, MP V. Vijaya Sai Reddy's statements and media reports to buttress his argument that the government was bent on shifting the capital.

Mr. Tirupati Rao appealed to the HC to declare the shifting of the Executive Capital as arbitrary and violative of the legally enforceable promises made by the previous government.

This schoolteacher has bowled the internet over

Video of family playing cricket goes viral

M.P. PRAVEEN

KOCHI
A routine game of backyard cricket from Mezhathur, near Pattambi in Palakkad district, has gone viral on social media, propelling Bindu Ozhukil, a 50-something high school Sanskrit teacher, into an internet star.

Her husband, Raman Nambodiri, a 58-year-old ex-serviceman, was enjoying a game of cricket with their two college-going sons on Wednesday evening, when

Ms. Ozhukil walked in to roll her arm over, sending down a few decent deliveries at her husband.

Her husband and sons were mighty impressed by her hitherto unknown skill and her younger son, Navaneeth Krishnan, shot a video of his mother's bowling.

Overwhelmed by a wave of childhood memories when she used to play the game with her cousins at her ancestral home at Nelluvar, near Wadakkanchery in Thrissur, Ms. Ozhukil posted the video on Facebook the next day without having the faintest idea of what was to



School teacher Bindu Ozhukil bowling to her husband Raman Nambodiri in Mezhathur, Palakkad. *SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

be in store. "We still don't know how the video, which was shot just for fun, has gone viral.

As our sons keep on saying, it seems to have completely gone out of our hands. We have been flooded with calls

from our friends and relatives since then and it is now heard that it has been taken note of by some cricket officials," said Mr. Nambodiri.

In their 27 years of marriage, he had not known of his wife's cricketing skills though she used to watch the game. Though Mr. Nambodiri and his sons have been playing cricket to overcome the lockdown blues, Ms. Ozhukil never joined them till that session which has gone viral. Now that her cricketing skills have been revealed, she has been invited to be more active in the family's daily cricket session.

Anonymise data before handover, HC tells Kerala govt.

Sprinklr warned about confidentiality

K.C. GOPAKUMAR

KOCHI
A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court on Friday directed the State government to anonymise the data of COVID-19 patients and those under home quarantine, the U.S.-based analytics firm with which the government has entered into a contract, to access the data only after the process is completed.

The Bench, comprising Justice Devan Ramachandran and Justice T.R. Ravi, also restrained Sprinklr from committing any act that will breach the confidentiality of the data entrusted with it. The court directed the State government to obtain the consent of the citizens before collecting data. The company was asked not to hand over the data to a third party and to return the same after the contractual obligations are over.

The court passed the directives while admitting a batch of public interest litigations filed by Balu Gopalakrishnan of Thiruvananthapuram, Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala, and BJP State president K. Surendran among others, challenging the agreement.

The court directed Sprinklr to immediately transfer the residual or secondary data back to the State government. Sprinklr was also restrained from advertising the project of the State government and using Kerala's name and emblem.

Govt. argument

When the petition came up for hearing, N.S. Nappinai, a Mumbai-based cyber lawyer appearing for the State government, submitted that the privacy policy of the company and international data protection norms ensured a high level of confi-



The HC asked the State to get consent of the citizens before collecting data.

ence. The agreement prevented Sprinklr from using the data for other purposes. It was stored in an encrypted form in Amazon Cloud and hence its confidentiality was guaranteed. Besides, the period of the agreement was for six months, beyond which the company could not retain the data. She argued that as the data was in India, criminal prosecution could be initiated under the provisions of Information Technology Act 2000 for breach of confidentiality.

On NIC services

Additional Advocate General K.K. Raveendranath submitted that none of the government institutions in the State were presently capable of big data analysis in a short time, which was the need of the hour. He submitted that the State government would take a call on utilising the services of the National Informatics Centre (NIC) for data analysis.

Assistant Solicitor General of India P. Vijayakumar submitted that sensitive personal data, such as those pertaining to health, should not be shared with a third party service provider. The State should have anonymised the data before sharing it. In fact, the NIC could have processed the data if the State had made the demand.

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 Saturday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning likely at isolated places over Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Telangana, Sikkim, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka and Kerala.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	7.8	30.5	21.0	Kozhikode	0.2	36.4	27.8
Ahmedabad	...	40.3	27.3	Kurnool	...	41.3	30.4
Aizawl	7.0	23.7	15.2	Lucknow	...	36.1	23.5
Allahabad	1.0	37.2	22.6	Madurai	...	39.2	27.5
Bangaluru	23.2	36.0	23.5	Mangaluru	...	36.9	27.2
Bhopal	...	40.4	23.6	Mumbai	...	34.9	26.2
Bhubaneswar	0.4	35.9	26.2	Mysuru	...	12.5	23.3
Chandigarh	...	34.7	20.3	New Delhi	...	38.4	20.2
Chennai	...	35.0	28.5	Patna	...	31.4	22.2
Coimbatore	...	36.9	26.0	Port Blair	...	32.9	26.5
Dehradun	...	32.8	16.6	Puducherry	...	35.2	27.6
Gangtok	3.1	18.6	14.5	Pune	...	38.6	21.3
Goa	...	34.4	27.0	Raipur	...	39.5	25.6
Guwahati	42.4	26.5	18.2	Ranchi	...	9.2	33.4
Hubballi	...	37.0	23.0	Shillong	...	12.4	18.3
Hyderabad	...	40.7	26.8	Shimla	...	21.6	11.1
Imphal	...	20.1	13.7	Srinagar	...	26.5	8.2
Jaipur	...	...	21.7	Thiruvananthapuram	...	5.6	34.8
Kochi	3.4	35.5	23.3	Tiruchirappalli	...	40.2	28.0
Kohima	...	24.2	12.9	Vijayawada	...	39.2	27.1
Kolkata	4.6	32.9	23.1	Visakhapatnam	...	34.7	29.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE	Yesterday
Bengaluru	...	21	13	46	...	...	In observation made at 6:00 p.m., Panipat, Haryana, recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 204 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution.
Chennai	...	03	32	42	...	...	contrast, Aizawl, Mizoram, recorded a healthy AQI score of 13.
Delhi	...	18	11	112	...	...
Hyderabad	...	12	50	22	...	...
Kolkata	...	09	12	28	...	...
Lucknow	...	06	21	55	...	...
Mumbai	...	45	58	...	...	...
Pune	...	24	09	53	...	...
Visakhapatnam	

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.
PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.



No 100% quota

SCouting stresses that overzealous reservation tends to affect rights of other communities

The Supreme Court is right in considering cent per cent reservation as anathema to the constitutional scheme of equality even if it is for the laudable objective of providing representation to historically deprived sections. The verdict quashing the reservation of 100% of all teaching posts in 'Scheduled Areas' of Andhra Pradesh for local Scheduled Tribes is not against affirmative programmes as such, but a caution against implementing them in a manner detrimental to the rest of society. A five-judge Constitution Bench found that earmarking teacher posts in areas notified under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution adversely affected the interests of other candidates not only from Scheduled Castes and other backward communities but also other ST communities not native to those areas. Of course, what the State government did, in its original orders of 1986, and thereafter, in a subsequent order in 2000, was not without its own rationale. It found that there was chronic absenteeism among teachers who did not belong to those remote areas where the schools were located. However, its solution of drafting only members of the local tribes was not a viable solution. As the Bench noted, it could have come up with other incentives to ensure the attendance of teachers. Another aspect that the court took into account was that Andhra Pradesh has a local area system of recruitment to public services. The President, under Article 371D, has issued orders that a resident of a district/zone cannot apply to another district/zone for appointment. Thus, the 100% quota deprived residents of the Scheduled Areas of any opportunity to apply for teaching posts.

Affirmative action loses its meaning if it does not leave the door slightly ajar for open competition. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar observed during the debate in the Constituent Assembly on the equality clause, that any reservation normally ought to be for a "minority of seats". This is one of the points often urged in favour of the 50% cap imposed by the Court on total reservation, albeit with some allowance for relaxation in special circumstances. It is still a matter of debate whether the ceiling has innate sanctity, but it is clear that wherever it is imperative that the cap be breached, a special case must be made for it. Such a debate should not divert attention from the fact that there is a continuing need for a significant quota for STs, especially those living in areas under the Fifth Schedule special dispensation. In this backdrop, it is somewhat disappointing that courts tend to record *obiter dicta* advocating a revision of the list of SCs and STs. While the power to amend the lists notified by the President is not in dispute, it is somewhat uncharitable to say that the advanced and "affluent" sections within SCs and STs are cornering all benefits and do not permit any trickle-down. Indian society is still some distance from reaching that point.

Joining of giants

The coming together of Facebook and Jio is exciting, but there is a risk of a monopoly

Facebook's decision to invest ₹43,574 crore for a 9.9% stake in Reliance Industries Ltd.'s Jio Platforms marks a rare coming together of two giants who have a reputation for market domination. The focus of their combined might is the India retail sector, a difficult terrain as large parts of it are still unorganised. But then for the same reason, it holds potential for huge disruption. In recent years, the retail space has been an ongoing battlefield for behemoths such as Amazon and Walmart, themselves globally dominant players. The other interested parties in this are payment services companies such as the Softbank- and Alibaba-backed Paytm, and Google, which runs Google Pay. But the combination of Facebook and Reliance will be difficult to beat — they seem to have both the marketplace and the payment solution sides covered. For Facebook's WhatsApp messaging service, India is the biggest market with over 400 million users. It currently awaits regulatory approval for its payment solutions. Jio is now India's No. 1 telecom brand by user base, less than four years after it launched its service. And then, JioMart is a recently-launched commerce marketplace, which seeks to connect local retailers with consumers. And this is why, "the largest investment for a minority stake by a technology company anywhere in the world" (as a Reliance Industries press release put it to describe the Facebook move) has been notably accompanied by an agreement to "further accelerate" business on the JioMart platform using WhatsApp.

In short, it is a win-win deal for both players. While its social media services and messaging services have been extremely popular in India, Facebook has however struggled to get past regulatory concerns in India over some of its ambitious projects such as its free limited Internet offering Free Basics and digital currency Libra. While it stays blocked in mainland China, Facebook now gets to participate in a stronger way in one of the world's fastest growing markets for e-commerce. Reliance can rely on the popular messaging service to accelerate the building of its marketplace. It has also received handy money to reduce its debt. The deal, coming as it does at a time when the world is fighting the coronavirus pandemic, is a thumbs up to India's potential. It is noteworthy that this is the largest foreign direct investment in the technology sector in India. But will the deal that brings together the world's largest social media company and the group that is a leader in everything from oil to data lead to more consolidation and fewer players, as it happened in the telecom sector? It is a big question mark, and the deal should not be passed without closely scrutinising this. For, the future of India's Internet economy is at stake.

Troughs and crests in the pandemic response

The nationalistic turn in global politics has affected vital institutions and partnerships at a time they are needed most



IRFAN NOORUDDIN

The novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, that causes the disease COVID-19, has proven the ultimate stress test for governance systems globally. And governments worldwide are failing, showing up for all to see how poorly prepared they were for this examination. Even those governments that are likely to be rated relatively highly by scholars of public policy studying this moment later will not pass the examination unscathed. Such is the virality and lethality of this pathogen that success will be measured in hundreds of lives lost, compared to the tens of thousands of fatalities experienced elsewhere. Yet, the common challenges faced by all governments to fight COVID-19 must not mask the considerable variation in their performance which holds lessons from which we must learn.

Stages in the response

Disease outbreaks, even global pandemics, are scarcely new. The playbook for dealing with them therefore is well understood and has been honed by practices and lessons gleaned from hard-fought battles. A first stage is early clear-eyed recognition of the incoming threat, and, in the case of COVID-19 at least, requires the unpalatable decision to lock down society.

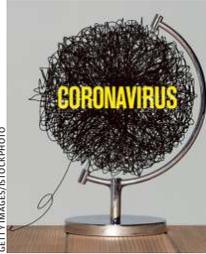
Ideally this is done with full consideration of how to support the most vulnerable members of society, especially in a country such as India, where so many survive hand-to-mouth. This is a phase aimed at buying time, of flattening the epidemic curve, so that public

health facilities are not overwhelmed; and, for using this time, paid for by collective sacrifice, to secure the personal protective equipment (PPE) and medical supplies necessary to save lives.

The second phase of the pandemic response is slowly to ease the burden on the economy by permitting a measured return of business activity so that livelihoods and supply chains can be restored. This stage can only be safely executed if accompanied by a war-footing expansion of testing capacity so that new infections can be identified and isolated at once, allowing contact tracing to be implemented by masses trained to do this crucial and painstaking work in communities across the country. The final stage, which for COVID-19 seems a lifetime away, is a mass vaccination programme and then the full rebuilding of economic and social life. None of this is easy, but, like an examination in a dreaded subject, one's only hope is early and persistent preparation and, at crunch time, remembering the lessons learned.

What drags systems down

So, why have governments failed to do better? And what separates successful responses from failed ones? Answers lie in three main limitations of contemporary governance systems. First, for all the defensive finger pointing, opportunistic politicking and xenophobic posturing — exemplified best by the peevish current occupant of the White House but hardly unique to him — this is not a crisis that can be tackled without robust and multidimensional international cooperation between nations. From the epidemiologists whose data-driven models inform policy debates about how and when to lift quarantines, to the medical community identifying more effective treatments, to the research scientists racing to find a vaccine,



we are watching in real time the benefits of intellectual collaboration that does not stop at national borders. But the nationalistic turn in global politics over the past two decades has reduced investment in and undermined the legitimacy of the very institutions that facilitate international partnership at the very time they are needed most.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi did well to convene the leaders of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) nations in mid-March to discuss the possibility of a regional response, but that video-conference call also highlighted that there have been no summit-level meetings of SAARC since 2014, in no small part due to India-Pakistan jingoism that has victimised the regional organisation. Similarly, last week's outburst by United States President Donald Trump that resulted in his demanding that the U.S. end its funding of the World Health Organization (WHO) not only endangers American lives by cutting off his own administration's access to vital international data, but also directly affects India which receives significant funding and expertise from WHO (with ~10% of its overall WHO financing in 2019 coming directly from the U.S.).

Second, pandemic response requires a whole-of-government strategy, for which political will

and legitimate leadership are vital to convene and maintain.

Textbook examples

Germany and Kerala provide two powerful though different examples of this in action. In Germany, in spite of a high level of federalism that gives its States (Länder) a lot of power, Chancellor Angela Merkel's ability to mobilise the entire system has allowed Germany to emerge as a success story in Europe. In Kerala, as Patrick Heller described in this daily last week (The Hindu, Editorial page, April 18, 2020), State Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan convened a State response team at the earliest possible moment and has provided the full weight of his office in support of a coordinated public health strategy that has been accepted by the State's citizens who have learned to trust the government in such situations. Yet these two examples stand out in part for how rare they are. Consider again the cautionary tale of the U.S. where some State Governors have yet to issue stay-at-home orders, and others are rushing to open the economy against the express advice of public health experts, all while the U.S. President urges citizens in States governed by his political opponents to seek "liberation".

Third, we are seeing first hand the consequences of starving public health systems of necessary funds and resources. The comparative advantage of the private sector is efficiency; the need of the hour in pandemic response is redundancy, or, more precisely, excess capacity. Most hospitals do not need invasive ventilators normally, just as they do not need vast stocks of PPE and extra intensive care units beds, but these are essential goods right now as we brace ourselves for a flood of sick patients into hospitals. Watching the advanced health-care system of northern Italy buckle under the unimaginable pressures to which

it was exposed over the past six weeks should be a cautionary tale for all countries that thought turning health care over to private actors was responsible governance. It is not. Again, consider Kerala, which has consistently ranked at the top of State rankings for health expenditures, and which has, as a result, a well-functioning local public health system capable of implementing the test-isolate-trace protocols critical for fighting COVID-19.

A State in contrast

For a sharp and worrying contrast to Kerala's success, consider Madhya Pradesh. While State Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan earlier earned plaudits for his investments in infrastructure, health expenditures are low, with the State ranking dead last in this category as in NITI Aayog's data. This will undermine the State's ability to fight the virus, which given the rapid growth of cases and a relatively high case fatality ratio, looks increasingly vulnerable to a debilitating outbreak. But even more worrisome is the abdication of good sense by the political class in the State. Even as the threat of COVID-19 was apparent, and as Kerala had put its State response into action, a soap opera in Madhya Pradesh was in full swing, with defections and the collapse of the Congress State government. Then, while the rest of the country was practising social distancing, Mr. Chouhan was at the centre of incongruous images of large-scale packed celebrations. Now, finally, a full month after its new-old Chief Minister was inaugurated on March 23, Madhya Pradesh finally has a Health Minister. Wish him luck; he is going to need it.

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Bihar's dystopian moments and a looming crisis

With the global and national order in reset mode, it is no longer an option for the State to ignore its chronic issues



YASHWANT SINHA & ATUL K. THAKUR

Should the government of Bihar get the benefit of doubt or should it, along with its political partner, the Central government, not be held solely responsible for its poor performance today? The Centre's much-touted spirit of 'cooperative federalism' has been nothing more than a hollow promise. There is a glaring gap between stark ground realities and propaganda. India's federal system is badly challenged today with partisan Governors, misplaced policies and languishing financial assistance. Bihar is no exception. States, including Bihar, have been in the throes of financial stress from before; the novel coronavirus outbreak and the national lockdown have further weakened their fiscal position. In fact, Bihar is still waiting for the elusive 'special status' that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had promised during elections and again soon after Nish Kumar formed the government with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Sadly, it has proved to be another 'jhumla'.

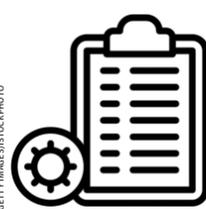
Bihar has had a long history of suffering because of a persisting feudal political culture that neglected efforts to create industrial capabilities and employment opportunities in the State. Conse-

quently, the exodus of labour has become a new normal since the 1990s. Despite the fact that construction of new roads and overbridges made through central assistance in Mr. Kumar's first term along with the contractual recruitments (especially in schools) could draw a few migrants back to the State, the situation on the migration front remained grim. Mr. Kumar has been in power for 15 years, yet the fate of these workers has not improved. They continue to be vulnerable and compelled to work without any legal protection.

The forgotten people

With the global pandemic and national lockdown causing unprecedented loss to lives and livelihoods, Bihar's vulnerabilities have come full circle. The State government has failed to ensure proper equipment and health-care facilities to the people. It has also dealt with migrants with disdain. A large number of Bihar migrants in Delhi, Mumbai and other parts of the country were left stranded when the lockdown took effect. Some of them tried their best to stay wherever they were, but finally gave up as they had no money or food to survive.

The heart-rending visuals of the poor and helpless migrants desperately walking from Delhi/National Capital Region back to Bihar reflect the hollowness of the State's approach to tackling a disastrous disease and the consequent lockdown. Also, some recent developments show that the government adopted a selective approach in disaster manage-



ment. For example, while an MLA from the ruling party was issued a special pass to travel to Kota in Rajasthan to bring his child back from there, countless others were left to face socio-economic hardship and apathy.

Within the State, pauperisation is in full swing and the hunger is just killing; Biharis with no support of remittances are on the fringes in their own homeland. In Gaya and other parts of Bihar, children were seen eating roasted frogs. What could be more pitiful than this in a country that will have food grains of over 100 million tonnes in warehouses by the end of April, and as according to the Food Corporation of India (FCI), where the annual produce is expected to be record 292 million tonnes in year 2019-20? Reportedly, India has enough in macro production. Reportedly, India has too little with lack of insight in disaster management in a trying time such as this.

Floundering health care

In Bihar, public health was the next thing after education that became corrupted and collapsed.

Opening of new hospitals including an All India Institute of Medical Sciences and few others were hardly beneficial for the poor living in rural areas since they do not have the means to avail them. Unlike the highly publicised claims of Mr. Kumar, health-care facilities at district and block levels are in pathetic shape.

As per National Health Profile 2019 of Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI), there are 7.13,986 total government hospital beds available in India. More precisely, this amounts to 0.55 beds per 1,000 population. Many States even lie below the national figure, Bihar is one of them, experiencing an acute shortage of government hospital beds with just 0.11 beds available per 1,000 population. This is something alarming in a State that was once known for its socialist leanings. The odd match-making of allies in the ruling government is not creating room for the resolve to help people.

Irrespective of the fact that Bihar has now a new grammar of politics, the State government has failed to give due weightage to the health sector. Even when Mr. Kumar may no longer be charmed with socialism, how can he overlook the unimaginable hardship of the poor, the unemployed and the marginalised? He must bargain for more from the Centre, because his alliance with the BJP has not benefited Bihar. The people of Bihar are still waiting for the fulfilment of the promises made by Mr. Modi and Mr. Kumar.

Ram Vilas Paswan, who holds

charge of Food and Public Distribution at the Centre must think of universalising the Public Distribution System. As a leader from Bihar, he should think of the migrants from Bihar and elsewhere in the country, and ensure basic supplies to them even without ration cards. Mr. Kumar should enable timely policy advocacy for this. Also, he should not be wary in seeking the views of the Opposition's views in terms of crisis management and a plan to rebuild.

As the global and national order is in a phase of reset, it is no longer an option for Bihar to ignore chronic issues such as industrial backwardness, unemployment and outbound migration. For Mr. Kumar, who was once known as "Sushasan Babu", the time has come to follow Raj Dharma. What is expected from him is to be dutiful, not the balancing plays of caste arithmetic and crossing the fence merely for political survival. The state of affairs in Bihar is worrisome; accordingly, policies and plans have to be prioritised. Politics in the State should not defeat the aspirations of millions of Biharis who have already suffered too much.

For sure, the land of Bihar should never be known as the 'imaginary homeland' for its people who are now home-bound as the cities which they contributed to build have failed them.

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The options

It is dismaying that in a country of huge economic capabilities, where a major share of GDP is borne out of the toil of the labour class, they have, for many years, been marginalised when it came to the fruits of their labour. It is unfortunate that they have been denied their rightful entitlements as far as health, education and living conditions are concerned (OpEd page, 'Parley' - "How will India emerge out of the lockdown?", April 24). It may not be an exaggeration to say that we have been taken for a ride by the political class for over 70

years and we are still accepting of their excuses for not spending enough on health and other basic amenities. Take for instance the expenditure on health care, which is well short of the prescribed percentage for the overall well-being of the nation. Let us also not forget the underspending in education and living conditions. How long will we be under this political lockdown at the cost of our basic rights is for us to decide. The pandemic response is also the right time to question the political class about the priorities. Let us not forget that Victor Hugo said: "The

paradise of the rich is made out of the hell of the poor."

KARUMANCHI MANOHAR, Ongole, Andhra Pradesh

■ For India, further stretching the lockdown poses huge economic challenges. Unlike 'a formulaic slump, where policies can be tailored to finance and raise demand', the challenge now is to 'keep productive capacity intact even as many firms and workers remain idle'. As Nobel prize-winning economist Paul Krugman has argued, "The economic response to the crisis will have to include two parts — one, an immediate disaster

relief component that ensures survival of both firms and workers who have been rendered idle. And two, a stimulus component that aims to repair and restart production lines during the exit phase of the lockdown." For India, with a large informal sector and a weak social safety net, the first challenge is going to be tougher than the second one. R. SIVAKUMAR, Chennai

Quarantine facilities

It is disheartening to know that doctors and medical staff in Rae Bareilly had to face dismal living conditions (Page 1, "In Rae Bareilly,

doctors have untold stories of quarantine", April 24). Frontline health staff need to be treated in a dignified way in view of their selfless service to society. Such incidents might cause people to stay away from getting screened. DEEPIKA JAIN, New Delhi

Flattening the curve

There is substance in the government's claim that the extended national lockdown has ensured that the growth of cases has remained linear (Page 1, April 24). But on the other side there can be no denying that the lockdown has inflicted untold misery

on migrant labourers, daily-wage earners, self-employed persons and the micro, small and medium enterprises sector. There is a great deal of doubt whether in a post-lockdown scenario the lot of the vast majority of the population would improve. Much would depend on whether India will be in a position to continue focusing on steps such as social distancing. As WHO has predicted that the pandemic is not going away in a hurry, the Centre and States will have to be on their toes. C.V. ARAVIND, Bengaluru

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Power play during a pandemic

While the Congress government was fighting to retain its hold and the BJP was trying to wrest power, several medical professionals, police officials and others contracted COVID-19 in Madhya Pradesh. **Sidharth Yadav** reports on a State which did not appoint a Cabinet for nearly a month even as a pandemic raged on

In Madhya Pradesh, March 20 will be remembered for two things. It was the day when Kamal Nath bowed out as Chief Minister, bringing to a close a month-long power tussle in the State. It was also the day when four people tested positive for the novel coronavirus in Jabalpur.

Around noon, a political spectacle, long coming, played out at Nath's residence in Bhopal, atop the Shyamala hills, overlooking the Upper Lake. Among the hundreds of journalists who had assembled there for a press meeting was a 62-year-old man, unknowingly carrying the virus. On the dais, in the open-air hall, stood a sullen set of Ministers. The government had been rocked by desertions from within the ranks. At the centre, a chair and table were set, from where Nath would later announce his resignation.

"Please come forward, and closer," Narendra Saluja, media coordinator for the Chief Minister, gestured to journalists. Chairs were pulled with a screech, and arms and knees rubbed against each other as journalists, perspiring in the heat, huddled together to catch sight of the Congressmen on the dais.

"I had no idea I was carrying it," the journalist, who remained asymptomatic through the 10 days of his treatment, said after his recovery. His daughter, 26, a postgraduate student in London, tested positive on March 22, days after her return. Hers was the first case in Bhopal.

Despite being faced with an unprecedented health crisis from March, by when cautious States had already closed down public places, prohibited gatherings, and ramped up health infrastructure and marshalled doctors, Madhya Pradesh was embroiled in political wrangling. The virus was knocking furiously at its gates. By April 12, SARS-CoV-2 had gripped Indore, where 10% of the infected had died, the worst case fatality rate for any Indian city. Worse, it had penetrated the State health unit. By April 24, as many as 110 health officials and their family members were infected in Bhopal. As for the police in Bhopal, 41 personnel and their family members have contracted the illness so far.

The signs of an impending crisis were clear. On March 2, when the Centre issued its fifth travel advisory, the Congress was busy rescuing its MLAs reportedly being held hostage by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at a Manesar hotel. On March 10, abandoning the State's preparation for the pandemic, Health Minister Tulsiram Silawat was cooped up at a Bengaluru resort with 21 rebel Congress MLAs, who quit later. Until that day, 63 COVID-19 cases had been reported nationwide. By March 16, the virus had infected 126 people and killed two. It had entered 13 States, including neighbouring Maharashtra and Rajasthan. That was when a vexed BJP, sniffing power, chided the Speaker's decision to adjourn the Vidhan Sabha session, in view of the pandemic's threat, as a ploy to buy time.

A single-man cabinet

Madhya Pradesh reacted late to the pandemic owing to Shivraj Singh Chouhan's zeal for power, claimed Jitu Patwari, State Congress working president. "Otherwise, the State could have been saved. Around the time we planned to procure additional medical equipment, the Health Minister ran away. He had sold himself to the BJP," he said.

On March 4, Nath held the first secretary-level meeting on the illness. The next day, a helpline was set up. Next, the IIFA awards ceremony, Nath's long-cherished dream, was cancelled. On March 7, schools and colleges were ordered shut. Patwari alleged that the BJP "punctured a moving vehicle".

The day after Chouhan took oath as the Chief Minister on March 23, Prime Minister Narendra Modi imposed a nationwide curfew. Nath alleged Parliament was made to function just to offer a chance to the Speaker to run the Madhya Pradesh Assembly too. "This was so that my government could be toppled," he alleged.

The turmoil not just delayed the State's reaction, but the Centre's too, said Sachin Jain, of the Right to Food campaign. "The lockdown was imposed 10 days late. Airports could not have shut operations as MLAs had to be flown to different cities citing horse-trading," he said.

The day after taking charge, Chouhan looked away from the uptick in the COVID-19 cases to seven, instead preferring to reverse decisions taken by the outgoing regime first. He ordered the closure of the case of an economic offence against Jyotiraditya Scindia, who had crossed over to the BJP, cancelled appointments made to various commissions, and shunted out the Rajgarh collector.

For nearly a month, Chouhan ran a single-man Cabinet. An opinion piece published by the public relations department even dubbed his role heroic,



"Shivraj Singh Chouhan waving at BJP supporters at the party office in Bhopal on March 20, after Congressman Kamal Nath resigned as the Chief Minister around noon that day." (Below): Congresswoman-turned-BJP leader Imarti Devi, who was the Minister for Women and Child Development in the Kamal Nath government, being greeted by BJP workers upon her arrival in Bhopal from New Delhi on March 21. —A.M.FARUQUI



The State could have been saved. Around the time we planned to procure additional medical equipment, the Health Minister ran away. He had sold himself to the BJP.

JITU PATWARI
State Congress working president

describing him as a "one-man army". It was only on April 21 that five Ministers were appointed. Two of the Ministers, including Silawat, have held the health portfolio in the past. "Along with Chouhan, they did not develop the health infrastructure in the State, for which they owe an explanation now," said Rasheed Kidwai, Visiting Fellow, Observer Research Foundation. In addition, the setting up of a COVID-19 task force, headed by State BJP president V.D. Sharma, has drawn flak for having on its ranks only politicians and their lackeys. "Compare Maharashtra's team, comprising health experts, with ours, composed of only political lackeys," said Kidwai.

An unlikely hotspot

On April 3, at 11 p.m., the Bhopal district administration released a list of new patients after deleting one name from it. The virus had penetrated the Health Department, the institutional bulwark supposedly meant to guard the State against its advance. Two days later, it was declared that an IAS officer, tasked with procuring drugs and equipment for the State, and also the Ayushman Bharat Yojana MD, had tested positive. No one knows where he got the illness. Today, the office of the Directorate of Health Services has turned into Bhopal's biggest, and most unlikely, hotspot.

Cases within the department, to its embarrassment, have refused to ebb. The virus is taking down at least two of officials every day. Directors heading different verticals, doctors, peons, personal assistants, clerks and drivers have all been infected. The six-floor office complex, Satpura Bhawan, was evacuated, sealed for 15 days, and sanitised repeatedly. Officials self-quarantined, as operations were moved online.

The case of the Principal Secretary, Public Health and Family Welfare, who tested positive the next day is the most peculiar. For at least three days, the department's senior-most bureaucrat refused to be admitted to a hospital. Meanwhile, the residential enclave for bureaucrats and Ministers in Bhopal, Char Inli, was cordoned off. She continued releasing media bulletins every evening, and Chouhan hailed her resilience.

Pressure mounted on her after a photograph of four health workers, dressed in personal protective equipment and

tending to her house, went viral on social media. Moreover, she was publicly accused of not self-isolating, despite her son's return from the U.S. The Madhya Pradesh Human Rights Commission stepped in, seeking a response from the government over officials sidestepping treatment protocol. In the end, she relented and moved to a private hospital along with other infected officials. Not a dedicated COVID-19 facility until then, the hospital was immediately designated as one.

Meanwhile, other infected health workers showed reluctance to be treated at the AIIMS, Bhopal, with many alleging inadequate facilities. Another private facility was already treating their co-workers, and they were eager to shift there. "Well, they were infected together and wanted to recover from it together," said Faiz Ahmed Kidwai, Health Commissioner.

Within the disease incubation period, an unusual bustle had taken over the Directorate March-end. Files changed numerous hands, back-to-back meetings were held, and officials milled in the emergency mode against the pandemic. The National Health Mission staff also moved to the building to give a leg-up to mitigation efforts, but only to crumple the space further.

Making matters worse, the community medicine department of the government-run Gandhi Medical College, which guides the State government in tackling the outbreak, went into quarantine on April 10, after a junior resident in the department tested positive. The team included a member of the COVID-19 technical advisory panel to the government. As of April 24, six staffers of the AIIMS, including doctors, had been infected too.

The Principal Secretary, the Ayushman Bharat Yojana MD, and an Additional Director are the primary nodes of the spread within the department. The Deputy Secretary of the Medical Education Department and an Officer on Special Duty with the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme, both IAS officers, have been infected too.

COVID-19 affects cops too

The day the Health Department registered its first case, the police found four of its personnel infected too. "Officials from the two departments were in con-

tact at the workplace or casually," said Rahul Rajak, a researcher who is mapping the outbreak in Bhopal.

Cases from the two departments converge mainly in TT Nagar, where a police housing society and a battalion are located, and several doctors reside. Health workers from different areas infected at least three policemen residing there while they were on duty. But in one case, a doctor and a policeman, both residing in TT Nagar, had mutual contact.

These policemen unwittingly carried the virus to their workplace, to the Aishbagh and Jahangirabad police stations. Batons, wireless sets, arms and log-books changed hands with co-workers at the end of shifts. It was common for cops to squeeze into a patrol vehicle or a riot-control bus, awaiting orders. Infected officials unintentionally brought the virus upon family members — wives and mothers are infected mostly — in 19 different areas across the city. Stepping out for casual meetings or buying groceries, they in turn became potential carriers. To break this chain, the entire city police, 2,100 personnel, have checked into hotels.

Decoding the purpose of a meeting is important, said Rajak. "It reveals a patient's physical proximity and the level of interaction with primary contacts, crucial for infection." Swift action is the key to trump the virus, so once the infection is confirmed, patients get a call from a centre asking for who they met, and how.

More than half the infected in Jahangirabad, another hotspot with 55 cases, are primary contacts such as family members. Bhopal stared at the grim prospect of the densely populated area becoming like Indore's congested hotspots. The Bhopal administration swung into action and took 1,000 samples for testing, to pre-empt an outbreak.

There is no single source for the infection in Bhopal. Several isolated cases have sprung up in 23 hotspots, having at least three cases each. All patients have been categorised along four verticals — the police, the health department, Tablighi Jamaat members, and others. Contrary to Chouhan's claim, experts are yet to come across a strong link of the Jamaat members who have tested positive and other cases, either in Bho-



Cases are surging rapidly and no one seems in control. The appointment of a Health Minister, at last, is a good step.

Journalist who tested positive for the virus

pal, where 23 members are infected, or in Indore.

From one tragedy to another

In an eerily familiar pattern now, eight of the nine who succumbed to the illness in Bhopal were survivors of the gas tragedy in 1984, which compromised their immunity severely. Two of them died on a hospital bed. After developing symptoms, the rest carried the virus unaware, hopping from hospital to hospital, scrambling to negotiate the paralysed healthcare system and a crippled referral system. Some landed outside shut hospitals, others were denied admission by hospitals fearing infection. Pushed to the brink, the patients could manage to reach a COVID-19 hospital only too late.

In one case, a man, gasping for breath, was taken to a government-run hospital, where no one provided him with oxygen support. Worried seeing his condition worsen, the sons lifted him out of an ambulance, but he died on the way inside within seconds. Another was denied ambulance service and admission by two private hospitals.

The virus attacked six of them so viciously, and swiftly, that they could not even wait for their test results to come in. Illnesses such as asthma, tuberculosis or cancer, caused by the methyl isocyanate leak from a pesticide plant in 1984, hastened the process. From 1998 to 2016, 50.4% of the survivors suffered from cardiovascular problems, 59.6% from pulmonary problems and 15.6% from diabetes, according to the Bhopal Memorial Hospital and Research Centre (BMHRC).

Five of the deaths occurred when the ICMR-run BMHRC, the only super speciality facility for the survivors, remained out of bounds for them for 23 days. On March 23, tens of admitted patients were arbitrarily discharged as the facility was converted into a COVID-19 facility. Three died later of non-COVID-19 diseases. The government, facing flak, has restored the facility to treat only the survivors.

Not all who died were publicly declared the gas tragedy's survivors by the Bhopal district authorities. Rachna Dhingra, of the Bhopal Group for Information and Action, said the ICMR-run National Institute for Research in Environmental Health, Bhopal, tasked with intervening for the survivors' health, had not made any effort so far to identify, screen or test the gas tragedy survivors who also had chronic illnesses. "The institute should be pulled up for dereliction of duty for the deaths," she said.

Referring to instances of patients being denied treatment in non-COVID-19 hospitals, Prabhakar Tiwari, Bhopal Chief Medical and Health Officer, said, "No hospital can deny admission to patients. Screening has been authorised at the six State-run hospitals too." Thanks

Along with Shivraj Chouhan, they (Tulsiram Silawat and Narottam Mishra) did not develop the health infrastructure in the State, for which they owe an explanation now.

RASHEED KIDWAI
Visiting Fellow Observer Research Foundation

to the intervention by the Madhya Pradesh High Court, all patients of the BMHRC will be screened for COVID-19 now.

Outbreak in Indore

The largest and most populous city of Madhya Pradesh, Indore, had a close shave with the virus in January. Two Indian students had returned from China's Wuhan, jostling with the pandemic then, but tested negative. Three months later today, a terrifying spectacle is playing out. Numbers have surged to four digits, deaths are piling, yet authorities are clueless about the outbreak's source.

By April 12, deaths in Indore had shot to 32. Salil Sakalle, Professor, Community Medicine Department at the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Medical College (MGMMC), believes this could be explained by the fact that 55.3% of the 47 dead by April 17 having had illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension, morbid obesity and chronic renal failure. These illnesses, combined with the virus to cause their deaths quickly. In addition, he said, 74% of the dead were above 50, with most reporting late to hospital. "They all suffered from respiratory distress by the time they first contacted the health system. And some carried a higher viral load," he said. In fact, nearly 30% of the deceased suffered from such acute distress, they didn't survive to see their COVID-19 test results.

Ujjain also sends its patients to Indore for treatment. As many as 10.7% of its patients have died of the illness until April 24. So, health experts are wondering whether the strain is of a more virulent type. "Most mortalities in the State have occurred in this area, and we are trying to find out the cause," said Jyoti Bindal, the college's Dean. Indore has recorded 55 of the 92 deaths in the State, and neighbouring districts Ujjain, Khargone and Dewas with it make up 85% of all the deaths. The college will send samples to the National Institute of Virology for automated gene sequencing virus culture, to ascertain the strain's nature.

As recent cases were mostly primary contacts of the infected, already in quarantine, it was helping to stop the spread to newer areas, said Akash Tripathi, Indore Commissioner.

The outbreak in Indore, which detected its first case on March 22, had occurred in densely populated adjoining clusters, with no single source. In most cases, the spread in newer areas had separate carriers. By April 14, cases had grown by almost four times in 10 days to 427. As of April 24, the number had soared to 1,029, making up around 66% of the State's tally.

Faced with spiralling cases and deaths, 12 doctors and seven nurses getting infected until April 22 and health workers being roughed up and chased away on two occasions while conducting a survey, Indore authorities have started regulating the information flow.

First, the MGMMC was divested of its daily task of releasing a three-page comprehensive media bulletin. By contrast, district authorities have been issuing a single-page bulletin. Second, an Additional Director in the State Public Relations Department, Mangla Prasad Mishra, has been deputed by the State government to "resolve the crisis within Indore's electronic media, especially pertaining to official figures," as he put it.

On April 18, the State bulletin inexplicably removed 17 cases in six districts over the previous day, to bring down the tally. On April 16, the government claimed to have tested 3,896 samples, a dubious 41% jump from the previous day. This further dented the credibility of official figures, as the spike was incongruous with individual testing data from centres and much higher than testing patterns nationwide.

In Bhopal, another journalist who took part in Mr. Nath's meeting tested positive later. "Cases are surging rapidly and no one seems in control. The appointment of a Health Minister, at last, is a good step," said the first journalist who tested positive for the virus.

On April 22, Narottam Mishra was appointed to helm the Health Department, rudderless for 40 days. But the political drama, and backroom manoeuvring, is far from over. Though the virus is here to stay and gnaws at a crumbling health system, 24 seats in the State Assembly will be up for grabs within five months. "No matter how important an event, human life must come first," said the journalist.

FROM PAGE ONE

India records largest single-day spike

Dr. Paul added that India with its surveillance system ensured that the government's effort to control the disease became a Jan Andolan.

Sujit Kumar Singh, director, National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) giving his presentation on how surveillance is being used to gather epidemiological intelligence and take required measures accordingly to contain the COVID situation said that currently in India actively monitoring 9,45,000 people.

"Surveillance network has been set up at district level as well, so that household survey, quarantine and isolation are done as part of cluster containment plan. It is because of the combined efforts that the early infection rates were reduced," he said.

"During the initial period of lockdown, doubling time of cases decreased since people infected already were being detected; later it improved as lockdown put a brake on the spread of the infection. Our seven day doubling time increased from 4.2 in April 6 has gone up to 8.6 days on April 20. We had started our surveillance mechanism even before the first COVID-19 case was reported in India. This

has played an important role in helping us contain the spread of the infection," Mr. Singh said.

"Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Friday interacted with all the State Health Ministers and Health Secretaries through a video conference to review the preparedness and actions taken for management of COVID-19. He urged the States to focus on surveillance, house-to-house active case finding, early identification of cases and proper clinical management to ensure that the patients get timely treatment and mortality is reduced," Mr. Agarwal said.

Union Health Ministry has on Friday also written to States/UTs to ensure that all the facilities under National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP) remain fully functional in public interest and ensure that the diagnosis and treatment of TB patients goes without any interruption notwithstanding the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

The Ministry has added that even if the TB patient is unable to approach the health facility, arrangements should be made by the facility to deliver drugs at the doorstep of the patient wherever possible.

India must be self-reliant, says Prime Minister Modi

The Swamitva programme, he said, would help rural India leverage property for institutional credit and other benefits.

The Prime Minister lauded panchayats and villages across India for implementing lockdown rules and social distancing norms. It showed how "rural India has channelled our traditional values to combat the pandemic in a way that astounds those with fancy degrees from abroad."

Since there was no real cure for COVID-19, the simple mantra of *do gaj doori* (two yards of separation) needed to be propagated, he added.

Mr. Modi's statement on self-reliance comes at a time when new foreign direct investment (FDI) rules raise barriers for investments by certain countries and the new Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient policy for wresting back India's lost dominance in the sector.

Total lockdown in 5 Tamil Nadu cities

A senior official told *The Hindu*: "The data from the health bulletin for the past three days showed there were more cases in urban centres, especially Chennai. It was felt more people were out on the streets for various reasons. Unless there is a strict enforcement of restrictions, the lockdown will not yield fruitful results."

"Although the spread of the novel coronavirus has come under control in rural areas, there are chances of more spread in the urban pockets, especially in the areas where people gather in large numbers. Hence, there is an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in such Corporations as Chennai, Coimbatore and Madurai," said a government order issued later in the day.

At a discussion on Friday, medical and public health

experts opined that the spread of COVID-19 could be brought under control only if the lockdown was further intensified in urban areas.

"The movement of the public would be restricted in other areas of the Corporations completely. Severe action would also be initiated against those who violate the lockdown conditions, besides the seizure of vehicles," the order stated.

"Wholesale vegetable markets such as the one in Koyambedu would function after complying with appropriate rules. Likewise, the sale of vegetables and fruits would be allowed only on mobile carts. There is no permission for other shops to operate during these days," Mr. Palaniswami said.

He said the stringent restrictions would be imposed in containment zones and disinfectants would be sprayed daily.

U.P. to bring back migrant workers in phases

After the U.P. government recently sent 300 buses to bring back its students stranded in Kota, Rajasthan, Opposition leaders, including Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, had stressed that something similar should be done for labourers and workers stuck in other States.

More than 8,000 students were brought back to the State, as per government estimates.

Ayodhya became the 57th district in the State to record a positive case; a 25-year-old pregnant woman of Poora-

kalandar area tested positive at a private lab.

District Magistrate Anuj Jha said the staff and doctors of the hospital where she was being treated - she visited it first on April 19 before getting tested on April 22 - along with her relatives were put under quarantine. "The corona positive lady is having no symptoms of the disease, she has no problems in the moment," Mr. Jha said. The village she was from had been sealed as per protocol and medical staff were going door to door for contact tracing, he said.

No plan to ease fiscal deficit targets

States should trigger their own escape clauses, says Chairman of 15th Finance Commission N.K. Singh

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Despite the strain on government finances due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is no credible proposal to amend the legislation meant to control the fiscal deficit, Chairman of the 15th Finance Commission N.K. Singh said.

Speaking to presspersons after a two-day meeting of the Commission's Economic Advisory Council, Mr. Singh said the government was currently looking to see how to ameliorate economic hardship while staying within the broad framework of the existing law.

While presenting the Union Budget in February, the Finance Minister had in-

It is important to ensure that the State governments get access to adequate funds to undertake their fight against the pandemic

MEMBERS OF ECONOMIC ADVISORY COUNCIL

voked the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act's escape clause to relax the fiscal deficit target for 2020-21 by 0.5% percentage points to 3.5% of the GDP. If the government wishes to increase spending further in light of the current crisis, as many economists have recommended, it may need to amend the Act.

The State governments have been demanding that

their own 3% fiscal deficit targets be relaxed to 4% or even 5%, to give them elbow room in dealing with the impact of the lockdown.

Need for new law

Dr. Singh said that change would not be possible without fresh legislation being enacted by the States. A more expeditious method would be for the States to first trigger their own escape

clauses, he said. He also cautioned that the States need to weigh the cost of borrowing from the market, and whether there would be appetite for their bonds.

According to an official statement, Economic Advisory Council members felt that options need to be considered for financing the additional deficit. It is important to ensure that the State governments get access to adequate funds to undertake their fight against the pandemic, they said, adding that different States may come out of the pandemic's impact in different stages.

Council members all felt that earlier projections of real GDP growth will need to

be revised downwards considerably, though Dr. Singh declined to quantify the drop until fourth quarter macroeconomic data becomes available. Noting that the lockdown's impact on public finances will be significant, with a large shortfall in tax and other revenues, the Council recommended a nuanced fiscal response, with a focus not just on the size but the design of any stimulus package.

A support mechanism for cash-starved small enterprises needs to be a top priority, along with partial loan guarantees and other measures to protect non-banking financial companies, the Council said.

BJP pushed M.P. into crisis, says CPI(M)

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

With a spike in positive cases in Madhya Pradesh, CPI (M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said the BJP should be held accountable for pushing the State into a health crisis.

"Responsibility for these shocking numbers in the entire Madhya Pradesh falls solely on the BJP whose top leadership was singularly focused on toppling an Opposition government, instead of being concerned about the grave health crisis in the State," he tweeted, adding that their lust for power had jeopardised States' efforts to contain COVID-19.

'DA, DR cut inhuman, insensitive'

Govt. constantly hitting at the income of its employees and middle class: Congress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday accused the Central government of "hurting" its employees and pensioners by freezing their Dearness Allowance (DA) and Dearness Relief (DR) instead of cutting down on "wasteful expenditure" during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Former party chief Rahul Gandhi took to Twitter to term the government move "insensitive and inhuman".

In a tweet in Hindi, he said that instead of suspending the bullet train project and the Central Vista beautification project, costing lakhs of crores [of rupees], the government had taken an insensitive and inhuman deci-



Rahul Gandhi

sion to cut the DA of its employees, pensioners and jawans, who are serving the public by fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

At an online press conference, Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala echoed his leader. "Instead of curbing its waste-

ful expenditure, the government has been constantly hitting at the income of its employees and the middle class people," he said.

'At what cost?'

Mr. Surjewala said that the decision to cut the DA allowance until June 2021 would give the government only ₹38,000 crore at the cost of its employees, including armed forces personnel and pensioners.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji has deducted ₹11,000 crore of the 15 lakh serving armed forces personnel and nearly 26 lakh military pensioners. What is their fault," he asked.

"Modiji, on the one side you are telling the State go-

vernments, as also the private sector, not to cut wages and salaries. On the other side, you yourself are cutting the DA and DR worth ₹38,000 crore of 113 lakh Central employees and pensioners. Is it not an indicator of the entire private sector of the country to follow suit and cut wages and allowances of their employees? Is it not an indication to the State governments?" Mr. Surjewala said.

In the past one month, the government had slashed the interest rates of small savings instruments, savings bank accounts and fixed deposits of public sector banks, hurting the common people who depend on the incomes from their savings, he said.

Arnab granted 3-week protection from police

SC allows case to be shifted to Mumbai

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday granted television anchor Arnab Goswami three weeks' protection from police in a hate incitement case.

A Bench led by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud said Mr. Goswami can use the time to apply for anticipatory bail. It also allowed the case registered in Nagpur to be shifted to Mumbai, where investigation would continue.

The Bench stayed further action on other FIRs registered against him in States like Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Telangana and Jammu and Kashmir.

Mr. Goswami had moved the Supreme Court late on Thursday night. It had within the next couple of hours listed the plea for quashing the FIRs before Justice Chandrachud's Bench.

In the hearing, Mr. Gos-

wami, represented by senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, justified the "extremely urgent circumstances" as several FIRs were registered against him by Congress party members in States ruled by the party or their political allies. Mr. Rohatgi argued that the FIRs were filed by Congress members in retaliation to his TV shows on *Republic TV* on April 16 and *R. Bharat* on April 21.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, for the Maharashtra government, countered that comments inciting communal violence cannot be protected as free speech. He said nothing prevented Congress members from filing complaints. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is appearing in defamation cases filed by BJP members in several States.

FIRs could be filed against anyone. The police should be given a free hand to investigate.

'Resume child, maternal care in Rajasthan'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

Health activists in Rajasthan on Friday called for the resumption of immunisation services for children and antenatal care for pregnant women, which had come to a standstill last month following the enforcement of lockdown.

The Jan Swasthya Abhiyan, which acts as the State chapter of the People's Health Movement, said the suspension of these services would lead to an abnormal rise in maternal and child health-related morbidities and mortalities. Though the State had claimed that the services were being provided at health facilities, very few people had availed them during March and April.

Chidambaram asks govt. to facilitate travel of migrants

'Desire to go home cannot be suppressed due to lockdown'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram on Friday asked the government to facilitate the travel of migrant workers to their hometowns under strict conditions of health and safety. In a series of tweets, he cautioned the government that the desire of the people to be among their own could not be 'suppressed for long in the name of a lockdown'.

"The overwhelming mood and desire among migrant persons (and their families) is that, after May 3, they should be allowed to go back to their home states/villages. The desire to go back to their home states, to join



P. Chidambaram

their families, and to be among their own language-speaking people is an overpowering desire that cannot be suppressed for too long in the name of a lockdown," the former Union Minister said.

In a resolution on Thursday, the Congress Working Committee (CWC) - the par-

ty's highest decision-making body - urged the government to arrange for the return of the migrant workers to their hometowns.

"The CWC draws the attention of the Central Government to the necessity of framing a policy under which migrant workers who wish to return to their home states/villages (1) may be allowed to travel under strict conditions of health safety, (2) be provided with adequate money and food in the interim; (3) be allowed to return to work post the lockdown (4) compensation for the families of those migrant workers who have lost their lives in this period of crisis," the resolution said.

is also scheduled for retirement. Sanjeevane Kutty, Secretary, Ex-Servicemen Welfare, is also set to retire from the service.

According to government sources, reshuffle in the administration with key appointments is likely over the weekend.

Key PMO post

There are also several important vacancies in the administration. The most important vacancy is that of a Secretary in the PMO. Insiders said Additional Secretary in the PMO, A.K.



Health Secretary Preeti Sudan, left, and Economic Affairs Secretary Atanu Chakraborty are also scheduled to retire.



Health Secretary Preeti Sudan, left, and Economic Affairs Secretary Atanu Chakraborty are also scheduled to retire.

Sharma, a long-time trusted aide of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, may be made Secretary since he has recently been empanelled to hold the post of Secretary in the Central government. She is a 1988-batch Gujarat cadre officer.

Recently, the Department of Personnel and training (DoPT) empanelled 28 senior IAS officers belonging to the 1987 and 1988 batches to hold the post of Secretary or equivalent.

The Centre picks up the officials from the State cadre or those serving in the Central government on deputation after the empanelment.

Accordingly, several officials who were recently empanelled will likely be made full-fledged Secretary in the various departments in the government set-up.

Another senior IAS officer in the PMO, Tarun Bajaj, a 1988-batch Haryana cadre officer, has been empanelled along with Mr. Sharma. Whether he will be continued in the PMO or moved out as a full-fledged Secretary in the administration remains to be seen.

Another important vacan-

cy is in the Ministry of HRD as Secretary, School Education and Literacy. Currently, the post is being held by Higher Education Secretary Amit Khare.

As per the buzz, Anita Karwal, Chairperson of CBSE, is most likely to be new Secretary, School Education and Literacy. She was also recently empanelled to hold the post of Secretary in the Central government. She is a 1988-batch Gujarat cadre officer.

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Kidnapped policeman rescued, 2 militants killed

Brief encounter in Anantnag district

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Two militants, who kidnapped a policeman, were killed in a shootout in south Kashmir on Friday, according to the police.

"A police party neutralised two militants and rescued a [kidnapped] constable. However, one policeman was injured," Inspector General of Police, Kashmir, Vijay Kumar, said in a statement in a WhatsApp group.

Police sources said the militants were travelling in a car along with the abducted policeman when they were stopped near a checkpoint by the Army and the police at Kharpora, Arwani in Bijnbehara in Anantnag district, leading to a shootout.

The policeman was kidnapped when he was heading home in Kulgam on Friday. It was second such attempt in the past two days in Kulgam. Earlier, militants abducted a policeman on Thursday evening but the police managed to rescue him. On Sunday, one policeman was killed in his house in Anantnag.

The police on Friday said they allowed three families which identified slain militants killed in an encounter on Wednesday to participate in their burial in Sonamarg two days ago. "Three out of the four slain militants were identified by their families. These families participated in the burial in the presence of a magistrate," Mr. Kumar said.

In Kolkata, IMCT raises queries on tests

Central team also seeks clarification on the committee of doctors approving COVID-19 deaths

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

The Inter Ministerial Central Team (IMCT), which is in Kolkata, on Friday raised serious questions on the treatment of COVID-19 patients in West Bengal, particularly at M.R. Bangur Hospital that serves as the primary referral hospital.

The IMCT has sought clarifications on three major points – the facilities at the hospital, the presentation made by the Health Department to it and the committee of doctors approving the deaths of COVID-19 patients.

A letter by the IMCT to Chief Secretary Rajiva Sinha said there were a large number of patients in the isolation wards of the CNCI (Chittaranjan National Cancer Institute) and M.R. Bangur Hospital who were awaiting COVID-19 test results for five days or longer.

The letter by IMCT leader Apurva Chandra said they had spoken to four patients at M.R. Bangur Hospital awaiting test results since April 16, two since April 17 and three from April 18. "The patient admission system at the hospital appears to be



Daily round: Health workers visiting a locality during their door-to-door surveillance in Kolkata on Friday. •PTI

chaotic. There was no social distancing in the waiting area," it stated.

The communication also raised questions on reports in social media that bodies were lying on beds at M.R. Bangur Hospital awaiting death certificate.

"There are only 12 ventilator beds available in the Ban-

gur hospital even though it caters to 354 serious COVID-19 patients. When asked, the IMCT was informed that in case a patient requires ventilator support and it is not available, the patient is transferred to other facility. Records in this regards may be made available," the letter said.

The IMCT, while pointing out that the State government had said testing had increased from 400 to 900 a day, sought to know how many of these were repeat tests and how many first-time patients. "From the presentation, it appears that the State is reaching its peak capacity for testing. Since the State

believes that it is at the beginning of the test compared to other States, the IMCT may be provided with any efforts made by the State to increase its testing capacity further in future considering the large population of the State to say 2500/5000 day over what period of time," the letter said.

Audit panel confirmed 18 deaths, says West Bengal

Govt. releases figures after Central team asks for details

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Hours after the Inter-Ministerial Central Team (IMCT) asked for details of the procedure followed by the committee of doctors from West Bengal to audit COVID-19 deaths and sought an interaction with it, the West Bengal government released the number of COVID-19 deaths the audit committee has looked into so far.

The audit committee looked into 57 deaths and has so far confirmed 18 of them died of COVID-19, State's Chief Secretary Rajiva Sinha said on Friday. All the 57 had tested positive for COVID-19. "This Committee examined all the relevant documents sent by the hospitals concerned and have found 18 deaths due to COVID-19 infections," a letter released by the West Bengal government said. "The remaining 39 deaths were due to severe co-morbid conditions which were the immediate cause of death, and COVID-19 was incidental finding," said the letter signed by B.R. Satpati,



On guard: A policeman securing the entrance of a fish market in Kolkata on Friday. •RAJEEV BHATT

a former director of government health services and a member of the audit committee.

When it was pointed out by journalist that this information had come after the IMCT wrote to the West Bengal government, Mr. Sinha said what mattered was the information the State shared and nothing else. Responding to questions on the IMCT letters addressed to him during the day, Mr. Sinha said the committee had come to cooperate with State. "We are like an open book," he said. The State government

had nothing to hide. "Nobody has come here as inspectors or auditors. It is also not that we are passing or failing some exam. The only exam we have to pass is what people think... whether we have been able to provide them services," the Chief Secretary said.

Meanwhile, 51 new cases were reported in the State in the past 24 hours, taking the number of active cases to 385. The new cases were reported from seven districts in south Bengal, but half of them (51%) were from Kolkata alone.

IN BRIEF



11 new cases take Punjab tally to 298

CHANDIGARH Punjab on Friday reported 11 fresh COVID-19 cases, taking the State's tally to 298, according to an official statement. The Health Department said that on April 24, six new patients were reported from Patiala, two from Mansa and one each from Jalandhar, Ludhiana and Amritsar districts. Punjab has so far seen 17 deaths.

2 held for assaulting doctors in Berhampur

BERHAMPUR Two youths who allegedly assaulted and abused doctors at the MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Odisha's Berhampur have been arrested on Thursday. The two were irked when the doctors objected to their entry into the campus without wearing masks on Wednesday. The arrested were identified as M. Siba Patra and Nayan Swain from the Ankuli area of the city.

Boxer Dingko Singh to go to Delhi for treatment

IMPHAL Boxer and Arjuna awardee Ngangom Dingko Singh of Manipur was allowed to go to Delhi in an air ambulance for cancer treatment after he tested negative twice for the novel coronavirus. Chief Minister N. Biren Singh gave him monetary assistance on Friday and wished him a speedy recovery. Congress MLA R.K. Imo has given the boxer ₹50,000.

5 returning migrants test positive in Odisha

SHUBANESHWAR Five men, who recently returned to Odisha's Bhadrak district from neighbouring West Bengal, were found positive for COVID-19, taking the State's tally to 94 on Friday. Contact tracing and follow up action was initiated by the State government's Health & Family Welfare Department in the villages from where the new cases were reported during the day.

'Police officers should be given risk allowance'

NEW DELHI A retired police officer on Friday moved the Supreme Court for a direction to the government to make provisions for the payment of 'risk and hardship' allowance, incentives in the form of bonus and additional salary to the police officers serving on the front-lines of the COVID-19 lockdown. Bhanupratap Bhargre, represented by advocate Amit Pai, contended that police officers above the age of 48, with medical conditions such as diabetes making them vulnerable to infection should not be deployed for duty.



No distancing: A market in Ahmedabad ahead of the start of the Ramzan fast on Friday. •REUTERS

191 cases, 15 deaths in Gujarat

Of these cases, 169 are from Ahmedabad alone

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD

There was a sharp increase in COVID-19 infections in Gujarat, which added 191 new cases and 15 deaths on Friday, taking the total to 2,815 cases and 127 deaths so far.

After neighbouring Maharashtra, Gujarat is the second largest State with number of cases and casualties

due to the novel coronavirus. There are only seven recoveries on Friday, taking the total number of recovered patients to 265. As on Friday, 2,393 are undergoing treatment at various hospitals, while 29 are on ventilator support.

Out of the 191 cases recorded on Friday, 169 are from Ahmedabad alone, while 14 out of 15 deaths also

occurred in the city, which is the largest cluster with 1,821 cases and 83 deaths.

Meanwhile, only 1,438 samples were tested from April 23 5 p.m. to April 24 5 p.m. as per the data released by the State health department.

According to officials, the State has a capacity to test around 3,000 samples per day.

M.P. runs out of RNA extraction kits

Health Minister Narottam Mishra pleads with Harsh Vardhan for supplies

STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh is fast running out of automated RNA extraction kits and staring at a Statewide shortage in two to three days time in the wake of glitches in the supply chain. The kits, having twice as much output than manual ones, are used in the process to test a sample for COVID-19.

The laboratory in the State's hardest hit city, Indore, which accounts for 66% of the tally, will run out of the automated column-based RNA (ribonucleic acid) extraction kits today. Whereas in Bhopal, the AIIMS and the Gandhi Medical College's laboratories will run out of stock in another day. Kits at the Bhopal Memorial Hospital and Research Centre will last for two days, as will those with the Jabalpur laboratory.

The other six laboratories across the State have low testing rates, according to



Making a plea: A policeman pleading with commuters in Bhopal to stay home on Friday. •PTI

the State Health Department.

Enough machines

"We have enough machines. In fact, we can even get more of them. But we have no testing kits," Health Minister Narottam Mishra told Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare Harsh Vardhan during a videoconference. "If you could send them as early as possible, it will be a great

used for 12 samples in an hour, whereas the automated ones can be used for 24.

The vendors were mostly in Germany or the United States, both badly affected by the pandemic, Mr. Dhanaraju explained. "Companies are not supplying. Moreover, there is demand for kits all over the world. For the bead-based kits being manufactured domestically, procurement of raw material is hit as many components are imported," he said. The State had placed an order for 1.16 lakh RNA isolation kits, of which it had received just 23,000 kits so far.

"We have a problem on the supply side," said S. Dhanaraju, officer on special duty with the Madhya Pradesh Public Health Services Corporation Limited. "As a result, the testing output is affected. Unsteady supply is expected to continue till the end of this month," he added. The manual bead-based RNA isolation kits can be

Maharashtra records 394 cases, 18 deaths

The number of cases goes up to 6,817; the death toll mounts to 301

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUNE

Maharashtra reported 394 new COVID-19 cases on Friday as the State's tally mounted to 6,817 cases, while 18 new deaths took the toll to 301.

According to health officials, 11 of these deaths were from Mumbai, five were from Pune and two from Malgaon in Nashik.

Mumbai's death toll now stands at 178, while that of Pune district has risen to 67, with 63 reported from Pune city alone. "67% of the deaths reported had high-risk co-morbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, asthma and heart disease," State Surveillance Officer Pradeep Awate said.

While the surge was considerably lower than the staggering 700-plus case on Thursday, Mumbai's tally



Empty spaces: The Jama Masjid near the Bandra station remained closed on Friday. •ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY

soared to 4,447, with 242 of the 394 new cases reported from the city. The news was better for Pune city, which reported only 38 fresh cases, as against 100 on Thursday. The city's tally reached 848.

However, Pimpri-Chinchwad, which had hitherto kept the contagion in check, reported 13 new cases to

take its total to 70. Along with the rural areas, Pune district's cumulative tally has risen to 961.

Hearteningly, the number of those discharged saw a rise, as 117 persons were discharged on Friday. The number of persons recovered stands at 957.

Malgaon reported seven

Dharavi reports six fresh cases

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Dharavi reported six new cases on Friday, taking the total to 220. This is the lowest single-day rise after April 15. It also reported its 14th death, a 60-year-old man from Gopinath Colony.

The BMC is undertaking rigorous fever screening.

new cases, taking the city's tally to 116, with 11 deaths.

Areas in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (excluding the city) reported a jump in new cases, with seven reported from Kalyan-Dombivli to take its tally to 131. Seven more cases were recorded in Thane district whose total stands at 255.

Plea to isolate high-risk gas leak survivors

STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

As eight of the nine persons to die of COVID-19 in Bhopal were survivors of the gas tragedy, rights groups on Friday demanded that high-risk survivors having underlying chronic illnesses be immediately identified, isolated and given medical attention to help keep the disease at bay.

Six of the first seven who died had been undergoing treatment for chronic illnesses such as cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and hypertension. The methyl isocyanate leak from Union Carbide pesticide plant here in 1984 caused the illness and the coronavirus infection hastened their death.

Identification of the high-risk survivors could be done by the six State-run gas relief hospitals and the ICMR-run Bhopal Memorial Hospital and Research Centre and the National Institute for Research in Environmental Health, said Rachna Dhinra of the Bhopal Group for Information and Action.

The rights groups, in a letter to Union Minister for Health Harsh Vardhan, have demanded that the survivors be quarantined at their homes or centres after identification.

Can't bring students from Kota: Bihar govt. tells HC

'We can't violate lockdown norms'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

At a time when more than 12,000 students from Bihar, stranded in Rajasthan's Kota, and their parents have been repeatedly appealing to the State government to ensure their early evacuation, the government in a reply to the Patna High Court on Thursday said while it was "sensitive to the plight of stranded students, but bringing them back would amount to violation of lockdown guidelines."

On Thursday, a group of students from Bihar observed a silent protest in Kota while sending out an SOS to the Bihar government to

get them back as soon as possible.

The students are stuck in different hostels and paying guest accommodations in Kota where they had gone to attend engineering and medical entrance coaching institutes.

Earlier, the Uttar Pradesh government had sent as many as 300 buses to Kota to bring back the State's stranded students. On Thursday, 38 students from Dadra and Nagar Haveli and six from Diu had left by three buses, while 18 buses from Assam and 31 buses with students from Haryana were reported to be ready to leave Kota on Friday.

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TENDER NOTICE
NIT No: E-510000642HPC&HPI/APGENCO/2020
APGENCO invites tenders for "Fire & Allied Peril Insurance coverage for Plant Equipment of 4 X 100 MW Solar Power Project at Talcher (Rourkela) for a period of one year i.e from 00.00 Hrs on 12.06.2020 to Mid night of 11.06.2021" through A.P e-Procurement platform. Approximate Value of the Tender: Rs.76.05 Lakhs, Bid Start Date & Time: From 24.04.2020, 17:00 Hrs, Bid Submission Closing Date & Time: up to 14.05.2020, 12:00 Hrs. For further details visit website: www.apgenco.gov.in or https://tender.apgenco.gov.in.

TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS: TIRUPATI
O/o CHIEF WIGILANCE & SECURITY OFFICER
R.No.CN.13/15/VASO/TML/2020
23-04-2020 13-05-2020
5.00 p.m. 3.00 p.m.
1 Providing total management services for Collection, transportation, Sorting and Handling over of pilgrims baggages / cell phones / shoes / other electronic items in free luggage counters / cell phone counters / shoe leasing counters at Tirumala, Aliphi, Sivani Mettu, Chittoor Dist., A.P.
Tender Document can be downloaded from the website: https://tender.approcurement.gov.in. For further details contact Phone No.0871-2263665 and mail ID: cc2ca2001@gmail.com.
R.No.CN/13/17/Ab.No.63/PD/2020; Dated:24-04-2020
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

PM Garib Kalyan Yojana – Recent Updates

The latest announcement on PMGKY was made on 26th March, 2020 as an initiative towards the loss caused by the outbreak. The 21 days lock down is expected to cost the Indian Economy a cost of around 9 lakh crores.

Some of the latest announcements made by the Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman are mentioned below:

To provide an insurance cover of Rs 50 lakhs per health worker affected by COVID-19.

To provide free resources of 5 kg wheat or rice and 1 kg of preferred pulses for 80 crore poor people for the next three months under the PM Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana.

20 crore Women Jan Dhan account holders will be provided Rs 500 per month for next three months. To know more about the PM Jan-Dhan Yojana, refer to the linked article.

There will be an increase in MNREGA wage to Rs 202 per day to benefit 13.62 crore families.

The Central Government has given orders to State Governments to use the Building and Construction Workers Welfare Fund to provide relief to Construction Workers.

Foodgrain stock will last till next March, says FCI chief

Calling it excess stock will be an exaggeration, he says

T. RAMAKRISHNAN
CHENNAI

The stock of foodgrains available with the Food Corporation of India is “comfortable” to manage the situation till March next year, but it would be an exaggeration to hold that the stock is “far in excess” of the buffer stock requirement, which should include additional allocation, according to D.V. Prasad, Chairman and Managing Director of the FCI.

Responding to the demand being made by food security activists that the Central government, with “enormous excess stock”, release more foodgrains to States free of cost or at a nominal price over and above the existing allocations, Mr. Prasad told *The Hindu* on Thursday that the buffer stock norms were fixed based on the requirement of wheat or rice at 5 kg a person for 80 crore beneficiaries of the National Food Security Act (NFSA), which was in line with the requirements of the law.

Additional allocation
“The norms have been determined, considering normal situations and they essentially provide for any production shortfalls. However, a pandemic, as we are witnessing today, is a different situation and it may demand a revision of the existing norms in view of the additional allocation of foodgrains at 5 kg a person, as being done under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana (PMGKAY) for three months (April to June this



D.V. Prasad

year in the light of the COVID-19). In essence, the buffer norms now need to take into account the additional allocation too,” he pointed out.

As on date, the total stock is 564 lakh tonnes, of which rice accounts for 284 lakh tonnes and wheat, 280 lakh tonnes. In the remaining period of April, May and June, it is expected that there will be an outflow of 200 lakh tonnes for the regular NFSA scheme, 5 kg free for each NFSA beneficiaries given under PMGKAY and the new schemes introduced for non-NFSA cardholders and NGOs.

As per the norms fixed in 2015, the buffer stock, as maintained on April 1, was around 210 lakh tonnes, a figure which would change on the first day of July, October and January.

Kharif procurement
“As the Kharif procurement season for rice is approaching an end and wheat procurement has just started, the stock position at our warehouses will naturally be high on July 1. Wheat being once a year crop, it has to be

stocked from July for almost a year to meet the year-long demand by the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) till the arrival of the next crop. Similarly, we will have to wait at least for six months to start receiving the inflow of Kharif rice. Given our country’s pattern, we have to procure wheat in about three months for the entire year and rice over six to eight months. So, one should not take a look only at the overall figure, without taking into account the additional allocations due to COVID-19,” Mr. Prasad said.

Good response
Asked about the status of the scheme of providing foodgrains to those not covered under the NFSA (such as non-priority household cards), Mr. Prasad said the response had been “good.” So, far, 27,000 tonnes of rice and 18,000 tonnes of wheat had been lifted by the States. Maharashtra had received 16,326 tonnes of wheat (at a rate of ₹ 21 per kg) and 14,915 tonnes of rice (at ₹ 22 per kg).

‘It’s Centre’s call’
Among the southern States which had taken only rice, Kerala had obtained 1,967 tonnes of rice and Karnataka 9,609 tonnes.

To a question whether rice would be given for these cardholders free of cost, as demanded by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, the official responded that “it is a policy decision (to be taken by the Union government)”.

The city-based Serum Institute of India has said that it expects the vaccine for COVID-19 developed by the University of Oxford in the market by October or November provided the safety and efficacy of the product is established during trials.

The institute has partnered with the Oxford vaccine project as one of the seven global institutions that will manufacture the vaccine.

“In around two weeks, we can produce five million doses a month and scale that up to 10 million after six months while typically producing a

Dr. Adar Poonawalla told CNBC-TV18.

Observing that there were a lot of people who thought that they would have a vaccine in a few months, Mr. Poonawalla said there was, however, a strong caveat.

Trial process

“If the vaccine works in the U.K. trial and we do another trial in India, which we are hoping to start shortly, in safety and efficacy, only then will it be available by October or November and that is only if we start producing at our personal cost in risk by the end of this month,” he said.



Adar Poonawalla

Further, he said the institute would be using one of the existing facilities for manufacturing the COVID-19 vaccine. “However, it will take over two years to set up new manufacturing facilities for COVID-19 vaccine,” he added.

“Typically vaccine trial

that have been very carefully changed for this product development, we are very pleased to announce that we will be able to do it by the end of this year,” Mr. Poonawalla said.

SII is currently looking at 4-5 million doses monthly and would start manufacturing early to save time in the hope that the trial would be successful.

“So, we hope to build up 20-40 million doses by September-October in the hope that the trial works, then we will have this product,” he said.

Mr. Poonawalla said SII

is in touch with the Department of Biotechnology.

Talking about the decision and the risks involved, Mr. Poonawalla said: “We are not a listed company and we are not accountable for our actions to investors in terms of pure profits and returns. So, I was able to make this decision and take this risk on at the cost of our other vaccines that we are putting aside temporarily so that we can build up the scale here.”

Mr. Poonawalla said that the manufacturing plant in Pune would have an investment of ₹500-600 crore.

Benefits of PM Garib Kalyan Package

To reduce the loss caused by the outbreak of Covid-19 in India, the Finance Minister launched the PM Garib Kalyan Package on March 26th 2020 for the BPL families.

Some of the benefits provided by the PM Garib Kalyan Package are as follows:

An Insurance Cover of Rs. 50 Lakh

Under this PM Garib Kalyan Scheme, any health worker in government hospitals and healthcare centres who are treating the Covid-19 patients would be provided with an insurance cover of Rs. 50 lakh if met with some accident. These health workers include Safai karamcharis, ward-boys, nurses, ASHA workers, paramedics, technicians, doctors and specialists. All government health centres, wellness centres and hospitals of Centres as well as States would be covered under this scheme. Approximately 22 lakh health workers would be provided insurance cover to fight this pandemic.

Free Pulses for the next 3 months under PM Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana

The Government of India declared to provide free resources of 5 kg wheat or rice and 1 kg of preferred pulses for 80 crore poor people for the next three months under the PM Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana. Each one of them would be provided double of their current entitlement over the next three months to ensure adequate availability of protein to all Covid-19 affected BPL families.

Benefit to farmers

The Government to front-load Rs. 2,000 paid to farmers in the first week of April under existing PM Kisan Yojana which will benefit 8.7 crore farmers.

Free LPG cylinders to the BPL families

The Finance Minister of India, Nirmala Sitharaman made an announcement on 26th March, 2020 to provide free cylinders to the BPL (Below Poverty Line) families for the next three months under the Ujjwala scheme

To help the low wage earners in organised sectors

The PM Garib Kalyan Package will also help the Wage-earners who are earning below Rs. 15,000 per month in businesses that are having less than 100 workers. The wage workers who are at risk of losing their employment will be provided with 24 percent of their monthly wages into their PF accounts for next three months which would prevent disruption in their employment.

- 1 Play golf with a retired prime minister – it’s illuminating (7)
- 5 Sidestepped car at end of road (6)
- 9 Expl second? Not right! (5)
- 10 Grow-ups upset about eastern Internet forum (9)
- 11 Actors adopt a name for a game (7)
- 12 Stitch repeatedly as announced by what’s-his-name (2-3-2)

- 17 You are to get old record on unknown medical study (7)
- 18 In the morning draw a sacred vessel (7)
- 19 Altering any line without reason (7)
- 20 Time for wee twist (7)
- 22 One of Chaucer’s pilgrims heartily agreed with woman (5)

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

As is obvious, Quranic *huda* (guidance) puts a great deal of emphasis on humanitarianism, making Islam more of an anthropocentric *deen* (system of life) than an obsessively theocentric religion; which is why there cannot be a greater act of philanthropy today for the Muslims than the *ihsaan* of fulfilling their Ramzan obligations from home.

A. Faizur Rahman

INTERVIEW | RANIL WICKREMESINGHE

'South Asia needs a humanitarian response to the COVID-19 pandemic'

The former Sri Lankan Prime Minister says India has to play a leading role in formulating a SAARC-led regional response to the crisis

MEERA SRINIVASAN

As the world combats the deadly coronavirus pandemic, Sri Lanka's former Prime Minister **Ranil Wickremesinghe** underscores in an interview the need for a collective response in South Asia, focussing on both, health and economic revival. Edited excerpts:

Well before the COVID-19 crisis hit us, you have been an advocate of greater regional cooperation. How can it help at such a time?

■ You see, this is a good time for a regional cooperation programme. This is a global pandemic without a global leadership. Maybe the region can't provide leadership for all. But the first virtual meeting of SAARC leaders was good, looking at the background and the problems that are there. We must treat this as a humanitarian issue and come up with a regional response. Maybe one or two countries, for instance, India and one other, could put up a proposal, which then can be looked at by others, and possibly amended. Let us all work together. We [Sri Lanka], for instance have a good public health system. So has

Kerala. We can work together on that.

Countries in the region have each pledged money towards the recently set-up SAARC COVID-19 Emergency Fund. But each country is administering its funds based on requests made bilaterally, rather than through a common pool...

■ There has to be a common centre. The SAARC Secretariat and someone who is in-charge. The Secretariat itself has limited staff, so you must have someone in-charge of it. I think it may be better if they are placed somewhere more centrally, working with relevant medical authorities.

What do you mean by centrally located?

I don't know if it can be han-

dled from Kathmandu alone. If you can, well and good. But you may need another city. It can be Bengaluru, Colombo, any city.

But you see a greater role for the Secretariat too?

■ Yes, the Secretariat works with the one in-charge. One person overall, who has everyone's confidence, should deal with it. In regard to the Secretariat, the advantage is that the ambassadors accredited to SAARC are there. That is the plus point of Kathmandu.

We are seeing some tensions in the SAARC COVID-19 response, with Pakistan saying the SAARC Secretariat should handle the funds.

■ You need someone in-charge there. I'm not saying it is not the Secretariat. But India has a leading role. Pakistan can't match India's funding. Let Pakistan make a proposal and one another country should get together. Someone should make a pro-



This is a global pandemic without a global leadership

posal and give it to the Secretary General who will talk with the others, and then we finalise it.

It is not India-led, the effort is SAARC-led, but let India give the input. Similarly, let Pakistan, Bangladesh give theirs. Let the Secretariat put it together. We have to look at issues pertaining not only to health, but also to our economies.

The World Bank's Chief Economist for South Asia recently told *The Hindu* that managing migrant returns, service sector revenue losses and ensuring food security for the poorest will emerge key priorities for the

region. Do you agree?

■ Well, there's one more. Keeping enterprises going big or small - if they collapse, the whole formal sector goes. It's the total economic activity that is at stake, other than production of safety [PPE] suits, gloves and medicines. I think SAARC can also develop a standby industrial base on this.

How so?

■ We could start companies to start manufacturing. Of course, when they start their prices may not be that competitive, but we decide on it and everyone buys from one or two companies earmarked for it.

Job creation will also be a major challenge, isn't it? Especially since migrant workers from the region, who were working in West Asia, are returning and may not go back.

■ We have to work this out. Remember tourism is big in

the Maldives, Sri Lanka, parts of India, Nepal. How do you manage that? I would look at some of the climate change issues, and also modernising agriculture. We have got to create jobs. You have to have helicopter money. The thing is the problem we have with our debts and the amount we owe to the international sovereign bonds. So, it is more a question of dealing with the London Club than the Paris Club, but I think a common approach would help us.

For Sri Lanka, while the bilateral debts are perhaps negotiable, the terms of the sovereign bonds are ruthless, aren't they?

■ That's a big one, yes. That is why you can't do anything on the rupee debt. We'll have inflation. That is one thing we can work on as a unit.

More broadly, do you also see a potential shift in the region towards expansionary fiscal policy, a basic income? We see that talk picking up globally.

■ You have to. You have to move away from some of those [past policies]. If you look at the IMF reports, they say it is bad this year, it might pick up next year. I don't know, if we don't find a remedy quickly, next year is also going to be bad. We should plan for two years.

When you say move away from some established policies, what do you mean?

■ You have to look at some sectors that you are going to pump in money into. We have focused on inflation, but inflation is really down. Then, the question of raising money - commercially and otherwise, how much can the London Club give us? That is really the big issue for all of us. And the fact that for India and Pakistan, it is a big amount, maybe a few billion dollars. So it is better to go as a team and take it on.

Speaking of the pressures of the international money market, do you think it's time to rethink the prevailing economic model?

■ Well, the free markets have to flow. But some of the countries that are doing well [in their COVID-19 response] have a more social market economy.

How do you think COVID-19 will impact the global order? China and the U.S., two powerful countries, have been hit so badly.

■ Europe is going to get the worst of it. And what will the U.K. do? They've lost a market, and in this situation, you can't gain a market in a hurry. What President Trump is trying to do is to keep the economy going so he won't be second-guessed by China. But China actually had a lockdown and they are now restarting. The problem for China, like all of us in different ways, is that the markets are in the western world. Until the western world picks up, we have to move towards other markets also. I think India should reconsider coming into the RCEP [The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership], even at a later stage.

'China may have known of virus in Nov.'

Pompeo reiterates United States' demand for sample of the SARS-CoV-2 detected in Wuhan

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE WASHINGTON

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo charged on Thursday that China may have known of the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) as early as November, renewing accusations that Beijing has not been transparent and again drawing ire from China.

"You'll recall that the first cases of this were known by the Chinese government maybe as early as November, but certainly by mid-December," Mr. Pompeo said.

"They were slow to identify this for anyone in the world, including the World Health Organization," he told conservative radio host Larry O'Connor.



Rising anger: Demonstrators taking part in a motorcade in Washington as part of a protest against the Trump administration's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. +AFP

COVID-19

Mr. Pompeo said the U.S. still wanted more information from China, including the original sample of the SARS-CoV-2 virus detected in the metropolis of Wuhan.

"This issue of transparency is important not only as a historical matter to understand what happened back

in November and December and January, but it's important even today," he said. "This is still impacting lots of lives here in the U.S. and, frankly, around the world."

China hit back on Friday, saying Mr. Pompeo's remarks were "totally groundless and entirely for the purpose of blaming others".

Mr. Pompeo's comments

ran "counter to the general consensus of the global community", Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said at a daily press briefing, adding that China had "provided timely information to the world".

China initially closely guarded information of the virus and silenced whistleblowers. The first official acknowledgment of what became a global pandemic came on December 31.

Critics say that Mr. Trump is seeking to deflect from his own handling of the crisis, which he claimed to have "totally under control" in January but has since killed more than 50,000 people in the U.S. - more than any other country.

U.S. death toll crosses 50,000

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE WASHINGTON

The novel coronavirus has killed more than 50,000 people in the U.S., after one of the deadliest days of the pandemic which saw 3,176 deaths, according to a tally on Thursday from Johns Hopkins University. It now has 870,468 confirmed cases.

'Johnson is recovering'

REUTERS LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson continues his recovery from COVID-19 at his country residence and any decision to return to work in London will be taken on the advice of his doctors, his spokesman said on Friday.

Uproar after Trump suggests 'injecting disinfectant' as cure

Makers of Dettol, Lysol warn the products are not for treatment

ASSOCIATED PRESS WASHINGTON

The makers of Lysol and Dettol warned on Friday that their products should not be used as an internal treatment for the COVID-19 after President Donald Trump wondered about the prospect during a White House briefing.

Mr. Trump noted on Thursday that researchers were looking at the effects of disinfectants on the virus and wondered aloud if they could be injected into people, saying the virus "does a tremendous number on the lungs, so it would be interesting to check that."

That prompted a strong warning from the maker of disinfectants Lysol and Dettol, which said it was issuing a statement to combat "recent speculation."

"As a global leader in health and hygiene products, we must be clear that under no circumstance should our disinfectant products be administered into the human body (through in-



Donald Trump

jecting, ingestion or any other route)," said the statement from Reckitt Benckiser.

Mr. Trump has often talked up prospects for new therapies and offered rosy timelines for the development of a vaccine as he encourages states to move to reopen their economies.

"The virus is dying at a much more rapid pace just from exposure to higher temperatures and humidity," Mr. Bryan said.

"I hope people enjoy the sun. And if it has an impact, that's great," Mr. Trump said, adding, "It's just a suggestion from a brilliant lab by a very, very smart, perhaps brilliant man."

Iran's missile launch is of significant concern: U.K.

REUTERS LONDON

The U.K. said on Friday that an Iranian satellite launch earlier this week was of significant concern and inconsistent with a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution.

"Reports that Iran has carried out a satellite launch using ballistic missile technology are of significant concern and inconsistent with UNSC resolution 2231," a Foreign Office spokesman said in a statement.

"The UN has called upon Iran not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons. Iran must abide by this," the spokesman said.

"We have significant and longstanding concerns... over Iran's ballistic missile programme, which is destabilising for the region and poses a threat to regional security," the spokesman added.

Trump will try to postpone U.S. poll: Biden

Former V-P says it is the only way the President 'thinks he can possibly win'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE WASHINGTON

Presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden has predicted that U.S. President Donald Trump will try to postpone the country's November election in an attempt to win.

"Mark my words, I think he is gonna try to kick back the election somehow, come up with some rationale why it can't be held," Biden said during an online fundraiser Thursday.

The 77-year-old former Vice-President said it is "the only way he thinks he can possibly win."

Six months before U.S. voters head to the polls, Trump's mind is already in election mode.

But with a pandemic raging and job losses climbing to 26.4 million on Thursday, Mr. Trump's path to victory



Joe Biden

may be harder than he anticipated.

Mr. Biden, highlighting Mr. Trump's recent threat to

veto emergency funding for the U.S. Post Office, claimed it was an example of the President's intention to "do all he can to make it very hard for people to vote."

While mail-in voting and absentee ballots remain methods many say could help limit voters spreading coronavirus, Mr. Trump maintains they create the potential for fraud.

Media briefings? Meanwhile, dozens of U.S. States have postponed their primary races, which will of-

ficially determine who will be the presidential nominee.

The 73-year-old Mr. Trump has been criticised for turning his daily White House coronavirus briefings into campaign events - rallying his base and taking swipes at his detractors such as Mr. Biden, who is sheltering at home.

"We have a sleepy guy in a basement of a house that the press is giving a free pass to, who doesn't want to do debates because of COVID," Trump said during the Thursday briefing.

German court tries IS jihadist over genocide

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE FRANKFURT

An Iraqi man, who is believed to have belonged to the Islamic State, accused of genocide and murdering a child belonging to the Yazidi minority who he held as a slave, went on trial in Germany on Friday.

Taha al-Jumaili, 27, also stands accused of crimes against humanity, war crimes and human trafficking in the case in Frankfurt. His wife, a German woman, has been under trial at a Munich court.

We will build ties in the neighbourhood: Taliban

'We don't want any foreign outfit using Afghan soil to target another country'

SUHASINI HAIDAR NEW DELHI

The Taliban would like to build ties with all neighbouring countries, including India, said its spokesperson Mohammad Suhail Shaheen, and claimed that the group would even enact a law against foreign terror groups conducting operations against any other country, if it comes to power.

"We would like good relations with all countries in the neighbourhood on the basis of mutual respect and mu-

tual interests," said Mr. Shaheen when asked about ties with India. "We will never want any foreign organisation using Afghan soil to target another country. We will bring a law to stop any such activity," he added, speaking to analysts during an internet-based seminar organised by Delhi-based think-tank, "Global Counter-Terrorism Council" (GCTC).

On Thursday, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar tweeted that he and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pom-



Mohammad Suhail Shaheen

peo "exchanged views on the Afghanistan situation." Their conversation followed another call over the weekend with Mr. Zalmay Khalilzad who had welcomed "Indian engagement in regional and international efforts for a

lasting peace in Afghanistan, and discussed "the need for both the Afghan government and the Taliban to accelerate prisoner releases, support a prompt reduction in violence, and start intra-Afghan negotiations," which are currently at an impasse.

Speaking on Pakistan

dependent at the GCTC "web seminar", Amar Sinha, member of the National Security Advisory Board and former Ambassador to Kabul, said there was little point in participating in a dialogue process involving the Taliban, while it remains dependent on Pakistan for support and

safe havens, and until it eschews violence.

India has thus far not recognised the Taliban, which has had links with terror groups like the Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad, who have targeted Indians in Afghanistan. India was also not invited to a UN-led regional conference on the peace process last week.

However, speaking at another online interaction organised by the Washington-based United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Masoom Stanekzai, the head of the 21-member peace delegation appointed by Mr. Ghani, said he hopes that India will

be invited to the next regional conference, given its "contribution to Afghanistan's reconstruction."

During the 45-minute interaction with analysts, Mr. Shaheen said a future Taliban dispensation in Afghanistan would be radically different from the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan" that the Taliban ran from 1996-2001. Mr. Shaheen said the Taliban will be "committed to education and working rights for women", which would be in sharp contrast to the past, and even present of some of the districts that the Taliban controls in Southern Afghanistan.

ELSEWHERE



Hungary, China sign deal for rail project

BUDAPEST Hungary signed on Friday a China-financed loan agreement for a high-speed railway linking Budapest and Belgrade, billed as Hungary's biggest ever infrastructure investment and one whose contract details could be kept secret for a decade. The 350-km-long high-speed rail line would form part of a planned railway connection linking central Europe with the Chinese-run Piraeus port in Greece. The project is part of China's ambitious "Belt and Road" initiative. +AFP

12 rangers killed in attack in DR Congo

GOMA

At least 12 rangers were killed on Friday in an attack in Virunga National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site in the restive east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, a park spokesman said. It was one of the deadliest attacks in the park, Africa's oldest and most biologically diverse protected area. Another six people were wounded, the spokesman told AFP, adding that four other civilians passing through the area were also targeted. +AFP

MARKET WATCH

24-04-2020 % CHANGE		
Sensex	31,327	-1.68
US Dollar	76.46	-0.53
Brent oil	21.55	-4.94

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	270.65	-6.95
Asian Paints	1827.55	5.90
Axis Bank	403.95	-26.10
Bajaj Auto	2445.35	14.70
Bajaj Finance	4389.80	-339.80
Bajaj Finance	1976.25	-196.20
Bharti Airtel	494.25	-1.75
BPL	350.45	-4.70
Britannia Ind	3062.15	114.75
CIPLA	599.20	12.60
Coal India	137.00	-3.90
Dr Reddys Lab	4002.80	-24.30
Eicher Motors	13589.20	-479.15
GLAXO (India)	81.50	-1.75
Graham Ind	499.05	-1.40
HCL Tech	468.10	-9.60
HDFC	1580.30	-83.15
HDFC Bank	938.05	-16.90
Hera Motocorp	1894.80	29.80
Hindalco	103.65	-7.60
Hind Unilever	2283.10	-34.40
ICI Bank	334.85	-18.10
Indiabank	382.90	-27.05
Infratel	152.00	-14.10
Infosys	658.00	-21.30
Indian Oil Corp	81.50	-1.60
ITC	390.05	-6.50
JSW Steel	153.25	-6.70
Kotak Bank	1239.55	-10.10
L&T	851.20	10.60
M&M	334.85	-13.20
Mahindra Suzuki	594.05	-17.70
Nestle India Ltd.	17406.05	-30.00
NTPC	93.40	-1.80
ONGC	67.60	0.25
PowerGrid Corp	159.15	1.15
Reliance Ind	1417.00	46.10
State Bank	179.75	-6.95
Shree Cement	18587.45	-120.30
Sun Pharma	485.55	8.10
Tata Motors	74.20	-1.45
Tata Steel	267.55	-2.75
TCS	1818.55	-59.70
Tech Mahindra	503.45	-20.25
Titan	906.05	-6.55

Debt funds pose no systemic risk: AMFI

Brokers want SEBI, FinMin to intervene following Franklin Templeton winding up six schemes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

A day after Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund decided to wind up six debt funds due to illiquid, low-rated securities, the mutual fund industry clarified that the issue is limited to just one fund house and there is no market or systemic risk posed by debt funds.

The Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) highlighted the fact that while credit risk funds account for a very small portion of the overall debt assets, more than half of the assets in debt schemes have a rating of AA or above.

"While around 20% to 30% of the total debt AUM (assets under management) are AAA rated or in cash, another 30% to 50% would be in AA+ or AA rating," said Milind Barve, managing director, HDFC Asset Management Company, during a media conference call arranged by AMFI.

"It is not appropriate to put all credit risk funds in



Retail investors should not panic. Money in credit risk funds is not at any significant risk, says HDFC's Barve. • PAUL NORONHA

the same category. Retail investors should not panic. This is a one-off instance and money in credit risk funds is not at any significant risk," he added.

On Thursday, Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund announced that it has decided to wind up six debt funds that have combined assets

A majority of our funds should not have any impact due to an isolated instance at one MF

NILESH SHAH
Chairman AMFI

worth ₹25,856 crore as on April 22.

"This action is limited to the funds which have material direct exposure to the higher yielding, lower rated credit securities in India that have been the most impacted by the ongoing liquidity crisis in the market," stated a release by Franklin Temple-

ton Mutual Fund. The schemes that have been shut are Franklin India Low Duration Fund, Franklin India Dynamic Accrual Fund, Franklin India Credit Risk Fund, Franklin India Short Term Income Plan, Franklin India Ultra Short Bond Fund and Franklin India Income Opportunities Fund.

ing to the media during the AMFI conference call.

The Association of National Exchanges Members of India (ANMI), the umbrella body of stock brokers, believes that the abrupt closure of six schemes has created a panic in the markets.

It has requested the Ministry of Finance and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to intervene and take swift action to protect investor money.

"ANMI humbly requests the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and SEBI to take swift action for protecting the hard-earned savings of lakhs of investors who have invested in FTMF (Franklin Templeton MF).

"An expert committee of mutual fund professionals should be formed by them to determine the precise problem in FTMF schemes," it said in a letter written on Friday. ANMI believes that it is of paramount importance as the confidence of investors in debt mutual funds is at risk, it added.

Tata, Jindal among players seeking loan moratorium

ICRA list names 328 such entities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

Several large industrial houses, including groups like Tata and Jindal, have sought moratorium on loan repayment from their banks.

Rating agency ICRA has compiled a list of 328 entities that have sought to defer loan repayment for three months.

The list includes Tata Power, Jindal Power, Jindal Steel and Power, JSW Steel, Tata Power Renewable Energy, Piramal Enterprise, Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals, Kalyan Jewellers, TV Sundaram Iyengar and Sons, Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd., Jay Shree Tea, Bharat Aluminium and Indian Terrain Fashions, among others.

ICRA said the list was not a comprehensive one, as information about some rated entities was not readily available as of now.

"It may be noted that for the entities that are yet to re-

ceive an approval for the moratorium from their lending institutions, if the same is not received in due course, ICRA would review its stance on default recognition," ICRA said.

Following the nationwide economic lockdown, the Reserve Bank of India has allowed banks to extend the repayment moratorium for three months on term loans. Banks are not allowed to change the asset classification status of the loan even if a customer had applied for loan moratorium. However, it is the discretion of banks whether to allow the moratorium to their customers.

Among non-banking finance companies, Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited, has applied for moratorium. A few micro-finance institutions have also applied for the moratorium.

Most banks have so far denied any loan moratorium to non-banking finance companies, including housing finance companies.

What are debts and equities?

Debt instrument helps to raise loans by borrowing.

In return, the holder of debt instruments, are owed the amount of money borrowed along with the interest promised. e.g Bonds.

It involves less risk than equity investments and typically offers a correspondingly lower potential return on investment.

Equities also help to raise loans, but instead of owing back the money, partnership in the firm is offered based on the amount borrowed. e.g Shares.

It is riskier but has the potential to bring more returns if the firm makes profit.

What are debt funds?

Equity funds invest mostly in shares of listed companies and debt funds invest in instruments like government bonds, commercial papers (CPs), certificate of deposits (CDs) and non-convertible debentures (NCDs).

The interest made from these instruments is shared among the investors after deducting the fund-management charges.

The gains made on the investment in debt schemes are taxable.

If the securities are sold within 3 years, it is considered short-term wherein the gains are added to the income of the investor and taxed as per the applicable tax bracket.

If the securities are held for more than three years before selling, there are long-term capital gains tax.

The tax rate is 20% with indexation and 10% without indexation.

What are the different types of debt funds?

Debt funds can be classified on the basis of the tenure of the bonds or instruments in which they invest.

Liquid funds - They invest in instruments that have a tenure of less than 90 days.

Short-term funds - They invest in instruments that typically have a tenure of three to six months.

Corporate debt - They could have a tenure of up to three years.

Long-term funds - They invest in bonds that have a tenure of three to five years or even more e.g Government bonds (G-Secs).

What are the advantages?

They are generally used by banks and corporates for their treasury operations.

They offer more return than bank fixed deposits.

So they are popular among high net worth individuals (HNIs) to park their money temporarily before moving to other asset classes.

This enables the investors to indirectly invest in instruments like government bonds, where direct retail investment is not possible.

The risk is also higher compared to the safe FDs that offer assured returns so the number of retail investors in debt funds are still very little.

In the case of bonds, the price could fall due to various reasons thereby impacting its price and its return.

There have been cases where the securities have been downgraded that also led to less returns.

Quick Fact

Indexation

It refers to the mechanism wherein the gains are adjusted against the rate of inflation to derive the net taxable gains from the schemes.

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 artilleries.

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



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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

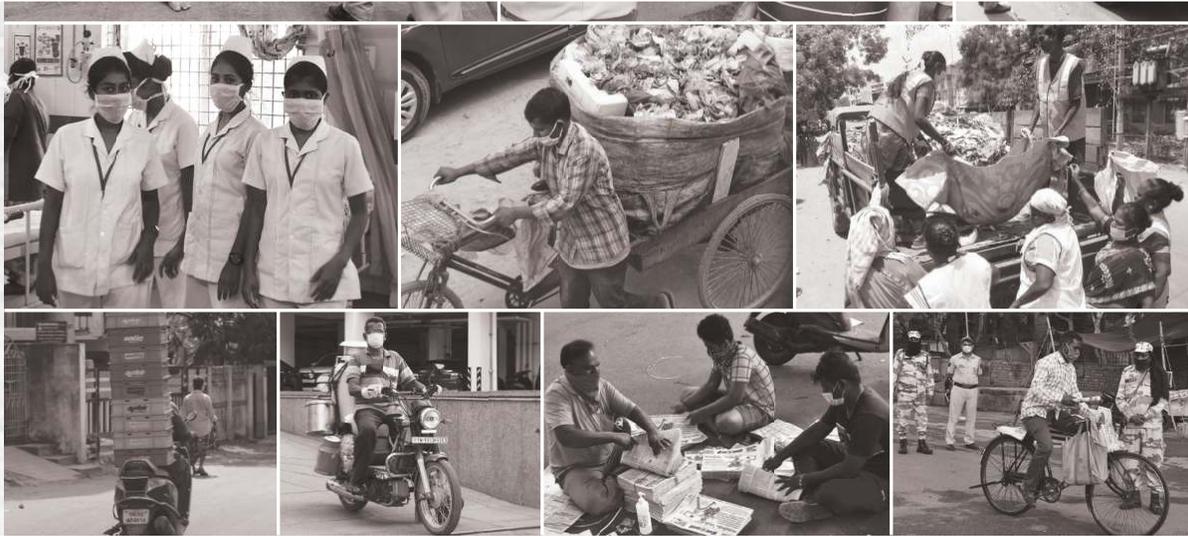
Talking only with Taliban is a short-sighted policy. Dialogue needs to take place among all the stakeholders in Afghanistan.

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.



History will remember those who dared to enter where the fight was thickest.
History will be written about our frontline heroes, who not only saved the day, but the future of the world.
History will speak about how the war was won with face masks, full-protection suits and gloves,
not machine guns and nuclear bombs.
History will remember and so will we.
We will tell the generations to come that the world and humanity at large, was saved by kindness.
We remember. India remembers.
