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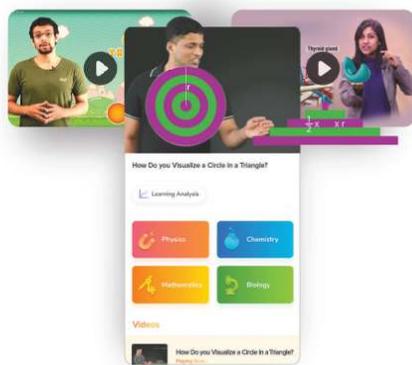
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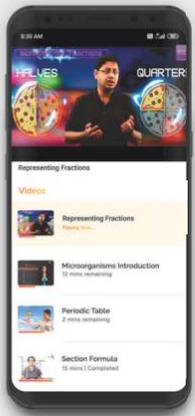
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P. Chidambaram suggests ₹1 lakh crore package for MSMEs

page 8



We will have to be on guard for at least a year, says Srinath Reddy

page 10



By any calculus, India qualifies for UNSC seat, says Syed Akbaruddin

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After virus scare, British PM Boris Johnson becomes father

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NEARBY



State to ramp up testing in red zones, says CM

CHENNAI
Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Wednesday said the government would increase the rate of testing of samples for COVID-19 in red zones and also speed up testing in Chennai, which accounts for around 35% of the cases in the State so far.

TAMIL NADU • PAGE 2

Submit report on easing curbs, Collectors told

CHENNAI
Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Wednesday directed all District Collectors to submit a report at the earliest, suggesting specific industries that could be allowed to function, depending on the COVID-19 situation in their areas.

TAMIL NADU • PAGE 2

Grocery shops to stay open till 5 p.m. today

CHENNAI
Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami said grocery stores would work from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Chennai, Coimbatore and Madurai on April 30. From May 1, the timing will continue to be from 6 a.m. to 1 p.m.

TAMIL NADU • PAGE 2

METROPLUS • 4 PAGES

Home Ministry clears inter-State movement of stranded people

Nodal authorities will register such persons and facilitate their travel

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

More than a month after the countrywide lockdown owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) issued guidelines to allow inter-State movement of stranded migrant workers, tourists, pilgrims, students and others.

Public transport, including trains and buses, continue to remain suspended and the State governments have been asked to appoint nodal authorities to register such stranded persons and facilitate their movement.

The MHA spokesperson tweeted on Wednesday that new guidelines to fight COVID-19 will come into effect from May 4 "which shall give considerable relaxations to many districts." "Details regarding this shall be communicated in the days to come," the tweet said.

Quarantine mandatory
The MHA said such persons should be kept in home quarantine for 14 days unless an assessment by a medical team recommended institutional quarantine.

For individuals who wanted to travel in their private cars, permission should be taken from the State authori-



Seeking their due: Labourers protesting in Telangana on Wednesday for back wages and better facilities. • MOHD ARIF

ties, an official said. "If someone has to cross multiple States to reach their destination, then the State authority where the travel will originate, will coordinate with the respective State authorities and issue a pass accordingly," a senior Home Ministry official stated.

The BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh was one of the first States to arrange for the return of stranded migrant workers to return to their homes.

The guidelines issued by the MHA on April 19 asserted that there would be no inter-State movement of labourers.

Following Uttar Pradesh, States like Punjab, Odisha,

Punjab extends lockdown by two weeks

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Punjab on Wednesday became the first State in the country to announce that it would extend the lockdown till May 17, while permitting the opening of shops in a staggered way on rotation for four hours every morning from April 30.

Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, in a video address, also unveiled steps for limited lifting of lockdown restrictions from April 30 in the non-containment and non-red zones. The situation will be reviewed after two weeks and further relaxations will be announced if the pandemic is in control, he said.

The limited relaxations from Thursday include permission for opening all registered shops, except those in multi-brand and single-brand malls, with 50% staff strength from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m.

CONTINUED ON • PAGE 8

India reports 70 deaths, highest in a single day

Death toll mounts to 1,008 even as 22,982 cases are active

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India reported 70 COVID-19 deaths – the highest in a single day – in the past 24 hours. The total death toll as of Wednesday evening had reached 1,008 and propped India among 17 countries that had over 1,000 deaths. The total confirmed active cases were 22,982 and 7,796 had recovered, the Health Ministry website said in its evening update.

At a conference, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said that in the last three days, India's doubling rate was 11.3 days. Although global mortality rate was around 7%, India's was around 3%, and around 86% of those who died had a co-morbidity, he said.

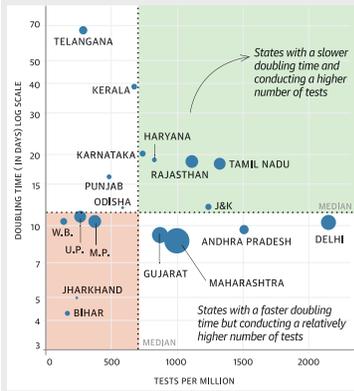
COVID-19

Data from the State Health Departments put the nationwide death toll at 1,067 and the total number of positive cases at 32,741, with 23,334 active ones.

Preeti Sudan, Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, said non-COVID essential medical care ought not be neglected. Patients needing care such as dialysis, cancer treatment, dia-

Testing times

The doubling time for cases in Telangana and Kerala has slowed down to 67.3 and 38.9 days recently. Cases have doubled in 9.2 and 8.7 days in Gujarat and Maharashtra, but they are better off in terms of testing unlike M.P. and U.P. Chart compares time taken for cases to double, with the number of tests conducted per million people in the States. Size of the circles correspond to the total infections as of Tuesday



betics, pregnant women and those suffering from cardiac ailments must be given adequate care. She also urged States to promote the Arogya Setu App which was a self-assessment tool useful in the prevention efforts of the government, said a press

statement. The customary daily briefing for journalists, conducted by the Health Ministry, was not held on Wednesday.

CONTINUED ON • PAGE 8
MORE STORIES ON • PAGES 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12

Only 30 lakh found NREGA work in April

This is 82% lower than in previous year

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
NEW DELHI

Although the Centre gave explicit instructions to reopen its flagship rural jobs scheme from April 20, only 30 lakh people were provided work under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in April, about 17% of the usual, government data show.

In mid-April, only 1% of the usual number of workers had found employment.

The figures for this April are the lowest in five years, and show an 82% drop from the previous year's figure of 1.7 crore workers. Some States had zero workers as on April 29, showing they had not restarted their work sites at all. Only 1,005 people got work in Haryana, along with 2,014 in Kerala and 6,376 in Gujarat, showing very low rates of employment. Andhra Pradesh,



Labourers at an MGNREGA work site in Amethi. • PTI

on the other hand, has provided 10 lakh jobs, though it is still lower than the 25 lakh jobs provided last April.

In the light of government failure to provide sufficient work at a time when the loss of livelihoods due to the lockdown and returning migrant workers have increased the need for work in Indian villages, there is a rising demand for compensation wages to be paid to workers instead.

CONTINUED ON • PAGE 8

India remains on U.S. Priority Watch List

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

India continues to be on the 'Priority Watch List' of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) for lack of adequate intellectual property (IP) rights protection and enforcement, the USTR said in its Annual Special 301 Report, released on Wednesday.

India remained one of the most challenging economies for IP enforcement and protection, the report said, using language it has used previously. Algeria, Argentina, Chile, China, Indonesia, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Ukraine and Venezuela are also on the Priority Watch List. While India made "meaningful progress" to enhance IP protection and enforcement in some areas over the past year, it did not resolve recent and long-standing challenges, and created new ones, the report said.

CONTINUED ON • PAGE 8

Lockdown blues



With eateries closed and beach goers keeping away, birds find it difficult to get food. A flock of pigeons on the Marina beach in Chennai on Wednesday. • R. RAGU

India's crossover star Irrfan Khan passes away

A loss to the world of cinema and theatre, says PM Modi; President Kovind calls him a rare talent

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

One of Indian cinema's leading actors and its most recognised face internationally, Irrfan Khan passed away in Mumbai's Kokilabhai Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital on Wednesday. He was admitted on Tuesday night for a colon infection and died at 11.11 a.m. the next day because of resultant complications.

Mr. Khan is survived by his wife, screenwriter Sutapa Sikkar and two sons, Babil and Ayan.

His last rites took place on Wednesday at the Versova Kabrastan in Mumbai in the presence of his family, close relatives and friends, including filmmakers Vishal Bhardwaj, Tigmanshu Dhulia and Abhinay Deo. "We pray for

his peace and we hope he's in a better place today. He was strong in his fight, and we all have to be strong too in this loss," a statement released by the family said.

Mr. Khan, 53, was detected with neuroendocrine tumour in March 2018 and he battled it for several months in London. He returned early last year to shoot for Homi Adajania's *Angrezi Medium* – his last film – but had to get back to London again in September for

further treatment.

Mr. Khan's nonagenarian mother Saecida Begum passed away on Saturday morning in Jaipur, and according to agency reports, he paid his last respects to her through video conferencing.

Born in Jaipur, Mr. Khan started his illustrious innings in acting with a stint at New Delhi's National School of Drama.

While Mira Nair's *Salaam Bombay!* (1988) is credited as his debut, he had to struggle long and

hard to make space for himself in the world of films.

He acted in a lot of television shows through the 1980s and the 1990s, including the popular *Banegi Apni Baat*.

Notable projects

The films to truly get him noticed were Tigmanshu Dhulia's *Haasil* (2003) and Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* (2004). But even before them, the buzz around him had started growing strong abroad with Asif Kapadia's *The Warrior* (2010), in which he played a brutal warrior on the road to redemption.

Ms. Nair's *The Namesake* (2007), based on the Jhumpa Lahiri book by the same name, made him gain more ground internationally. Wes

Anderson's *The Darjeeling Limited* (2007), Michael Winterbottom's *A Mighty Heart* (2007), Danny Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008), Ang Lee's *Life of Pi* (2012) and Marc Webb's *The Amazing Spider-Man* (2012) were his other notable projects. *Paan Singh Tomar* (2012), in which he played an athlete-turned-dacoit, got him the National Award for Best Actor. He was honoured with the Padma Shri in 2011.

He was "a rare talent and a brilliant actor," tweeted President Ram Nath Kovind. Prime Minister Narendra Modi described Irrfan Khan's death as "a loss to the world of cinema and theatre".

MORE REPORTS • PAGE 14

Chennai sees spike with 94 new cases

Two deaths in city; 10 fresh cases in rest of Tamil Nadu

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The State capital saw another spike in the number of COVID-19 cases on Wednesday with 94 of the 104 new patients in Tamil Nadu coming from Chennai.

In fact, it was the second consecutive day when the number of fresh patients crossed 100.

Two persons, including a 27-year-old pregnant woman, died of COVID-19 in the city. In Karur, however, a 95-year-old woman hailing from Dindigul was discharged from hospital after making a full recovery.

Eight more children tested positive for COVID-19, taking the count in the 0-12 age group to 129 – 71 boys and 58 girls. This included a two-year-old, a three-year-old



A police officer hands out vitamin pills to colleagues in Chennai on Wednesday. • PTI

and a four-year-old child. Eleven others, aged 13 to 20 years, have also tested positive.

The State's tally of COVID-19 cases stood at 2,162, while the death toll increased to 27. A 65-year-old man, who was suffering from cancer, died of COVID-19 at Rajiv Gandhi Go-

vernment General Hospital. He was a resident of Chennai. The pregnant woman died at the Government Kasturba Gandhi Hospital for Women and Children on April 27. Her samples returned positive for COVID-19 on Wednesday. Officials said she was married a year ago and was to give birth in mid-May.

A total of 82 persons were discharged after treatment across the State. This took the number of persons discharged to 1,210. So far, 210 persons have been discharged in Chennai followed by 121 in Coimbatore, 91 in Tiruppur, 69 in Erode and 66 in Dindigul. A total of 922 persons continue to be under treatment.

CONTINUED ON • PAGE 2

The Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) has published a notice, amending lists of developing and least-developed countries that are eligible for preferential treatment with respect to countervailing duties (CVDs) investigations.

The new lists consist of 36 developing countries and 44 least developed countries. Why this is a cause for concern for India?

India was, until February 10, on the developing country list and therefore eligible for these more relaxed standards. It has now been taken off of that list.

Countries not given special consideration have lower levels of protection against a CVD investigation. This will now make it easier for it to impose countervailing duties (CVDs) on goods from India. The move has cast a shadow on India being able to restore preferential benefits under the Generalised System of Preference (GSP) as part of its trade talks with the US, as only developing countries are eligible for it. What is the basis for classification?

To harmonise U.S. law with the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (SCM) Agreement, the USTR had, in 1998, come up with lists of countries classified as per their level of development.

These lists were used to determine whether they were potentially subject to U.S. countervailing duties. The de minimis (too small to warrant concern) thresholds and import volume allowance are more relaxed for developing and least-developed countries. The de minimis standard is usually a subsidy of 1% or less ad valorem and 2 percent for special cases. The 1998 rule is now “obsolete” as per the USTR notice.

What was considered as negligible import volumes?

If a country’s goods constitute less than 3% of all imports of that good into the U.S., it meets the ‘negligible import volumes’ standard. For special cases it is 4%. Imports do not meet the standard, if , individual volumes are less than 3% (special cases: 4%) but the aggregate volume of imports into the U.S. is 7% of all such goods. Criteria:

The USTR used the following criteria to determine whether a country was eligible for the 2% de minimis standard: (1) Per capita Gross National Income or GNI (2) share of world trade (3) other factors such as Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) membership or application for membership, EU membership, and Group of Twenty (G20) membership.

Why India was removed from this list?

India, along with Brazil, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam were taken off the list since they each have at least a 0.5% share of the global trade, despite having less than \$12, 375 GNI (the World Bank threshold separating high income countries from others).

India was taken off the list also because — like Argentina, Brazil, Indonesia and South Africa — it is part of the G20. Given the global economic significance of the G20, and the collective economic weight of its membership (which accounts for large shares of global economic output and trade), G20 membership indicates that a country is developed.

mil Nadu have required ventilator support till now. A few others, who did require oxygen, were put on high-flow oxygen therapy and recovered well, said senior doctors involved in the treatment of COVID-19 patients. As on date, the State has a

hospitals, undergoing treatment. The State has so far recorded 27 deaths due to COVID-19. A senior doctor said that of all those who tested positive in the State so far, 2-3% may have required ventilator support. About 5-10% re-

port. One of the main reasons is that we are picking up cases early. Some were put on high-flow oxygen therapy and it has helped them. They came out well and were discharged,” he said. Another reason is the close monitoring of asymp-

and keeping patients in a prone position to improve oxygenation. “We are in a situation where it is early to tell which one gives better success rates. Nevertheless, as of now, the number of critical patients is less in the State,” the doctor said.

host, a doctor, said, adding: “All three factors should be favourable for the infection to be established.” “In COVID-19, the infectivity is high, that is, person to person transmission is high. But the disease is developing less in people,” he said.

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MOHAMED IMRANULLAH S. CHENNAI

The Madras High Court has taken serious note of the fact that doctors, paramedical staff and sanitation workers of the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital (RGGGH) have tested positive for COVID-19. It has called for a report from the State government on the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) to front line workers, in the fight against the disease.



The court expressed concern over the safety of front line workers. ♦♦♦

published on Monday regarding the Madras Medical College hostel having been shut after two postgraduate students reportedly tested positive for COVID-19 and the source having been traced to a sanitation worker at the hostel.

The judges recorded in their interim order that some doctors in RGGGH had complained to the newspaper of not having been provided a sufficient number of PPE kits. “This court is concerned about doctors, nurses, sanitation workers and policemen who are the front-warriors,” they said.

Further, appreciating the services rendered by those in the Revenue Administration Department as well as local bodies, the judges said their interests should also be taken care of by the State. The Bench added that guidelines had been issued by the National Centre for Disease Control to make PPE kits mandatory in the checklist for isolation rooms.

T.N. raises ₹2,000 cr. by issue of bonds

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu has raised ₹2,000 crore through the issue of bonds known as State Development Loans (SDLs) with a tenure of 30 years, at an interest rate of 7.15%, according to data from RBI. With this, the State has so far raised ₹8,560 crore (₹8,000 crore this month alone) by selling bonds to meet the increased expenditure due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Earlier this month, the Centre allowed States to raise ₹3.2 lakh crore in net market borrowings during the first nine months of the current financial year, as a result of which Tamil Nadu will be able to borrow ₹28,880 crore. “While several States have issued shorter tenor SDLs of 1-3 years, Tamil Nadu has reissued a 30-year SDL,” said Jayantia Roy, senior vice-president at ICRA.

FROM PAGE ONE

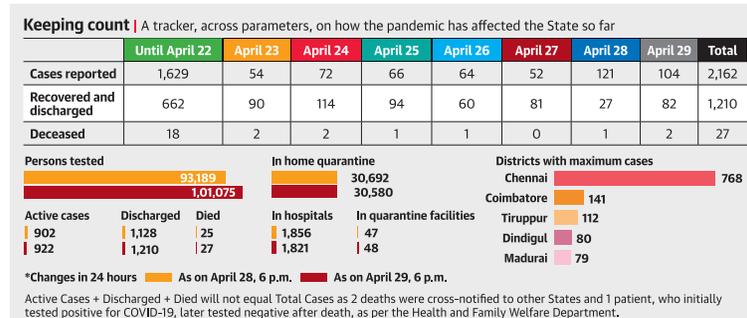
Chennai sees spike with 94 new cases

The fresh cases were reported in five districts. Apart from Chennai, there were four cases in Chengalpattu, three in Kancheepuram, two in Villupuram and one in Tiruvallur. With this, Chennai’s count has gone up to 768 cases, according to the bulletin issued by the Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine.

While Krishnagiri continued to be in the green zone with no positive cases, four districts — Kanniyakumari, Ramanathapuram, Ranipet and Perambalur — moved from the red zone to orange (districts that have less than 15 cases or no new cases in the last 14 days).

With this, the number of districts in the orange zone increased to 11, while 25 districts continue to be in the red zone (more than 15 cases or doubling time less than four days).

The number of persons with an unlinked source of



infection (primary) increased to 37 on Wednesday. Officials of the Health department said they were intensifying existing activities in Chennai Corporation areas. “The more cosmopolitan an area is, the higher the problem. Testing in Chennai is definitely on the higher side. More than 3,000 sam-

ples were sent for testing, and it is all set to double. That the city has more number of positive cases should not be a reason for fear among the public. It means we are searching for and finding more cases,” an official said. The number of samples tested stood at 8,087, the

highest so far. With this, 1,09,961 samples have been tested so far. In addition to the 41 testing facilities in the State, three more laboratories in the government sector have been approved for testing COVID-19 — the Government Medical College Hospital, Omandur Estate, Sivagan-

ga Medical College Hospital and Virudhunagar Medical College Hospital. With this, there are 33 government testing facilities and 11 in the private sector. (“This is inclusive of two deaths cross-notified to other States and one patient who died after testing negative for the infection”)

Timings CHENNAI
THURSDAY, APR. 30
RISE 05:49 SET 18:24
RISE 11:37 SET 00:00
FRIDAY, MAY. 01
RISE 05:49 SET 18:24
RISE 12:35 SET 00:46
SATURDAY, MAY. 02
RISE 05:48 SET 18:24
RISE 13:34 SET 01:37

Chennai Weather max min
Thiruvallur 32 22
Chennai Airport 35 28
Chennai City 36 28

Chennai Airport Today
35°C Dry and warm weather with partly cloudy sky to prevail during the day. Night will be pleasant.

Chennai Airport Tomorrow
35°C Dry and warm weather with partly cloudy sky to prevail during the day. Night will be pleasant.

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An app to help police track violators

VIVEK NARAYANAN CHENNAI

In an effort to track people leaving their homes for no reason during the lockdown, the city police has started using an app called Eye Tracker from Wednesday.

"The police personnel will scan the driving licence or Aadhaar card using the app. If the motorist does not have either, his mobile number will be entered along with the purpose of travel," said Shekhar Deshmukh, deputy commissioner of police, Mylapore.

All these details will be stored in a server. "This will have the travel history of the motorists. With this app, the policemen will be able to identify them easily," said another senior officer. If the motorists are found roaming around frequently without any reason, their vehicles would be seized.

THE HINDU
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With over 65% of COVID-19 cases, all eyes on north Chennai

The region has a high population density — 55,000 people per sq. km

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

Over 65% of the COVID-19 case load in the city has been reported in three zones of north Chennai.

The 426 sq. km of the city is divided into 15 zones with a total population of around 70 lakh.

Chennai Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash on Wednesday said the city's northern zones — Tondiarpet, Royapuram and Thiru Vi Ka Nagar — have registered more positive cases. "The number of positive cases in north Chennai is more because of the population density. The city has a population density of 27,000 per sq. km while north Chennai has 55,000 per sq. km. Six wards in north Chennai reported more positive cases," he said.

"The testing rate in Chen-



In the clear: Contacts of COVID-19 patients returning home after testing negative at a hospital in Tondiarpet.

• B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

nai is also one of the highest in the country. We have collected 22,000 samples for focused testing, out of which 673 persons have tested positive for COVID-19. But 44 positive cases have unlinked history. We have formed special teams to trace the links. There is no community spread," Mr. Prakash insisted. He said 200 samples from traders in Koyambedu

had been collected and added. "Over 1,600 retail traders will be shifted to 245 playgrounds in the city."

Stressing on the need for social distancing in commercial establishments, Mr. Prakash said shops violating norms of social distancing will be sealed for three months.

"Over 1.75 lakh people in containment zones will soon

get assistance from volunteers who will facilitate supply of essential commodities," Mr. Prakash said.

Over 95% of positive cases are asymptomatic in the city. For example, most of the 59 media persons who have tested positive are asymptomatic. The Corporation has created 22,000 quarantine spaces in various parts of the city. An additional 22,000 will be created in private schools, private lodges and colleges.

Case in Ripon Buildings

An employee at the Chennai Corporation headquarters Ripon Buildings has tested positive for COVID-19 and has been admitted to a hospital. "This condition is stable. Samples have been collected from more employees from Ripon Buildings," an official said.

Daily testing of samples to be stepped up in city, says CS

Field teams posted for contact tracing and containment

T. RAMAKRISHNAN CHENNAI

The Greater Chennai Corporation has been instructed to ensure that the number of samples tested daily for COVID-19 in the city is stepped up from 1,300 to the 1,500-1,800 range, according to Chief Secretary K. Shanmugam.

Responding to a question on the perception that there was "delay" in taking samples, testing and declaring the results, the Chief Secretary, told *The Hindu* on Wednesday, that this was the case about a week ago.

Now, "both data entry and updating the results are done online. The time taken is only 24 hours. There are no issues, now," he said, adding that he was personally monitoring the situation daily.

In terms of samples tested per million population, it



Media personnel in PPE kits reporting from the gates of the High Court on Wednesday. • P11

was highest in Chennai. As for contact tracing, Mr. Shanmugam said this had "improved a lot." The time taken for completing the cycle was 48 hours. Multiple agencies such as the police, Health Department and the local bodies were all involved. "As for Chennai, the status is being reviewed daily by Director-General of Police [J.K. Tripathy] and I," he said.

Attributing the rising graph of positive cases in Chennai to increased testing, Mr. Shanmugam emphasised that "Chennai is our focus." Field teams were posted in areas with a heavy concentration of the COVID-19 cases to keep a close watch on following procedures such as contact tracing and containment area management, Mr. Shanmugam said.

Delivery partner tests positive for COVID-19

Contact tracing on, family quarantined

STAFF REPORTER CHENNAI

A delivery partner with on-line food ordering and delivery app Swiggy was among those who tested positive for COVID-19 in the city.

The Greater Chennai Corporation confirmed this and said that contact tracing was under way. "We are tracing 64 contacts and taking necessary action. Swiggy has also been cooperating with us for the same," said a senior official.

Six members of his family have tested negative and have currently been quarantined. In an official statement, Swiggy said that in accordance with predefined protocols, the delivery partner was quarantined as soon as the incident was discovered and he was currently in the care of health authorities.

"We are committed to supporting the delivery partner through this period. We have been working with local health authorities to



Swiggy said the delivery partner was quarantined as soon as the incident was discovered. • M. VEDHAN

support them in any way needed," the statement said. As part of the measures taken, Swiggy said that they have strongly encouraged contactless delivery and have been checking for mask usage through technology as well as using their network of restaurants to test delivery partners for COVID-19. "Another measure we will be taking is that all deliveries will soon mandatorily be no-contact deliveries," the company added.

Koyambedu fruit, flower sellers against moving to Madhavaram

Many decide to shut shop until the end of lockdown

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

Flower merchants in Koyambedu market have decided to close shops till May 3 and not source produce till then as a precautionary measure against COVID-19.

While alternate space was being prepared in Madhavaram for flower and flower traders at Koyambedu, flower merchants have decided not to shift citing various reasons.

S. Mookiah, president, Koyambedu Wholesale Flowers Market Merchants' Association said there are about 470 flower shops in Koyambedu. It would be difficult for 3,000 traders and labourers to shift overnight to the alternate site. There may be hardships in bringing produce to Madhavaram late at night.

"We have already stopped sourcing flowers to the Koyambedu market since Sunday. One of the flower



Workers preparing temporary stalls for fruit and flower sellers at the Madhavaram bus terminal. • B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

merchants tested positive for COVID-19 in his residential area. Instead of shifting to Madhavaram, we decided to shut shops and support the government's directive not to function in Koyambedu," he said. Similarly, fruits merchants plan to close shop after Thursday. Licensed traders were provided application forms to allot shops at Madhavaram.

S. Srinivasan, wholesale fruit merchant at Koyambedu, said, "We plan to finish selling stock on Thursday and then shut shops. It will

be tough to shift to Madhavaram for most fruit traders."

Meanwhile, wholesale vegetable traders who were allowed to function at Koyambedu reported less sales. Some of them dumped the unsold stock in the market. About 250-300 shops operated on Wednesday. The market received only 200 truckloads of vegetables, which was half the daily load on Wednesday. Some retailers continue to seek space in the Koyambedu mofussil bus terminus, traders added.

Disinfect establishments twice a day: Corporation

STAFF REPORTER CHENNAI

The Greater Chennai Corporation said all establishments which have been permitted to function should be sanitized and disinfected twice a day.

Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash, in a statement, said establishments which were open and functioning should be disinfected twice a day and all employees should compulsorily wear masks. These establishments have been directed to ensure that physical distancing is maintained and employees wash their hands regularly. After every use, ATMs should be sanitized, the GCC has directed.

Functioning establishments have been asked to have a team of people in charge of disinfecting the space.

Details regarding the number of employees working as well as measures taken to disinfect and sanitize the premises has to be provided to the Corporation be-

'Refrain from panic buying'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

The City Police Commissioner A.K. Viswanathan asked residents not to indulge in panic buying on Thursday and opt for neighbourhood shops.

In a video message, he said to help people purchase goods after the intensified lockdown, shops will be open from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Thursday.

From May 1, the Commissioner said. Officials from the Health Department are expected to carry out inspections of these premises as well.

The Corporation warned violators will be penalised.

Residents bar visitors from their localities

Signboards, banners used to block streets



Desperate measures: A makeshift barricade erected on a street in Kundrathur bars entry to visitors. • B. VELANKANNI RAJ

VIVEK NARAYANAN CHENNAI

As COVID-19 positive cases have been reported in most parts of the city, various residents' associations have started blocking streets using banners and signboards asking outsiders not to enter.

The city has recorded around 673 cases and Royapuram zone alone has 164 cases, followed by Thiru Vi Ka Nagar with 128 cases. Zones such as Manali and Sholinganallur have recorded very few positive cases so far.

Meanwhile, residents in many parts of the city have now started taking precautions and are not allowing outsiders.

"The MGR Nagar locality in Thirumullaivoyal houses more than 400 families and there are many migrant workers too. The friends of workers visit the locality often and the stretch is used by people to reach Thirumullaivoyal Main Road. Hence, we decided to put a board asking outsiders not to enter," said Mullai Dayalan, a resident.

Meanwhile, M. Selvi, a resident of Rettakuzha near Mundakkanni Amman MRTS station in Mylapore, said residents in the lane decided not to allow anyone to enter the area. "The decision was taken after a few residents, living near Dr. Ambedkar Bridge off R.K. Salai, tested positive for COVID-19. The youngsters from that locality often hang out in our area," she said.

TNSCB tenements too

In Perambakkam, the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board (TNSCB) tenements has also restricted outsider entry. "There are four entries into a block. Three of them have been blocked. The lift operator does not allow visitors into the block. The residents have to come down and meet them," a resident said.

Similarly, residents of some apartment complexes in Padikuppam also put up signboards at the entrance asking visitors not to come inside till the lockdown is over.

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY
Corrigendum
Addendum and corrigendum slip No.21 of e-Tender Notice No.87 of 2019-20 (Open)-Engg/DDU (1) The tenders except e-Tender No. 78 of e-Tender Notice No. 87 of 2019-20 (Open)-Engg/DDU, which are scheduled to be closed on 20.04.2020 and have been extended on 12.05.2020 due to COVID-19 reasons. (2) Other terms and condition shall remain unchanged.

CENTRAL RAILWAY
CORRIGENDUM (S&T)
Corrigendum No. 1 & 2 is being issued for following one tender and details can be viewed on Website at www.ireps.gov.in. 1. CR-BB-S&T-tele-2020-07. Reason for Corrigendum Extension of Tender closing date from 05.05.2020 to 26.05.2020 15:00 Hrs. due to Administrative reason. This tender complies with Public Procurement Policy Order 2017 dated 15.06.2017. 2. RPF Security Helpline 182

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY
Corrigendum
Addendum and corrigendum slip No. 02 of e-Tender Notice No. 88, of 2019-20 (Open)-Engg/DDU. 1) e-Tender No.80 of e-Tender Notice No. 88 of 2019-20 (Open)-Engg/DDU, which are scheduled to be closed on 20.04.2020 and have been extended on 12.05.2020 due to COVID-19 reasons. (2) Other terms and condition shall remain unchanged.

SOUTH EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY
CORRIGENDUM No.-1
Following corrigendum is being made in the e-Tender Notice No. DRM-Engg-BSP-1-04-2020-21. Date: 03.04.2020, issued and published by this office. Closing Date of Tender: As Published: 29.04.2020. Now read as: 11.05.2020. The complete information of above Corrigendum in the notice can be seen in e-Tender Notice available over website: <http://www.ireps.gov.in> Bids other than e-bids shall not be accepted against above Tender. All other terms and conditions will remain same. Divisional Railway Manager (Engg) CPR/10/32 S.E.C.Rly. Bilaspur.

THE HINDU
Air Surcharge as applicable: New Delhi - Rs. 15/-; Port Blair - Rs. 20/-

WESTERN RAILWAY - RATNAM DIVISION
E-TENDER NOTICE
(No.: EL/TRD/158/2020-21/01) Date: 24.04.2020 Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer, Traction Distribution, Western Railway, Ratnam for and on behalf of President of Union of India invites e-tenders to the following work: Tender No. EL/RO/2020-21/01. Name of the work: Godhra-Shopian Section Replacement of various interupters and circuit breakers having completed their code life. Estimated cost of work: Rs. 5,73,46,850/-. Earnest Money Deposit: Rs. 4,36,700/-. Completion period: 06 Months. Closing date and time: 05.06.2020 at 15:00 hrs. Validity of offer: 45 days from the date of opening. Website details: www.ireps.gov.in. Notice board location: In front of the office of Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (Traction Distribution), Western Railway, Ratnam-457001. ANJ/13/1000 S.D/ESTDR/RTM. Like us on: Facebook.com/WesternRly

Government of Jammu & Kashmir
Office of the Executive Engineer P.H.E. Mechanical Division (North) Sopore
Short term e-Tender
NIT No: PHE/MDNS/NIT/E-04 of 2020-21
For and on behalf of Lieutenant Governor of Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, sealed e-tenders in two covers are invited from experienced, reputed and registered firms/ genuine manufacturer/authorized distributors/dealers/workshop holders /SSI Unit holders for the following work:

S. No.	Name of work	Cost of tender (Rs in Lacs)	Estimated Cost (Rs in Lacs)	Earnest money (Rate in Rs)	Validity of offer (Days)	Position of funds
1.	Various electrical/mechanical works to be carried out at WSS Gohla Tehpora 1"	Rs 100.00	Rs 1.15	Rs 2300.00	120	Available under MSE Plan
2.	Various electrical/mechanical works to be carried out at WSS Goom Alangora 1"	Rs 50.00	Rs 0.35	Rs 700.00	-do-	-do-
3.	Providing, fitting, testing and commissioning of MIG-20 starter at WSS Palthan (Old)	Rs 50.00	Rs 0.25	Rs 500.00	-do-	-do-
4.	Providing and fitting of new 100KVA Voltage Stabilizer and 50 HP FSD Panel with electro-mechanical equipment at WSS Hakbara Pehlihora	Rs 100.00	Rs 1.20	Rs 2400.00	-do-	-do-
5.	Providing and fitting of service and distribution lines, illumination and other electrical and mechanical works at WSS Shadpora	Rs 100.00	Rs 2.25	Rs 4500.00	-do-	-do-
6.	Replacement of 200 Meters of 80 mm dia GI pipe lines for both raw and clear water at WSS RSP Galizoo	Rs 200.00	Rs 2.60	Rs 5200.00	-do-	-do-
7.	Providing, fitting, installation, testing and commissioning of 75 KVA voltage stabilizer and MIG Starter at WSS Trehgam	Rs 100.00	Rs 1.70	Rs 3400.00	-do-	-do-

The tenders consisting of qualifying/eligibility criteria, technical specifications, general and commercial terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the website <https://jitenders.gov.in> from 28-04-2020 (10:00 am).

The bids shall be submitted in electronic format on the website <https://jitenders.gov.in> from 28-04-2020 (10:00 am) to 07-05-2020 (6:55 pm). The bids uploaded on the website up to due date and time will be opened on the time and date, in the office of the Executive Engineer, P.H.E. Mechanical Division (North) Sopore in presence of the bidders who wish to attend. In case officers happen to be closed due to holiday, or any other reason, on the schedule date of opening, the bids will be opened on the next working day at the scheduled time and venue.

The complete bidding shall be online.

Prequalification bids shall be opened online in the office of the Executive Engineer, P.H.E. Mechanical Division (North) Sopore on 08-05-2020 at 3:00 pm after which the Financial bids of qualifying bidders shall be opened on the same day. The pre-bid meeting regarding clarification shall be held in the office of the Executive Engineer P.H.E. Mechanical Division (North) Sopore on 04-05-2020 (11:00 am).

The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of bids,

No. PHE/MDNS/DB/183-90
Dated: 25-04-2020
Sd/- Executive Engineer P.H.E. Mechanical Division (North) Sopore
DIPK-NB-166/20

DIESEL LOCOMOTIVE WORKS, VARANASI - 221004
CORRIGENDUM-2
Due to some unavoidable circumstances following changes are issued to above Tender Notice. Originally Published Tender Notice: SN. 1, Tender No. EL/1010/W-1127, Approximate Cost: ₹ 14,84,731.08 (Rupees Fourteen Lakh Eighty Four Thousand Seven Hundred Thirty One and Eight Paise only). Opening Date: 30.03.2020 at 15:30 hrs. Revised Tender Notice-1: Tender No. EL/1010/W-1127, Approximate Cost: ₹ 14,84,731.08 (Rupees Fourteen Lakh Eighty Four Thousand Seven Hundred Thirty One and Eight Paise only). Opening Date: 30.04.2020 at 15:30 hrs. Revised Tender Notice-2: Tender No. EL/1010/W-1127, Approximate Cost: ₹ 14,84,731.08 (Rupees Fourteen Lakh Eighty Four Thousand Seven Hundred Thirty One and Eight Paise only). Opening Date: 29.05.2020 at 15:30 hrs. Note: For details and to participate e-tender can be seen and Hindi version also on website www.dlw.indianrailways.gov.in & <http://www.ireps.gov.in>
PROJ/LW-02 Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/Maintenance
dlw@ireps.gov.in Website: www.dlw.indianrailways.gov.in

CENTRAL ORGANISATION FOR RAILWAY ELECTRIFICATION
1, NAWAB WALI ROAD, CIVIL LINES/PATAGRAJ-211001 FAX No.: 0532-2407717
Tender No. EL/CORE-OHE-EPC-04-Mod-Re TENDER DOCUMENT Closing Date/Time: 22.05.2020, 15:00
CAO/RE acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against Tender No. EL/CORE-OHE-EPC-04-Mod-Re Closing Date/Time 22.05.2020, 15:00 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.

Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through online payment mode available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand Draft, Bank cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.

1.NIT HEADER
Name of Work : EPC TENDER : Request for Proposal For Electrification of Railway Lines of the section Manmad/Ankai-Mudkhed-Manoharabad including Jankampet-Bothan and Mahbubnagar-Dhone of South Central Railway Total RKM/TKM : 795 : 10/1046:11 On Engineering, Procurement & Construction (EPC) Mode. [Bid/Package No. EPC-04 (Mod)].

Bidding Type	EPC (Single Stage)	Bidding System	Two Packet System
Tender Type	Open	Date Time of Uploading Tender	24.04.2020, 19:00
Tender Closing Date Time	22.05.2020, 15:00	Pre-Bid query Date Time	Not Applicable
Pre-Bid Required	No	Tendering Section	CHE
Advertised Value (₹)	6793130111.78	Bidding Unit	Rs.
Bidding Style	Single Rate for Tender	Validity of Offer (Days)	180
Earnest Money (₹)	20000000.00	Period of Completion	900 Days
Tender Doc. Cost (₹)	0.00	Contract Category	Expenditure
Contract Type	Works	Are Joint Venture (JV)	Yes
Bidding Start Date	08.05.2020	firms allowed to bid	Capital(Works)
Ranking Order For Bids	Lowest to Highest	Expenditure Type	
Docs. Receipt Confirmation	Required		

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IN BRIEF

Donation of plasma laudable, says Prince

CHENNAI
The Prince of Arcot, Nawab Mohammed Abdul Ali, on Wednesday appreciated the decision of some Tablighi Jamaat members, who have recovered from COVID-19 and come forward to donate their blood plasma for the relief of other patients. In a statement, he acknowledged that the Jamaat had acted in haste and conducted its Delhi conference in March though the pandemic was spreading globally. However, there was no truth in the allegation that they had intended to infect others. He said that their gesture in donating blood plasma showed their generosity and large heartedness and willingness to help all, irrespective of caste, creed or religion.

11 arrive from Surat, quarantined at Ambur

TRIPURA
Revenue and health officials have sent 12 persons, who were stranded in Ambur, to Surat by specially-arranged cabs. Similarly, 11 persons who returned from Gujarat have been quarantined in Ambur.

Rain adds to woes of farmers

VELLORE
Farmers in Tiruvannamalai, Vellore and Ranipet districts, who are under stress during the lockdown, suffered yet another blow in the form of summer rains on Monday and Tuesday. Rain lashed Polur, Vellore, Katpadi, Sholingur and Ambur, crashing their hopes of saving the crops.

NLCIL begins operations at Odisha blocks

CHUDALORE
NLC India Ltd (NLCIL) commenced coal production at its Talabira II and III coal blocks in Odisha. The coal mines allotted to NLCIL in 2016 has a capacity of 20 million tonnes per annum. Rakesh Kumar, CMD, NLCIL, said the PSU had achieved success on Talabira project during a difficult time due to the lockdown.

Farmers oppose Centre's move on Cauvery management authority

Farmers' leaders say it could erode autonomy and dilute powers of the Authority

S. GANESAN
TIRUCHI
The Union government's decision to bring the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) under the Ministry of Jal Shakti has evoked stiff opposition from farmers' organisations in the Cauvery delta region. While the move was viewed as an "administrative procedure" in official circles in Chennai, a section of farmers' leaders has expressed apprehensions that it could erode the autonomy and dilute the powers of the Authority. The Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association, the original petitioner in the Cauvery dispute, however, hoped that the Centre's latest notification would not have any adverse impact for the State.

The CWMA was constituted in June 2018 under the direction of Supreme Court to give effect to the final award of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal as modified by the court in its order dated February 16, 2018.

S. Ranganathan, general secretary, Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association, hoped that the charac-

Stalin threatens protest

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

DMK president M.K. Stalin on Wednesday alleged that by bringing the Cauvery Water Management Authority under the Jal Shakti Ministry, the BJP government at the Centre had defeated the purpose of the constitution of the body. In a statement, he urged Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami

to hold a cabinet meeting to adopt a resolution against the Centre's move. "If the Centre does not withdraw the notification, we will organise protests."

Alagiri slams Centre
TNCC president K. S. Alagiri condemned the decision and charged that the "unilateral move" is aimed at benefiting Karnataka.

ter of the CWMA as enunciated in the orders of the Tribunal and Supreme Court would not be changed by the Centre's latest notification. "We don't know why it has been done now but hope the CWMA will continue to have the same powers and strength of force," Mr. Ranganathan observed.

But other farmers' organisations viewed it as an attempt to render the CWMA ineffective. Reacting strongly, P.R. Pandian, general se-

cretary, Tamizhaga Cauvery Vivasayal Sangam, alleged that the decision was nothing but an attempt to cripple the CWMA. "The Centre's actions appear to be supportive of Karnataka, which had opposed the formation of the CWMA. It has not even appointed a full-time chairman to the authority. The latest notification has come as a shock to us," Mr. Pandian said and demanded the revocation of the notification. The notification went

Private sector and patient safety

Everyone has a family member who has some medical issues - someone waiting to check his blood sugar levels, someone waiting for their pregnancy ultrasound scan and others waiting for a surgery - the list is never ending.

The big question is, "Is it safe to go to a hospital for consultation/procedure during these times?"

Thankfully, our country has taken stringent social distancing measures like a 6-week lockdown to flatten the curve. The peaking of cases which we see in smaller European countries and some States of US is in stark contrast to what we have suffered as a large nation. Kerala has already flattened its curve and is showing great progress with preventive and containment measures.

The private healthcare sector has also evolved its strategies in the past few weeks.

A pandemic this large is a new learning experience for everyone alive at this moment in the world. It's important for the private sector in India, being a major healthcare deliverer, to learn, evolve and adapt newer strategies to cope up with the unprecedented disaster.

The learning process and adaptation of knowledge in implementation has kept India significantly proactive. The patient safety measures and personal protective equipments (PPEs) against the virus have been a result of the knowledge shared across the continents after analysing the rapidly evolving scientific data.

When the world is struggling with the availability of proper PPEs for the healthcare workforce, thanks to our innovative and indigenous textile infrastructure in the cities of Coimbatore and Tiruppur, we could get sufficient international standard PPEs, including Hazmat Suits, N95 protective masks



Dr. S. ASOKAN
CEO, GEM Hospital

COVID-19

chain of hospitals is a standing proof of this evolution of our understanding and implementation of patient safety measures.

Based on the data collated and analysed by more than 100 doctors, we have formulated 'GEM Patient Safety Initiatives - GPSI', which are implemented across our facilities in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Identification, isolation, providing information, educating the patients are the key functions of GPSI. Making all facilities adopt a unidirectional flow, segregating the visitors with physical distancing, sanitising the facilities, equipments and personnel to maintain utmost safety for both the public and healthcare workers is the idea behind this initiative. We are happy to share our practices with others so that the public are benefited more.

As more doctors are falling ill across the world and even in our country, the question of patient safety takes no back foot in any standard all over the world. The safety of the healthcare workforce. As a patient, the fear is understandable and inevitable, even in emergency situations, leave alone the planned visits.

However, with the increasing availability of the rapid screening for COVID-19, and laboratories performing the PCR testing (some with in-house collection facilities), the hospitals can literally function as individual units with Safe Zones, free from COVID-19, and designated COVID-19 isolation zones.

The entire structure of hospital operations has to be segregated, minimising contact among patients, with the highest safety standards with adequate PPEs for patient and healthcare teams alike.

The safety measures implemented across our own

With the unavailability of a vaccine or proven antiviral therapeutic option at present, the fight is still preventive but the other medical issues plaguing the human race can't wait or we may equally lose lives over cancers, heart issues, strokes and other critical issues. These preventive safety measures will guide and help us, the medical professionals to continue the services in these tough times safely.

Most medical conditions fall in the bracket of semi-emergencies (e.g. ulcer diseases, hernias, gallstone disease, obesity etc.) which may not require immediate attention, however with the suffering prolonged and without medical attention may be left undetected of something bigger going within. The flattening the curve may take its time, but its time to move on, slowly, steadily and more importantly safely and definitely. Most tertiary care centres have evolved strategies to ensure the same.

DMK to set up community kitchens in 25 towns

We will feed 20 lakh people, says Stalin

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

DMK president M.K. Stalin on Wednesday said his party would establish community kitchens in 25 important towns to feed the people who had been denied a livelihood by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We will do it under the name, *Ezhai Eliorukku Un-*

avu (food for the poor). We will feed 20 lakh people in 25 towns. On a daily basis, we will give food to one lakh people," Mr. Stalin said in a video message.

He said over six lakh people had sought help after he launched *Ondrinaivom Vaa*, an online initiative, and the party was distributing them food, medicines and other

essential commodities. Mr. Stalin said he had decided to set up kitchens since many people wanted cooked food instead of food items.

"I was heartbroken when they said that they do not have place to cook food. They are migrant workers, daily wageers and homeless," he said.



M.K. Stalin

Puducherry Minister stages protest in House

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUDUCHERRY

Health Minister Malladi Krishna Rao on Wednesday staged a sit-in protest inside the Assembly over the refusal of Yanam administration to allow entry to 14 people who returned from other States.

Mr. Rao, who represents Yanam constituency, came to the Assembly in a black dress squatted on the portico of the Assembly demanding permission for the workers to enter Yanam.

Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy and Speaker V. P. Sivakolundhu met Mr. Rao and enquired with him about the reason for staging the protest. He submitted a memorandum to Mr Sivakolundhu accusing Lieutenant Governor Kiran Bedi of working against the interest of people in Yanam.

Speaking to reporters,



Malladi Krishna Rao sitting in protest. + S.S. KUMAR

the Minister said the workers reached the Andhra Pradesh side of the border by foot from Odisha, Hyderabad and Puttaparthi four days ago. They have expressed their willingness to get quarantined once they are allowed permission to enter the region, he said.

Mr. Rao said the Regional Administrator was adamant on not allowing the workers to cross the border.

Doctor in Villupuram tests positive

S. PRASAD
VILLUPURAM

A doctor attached to the Villupuram Government Hospital has tested positive for COVID-19. With this, the total number of patients who have tested positive for COVID-19 in the district has reached 49.

A Health Department official said the doctor had been admitted to the isolation ward in the Villupuram Government Medical College and Hospital (VGMCH).

The doctor, who was recently married, had visited his wife, also a doctor in the Krishnagiri GH. He had visited Krishnagiri last Thursday after the end of his quarantine period and returned on Monday.

A COVID-19 test was done on Tuesday and he tested positive.

Majority of children asymptomatic, say doctors

They account for nearly 6% of total cases in State

SERENA JOSEPHINE M.
CHENNAI

Like adults, a majority of children who tested positive for COVID-19 in Tamil Nadu are asymptomatic. The paediatric age group accounts for nearly six per cent of the total 2,162 COVID-19 positive cases in the State. As of April 29, 129 children - 71 boys and 58 girls in the age group of 0 to 12 years have tested positive in the State. One of the youngest, a five-day-old baby, whose mother had tested positive for COVID-19, has been admitted to a government hospital in the city.

S. Srinivasan, State nodal officer, Child Health, said for a majority of the children, their parents had tested positive for COVID-19. "Almost all children are asymptomatic

and are doing well. They have not reported any problems warranting respiratory support," she added.

Dr. Srinivasan added that during the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak in 2002 and MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak in 2012, the paediatric population across the world accounted for 6.9% and less than 3%, respectively.

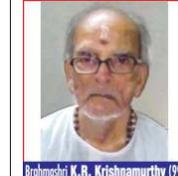
Hospitals are able to manage children admitted to isolation wards as one of their parents are with them. "They are coping well. A few of them have mild symptoms of cough or lower respiratory tract infection. Just like they stay home during the lockdown, they stay inside a room at the hospital. Some of them do try to come out of the room, but being a hospital set-up, they do fear doctors and stay inside the isolation rooms," a senior doctor said.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH



Sri K. Rajagopalan
82 yrs (Retd. Asst. Exe. Engr, TNEB Trichy).
Attained Acharyan Thiruvadi on 23-04-2020 at Bangalore.
Ph: 9444063311 / 9620722900



Brahmeshri K.R. Krishnamurthy (99)
Ex Burma Shell, Chennai
Passed away on 21.04.2020
Funerals on 28.04.2020
Deeply Mourned by Wife, Sons, Daughters, Daughters-in-law, Grandchildren, Great-grandchildren, Relatives & Friends.
Ph: 044-2742422 / 98862 0255 / 98410 0827

BIRTH CENTENARY

Birth Centenary



M. MARIA LOUIS
30-04-1920 15-08-1985
Fondly Remembered by:
Mrs. Carmela James & Family
9791116316 / 9282228567

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INNOVATION AND CSR IN COVID TIMES



Saaveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences provided more than 5,000 safety face hoods as personal protective equipment to CSF at Chennai airport and various other airports across the nation. Dr. N.M. Veerayan, Chancellor of Saaveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences explained the design of the hood. During his visit to Saaveetha hospital, Mr Vinay Kalra, DG CSF Arakkonam immediately saw the benefits of the safety face hood to protect the CSF personnel at the airports and requested Saaveetha Medical College to supply the hoods. The face hoods were handed over by Dr N.M. Veerayan, Chancellor of Saaveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences to Mr Vinay Kalra, DG CSF Arakkonam, and Mr Ashish Kumar, Commandant CSF, Chennai Airport.

ROBOT TO MINIMIZE NURSING INTERFERENCE



A group of Electrical Engineering students and faculty from Aarupadi Veedu Institute of Technology, Vinayaka Mission's Research Foundation, Deemed to be University along with duo entrepreneurs Mr Premnath and Mr Subramanian developed a robot called V2 Buddy at the Chennai Innovation and Entrepreneurship Centre. V2 Buddy was demonstrated at Vinayaka Mission's Super Speciality Hospital at Salem and deployed in Vinayaka Missions Medical Colleges at Salem, Pudukcherry and Karakkal. V2 Buddy can replace nursing interface by checking COVID-19 patient's temperature, dispense sanitizing hand rub, deliver medicines and food, assist the nursing staff to interact with COVID 19 patients remotely through video and audio interface from their nursing stations. Dr. Meenakshi Sundaram, Medical Director, of Vinayaka Institute of Medical Sciences (VIMS) and Dr.A.S.Ganesan, Chancellor, Vinayaka Missions Research Foundation praised the students. VMRF is planning to donate two V2 Buddy nursing robots to Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital and Indira Gandhi Government Hospital.

CORONA PREVENTION INITIATIVES



Evergreen Group of Schools has been involved in a series of activities aimed at preventing and handling COVID-19. At its Kolathur school, 35 office staff and about 300 teachers joined hands with the Corporation of Chennai for two weeks in feeding the data about the people in Thiru. Vi. Ka. Nagar zone on the Corporation website, related to the prevention measures. The staff members of the school worked from their homes and sent the data to the Corporation officials. This facility was extended at their Perambur school too. The Evergreen group is also organising stress buster events for the migrant workers housed by the Corporation of Chennai Thiru. Vi. Ka Nagar zone at three centres in Otteri and Perambur. The School has been organising yoga exercises for the workers. More events such as magic shows and dance programmes are also being arranged. Everwin Vidyaashram, Mathur honoured ISO consensancy staff of Chennai Corporation Manali zone with groceries on Saturday. The school is also used by the field survey workers engaged by Corporation of Chennai everyday for planning and coordination.

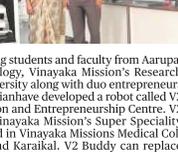
A Business Initiative

LIFE SAVING ROBOTS TO ASSIST IN WARDS



Sevill - a service robot was developed by the Centre for Automation and Robotics, Hindustan Institute of Technology and Science, Chennai to assist the medical frontline. The first 'SEVILL' developed and sponsored by the University is deployed at Rajiv Gandhi Govt. Hospital. Four more robots are given to isolation wards at RGGH. This initiative was supported by Renault Nissan. The project team is led by Prof. Dinakaran, Head of the Centre for Automation and Robotics (ANRO) and the members include Prof. M. M. Ramya and other faculty of ANRO, research associates Mr. Karthick Kumar, Mr. Jaise Jose, Mr. Rajesh, Mr. Sujin, Technical Staff Mr.Vinayagamoorthy and Mr. Rajasekar, Students of Mechatronics Engineering Mr. Lena Sekar, Mr. Akash and Mr. Sivaprasakam. He expressed his sincere gratitude to Dr. Vijayabaskar, Dept. of Health and Family Welfare; Dr. Jayanthi Dean of Madras Medical College and Rajiv Gandhi General Hospital and Axis Global Automation. He also thanked Dr. Anand Jacob Verghese, Pro-Chancellor, Mr. Ashok Verghese, Director, and Dr. K. P. Issac, Vice-Chancellor.

BREAKTHROUGH AI SOFTWARE TO DETECT COVID-19



In the aftermath of the World Health Organization's designation of the novel coronavirus as a pandemic, several measures have been put in place by various Governments to minimise the spread of the infection. Hence, in a bid to help the Central and the State Governments and also the people, a team of students and faculty from Rajalakshmi Group of Institutions, has developed a breakthrough software to detect COVID-19. The AI (Artificial Intelligence) tool is based on a neural network to detect COVID-19. CAP (Community-Acquired Pneumonia) and normal condition from chest X-Ray images. A whopping number of 14148 images were used in the training process and the tool has testing accuracy of 95.4 percent.

STUDENTS OBSERVE WORLD BOOK DAY



World Book Day, also known as World Book and Copyright day or International Day of the Book is an annual event organized by UNESCO to promote reading, publishing and copyright. It's a celebration of reading. Velammal Vidyalaya, Paruthippattu encouraged their students to commemorate this memorable day on the theme DEAR Drop Everything And Read on the 22nd of April. The school aimed at getting kids closer to books to discover the art of reading. Despite the lockdown, the students vowed to mark the special event by reading at the same time between 1:30 P.M. - 2 P.M. in their homes. In a nutshell, the students celebrated this occasion not only by staying home and safe but also by reading. The school management feels proud to make use of this opportunity to create the best in their students and appreciates them for their efforts to make the best use of this time.

One dies in Karnataka, A.P., grapples with spread

Stranded people abroad to be flown back to Bengaluru, Kerala says community sample survey shows no spread

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/
VIJAYAWADA/BENGALURU/
HYDERABAD/CHENNAI
Karnataka's Tumakuru district recorded the death of a COVID-19 patient on Wednesday and the State reported 12 new cases.

The virus continued to infect more people in Andhra Pradesh, which reported 73 new cases in 11 districts, and Kurnool and Guntur remained hotspots. Kerala had 10 fresh cases Wednesday, of whom eight had contracted the disease through contact with known or unknown sources.

Kerala Chief Minister, Pinarayi Vijayan reiterated that there was no community transmission in the State. "There seems to be a widespread campaign that Kerala is up against the community spread of COVID-19. There have been no developments that are uncontrollable. However, the threat of community transmission is very real," he told the media.

Kollam accounted for six

of the 10 new cases while Thiruvananthapuram and Kasaragod had two cases each.

In five out of six cases in Kollam, contact with known

COVID-19

or unknown sources was the cause. These included three healthcare workers. One person had come from Andhra Pradesh.

Of the two cases in Kasaragod, involving local transmission, one was a media person from a news channel. In Thiruvananthapuram, one person had come from Tamil Nadu, while the source of infection of the other was under study. Of the 495 cases reported so far, 123 were undergoing treatment.

Mr. Vijayan said that the results of 391 samples out of the 3,101 samples randomly collected from select groups on a single day, as part of an "augmented testing" drive, were awaited from the lab.

Keeping hunger at bay

As it has become tough for people to get food and other essentials during the nationwide lockdown, the government has taken steps to provide them free of cost at various centres



Patient wait: Transgenders collecting ration kits at a distribution centre in Hyderabad on Wednesday. * G. RAMAKRISHNA

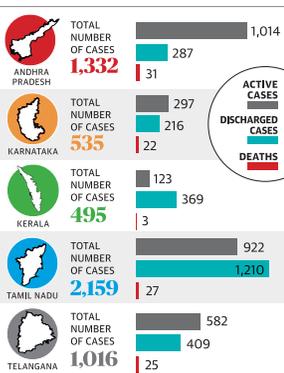
Only three samples of the 3,101 tested positive. Results of another 25 would be released after re-confirmation.

With the detection of 73 new cases, the tally in Andhra Pradesh rose to 1,332. The State had conducted 7,727 tests, the highest number tested in a day, taking the

total samples tested to 88,061. Among fresh cases, 29 were from Guntur, the second most affected district after Kurnool, which reported 13 cases while Kadapa, Prakasam and Anantapur districts had four cases each. Chittoor had three cas-

es, West Godavari two and East Godavari, Srikakulam and Visakhapatnam one case each.

In Telangana seven more cases were reported on Wednesday, all from Greater Hyderabad limits, taking the total to 1,016. The medical bulletin said 11 districts including Sid-



Safe harvest



Taking precautions: A plantation worker plucking tea leaves at Nelliampathy in Kerala; and, right, a person loading bananas on a truck in Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu, on Wednesday. As agricultural operations are permitted during the lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19, workers are increasingly taking precautions against the virus. * K.K. MUSTAFAH & M. SRINATH



IN BRIEF



Buses to ferry labourers stranded in Guntur

KURNOOL
The Andhra Pradesh government, with the help of State Road Transport Corporation, has begun transporting 4,641 stranded migrant labourers from Guntur district to various places in Kurnool. The first batch of 159 buses arrived here on Wednesday. This is said to be the biggest passenger transport operations during the lockdown period. All the migrant labourers were seated in compliance with the social distancing norms.

Fishermen stranded in Gujarat to reach A.P.

GUNTUR
More than 4,500 fisherman from the Andhra Pradesh, who were stranded at Veraval port in Gujarat to the lockdown, are being brought home in 65 buses and they are expected to reach their native districts by Thursday afternoon, Minister for Marketing, Fisheries and Animal Husbandry Mopidevi Venkata Ramana Rao has said. Initially, the government had thought of bringing the stranded fishermen through the sea route, but the plan was shelved due to logistical issues. Of the 65 buses, 57 have started their journey.

Aero India 2021 is on, at same time and place

BENGALURU
The 13th edition of Aero India will be held from February 3 to 7, 2021. The venue remains unchanged again - Air Force Station, Yelahanka, according to the event site of the Ministry of Defence. The dates of the two-yearly international military and civil air show are normally announced in October. There was no immediate information why the announcement was made more than five months ahead.

Construction workers turn restive near Hyderabad

Three officials injured after they throw stones

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SANGAREDDY

Tension prevailed for some time near the Indian Institute of Technology-Hyderabad (IIT-H) on Wednesday when hundreds of workers came out, demanding that they be sent back to their native places. At one point, they pelted stones at a patrol vehicle, injuring three officials, including an assistant sub-inspector.

Police were deployed in large numbers on the premises where about 2,400 workers are staying.

The situation was brought under control after MLA T. Jayaprakash Reddy, Collector M. Hanumantha Rao and Superintendent of Police S. Chandrasekhar Reddy held talks with the workers and pacified them.

According to the police, a large number of workers, mostly migrants from diffe-



Tipping point: Workers staging a dharna in Sangareddy district on Wednesday. * MOHD ARIF

rent parts of the country, are involved in construction activity on the IIT-H premises. Alleging that they had not been paid for the past three months, the workers raised slogans against the contractor. They also alleged that the food supplied to them was of poor quality and showed the heaps of food thrown into the dustbin. Even the toilets were in a ve-

ry bad condition, they said. The police brought the situation under control by using force.

"Pending wages for two months would be paid by Thursday evening. Representatives of the construction companies have accepted that. The work would commence from Friday," the MLA, the Collector and the SP, told the reporters.

A smart way to watch over COVID-19 patients

AFSHAN YASMEEN
BENGALURU

With the Union Health Ministry announcing new guidelines for home isolation of people who either have very mild COVID-19 symptoms or are in the pre-symptomatic phase, it will now be a mammoth task for the authorities to monitor their health status and also ensure they do not violate home quarantine norms.

This is where a wearable device developed by the faculty of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc.) and city-based doctors, in collaboration with MIISKY Technovation Pvt. Ltd., could come in handy.

The device, a smartwatch, can measure various vital parameters of individuals under isolation on a real-time basis. Linked to a smartphone via Bluetooth, the smartwatch will record the patient's blood oxygen saturation and body temperature, said Hardik J. Pandya, Assistant Professor, at

the Department of Electronic Systems Engineering at IISc.

The team that has developed this device comprises, besides Dr. Pandya, students at BEES Laboratory and doctors from Aster CMI and Sri Shankara Cancer Hospital and Research Centre from MIISKY Technovation Pvt. Ltd.

Sonal Asthana, Senior Consultant Transplant surgeon in Aster Integrated Liver Care team, said the device will also help get the location details of the wearer. "The location details will help ensure that the individual is adhering to quarantine norms. A warning can be sent to authorities if the user crosses over from one zone to another. Also, if the temperature rises or the oxygen saturation level falls below 93%, the wearable device alerts the local tracking centre about the impending need for hospitalisation," he explained.

A mobile game to beat boredom, keep the virus at bay

IIT-Tirupati researchers gamify the COVID-19 safety protocol, reinforcing masks, hand washing and more

AD RANGARAJAN
TIRUPATI

Finding a solution to COVID-19 may take time, but learning to tackle its spread is now child's play.

The Indian Institute of Technology Tirupati (IIT-T) has developed a web and mobile game to make the process interesting.

"SurviveCovid-19", the Mario-style lightweight survivor game was developed on a 2D platform by the Research in Intelligent Software & Human Analytics (RISHA) lab of IIT-T's Department of

Computer Science and Engineering. The game, played around 800 times so far, is all about a person, who must step out of his house to buy groceries and return safely when the dangerous virus is around. It is one of the most common scenarios and is universally applicable.

The gameplay requires the individual to protect himself from the virus that chases him in the endeavour. He must choose to wear a mask, use sanitiser, eat immunity-boosting fruits and staying



Best fit: A student playing the 'SurviveCovid-19' game.

away from others (physical distancing) on the street. The man moves around the

screen based on the player's cursor key movement.

'Effective tool'

The game was developed by academican Sridhar Chimalakonda, mentoring his students Dheeraj Vagavolu and Akhila Sri Manasa Venigalla. "The game is useful not only to beat boredom during the lockdown, but also in encouraging people to stay indoors and practice health measures," says Dr. Chimalakonda. He adds that awareness through games would be more successful

with the younger generation, rather than in the form of campaigns or media advertisements.

The game designed for Android-based mobiles has been evaluated through a remote qualitative user survey, using 20 volunteers. "The results are promising with all the questions in the survey having a mean value greater than 3.6," says one of the researchers. A full-fledged research paper on the effort, the first such COVID-19 game, is to be produced, the team says.

Ordinance route to defer pay in Kerala

High Court had stayed the govt. order

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala Cabinet has cleared a draft Ordinance empowering the government for deferring six days' salary of employees and teachers for five months to face the extraordinary fiscal crisis triggered by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan told reporters here on Wednesday that there was a steep fall in income and the crisis was unbearable. The decision on deferment was made to overcome the crisis. Since the High Court had pointed out that the decision was legally untenable, the Cabinet decided to recommend the Governor to promulgate an Ordinance, he said.

The Ordinance will also empower the government to impose a 30% cut in the salary, allowances and honorarium of Ministers and MLAs for a year. The draft explains that in the event of any disaster or public health emergency, it shall be competent and lawful for the government to defer up to one-fourth of the total monthly salary of an employee for the management of the crisis that stemmed out of the public health emergency, but would strictly go by the earlier decision to defer the salary.



Pinarayi Vijayan

including aided and grant-in-aid bodies.

The High Court had said there was no sanction of law for the order to defer the salary and it amounts to deprivation of property of the employees and teachers who were affected by it. Hence, the government had to issue the Ordinance under extraordinary circumstances, it said.

Finance Minister T.M. Thomas Isaac clarified that the government had the powers to deduct up to one-fourth of the total monthly salary of an employee for the management of the crisis that stemmed out of the public health emergency, but would strictly go by the earlier decision to defer the salary.

Exempt judges' salaries from order: Kerala HC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

The Kerala High Court Registrar General has requested the State government to exempt salaries of High Court judges from the government's salary deferment order.

In a letter to the State government, the High Court Registrar General said salaries and allowances of the Chief Justice and the judges

cannot be varied or deferred by the State government through an executive order. As per Article 221 of the Constitution, High Court judges are paid salaries as determined by Parliament and they shall not be varied to their disadvantage after appointment.

The letter was sent on April 27, a day before a single judge stayed the salary deferment order.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSTAT/IMO (TAKEEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Thursday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning, hail and gusty winds very likely at isolated places over Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Telangana and Maharashtra; with lightning and gusty winds at isolated places over Punjab, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	44.6	33.5	21.6	Kozhikode	...	36.0	25.6
Ahmedabad	...	41.8	27.4	Kurnool	...	38.9	25.8
Aizawl	...	24.9	16.8	Lucknow	...	33.8	22.1
Allahabad	...	36.4	22.6	Madurai	...	38.2	27.5
Bangaluru	1.0	25.8	19.6	Mangaluru	...	36.2	26.1
Bhopal	...	40.0	23.6	Mumbai	...	36.4	25.8
Bhubaneswar	...	34.4	22.1	Mysuru	...	35.0	22.6
Chandigarh	...	33.5	21.2	New Delhi	...	37.6	23.1
Chennai	...	35.2	27.7	Patna	...	32.4	21.4
Coimbatore	38.0	33.7	21.8	Port Blair	3.8	32.8	25.2
Dehradun	...	30.4	17.9	Puducherry	...	36.0	26.2
Gangtok	2.3	18.4	11.8	Pune	...	39.9	25.3
Goa	...	34.8	27.2	Raipur	...	36.6	22.0
Guwahati	3.9	31.6	21.4	Ranchi	...	4.2	29.2
Hydrabad	...	36.0	23.0	Shillong	...	19.8	...
Imphal	...	38.3	24.6	Shimla	...	24.8	13.7
Jaipur	...	25.5	17.7	Srinagar	...	26.6	11.1
Jalandhar	...	...	24.0	Thiruvananthapuram	75.5	35.1	23.3
Kochi	5.4	33.4	25.4	Tiruchi	...	36.7	27.2
Kolkata	2.8	23.0	10.6	Vijayawada	...	1.1	36.7
Lucknow	1.0	32.5	22.7	Visakhapatnam	...	33.4	27.4

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE	Yesterday
Ahmedabad	46	28	17	44	76	...	...
Bangaluru	10	17	50	...	90	...	...
Chennai	03	17	40	23	...	...	...
Delhi	19	36	140	129	...	...	...
Hyderabad	04	60	22	...	47	...	...
Kolkata	05	08	13	25	37	...	...
Lucknow	13	18	...	99	...	...	...
Mumbai	01	...	63	...	55	...	...
Pune	35	13	51	46	42	...	...
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.



Strategic shift

India is now forced to reserve its health-care facilities for those who need it the most

On March 28, only 130 districts of India's 736 had reported COVID-19 cases. The Health Ministry's strategy then, after the national lockdown, was to ensure State supervision of those who manifested symptoms – as well as their high-risk contacts – and who had a travel history. Suspected high-risk contacts or those likely to have been exposed to the infection were subjected to varying degrees of State quarantine. Those not showing signs of the disease or 'mild' manifestations, were put in care centres and those noticeably sicker, in hospitals. The idea always was that if the sick and their contacts were segregated from the community long enough, the transmission chain would be broken and the disease extinguished. As April ends, the number of affected districts stands at 401 and confirmed cases have risen by a 1,000 a day; the daily death count hovers between 50 and 60. In a containment strategy tweak, those with a mild form of the disease, or are presymptomatic, would have the option of home quarantining. But their homes ought to have self-isolation facilities, a full-time caregiver, and daily health-status reports given to the district surveillance officer.

The Health Ministry has not explained what prompted this relative relaxation. However, anecdotal evidence suggests doctors and health-care workers have been disproportionately vulnerable to the infection and a single case leads to entire hospitals being shut down. Unlike in the U.S. and western Europe, India's hospitals are not yet clogged with seriously ill patients. It could be due to India's relatively low case-count and also people not turning up fearing infection. Allowing home quarantine could be seen as health authorities inferring that quarantining in public facilities posed more risks. The presymptomatic (mild illness) and asymptomatic (no signs) did not benefit from treatment and were potent virus spreaders, and therefore endangered the staff and health workers. They also stretched State resources in maintenance. The Ministry also found that among those who tested positive, there were two presymptomatic or asymptomatic for every symptomatic. The disease spread, it appears, is now beyond the ability of the state to contain, by quarantine, and it was far more prudent to fortify health workers and hospitals with the best facilities available to handle patients. Officially, there is no community transmission in India but at this magnitude of cases, it does not practically matter. Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi are powering the spread of cases and only consistent declines here can broach discussion on the end of the pandemic. From a month ago, India, on paper, is equipped with better supply channels of personal protective equipment, infusion pumps (for oxygen), hospital beds, laboratories for testing and PCR kits. If the lockdown is lifted on May 3, the rationale behind the government's containment strategy will be put to a stringent test.

President under probe

Bolsonaro faces a political setback as Brazil struggles with economic and health crises

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro's decision to sack the country's federal police chief has come back to haunt him. First, Sérgio Moro, one-time Bolsonaro ally and Justice Minister, announced his resignation in a press conference, accusing the leader of trying to interfere in the federal police. Then the Attorney-General moved the Supreme Court seeking authorisation for a probe into Mr. Moro's allegations. On Tuesday, the top court approved a 60-day probe into the President's actions. The police were reportedly investigating two of the President's sons, both public officials, over alleged fake news dissemination, corruption and mafia group ties. While the President and his sons have dismissed the allegations, the move to quickly replace the police chief with a "friend" of one of the President's sons, has strengthened Mr. Moro's claim that the President wants someone in the police "from whom he can collect intelligence". The probe comes at a time when the President's handling of Latin America's largest coronavirus outbreak is already under fire. Mr. Bolsonaro, who wants the economy to be reopened sooner, sacked his Health Minister Luiz Henrique Mandetta earlier this month over disagreements.

Mr. Bolsonaro is not new to controversies. From his incessant attacks on political rivals, activists, environmentalists and sexual minorities to the controversial handling of the Amazon fires, he has triggered sharp criticism. But this time, he is perhaps facing his biggest crisis as President. Mr. Moro and Dr. Mandetta were relatively popular figures in his Cabinet. The alliance with Mr. Moro, a former judge, had been particularly strong. Last year, a media report showed that Mr. Moro had colluded with the prosecutors who led a corruption investigation against former President Lula da Silva. Lula was convicted in 2018 when he was leading in the presidential election. His exit enabled an easy win for Mr. Bolsonaro. With Mr. Moro's resignation, Mr. Bolsonaro has lost a powerful ally, and is now surrounded by his unpopular far-right Cabinet colleagues and family. Hundreds are dying from COVID-19 and the government appears to be clueless about its containment. Brazil's economy is expected to contract 5.3% this year, a sharp fall from the government's rosy projections made earlier. Mr. Bolsonaro's approval ratings are also steadily falling. Left-wing Senators have already launched a campaign to impeach him. According to a recent poll, while 45% Brazilians support his impeachment, 46% want him to resign. All these point to an isolated, unpopular President who is losing allies and followers and facing a police probe at a time when the country is going through grave political, economic and health crises.

Afghan peace and India's elbow room

Though sidelined from regional discussions on Afghanistan, India must still pursue the ample chances in seeking peace



SUHASINI HAIDER

Earlier this month, the United Nations Secretariat held a meeting of what it calls the "6+2+1" group on regional efforts to support peace in Afghanistan, a group that includes six neighbouring countries: China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; global players the United States and Russia, and Afghanistan itself. India was conspicuous by its absence from the meeting on April 16, given its historical and strategic ties with Afghanistan, but not for the first time.

Left out, but some recovery

In December 2001, for example, the Indian team led by special envoy Satinder Lamba arrived in Germany's Petersberg hotel near Bonn, where the famous Bonn agreement was negotiated, to find no reservations had been made for them at the official venue. In January 2010, India was invited to attend the "London Conference" on Afghanistan, but left out of the room during a crucial meeting that decided on opening talks with the Taliban.

In 2020, the reason given for keeping India out of regional discussions on Afghanistan was ostensibly that it holds no "boundary" with Afghanistan; but in fact it is because New Delhi has never announced its support for the U.S.-Taliban peace process. In both 2001 and 2010, however, India fought back its exclusion successfully. At the Bonn agreement, Ambassador Lamba was widely credited for ensuring that Northern Alliance leaders came to a consensus to accept Hamid Karzai as the

Chairman of the interim arrangement that replaced the Taliban regime. After the 2010 conference, New Delhi redoubled its efforts with Kabul, and in 2011, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Afghan President Karzai signed the historic Strategic Partnership Agreement, which was Afghanistan's first such agreement with any country.

New Delhi's stand

As planners in South Block now consider their next steps in Afghanistan, they must fight back against the idea that any lasting solution in Afghanistan can be discussed without India in the room, while also studying the reasons for such exclusions. To begin with, India's resistance to publicly talking to the Taliban has made it an awkward interlocutor at any table. Its position that only an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned, and Afghan-controlled process can be allowed is a principled one, but has no takers. Kabul, or the Ashraf Ghani government does not lead, own or control the reconciliation process today, comprising the U.S.-Taliban negotiation for an American troops withdrawal, and intra-Afghan talks on power sharing. The U.S.-Taliban peace deal means that the Taliban, which has not let up on violent attacks on the Afghan Army, will become more potent as the U.S. withdraws soldiers from the country, and will hold more sway in the inter-Afghan process as well, as the U.S. withdraws funding for the government in Kabul.

New Delhi's decision to put all its eggs in the Ghani basket has had a two-fold effect: its voice in the reconciliation process has been limited, and it has weakened India's position with other leaders of the deeply divided democratic setup in Kabul such as the former chief executive Abdullah Abdul-



lah. Meanwhile, India's presence inside Afghanistan, which has been painstakingly built up since 2001, is being threatened anew by terror groups such as the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), believed to be backed by Pakistan's establishment. Intercepts showed that the brutal attack, in March, that killed 25 at a gurdwara in Kabul was meant for the embassy in Kabul, and intelligence agencies had warned of suicide car bomb threats to the consulates in Jalalabad and Herat last December.

While the government has said that the novel coronavirus pandemic prompted its decision to clear out both consulates this month, the truth is that a full security reassessment is under way for them. Either way, India's diplomatic strength in Afghanistan should not appear to be in retreat just when it is needed the most.

What dents India's goodwill

The government must also consider the damage done to the vast reservoir of goodwill India enjoys in Afghanistan because of recent events in the country, especially the controversy over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. The building blocks of that goodwill are India's assistance in infrastructure projects, health care, education, trade and food security, and also in the liberal access to Afghans to study, train and work in India.

A critical study of Trump, the postmodernist

In his COVID-19 response, the U.S. President shows that he follows his wavering instincts more than scientific advice



DIPANKAR GUPTA

COVID-19 has brokered ideal ring conditions for a straight fight between scientists and postmodernists. So far, the two have been shadow boxing under hypothetical conditions. While there were, indeed, many practising scientists, there was no recorded case of a practising postmodernist, that is till Donald Trump arrived on the scene. Now the fight can get real.

Yes, indeed, postmodernism has many known thinkers in its ranks and some of them, in fact, are hugely celebrated. However, outside of theory, neither Jacques Derrida or Jean-François Lyotard, or Jean Baudrillard, or any known postmodernist, ever presented a live case of someone who empirically led a postmodernist life. They had the recipe, but where was the curry? Mr. Trump changed that. As far as one can tell, so far, he is the only celebrated case of an actually functioning, full time, postmodernist person. This is why he should be examined critically, not dismissively, as many tend to do.

Divergent views

Scientists and postmodernist come to the ring from different training schools and their reactions to COVID-19 illustrate this divergence perfectly. Scientists to-

day are looking for a uniform text to explain COVID-19. They are searching for a fundamental core that would not just help in finding a cure for the disease, but would also add to our knowledge of the virus's etymology. In-depth comparative analysis is meant to facilitate an overall agreement and, if things go according to plans, major authors, from China to the United States, will come to a consensus. This may, or may not, happen, but that is the goal.

Diametrically opposed to this perspective are the postmodernists. Be prepared, they have no patience for science. For them the real is substituted, as in Baudrillard, for the "hyper real" which is related, at best, to the tactile world through the medium of signs. Derrida, the lead singer of postmodernism, declared that a text is a dubious phenomenon as "it hides its composition and the rules of its game..." This concealment allows for meta narratives to pretentiously claim "truth". Lyotard limply articulates the consequence of this view when he states: "Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity towards meta narratives..." Now what exactly does this big word "meta narrative" mean? Answer: Anything that is connected to the enlightenment ideal of science and technology, and that also includes contemporary advances in artificial intelligence.

Instead of the grand, or meta, narrative of science, postmodernists prefer what Derrida would call "free play". This is a shifting, flirtatious condition, unconstrained by any methodological



principle that science is obliged to work under. There is now no "origin" and no "zero degree", or, as Baudrillard would argue, we only experience the "hyper real". If one were to accept Hélène Cixous, it is important that we "fly", under such conditions, on independent propulsion. A more radical reading might even conclude that scientific theories are patriarchal and gender laden. Finally, as the bestselling author, Helene Hegemann, said, "There is no such thing as originality, only authenticity." If the author is authentic to the self, every text is as good as any other.

Where does all of this leave science? Under a rock!

Trump and 'authenticity'

Now watch how Mr. Trump is actually a living, breathing, in fact, a breath-taking postmodernist. He is not faithful to any one position, but can move freely between them without constraint because he believes, and so do his followers, that he is truly authentic. Mr. Trump intently commended the Chinese when COVID-19 first entered the U.S. and said he had "very good conversations" with Xi Jinping and had "much respect for him". He soon changed tack and accused China of being "knowingly responsible" for spreading the disease

Above all, it is India's example as a pluralistic, inclusive democracy that inspires many. Afghanistan's majority-Muslim citizens, many of whom have treated India as a second home, have felt cut out of the move to offer fast track citizenship to only Afghan minorities, as much as they have by reports of anti-Muslim rhetoric and incidents of violence in India.

While many of these are problems of perception, New Delhi must move swiftly to regain the upper hand in the narrative in Afghanistan. India's assistance of more than \$3 billion in projects, trade of about \$1 billion, a \$20 billion projected development expenditure of an alternate route through Chabahar, as well as its support to the Afghan National Army, bureaucrats, doctors and other professionals for training in India should assure it a leading position in Afghanistan's regional formulation.

Three major projects: The Afghan Parliament, the Zaranj-Delaram Highway, and the Afghanistan-India Friendship Dam (Salma dam), along with hundreds of small development projects (schools, hospitals and water projects) have cemented that position in Afghan hearts nationwide, regardless of Pakistan's attempts to undermine that position, particularly in the South. As a result, to tie all India's support in only to Kabul or the Ghani government; the government must strive to ensure that its aid and assistance is broad-based, particularly during the novel coronavirus pandemic to centres outside the capital, even if some lie in areas held by the Taliban.

Making a leap

India must also pursue opportunities to fulfil its role in the peace efforts in Afghanistan, starting with

efforts to bridge the Ghani-Abdullah divide, and bringing together other major leaders with whom India has built ties for decades. It would be an utter tragedy if the Taliban were to enter the government in Kabul as the U.S. deal envisages, to find the opposing front collapse as it did in 1996.

The conversation India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar had with the U.S.'s Special Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad last week, where they discussed India's "engagement" in the peace process, appears to open a window in that direction.

An understanding between Iran and the U.S. on Afghanistan is necessary for lasting peace as well, and India could play a mediatory part, as it did in order for the Chabahar project.

Finally, New Delhi should use the United Nations' call for a pause in conflicts during the novel coronavirus pandemic, to ensure a hold on hostilities with Pakistan. This will be even more difficult than it sounds, given the abyss that bilateral relations have fallen into in the past year over Kashmir and the rise in firepower exchanged at the Line of Control.

However, if there is one lesson that the U.S.-Taliban talks have imparted, it is that both have found it necessary to come to the table for talks on Afghanistan's future. For India, given its abiding interest in Afghanistan's success and traditional warmth for its people, making that leap should be a bit easier.

Above all, the government must consider the appointment of a special envoy, as it has been done in the past, to deal with its efforts in Afghanistan, which need both diplomatic agility and a firmness of purpose at a watershed moment in that country's history.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Plight of workers

It is astonishing how a 100 million-plus strong workforce, the backbone of the informal economy, has largely remained hidden from the attention of society and policymakers (Editorial page, "Vividly imagining the life of migrant workers", April 29).

It remains to be seen whether the public sympathy generated by their lockdown-related travails would translate into the making of rights-based social security policies. The Centre, the home States, and the host States would have to share the burden of creating a social safety net

for the workers so that we do not expose them to the cumulative deprivations of joblessness, homelessness, and hunger in the future. It is surprising that narratives about migrant workers skip an important plot in the script – the chronic socio-economic backwardness of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal to which most of the migrant labourers belong. The political rulers and elites of these States should be held accountable for the distress migration.

V.N. MUKUNDARAJAN,
Thiruvananthapuram

Another flip-flop

It is unfortunate that the

Union Health Ministry has done a U-turn on plasma therapy (Page 1, "Ministry does U-turn on plasma therapy", April 29). Initially, we were told that there is no health emergency. But we seem to have come to that point. Then, we were told to wait for the rapid test kits. They too appear to be faulty. Finally, there was a ray of hope with the theory of plasma therapy. That too has been dashed. The pace of events suggest that there is a lot of false hope being given to buy time. It is time the Centre and States come out with a clear strategy.

K. GANESH,
Coimbatore

Nostalgic rewind

The 1970s were a golden period as far as entertainment was concerned ("Open Page", "The period drama on the idiot box", April 26). I had a transistor radio then and TV sets such as Dyanora and Solidaire were famous. My son and daughter used to visit houses in the neighbourhood to watch cricket matches, Wimbledon and the French Open which were relayed by Doordarshan. Those days, Doordarshan screened Tamil films on Saturdays and Hindi films on Sundays. During this period, my brother-in-law bought a Dyanora TV set

which was viewed as a boon by my children. I had avoided buying a TV set as I felt their studies would be affected. But the pressure grew and I bought a Solidaire set in 1978. The TV would be on the whole day at times – for sporting events, "Ramayana" or "Mahabharat" and serials, and even Oliyum Ozhiyum. It took a while for me to restore order in the house. When there was no TV, we would be running to some house to view programmes and when it was there we would be switching it off every now and then. How ironical.

D. SETHURAMAN,
Chennai

Saliva use

If the repulsive sight of using saliva to polish cricket balls makes a retreat in post-COVID-19 scenario, it would be a desirable side-effect of the pandemic. Like yesterday's follies become today's customs and tomorrow's edicts, the invented attributes and benefits were thrust upon this unhygienic mannerism of some prominent cricketer of yore. The ICC's move to explore other options over "saliva-polishing" is a case of better late than never.

ATYASSERI RAVEENDRANATH,
Atanamulla, Kerala



To read more letters online, scan the QR code

Coping with today, planning for tomorrow

While we stay resilient and optimistic, we must take this opportunity to prepare for a post-COVID-19 economy



RAMASUBRAMANIAN & ARUNA MOHAN

"And once the storm is over, you won't remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won't even be sure, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm, you won't be the same person who walked in. That's what this storm is all about" - Haruki Murakami, in 'Kafka on the Shore'

As we tackle COVID-19, several issues continue to baffle us. One, does a negative PCR swab test rule out the infection? Even though the PCR test is currently considered the gold standard, it has only 60-70% sensitivity in picking up the infection. Two, can patients become re-infected? Up to 10% of patients in China and South Korea who were discharged from hospitals after recovering from the infection subsequently tested positive by nasal swab PCR. The implications are unclear. Three, do masks for the public help? With increasing evidence of transmission from asymptomatic persons with COVID-19 and the possibility that masks may partially help prevent viral transmission, cloth masks for all public is likely to be recommended. Four, will an early vaccine release help the pandemic? Vaccines, if effective, will be a definitive answer to the pandemic. However, vaccines need to undergo safety and efficacy studies in an animal model followed by human volunteers, which will take up to 12-18 months. Five, is plasma therapy an answer? It is too premature to expect that it will cure the infection. It appears less promising than it appeared initially.

Understanding viral dynamics

We need to understand that the lockdown has helped only to slow down the progression of the infection and has done precious little to eradicate it. Flattening the curve only gives the healthcare system a breather, to prepare for the onslaught of the virus. The real problems will start when the lockdown ends.



"Once the lockdown is lifted and life resumes, there is bound to be a surge in the number of cases, with no indication that the exponential growth of the virus will stop." Health workers conduct door-to-door thermal screening in a containment zone in Chandigarh on Apr 29. - AKHILESH KUMAR

At present, infections are doubling every eleventh day in India. Once the lockdown is lifted and life resumes, there is bound to be a surge in the number of cases, with no indication that the exponential growth of the virus will stop. This will cease only if a significant number of the population is infected or immune. In fact, the pandemic will end only when over 60% of the population is infected, leading to herd immunity, or if a vaccine is available, both distant options at this time. We will be in a position to lift the lockdown only if we have had no new cases for at least two weeks. This would wreak havoc on the economy of any country and be detrimental to the health of infected persons, and also deleterious in the management of non-COVID health issues.

What are the options? Will a partial and periodic lockdown for weeks help? Can we lockdown the entire world till we stop the pandemic? Both of these will lead to massive unemployment and recession and ruin the economy. It appears prudent to try to save lives now rather than stave off a potential future catastrophe. Even when the ban is lifted, several industries may not show revival for up to a year. So the current lockdown, however harsh it may seem, is our best option.

Discipline of the community at large, in times like this, is an enormous challenge. Unfortunately, this is a war, albeit without bombs, bullets and tanks, during which we cannot ask for freedom to do whatever we want. Only resilience and perseverance can help.

Realistic optimism is key

Jim Collins, a business strategist, in his iconic book *Good to Great*, talks about the 'Stockdale Paradox', named after Admiral Stockdale of the U.S. Navy, who was imprisoned and tortured for seven years during the Vietnam War. The psychological duality of 'balancing realism with steadfast optimism' defined his endurance and survival.

All of us are weathering the same storm, but we are not in the same boat. The implications of this crisis vary from financial catastrophe to emotional black holes. We are on different ships looking to survive, and survive we will. One has to be realistic, yet solid in the belief that 'this too shall pass'.

We need to face this period of turbulence with calm efficiency. "Maturity of mind is defined as the capacity to endure uncertainty" said John Finley, an English historian and mathematician. During a crisis like this, India needs to invest in com-

munity education and community participation. Trust in the government is an important component in any emergency health response. An increased expenditure in a robust public health system is important to building trust and confidence. We also need to bolster infectious diseases surveillance.

The media and the public health system should ensure that the correct messages reach the common man. Whether the concern is with risk of infections from dead bodies, or the safety of groceries or newspapers, scientific and evidence-based information needs to be disseminated. One should realise that the cure should not do more harm than the disease. Hence, we need to temper enthusiasm about treating COVID-19 with wishful therapies and gather evidence by scientific and randomised trials.

Opportunities for innovation

While the clear priority right now is to cope with the number of cases and the economic havoc that the pandemic is wreaking, it is also time for the community and the government to take steps to minimise the pain of another pandemic. Humans cope with trauma by repressing its memory. The temptation to forget COVID-19 and move on will be overwhelming. But India must not let that happen. These crises create opportunities for innovation. We need a vision of a post-COVID-19 economy that is not 'simply a return to normal'. A new normal can build upon what we have discovered under lockdown, about making a living and living well. Let us work on an economy that conserves earth resources, avoids future pandemics, and enhances physical and mental well-being.

Finally, as Thomas Sowell, sociologist and economist at Stanford University, said, it is time to realise that "there are no solutions to managing a crisis of this nature, only trade-offs". Our destiny is in our hands, so let us keep them sanitised, let us maintain physical distancing, and let us pray for wisdom to make wise choices in this war against the virus.

Dr. Ramasubramanian is Consultant, Infectious Diseases, Apollo Hospital, and Director, Capstone Clinic; Dr. Aruna Mohan is Consultant Paediatric Dentist, and Director, Capstone Dental Care

Limitations of online learning

Direct human engagement is a crucial component of education



SHYAM MENON

India has been under lockdown in a desperate attempt to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. Even when the lockdown gets lifted eventually, the government may not allow large congregations in restricted physical spaces, including campuses.

Universities and colleges were in the middle of the second semester of their academic year when the lockdown was enforced. There was anxiety, particularly about the graduating batches of students, lest the ongoing session should be declared a 'zero semester'. This prompted a number of local initiatives. There were attempts from individual teachers to keep their students engaged. A few universities made arrangements for teachers to hold their classes virtually through video conferencing services such as Zoom. The transition to virtual modes was relatively less difficult for those institutions that had, even prior to the lockdown, adopted learning management system platforms. All the above were well-meaning attempts to keep the core educational processes going through this period.

Strategy to enhance enrolment?

An April 13 report quoted the UGC Chairman as saying that to maintain social distancing, e-education was the only way out. This was clearly meant to prepare the higher education community for the exigencies of a protracted period of closure of campuses.

However, close on the heels of this, he was also quoted as saying that online education was likely to be adopted as a strategy to enhance the gross enrolment ratio in higher education. This prompts many questions about the appropriateness of what may be an effective contingency measure to tide over the pandemic crisis to be deployed as a long-term strategy for enhancing enrolment in higher education. One, how far will online education help support greater access to and success in higher education among those who are on the margins? Two, how equipped are digital forms of education to support the depth and diversity of learning in higher education? Three, is there an unstated political motivation for this shift in strategy?

Higher education has an influx of students who are first-generation aspirants. They have no cultural capital to bank on while struggling their way through college. Access is not merely enrolment. It also includes effective participation in curricular processes, which includes negotiating through language and social barriers. These students are

also from the other side of the digital divide which makes them vulnerable to a double disadvantage if digital modes become the mainstay of education. Unless they receive consistent hand-holding and backstopping, they tend to remain on the margins and eventually drop out or fail. It is therefore necessary to think deeply and gather research-based evidence on the extent to which online education can be deployed to help enhance the access and success rates.

What learning involves

Acquisition of given knowledge that can be transmitted didactically by a teacher or a text constitutes only one minor segment of curricular content. It is this segment that is largely amenable to online and digital forms of transaction. But learning in higher education means much more than this. It involves development of analytical and other intellectual skills, the ability to critically deconstruct and evaluate given knowledge, and the creativity to make new connections and syntheses. It also means to acquire practical skills, inquire, seek solutions to complex problems, and learn to work in teams. All these assume direct human engagement - not just teacher-student interaction, but also peer interactions. Deconstructing given knowledge in relative isolation is never the same as doing it in a group. Arguably, some of this can, to some extent, be built on to a digital platform. But curricular knowledge has a tendency to adjust its own contours according to the mode of transaction and the focus of evaluation. It gets collapsed into largely information-based content when transacted through standard structures of teaching-learning and examination. While digital forms of learning have the potential to enable students to pursue independent learning, conventional and digital forms of education should not be considered mutually exclusive. Online learning needs to be understood as one strand in a complex tapestry of curricular communication that may still assign an important central role to direct human engagement and social learning.

Institutions of open and distance learning (ODL), established during the mid-1960s to 1980s, were a consequence of explorations for less expensive models for provisioning access to higher education. ODL may also have been considered by governments at that time "as a safe strategy (in the light of instances of campus turbulence) for managing mass aspirations for higher education without necessarily effecting large congregations on campuses" (Menon, 2016). One wonders whether there is a similar motivation behind the enthusiasm for online education.

Shyam Menon is a Professor at the Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi and former Vice Chancellor, Ambedkar University Delhi

A greater impact on women

COVID-19 poses a threat to women's livelihoods as well as increases their burden at home

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES

Early signs are that SARS-CoV-2 poses a greater direct health risk to men, and particularly older men. But the pandemic is exposing and exploiting inequalities of all kinds, including gender inequality. In the long term, its impact on women's health, rights and freedoms could harm us all.

Women are already suffering the deadly impact of lockdowns. These restrictions are essential, but they increase the risk of violence towards women trapped with abusive partners. Recent weeks have seen a global surge in domestic violence. At the same time, support services for women at risk face cuts and closures.

This was the background to my recent appeal for peace in homes around the world. Since then, over 143 governments have committed to supporting women and girls at risk of violence during the pandemic. Every country can take action by moving services online, expanding domestic violence shelters and designating them as essential, and increasing support to frontline organisations. The United Nations' partnership with the European Union, the Spotlight Initiative, is working with governments in more than 25 countries on these and similar measures.

But the threat to women's rights and freedoms posed by COVID-19 goes far beyond physical violence. The deep economic downturn accompanying the pandemic is likely to have a distinctly female face.

Unfair, unequal treatment

The unfair and unequal treatment of working women is one reason why I went into politics. In the late 1960s, as a student volunteer doing social work in poor areas of Lisbon, I saw women in very difficult situations, doing menial jobs and carrying the weight of their extended families. I knew this had to change - and I have seen important change in my lifetime. But decades later, COVID-19 threatens to bring back these conditions for many women.

Women are disproportionately represented in poorly paid jobs without benefits, as domestic workers, casual labourers, street vendors, and

in small-scale services like hairdressing. The International Labour Organization estimates that nearly 200 million jobs will be lost in the next three months alone - many of them in these sectors. And just as they are losing their paid employment, many women face a huge increase in care work due to school closures, overwhelmed health systems, and the increased needs of older people. And let's not forget the girls who have had their education cut short.

Even at the best of times, women do three times as much domestic work as men. That means they are more likely to be called on to look after children if businesses open while schools remain closed, delaying their return to the paid labour force. Entrenched inequality also means that while women make up 70% of healthcare workers, they are vastly outnumbered by men in healthcare management, and comprise just one in every 10 political leaders worldwide. We need women at the table when decisions are taken on this pandemic, to prevent worst-case scenarios like a second spike in infections, labour shortages, and social unrest.

Women in insecure jobs urgently need basic social protections, from health insurance to paid sick leave, childcare, and unemployment benefits. Looking ahead, measures to stimulate the economy, like cash transfers, credits, loans and bailouts, must be targeted at women.

The pandemic has made it clear that women's unpaid domestic labour is subsidising both public services and private profits. This work must be included in economic metrics and decision-making. We will gain from working arrangements that recognise people's caring responsibilities, and from inclusive economic models that value work at home. This pandemic is not only challenging global health systems, but our commitment to equality and human dignity. With women's interests and rights front and centre, we can get through this pandemic faster, and build more equal and resilient societies that benefit everyone.

António Guterres is the Secretary-General of the United Nations

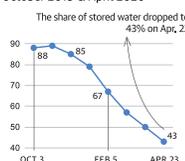


DATA POINT

Prevention measures, a privilege

As a large number of poor people have no access to soap and water and live in extremely crowded spaces, they find it difficult to practise handwashing and physical distancing, which are key interventions against COVID-19. The situation may now worsen with reservoirs drying up. By Vignesh Radhakrishnan and Sumant Sen

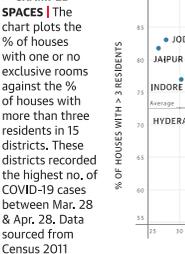
■ **DRYING UP** | Stored water as a % of total capacity in 123 major Indian reservoirs declined between October 2019 & April 2020



■ **SOAP AND WATER A LUXURY** | Data from the NFHS survey (2015-16) show that only 24% of the poorest households have access to both soap and water, while 21% did not have access to either

Wealth quintiles	Soap & water (%)	Water only (%)	Soap or other agents* but no water (%)	Water and other agents, but no soap (%)	No water, no soap, no other agents (%)	Total (%)
Poorest 20%	24	20	11	23	21	100
Second	43	23	7	14	13	100
Middle	60	21	5	7	7	100
Fourth	78	14	3	3	3	100
Richest 20%	93	5	1	1	1	100

■ **CRAMPED SPACES** | The chart plots the % of houses with one or no exclusive rooms against the % of houses with more than three residents in 15 districts. These districts recorded the highest no. of COVID-19 cases between Mar. 28 & Apr. 28. Data sourced from Census 2011



■ **STRIKING DISTANCE** | A significant % of slum population share toilets, fetch water from sources away from their homes and dwell in crowded units

34% of slum households had no latrines within their premises
43% of slum households with drinking water source not within their premises
45% of slum households in which more than 3 persons shared only one or no exclusive room

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 30, 1970

India and the Chinese Missile

The launching of a Chinese satellite foreshadowing the development of a long range nuclear missile within the next few years has led to apprehension that the Chinese threat to India's security has increased and to the feeling that steps should be taken to develop similar weapons in the country. The Defence Minister said in the Lok Sabha that, since the decision not to make nuclear bombs in India was unchanged, no investigation had been made of our capacity to make the bomb and its delivery system. This caused an uproar among the Opposition parties which wish to make political capital out of this issue. It is unfortunate that there has been no rational debate in Parliament as to whether China really poses the kind of nuclear threat to India which would justify enormous expenditure on the development of an Indian counter-weapon.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 30, 1920.

Bringing Coorg to Madras

(From third editorial)

There is a large volume of public opinion in Coorg in favour of its amalgamation with the Madras Presidency. This small province is under the administration of the Government of India through the Mysore Resident who is also the Chief Commissioner of Coorg. In him are combined all the functions of a Local Government and a High Court. The Secretariat is at Bangalore where the Assistant Resident is styled Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Coorg. During the regime of Lord William Bentinck Coorg was transferred to the Government of the East India Company in accordance with the general wish of the inhabitants. "No people of India," says Mr. W.W. Hunter, "have given more decisive proof of their loyalty to the British Crown." The "Garden of Eden" as His Excellency Lord Willingdon called it is a much-coveted place for the European planters who have made monumental profits in coffee plantations. The native subjects appear to resent the undue domination of the European settlers over them and demand amalgamation with the Southern Presidency as the result of which they hope to enjoy the "blessings of Reform" and escape the evils of one-man-rule. A rare opportunity has presented itself to the Government of India to apply the principle of self-determination to the inhabitants of Coorg and grant their prayer by sanctioning the amalgamation as prayed for.

Afghan – a ‘Graveyard of empires’

Afghan is considered as ‘Graveyard of empires’. The fall of Alexander (in Bactria), disintegration of USSR, and the decline of US hegemony were started in this region. There is an ever-growing perception that it is difficult to come out of Afghan quagmire. The present US situation rings testimony to this quagmire.

History of India-Afghan relations

Relations between the people of Afghanistan and India can be traced back to the Indus Valley Civilisation. Following Alexander the Great’s brief occupation, the successor state of the Seleucid Empire controlled the region known today as Afghanistan. In 305 BCE, they ceded much of it to the Indian Maurya Empire as part of an alliance treaty. The Mauryans brought Buddhism from India and controlled the area south of the Hindu Kush.

From the 10th century to the mid 18th century, northern India has been invaded by a number of invaders based in what today is Afghanistan. Some of them were Ghaznavids, Khaljis, Mughals, Durranis etc. During these eras, many Afghans began immigrating to India due to political unrest in their regions.

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan of Afghan was a prominent leader of the Indian independence movement and active supporter of the Indian National Congress.

India-Afghanistan Relations – Strategic, Economic, and Security Interests

India-Afghanistan: Strategic interests

If we go by Mandal Sidhanth, Afghan is India’s natural ally.

India is interested in retaining Afghanistan as a friendly state from which it has the capacity to monitor Pakistan and cultivate assets to influence activities in Pakistan.

While India is keenly interested in cultivating a significant partnership with Afghanistan, Pakistan is trying to deny India these very opportunities.

India’s interest in Afghan is more than mere Pakistan-centrist and reflects its aspiration to be and to be seen as a regional power.

Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan and Afghan has deleterious effects in the domestic social fabric of India, as Hindu fundamentalism in India is triggered by these external developments.

Afghan is also a center of ‘great games’.

In Medieval times it was between Persian and Mughal Empire.

During colonial times it was between Russia and Britain.

India-Afghanistan: Economic interests

Afghanistan has a mineral wealth of about \$1-3 trillion of Iron ore, Lithium, Chromium, Natural Gas, Petroleum etc.

Safeguarding Indian investments and personnel in Afghan is utmost important to India as Indian investment in Afghan amounts to about \$3bn.

India-Afghanistan: Security interests

India faced many security challenges from the Taliban in Afghan during the 1990s.

Pakistan has raised and supported several militant groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen/Harkat-ul-Ansar, and Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami among others, which operate in India.

All of these groups have trained in Afghanistan, with varying proximity to the Taliban and by extension al-Qaeda.

Thus India is absolutely adamant that Afghanistan should not again become a terrorist safe haven.

Radical ideologies and terrorism spreading in this region are a security threat for India.

With Pakistan increasing its strategic depth in Afghan, it can reverse the gain of India in Afghan brought through much cost. Pakistan can incubate and move around various anti-India groups in Afghan especially in Loya Paktia.

The golden crescent comprising of Iran, Afghan, and Pakistan is a worry for India, especially with respect to the issue of drug abuse in Punjab.

Islamic State is using Afghan as an outpost in Asia as it comes under stress in Iraq and Syria.



er copyright laws not incentivising the creation and commercialisation of content; and an outdated trade secrets framework.

India also further restricted the transparency of information provided on state-issued pharmaceutical manufacturing licenses, continues to apply restrictive patentability criteria to reject pharmaceutical patents, and still has not established an effective system for protecting against the unfair commercial use, as well as the unauthorized disclosure, of undisclosed

on medical device formation and Cotions Technology goods categories consistent challenges talks between the tries last year – the used in the 2020 this context is the the 2019 report.

Online IP enforcement India has improve port said, but prog dercut by factors weak enforcement and the police, lac liarity with inv techniques and nised IP enforcement,

d immediately e implementa-specific recom ₹1 lakh crore tion assistance ISMEs pay wages for April and credit guaran-the MSMEs that m to go to the row money.” “For the non-ange the govern-ounce a pay otection pro-lar to the one in the United

snan’s doors when the State government didn’t respond to his pleas.

“I had a word with Home Minister Amit Shah last evening after not getting any response from the State government. He was very positive and concerned about it. I had written a letter to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar two days back requesting him to arrange transport to bring back our students stuck in Kota and other places, but I didn’t get a response.” Mr. Paswan thanked Mr. Shah for bringing in the order.

India has sought to establish its presence in Afghanistan from the early days of its independence in 1947.

In 1950, Afghanistan and India signed a "Friendship Treaty."

India had robust ties with Afghan King Zahir Shah's regime.

Prior to the Soviet invasion in 1979, New Delhi had formalized agreements and protocols with various pro-Soviet regimes in Kabul.

While India's role in Afghanistan was constrained during the anti-Soviet jihad, between 1979 and 1989, India expanded its development activities in Afghanistan, focusing upon industrial, irrigation, and hydroelectric projects.

After the Taliban consolidated their hold on Afghanistan in the mid-1990s, India struggled to maintain its presence and to support anti-Taliban forces.

However, Indian objectives in Afghanistan remained modest given the constrained environment. India aimed to undermine the ability of the Taliban to consolidate its power over Afghanistan, principally by supporting the Northern Alliance in tandem with other regional actors.

Working with Iran, Russia, and Tajikistan, India provided important resources to the Northern Alliance, the only meaningful challenge to the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Since 2001, India has relied upon development projects and other forms of humanitarian assistance.

Debate on India's role in Afghan

There is a debate among major players in Afghan on the optimal role for India in Afghanistan's reconstruction in light of the enduring security competition between India and Pakistan.

Expanding India's presence in Afghanistan through increased Indian training of Afghan civilian and military personnel, development projects, and expanded economic ties.

Caution against India's involvement.

Indian and Pakistani competition in Afghanistan is seen as a new "Great Game" and argues that Afghanistan can be pacified only through a regional solution that resolves once and for all the intractable Indo-Pakistan dispute over Kashmir.

Afghan History

Phase I – until the end of the cold war

Monarchy under King Zahir Shah lasted till 1973 and was overthrown by a coup led by Mohammed Daoud Khan. He declared Afghanistan as a republic. Against his repressive rule, protest became widespread leading to Communist Revolution or Saur Revolution in 1978 and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan came into being. The event proved to be the catalyst for decades of unrest and bloodshed in Afghan. There were protests against the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and to stabilize the communist regime, USSR intervened in 1979.

The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, renamed in 1987 to the Republic of Afghanistan, commonly known as Afghanistan, existed from 1978 to 1992, during which time the socialist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) ruled Afghanistan.

India had an upper hand as the diplomatic and cultural ties were strong with the Afghan regime during these periods.

India was the only South Asian nation to recognize the Soviet-backed Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and the Soviet Union's military presence in Afghan territories.

Meanwhile, US-Pakistan interest coincided in Afghan. After the Iranian revolution, Iran came out of US influence in the Middle Eastern region. So the US was apprehensive of growing Soviet influence in Afghan.

Thus CIA-ISI worked together to destabilize the communist government in Afghan, which led to USSR intervention in 1979. The intervention lasted from 1979 to 1989.

Mujahadeen succeeded in toppling communist regime in Afghan in 1989. Mujahadeen was Pakistani supported alliance by seven Afghan Mujahideen parties fighting against the Soviet-backed the Democratic Republic of Afghan forces in Soviet-Afghan war.

India, however, recognized the Mujahadeen government. Following the withdrawal of the Soviet armed forces from Afghanistan in 1989, India continued to support Najibullah's government (Mujahadeen government) with humanitarian aid.

Airport officials told to ensure that passengers follow safety protocol

S. VIJAY KUMAR
CHENNAI

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) is looking at commencing limited domestic/international flight operations with 30% capacity post COVID-19 lockdown. Airport officials have been told to ensure that the passengers followed the safety protocol, particularly physical distancing. Facilities for hand sanitising/washing would be created in as many places as possible.

In a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) circulated to all airports on Wednesday, the AAI said once the lockdown period is over, airports shall be facilitating limited domestic/international scheduled flights in a phased manner. "To start with, may be at 30% capacity to facilitate social distancing. The operations to its original level is likely to be scaled up in gradual manner."

Where there were more terminals, only one terminal would be

opened for use to minimise the cleaning area considering the limited availability of material resources. "Initially it is presumed that airline operations will be limited to Tier-I cities [Metros] and some other State capitals and major Tier-II cities... limited food and beverages and retail outlets to be made available to the passengers till operations of Airlines gradually increase. Initially they should serve tea/coffee etc. with take away snacks in boxes. As part of this limited restaurant facilities to be permitted inside security hold area," the guidelines said.

Airport authorities were told to coordinate with the State governments/local administration to ensure availability of public transport/private taxis for connectivity to the airport for passengers and staff. Spa centres/massage chair facilities would remain suspended as a safety measure. While air-

lines would advise passengers to reach the airport well in advance, the officials would take effective steps to ensure safe distance among passengers and staff at entry points, frisking booths, boarding gates etc.

Health screening
AAI said adequate number of doctors and paramedics should be available at airports to conduct screening of passengers both arriving and departing. Among other instructions were to ensure cleanliness and sanitation of the entire terminal building and public areas, including washrooms, chairs, counters, trolleys, security trays, x-ray machines, hand-rails, doors etc on a regular basis. Employees showing symptoms such as high fever, difficulty in breathing and cough should not be taken on duty. Such cases should be reported to appropriate health authorities.

Available Period of tender schedule : From 30.04.2020 to 14.05.2020 upto 5.45 PM.
Last date for receipt of tender schedule : 15.05.2020 Up to 3.00 PM
Date of Opening fixed : 15.05.2020 at 3.30 PM
Total Number of works : 2 (Two)
Approximate value of work : Rs.991.43 Lakhs (Excluding GST)
For other details and to download tender documents at free of cost visit Government web site www.tenders.in.gov.in and www.intenders.gov.in.
Special Chief Engineer PWD / WRO. (I/C)-
Vaippar Basin Circle, Virudhunagar.

idco ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER (P&C)
IDCO, IDCO TOWER, BHUBANESWAR.
Tender Call Notice No. IDCO/HO/P&C/EST-E/99/FC/08(P-I)/6541 Dated : 23.04.2020
NOTICE INVITING TENDER UNDER NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT
1. Name of the Work : Undertaking complete assignment on turnkey basis to prepare the Forest Diversion Proposal including all related activities thereof leading to forest clearance and to facilitate obtaining the approval of using Forest land measuring AC 2236.66 in different villages (Badasulidhi, Galagan, Rawana, Mantra, Chandia under Danagadi Tahasil & Villages Baragadia, Mirigacha, Gobarghati under Sukinda Tahasil) at Kalinga Nagar of Jajpur District, Odisha from Ministry of Environment and Forests & O Climate Change (MoEF & CC) Govt. of India (Forest Clearance) under Forest (Conservation) Act-1980.
2. Other Details:

Procurement Officer	Bid Reference No.	Availability of Tender on-line for Bidding	
		From	To
CGM(P&C), IDCO, IDCO Tower, Jampath, Bhubaneswar	P&C/EST-E-01/2020-21	After 16:00 Hours of 04.05.2020	Up to 16:00 Hours of 27.05.2020

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal of Govt. of Odisha www.tendersodisha.gov.in. Corrigendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can be seen in e-procurement portal as well as in IDCO website.
Sd/- Chief General Manager (P&C), IDCO, Bhubaneswar
OIPR-14003/11/0003/2021

SRI VENKATESWARA BHAKTHI CHANNEL, TIRUPATI. RECRUITMENT NOTIFICATION
Rec.No.TTD-97924(31)/2/2020
SRI VENKATESWARA BHAKTHI CHANNEL invites Applications for filling the post of **CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**, for its Channel from the eligible candidates.
Tenure of Appointment: **THREE YEARS**
Last Date for the receipt of Application: **29-05-2020**
Persons professing Hindu Religion shall only apply.
The eligibility conditions and prescribed application form can be downloaded from the web site: www.svbcttd.com.
Rec.No.PRA/13917/Adm.No.05/PRO/2020, Dated:29-04-2020 **MANAGING DIRECTOR**

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH SAMAGRA SHIKSHA STATE PROJECT OFFICE, KBC BOYS HIGH SCHOOL CAMPUS, OPP. RAITHU BAZAR, PATAMATA, VIJAYAWADA, ANDHRA PRADESH
Request for Proposal
e-procurement notice No. SSA-16021/4/2019-MIS SEC-SSA, dt.29-04-2020
Samagra Shiksha, Andhra Pradesh is inviting Request For Proposal for procurement and supply of set of note books under the scheme of "Jagananna Vidya Kanuka" to all the students (approximately 21 lakhs in number) studying classes VI to X in Government/ MPP/ ZPP/ Municipal/ KGBVs/ Model Schools/ Ashram Schools/ Residential Aided Schools of Education and welfare departments in the State of Andhra Pradesh during the year 2020-21. For details please visit <https://tender.aeprocurement.gov.in> from 01-05-2020. Tender/RFP form can be downloaded from website. Eligible firms shall upload the prescribed format as per the schedules given in the above said site. Contact No. 0866-2428599.
Sd/- V.Chinaveerabhadradu, I.A.S.,
State Project Director,
Samagra Shiksha, Andhra Pradesh.
DIPR 23PPICL, Dt: 29-04-2020

INTERVIEW | SRINATH REDDY

'We cannot let down our guard till April or May next year'

As urban areas resume activities, travel to rural areas must be restricted to prevent ingress of the virus to those places, says ICMR's task force member

JAYANT SRIRAM

With the possibility of a graded exit from the 40-day lockdown approaching, Srinath Reddy, president of the Public Health Foundation of India and member of the ICMR's COVID-19 task force, takes stock of what has been achieved during this period in respect of the public health systems. With systemic weaknesses still remaining, he cautioned that we will have to be on guard against the virus for at least one year. Excerpts:

A key objective of the lockdown was to give us time to scale up our public health systems in case there is a surge of cases going forward. Has this been adequately achieved?

■ Our public health system has been quite weak for several decades, because of poor investments, not only in infrastructure, but also in the health workforce. And in

health financing, which were barriers to access and affordability of healthcare.

Obviously, we cannot say that we have actually accomplished a transformation in each of these areas, whether it is from the point of view of a steady state functioning of the health system or the surge response that is required to meet a pandemic challenge like this. However, I believe that lockdown has

care. Also, for ensuring that our testing capacity has improved with acquisition of more testing kits, pressing into service of a large number of healthcare workers for contact tracing and isolation, as well as bringing in more doctors and nurses, including from the retirees, for providing healthcare services if required. We have also seen that the manufacturing capacity of medical equipment as well as personal protection equipment has gone up quite substantially.

What's your advice on how to restart and what are the activities that can be avoided?

■ I believe that it is time for us to now start moving out of



■ We have to avoid mass meetings, we have to avoid malls and cinema halls, but smaller group meetings should be possible

nue, if not the full, rigorous form of the lockdown, at least the slightly loosened form of lockdown.

I believe we ought to look at urban and rural areas

happening in terms of harvesting and other fieldwork. Even as urban areas resume activities, we must try and restrict the travel and transportation of goods between urban and rural areas to absolutely essential goods and essential travel needs, because we should prevent the ingress of the virus from urban areas into rural areas.

We have to avoid mass meetings, we have to avoid malls and cinema halls, but smaller group meetings should be possible, and of course social distancing in public would still have to be maintained. And in education, I would give preference to school education over college education immediately, because school education is something that has to be

There is concern that over the winter we may see a second wave of the virus even if it slows down now. What do you think is the kind of time period we're talking about in which we are going to be seeing the effects of the virus not just in our health system, but in the way our economic activities are also affected?

■ There is anticipation that we will see a slowdown in summer as the temperatures rise and even when the humidity rises. But there is also an apprehension that it could actually raise its head again in winter. We have to see whether it behaves like other coronaviruses, which do have a seasonal pattern, or whether this is an atypical

fect, and we'll go into a bit of a slumber during the period between summer and onset of winter, then we still have to be prepared for a possible resurgence in winter and we cannot let down our guard till April or May next year. In the interest of safety, we have to plan as though this is going to be a phenomenon that we have to deal with for over a year.

What are the public health lessons that we can learn from other Asian countries that have been doing well?

■ Actually the champion in this region has been Vietnam. It is a sort of unreported, unsung hero. Of course, Singapore is now having some problems in terms of

health. What we have seen in Southeast Asian countries is that because they have had the experience of the H1N1, the H5N1, the so called Swine Flu, as well as the avian influenza, as well as the SARS, they have actually prepared public health as well as healthcare systems to respond very quickly to any such threat. They're ready to get into high gear very quickly.

We have had other things that have been favouring us but from the point of view of investments in public health, it is absolutely important that we build up a very strong surveillance system, a very strong primary healthcare system.

We also ensure that invest-

Taliban to power

Even though the Mujahadeen government came into power by the backing of US-Pakistan, the government comprised of different warlords. This led to the power struggle between them and there was a law & order crisis.

Moreover, the then president, Najibullah, became pro-India.

This led to the promotion of Taliban by Pakistan.

WHO ARE THE TALIBAN?

Taliban means students.

They are refugees of Afghan civil war and are located in NWFP in Pakistan.

They were educated in Madrasas financed by Saudi Arabia and indoctrinated with Wahabism-Salafism.

Wahabism is a puritan movement in Islam who wants Shariat rule.

After fall of Mujahadeen government, India together with the international community supported the coalition government that took control, but relations and contacts ended with the outbreak of another civil war, which brought to power the Taliban. The Taliban regime was recognized only by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha monuments by the Taliban led to outrage and angry protests by India. In 1999, the hijacked Indian Airlines Flight 814 landed and stayed in Kandahar in Afghanistan and the Taliban were suspected of supporting them. India became one of the key supporters of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance.

Phase II – since the end of the cold war

India tried to repair the relations since the 1990s. But the emergence of the Taliban with Pakistan's support limited India's options. India continued to support anti-Taliban forces in Afghanistan.

The war in Afghan (2001-present)

Meanwhile, post-cold war scenario changed the regional dynamics and US war on terror in 2001 led to the defeat of the Taliban.

US war in Afghan was started in 2001. The war's public aims were to dismantle al-Qaeda and to deny it a safe base of operations in Afghanistan by removing the Taliban from power

The US demanded extradition of Osama-bin-Laden from Taliban post 9/11. Taliban didn't comply and the US launched the war on Afghan under the war on terror. Northern Alliance, which was fighting the Taliban since the 1990s, offered assistance to the US in this endeavour. Thus all the powers, including India, Russia, the US fought against the Taliban. Taliban was ousted and went underground in Pakistan.

India offered assistance for the US in this endeavour. India sensed an opportunity to re-establish itself in Afghanistan in this different international and regional framework. India began assistance for reconstruction and nation-building in Afghan.

Zaranj-Delaram road in 2009.

Salma dam.

Construction of Afghan parliament.

After the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the concentration of US was shifted to Iraq. This led to Taliban insurgency in 2005 and they regrouped from Pakistan hideouts.

Since then the US is looking to come out of the war in Afghan but the war is being protracted without an end in sight.

Recently US-Taliban talks were held in Doha and US announced that there has been an in-principle agreement on key issues: US troop will leave Afghan and in return, the Taliban promised that Afghan will not be used by terrorists.

Thus from 2001 to present, the Taliban has emerged as an important central player in the Afghan peace process. Now major players like US, Russia, China have accepted this centrality of the Taliban. Since only Pakistan has influence over the Taliban, this turn of events can be considered as a diplomatic victory of Pakistan whereas India is increasingly being sidelined in these proceedings.

INTERVIEW | SYED AKBARUDDIN

'By any calculus, India qualifies for UNSC permanent seat'

It is a country of a billion-plus people working together in a democratic framework, says the outgoing Permanent Representative of India to the UN

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

Syed Akbaruddin, India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, retires on Thursday. The diplomat discussed a range of topics related to India at the UN, including the country's bid for permanent membership at the Security Council. Edited excerpts:

India is due for election to the temporary membership of the UN Security Council later this year, for the 2021-22 period. What do you think will be the priorities for India to work on?

■ India in many ways is a *sui generis* country. It's a country of a billion-plus, it's a country which is a democracy, perhaps the only example in history of a billion-plus people working together in a democratic framework. We will bring to it those values and strengths of being able to work cohesively among disparate entities. That's our USP, we try and work out solutions.

One of the biggest issues that will confront all multilateral organisations and certainly the Security Council will be issues which are beyond borders. Issues of... the global commons, whether it is in cases of public health as we are now seeing in the current pandemic, but other issues, for example, cyber [issues]. There are no regulatory mechanisms or no rules on that, and that's another.

A third one is issues of high seas. Again, beyond your EEZ [exclusive economic zone], there is very limited

understanding of what states can do and what states can't do. Now, why should we focus on these broader thematic issues? It's because you'll see our experience has been: ungoverned spaces lead to opportunities for those who are inimical to global governance to breed, whether it is in states or it is beyond state boundaries, this has been the experience, and therefore, we as a country would like to focus on these things.

Has India got closer to permanent membership status at the Security Council in the past four or five years?

■ One of those aspirational goals was, is and will remain permanent membership to the Security Council, because we feel by any present day calculus, we would qualify. Now, the issue of the expansion and reform of the Security Council is not an India-centric issue. It is an issue which entails a whole host of teams, because, as I told you, everybody acknowledges that India is *sui generis*. A billion-plus people not being permanently in an organisation which starts with, 'We the peoples of the United Nations'. You can't have that dichotomy between an

organisation, which says, 'I'm ready, I work on behalf of the peoples of the world,' and keeps such a big country representing more than a billion people out.

On India's membership, there are very few discordant notes, but there are other issues. There are people who feel that matters relating to, for example, the veto are important factors. There are others who feel, 'Should it be that every region expands or are there some regions that are already represented adequately (or not)? There are a multiplicity of other issues which are fairly complex in nature.

What is India's position on accepting permanent membership in case it doesn't carry veto power? And what, if anything, will actually change China's position on India becoming a permanent member?

■ If you look at the voting pattern at that stage when the reform or the expansion from 11 to 15 happened by increasing four non-permanent members, none of those present there as permanent members right now voted in favour. There were some who opposed, there were others who abstained. The only representative at that stage who voted in favour of change was the Republic of China. Now, even with that sort of vote, in two years, everybody accepted the vote and ratified it... in di-



We will bring to the Security Council the strengths of being able to work cohesively among disparate entities

plomacy, there is no finality in these things of what people say, people evolve, situations change, global pressures will mount.

The choice will have to be, do you want an organ which is moribund, which is not effective, which is not legitimate, which is not credible, or do you want, in the evolving situation, a body which is able to work - with its difficulties, but it's able to work. Therefore, we bet on optimism and we bet that change will happen and people who may have reluctance today will join.

On the veto...

■ Of course, there are many of us who feel that veto was the outcome of a situation in 1945 when the world was dif-

ferent. Our view is that we do not oppose any approach that is non-discriminatory in nature. You are aware that on the issue of discrimination, we have a very strong historical record, whether it was going back to the NPT [Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty]. At that stage, it was discriminating among those who had nuclear weapons before a certain date or later, similarly on the issue of veto. If there are restrictions, these need to be applicable to everyone. These are difficult calls and those discussions have not yet happened.

Would you agree that the issue of Jammu and Kashmir has been internationalised after the August 5 decision by the government, given how many times it's been raised including by the Secretary-General and the Security Council after so many decades [last taken up in 1971]?

■ [Mr. Akbaruddin said that the Secretary-General issues

a list of all items that are/were discussed formally in the Security Council, including those that have not been discussed in decades but are listed at the behest of delegations. These include 'The Hyderabad Question' and 'The India-Pakistan Question' of 1948].

I'm not contesting that is on the agenda because the agenda, the way it works is that one country can put in anything on the agenda to continue, even if not discussed for... in the case of Hyderabad now, 70 years. Being on the agenda is not an issue of concern to anybody.

But it [Jammu and Kashmir] was discussed informally...

■ Informal consultations by definition are not considered to be formal if in any nature. Yes, any country can raise anything on the agenda or outside the agenda in an informal setting. Like you and I when we sit and have a cup of tea, discuss anything under the agenda. Sure. We have not contested that this was informally raised, but you also are aware of those outcomes. No country, not even the informal outcome was shared with anybody, so you can see what the inclination of most members is. I can repeat it, I've done it many a time before, that there is no interest in addressing that issue in the Council in any format. That's why those who had raised it raised it three times, but look at the

way each time they raised it, the returns have diminished.

So is it fair to say that you disagree that it's been "internationalised"?

■ In a globalised world, you can say anything is internationalised, but I don't think there is any fear that if something is... States are sovereign, they can do what they want, but if you don't have resonance, it's a loss.

How does plurilateralism - a concept India has backed - work during a pandemic? Wouldn't multilateralism - which is, in many senses, under attack right now - work better given the pandemic affects everyone?

■ I don't see a conflict between the two frameworks. There are multiple levels at which you can address the same issue and perhaps that's the way to go about it. There is a national effort under way. That does not detract from a regional effort like we've tried in SAARC with our Health Ministers. The EU is trying in some way in the European Union countries, there are others trying elsewhere. However, at some stage, you will also have to address it multilaterally, beyond plurilaterally. A virus knows no borders, so there will always be a threat to us unless we address it across the board, and that's the role of multilateralism.

India has achieved quite a bit in having its position on a global response to terrorism acknowledged. However, we haven't been able to make headway on the proposal for a comprehensive convention on international terrorism, the CCIT. Which regions and countries have been the biggest hurdles?

■ We need to look at the global context in which we made that submission and what is the situation today? We made the submission when I was a young First Secretary here in 1996. At that stage, terrorism was not even looked on as anything beyond a law and order issue.

Today, we've come a long way on that. There are multiple elements... of what we put in there, which are now norms in the global discourse. They are now part of many Security Council resolutions, itself. The discourse has absorbed many elements from that.

There still remain areas where we need to address them. Terrorism financing - there are Security Council resolutions; terrorism nuclear issues - there is a separate convention. The norm that nothing justifies terrorism is now accepted globally. We've come a long way on that, of course.

(With inputs from Suhasini Haidar)

(For the full interview, log on to bit.ly/Akbaruddin)

Afghan is India's natural partner, not just to balance Pakistan but also for the fulfilment of energy-economic interest.

Indian policy in Afghan can be described as the dichotomy between its aspiration for a larger role in its northwestern neighbourhood and the real constraints on it.

In 2011 India became the first country Afghanistan signed a strategic partnership agreement. Until then India was following US demand of India's limited cooperation with Afghan.

India has repeatedly stressed that its relationship with Afghan is independent of Pakistan.

India argues that the tripartite relationship between India, Pakistan, and Afghan are mutually independent:

In both the 1965 and 1971 wars, Afghanistan was non-committal and did not support India.

On the Kashmir issue, Afghanistan has not publicly supported India

India has not entered the debate on the Durand Line.

In 2018, in a first major offensive military platform to Kabul, India gifted a Mi 25 attack helicopter.

The delivery marks the first time India has gifted offensive combat capability to Afghanistan, a sensitive topic in the past due to strong objections by Pakistan.

Under the agreement, India will also train Afghan defence personnel on operations.

US policy on Afghanistan

US policy on Afghan had not been consistent. On the one hand, the US thinks that it needs the assistance of Pakistan to solve the issue because of the geographic proximity of Pakistan to Afghan. On the other hand, the US is also wary of Pakistan's double game of supporting the US and Taliban at the same time.

Because of this inherent inconsistency of US policy regarding Afghan, US has not been able to decide what should be the extent of India's role in Afghan.

India's reconstruction program in Afghan is inconvenient for the US for the fear of provocation of Pakistan.

Under the Obama government

Obama policy was of regional diplomacy along with providing additional troops in Afghan.

The aim was to draw down forces from 2011 and by 2014 Afghan will take over security.

But Taliban increased attacks thus exposing the weakness of Afghan capability to take over.

Under Trump government

Donald Trump endorsed that the Afghan war should be ended at the earliest possible time.

But hasty withdrawal would create a vacuum as the ground situation had become more complicated with various terrorist outfits including ISIS and al-Qaeda gaining space in Afghan.

Followed Obama policy of a modest increase in troops.

Initiated New Afghan policy.

New Afghan strategy of US

Military commitment without a deadline.

Open acknowledgement of Pakistan's role in providing sanctuary to Afghan-based militant groups.

Acknowledgement of India's role in stabilizing Afghan.

US's new Afghanistan-Pakistan-India policy builds India's economic assistance into its own strategy for Afghanistan.

Under the strategy, the US held back its aid to Pakistan until Islamabad demonstrates action against terrorist groups. However, China came in aid of Pakistan by arguing that Pakistan has also been affected by terrorism.

China to hold legislative session in May

The annual event was earlier scheduled for March; COVID-19 infections in the U.S. cross one million

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BERLIN

Countries tried to balance how far to ease coronavirus lockdowns on Wednesday, with Germany enforcing mandatory masks in shops, as the crushing global economic cost of the pandemic became clearer. Excitement over moves towards normality is being tempered by fear of fresh outbreaks of a disease that has already killed 2,14,000 people worldwide and infected more than three million.

China said its legislature would hold its annual session in May after being delayed by the coronavirus, signalling the communist leadership's growing confidence in taming the disease that emerged in the country late last year.

From Wednesday in Germany, masks were needed to enter shops, which began to open last week after the government declared its outbreak under control. Nose and mouth coverings are already compulsory on buses, trains and trams.

Warning against travel

However, Germany extended a warning against travel worldwide to mid-June, spelling more bad news for a global aviation industry that has already been forced to cut tens of thousands of jobs.

Italy, Spain and France have been the worst affected European countries, with each reporting more than 23,000 deaths but daily tolls appear to be on a downward trend and they are all charting their way out of shutdown.

Spain reported a slight increase in its daily death toll from the disease on Wednesday but the government is moving towards a transition out of lockdown by the end



Justice, freedom, democracy: Pro-democracy protesters observing social distancing measures at a shopping mall during a rally in Hong Kong on Wednesday. • AFP

of June, having already allowed children out at the weekend for the first time in six weeks. The pressure to ease lockdowns is immense as the world economy teeters on the brink of a huge depression, with demand for goods gutted, travel and tourism hammered and big banks reporting deep falls in quarterly profits.

With warnings mounting of a meat shortage in the U.S., the White House said President Donald Trump would sign an executive order compelling meat-packing plants to stay open, despite a string of coronavirus deaths in the industry.

The United States has reported its millionth coronavirus case, and at over 58,000 the country's COVID-19 death toll is by far the world's highest – surpassing the number of Americans killed in the Vietnam war in the 1960s and 1970s.

Chinese state media said Wednesday that the top legislature will hold its annual meeting on May 22, after postponing it from March.

1.6 billion at the risk of losing jobs, warns ILO

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
GENEVA

Nearly half of the entire global workforce is in immediate danger of having their livelihoods destroyed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the International Labour Organization (ILO) warned on Wednesday.

The ILO said the risk fell on those workers in the informal economy, and three-quarters of them, some 1.6 billion people

were at risk in the second quarter of 2020. It said an expected further sharp decline in working hours meant that these workers were in "immediate danger of having their livelihoods destroyed". In its third report on the coronavirus crisis and the world of work, the ILO warned of the impact on the most vulnerable in the labour market, who are often in

the hardest-hit sectors. The 1.6 billion people stand in line to suffer "massive damage to their ability to earn a living," said ILO director-general Guy Ryder.

The ILO said the global workforce was 3.3 billion people, of which more than two billion worked in the informal economy – in jobs characterised by a lack of basic protections, no possibility to work from home and no income replacement during the lockdown. It said that almost 1.6 billion informal economy workers, accounting for 76% of informal employment, were significantly impacted by lockdown measures.

The ILO said the worst-affected sectors would be accommodation and food services, manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, and real estate and business activities.

U.K. PM becomes father of baby boy

REUTERS
LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's fiancée, Carrie Symonds, gave birth to a baby boy at a London hospital on Wednesday, slightly earlier than had been expected.

Ms. Symonds, 32, had said previously that their baby was due in the early summer. Mr. Johnson, 55, whose country is facing its worst health crisis since the 1918 influenza outbreak, will take a short period of paternity leave later in the year.

"The Prime Minister and Ms. Symonds are thrilled to announce the birth of a healthy baby boy... earlier this morning," the couple's spokeswoman said.

"Both mother and baby are doing very well," added the statement.

No end in sight, says Rouhani

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TEHRAN

Iran reopened for business despite its persistent COVID-19 outbreak as there was no end in sight to the crisis, President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday, as 80 new deaths were announced.

His remarks came as the Health Ministry announced that 80 new deaths from COVID-19 had taken the country's overall toll to 5,957. Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said another 1,073 people tested positive for the virus in the past 24 hours.

Study on China dams brings the Brahmaputra into focus

'Structures built on Mekong river altered its natural flow'

ANANTH KRISHNAN
CHENNAI

A new study highlighting the impact of China's dams on the Mekong river has raised fresh questions on whether dams being built on other rivers that originate in China, such as the Brahmaputra, may similarly impact countries downstream.

While China's southwestern Yunnan province had above-average rainfall from May to October 2019, there was "severe lack of water in the lower Mekong", the study found based on satellite data from 1992 to 2019.

The Mekong flows from China to Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. The Mekong River Commission, which comprises Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam, has said more scientific evidence was needed to establish whether dams caused a 2019 drought.

The study released this month said six dams built since the commissioning of the Nuozhadu dam in 2012 had altered natural flow of the river. It was published by the Sustainable Infrastructure Partnership in Bangkok and the Lower Mekong Initiative, which is a U.S. partnership with all the downstream countries besides Myanmar. The study was funded by the U.S. government.

'Groundless study' China has maintained that the dams it is building on the river, known as the Lancang there, are "run of the river" dams that only store water for power generation. The Foreign Ministry said the study was "groundless". Yunnan had also suffered



Harnessing the flow: The Zangmu Hydropower Station in Gyaca county in Lhoka, Tibet. • AFP

from drought, while the Lancang only accounted for 13.5% of the Mekong's flows.

India has long expressed concerns over dam-building on the Brahmaputra. In 2015, China operationalised its first hydropower project at Zangmu, while three other dams at Dagu, Jiexu and Jiacha are being developed.

Indian officials have said the dams are not likely to impact the quantity of the Brahmaputra's flows because they are only storing water for power generation. Moreover, the Brahmaputra is not entirely dependent on upstream flows and an estimated 35% of its basin is in India.

India does not have a water-sharing agreement with China, but both sides share hydrological data. "We have got China to cooperate with us for warnings on how flows are moving down the Yarlung Tsangpo and into the Brahmaputra, so that we can warn our population living in low-lying areas and move them safely to higher ground," said Gautam Bambawale, who was India's Ambassador to China until December 2018.

"India will continue to raise the issue of river waters in the Brahmaputra with

China, as that appears to be the only methodology to ensure what happened on Mekong does not happen on Brahmaputra," he said.

Management problem "India, for the most part, doesn't have a quantity problem but a management one," added Ambika Vishwanath, who researches water security and is director of the Kubernein Initiative. "We really need to worry more about activity in China affecting quality, ecological balance, and flood management."

The Mekong study, she added, was not conclusive on the question of how China's dams had affected quantity of flows. "To state that the basin had less water because of activities in China alone is misleading, mainly because that only considers the water flowing into the lower basin at one station in Thailand," she said, adding that the study did not consider other dams and water use along the course of the river. The lower basin isn't entirely dependent on flows from China, but also receives water from tributaries in all four countries, which the study did not account for.

Detained Canadians are in good health: China

'Beijing will protect their legal rights'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

China said on Wednesday that two Canadians held for more than 500 days in a case that has roiled diplomatic relations were in "good health", after authorities suspended consular visits over the pandemic.

Businessman Michael Spavor and former diplomat Michael Kovrig have been in detention since December 2018, an apparent retaliation for the arrest of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou in Vancouver on a U.S. warrant. The United States wants Ms. Meng extradited to face trial on charges related to the Chinese telecom equipment maker's alleged violations of U.S. sanctions against Iran.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said last Thursday – on the 500th day of their detention – that

consular visits to the men had been blocked due to a lockdown of prisons.

Asked for updates on the detained pair, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said on Wednesday: "I understand these two people are in good health and the Chinese will always protect their legal rights and interests." Mr. Geng added that both men have received visits from the Canadian Embassy on multiple occasions, but such visits have been put on hold due to the pandemic.

Mr. Trudeau has noted that they "are in a facility in a region that is not particularly affected by COVID-19." He said that Canada's Foreign Minister has also protested to his Chinese counterpart over the continued detention of the pair, who are accused of gathering Chinese state secrets.

Images show Kim's yachts near Wonsan

Movement of boats suggests that he or his entourage may be in the coastal city

REUTERS
SEOUL

Satellite imagery showing recent movements of luxury boats often used by North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and his entourage near Wonsan provide further indications he has been at the coastal resort, according to experts who monitor the reclusive regime.

Speculation about Mr. Kim's health and location erupted after his unprecedented absence from April 15 celebrations to mark the birthday of his late grandfather and North Korea's founder, Kim Il-sung.

On Tuesday, North Korea-monitoring website NK PRO reported commercial satellite imagery showed boats often used by Mr. Kim had made movements in patterns that suggested he or his entourage may be in the Wonsan area.

That followed a report last week by a U.S.-based North



Lighter moment: North Korean leader Kim Jong-un with former NBA player Dennis Rodman in Pyongyang in 2014. • AFP

Korea monitoring project, 38 North, which reported satellite images showed what was believed to be Mr. Kim's personal train was parked at a station reserved for his use at the villa in Wonsan.

Officials in South Korea and the United States say it is plausible that Mr. Kim may be staying there, possibly to avoid exposure to the new coronavirus, and have expressed scepticism of media reports he had some kind of serious illness.

court, and private train station, according to experts and satellite imagery. An airstrip was bulldozed last year to build a horse riding track, while a boathouse nearby shelters Mr. Kim's Princess 95 luxury yacht, valued at around \$7 million in 2013.

Wonsan is one of the larger and better appointed compounds, but it also has a useful location that allows Mr. Kim to easily travel to other areas along the coast, or return quickly to Pyongyang in his private train or along a special highway designated for use only by the Kim family or top officials, U.S.-based North Korea researcher Michael Madden said. Wonsan also holds symbolic power for the Kim dynasty: It was there Kim Il-sung, who helped found North Korea at the end of Japanese colonial rule in 1945, first landed with Soviet troops to take over the country.

Seaside compound Mr. Kim's seaside compound in Wonsan, on the country's east coast, is dotted with guest villas and serviced by a private beach, basketball

38 killed in S. Korea construction site fire

Workers were building a warehouse

REUTERS
SEOUL

A fire at a construction site in South Korea killed at least 38 people and injured another 10 on Wednesday, fire authorities said.

The fire broke out when workers were building a warehouse in the city of Icheon, about 80 km southeast of Seoul, they said.

They said "rapid combustion" occurred while workers were working on an underground level of the warehouse, adding that they are investigating the cause of the blaze.

410 people mobilised A total of 410 people including 335 firefighters, were mobilised to respond to the accident. South Korean President Moon Jae-in asked related Ministries to do their utmost



Firefighters at the site in Icheon, South Korea, on Wednesday. • REUTERS

efforts for the search and rescue operation by mobilising all available resources, presidential blue house spokesman Kang Min-seok said. The fire was extinguished five hours after it occurred at 1:32 pm, Yonhap News Agency said.

ELSEWHERE

Epidemic shakes France's faith in a cornerstone: strong govt.

After the US released this new Afghanistan strategy, Defense Minister Nirmala Sitharaman visited the US. India put forward its Afghan strategy:

There will be no Indian boots-on-ground in Afghan.

India will provide economic assistance and capacity building.

India will sign MoU with Afghan to train its police force.

India will assist Afghan in its own way and not the way desired by the US, that is boots-on-ground.

Countered the argument of Pakistan Prime Minister that India has zero political and zero military role in Afghan.

However, President Donald Trump now appears reconciled to Pakistan's centrality to the endgame in the region. He unilaterally announced his plan of pulling US troops out of Afghan. A "framework" deal between the US and Afghan Taliban signed at Doha. Washington's hasty timetable of 18 months to disentangle itself from the Afghan quagmire has narrowed the US's options. Due to this India is trapped in a strategic blind-spot in Afghanistan.

Myanmar 'Military of use'

-PRESSE

itary must or possible nd crimes ity" as a bels in the west ramps expert said The mili-a civil war kan Army, up fighting ny for eth-ldhists. een killed, nded and 0 people omes since pted in Ja- r. "...[T]he ary conti- its assault e, targeting pulation," anghie Lee day.

Regional Powers

China

China's role in Afghanistan is gradually evolving towards more engagement in various areas. China has evolved into a notable though not yet major player in Afghanistan in the areas of investment, economic and humanitarian assistance.

This increasing engagement reflects both China's concerns about the deterioration of security in Afghanistan and its interest in benefiting from a reconstructed Afghanistan.

Afghan's geographic location at the crossroads of Central and South Asia, between India in the South and Russia in the North, is of great strategic value to China. In addition, Afghanistan's vast natural resources are also an attraction.

China's interest in ensuring stability in Afghan reflects its growing worries about an eruption of insecurity that could endanger its security of its border province Xinjiang, its investments in the Central Asian region and also its OBOR initiative.

Beijing is concerned about possible links between its Muslim minorities in Xinjiang and the Taliban, as well as other Islamist groups in Afghanistan.

Beijing remains reluctant to consider a security role in Afghanistan but has made major diplomatic efforts to promote the Afghan peace process.

China is holding talks in Islamabad since early 2016 along with Afghanistan, the US, and Pakistan (the Quadrilateral Coordination Group). China is also holding peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

China's role as a mediator and confidence-builder may be crucial, as its pressure has kept Pakistan peacefully engaged.

What Afghanistan needs is long-term and sustainable support – and China would be in a position to provide it, be it in the frame of its OBOR scheme or other initiatives.

There may also be several areas of common interest for China to explore with other countries that are present in Afghanistan already.

This could include joint infrastructure projects and training and professionalization for Afghans.

India and China have agreed for joint projects in Afghan in the Wuhan summit in 2018.

Iran

Like India, Russia, China, and the U.S., Iran would want to see a steady hand at the helm in Afghanistan.

Iranian Revolution 1979 can be seen as a precursor to Afghan turmoil. Iranian Revolution led to two developments in the region:

Iran came out of US influence. The US thus intervened in Afghan to counter USSR influence in the region. This led to USSR intervention in Afghan in 1979.

Iranian Revolution consolidated Shia sect in Iran. This threatened Saudi and UAE led by Sunni sects. This, in turn, led them to finance Wahabism-Salafism and thus Taliban.

Since Saudi was promoting Wahhabi Islam through the Taliban, Iran supported the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001.

After deterioration of US-Iran ties, Iran began to support the Taliban in its borders to ward off US presence from their borders.

Amidst the crippling sanctions on its economy, Iran can benefit from a stable trading partner in its neighbourhood. In 2017 it supplanted Pakistan as Afghanistan's largest trading partner.

Russia

Russia has increased its involvement in Afghanistan.

Russia established ties with the Taliban in 2007 to discuss the issue of drug trafficking through the central Asian region.

Moreover mutual fear of IS has brought the Taliban and Russians closer.

After the Syrian crisis, Russia is trying to flex its muscle in this region to boost its global power status.

Peace conferences and processes

There are many peace conferences and processes to solve the crisis. Bonn Agreement 2001 was the first international pact on Afghanistan for peace and reconciliation. Let us look at some of the important among them, their consequences and India's role or stand in them.

There are two major international peace efforts that are currently underway – the American push for peace led by Zalmay Khalilzad (Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Khalilzad) and the Moscow-led consultations.

Zalmay Khalilzad has held talks with different stakeholders – Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the Taliban with the intention to deliver a deal in six months. Appointment of Khalilzad indicates the US urge to get out of Afghan at the earliest possible time.

Moscow consultations are called 'Moscow-format consultations on Afghanistan'. Moscow consultation is one of the few peace processes which have managed to get the Taliban and Afghanistan at the same table of talks notwithstanding its inconclusiveness.

Heart of Asia Conference, Kabul process etc. are some of the other peace conferences.

determine the creditworthiness of MFIs, helping banks in their decision-making process on lending to microlenders.

"Though the government has allowed MFIs to function in a limited manner, the

rector of Sa-Dhan, said in the letters to the two agencies.

He added that some ratings agencies were seeking to give fresh ratings to MFIs based on incomplete and insufficient information, and an absence of field assess-

ment 12 to 15 months, so that fresh assessment can be done and renewed rating can be assigned after the normal operations resume in the microfinance sector," the letters to the regulators dated April 28, stated.

tion capabilities will drive our growth going forward," said Atul Nishar, chairman, Hexaware Technologies Limited. Operating margin contracted 180 basis points sequentially to 11.6% during the quarter.

के लिए होम/संस्थागत क्वॉरंटीन स्वयं व प्रत्येक नागरिक के जीवन के लिए अनिवार्य है।

टोल फ्री नम्बर 1800 180 6127 (प्रवासियों के लिए)

सूचना एवं जनसम्पर्क विभाग, राजस्थान

India's stand in the Peace Conferences

In peace conferences, India's stand is that it should be Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled and with the participation of the government of Afghanistan. India is also wary of talks with the Taliban and the distinction of 'good Taliban-bad Taliban'.

Recent events

Much to India's chagrin, U.S. and Russia have accepted the idea that peace in Afghanistan is not possible without major concessions to the Taliban. Taliban has become the centre stage in all the peace conferences.

This is evident in the talks facilitated by Russia in Moscow in February 2019, with mainstream Afghan politicians sitting around the table with Taliban leaders and recent U.S.-Taliban talks in Qatar.

The U.S. and Russia have, in their respective peace processes, agreed to sidestep the Ashraf Ghani regime in Kabul, and accepted the Taliban's condition that it will not negotiate with the elected Afghan government at this stage.

And both the Russian and U.S. processes are dependent on cooperation from Pakistan, which retains its influence over the Taliban leadership.

Current talks with the Taliban are not Afghan-led, owned or controlled, and the Taliban has not abjured violence, or sworn allegiance to the Afghan constitution before joining talks.

For India, which has built on its centuries-old ties with Afghanistan with \$3 billion in development assistance over the last 10 years, the spectre of a Pakistan proxy in power in Kabul is now looming large.

Holding no trump cards in this game, India is now engaging with China and Iran, and with a range of Afghan actors including former President Hamid Karzai, who is said to be playing a key role in the US-Taliban process.

India aims to secure its own strategic and economic interests in Afghanistan while backing the position taken by the government in Kabul on the talks.

According to foreign policy experts, India may have to think of reaching out to the Taliban in near-future, at least sections of it that are independent minded.

Trade and Connectivity between India-Afghan

India wants to improve transport connectivity and economic collaboration with countries in Central and South Asia through Afghan.

There is a land route through Waga Atari route. But Pakistan doesn't allow India-Afghan trade through this route.

India and Iran inked a transit agreement on transporting goods to landlocked Afghanistan.

Indian investment in Chabahar port in southeastern Iran will serve as a hub for the transportation of transit goods.

India builds Deleram- Zaranj highway in Afghan.

India-Afghan established two air corridors to facilitate bilateral trade.

India helped Afghans in the reconstruction of Salma Dam in the Herat province.

India has also constructed a new Parliament complex for the Afghan government.

There is an India Afghan joint working group on trade, commerce, investment.

India ratified UN TIR (Transports Internationaux Routiers or international road transport) Convention in 2017.

TIR facilitates trade and international road transport by permitting customs sealed vehicles and containers to transmit nations without inspected at borders.

Afghan Pakistan are contracting parties of TIR

TIR may boost trade between India-Afghan through Pakistan.

Under Afghan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement, Afghan can use Pakistan territory for transit trade and vice versa.

But Pakistan did not allow the agreement to be used by India for transit.

Afghan is in favour of India joining the agreement, but Pakistan rejected this proposition.

Conclusion

Donald Trump is the third US President who is trying to end the Afghan war. However many experts opine that the announcement of drawdown before getting anything concrete from the Taliban is a strategic blunder for the US. It will lead to instability in Afghan that will not only affect India's interest but also regional stability.

The current US move has been a diplomatic victory for Pakistan. The US will require Pakistan's support to implement the interim deal as only Pakistan has influence over the Taliban.

Fully aware of the deadline, the Taliban are trying to secure maximum concessions from Zalmay Khalilzad without offering anything meaningful in return.

With the US withdrawing from Afghanistan, India must find ways to maintain its presence. Despite being an important stakeholder in Afghanistan, India finds itself increasingly marginalized in negotiations involving the key regional players. New Delhi is concerned about the vital role that all the powers are giving to Pakistan. Iran and Russia, two of India's closest allies during the Northern Alliance's battle against the Taliban regime in the 1990s, seem out of sync with New Delhi's interests. India's developmental approach has earned it immense goodwill among the Afghan people. However, the "soft power" strategy has limitations. The recent mocking of Donald Trump of New Delhi's role in war-torn Afghanistan is a manifestation of this limitation. However, there is a domestic consensus in India that boots-on-ground is not an option. Thus India is in the dilemma between continued soft-power or to aggressively push its hard power.

Trump's recent strategy of engaging with the Taliban without the consideration of India has cast a shadow over the US's role as a strategic ally of India in the region.

observing, and discovering drama, he grew t. I have many ut in Irrfan, that ent is le." ould always be ooks; there was latest script of a hand," Sutapa don't remember classmate who ry so many d books in their

nd Irrfan first I over their interest in films. seriously in directing wanted to use raining as a stone to the Hindi try. And Irrfan act in films. ld spend a lot of hing and talking lywood films ctors like Robert ad Al Pacino, and of Martin Together they cuss other nal filmmakers, inner Werner r.

ng Irrfan's NSD s remember is ion with din Shah. In the young students d a few role actors with ent spirits who eers in the new arallel cinema t, and Naseer itely one of them, y Shabana Azmi, l and Om Puri. ould all tease him Mita Vashisht as like, 'Arre n, Naseer ko ('Please, Irrfan, ut Naseer'). But v he wanted to a role, the way I perform. We Naseer in his nces." Irrfan was ough to confess addin Shah how senior actor had im. "I am glad he to become aseeruddin l discovered his ity," Naseer says. an excerpt used ision from the n Khan: The Dreamer, 'The eem Chhabra, 'Rupa ns.)

P races cancelled

oGP races in y, the Netherlands and in June and July n cancelled, the ional Motorcycling ion (FIM) and er Dorna Sports ed on Wednesday. onavirus outbreak gated the cancellation ee events," they said t statement. AFP

is, Uber Cup Finals f again

mas and Uber Cup ere, on Wednesday, back for the second e to the COVID-19 ic as the Badminton ederation (BWF) to hold the global ampionships from r 3 to 11 in Aarhus, k. IANS

id tour unlikely, /arner

NE /arner believes ia' limited-over tour of d and Scotland looks unlikely in the ongoing tances due to the 19 pandemic. Australia luded to face Scotland l on June 29 before three T20Is and as Dis against England ly 3. "At the moment ly unlikely we're o go over there given appened in England," ner told com.au. IANS