



INDIA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1878



BJP's Jammu unit asks Amit Shah to review job quota for J&K domiciles
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Appeal to delay arrest of activist-academics Navlakha, Teltumbde
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Brent crude oil futures rise in anticipation of new deal to cut supply
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NEARBY



Stock up, don't go out daily, CM tells people

Warning residents that the government would strictly implement the prohibitory order, CM Edappadi K. Palaniappan advised them to stock essential supplies for at least a week instead of stepping out daily.

TAMIL NADU • PAGE 2

Eight hotspot clusters sealed in Chennai

The Chennai Corporation has identified eight hotspot clusters in the city, where multiple COVID-19 cases have been reported. The Corporation has sealed them and imposed strict restrictions on the movement of residents and traders.

TAMIL NADU • PAGE 2

Chief Secretary meets religious leaders

Tamil Nadu Chief Secretary K. Shanmugam on Friday chaired meetings with heads and representatives of religious communities at the Secretariat to explain to them the magnitude of COVID-19 and steps taken to contain its spread.

TAMIL NADU • PAGE 2

PROPERTYPLUS • PAGE 3

METROPLUS WEEKEND • 4 PAGES

Coronavirus toll touches 62; revised testing norms likely

2,653 cases confirmed across country, 647 of which are from Nizamuddin cluster

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The number of COVID-19 cases continued to rise in the country with 336 new cases reported in the past 24 hours taking the total tally to 2,547, while 18 more deaths were reported, the Union Health Ministry said on Friday.

India has registered 62 deaths due to COVID-19 so far, while 162 patients have been discharged. Nationwide, 66,000 samples have been tested so far, which includes repeat tests on patients to confirm health status.

COVID-19

"India, due to its early measures, had been able to keep its COVID-19 numbers low but one incident has caused our numbers to rise, which highlights the need for absolute compliance. The 647 coronavirus cases reported over the last two days are linked to the religious gathering of the Islamic sect Tablighi Jamaat in Delhi. These cases are spread across 14 States. Some deaths have also been linked to this," Joint Secretary at the Union Health Ministry Law Agarwal said at the Minis-

These tests, also known as serological tests, are blood-based tests that can be used to identify whether people have been exposed to a particular pathogen. These tests are commonly used to screen a person for an HIV infection; it can detect the HIV antibodies in the blood or oral fluid in under 30 minutes.

In the slow lane: Essential commodities being transported on a bullock cart in New Delhi on Friday, amid the lockdown restrictions. • R.V. MOORTHY

try's daily press briefing. According to reports from State Health Departments, the total number of confirmed cases nationwide was 2,947 with 2,655 active cases. The death toll rose to 83. Maharashtra continued to report the most cases at 417, followed by Tamil Nadu where numbers spiked to 411 and 386 respectively. Kerala reported cases, while Telangana reported 229 cases.

Despite the rise in Mr. Agarwal said the re-testing guideline is still under consideration and would be released by Saturday. He added that the Ministry's newly launched app - Aarogya Setu - had been downloaded by 30 lakh people.

Rapid antibody test
In an interim advisory, the

ICMR advised that "Population in hotspot areas may be tested using rapid antibody test. Antigen positives to be confirmed by RT-PCR (reverse transcription-PCR) using throat/nasal swab, and antibody negatives to be quarantined at home," the ICMR ad-

PM: on Sunday, light lamps for 9 minutes from 9 p.m.

He calls for demonstration of collective will to fight virus

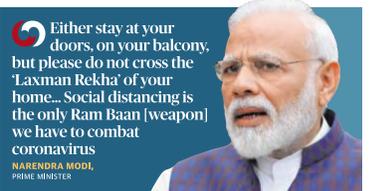
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

On the 10th day of the nationwide lockdown imposed due to the pandemic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked the countrymen to demonstrate a collective will to fight coronavirus, a token demonstration of which, he said, would be to light candles, lamps and hold mobile phone torches for nine minutes from 9 p.m. on April 5.

In an address to the nation, he noted, "There is no bigger force than our conviction and resolve. There is nothing we cannot achieve with these forces."

Mr. Modi made it very clear that the coronavirus threat could only be combated with the full cooperation of the people, and that the collective strength was what would take the country out of what he termed "darkness that engulfs us" in the form of coronavirus.

'We are not alone'
The plight of the poor, with



Either stay at your doors, on your balcony, but please do not cross the 'Laxman Rekha' of your home... Social distancing is the only Ram Baan [weapon] we have to combat coronavirus
NARENDRA MODI, PRIME MINISTER

Disappointing, says Oppn.

Opposition leaders expressed disappointment over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's video message asking citizens to light lamps in their homes on Sunday. Congress MP Shashi Tharoor called him a "showman and a photo-op Prime Minister", while

former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram questioned why the government had not announced a second financial aid plan. CPI leader D. Raja said people expected Mr. Modi to come out with substantial measures. • PAGE 8

Mr. Modi acknowledged that being under a lockdown could be a lonely experience full of anxiety and assured the people that "we, none of

in some parts of the country, Mr. Modi made it a point to say that nobody should repeat it. "Either stay at your doors,

NSA to be filed against 6 for harassing nurses

They used obscene language, gestures

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW/ GHAZIABAD

The Uttar Pradesh government has said that six persons associated with the Tablighi Jamaat who have been accused of misbehaving with women staff at the district hospital in Ghaziabad will be charged under the National Security Act (NSA).

Though the government is yet to issue an official statement, Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Awasthi attributed the direction to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

"Ye na kanoon ko manenge, na vyavastha ko manenge, ye manavta ke dushman hai..." [They don't follow the law or the system, they are enemies of humanity]," Mr. Awasthi said in an

official WhatsApp group quoting Mr. Adityanath.

The police had filed an FIR against the six persons who attended the Tablighi Jamaat's congregation in Delhi and were admitted to the MMG District Hospital.

Nurses there accused them of inappropriate behaviour and complained to Medical Superintendent Ravinder Singh, who wrote to the Uttar Pradesh police.

Dr. Singh said the six were using obscene language and were making vulgar gestures at the staff. His letter said that some of them were moving around in a state of undress and were demanding bidis and cigarettes.

CONTINUED ON • PAGE 8

A battle won



Hailing a hero: Colleague COVID-19 on Friday. Sh

SC calls for quick end to Kerala-Karnataka border row

Patients seeking treatment in Mangaluru denied access

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday ordered the Centre, Kerala and Karnataka to confer immediately and "formulate parameters for passage of patients for urgent medical treatment at the interstate border at Talapadi".

The order by a Bench of Justices L. Nageswara Rao and Deepak Gupta came on a series of petitions highlighting Karnataka's blockade of the border. The blockade, the court was informed, had resulted in deaths as ambulances bound for Mangaluru (in Karnataka) were not being permitted to cross the border.

The court listed the case for hearing next on April 7.

The order came on petitions to facilitate the free movement of vehicles carry-



The Supreme Court has listed the case for April 7.

ing persons for urgent medical treatment across the border between Kerala and Karnataka (Talapadi).

The court, meanwhile, issued formal notice on an appeal filed by Karnataka against the Kerala High Court order of April 1 allowing patients to cross the border for treatment.

Karnataka has argued that the blockade was in the in-

terest of public health. The situation regarding coronavirus was "really dire" said. Karnataka has said that opening the border would cause a law and order issue as the local population wanted the border to be sealed.

Karnataka argued Kerala was the "worst-affected" State in the country nearly 194 coronavirus cases. In this, Kasaragod, joining Karnataka, was "worst-affected" district Kerala with over a 100 deaths.

The court separately considered a writ petition by sargod MP Rajmohan nithan for an order forthwith open the border. He said Karnataka's blockade was "ill-planned dangerous" and had led to the loss of lives.

The central or state government shall constitute one or more Advisory Boards.

It consists of three persons who are qualified to be appointed as Judges of a High Court.

The grounds of detention must be placed before the Advisory Board within 3 weeks from the date of detention.

The detained person can appeal before the Advisory Board but they are not allowed a lawyer during the trial.

If the Advisory Board finds no sufficient cause for the detention, the government shall revoke the detention order and release the person.

Protective Measures
No suit or other legal proceeding shall lie against the Central or State Governments, or any other person, for anything in good faith done or intended to be done in pursuance of this Act.

State still in Stage 2, says Health Secretary

Beela Rajesh rules out community transmission as only 3 with severe respiratory infection test positive

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Three out of 376 persons, who were admitted to hospitals for severe acute respiratory infection (SARI), have tested positive for coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Tamil Nadu. This shows that the State is still in Stage 2 of COVID-19 transmission, according to Health Secretary Beela Rajesh.

"With more number of positive cases being reported, we lifted samples (throat and nasal swabs and blood) from 376 persons who had SARI and tested them simultaneously. Only three of them, who had contact with COVID-19 patients, tested positive. What this shows is

COVID-19

that we are still in Stage 2 and community spread of COVID-19 has not yet happened," she told reporters on Thursday.

This was why self-isolation and physical distancing should be adhered to, she said. "We are insisting on better care and isolation of vulnerable groups such as elderly persons, immunocompromised persons, persons

COVID-19 in T.N. A tracker, across parameters, on how the pandemic has impacted the State so far									
	Until March 27	March 28	March 29	March 30	March 31	April 1	April 2	April 3	Total
Cases reported	38	4	8	17	57	110	75	102	411
Recovered and discharged	2	0	3	1	0	0	1	0	7
Deceased	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Monitoring*		Capacity*		Testing*	
Persons screened at airports	2,10,538	Beds in isolation wards	23,689	Samples collected	3,684
Persons under home quarantine#	86,342	Ventilators	3,396	Tested positive	3
Persons in isolation wards in hospitals	1,580			Tested negative	2,789
Persons in quarantine facilities	150			Under process	484

*Status as on date; #Includes only Health and Family Welfare Department figures. People under home quarantine as per Bureau of Immigration advisory not included

with diabetes and hypertension."

Swift action

"What Tamil Nadu is doing differently is that we do not wait for clusters to happen to carry out containment plans.

"As soon as a person tests positive for COVID-19, our focus is on the containment plan.

"Several departments come together to take up the containment plan in full swing," she said.

Dr. Rajesh said the con-

tainment plan was centered around the patient's residence and any of his/her high-risk contacts.

On Thursday, 5,000 field workers were involved and nearly five lakh population was covered under the containment plan.

She said while exclusive COVID-19 hospitals were notified in the government sector, some of the patients preferred private hospitals. "As per the Chief Minister's order, we are notifying private hospitals too," she said.

According to details avail-

able in the bulletin issued by the Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Chennai, topped the list in terms of number of positive cases.

Biggest spike

The city had 81 cases, with the biggest spike so far being on Friday (35 cases). Dindigul climbed up the list with 43 cases followed by Tirunelveli with 36 cases and Erode 32 cases.

A total of 3,684 samples had been tested so far. Of these, 484 samples were un-

der process. A total of 1,580 persons were admitted to isolation wards of various hospitals. The State has 23,689 beds in the isolation facilities.

A total of 5,080 persons had completed the 28-day quarantine period.

A total of 86,342 persons were under active home quarantine and 105 in government quarantine facilities.

Officials said it was important to ensure that those under home quarantine and those who test positive were not stigmatised.

Govt. designates 21 hospitals for treatment of COVID-19

Four of the facilities are in Chennai

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Twenty-one hospitals, including four in Chennai, have been notified as designated hospitals for treatment of COVID-19 patients in Tamil Nadu. Each of these hospitals will cover patients from earmarked districts.

The Health and Family Welfare Department on Thursday issued a government order designating hospitals in 18 districts as "exclusive COVID-19 hospitals".

Thirty seven districts in the State should have their own exclusive isolation room for admission and treating influenza-like illness and severe acute respiratory syndrome patients.

Each district should have one exclusive quarantine facility, inside the health facility.

In Chennai, the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital, the Government Stanley Medical College Hospital, the Government Kil-



Visitors at the isolation ward of the RGGGH in Chennai. • B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

paik Medical College Hospital. The other hospitals and Chidambaram, will cover Cuddalore. Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Government Hospital in Tiruchirappalli will cover Ariyalur, Perambalur, Tiruchi and Pudukottai districts.

The other hospitals and the districts that the institutions will cover are - the Government Thanjavur Medical College Hospital (Thanjavur), the Government Tiruvallur Medical College Hospital (Tiruvallur), the Government Tirupattur Medical College Hospital (Tirupattur), the Government Mohan Kumaramangalam Medical College Hospital for Salem, the Government Erode Medical College Hospital in Perunthurai will cover Erode district.

The ESI Hospital will cover Coimbatore, Tiruppur and Nilgiris while the Government Medical College Hospital in Villupuram will cover Villupuram and Kallakurichi districts.

The Government Tiruvannamalai Medical College Hospital has also been designated while those in Dhar-

mapuri and Krishnagiri can go to the Government Dharmapuri Medical College Hospital.

Government Karur Medical College Hospital will cover patients from Karur, Dindigul, Namakkal while Raja Muthiah Medical College, Chidambaram, will cover Cuddalore. Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Government Hospital in Tiruchirappalli will cover Ariyalur, Perambalur, Tiruchi and Pudukottai districts.

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Avoid shopping daily, CM urges people

Strict action against those defying prohibitory orders, says Palaniswami

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Friday urged people not to step out of their homes to shop daily for essential supplies. Instead, they should stock supplies at least for a week during the lockdown.

Mr. Palaniswami said the government would strictly implement the prohibitory orders since many were not taking them seriously.

After visiting three camps for migrant workers, he told journalists, "People should follow the instructions in the right manner. They should not go out to shop for essential supplies daily. They could shop for vegetables and provisions for a week."

Some have not realised the seriousness of the pandemic. "Some are out on two-wheelers and many are coming in cars too," he said and added that about 45,000 cases had been registered for violating prohibitory orders and 50,397 persons were arrested and released on bail. About 37,000 vehicles had been impounded and 92 cases were booked for spreading rumours and 95 persons arrested in that regard.

He warned that if people did not listen, "law will do its duty." The prohibitory orders were issued in people's interest.

"Every family is impor-



Keeping morale high: Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami serving food in Chennai on Friday. •PTI

tant to the government and it is the government's responsibility to ensure their safety. The people should cooperate by staying at home," Mr. Palaniswami appealed.

Asked if the lockdown would be extended, he said: "The Centre has announced it until April 14. Wait and see."

On the price rise in some places, he said though rations with essential supplies were allowed to operate, not many were operating. The government had been taking steps to tackle this and action taken against those selling commodities at higher prices.

No salary cut

He replied in the negative

when asked if the salary of government employees would be cut like in a few other States.

The Chief Minister visited camps in Raja Annamalaipuram, Velachery and Periamet, where migrant workers had been provided shelter, food and relief material. Workers from Assam, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and so on were in the camps.

About 1.18 lakh workers from other States were working in Tamil Nadu. Municipal Administration Minister S.P. Velumani, Fisheries Minister D. Jayakumar, Commissioner of Greater Chennai Corporation G. Prakash, and Chennai District Collector R. Seethalakshmi accompanied him.

Ration cardholders to get dole at doorstep

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The State government has decided to distribute the ₹1,000 cash aid to rice family cardholders at their doorsteps when the tokens are given to them to collect rations, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami said on Friday.

Mr. Palaniswami told journalists in Chennai that since there was a possibility of crowding at the time of collecting financial assistance at ration shops, the money component would be distributed while the tokens were given. As for those who were not in a position to collect the assistance, they could do so till the end of this month.

In another decision, he said since journalists were involved in spreading awareness about COVID-19 and highlighting the government's actions, a special assistance of ₹3,000 each would be distributed to accredited journalists.

Govt. reaches out to community leaders

Officials drive home the scale of the COVID-19 pandemic

DENNIS S. JESUDASAN
CHENNAI

Chief Secretary K. Shanmugam on Friday chaired meetings with heads and representatives of religious communities in the Secretariat to explain to them the magnitude of COVID-19 and the need to contain it.

Leaders and representatives from various denominations of Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh and Jain communities took part in three separate meetings in which senior government officials and police officers participated. The meetings were held primarily to seek coop-



Ominous warning: The signboard at a barricade in Villivakkam delivers the message effectively. •K. PICHAYAN

eration from them and to explain the magnitude of the situation," an official said. Prince of Arcot Nawab Mohammed Abdul Ali, one of the participants, praised the efforts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami. "Even so many years ago, the authentic sayings of Holy Prophet Muhammad

verment explained the seriousness of the pandemic and steps we could take."

Home Secretary S.K. Prabhakar, Revenue Secretary Atulya Misra, Director-General of Police M.K. Tripathy, Health Secretary Beela Rajesh and Chennai Police Commissioner A.K. Viswanathan were present.

'Ensure transparency'

Manithaneya Makkal Katchi founder M.H. Jawahirullah on Friday said the State government must be transparent in testing for COVID-19 Muslims who attended the Tablighi Jamaat conference in New Delhi. In a statement, he said names of the patients were released in a few districts and urged the government to clamp down on those spreading rumours and hate.

FROM PAGE ONE

102 more test positive

Health Minister C. Vijayabaskar said that a majority of persons who had attended the Nizamuddin conference and had tested positive for COVID-19 in the last three days were asymptomatic. "We checked with the neighbouring States that have reported positive cases among those who had travelled to Nizamuddin. It seems that at least 40% of the persons who tested positive across the country are asymptomatic. Nevertheless, we will have to study this," he said.

"We are planning to study the virus strain. We need to understand if immunity levels play a role, and look at the virulence of the virus." The condition of all patients, including the 10-month-old baby and 73-year-old woman who had tested positive earlier, was stable, he added.

Churches embrace technology

Live streaming of mass for the Holy Week planned

KATHELENE ANTONY
TIRUCHI

With Holy Week and Easter round the corner, churches in Tiruchi are making special arrangements to make use of technology to reach out to the faithful in view of the prohibitory orders in force. Many churches are looking to stream sermons online, especially for Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

At St. Mary's Cathedral in Melapudur, it has been an unusual season of Lent. The 40 days prior to Easter, nearly 5,000 devotees gather at the church every evening to pray while keeping a Lenten fast. This year, however, they have been asked to follow the mass proceedings on television, says Fr. T. Sagayaraj, parish priest at the cathedral.

The church is mulling live streaming mass for the Holy Week, beginning with Palm Sunday on April 5, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday



Praying in solitude: A priest conducts mass at St. Mary's Cathedral without members, in Tiruchi on Friday. •M. MOORTHY

which will culminate with the Easter Sunday mass.

"It has been difficult to convince the devotees to stay at home. They are not satisfied with watching the masses on television too. For their satisfaction, we will be live-streaming it on our website and on Facebook," he said.

At the church, three priests, including the parish priest have been conducting the regular mass proceedings through Lent in the absence of church members.

At the Infant Jesus Church, Edamalaipattipudur, Fr. Irudhaya Raj encourages his parishioners to read prayers and Bible verses. "Through the Bishop of the Tiruchi Diocese, all churches have been given booklets for people to read and pray at home. We are a little old-fashioned here," he laughed.

At St. John's Church, the masses are recorded and shared by pastor Rev. S. Sudharshan and his assistant from the beginning of Lent season.

Separate jails for fresh inmates

Newly earmarked prisons have been sanitised, staff posted

S. VIJAY KUMAR
CHENNAI

In a bid to ensure that prisoners already lodged in prisons across the State do not contract SARS-CoV-2 infection from fresh inmates, the Prisons Department has notified district jails, sub-jails and Borstal schools in 37 cities/districts to accommodate new comers.

Director-General of Police (Prisons) Sunil Kumar Singh said that the move was to prevent the spread of COVID-19 from any newcomer to the existing prisoners.

The newly earmarked prisons were cleaned and disinfected to house the new comers, the Director-General of Police (Prisons) said.

Adequate staff strength was provided in jails notified for fresh inmates referred in judicial custody. "As a precautionary step, the newcomers will be sub-

clinical establishments in the State, the authority has said that in view of COVID-19, these health facilities should provide essential services - maternal and child health services on follow-up, and services to those with chronic illnesses such as maintenance dialysis, chemotherapy and other neurological supportive care.

"It has been brought to the notice of the State Appropriate Authority about the denial of the above ser-

VICES which is unethical and against the Medical Council of India rules. Hence, it is reiterated that establishments providing such services should not close down, and should offer medical services for their regular clients," the letter said.

The authority said that any deviation will attract suspension or cancellation of registration of the erring establishments under the provisions of Clinical Establishments Act.

Private clinics warned

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The State Appropriate Authority, Clinical Establishments Act and Director of Medical and Rural Health Services has cautioned private establishments that provide maternal and child healthcare, and treatment for chronic illnesses against closing down their establishments and offer medical services for their regular patients.

In a letter to all private

ells us that during epidemics such as plague and others, travel is banned and one should confine himself within the house. I told my Muslim brothers that we should support the government in its efforts," Mr. Ali said.

Fr. Patrick Paul, secretary to Archbishop of Madras-Mylapore Most Rev. Dr. George Antony, said, "The go-

Relief for those who returned from foreign trips

DENNIS S. JESUDASAN
CHENNAI

All persons, who arrived in India after February 15 and were in government/government-arranged quarantine facilities, will be "released" after the expiry of their specified mandatory quarantine period and being tested COVID-19 negative." A G.O. was issued to this effect on Friday.

The earlier G.O. of March 25 had not specified when these people, who were in government/government-arranged quarantine facilities, would be "released" (lifting of quarantine).

Chief Secretary K. Shanmugam, in his order, amended the earlier G.O. to exempt transit arrangements of foreign nationals in India from the lockdown.

According to the Standard Operating Procedure now, persons who returned from abroad after February 15 would be 'released' from the quarantine facilities after testing for COVID-19 as per standard health protocol. However, "this will not apply to a group, where even one person tests positive for COVID-19."

In view of a number of foreign nationals being stranded in different parts of the country due to lockdown, some foreign countries had approached the Centre to arrange for the evacuation of their citizens.



Sunil Kumar Singh

Newcomers will be subjected to medical screening and anybody with symptoms will be referred to the nearest government hospital

rantine blocks, irrespective of whether they have any symptoms or not, the decision to notify separate jails was to prevent the possibility of asymptomatic infected persons mingling with a larger crowd, sources in the prison department said.

The occupation of the 135 prisons in the State was 11,985, which is 51.23 per cent of the total capacity. About 4,000 inmates involved in petty offences were released on bail, including personal bond, in the last ten days, the sources added.

Procedure standardised Although the Standard Operating Procedure in prisons is that all newcomers are isolated for 14 days in qua-

Timings
CHENNAI

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

SUNDAY, APR. 05
RISE 06:03 SET 18:21
RISE 15:47 SET 03:46

MONDAY, APR. 06
RISE 06:02 SET 18:21
RISE 16:47 SET 04:35

Chennai Weather max min

Thiruvallur	36	23
Chennai Airport	34	24
Chennai City	34	26

Chennai Airport Today
33°C The morning will be pleasant. A partly cloudy sky is expected to persist over the city.

Chennai Airport Tomorrow
33°C The morning will be pleasant. A warm day lies ahead. A partly cloudy sky is likely to persist over the city.

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THE HINDU
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Virus alert: eight clusters identified, access points sealed

25-30 people deployed in each cluster to check symptomatic cases

ALOYSIUS XAVIER LOPEZ
R. SIVARAMAN
CHENNAI

The Chennai Corporation has identified eight hotspot clusters in the city where multiple COVID-19 cases have been reported, and imposed strict restrictions on the movement of residents and traders in these areas.

On Friday, the clusters were sealed by authorities and barricades placed at various entry points to prevent movement of vehicles. Unarmed police personnel began guarding vantage points to ensure that residents did not venture out of their houses, even for buying essential commodities.

The Corporation has deployed 25 to 30 people in each cluster to identify symptomatic cases. "Once the symptomatic cases are identified, the doctors will come in. The person will be



No entry: On Friday, the clusters were sealed by authorities and barricades placed at entry points to prevent movement of vehicles. *S. R. RAJAKUMARAN

given an option to go to a private hospital. If not, the doctors will make arrangements for an ambulance to take them to government hospitals. Routine data in hotspot clusters have been generated and more than 50 persons with symptoms have been admitted to hospitals," said an official.

According to the government's medical bulletin, 78

cases have been reported in Chennai Corporation limits till now. Many of the positive cases reported in the clusters had attended the Nizamuddin event held recently, the police said.

In a cluster where five cases were reported, a police officer said, "The entire area is under quarantine. We follow standard protocols. It is more vulnerable, as the area

is densely populated." Each hotspot cluster will have more than 50,000 residents. Some clusters have a significantly higher number of residents. Government agencies, however, are yet to make arrangements for supply of essentials in the clusters, officials said. Residents have requested officials to make arrangements for the supply of essentials.

Drones put to novel use: help enforce lockdown in bylanes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The police have deployed drones fitted with public address systems, advising people not to venture out from their houses.

In the past, the police have used drones for patrolling, surveillance of rallies and meetings, among others.

Now the drones have come in handy to enforce curfew in lanes and bylanes, in various parts of the city.



On Friday, the drones were used in Pudupet, Chepauk, Egmore and Chintadripet, among other areas. *P. I.

For surveillance
Additional Commissioner of Police, South, Prem Anand Sinha and Deputy Commissioner of Police G. Dharamarajan, with assistance of a few technicians, deployed the drones fitted with public address systems.

On Friday, the drones were used in Pudupet, Chepauk, Egmore, Chintadripet

and other areas.

"The drones have come in handy, especially in surveillance. Since it is a flying object with the public address system, it attracts people and makes them listen and obey curfew orders. Besides, we are also using audio fitted public address systems," said an officer.

Drones are handy tools to spot people wandering on narrow lanes and warn such persons to stay indoors, the officer said.

Despite a curfew being in place, people were spotted on streets for frivolous reasons. The city police booked 399 cases on Thursday night till Friday morning.

Family provides food for workers

Nearly 300 Metrowater, Corpn. workers are fed every day

K. LAKSHMI

Every day, a vehicle arrives at Kilpauk Water Works, not to fetch water, but to deliver homemade, piping hot food to workers at the public utility.

A family in Kilpauk has been preparing breakfast and lunch for nearly 300 workers of Metrowater and Chennai Corporation, in the locality, since the beginning of the lockdown.

The workers, including lorry drivers, at Kilpauk Water Works and zone B, have been struggling to find food, as eateries are shut by the time they finish work, late in the afternoon.

A Metrowater official in zone 8 said: "Several lorry drivers are from other parts of the State, including Tiruchi and Madurai, and depend on eateries."



The workers have been struggling to find food, as eateries are shut by the time they finish work. *K. PICHUMANI

The household of Ashok Parmar, a resident of Rajarathinam Street, gets busy at the break of dawn, and in four hours, breakfast and lunch is cooked, and is ready to be transported. Mr. Parmar's family was involved in voluntary efforts during the 2015 floods as well.

"We serve lunch consisting a variety rice, with a side dish, to Metrowater work-

ers, and breakfast and lunch to Corporation workers. We check the number of people who need food the previous day and they collect it from us," said Mr. Parmar. "It is our contribution for workers who are providing essential services during the crisis," he said. Such voluntary efforts motivate workers to continue their work, a Metrowater official said.

At Stanley, robot takes on nursing duties

Device will help avoid overexposure

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Now, a robot delivers food, water and medication to patients admitted to the COVID-19 ward of the Government Stanley Medical College Hospital.

The hospital has introduced the "robot nurse" to reduce the number of times a healthcare provider, especially a staff nurse, interacts with a COVID-19 patient, according to hospital authorities.

The robot was put on trial for a few days at the hospital, and a staff nurse, who was posted at the ward, was trained in operating the robot, Health Minister C. Vijayabaskar said.

Protecting workers
The Minister, who inspected the upcoming 500-bed COVID-19 facility at the hospital on Friday, said: "The robot will help avoid overexposure for staff nurses. They can operate it and send food, water bottles and medicines for the patients in the COVID-19 ward."

It is important to protect healthcare providers from



The Health Minister inspected the upcoming 500-bed COVID-19 facility at Stanley hospital.

infections, he added. P. Balaji, dean of the hospital, said that they had deployed the robot so that the contact of a nurse with a patient is restricted. "It has a two-way camera too. We can also send books for patients using the robot. Our staff need not walk into the ward frequently and this will also reduce apprehensions among them," he said.

Dr. Vijayabaskar added that the hospital was in the process of setting up a COVID-19 facility with 500 beds and 100 ventilators.

Mobile ATM makes withdrawals easy

VIVEK NARAYANAN
CHENNAI

To prevent crowding at ATMs in St. Thomas Mount police district and to help families of police personnel and residents withdraw money without hassle, the police have tied up with the State Bank of India to operate a solar-powered mobile ATM.

There are 15 police stations in the St. Thomas Mount police district and there are hundreds of policemen living in the police quarters in the jurisdiction. Be-

sides, there are thousands of apartment complexes.

K. Prabakar, Deputy Commissioner, St. Thomas Mount, spoke to the State Bank of India, Guindy, and arranged for the solar-powered mobile ATM.

"It will go to apartment complexes and police quarters, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., every day, till April 15. The machine and the van are disinfected frequently and people are made to use hand sanitiser before entering the vehicle," the Deputy Com-

missioner said. People are made to follow physical distancing norms while entering the vehicle to withdraw money. "Now we can withdraw money at our doorsteps," said I. Senthil Kumar, who works in the St. Thomas Mount Deputy Commissioner's office.

D. Kesavan, head constable, Tambaram police station, said such ATMs were helpful. "We no longer have to enter ATMs that are crowded at the beginning of the month," he said.

Book essentials at post offices

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Customers may continue booking shipments of essential and life-saving items at post offices.

All head post offices and select sub post offices and branch post offices in rural areas of the State have been kept open during the lockdown.

Arrangements have been made to transport the booked consignments to the destinations.

Meat shops to remain shut on Monday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The Chennai Corporation has announced that meat shops will remain closed on Monday, on account of Mahavir Jayanthi.

In a press release, the Corporation warned meat shop owners that their licences

would be cancelled if they violate physical distancing norms.

On Monday, civic officials are planning to close all 2,800 meat shops for 10 days to prevent crowding at such shops. Later, the decision was shelved by senior officials.

According to Corporation officials, most meat shops are crowded, increasing the risk of COVID-19. On Thursday, just 130 animals were slaughtered for meat in Corporation facilities. Usually, the number of sheep and goats slaughtered in the city is around 2,000, every day.

Customs waives late fee

STAFF REPORTER
CHENNAI

Customs has waived late fee for consignments that arrived on or after March 20, owing to the COVID-19 outbreak, according to a press release. Container freight stations too have waived storage charges.

THE HINDU

Subscription rates (Chennai City)

March 2020 : Rs. 180
April 2020 : Rs. 170

NATIONAL HIGHWAYS AUTHORITY OF INDIA
(Ministry of Road Transport & Highways)

PUBLIC NOTICE
REVISED USER FEE (TOLL) RATES AT NALLUR TOLL PLAZA APPLICABLE FROM 01.04.2020
(GOI Notification Part-II, Section 3, Sub Section (II) dated: 13th February, 2009)

The public are hereby informed that pursuant to approval of revised user fee rates vide NHAI, RO letter No. NHAI/11025/86/2019/RO Chennai/Acc/1355 dated 31st March 2020, the user fee rates for use of section from Km.11,000 Km. 54,400 on Chennai - Tadapa section of NH-5 are going to be revised as under w.e.f. 01.04.2020 at Nallur Toll Plaza (Chennai 21/635 Km. near Nallur Village, Thiruvallur District) in the state of Tamil Nadu.

Sl. No.	Category of Vehicle	Fee for single journey	Fee for return journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 30 single journeys in a month	Fee for commercial pass for 50 single vehicles registered within the district of plaza
1	Car, Jeep, Van or Light Motor Vehicle	50	75	1700	25
2	Light commercial Vehicle, Light Goods Vehicle or Mini Bus	80	125	2745	40
3	Bus/Truck (Two Axles)	175	260	5755	85
4	Three Axle commercial Vehicles	190	280	6275	95
5	Heavy Construction Machinery (HCM) or Earth Moving Equipments (EME) or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (Four to Six Axles)	270	405	9025	135
6	Over-sized Vehicles (Seven or more Axles)	330	495	10985	165

As per user fee notification 50 or more one way ticket will be issued at discounted rate equivalent to 2/3rd of fee payable during the period of one month from the date of payment of fee. The rates for monthly pass applicable for local personal vehicle shall be ₹ 275/- for the year 2020-21.

PROJECT DIRECTOR,
Project Implementation Unit, Chennai

BUILDING A NATION, NOT JUST ROADS

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT & HIGHWAYS
(NATIONAL HIGHWAYS AUTHORITY OF INDIA)
Project Implementation Unit - Chennai
SRI TOWER, 3rd Floor, DP-34 (SP), Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai-600 032. Tel: 044-22251885 Fax: 044-22251895 E-mail: chennai@nhai.org

NHAI/11025/86/2019/RO Chennai/Acc/1354 Dated 31.03.2020

PUBLIC NOTICE
Revision of User Fee for the year 2020-21 for Chennai Bypass from Km.0,000 to Km.32,600 in the State of Tamil Nadu

The approved revised user fee rates for above mentioned section to be applicable w.e.f. 01.04.2020 to 31.03.2021 are as under:

(A) User fee rates for Vanagaram Toll Plaza at 16,500 of Chennai Bypass Phase-I for a length of 18,375 Km. and 0.825 Km. length of structure (under fee Rules 2008 as amended).

Category of Vehicles	Fee for single journey (₹)	Fee for return journey within a day (₹)	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single journeys in a month (₹)	Fee for single journey for the commercial vehicles registered within the district of fee plaza (₹)
Car, Jeep, Van or Light Motor Vehicle	45	65	1430	20
Light Commercial Vehicle, Light Goods Vehicle or Mini Bus	70	105	2310	35
Bus or Truck	145	220	4835	75
Three-Axle Commercial Vehicle	160	235	5275	80
Heavy Construction Machinery (HCM) or Earth Moving Equipment (EME) or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (three to six axles)	225	340	7585	115
Over-sized Vehicles (Seven or more axles)	275	415	9230	140

The rates for monthly pass applicable for local personal vehicle shall be Rs.275/- for the year 2020-21.

(B) User fee rates for Surappattu Toll Plaza at 28,600 of Chennai Bypass Phase-II for a length of 9,915 Km. and 3.485 Km. length of structure (under fee Rules 2008 as amended).

Category of Vehicles	Fee for single journey (₹)	Fee for return journey within a day (₹)	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single journeys in a month (₹)	Fee for single journey for the commercial vehicles registered within the district of fee plaza (₹)
Car, Jeep, Van or Light Motor Vehicle	60	90	1985	30
Light Commercial Vehicle, Light Goods Vehicle or Mini Bus	95	145	3205	50
Bus or Truck	200	300	6715	100
Three-Axle Commercial Vehicle	220	330	7325	110
Heavy Construction Machinery (HCM) or Earth Moving Equipment (EME) or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (three to six axles)	315	475	10530	160
Over-sized Vehicles (Seven or more axles)	385	575	12815	190

The rates for monthly pass applicable for local personal vehicle shall be Rs.275/- for the year 2020-21.

PROJECT DIRECTOR,
NHAI, PIU-Chennai.

NOT JUST ROADS, BUILDING A NATION

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
(Ministry of Road Transport and Highways)
(National Highways Authority of India)
Project Implementation Unit - Chennai
SRI TOWER, 3rd Floor DP-34 (SP) Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai 600 032, Tel: 044 - 2225 2635 Fax: 044 - 2225 2636, E-mail: chennai@nhai.org

PUBLIC NOTICE
Revision of user fee for the year 2020-2021 for Tirupathi - Tiruthani - Chennai section of NH - 205 from km 31/800 to 305/800 in the state of Tamil Nadu

The approved revised user fee rates for above mentioned section to be applicable w.e.f. 01.04.2020 - 31.03.2021. NHAI, RO letter No. NHAI/11025/86/2019/RO Chennai/Acc/1352 dated 31st March 2020

User fee rates for Pattaraipembudut Toll Plaza at Km 31/800 of Tirupathi-Tiruthani - Chennai section of NH-205 for a total length of 42.6 km (under fee Rules 2008 as amended).

Sl. No.	Category of Vehicle	Fee for single journey	Fee for return journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single trips/journeys in a month
1	Car, Jeep, Van or Light Motor Vehicle	30	45	1035
2	Light Commercial Vehicle, Light Goods Vehicle or Mini Bus	50	75	1675
3	Bus or Truck	105	155	3500
4	Heavy Construction Machinery (HCM) or Earth Moving Equipments (EME) or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (Three to Six Axles)	165	245	5485
5	Over-sized Vehicles (Seven or more Axles)	200	300	6680

As per user fee notification 50 or more one way ticket will be issued at discounted rate equivalent to 2/3rd of fee payable during the period of one month from the date of payment of fee. The rates for monthly pass applicable for local personal vehicle shall be ₹ 275/- for the year 2020-21.

PROJECT DIRECTOR,
Project Implementation Unit, Chennai

BUILDING A NATION, NOT JUST ROADS

REGIONAL APPOINTMENT

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF POWER

NOTICE FOR EXTENSION OF LAST DATE OF RECEIPT OF APPLICATIONS

In reference to the advertisement for the posts of Chairman, Member (Technical) and Member (Finance) in Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC) published in the weekly Employment News dated 14.03.2020, the last date of receipt of applications has been extended up to 24.04.2020. Detailed Vacancy Circular dated 24.02.2020 is available on the websites of Ministry of Power (www.powermin.nic.in) and Damodar Valley Corporation (www.dvc.gov.in).

Sd/-
(R K Das)
(INF/25/Recruit/20-21)
Under Secretary to the Government of India

IN BRIEF

Case against legislator

PUDUCHERRY
The Mahe police on Thursday registered a case against independent legislator V. Ramachandran for violating the 21-day lockdown stipulations. Senior Superintendent of Police (Law and Order) Rahul Alwat told *The Hindu* on Friday that the MLA used his own vehicle to distribute essential commodities at the doorstep of people. Police had registered cases against Congress legislator A. John Kumar and non-rated legislator belonging to BJP V. Saminathan on same charges.

MP donates ₹1 crore

PUDUCHERRY
Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) N. Gokulakrishnan has donated ₹1 crore from the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme fund to the territorial administration to procure 8 ICU ventilators and an ambulance. The MP said while the ventilators would be for the government hospitals in Puducherry and Karaikal, the ambulance would be given to Karaikal GH.

Mobile ATM deployed

VELLORE
Coming to the rescue of its customers, State Bank of India set up a mobile ATM near the Collector's office on Friday. It was also taken around various parts of the Vellore city. Arrangements have been made to provide sanitisers to people and only then they will be allowed to use the ATM machine.

CIJ forms task force

PUDUCHERRY
The Confederation of the Indian Industry (CIJ) Puducherry has formed a State-level COVID-19 taskforce as part of its efforts to work closely with the government to contain the spread of coronavirus. The taskforce, led by M. Sankaranarayanan, CIJ Puducherry chairman, will coordinate with various departments and facilitate movement of essential items.

Rush at ration shops

VELLORE
Ration shops in rural pockets of Tirupattur district witnessed large crowds as tokens for government aid were distributed on Wednesday. Residents who got tokens did not adhere to maintaining the stipulated distance between recipients. In a fair price shop in Periangkuppam in Ambur more than 75 people had gathered in front of the shop at 6 a.m.

Govt. told to provide rice, dal to non-cardholders at ration shops

HC wants physical distancing maintained when beneficiaries stand in queue

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

The Madras High Court on Friday directed the State government not to insist upon the presence of migrant labourers and others who do not possess ration cards at the Collectorate concerned to obtain 15 kg of rice, one kg of dal and one kg of edible oil offered to mitigate the hardship caused by the nationwide lockdown to fight COVID-19.

A Division Bench of Justices Vineet Kohari and R. Suresh Kumar feared that asking people without ration cards to approach the jurisdictional Collectorate might defeat the object of maintaining physical distancing. Hence, they ordered that the essential commodities be supplied to such people too in the nearest ration shop it



self. In order to keep a check over any irregularities in supplying the commodities, the ration shops must be ordered to submit the details of daily transactions to the Collectorate, they added.

'Communicate orders' The judges also requested Additional Advocate General P.H. Arvindh Pandian to communicate the orders

passed by them to the Chief Secretary forthwith.

The directions were issued on a public interest litigation petition filed by P. Arularasu, who wanted essential commodities to be supplied even to those without ration cards. He said Aadhaar or driving licence should be permitted as alternative identity proof. However, the AAG told the court that even those without ration cards could avail the benefits at the Collectorate.

Passing interim orders in yet another PIL petition filed by advocate G. Rajesh, the Bench directed officials to ensure that physical distancing was maintained at ration shops when beneficiaries queue up.

Technical committee The Bench further directed a

technical committee led by the Health Secretary to consider a representation made by a litigant, P.A. Joseph of Chennai, to suggest 'Kabasura Kashayam', a Siddha medication, to boost immunity against COVID-19.

Though the litigant sought a positive direction to the government to prescribe it as a preventive medicine and also as a medication for treating COVID-19 patients, the judges left it to the discretion of the committee to take a call.

They recalled having passed similar orders early this week on a public interest litigation petition, which sought a direction to the government to consider providing alternative medication such as Siddha, Unani and homeopathy to treat COVID-19.

Aches and pains and a spot of exercise during COVID-19

Since the lockdown, with restricted movement in place, a number of people have expressed concern about getting adequate exercise, among other things to be worried about. If you have a regimen in place and that is disrupted, anxiety may follow. Some people also have to, for medical reasons, get adequate exercise during the day.



DR. MADHU THOTTAPILLIL Sports Medicine Specialist Team Doctor, Chennai Super Kings

COVID-19

We have also been flooded with calls, mainly from people with chronic issues — pain mostly. Since they are probably sitting at home in all kinds of odd postures and watching movies on the net or phone. We have been getting an extraordinary amount of calls from people complaining of backpain, shoulder and neck pain.

The general tips that I would give all these people anxious about getting exercise and those who must exercise, are:

1. Involve your family member (could be spouse, parent, sibling, child) in the exercise effort.

2. Try to use any available space inside the house, around the house or the terrace for exercises. About 30 to 40 minutes of brisk walk daily would be recommended.

3. Try to do some strength training too, using household things that you can lay

your hands on, like water-bottles (filled with water), bags, etc. Free weight or body weight exercises such as squats, lunges, planks, etc., are helpful.

4. Do remember to warm up and stretch before the exercises.

5. Try to assign a fixed time to your exercise activity, which will ensure that you will follow your routine and won't skip it.

6. Keep an eye on your diet and temper it to suit your activity levels. Following the same diet that you were on when you were more active during the lockdown will only result in weight gain and misery.

7. Post surgery patients should stick to the physiotherapy schedule prescribed by their surgeon or therapist.

When in doubt about anything, it is better to be cautious and call your doctor and check.

Stalin distributes aid to workers

The DMK leader gave away essentials, sanitisers and masks

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

DMK president M.K. Stalin visited his constituency, Kolathur, on Friday and distributed food, ration, sanitisers, masks and other essentials to 1,000 conservancy workers, autorickshaw drivers and children in the constituency.

The DMK said, on Mr. Stalin's advice, the party had been providing food to 1,000 conservancy workers in the area for the past seven days.

On Friday, the DMK leader visited the constituency and personally served breakfast to the workers at the party's office.

He distributed protective items to be used against CO-



M.K. Stalin serving food to conservancy workers in Kolathur.

VID-19 and groceries to families. He gave food, sanitisers and masks to migrants as well as clothes, bedsheets, and toiletries, the party added.

At the market, Mr. Stalin checked on the availability and prices of vegetables. He distributed ₹500 to over 500 autorickshaw drivers in the

area who have lost their daily livelihood due to the lockdown and 5kg of rice and other ration items to their families.

He thanked the police officials on duty for their service during the lockdown and handed over masks and sanitisers to them, the party said.

T.N. prisoners make 36,000 surgical masks every day

Inmates with tailoring skills roped in to meet the demand

S. VIJAY KUMAR CHENNAI

The prison authorities have pooled in the expertise of inmates with tailoring skills to increase the production of surgical face masks to meet the growing demand of the Police Department, which has deployed thousands of its personnel to enforce the COVID-19 prohibitory orders and maintain law and order in the State.

Shutting its tailoring units temporarily, the Prison Department commenced manufacturing of face masks. The inmates of Puzhal, Tiruchi and Coimbatore central prisons rolled out 3,000 face masks a day. With the police asking for more, Director General of Police Sunil Kumar Singh asked the inmates in three more central prisons to join the work and increase the productivity to 36,000 face masks per day.

"We are making proper surgical masks at a cost of ₹10 per piece. We have so far supplied 2.16 lakh pieces. Since there is an acute shortage of face masks in the



Police Departments in need of masks for thousands of its personnel deployed on lockdown duty.

open market, private hospitals and establishments are approaching us. We declined an order to make 1 lakh masks recently because our focus is on to meet the requirements of the police force," Mr. Singh said.

Hand sanitisers

The prisoners are making hand sanitisers, but only for in-house consumption. The 135 prisons located across Tamil Nadu have a capacity of 23,392 inmates. The occupancy was brought down to 51% from 62% a week ago

with hundreds held for petty offences released on bail. Since there was no public transport due to the lockdown, suspects released on bail were being dropped home in police vehicles.

The Prison Department banned family interviews for prisoners as part of measures to contain the spread of coronavirus.

However, it has procured smart phones to facilitate prisoners make video calls to their family. Convicts can make calls twice a week and undertrials, thrice.

'Coordination helped contain COVID-19'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT PUDUCHERRY

Lt. Governor Kiran Bedi said the absence of communication gap between the political leadership and the administrative leadership helped effectively contain the spread of COVID-19 in the Union Territory.

Participating in a video-conferencing review convened by President Ram Nath Kovind and Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu, Ms. Bedi said apart from the daily review meetings at the levels of Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy, Chief Secretary Ashwani Kumar and Collector T. Arun, the office of the Lt. Governor held an audio-call stocktaking of the daily situation.

Seamless coordination

There was seamless coordination between political leadership and administration as envisaged in the Disaster Management Act, in addition to the existing technology channels such as social media, group mail and WhatsApp groups that linked officers with the leadership, volunteers and trainers.

'Firms can't force employees to take leave without pay'

Experts point to government clarification

SANJAY VIJAYAKUMAR CHENNAI

Companies cannot force employees to take leave without pay amid the 21-day lockdown imposed by the government to control the spread of COVID-19, according to experts.

"In general, annual leave is a statutory entitlement to be availed at the employee's discretion and as per terms of company policy. It cannot be forced upon the employees," Vikram Shroff, head of HR Laws at Nishith Desai Associates, said. The government has clarified that employees shall be deemed to be on duty in case of a lockdown. The employer may treat it as leave without pay if an employee refuses to work from home, he said.

Mr. Shroff pointed out that as a result of a natural calamity, factories and industrial establishments may be able to lay off its workmen in compliance with law and the employer's Standing Orders, subject,

however, to the government notifications. S. Ravindran, a senior advocate, said the legal compulsion to suspend the operations/activities in factories, shops, commercial establishments, etc., did not result in denial of wages to employees, including contract workmen.

An employee could be denied wages only when he was absent from work or when he was on strike and, therefore, all employees, including contract workmen, were entitled to full wages lastly drawn by them during the period up to April 14, he said. S. Kannan, CITU president, Kancheepuram district, said the State government had to pitch in to clarify on the issue of wages.

"This is an extraordinary situation. Even in times of floods and cyclone the recovery has been fast. If companies cut things like shift allowance or conveyance it is understandable. But cutting basic wages is not acceptable," he said.

MP helps stranded T.N. workers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT VILLUPURAM

Over 1,500 migrant workers from Villupuram district stranded in Maharashtra in the middle of the lockdown, have got help, thanks to the timely intervention of Villupuram MP D. Ravikumar and the district administration.

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OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH
R BALASUBRAMANYAN (Film Producer, Part Owner of Karpagam Studios, Winner at Moscow Film Festival for film Panama Pasama). Aged 96 years departed for his heavenly abode around 6:15 PM on 02-04-2020. He is survived by his wife Chellammal and his Children. Residence: New No.9, Kumaran Colony, 7th St, Vadapalani, Ch - 26 Mobile: 9791154150

DEATH
BUT THANKS BE TO GOD, WHO GIVES US THE VICTORY THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST - I CONTEST!!
Dr.M.SURYA PRAKASH MESS, DTCO. 04. HAS ENTERED ETERNAL GLORY ON 3RD APRIL AT 3:05 PM. MAY HIS SOUL REST IN PEACE. He is deeply missed by his surviving wife Malini, his children, grandchildren, nephews, nieces, and all family members. Malini, Chitra and Sun.

BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE
smt.J.MALINI D.E.(Retd)/BSNL,Chennai. "She is ever the gentle breeze, sweet ambience, fragrant flower and glowing light in the garden of our life". by M. Annamalai S.E.(Retd./TNEB and family.

OBITUARY
12.04.1941 - 03.04.2020
R.C. SATHYANARAYANA RAO (Ret. Eng. Exports Corporation of Chennai) My father expired yesterday Friday 03.04.2020 at 16.40hrs. Cremation today 04.04.2020 Saturday @ 11am at Besant Nagar cremation ground.
ANAND MURUGA UTHARKAR USHA DEVI

OBITUARY
Air Commodore (Retd) MG ACHUTHAN Attained Acharyan Thiruvadi at Chennai on 3rd April 2020 Deeply mourned by Daughter : Prabha Sekar, Son in Law : TA Sekar, Grandsons : Abhijeet and Adishwara. Contact details : Prabha Sekar : 9840049113, 9940020828.

OBITUARY
In memory of your loved ones To dedicate a space in this section, Please contact: 044-28575711 / 28575714 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. & 72990 95757 from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. from 5 to 7 p.m. for Monday Edition For Placing Advertisements Online log on to **www.thehinduads.com** DONATE EYES-GIFT SIGHT

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES
SECOND ANNIVERSARY (04.04.2020)
Dr. Vasanthi Rangarajan Smt. N. Lalini Chidambaram Sri. Karti P. Chidambaram Dr. Sriinidhi Karti Chidambaram & Aditi Lalini Chidambaram

OBITUARY
Dr.B.Rangarajan "You live in our hearts" Dr. Vasanthi Rangarajan Smt. N. Lalini Chidambaram Sri. Karti P. Chidambaram Dr. Sriinidhi Karti Chidambaram & Aditi Lalini Chidambaram

HOMAGE
SAD DEMISE Mr R Achutha Narayanan passed away peacefully on 2nd April 2020 at his residence in K K Nagar, Chennai. May his gracious & ever-helping soul rest in peace.

'Declare fishing as an essential service'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT PUDUCHERRY

The National Fishermen's Forum has demanded that fishing be declared as an essential service. In a letter to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, former MLA and NFF chairperson M. Ilango said fish was a cheap source of protein for a large section of the population in the country. Mr. Ilango said that fishing should be declared an essential service. An announcement in this direction will protect their livelihood, he said.

South Western Railway

CORRECTION: The date of closing for the following tenders have been postponed as under. Tender Notice No: CAO/CW/BC/19/2020 Date: 17.03.2020

Tender Ref. No.	Date of Closing Original	Revised
LD-MR/51		
HIGA/R4R	06/04/2020	21/04/2020
ASK-TK/37		
YMK-PK/42		
LD-MR/49	08/04/2020	23/04/2020
SMEI-RNR/01		

All other terms and conditions remains unchanged. For further details log on to www.rps.gov.in
Deputy Chief Engineer (Works) For Chief Administrative Officer Cantonment South Western Railway, Bengaluru Cantonment PUB112/AA/SP/PR/BS/2019-20



Throwing caution to the wind: Though physical distancing is necessary to avoid the spread of COVID-19, people hardly follow the rules. (From left) Farmers waiting at the agriculture market in Khammam for free meals; women collecting potable water supplied once in four days at Ambedkar Colony in Bengaluru; people preparing a plot for vegetable farming in Thiruvananthapuram; and pensioners outside a bank near Old Jail Road in Visakhapatnam on Friday. *G.N. RAO, K. MURALI KUMAR, S. MAHINSHA & K.R. DEEPAK

Telangana sees 75 more virus cases

More cases linked to Tablighi Jamaat event confirmed in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA HYDERABAD
Telangana had a fresh spike of 75 new coronavirus infections reported on Friday, taking its tally to 229. Andhra Pradesh confirmed its first COVID-19 death, while Karnataka had four new cases, of which one died, and Kerala registered nine.

Eleven patients have died at various hospitals in Telangana, two of them on Friday, while 32 were discharged after treatment. There were 26,586 persons with a history of foreign travel and their contacts under home quarantine.

In Andhra Pradesh, it was

COVID-19

officially confirmed that a 55-year-old man who died a couple of days ago in a government hospital in Vijayawada had succumbed to the virus. This is the first coronavirus death reported in the State, where the total number of cases rose to 161, of which three had recovered.

The man had contracted the disease from his son, who returned from New Delhi after attending the Tablighi Jamaat congregation on March 17. "He came to the government hospital at 11.30 a.m. on March 20 for a



Standing still: Boats anchored at Jalaripeta, Visakhapatnam, due to the lockdown on Friday. *K.R. DEEPAK

check-up. His blood swab was sent for examination but in the meantime he died around 12.30 p.m. The patient was also suffering from hypertension and cardiac problems and was diabetic.

The delay in confirming the cause as coronavirus was due to his other ailments, State nodal officer Arja Srikanth said in a press release. The man's son tested positive for COVID-19 on March 31 and was in quarantine.

"We have identified 29 others who came in contact with him and they were also sent to quarantine," Mr. Srikanth added.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister (Health) A.K.K. Srinivas said over 140 of 161 coronavirus positive cases in

A.P. were related to the Jamaat event.

"Of the 881 blood samples of those who attended the Jamaat event, 108 turned positive. Results of another 65 are awaited."

Cases from Delhi
In Karnataka, four people, including three who attended the Jamaat meet in Delhi,

tested positive for the coronavirus on Friday, taking the State total to 128, the Health department said in Bengaluru. The three men from Bengaluru had attended the Jamaat meeting from March 13 to 18, while the fourth was a 75-year-old resident of Bagalkote, who died late at night.

The official bulletin said as of Friday, 128 COVID-19 cases had been confirmed in Karnataka, including four deaths and 11 who were discharged.

Of 114 active cases in the State, 111 (including a pregnant woman) were in isolation at designated hospitals and were stable, while three were in ICU (one on oxygen and two on ventilator). Seven of the 128 cases con-

firmed were transit passengers of Kerala, who landed at airports in Karnataka and were being treated in the State.

Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa asked the labour department to deposit an additional ₹1,000 from the Construction Workers Welfare Fund in the accounts of 15 lakh labourers.

More cases in Kasaragod
Kerala reported nine new cases on Friday, with seven from the worst affected Kasaragod district, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said. One case each was detected from Thrissur and Idukki.

(With inputs from Vijayawada, Bengaluru and Thiruvananthapuram)

Heightened police vigil at quarantine ward in Adilabad

Jamaat returnees created ruckus, complain RIMS staff

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT ADILABAD

Police enhanced vigil at the quarantine wards in the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), Adilabad, on Friday after doctors and other medical staff manning the wards complained that they felt threatened by six Jamaat returnees, who are in isolation.

The six had refused to cooperate with the hospital staff. They refused to subject themselves to medical tests, declined to sleep in the ward and shouted at the staff, sources said.

"The COVID-19 suspects demanded cigarettes and were tampering with instruments," a RIMS source said. "They used foul language with the staff," he added.

"We have received the complaint and deployed more force in the quarantine wards. After the period of quarantine, the persons accused in the complaint will be proceeded against as per the law," Superintendent of Police Vishnu S. Warrior said.

Quoting the provisions of the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, which are applicable in this instance, the SP said everyone is required to



The Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences, where six Jamaat returnees have been kept in isolation. *S. HARPAL SINGH

cooperate. "Non cooperation with the authorities is considered a crime against humanity," he observed.

134 tested in Karnataka

A total of 288 persons, including 134 from Bengaluru who attended the Tablighi congregation, have been tested in Karnataka and only 13 of them have turned out positive. Releasing the COVID-19 bulletin on Friday, Karnataka Primary and Secondary Education Minister Suresh Kumar told presspersons that the test reports of 88 persons were still awaited. Nineteen of those tested are foreigners.

The Centre's list also had names of several non-Mus-

lims. The names of some of the officials including Subodh Yadav, an IAS official who earlier served in Karnataka, also figure in the list of 1,500 sent by the Centre.

Meanwhile, Jawaid Akhtar, Additional Chief Secretary, Health and Family Welfare, said the State has received a stock of 1.39 lakh Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) kits in the last one week and of that 53,000 is still remaining with the department. The rest have been distributed. While an order for one lakh kits has already been placed, an order for two lakh more will be placed soon, he said.

(With inputs from Bengaluru)

IN BRIEF



Houseboats offered to be set up as isolation wards

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT BENGALURU
The High Court of Karnataka on Friday directed the Karnataka government to ensure either the availability of proper transportation for farmers to carry their agricultural and horticultural produce to markets or the procurement of produce from their doorstep.

The court also directed the government to ensure passage of farmers and farm labourers to their fields as the Union government has allowed the continuation of farming and related activities, including transportation of produce to Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) yards, during the lockdown.

'Kerala has to augment health-care facilities'
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Kerala will have to augment its health-care facilities further to manage a reverse migration from Gulf countries soon in the face of the COVID-19 threat, Finance Minister T.M. Thomas Isaac said. "Quarantine and testing facilities have to be augmented. An emotional support has also become imperative for those rendered jobless and are annoyed over their career prospects in the Gulf. We are anticipating a major spurt in demand for such facilities for which paucity of funds is the only hitch," he said.

Eateries can deliver food on the doorstep: Kerala
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
The Kerala government on Friday sanctioned door-to-door delivery of food from hotels till 8 p.m. An official said the order was part of the 'one step at a time' move to wake the State from hibernation without triggering an uncontrollable influx of people onto the streets. Hotels and restaurants still cannot entertain any customer at their takeaway counter after 5 p.m. They cannot permit tight lines of customers, serve guests or allow patrons indoors.

Give transport or procure produce from farmers, says Karnataka HC

Order comes in the wake of farmers dumping fruits, milk

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT BENGALURU

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Smooth progress of farming operations will help State to assist farmers, the HC said.

Taking note of incidents of farmers dumping fruits, vegetables and milk owing to non-availability of transport to take them to markets, the court observed that smooth progress of farming operations and transportation of produce to markets

would not only help the State in assisting farmers, but would also ensure the supply of essential commodities.

A special Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Abhay Shreenivas Oka and Justice B.V. Nagarathna issued the directions during a hearing, through videoconferencing, on PIL petitions filed on issues that have arisen because of the enforcement of measures to check the spread of COVID-19.

The Bench also said that the government would have to ensure that fertilizers, pesticides and seeds, as well as agricultural equipment and related repair services, should be made available to farmers.

Bankers' panel protests against police notice

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The State Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC) has objected to the notices issued by the police to banks warning them of stern action if excess staff are found on duty in violation of the COVID-19 lockdown norms.

The SLBC has taken up the matter with State police chief Loknath Behera, convenor of the committee. N. Ajit Krishnan said here on Friday. The panel has intervened after such a notice has been slapped on a State Bank of India branch in Kottayam.

Disbursal of pension

According to the SLBC, more personnel are needed to handle the increase in customer flow. Bank branches are witnessing

heavy traffic on account of Jan Dhan account payments and disbursal of welfare pensions. The rush is expected to continue for at least 10 days as the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan) payments also are due.

On April 1, Kottayam District Police Chief emailed all Station House Officers (SHOs) pointing out that many banks were seen to be functioning with their full complement of staff, which was against the government instructions.

The SHOs were asked to issue notices to the banks asking them to ensure that only personnel required for carrying out essential transactions were put on duty. Failure to comply with the directive would invite legal action, the notice said.

Hospital cheers as elderly Kerala couple beat virus

Thomas, 93, and his 88-year-old wife Mariamma return home after treatment for 23 days

STAFF REPORTER KOTTAYAM

In a happy turn of events, COVID-19 patients 93-year-old Thomas, perhaps the oldest to recover from the disease, and his 88-year-old wife Mariamma returned home to Ranni, Pathanamthitta, on Friday after undergoing treatment at the Government Medical College Hospital, Kottayam, for 23 days.

Reshma Mohandas, the staff nurse at the hospital who tested positive for the virus on March 23, too returned home on Friday.

"It was extremely challenging for us to take care of the elderly couple as they were suffering from cardiac problems, diabetes, and hypertension along with age-



Looking ahead: The couple's treatment in hospital was successful in spite of their pre-existing health conditions.

related disorders. We strived hard to keep them active, even though they insisted on adopting their home routine. We overcame the challenges through a team approach," R.P. Renjin, Resident Medical Officer, told *The Hindu*. He attributed the recovery

of the couple to the hospital staff, the medical establishment and the State government's support.

Dr. Renjin said Mr. Thomas was treated with antiviral and antibiotic medication and monitored in intensive care as he had heart failure

and pneumonia. The RMO thanked Health Minister K.K.Shylaja, who kept a close watch on the treatment. "The Ministry would call us everyday and ask us to stay positive and be thankful of all external factors, including the cost of treatment," he said.

First symptoms

The couple, who showed symptoms of infection, including fever and cough, were first admitted to the pay ward while their treatment protocols were finalised. They were later shifted to the Medical ICU and then to the Transplant ICU where they could see each other.

The condition of Mr. Thomas, who suffered a heart attack, worsened at one point

with the oxygen level in his blood plummeting, following which he was put on ventilator. Both patients developed a urinary infection during the period. Although discharged, the couple will be in home quarantine for 14 days and monitored by hospital doctors.

Mr. Thomas and Ms. Mariamma are parents of COVID-19 patients who had returned from Italy. They were admitted to the MCH on March 9, after being referred from the Pathanamthitta General Hospital.

They tested negative two days ago, a second time, but the hospital decided to keep them under observation for a couple of days more and psychologically prepare them for the discharge.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 19:00 HRS)

Forecast for Saturday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning and gust likely at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Chhattisgarh and Odisha.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	36.4	22.2	27.2	Kozhikode	37.8	27.2	27.2
Ahmedabad	38.9	21.2	28.3	Kurnool	41.1	28.3	28.3
Aizawl	32.2	16.9	22.2	Lucknow	32.8	17.2	17.2
Allahabad	36.8	17.8	28.2	Madurai	38.2	25.0	25.0
Bangaluru	35.6	23.0	31.4	Mangaluru	35.4	26.7	26.7
Bhopal	35.2	19.0	34.1	Mumbai	34.1	24.0	24.0
Bhubaneswar	38.2	24.8	20.0	Mysuru	35.2	20.0	20.0
Chandigarh	29.0	13.6	30.1	New Delhi	30.1	15.4	15.4
Chennai	34.0	27.2	35.2	Patna	35.2	22.8	22.8
Coimbatore	37.2	24.4	31.4	Port Blair	31.4	25.2	25.2
Dehradun	29.5	12.1	34.3	Puducherry	34.3	25.6	25.6
Delhi	16.2	11.6	19.3	Pune	38.3	18.4	18.4
Goa	33.4	25.6	38.2	Raipur	38.2	20.5	20.5
Guwahati	35.2	19.3	33.6	Ranchi	33.6	22.0	22.0
Hubballi	37.0	23.0	25.3	Shillong	25.3	18.4	18.4
Hyderabad	35.2	26.4	38.5	Shimla	19.3	6.8	6.8
Imphal	1.8	31.2	14.7	Srinagar	17.5	2.6	2.6
Jaipur	33.6	18.8	32.9	Thiruvananthapuram	32.9	26.0	26.0
Kochi	33.6	27.2	38.5	Tiruchirappalli	38.5	25.0	25.0
Kolkata	36.6	27.0	33.1	Vijayawada	38.5	25.4	25.4
				Visakhapatnam	33.1	27.4	27.4

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITY	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE	Yesterday
Ahmedabad	35	47	36	62	90	90	Good
Bangaluru	15	06	65	76	71	71	Good
Chennai	03	19	38	66	66	66	Good
Delhi	18	29	100	100	100	100	Very Poor
Hyderabad	05	23	27	70	73	73	Good
Kolkata	15	22	15	74	75	75	Good
Lucknow	05	22	56	107	107	107	Very Poor
Mumbai	03	14	08	43	49	49	Good
Pune	27	25	51	54	33	33	Good
Visakhapatnam	09	41	06	47	68	68	Good

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.

PM_{2.5} & 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.



Light and sound

Symbolism has its place, but it must be part of a sustainable action plan

Full of sound and piety but signifying little, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's third and latest address to the nation on the COVID-19 pandemic hardly calmed frayed nerves. Anxieties triggered by the pandemic are on the rise among all sections of society. The lockdown enforced on March 24 has brought the economy to a halt: small businesses are bleeding, and companies are scurrying to keep their heads above water. Migrant labourers are stranded and hungry, health workers and security personnel are already stretched. The extent of the pandemic itself remains uncertain, meanwhile. It is only natural that 130 crore Indians, the audience that the Prime Minister calls on to in all his speeches, have a lot of angst regarding it. They did expect a reassuring action plan from the Prime Minister and a clear picture of the challenge ahead. They expected some clarity on the post-lockdown course for the country. They hoped for more mitigation measures, beyond those announced by the Finance Minister and the Reserve Bank of India Governor. Chief executives of many democracies have personally addressed the people with detailed and material plans of action since the outbreak. They have also kept the interaction alive, and two-way. The political leadership at the Centre has largely remained aloof. Mr. Modi himself continues with his monologues, shunning all questions.

Rhetoric to rally the nation in a moment of crisis can actually do good. Unifying and galvanising the country is very critical in combating the pandemic. To the extent that it sought to achieve those goals, the Prime Minister's message was purposeful. But gong and cymbals that drown out substantive conversations can be counterproductive. If the pandemic itself was not mind-boggling enough, now the country has a unique puzzle to resolve — which is about the nine-minute light ceremony at 9 p.m. on Sunday, April 5, that the Prime Minister has called for. Unsurprisingly, an industry has instantly sprung up online interpreting the choice of number nine as a stroke of celestial genius, forcing the Press Information Bureau to issue a clarification. "Don't fall for the rumours and unscientific reasoning on the appeal for lighting a diya..." it said. The Prime Minister himself has repeatedly asked people to stay away from rumours and misinformation about the pandemic, and rely only on trusted media platforms. Mr. Modi has a formidable following among the Indian public and his words carry weight. But no country can talk its way out of a pandemic and an economic collapse. If words are all one has, the virus is free to be kind. Nor is an economy going to stop its free fall at the sight of candles. Symbolism is infused with meaning only through corresponding action.

A million and counting

The global spread of the virus is continuing despite mitigation efforts

On April 2, the number of novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) infections in 181 countries/regions crossed one million, and deaths passed 50,000. On April 3, the total number of cases and deaths stood at 10,39,166 and 55,092, respectively. With 2,45,846 cases, the U.S. accounts for 24% of the global total, while Italy, with 13,915 deaths, has over 26% of total mortality. Four countries — the U.S., Italy, Spain and Germany — have more cases reported than China. The exponential increase becomes striking considering that the time taken to report 1,00,000 more cases has been reducing. If it took 12 days to double to 2,00,000, it took just three days each to cross 3.0 and 4.0 million. Thereafter, 0.1 million more cases have been reported every two days except on two occasions — the increase from 0.6 million to 0.7 million and 0.9 million to 1 million happened in a single day. Yet, the cases reported so far might be a small percentage of the actual numbers in most countries. The main limiting factor in knowing the true spread has been the restricted number of tests done in most countries, India included. In about a month after restrictions on testing were loosened, the number of tests in the U.S. crossed one million on March 30. While this may be a huge number, there is still a bottleneck in the number of people being tested. According to *The Washington Post*, as on March 28, only 2,250 tests per million were performed, which is two-thirds of what South Korea did three weeks earlier.

Besides missing out those exhibiting mild symptoms and under-reporting by countries, the actual number of infections might be manifold higher as most countries have not made attempts to test those who do not show symptoms. There is accumulating evidence suggesting that a "substantial fraction" of people infected with the virus are asymptomatic. For instance, in South Korea, more than 20% of asymptomatic cases did not develop symptoms during hospitalisation. If in Italy the virus was spreading silently for about 50 days before the first case was reported on February 20, in Iceland, nearly half of the 20% who tested positive for the virus were either asymptomatic or showed only mild symptoms. The *South China Morning Post* said more than 43,000 people in China who tested positive by end-February were asymptomatic and unreported. Since April 1, China has been reporting new cases that are asymptomatic. China's National Health Commission reports that as on March 31 there have been 1,541 asymptomatic cases. The World Health Organization maintains that the virus mainly spreads through droplets and contact with contaminated surfaces, and the risk of getting infected by an asymptomatic person is "very low". In India, it is important to test travellers and trace and monitor their contacts. Otherwise, there remains the risk of continued spread once the lockdown is withdrawn.

The spectre of a post-COVID-19 world

The pandemic could not have come at a more difficult time; the global order could see major changes



M.K. NARAYANAN

As COVID-19 spreads exponentially across the world, and the figures of those tested positive as also the numbers of deaths keep increasing in near-geometrical progression, profound uncertainty and extreme volatility are wreaking havoc of a kind seldom encountered previously. It might, hence, be wise to start thinking of what next, if at least to try and handle a situation created by the most serious pandemic in recent centuries.

China's pivotal role

The problem with the novel coronavirus is that with the exception of China, which battled another coronavirus epidemic in 2003 — the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic — there is little available for most nations on which to base their assessment of what next. What is known is that China's growth rate has further plummeted, even as it was confronting an economic slowdown which had been in the works for some time. The consequences for the global economy of China ceasing to be the world's biggest exporter of manufactured goods are considerable, and with no country in a position to replace it, this development will precipitate a further economic downturn internationally.

It is not the intention here to minimise the human costs of the tragedy that has unfolded, and which is still unfolding, consequent on COVID-19. If China was the worst affected nation initially, the United States, Spain, Germany and Italy have since eclipsed China. Many other countries are today facing a serious plight, and few, if any, remedies are as yet available even as

the human costs keep mounting. Still, it is important to think of what lies ahead.

The COVID-19 pandemic could not have come at a more difficult time. The world was already having to contend with an uncertain economic environment, with industries in turn facing newer challenges such as having to adjust to a shift from cost efficiencies to innovation and breakthrough improvements. Added to this were: a global slowdown, increasing political and policy uncertainties, alterations in social behaviour, new environmental norms, etc. Newly emerging economies, such as India, were even more affected by all this, than some of the older established ones.

Prognosis for India

At one point, India was estimated to be among the 15 most affected economies by the COVID-19 epidemic, but as the pandemic has raged unchecked, all bets are off. An early estimate by the Asian Development Bank, soon after the epidemic was declared, was that it would cost the Indian economy \$29.9 billion. A recent industry estimate pegs the cost of the lockdown at around \$120 billion or 4% of India's GDP. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) had at one point warned that the COVID-19 impact, and the existing stress in the financial sector, meant that India would require up to six months even after the entire course of the COVID-19 epidemic is over to restore normalcy and business continuity.

India has, no doubt, acted with speed in the wake of the pandemic and declared a lockdown early on. Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared the pandemic as a serious global crisis, and in the course of two national broadcasts in mid-March, announced a series of steps such as a one day 'peoples curfew' (on March 22) 'social distancing', the setting up of a COVID-19 Taskforce under the Finance Minister to come up with



measures to mitigate the economic hardship engendered by the pandemic, and finally a three-week-long lockdown. Several precautionary measures based on guidelines in vogue elsewhere in the world for preventing pandemics of this kind, have also been introduced including 'home isolation', 'home quarantine', etc.

The prognosis as to what lies ahead is indeed bleak. On the economic plane, according to most experts, a global recession seems inevitable. Uncertainty, panic and lockdown policies are expected to cause demand worldwide to decline in a precipitous way. This will inevitably lead to a vicious downward cycle, where companies close down, resulting in more lay-offs and a further drop in consumption. A precipitous decline in GDP would follow. To compensate for this loss, massive inflows of government funds would be needed, but most governments, India included, might find it difficult to find adequate resources for this purpose. Equally important, if not more so, is that such massive inflows of funds (if they are to be effective) should be here and now, and not later, by which time the situation may well have spiralled out of control. Global coordination was a must in the extant situation.

Pandemic as disrupter

COVID-19 is, in turn, expected to bring about major changes in the global order. Some of these changes have, no doubt, been in the making for some time, but would get accelerated. As of now, though the U.S. is no longer the global

power that it once was, it is hardly in retreat. It is, without doubt, increasingly disinclined to act as the world's gendarme, as instanced by its retreat from Afghanistan after a dubious accord with the Afghan Taliban, but this was not the end of the road as far as U.S. power was concerned.

Post COVID-19, however, and given that the U.S. is among the countries badly affected by this pandemic, together with existing uncertainties affecting its financial markets, the U.S. can be expected to step back even further — from one of assertion to neutrality in global affairs.

Already, U.S. command of the global commons has weakened. Meantime, China and Russia have strengthened their relationship, and improved their asymmetric capabilities. The challenge from China is becoming more obvious by the day — measured by purchasing power parity, the U.S. is not the largest economy in the world as of now. Even more daunting from a U.S. standpoint, and also representing a sea-change from the recent past, Russia has become far more economically and politically stable and an important power broker in West Asia. These shifts cannot but, and are likely to, have a direct impact on the liberal international order. It could, in turn, give a boost to authoritarian regimes and authoritarian trends.

Social concerns

Moving away from the political and economic consequences of COVID-19 are other concerns arising from an extended lockdown, social distancing and isolation. Psychologists are even talking of an 'epidemic of despair' arising from a fear of unknown causes, resulting in serious anxiety and mental problems. Extended isolation, according to psychologists, can trigger a different kind of pandemic even leading to possible suicidal tendencies, fits of anger, depression, alcoholism and eccentric behavioural patterns.

Another fallout from the current epidemic might well be the extent to which inequality in incomes impact segments of the population, facing a common malaise. Countries lacking a comprehensive nationwide health system would find this an even more difficult situation to handle. Meantime, as the economy weakens, accompanied by job losses, those without high levels of skills would fall further behind.

This is evident to some extent already given recent reports of mass migration across the Indian landmass. Out of work migrant labour, unable to find new jobs since they lack the necessary skills, are attempting to return to their normal habitat, bringing in their wake untold suffering and, perhaps even the spread of the virus. This has all the makings of a huge human tragedy. Existing curbs on their movement would further exacerbate the problem, and could even lead to a major law and order situation.

Digital factor

One possible, and unexpected, aspect of the COVID-19 epidemic could be the thrust it could provide to 'digital authoritarianism'. China's authoritarian methods seem to have helped it to contain the spread of the virus — at least for the time being. Somewhat similar tactics are being employed by some other countries as well. In turn, leaders across many nations may find China's methods, and the embracing of technology to re-fashion authoritarianism for the modern age irresistible, and a standard to be adapted, even if they profess to be democratic. The rise of digital autocracies could lead to digital repression, and in the age of AI-powered surveillance, create a capacity for predictive control, or what is often referred to as 'social management'.

M.K. Narayanan, is a former National Security Adviser and a former Governor of West Bengal

Only through the prism of science

India needs its top leader to make people realise why science has no substitute in the battle against COVID-19



ATUL MISHRA

On Friday, April 3, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made his third COVID-19 address to the nation. To raise the people's morale, Mr. Modi asked them to light up candles, *diyas* (lamps), torchlights and mobile flashlights for 9 minutes at 9 p.m. this Sunday. Soon after his address, the citizens outreach portal of the Government of India tweeted a video explaining the 'science' behind the Prime Minister's request.

The video had a former president of the Indian Medical Association claiming that the request was based on a yogic 'principle of collective consciousness'. The doctor said that if the people collectively thought that they would not be afflicted by the coronavirus, then their collective consciousness would ensure that this happens. This, he said, was based on a 'quantum principle'. The tweet was soon deleted. But the incident shows how pseudoscience may be endangering India's public health policy at this critical moment.

Need for scientific temper

At no point in its modern history has India needed its people as now

to urgently understand how microbiology impacts public health. The Central and State governments are making huge efforts to give us a crash course on the spread and arrest of COVID-19. But in our country, the Prime Minister's voice on national issues carries the most weight. In this hour of national crisis, India needs its top leader to make the people realise why science has no substitute in battling the virus. How has Mr. Modi fared as a promoter of scientific temper?

In October 2014, the Prime Minister made two claims linking cutting-edge life sciences to Indian myths, including the *Mahabharata*. In a speech delivered in Hindi, he said that Karna's birth was a result of stem cell science and technology. He also said that the world's first plastic surgery was performed on Ganesha, giving the deity his elephant head. And, he made these remarks while inaugurating a hospital in Mumbai.

Invoking 'Mahabharata'

On March 25 this year, a day after announcing the national lockdown, Mr. Modi interacted with the residents of Varanasi. Invoking the *Mahabharata* again, he told them that the *Mahabharata* war was won in 18 days and India would win its war against the virus in 21. In his English translation of the epic, Bibek Debroy, the Chair of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, doubts that



the war of the scale described in the epic took place. Or that "miraculous weapons and chariots were the norm".

The Prime Minister's 2014 remarks mixed up science and mythology, and sent out the following public message: our epics are historical truths; the fantasies within them are records of our ancient accomplishments in cutting-edge science and technology; and since the 'knowledge' they contain has come down to us as part of our unbroken tradition, our indigenous wisdom can solve the problems that the life sciences currently face. One wonders how those who believed his 2014 remarks would have responded to his projection of winning the war against the pandemic in 2020.

Since Mr. Modi's 2014 remarks, a number of Central and State leaders as well as lawmakers belonging to his party have peddled pseudoscience and untenable claims that fracture the backbone of the life sciences. For instance, in 2017-18, the then Minister of

State for Human Resource Development, Satyapal Singh, called the theory of evolution 'scientifically wrong' and demanded its removal from the school curricula. Such views are illustrative of a thriving ecosystem of opinions masquerading as 'indigenous' science.

Although this ecosystem has been around for long, it has strengthened in recent years. Chief Ministers, Union and State Ministers, lawmakers, film personalities, businesspersons, gurus and other notables with large public following have repeatedly made pseudoscientific statements. Science gatherings have been used to peddle such ideas. And public defenders of science have been marginalised.

Dispelling the darkness

It is not surprising therefore that a 'theory' that sound vibrations kill the virus recently found a large number of takers. Nothing but the acceptance of this myth masquerading as science explains the outrageous interpretation of the Prime Minister's call to thank the nation's essential service providers with applause, bell-ringing and banging of metal *thalis* (plates). Several groups of people hit the streets on the evening of March 22 to 'celebrate' the 'Janata Curfew'. They practised intense social proximity and banged metal utensils merrily and mercilessly. Did these actions increase the danger of the

community spread of the virus? If they did not, then why did the Prime Minister tweet the next day that many people had not taken the lockdown seriously?

Mr. Modi did not ask people to erupt on the streets and endanger public health. However, it is not implausible that it happened because his message was interpreted by groups of people influenced by the present anti-science ecosystem. Dozens of pseudoscientific solutions to the pandemic are floating within this ecosystem. After Mr. Modi's Friday morning address, claims about the prowess of light to fight the virus have begun circulating on social media. The Prime Minister has for years had the authority to crack down on this ecosystem. We would have been better placed in the fight against COVID-19 had he done so.

And thus, the challenge: we are confronting a pandemic that only science and technology can fight in an ecosystem rife with belief in pseudoscience. The 20th century philosophers of science, Karl Popper and Imre Lakatos, argued that pseudoscience was a great danger to liberal societies. We can only hope that it is not irreversibly damaging India's public health in this moment of crisis.

Atul Mishra is an associate professor of International Relations at Shiv Nadar University. The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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



Read the spectre of COVID article. It gives insight into a post COVID world and how the equations of global politics will be rewritten. How much do you think is agreeable? Or will world politics continue to be the same as we know of? Write an essay. Word limit 250 words. Can mythology be made the base for scientific thinking or should science have the upper hand above everything including our faith. Elaborate.

Read the article below and note the various issues faced by migrant labourers.

The long march to uncertainty

Blamed for leaving their homes in defiance of the lockdown, hungry, and cash-strapped, migrants struggle in packed shelters, while those who managed to reach their native places face hostility. **Ajeet Mahale, Jatin Anand** and **Omar Rashid** report on their plight

"In my 20 years in Mumbai, I have never seen such a sight," said Gopal Das as he recounted his ordeal on March 21 at the Lokmanya Tilak Terminus. Gopal was among the sea of people who had attempted to board what would be the last few trains out of the city to their homes hundreds of kilometres away. Gopal, a construction worker, did not manage to board the train. And nothing had prepared him for what was to follow.

Gopal is from Bhagalpur, Bihar. He said he and his friends spent nearly four hours trying to get tickets. "A few people who had clambered on to the trains fell on the platform. A little later, we heard that all the trains had been cancelled. Since there was no public transport, we walked for three hours to our room in Bandra (East) with ₹250 in our pockets. We were still hoping they would start the trains. We didn't think it would last this long," he said.

Visuals of hundreds of workers wearing *gamchas*, carrying heavy backpacks and wailing children, and walking on national highways, boarding tractors, and jostling for space atop multi-coloured buses became defining images for days to come in India. To fight the novel coronavirus, States began imposing restrictions on the movement of people. Then the Prime Minister announced a nationwide 21-day lockdown. This tough measure was met with fear, anger and frustration in many parts of the country, including Mumbai.

No transport, no jobs, no food

In its own capacity to contain the spread of COVID-19, the Maharashtra government put in place a series of restrictions in the days leading up to the March 24 nationwide lockdown. On March 20, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray imposed a lockdown in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, Pune, Pimpri-Chinchwad and Nagpur until March 31. Suddenly, in just a few hours, lakhs of migrant workers living in the city found themselves without work. To make matters worse, there was little or no guarantee that they would get basic amenities such as food and water. This forced thousands of migrant labourers to flock to the city's major train termini – the Lokmanya Tilak Terminus and the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus – as well as train and bus terminals in other cities. Following the Chief Minister's announcement, the Railways operated 14 special trains on March 20 and 21, eight of them from Mumbai, to various destinations such as Patna, Howrah, Dhanu, Gorakhpur, Manduadih and Balharshah. Long-distance passenger services were initially shut only on March 22 on account of the Janata Curfew. However, the suspension of services was extended to March 31 and then to April 14 after the Prime Minister announced the lockdown. Shahrukh Malik, a driver of Ola and Uber cabs, said: "Had we known this was going to last this long, we would have gone home much earlier and returned after two-three months."

Work was to follow. City-based civic organisations were flooded with distress calls from workers across the city, who were in dire need of food. Sadrul Sheikh's phone has been ringing constantly for a week. He and his team, spread across the city, are part of the Jharkhandi Ekta Sangh. "We have managed to give ration to only 1,200 people. This is a fraction of the number of people who need help at the moment. With each passing day, the calls increase. I am now getting around 1,000 calls every day," he said.

According to the 2011 Census, Maharashtra has the highest number of migrants in the country (2.3 million). But activists say that the Census fails to capture seasonal migration that occurs for around four to five months. For 20-year-old Digambar Rai, the last week has been a nightmare. He arrived in Mumbai from Jharkhand on March 21 in the hope of earning for a few months before returning home. He had no idea about the lockdown; he was told that he could earn around ₹400 a day as a construction worker. "I have not even worked a day, so I have no money. I am struggling to get ration. I am relying on other workers from Jharkhand to help me," he said.

According to Raghav Mehrotra, a researcher at Aajeevika Bureau, an organisation that works with migrant labourers, what connects all the migrant workers in the region now is that they have all lost their jobs and wages. "In the communities that we work in, migrant workers typically work in small garment workshops. They stay at the site of work and rely on local dhabas for their daily food. We have managed to get them basic ration by transferring money to their nearest grocer, but cooking the food is a real challenge," he said.

Many migrant workers have banded together to ask for help. Manas Raut from Odisha lives and works in Rabale on the outskirts of the city. Raut said he and 70 other workers from his State were provided aid after they sent a distress call on the Internet. Many set up their own helpline numbers. "None of



Migrant workers begin to walk to Madhya Pradesh from Mumbai. (Below): Migrants from Delhi in Lucknow. •ARJUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY/PTI



peals made by the Chief Ministers of U.P. and Delhi and the Prime Minister himself, seemed to have been too little too late. Most such shelters in the Gautam Buddha Nagar district, sources in the U.P. government familiar with developments in this regard said, were either vacant or had "very thin occupancy". In the capital, though there was significant occupancy at such shelters, food arrangements could only be made incrementally over several days.

A trickle and then a deluge

On the night the Indian Railways announced that all passenger trains would be suspended, there was a trickle of migrant workers – most of them daily wage earners who no longer had the means to sustain themselves and the family members accompanying them. The trickle turned into a deluge at certain points by March 28 – places in Anand Vihar in Delhi bordering U.P.'s Ghaziabad; in Manesar, Faridabad and Gurugram in Haryana; and in Noida and Greater Noida in U.P.

While a majority of the migrants were seen boarding buses already overflowing with passengers, hoping against hope to reach their homes hundreds of kilometres away, others, sources in the government said, had walked endlessly on highways linking States before the borders were sealed. They walked along the banks of the Yamuna river, through the wilderness of U.P., and through unused railway tunnels before being told that the borders were shut.

Those who had tried and failed, over two consecutive days when the lockdown was eased in U.P., to find any means of travelling home returned to their rented accommodations to live a life of uncertainty. Some from States such as Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal, located far away from the NCR, decided to stay back. "We first thought of going. Even if the trains were not operational we thought

we would take buses. We packed our bags and went to Zero Point because our family begged us to try and travel somehow as things seemed to be getting worse. But there were no buses except to Agra and they were mostly full. It would have taken us weeks to get to Kolkata. So we came back," said Pradeep Haldar, employed as a security guard in Greater Noida.

"Did you see what they (the police) are doing to people looking for buses? I shudder to think how many times they will beat my husband and me if we try going to Ranchi. And what for anyway – getting on those crowded buses will expose us to the risk of contracting the infection," said Manju Kumari, a resident of Jharkhand, employed as a house help in Greater Noida's Omega-1.

On March 28 morning, a Saturday, Zero Point on the Yamuna Expressway was packed with migrant workers who chose to put their urge to reach home above the need to practise social distancing lest they contract SARS-CoV-2. They were there as the district administration had announced that 200 State-run buses had been arranged to ferry commuters to various locations in the rural parts of U.P. every two hours from the area. Bound mainly to Agra, Aligarh and Lucknow, migrant workers and their families thronged to the location to try their luck at boarding any vehicle, en route home, till midnight.

Manish Kumar, who was employed at a factory in Kasma and was among the hundreds seeking to inch closer home, in his case to Kanpur, said: "Any form of transport which takes me anywhere close to my destination from here will do at this point. I'm going to die soon anyway. If I stay here it will be of hunger; there is no one here to even beg for food. Everyone's pockets are empty. If I contract the infection I can at least die on my own soil."

Families carrying whatever they could get their hands on before under-

taking their journey lined the boundary wall of the highway as small groups of civil society volunteers offered them vegetable biryani, sealed cups of water and hand sanitiser.

Animesh Kumar, an out-of-work factory hand who sought to travel to his home in Bihar's Munger, was among them. "Things are really bad here. You know what is happening; then why do you keep asking? I've told you I'm on my way. I have nowhere else to go, I will come home soon, trust me," he assured his mother over the phone as he broke down. "They should have allowed us to come here two days ago," he complained when asked what was wrong and if he needed any assistance. "For two days – first in the morning and then in the evening – I tried to come here so I could catch a bus or use any other means to go home. The police beat me every time I tried to reach the expressway on both days. I will get on any bus, any vehicle; I'll start walking from wherever it drops me," he said.

After many hours, having realised the futility of their efforts, many decided to return to their rented accommodation. Anand Kumar, who operates a pan shop in the Alpha-1 area near the transit hub of Pari Chowk, was engaged in an animated discussion with his roommates Sunil Kumar Gupta and Gupta's sibling, Anil. "They are charging ₹1,000-₹2,000 per passenger and the buses themselves are jam-packed. Where will you people sit? What if you get infected," he asked the Gupta siblings.

At the end of a four-hour-long wait, Sunil and Anil decided to abandon their effort to find a ride. According to a police official deployed on duty near the point, they were not among the "fortunate" ones who had been able to find transport till midnight on Saturday. "What's the point of being stuck with nothing on either side of Zero Point," Sunil asked. "Let's go back home," he told Anil and Anand as they began their five-km-long walk back "home".

On Monday morning, as strict enforcement of the lockdown returned to the area, the same police personnel who were trying their best to assist migrant workers board the buses used their batons and sticks to "persuade" hapless migrant workers to go to shelter homes.

As those like Ram Kumar and his family of seven, who had travelled from Manesar and could reach Zero Point in Greater Noida only on Monday morning, sought to try their luck, Sunil and Anil were busy persuading their landlord against throwing them out since they would be late with the rent this month. "We were able to convince him; both of us pooled in some money. It looks like it will be enough to tide us through the lockdown till April 14," Sunil said on Thursday, almost a week after he tried – and failed – to keep his

promise to his mother that he would return home.

Not quarantined

U.P. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath instructed officials to prepare a list of migrants who had started moving into the State last week. He said they must be identified, medically inspected and put under home quarantine if they were suspected of having the virus.

However, officials on the ground find it difficult to contain the people in these quarantine homes. In districts like Sultanpur, Rae Bareilly, Hapur, Hathras and Azamgarh, the police have lodged cases against people for jumping quarantine. In Sultanpur, 26 persons of a 115-capacity quarantine home fled after jumping from the second floor of the building using a bedsheet. All of them were later located. In Lakhimpur Kheri, a Dalit man who had returned from Gurugram was found hanging in the field after the police allegedly beat him up for jumping quarantine. The matter is under probe. In Hathras, the quarantined persons gave the panchayat secretary the slip when he left the premises after dinner.

While a number of migrants said they underwent thermal screening at the bus station of their native district when they boarded, many slipped under the radar. A group of migrants from Sitapur district returning from Gurugram on March 29 said they went straight to their homes without getting screened as they arrived in the wee hours. "Our bus arrived at 3:30 a.m. There was nobody there," said Shivpal Singh. No official approached him either, he said. Another migrant in Gorakhpur district narrated a different story, however. After reaching his village, the locals forced him to get a medical test done before allowing him entry, even though he didn't show any symptoms, he said. As a bargain, he later decided to stay under quarantine in his house and not at the primary school built outside the village.

As efforts to control the pandemic continue, U.P. has witnessed a sharp rise in figures over the past week, coinciding with the entry of migrants and the revelation of the Tablighi Jamaat event in Delhi.

Meanwhile, in Mumbai, apart from the pandemic and the economic situation it is a bleak future that worries people. For the construction workers of Mumbai, the peak season consists of the months of March, April and May as construction activity stops once monsoon starts to set in. With most of the season lost in the crisis, several workers will have to head back home. Digambar, who had come to the city in hopes of earning some extra money, said that he would be taking the first train back. Gopal agreed with him. "There is no question of staying back. The city will be half empty once the trains start," he said.



FROM PAGE ONE

Coronavirus death toll touches 62 in India

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan has appealed to patients and their families not to create any obstacle and allow the medical staff to discharge their duties. He is concerned about the violence against medical staff being reported from various part of the country," Mr. Agarwal said.

Dr. Vardhan visited Dr. RML and Safdarjung Hospitals, on Friday, to review preparations to tackle the COVID-19 outbreak. At RML Hospital, the Minister visited the flu corner, emergency

care center, trauma centre and corona screening centre while at Safdarjung he took reviewed facilities available at the super speciality block which has been converted into a COVID-19 isolation management centre, with 400 isolation and 100 ICU beds. Meanwhile, the Home Ministry launched two more COVID-19 related helpline numbers -1930 (all India toll free number) and 1944 (dedicated to Northeast) in addition to the existing seven.

NSA to be filed against 6 for harassing nurses

Manish Mishra, Superintendent of Police (City), Ghaziabad told The Hindu, that the complaint was against six Jamaatis who were picked up from the Masuri area of Ghaziabad.

Shailendra Kumar Singh ADM (City) said the six persons, including the one who has tested positive, have been shifted to another quarantine facility. It has been

decided that female staff would not attend to them.

Fuzail Ayyubi, one of the members of the legal team of the Tablighi Jamaat, said, "Their alleged behaviour is condemnable in any civil society. However, we are trying to ascertain whether they really attended the congregation. The Jamaatis are not known to indulge in such behaviour," he said.

U.P. villages tense as many skip quarantine



Eye in the sky: A policeman is testing a drone used to check gathering of groups during the lockdown in Prayagraj on Friday. *AP

The administration has taken action against such persons in across districts including Hathras, Sultanpur, Lakhimpur Kheri, Rae Bareilly, Sitapur, and Azamgarh. Returning workers are being kept in primary schools or other buildings outside villages for a designated period before being allowed home.

In Rae Bareilly on Thursday, an FIR was lodged against nine persons in Kubna village in Maharajganj tehsil for escaping the isolation centre built inside the local primary school.

In Rae Bareilly, the district magistrate also ordered FIRs against 19 persons in Salon, Deeh and Nasirabad areas for escaping the quarantine centres and not following "quarantine norms."

Hathras police officials on Thursday evening said they had lodged a case against 29 persons under Sections 269 and 270 of the IPC and Section 4 of the Epidemic Diseases Act for allegedly escaping the quarantine centre in Sarabar village in Sadabad.

Thirty-five persons were kept at the quarantine centre with some of them coming there recently after the huge influx of migrants fleeing home from cities like Delhi.

Police brutality

In Lakhimpur Kheri district, police are probing the death of a 25-year-old Dalit man Roshan who was found hanging in the fields of his village three days after he returned home from Gurgaon where he worked in a power tower firm. His family alleged that he was threatened and badly thrashed by policemen for allegedly escaping from the local quarantine centre, following which he hung himself.

Roshan had left the quarantine centre after his sister-in-law asked him to go to local flour mill to grind the grains, his brother Sipahil said in his police complaint.

Superintendent of Police, Lakhimpur Kheri, Poonam

decided that female staff would not attend to them. Fuzail Ayyubi, one of the members of the legal team of the Tablighi Jamaat, said, "Their alleged behaviour is condemnable in any civil society. However, we are trying to ascertain whether they really attended the congregation. The Jamaatis are not known to indulge in such behaviour," he said.

Conflicting statements While Roshan's family alleged that he had fractured his arm in the police assault and received other injuries, Kheri police said in a statement that no such injury was found in the autopsy and that the reason of death was hanging.

Kranti Kumar Singh, a political activist associated with the Samajwadi Party, questioned the credibility of the police probe saying they did not file any FIR against the constables. Mr. Singh said locals had a video footage showing injury marks on Roshan's body. "He left hand was fractured and had swelling marks on his hip and right hand. That's why he wasn't cremated but buried so that a fresh autopsy can take place through a court order after the lockdown phase," Mr. Singh said.

Awanish Awasthi, additional chief secretary home, said 40-50 persons had also left the quarantine centre in Hapur, adding that action would be taken against officials for laxity.

'Practise yoga' Mr. Awasthi appealed people to not leave the quarantine centres unnecessarily, saying it was in their interest. He even suggested that people can pass time by practicing yoga.

Briefing media on Friday, Mr. Awasthi also said Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath instructed that the district police chief and district magistrate would be held accountable and action be taken against the concerned staff if people escape from the quarantine centres.

Modispeak is disappointing, says Opposition

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor calls him a 'photo-op Prime Minister'; Left parties seek concrete steps to tackle pandemic

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Opposition leaders expressed disappointment over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's latest video message of asking citizens to light lamps in their homes on Sunday. Congress MP Shashi Tharoor called him a "showman and a photo-op Prime Minister".

"Listened to the Pradhan Showman. Nothing about how to ease people's pain, their burdens, their financial anxieties. No vision of the future or sharing the issues he is weighing in deciding about the post-lockdown. Just a feel-good moment curated by India's photo-op Prime Minister!" tweeted Mr. Tharoor.

In a series of tweets, former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram questioned why the government had not announced a second financial action plan even as the lockdown entered the tenth day. He said every working person - from business persons to daily wage earners - expected Mr. Modi to announce steps to arrest the economic slide and restart the engines of economic growth.

"Dear Prime Minister, We will listen to you and light diyas on April 5. But, in return, please listen to us and to the wise counsel of epidemiologists and economists. Symbolism is important, but serious thought to ideas and



measures is equally important", he said.

'Prices being hiked'

The Congress, in an online media briefing, also claimed that the supply chain for transporting essential commodities had nearly collapsed and prices have skyrocketed in the past 10 days.

Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera said, "Of the 12 million kirana [grocery] stores of the country, only 2.5 million are open. The rest are shut because of disruption of supplies of essential commodities. The Centre's intervention is a must. The

tomato, which is available in the mandi at ₹18 a kg, becomes ₹50 to ₹60 a kg for the consumer. Likewise, the potato, which is available in the mandi at ₹16 a kg becomes ₹50," he added.

COVID-19

CPI general secretary D. Raja said people expected the Prime Minister to come out with substantial measures to guard them against COVID-19 as well safeguard the economic interests of the migrant workers and daily wage earners.

"He could have announced full ration for the migrant workers or wages to

MGNREGA workers," he said.

CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury didn't directly comment on Mr. Modi's call to light lamps but targeted the government over inadequate health infrastructure in rural India.

"When public money is wasted on vanity projects like statues, bullet trains, PR campaigns & personality promotion, no surprise that health infrastructure has further crumbled under this govt. Its priorities over past 6 years have been laid bare by the #COVID19 crisis. Poor will suffer as more distractions are mounted. Rectify immediately," he said on Twitter.

On the draw SURENDRA



After PM's call, energy authorities make plans

'Unlikely to disrupt power networks'

T. RAMAKRISHNAN
CHENNAI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for switching off electric lights at homes across the nation for nine minutes at 9 p.m. on April 5, as a mark of demonstrating a collective will to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, has prompted energy authorities to swing into action.

The Power System Operation Corporation (POSOCO), which runs the national load despatch centre, got in touch with all the regional load despatch centres, which, in turn, asked constituent States to prepare plans for managing the power supply position in their States for the purpose. This led senior officials of the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (TANGEDCO) and Transmission Corporation (Tantra)

to discuss details of the plan that was being finalised, one of the officials said. In the wake of the Prime Minister's call, the demand may go down by a maximum of 20,000 MW during the nine-minute period. In India, the evening peak demand is measured at what is recorded at 7 p.m. every day.

An official said that Tamil Nadu may see a maximum drop of 2,000 MW in demand during the nine-minute period, after which there would likely be a surge. Regulating the operation of several distribution feeders and keeping ready hydro reservoirs (which can generate 650 MW almost instantaneously) and gas-powered stations were among the measures being planned by the TANGEDCO.

One more reason for the assessment of the experts is the presence of an all-India grid, which comes handy in transferring power seamlessly from one region to another and maintaining the frequency of the country's power network at about 50 Hz.



An all-India grid helps in transferring power seamlessly, say officials.

This is why the situation is manageable, point out the experts.

Even now, the ongoing 21-day lockdown has resulted in a perceptible reduction in peak demand. Compared to the country's evening peak demand of about 1.56 lakh megawatt (MW) a month ago, the present demand according to the POSOCO is about 1.2 lakh MW.

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Ensure that basic needs of poor are met: President

Kovind condemns attacks on doctors, health workers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Taking note of the problems faced by the homeless, the unemployed and the weaker sections of society during the COVID-19 crisis, President Ram Nath Kovind said on Friday that the country would have to be extra sensitive towards their needs and ensure nobody is left hungry.

Stating that people had set an example by "showing exemplary courage, discipline and solidarity in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic", the President expressed concern over two incidents - the gathering of migrant workers in Anand Vihar and the congregation of Tablighi Jamaat in Nizamuddin - that caused a setback to the efforts.

Speaking with the Governors and Lieutenant Governor (L-Gs) in a video-conference, the President asked



Showing the way: President Ram Nath Kovind in a video conference with Governors and Lieutenant Governors on measures to combat COVID-19. *ANI

them to deliberate upon the ways and means to help the poor and needy.

Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu also took part. He suggested that voluntary organisations could be roped in to help.

The meeting also deliberated upon reports of doctors, health workers and police personnel coming under attack in some parts

of the country. "In the conference, there was unanimity that there is no scope for laxity or complacency in fighting the invisible enemy. In this context, the President noted with concern the incidents of attacks on doctors, health workers and police personnel in some parts of the country," a statement from the Rashtrapati Bhavan said.

Take criticism in right spirit, says Congress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Rejecting Home Minister Amit Shah's allegation that the Congress is playing partisan politics over COVID-19, senior Congress leader Anand Sharma said that the party is only constructively engaged.

Mr. Shah in a tweet on Thursday had accused the Congress of playing petty politics. "High time they think of national interest and stop misleading people," he had tweeted.

Mr. Sharma said that such allegations were completely baseless, and that the Congress, as a responsible and mature Opposition, has national interest at its heart. "Giving critical inputs or recommendations should not be misconstrued by the government. They should take it in the right spirit," he said adding that the government should adopt whatever suggestions could be acted upon.

Supreme Court quashes I-T case against NDTV

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In a major relief for New Delhi Television Limited (NDTV), the Supreme Court on Friday quashed an income tax re-assessment notice issued by revenue authorities against the premier news broadcasting company.

Though the Income Tax department had accused NDTV of "round-tripping" finances in connection with a July 2007 issuance of step-up coupon bonds amounting to \$100 million through its U.K. subsidiary, the Supreme Court stood firm to hold that the revenue authorities failed to show that the channel did not make a "full and true" disclosure of its income for the assessment year 2008-09.

"In our view the assessee (NDTV) disclosed all the primary facts necessary for assessment of its case to the assessing officer. What the revenue urges is that the as-

sessee did not make a full and true disclosure of certain other facts... We are of the view that the assessee had disclosed all primary facts before the assessing officer and it was not required to give any further assistance to the assessing officer by disclosure of other facts. It was for the assessing officer at this stage to decide what inference should be drawn from the facts of the case," the Supreme Court Bench of Justices L. Nageswara Rao and Deepak Gupta held in its judgment.

The court held that NDTV had disclosed the fact "that step-up coupon bonds for \$100 million were issued by NNPLC (the U.K. subsidiary).

However, the court found that the Revenue had sufficient reasons to believe that undisclosed income of the assessee escaped assessment, and therefore, there were grounds to issue the notice in question.

Jammu BJP raises concern over domicile rule with Shah

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

The notification of domicile rules for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir has the Jammu unit of the BJP worried and upset, as it not only loosens the criteria of who can claim domicile but also keeps lower level jobs reserved for locals and higher level jobs open for all.

The local unit has flagged these concerns with the party's national leadership and also with Union Home Minister Amit Shah. "According to what we gathered from the notification, only Group D jobs will be reserved for locals, while others are open for all. We have been told that the provincial services board will take care of some levels of hiring keeping locals in mind, but that is just oral assurance, the notification itself does not reassure us," said a senior Jammu BJP leader.

"This [the notification]

Regional parties rebuff J&K police's warning

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

The J&K police's warning to locals against criticising and "instigating" people over the domicile laws drafted by the Centre has been rebuffed by regional parties here, National Conference provincial president Devender Singh Rana on Friday described the

domicile law as "unjust, and betrayal of educated unemployed youth" and spoke of "consequences".

Peoples Democratic Party spokesperson Tahir Sayeed said, "If the people of J&K are not happy with this Tuglaqi [f]arman (diktat), it's their fundamental right to express displeasure in a democratic way."

Speaking to *The Hindu*, BJP general secretary Ram Madhav, who has been handling Jammu and Kashmir for the party for a long time, said there were issues that the Jammu unit of the party had flagged, and that "their fears are valid." He said Mr. Shah had been apprised of the concerns raised.

'Delay arrest of Teltumbde, Navlakha'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

More than 5,000 individuals and over 15 organisations around the world have pleaded that the impending arrest of activist-academics Anand Teltumbde and Gautam Navlakha be delayed in light of the COVID-19 pandemic as their health could be put at risk.

The activists were recognised for their life-long advocacy for the rights of the marginalised, a statement said.

Signatories include Professors Angela Davis, Cornel West, Jean Ziegler, Sukhadeo Thorat, Zoya Hasan and Noam Chomsky, writers and artists such as Arundhati Roy, Aparna Sen and T. M. Krishna. The statement was organised by India Civil Watch-International, a transnational democratic and civil rights advocacy group.



ho returned from Bangladesh leaving for home after
*PAKAR, NISSAR AHMAD, PTI & ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY

SWIFT is global financial messaging service that enables financial institutions worldwide to send and receive information about financial transactions in secure, standardized and reliable environment. It is used to transmit messages relating to cross border financial transactions. It was founded in 1973 and is headquartered in La Hulpe, Belgium. It is a cooperative society under Belgian law owned by its member financial institutions with offices around the world. Globally over 11,000 financial institutions in more than 200 countries use services of SWIFT. SWIFT does not facilitate funds transfer, rather, it sends payment orders, that must be settled by correspondent accounts that institutions have with each other. On receiving this message through SWIFT, banks abroad, mostly branches of domestic banks abroad provide funds to the company.

The AQI is an index for reporting daily air quality.

It focuses on health effects one might experience within a few hours or days after breathing polluted air.

AQI is calculated for eight major air pollutants:

- Ground-level ozone,**
- PM10,**
- PM2.5,**
- Carbon monoxide,**
- Sulfur dioxide,**
- Nitrogen dioxide,**
- Ammonia,**
- Lead,**

Ground-level ozone and airborne particles are the two pollutants that pose the greatest threat to human health in India.

foreign
PM-CARES
details unknown



Indians were directed to mobilise donations from abroad with SWIFT code.

relief to the affected," according to the original press statement.

That statement, as well as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first tweets on PM-CARES, included both an IFSC code as well as a SWIFT code. However, the donation link on the PM's website now says that "account details for foreign donations will be available in 2-3 days". Only the IFSC code is available on the donation link.

Government sources now say that the "PM CARES Fund will simply accept donations and contributions from individuals and organisations who are based in foreign countries." They pointed to an official statement in August 2018 that contributions from "NRIs, PIOs and international entities such as foundations would be welcome."

While this seems to indicate that the PM-CARES Fund will not accept foreign funds from governmental or corporate sources, it does seem prepared to accept unlimited tax-free donations from Indian corporates.

COVID-19: EU official speaks to Shringla

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla on Friday held a telephonic discussion on the COVID-19 pandemic with the Secretary General of the European External Action Service, Helga M. Schmid. The discussion came in the backdrop of a large scale evacuation of European Union (EU) citizens from major Indian cities over the past week.

"They exchanged notes on the situation and respective efforts to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic in the EU and India as well as coordination in the framework of G20, SAARC, etc," said a source familiar with the exchange between the two top diplomats. EU has been part of India's global dialogue to contain the crisis.

India and EU skipped a summit in March as the COVID-19 crisis exploded across the world leading to the suspension of international travel. While several major EU countries have evacuated nationals from India, Indian citizens continue to remain in major European destinations as India has suspended commercial air service and declared that no citizen will be evacuated without a pre-flight COVID-19 test. Apart from the continental Europe, a large number of Indians remain stranded in East European countries.

Lockdown lifts Delhi's air quality to a 5-year high

CPCB data shows pollution fell with cities recording a 'good' on AQI

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

The ongoing lockdown has pushed pollution levels in Delhi to a 5-year low and, across India, the number of cities that recorded 'good' on the air quality index (AQI) jumped from 6 – on March 16 – to 30 as on March 29, according to data from the Central Pollution Control Board.

PM 2.5, the most dangerous pollutant, measured at the pollution monitoring station in Anand Vihar, New Delhi, ranged from 16 µg/m³ - 42g/m³ (microgram per metre cubed) from March 25 to April 1, the first week of the lockdown.

By comparison, PM 2.5 had ranged from 72-187µg/m³ during the corresponding period last year, and 72-171µg/m³ in 2018.

In 2016, it spanned 49-116µg/m³, station data on the website of the CPCB shows. It wasn't possible to compare the air quality index,

which is a weighted average of the contribution of several pollutants, in this week from that in previous years, as such data wasn't available on the website.

Janata curfew report

The CPCB in a report on the impact of the 'Janata curfew' on March 22, said that on the day before, AQI was 'Moderate (101-250)' in Delhi.

"Overall, up to 44% reduction in PM10 levels was observed in Delhi during March 22-23, 2020, compared to previous day. The PM2.5 reduction was 8% on the curfew day but declined to 34% next day owing to negligible combustion activities on March 22-23, 2020, in and around the city," the report said.

The key factor that triggered the decline was the number of on-road vehicles, which contributed to a 51% reduction in NOx levels and a 32% reduction in carbon monoxide levels during

Capital breathes easy

Since the lockdown, Delhi's particulate matter pollution (PM 2.5) has dropped to levels not seen in the past few years. The table shows the average PM 2.5 levels* in Anand Vihar, Delhi for the first five days after the lockdown. The pollution levels have more than halved on many days compared to previous years

Day	2017	2018	2019	2020
March 25	89.52	72.41	73.02	42.55
March 26	78.3	91.19	72.42	44.99
March 27	118.87	158.88	80.28	25.54
March 28	121.67	171.25	158.64	22.69
March 29	71.95	116.53	187.6	29.11
March 30	103.17	129.45	153.15	31.88

* Small particulate matter of 2.5 microns or less in diameter



Out of the blue: As traffic came to a standstill in Delhi due to the lockdown, pollution eased up giving way to clear blue skies. ■ V. KRISHNAN

March 22-23 as compared to March 21. Unlike in the winter months, Delhi and other regions of the Indo Gangetic Plains generally tend to have better air quality in March, aided by consistent wind and sunlight, which help flush out pollutants.

"The impact of meteorological factors was partially favourable... however the reduction in air pollution can be largely attributed to transport and commercial-industrial restrictions," the CPCB said in its report.

Research studies have attributed the key sources of PM2.5 in summer to be: dust and construction activities (35%), transport sector (20%) and industry (20%).

Lockdown effect

During the lockdown PM10 and PM2.5 levels were reduced by about 35-40%.

The cessation of industries contributed to this reduction by 10%, vehicles 10-15% and dust another 10-15%, the organisation calculated.

As on March 29, a total 91

cities were under 'Good' (0-50) and 'Satisfactory (51-100)' categories, with 30 cities with 'Good' AQI values. However, Lucknow, Muzaffarpur, Kalyan, Guwahati and Singrauli were under 'Poor' category during March 25-28.

High emission levels in Lucknow and Guwahati were noted for PM2.5, attributable to 'local' combustion related activities.

As on March 29, no city was under 'Poor' AQI (251-300) category.

Bhopal-based CPCB is a statutory organisation which was constituted in September, 1974 under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.

It was entrusted with the powers and functions under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.

It serves as a field formation and also provides technical services to the Ministry of Environment and Forests of the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

Principal Functions of the CPCB, as spelt out in the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981

to promote cleanliness of streams and wells in different areas of the States by prevention, control and abatement of water pollution.
to improve the quality of air and to prevent, control or abate air pollution in the country.

Over two fold rise in domestic violence cases: NCW

There is also a threefold increase in police apathy towards women's complaints

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The first week of the nationwide lockdown, which has left many facing job losses, uncertainty over salaries, forced isolation and stressed households, has resulted in a steep rise in violence against women. The National Commission for Women (NCW), which receives complaints from across the country, has

recorded more than a two fold rise in gender-based violence.

The total complaints from women rose from 116 in the first week of March (March 2-8), to 257 in the final week of March (March 23-April 1). Complaints of rape or attempted rape have risen sharply from two to 13, while cases of domestic violence have increased from 30 to 69

over the same comparative period. Simultaneously, there has been an almost three fold increase in police apathy towards women's complaints, with the NCW receiving 16 complaints on the issue as compared to six earlier.

Similarly, complaints relating to the "right to live with dignity" too have doubled, rising from 35 cases to 77.

Such cases could pertain to discrimination on the basis of gender, class or caste

or all three of them combined.

Activists believe that these may only be the tip of the iceberg, as many women will not be able to reach out because of restrictions on movement and lack of privacy inside homes.

Jagori, a Delhi-based NGO, which runs helplines for women victims of violence, has, in fact, experienced a 50% drop in calls.

"Women need to be at ease to make calls for help," said Jaya Velankar, director,

Jagori. "They need privacy, when they are certain that they will not be discovered by their family. But when the entire family is at home, it is difficult for them to call the helpline," she added.

"Lockdown can't mean that you save me from a virus, but you expose me to other forms of violence," said Senior advocate and women's rights activist Vrinda Grover. She said that groups will be making a representation to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on the issue.

than 450 companies and several have expressed interest in commercial production, IIT-Roorkee said. Named 'Prana-Vayu', the closed-loop ventilator can deliver the required amount of air to the patient, with an automated process, controlling the pressure and flow rates.

NSP ROC No : 14381/2016/E1 **Dated : 31.03.2020**
CORRIGENDUM ON NOTICE INVITING REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION
Notice inviting RFP for Construction of a New Bus Stand Infrastructure Project for Namakkal Municipality, Tamil Nadu, on PPP Mode (DBFOT Basis), including financial management and maintenance for a period of 22 years published in the official website <https://tenders.gov.in> on 25.01.2020 and also in Hindi, English daily & Daily Thanthi, Tamil daily papers on 28.01.2020. Due to National lock down from 23.03.2020 to avoid the spread of Corona Virus (Covid 19), the last date of receipt of RFP has been postponed to the following dates.

	RFP already invited on	RFP postponed to
1. Last date for submission of Application addressed to : The Commissioner, Namakkal Municipality, Namakkal	Online: 08.04.2020 upto 14:00hrs Offline: 09.04.2020 upto 15:00hrs	Online: 12.05.2020 upto 14:00hrs Offline: 13.05.2020 upto 15:00hrs
2. Date and time of Opening of the Application	08.04.2020 - 15:30hrs at Municipal Office, Namakkal	13.05.2020 - 15:30hrs at Municipal Office, Namakkal

The RFP may be downloaded from the Official Website <https://tenders.gov.in> upto 12.05.2020 14:00hrs.
DIPR/1591/TENDER/2020 Commissioner, Namakkal Municipality.

Tablighi Jamaat link to death in Dharavi

A 56-year-old garment shop owner tested positive from Baliga Nagar and died on Wednesday

STAFF REPORTER MUMBAI

The Mumbai police have *prima facie* found out that the first person who died of COVID-19 at Dharavi had come in contact with around 10 Tablighi Jamaat members who had attended the gathering of the sect in Delhi. The police, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation and health officials will have to find out every place they visited in the city, including in Dharavi, before they reportedly left for Kerala if they test positive.

On Wednesday, Dharavi reported its first case, a 56-year-old garment shop owner from Baliga Nagar, and the person died on the same day. On Thursday, a doctor from Wockhardt Hospital living in the area also tested positive. He might have contracted the disease from his hospital as Wockhardt has so far reported at least two confirmed cases. A conservancy worker who did not live at Dharavi but had worked there had also tested positive, leading to concerns over whether Dharavi would become a hotbed.

In the case of patient 1, the police believe that he had come in contact with some



A hotspot: A man standing in front of his shanty at Shahu Nagar, Dharavi, on Thursday. *PRASHANT NAKWE

Tablighi Jamaat members. Five men and five women who came to Mumbai on March 22 after attending the meeting in Delhi had stayed

COVID-19

at Dharavi. The men stayed at the local masjid, while the women stayed in a flat owned by patient number 1. The police believe they left for Kozhikode on March 24.

Three couples went by air and the other two went "by other means." While the police believe that the deceased spent time with them, it is not yet clear if any of them have been tested positive. The police are in contact with their counterparts in Kerala.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone V) Niyati Thacker said, "It appears the deceased had common contact

with Tablighi members. They left around March 24 and are suspected to have gone to Kerala. It seems the deceased provided them his flat. It is possible that they came in contact with several residents of the area. Now we have to trace each and every person but for that people need to co-operate."

Assistant municipal commissioner of G North ward Kiran Dighavkar said, "We

are trying to establish the link of where the first patient got the virus from. Things will become clearer once the reports of his close contacts are in. If at all the people coming from Delhi were carriers of the virus, we will have to find out where they ventured in the area or even the city, who they came in contact with and screen all of them. It will be challenging."

Cases on foreign Tablighis can delay their exit: experts

MHA directs States to book 960 blacklisted individuals

VJAITA SINGH NEW DELHI

A directive from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) asking States to register criminal cases against foreign members of the Tablighi Jamaat could prolong their stay in India by up to five years.

On Friday, Joint Secretary MHA Purnima Salila Srivastava reiterated that States have been asked to register cases against 960 blacklisted foreigners and at "this stage the question of deportation does not arise" but whenever it happens it will be done as per health protocols.

Police in a quandry Police in different States are divided on registering cases against the foreign members under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, punishable by up to two years and Section 14 of the Foreigners Act, 1946, punishable by up to five years.

Several police officers *The Hindu* spoke to said there was no point in arresting the foreigners as their visas have been cancelled, and as per legal requirements they would have to be deported as soon as they are fit to leave the quarantine centres.

According to a MHA statement, from January 1, about 2,100 foreigners visited India for Tablighi activities. Among those blacklisted are 360 foreigners linked to Tablighi who have already left India.

The 960 blacklisted foreigners who are in presently in India include four Americans, nine British, six Chinese, three French, 379 Indonesian, 110 Bangladeshi, 63 Myanmar, 77 Kyrgyz, 75 Malaysian, 65



At risk: People who attended the Delhi event being taken to a quarantine facility in Ahmedabad on Friday. *PTI

Thai, 33 Sri Lankan, 12 Vietnamese and nine Saudi Arabian nationals.

Officers in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh Police, however, insisted that the foreign workers will be arrested and sent to jail. The police in Delhi report directly to the MHA and Uttar Pradesh is ruled by the BJP. Uttar Pradesh Police has registered 35 cases in 15 districts under Section 14 of Foreigners Act against the foreign Tablighi members.

Shifted to hospital A Tamil Nadu police officer said 125 foreigners traced in the State have been quarantined in mosques and a few who showed symptoms have been shifted to hospitals.

"They will be served 'leave India notice' after they come out of the quarantine; maybe cases can be registered against those who provide them logistic help," he added.

Former Uttar Pradesh DGP Prakash Singh said if their visas are cancelled then they should be deported as soon as possible.

"Government should give priority in deporting them and getting rid of them... registering a case means that trial might go on for years. It is essentially for public consumption that government is taking harsh measures," Mr. Singh said.

Six more CISF men at Mumbai airport test positive

The total number of infected personnel has gone up to 11; 147 inmates of Panvel camp isolated

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NAVI MUMBAI

Six more men of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), posted at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai, tested positive for COVID-19 on Friday, taking the total number of infected personnel to 11.

who shared the Panvel camp with those men have been isolated, and the entire Kalamboli camp has been sanitised. "The first CISF person to test positive has since recovered and his tests have come negative," CISF spokesperson Hemendra Singh said. The 11 personnel were in a stable condition. Panvel Municipal Corpo-

ration (PMC) Commissioner Ganesh Deshmukh said that after five CISF personnel were found to be positive on Wednesday, 147 of the remaining personnel at the Kalamboli camp were isolated at MGM Hospital.

"Of the 146 tested, six were found to be positive and the remaining negative, making a total of 11 CISF em-

ployees positive. Of the 11 positive, 10 are staff and one is a helper. It is suspected that they had contracted the virus during an air-lifting operation. Their routine included going to work from the Kalamboli camp to the Mumbai airport and back to the camp. Hence, we do not see any other possibility of contracting the virus. The

CISF camp has been sealed and sanitised by us," Mr. Deshmukh said.

Konkan Divisional Commissioner Shivaji Daund said the staff at MGM Hospital would continue to be quarantined there. "Two wings in the hospital have been dedicated to the CISF staff who have been quarantined there," he said.

NSA invoked against four Indore residents

Case relates to attack on health workers

STAFF REPORTER BHOPAL

The Indore district administration in Madhya Pradesh on Thursday invoked the National Security Act, 1980, against four persons accused of instigating residents of a locality to throw stones at health workers on Wednesday.

"We have arrested 13 of the accused. The Act has been invoked against four of them," Vivek Sharma, Inspector-General of the Police, Indore Zone, told *The Hindu*.

Pelted with stones

A team of health workers, revenue officials, anganwadi workers, municipal officials and policemen were visiting the Tatpatti Bakhal area of the city to trace the contacts of a COVID-19 patient when they were pelted with stones, said a note issued by

the Collectorate. The administration invoked Section 3(2) of the Act and passed an order to move the four accused to the Central Jail, Rewa.

"Such persons are not humans, they are enemies of humanity. Attack on paramedical staff and doctors, who are risking their lives to save people's lives, will not be tolerated," Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said. On Wednesday, a case was filed against unidentified persons under Sections 353 (Assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty), 336 (Act endangering life or safety of others), 145 (Joining or continuing in unlawful assembly, knowing it has been commanded to disperse) and 269 (Negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) of the Indian Penal Code.

SC issues notice to govt. on plea for free testing

Petition challenges price cap

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday asked the government to respond to a petition seeking free COVID-19 testing facility at all laboratories, including private ones.

A Bench led by Justice L. Nageswara Rao issued notice on a plea by Delhi resident Shashank Deo Sudhi, who challenged the legality of a March 27 advisory that caps the price for testing for the SARS-CoV-2 virus at ₹4,500 in private labs and hospitals.

Mr. Sudhi has argued that the advisory was both discriminatory and a violation of the fundamental right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution.

"It is extremely difficult for the common citizen to get himself/herself tested in the government hospital/labs and [there] being no al-

ternative in sight, the people are constrained to pay the capped amount to the private hospital/labs for protecting their lives," the petitioner contended.

"The respondents are completely insensitive and indifferent to the plight of the common citizens of the country who are already financially burdened on account of [being] completely locked down with no possibility of [the] lockdown being lifted in the near future," he added.

In the alternative, the petitioner asked the court to direct the government to "ramp up the testing facilities at the earliest, given the escalating mortality and morbidity rate across the country".

Mr. Sudhi said ideally the tests should be conducted under NABL-accredited pathological laboratories.

Plea seeks minimum wages for migrant workers

SC expresses concern over their plight, asks Centre to respond by April 7

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has expressed concern over the plight of migrant workers, especially in the unorganised sector, during the lockdown and asked the Union government to respond by April 7 to a petition demanding that Central and state governments pay them minimum wages.

A Bench led by Justice L. Nageswara Rao, through videoconferencing, took a serious note of a petition filed by activists Harsh Mander and Anand Bhardwaj, who said the declaration of the 21-day national lockdown without prior information "precipitated an unprecedented humanitarian crisis" for migrant workers, resulting in their mass exodus to their



Perilous state: Workers from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar staying at a workshop at Mazgaon. *EMMANUEL YOGINI

home towns. The petition said the Centre and the States should, either jointly or severally, take responsibility to pay migrant workers at least a week's wages for their sustenance.

The Bench took *suo motu* cognisance of a letter sent by Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra highlighting the condition of hundreds of migrants stranded without jobs and essential items during the lockdown that started

from March 24. It is an attempt to enforce social distancing to prevent the infection from spreading among the general population.

Mass exodus

However, shortly after the lockdown declaration, a mass exodus of panicked migrant workers was witnessed. They were moving from the metros, where they had come for work, to their home towns. The government has maintained that the panic was caused by 'fake' news. The Disaster Management Act, 2005, mandates the Centre and the States to pay compensation to those who have suffered losses during a disaster. The law requires the government to prepare a national plan to combat the disaster.

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States get ₹11,092 crore for COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Friday approved the release of ₹11,092 crore under the State Disaster Risk Management Fund (SDRMF) to all the States to take measures for containment of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The funds were allocated to the States on the recommendation of the 15th Finance Commission.

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot suggested to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday that the Centre release ₹1 lakh crore to tackle the pandemic and the ramifications of the 21-day nationwide lockdown.

Following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's video-conference with Chief Ministers, "the Central Government has released in advance its share of the first instalment of SDRMF for the year 2020-21, amounting to ₹11,092 crore, to augment funds available with the State governments," a statement by the MHA said.

Maharashtra which has reported the highest number of cases has been allocated ₹1611 crore. Kerala with a higher number of cases, however, has been allocated ₹157 crore, lower than most States, including Uttar Pradesh which gets ₹966 crore, Odisha ₹802 crore, Rajasthan ₹740 crore, Bihar ₹708 crore, Gujarat ₹662 crore and Madhya Pradesh ₹910 crore.

The SDRF is the primary fund available with the States to meet the expenditure of immediate relief to the victims of disasters.

Food for thought



Safe distance: Homeless labourers lining up to receive food being distributed at a gurdwara in Dwarka, Delhi on Friday in view of the lockdown to control the spread of COVID-19. ■ V. KRISHNAN

2 deaths, 93 new cases in Delhi

77 of the news cases are from the evacuated Tablighi Jamaat centre

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Two deaths and 93 new COVID-19 cases were reported in Delhi on Friday, taking the total number of deaths to six and total cases to 386 in the city, according to the Delhi government.

This is the second highest number of cases reported in a single day so far in the city. Of the 93 new COVID-19 positive cases, 77 are people from a centre run by the Tablighi Jamaat in Nizamuddin, which has been evacuated by the authorities.

A total of 259 people from the centre have tested positive for COVID-19 so far in Delhi alone — this is 67.1% of

the total COVID-19 cases reported in Delhi so far.

Till Thursday, Delhi had 293 cases of COVID-19.

Thursday, Wednesday, and Monday had recorded the biggest single-day jumps till then in the city, with 141, 32 and 25 cases respectively.

COVID-19

"Of the two people who died, one person is a 36-year-old man from Tamil Nadu and is connected to the Markaz (centre) event. He died on March 31 and his test came positive today," an official said. The second person is a 70-year-old man from

Delhi who died late on Thursday night and he was not connected to the Markaz centre. "We are still tracing how he got infected," the official said.

'79% positive'

"All the people from the Markaz who have been taken to hospitals (536) have been tested and many of the results are still awaited. Till now, 79% of them have tested positive," a Delhi government official told *The Hindu*.

They official said the authorities had also checked and evacuated about 400 people from other mosques in the city, who had visited the Markaz in March.

"From these people, the ones with symptoms have been moved to hospital and others have been moved to quarantine facilities. They will be tested from tomorrow and only then will we know whether they are infected or not," the official said.

The government on Friday launched a helpline to provide updated information. Introducing a COVID-19 helpline chatbot to provide all information pertaining to COVID-19, Mr. Kejriwal said, "The government is issuing a WhatsApp number today, which will provide you with all the information related to the coronavirus."

Over 7,000 fishermen from A.P. stranded in Gujarat's Veraval

They are stuck in their boats anchored at the harbour

MAHESH LANGA
AHMEDABAD

The countrywide lockdown forced by the COVID-19 pandemic has left thousands of migrant fishermen from Andhra Pradesh stranded at the Veraval fishing harbour in Gujarat, one of the country's largest.

"More than 7000 fishermen, mostly migrant labourers from Andhra Pradesh and a few hundred from villages in Saurashtra region are stranded at Veraval due to the lockdown," Ritesh Fofandi, a community leader and owner of Samudra Sea Foods company, told *The Hindu* from Veraval.

They are stuck in their boats that have been anchored at the harbour after they returned from deep sea fishing expeditions.

According to Mr. Fofandi, there are around 4500 fishing boats or trawlers at Veraval harbour on the Saurashtra coast. "Boat owners have made arrangements for their food, but the problem is that all of them have to live on



The fishermen had returned from deep sea fishing expeditions.

the boats as there are no other arrangements to shelter thousands of people," he said.

Around 10-12 workers live in a mid sized trawler, where social distancing is impossible to maintain. They do practically everything, from cooking and eating to bathing and sleeping, on the boat.

He said that these workers can only go home after train services resume. There is no other means of transportation as their villages are over 2000 km away.

When the government imposed the lockdown to contain the spread of Coronavirus epidemic, most of these workers would have been in mid seas. When they returned to the harbour, everything was shut.

"No fishing trips because of lockdown, as fish processing has stopped. Transportation has been affected, no ice is being produced to store the fish stock... the entire supply chain has been derailed," a leading marine food exporter from Overlunry told *The Hindu*.

Normally, migrant fishermen return to their native places from May onwards and come back in August for the next fishing cycle. Fishing activities are not allowed during the monsoon.

Gujarat, as the country's largest seafood producer, draws thousands of migrants, called "Madrasis" locally, from Vizianagaram, Srikakulam and Visakhapatnam to work on mechanised fishing trawlers from August to April every year.

Treat patients with compassion: Mamata

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

COVID-19 patients should be treated with care and compassion, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Friday. She urged doctors to provide a yeoman service to them.

The total number of coronavirus patients went up from 34 to 38 in the past 24 hours in the State.

Ms. Banerjee appealed to

people to come together and stamp out the virus. Officials were running into resistance while raising exclusive hospitals for COVID-19 patients. Hospitals were not too keen to treat these patients. "Please do not do this. The job is to provide self service. Do we expect that the patients would not visit the hospitals?" she said.

"Even people are not letting [the authorities] cre-

mate the bodies of the coronavirus victims. I am told by experts that the deceased cannot carry the virus," she said.

Ms. Banerjee said the government had opened 206 quarantine centres, where 5,165 persons had been admitted. While 3,218 were discharged, 1,892 were under treatment. The Health Department designated 59 hospitals for COVID-19 patients.

INTERVIEW | ROHIT KUMAR SINGH

'Ruthless containment' is key to controlling virus spread

'Despite the hardships, people have accepted our strict decisions, and are complying with the guidelines'

Rohit Kumar Singh, Additional Chief Secretary (Medical & Health), steers the huge health workforce in Rajasthan, which is toiling round the clock to tackle COVID-19 and control the spread of the novel coronavirus. He discusses the strategies to deal with the situation in an interview to Mohammed Iqbal in Jaipur on Friday.

What are the special steps the Medical & Health Department is taking in Rajasthan to tackle COVID-19, which are different from other States?

■ 'Ruthless containment', which we have adopted at the hotspots of infection, is the key to controlling the spread of coronavirus. Despite the hardships, people have accepted our strict decisions, and are complying with the guidelines. You have to weigh what you want — people's comfort or spread of the disease. We also went to

all households in the affected areas for screening. For example, we touched 40 lakh people in the worst-affected Bhilwara district, while the figure for the entire State is 4.16 crore.

Did the screenings lead to identification of COVID-19 positive cases?

■ After going to every individual in Bhilwara district and asking them about symptoms, we identified 14,000 people who had influenza-like condition. We kept track of them and if anyone

showed the COVID-19 symptoms, along with a history of contact or travel, he or she was isolated. We have followed a very structured standard operating procedure.

What is the purpose of the 11-day-long "all down curfew", which has started in Bhilwara on Friday?

■ We wish to cover every person who might have been left out. The figure of recovery of COVID-19-positive people in Bhilwara is very encouraging. Of the 26 infected persons, 17 have recovered. The strategy is: Don't let the virus spread and treat the people who are already infected. The government is working on both fronts.

Will the random sampling also help prevent the



There were some instances of attacks on doctors because of the emotional and social issues involved

community spread?

■ Because of the nature of the disease, there might be the people hovering around in the sub-clinical stage. They may not be showing

symptoms, but they are carriers. The community sampling involves rapid test, instead of a diagnostic procedure. If there is a probability that someone is carrying the virus, we start isolating them and go for confirmation.

After Bhilwara, the Ramganj area in Jaipur has emerged as a major hotspot. How are you tackling the situation there?

■ Ramganj is our bigger worry now. The character of the area is different, as it is densely populated and has small and congested houses. People live there in close proximity, and it is not possible for them to maintain social distancing. We have been carrying out an intense contact tracing there since the

first case was detected and have asked the people to keep distance from the suspected cases. Only today, two bus-loads of people were sent to an isolation facility after being asked to live separately for some days until the disease settled down. The good news from Ramganj is that no COVID-19-positive person has come up in the 170 tests we conducted since Thursday.

Are Tablighi Jamaat members who have returned to their native places or travelled to different towns after the attending the Delhi event emerging as a greater risk?

■ Tablighi Jamaat members are, indeed, a big risk. The infection has emerged in the districts such as Dholpur,

Bharatpur, Churu and Tonk, which were earlier unaffected. Tonk is a big hotbed now, with 17 cases. But the saving grace is that they have been largely identified. We have persuaded them to give details about where they went and whom they met. Our attempt is to isolate them and test them.

Were there some instances of attacks on doctors and health workers who went to the affected areas in the State?

■ There were some instances because of the emotional and social issues involved in this event scenario. But the situation has improved with the protection given by the police to the teams of the Medical and Health Department. I have received reports

that the people gathered in large numbers to get screened at several places when they were convinced about the exercise.

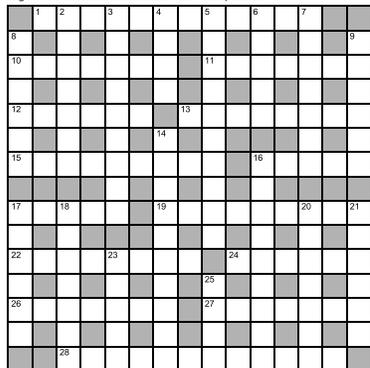
Will the situation be under control in Rajasthan by the time the nationwide lockdown is lifted?

■ I believe the situation will come under control, unless an unforeseen incident like the Nizamuddin centre's infection takes place. Before the Tablighi Jamaat cases were detected, we were reasonably in control till April 1. But these cases will be controlled, as they are very defined and structured. We are handling the entire set of Tablighi Jamaat members, not just those who attended the Delhi event, to be on the safe side.

Plum

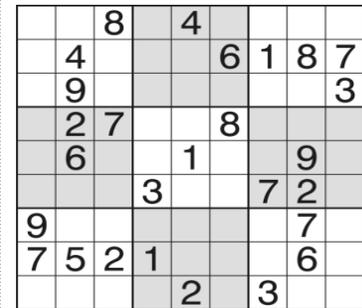
THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12901

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



- (set by Vulcan)
- 15 Financial expert more positive after change of rate (9)
 - 16 Try a flavour (5)
 - 17 With vacation starting off, knit (5)
 - 19 King's photo gets strong criticism (9)
 - 22 Leaves one woman after another (8)
 - 24 Simply occupied by training in public (6)
 - 26 Drink, breathe, drunk (4,3)
 - 27 Free-range eggs consumed with aromatic herb (7)
 - 28 Accomplishments native scheme brought about (12)
 - 5 Tree part figure reproduced (10)
 - 6 Top advocate in city (5)
 - 7 Monroe, say, with a basically cool hairdo (7)
 - 8 Without leader, group making noise (6)
 - 9 Thrash horse in pen (6)
 - 14 Pressure on an emperor to develop a particular empire (6,4)
 - 16 Ending anecdote with silence, say (9)
 - 17 A line about your old-fashioned dignitary (6)
 - 18 Country, not a large one (7)
 - 20 Put an end to being jazzy — leaves out perhaps an ornament (7)
 - 21 Old country with pricey, lonely housing (6)
 - 23 Suit and tie (5)
 - 25 Finally completed an over (4)

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12900

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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



■ ACROSS
1 It is wavering in a frenzy state (4,8)
10 English club magazine (7)
11 She flies from Scandinavia to Romania (7)
12 Quarters in a vessel where dogs are kept (6)
13 Corrupt nationalist leader's government ending after 10 years (8)

■ DOWN
2 Significance of German city church (7)
3 Teens seen rioting in this state (9)
4 Do nothing during paid leave (4)

U.S. reports record 1,169 virus fatalities

Worldwide, confirmed new coronavirus infections surged past 1 million and deaths topped 54,000

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON

The U.S. recorded 1,169 COVID-19 fatalities in the past 24 hours, the Johns Hopkins University tracker showed on Thursday, the highest one-day death toll recorded in any country since the global pandemic began.

The toll reflected figures reported by the university between 8:30 p.m. local time on Wednesday and the same time on Thursday. The grim record was previously held by Italy, where 969 people died on March 27.

The U.S. has now recorded 6,069 coronavirus deaths since the start of the pandemic.

Globally, Italy has the highest total death toll, with 13,915 dying of the disease there, followed by Spain at 10,003.

The U.S. also recorded more than 30,000 new cases of COVID-19 in the same 24-hour period, bringing the total number of officially reported cases in the country to more than 2,43,000, according to Johns Hopkins.

The outbreak has snapped the U.S.' record-breaking hiring streak of nearly 10 years, while U.S. and European medical workers struggling to save ailing patients on Friday watched supplies of medicine, protective equipment and breathing machines dwindle by the hour.

Swift end
Jobs numbers released in the U.S. showed the virus dealt a swift end to the nation's 50-year-low unemployment rate, with employers reporting hundreds of thousands of job cuts in March.

The true picture, though, is far worse, because the government figures do not include the last two weeks, when nearly 10 million

thrown-out-of-work Americans applied for unemployment benefits.

Worldwide, confirmed infections surged past 1 million and deaths topped 55,500, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

Europe's three worst-hit countries — Italy, Spain and France — surpassed 30,000 dead, or over half of the global toll. From those countries, the view remained almost unrelentingly grim, a frightening portent for places like New York, the epicentre of the U.S. outbreak, where bodies are being loaded by forklift into refrigerated trucks outside overwhelmed hospitals.

Shortages of critical equipment led to fierce competition between buyers from Europe, the U.S. and elsewhere. A regional leader in Paris described the scramble to

COVID-19

find masks a "worldwide treasure hunt." Governor Andrew Cuomo warned that New York could run out of ventilators in six days.

With infections spreading, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has asked the Pentagon for 1,00,000 more body bags.

In Florida, hundreds of passengers on a cruise ship where four people died were finally being allowed to disembark after a days-long stand-off. More than a dozen critically ill patients were taken to hospitals, while people healthy enough to travel were taken to the airport for chartered flights home.

One Spanish hospital turned its library into an intensive care unit. In France, space was set aside for bodies in a vast food market. The French prime minister



In short supply: Healthcare workers at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York demanding critical Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for personal safety and effective patient care. •REUTERS

Spain reports 900 deaths

REUTERS
MADRID

Spain's COVID-19 death toll rose to a total of 10,935 from 10,003 on the previous day, the Health Ministry said on Friday, but showed the first fall in a daily death toll since March 26. A total of 932 people died from the disease in 24 hours, down from 950 people in the previous daily toll, the figures showed. The number of cases rose to 117,710 on Friday up from 110,238 on Thursday, the Ministry added.

said he is "fighting hour by hour" to ward off shortages of essential drugs used to keep COVID-19 patients alive.

France cancelled its high-school exit exam known as the Baccalaureate, a first in the 212-year history of the test.

Some glimmers of hope emerged that Italy, as well as

'German curbs are working'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BERLIN

Measures taken by German officials to slow the spread of the coronavirus are starting to show effect, Lothar Wieler, the president of Robert Koch Institute for disease control said on Friday. He stressed that restrictions on public life "need to be maintained." He explained that each person who had caught the virus was now infecting only one person on average, where previously that number had been as high as seven.

Spain and France might be flattening their infection curves and nearing or even passing their peaks in daily deaths.

Elsewhere in Europe, officials began talking tentatively about how to lift lockdowns that have staved off the total collapse of strained health systems but also bat-

China releases \$56 bn to banks

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

China's central bank said on Friday it would cut the reserve requirements for smaller banks to release around 400 billion yuan (\$56.3 billion) in liquidity, a move to counter the COVID-19's impact on enterprises. The People's Bank of China said it will also slash the interest it pays on financial institutions' excess reserves to encourage them to use the cash rather than store it with the central bank.

tered economies.

Austria said it will set out a timetable next week for what could be "a slow start-up" of closed parts of the economy. The head of Germany's national disease control centre said he expects that any easing of the lockdown, which this week was extended to April 19, will be staggered.

Google publishes data on people's movements

Users travel information in 131 countries to aid health officials

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
REUTERS
PARIS

Alphabet Inc's Google has published charts showing how the coronavirus has brought hard-hit Italy to a standstill, led to runs on grocery stores around the world and prompted a stark drop in movement of people.

The analysis of location data from billions of Google users' phones is the largest public dataset available to help health authorities assess if people are abiding with government orders issued to rein in the virus.

The reports on users' movements in 131 countries will be made available on a special website and will "chart movement trends over time by geography", according to a post on one of Google's blogs.

Trends will display "a percentage point increase or decrease in visits" to locations like parks, shops, homes



In India, visits to retail and recreation locations dropped by 77%. •REUTERS

and places of work, not "the absolute number of visits," said the post, signed by Jen Fitzpatrick, who leads Google Maps, and the company's chief health officer Karen DeSalvo.

For example, in France, visits to restaurants, cafes, shopping centres, museums or theme parks have plunged by 88% from their normal levels, the data showed.

Italy and Spain, two of the hardest-hit countries, both saw visits to retail and re-

creation locations such as restaurants and movie theaters plunge 94%. The U.K. had declines of more than 80% while India, which went into a sudden 21-day lockdown on March 25, was also notable at 77%.

"We hope these reports will help support decisions about how to manage the COVID-19 pandemic," the Google execs said.

Like the detection of traffic jams or traffic measurement Google Maps, the new reports will use "aggregated, anonymised" data from users who have activated their location history.

'No identifiable data'
No "personally identifiable information," such as an individual's location, contacts or movements, will be made available, the post said.

The reports will also employ a statistical technique that adds "artificial noise" to raw data, making it harder for users to be identified.

Pak. mosques remain open as cases rise to nearly 2,500

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD

Several mosques remained open on Friday across Pakistan and people offered prayers there despite a government ban on big congregational gatherings in order to curb the spread of SARS-CoV-19 that has killed 37 people and infected nearly 2,500 others in the country.

The Sindh government had announced curfew like restriction from 12 noon to 3

p.m. to stop people from visiting mosques, while the Punjab government had issued fatwa for people to offer prayer in their homes.

The mosques made announcement urging people to pray at home, but some people defied the instruction and visited mosques, according to reports. Some clerics also encouraged people to attend prayers in mosques.

"The government and

police are making statements to create a sense of fear. Nothing will happen. Karachi is a city of 20 million, the government cannot implement its decision in every nook and cranny, the prayer leader of the Jamia Mosque Quba told *The Express Tribune*.

Majority of mosques in Karachi followed government orders. However, some continued to hold regular prayers.

IN BRIEF



Corona beer producer halts brewing

MEXICO CITY
The Mexican brewer of Corona beer said on Thursday it was suspending production because of the health emergency in the country over the COVID-19 pandemic. The Mexican government has ordered the suspension of all non-essential activities until April 30 to slow the spread of coronavirus. •AFP

Israel arrests Palestinian official in east Jerusalem

JERUSALEM
Israeli police arrested the Palestinian minister for Jerusalem affairs on Friday for allegedly violating an Israeli ban on Palestinian political activities in east Jerusalem. Fadi al-Hindi's office circulated surveillance camera footage showing police searching his home with dogs. •AP

Democrats postpone convention

It will be held in mid-August, a week before the event to renominate Trump

REID J. EPSTEIN
KATIE GLUEC
WASHINGTON

The Democratic National Committee on Thursday postponed its presidential convention because of the COVID-19 outbreak, moving it from mid-July to mid-August, and making it the largest political event to be upended by the public health crisis sweeping the country.

The convention will still be held in Milwaukee, as planned, the week of August 17, officials said, a week before Republicans plan to gather in Charlotte, North Carolina, to renominate President Donald Trump. The adjacent dates mean that both parties will be using expert health data from the same time frame to assess the safety of bringing together thousands of people at one event — and, ultimately, deciding whether the benefit



Safety comes first: A file photo of Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden at a campaign rally in Detroit. •AP

of staging the conventions outweighs the medical risks.

The timing sets the stage for a high-stakes test of wills and judgment over the next four months between Mr. Trump and former Vice President Joe Biden, the likely Democratic nominee, as the public health crisis paralyses the country through the summer. Neither will want to be the first to cancel his convention.

The decision to postpone the Democratic convention was made over the previous two days, officials involved in the planning said, but the issue was amplified on Wednesday night by Mr. Biden, who called for rescheduling the convention during an appearance on "The Tonight Show."

Tom Perez, the chairman of the Democratic National Committee, said he did not

consider moving the event to September, after the Republicans', and was averse to conducting a virtual convention that would be less likely to attract hours of television coverage.

Safe convention

"We're going to hold a very exciting and safe convention in Wisconsin to highlight our nominee and to make sure that people know the values of the Democratic Party and what we're fighting for," he said in a telephone interview.

"There are things you can do online, but there is something about the communal spirit that is important and people feed off of," said David Axelrod, a senior official in Barack Obama's presidential campaigns. "From a TV standpoint it's hard to have the same impact if you're cobbling together a series of remotes." NY TIMES

President's family firm faces financial woes

It is seeking to delay loan repayments

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NEW YORK

U.S. President Donald Trump's family company is asking creditors such as Deutsche Bank if it can delay loan payments as the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic deepens, *The New York Times* reported on Thursday.

The Trump Organization — the conglomerate of companies created by Mr. Trump and now run by his sons — is, like many others, losing money as the restrictions put in place to lessen the spread of the deadly COVID-19 bring the U.S. to a grinding halt.

The NYT said the company contacted Deutsche Bank, seen as the only major lender willing to do business with the company, at March-end for extension of some repayment deadlines. "These days, everybody is



Donald Trump

working together," Mr. Trump's son Eric, the Organization's executive vice-president, said.

The Trump Organization still owes Deutsche Bank several hundred million dollars, according to the *Times*. The group also contacted Palm Beach County to see if it could suspend rent payments on the Trump International Golf Club, a 27-hole course and clubhouse on more than 120 hectares.

Statue of Soviet Gen. removed in Prague

ASSOCIATED PRESS
PRAGUE

A district in the Czech capital, Prague, went on Friday ahead with a plan to remove the statue of a Soviet Second World War commander.

The Russian Embassy in Prague condemned the move, saying it sent a pro-foreign note to the Czech Foreign Ministry about the "demolition."

General Ivan Stepanovic Konev led the Red Army forces that liberated Prague and large parts of Czechoslovakia from the Nazi occupation in 1945. His monument, unveiled in the Prague 6 district in 1980 when the country was occupied by Soviet troops, has been a source of controversy.

On Friday morning, a crane at the site lifted the statue from its place.

Cuban doctors fighting virus around world

Havana has deployed 593 doctors to at least 14 countries to fight the disease, despite U.S. opposition

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Labelling the doctors and nurses as both exploited workers and agents of communist indoctrination, the U.S. has notched a series of victories as Brazil, Ecuador and Bolivia sent home thousands after leftist governments allied with Havana were replaced with ones friendlier to Washington.

The coronavirus pandemic has brought a reversal of fortune for Cuban medical diplomacy, as doctors have flown off on new missions to battle COVID-19 in at least 14 countries, including Italy and the tiny principality of Andorra on the Spanish-French border, burnishing the island's international image in the middle of a global crisis.



Medical diplomacy: Cuban doctors and medical professionals prepare to leave for Italy to fight the pandemic. •AP/FILE

"I am aware of the position of the United States, but we are a sovereign country and we can choose the partners with which we are going to have cooperation," Andorra Foreign Minister Marça Ubach said.

In the city of Crema in the hard-hit Lombardy region of

northern Italy, 52 Cuban doctors and nurses set up a field hospital with 32 beds equipped with oxygen and three ICU beds.

Symbolic moment

"This is a strongly symbolic moment because the Crema hospital has been going

through an extremely complicated situation from the start," Lombardy's top social welfare official, Giulio Gallera, said at the inauguration last week. "The number of patients who have filled and continue to fill the emergency room and departments has truly put the medical personnel to a hard test."

The U.S. has sought to cut off income to Cuba as part of a tightening of sanctions. And it continues to discourage countries from contracting Cuban medical workers despite the pandemic.

"The government of Cuba keeps most of the salary its doctors and nurses earn while serving in its international medical missions while exposing them to egregious labour conditions," the State Department said on

Twitter last week. "Host countries seeking Cuba's help for COVID-19 should scrutinize agreements and end labour abuses."

Cuba currently has about 37,000 medical workers in 67 countries, most in long-standing missions.

The most recent deployments of at least 593 doctors have also been to Suriname, Jamaica, Dominica, Belize, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Kitts and Nevis, Venezuela and Nicaragua, some of them reinforcing existing medical missions.

All have been billed as tied to the coronavirus epidemic, even though some of the countries have few confirmed cases so far. None of the agreements or financial terms have been made public.

Bill Withers, who sang 'Ain't No Sunshine', dies at 81

Three-time Grammy winner succumbed to heart problems

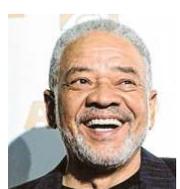
DERRICK BRYSON TAYLOR

Bill Withers, the legendary soul singer behind 1970s hits like *Lean on Me*, *Lovely Day* and *Ain't No Sunshine*, died on Monday in Los Angeles, his family said. He was 81.

The soulful singer and three-time Grammy winner died from heart complications, his family said.

"We are devastated by the loss of our beloved, devoted husband and father," the family's statement said.

"A solitary man with a heart driven to connect to the world at large, with his poetry and music, he spoke honestly to people and connected them to each other," it added.



Bill Withers

The family added, "in this difficult time, we pray his music offers comfort and entertainment as fans hold tight to loved ones."

Mr. Withers was well into his 30s when he began recording music, after growing up in a segregated coal-min-

ing town in West Virginia, serving in the Navy and working as an aircraft mechanic. But during his 14-year recording career, starting with the album *Just As I Am* in 1971, he wrote and performed songs that have become anthems around the world, drawn from gritty blues, R&B and the era's confessional style of lyrics.

Long after his de facto retirement from recording — he released his last album in 1985, after many battles with music industry executives — Withers entered the Grammy Hall of Fame in 1999. He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2015 by Stevie Wonder. NY TIMES

MARKET WATCH

	03-04-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	27,591	-2.39
US Dollar	76.13	-0.70
Brent oil	33.48	...

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	244.80	0.00
Asian Paints	1520.90	-82.30
Axis Bank	325.45	-33.20
Bajaj Auto	2033.75	-17.25
Bajaj Finserv	4510.75	8.85
Bajaj Finance	2207.50	-11.85
Bharti Airtel	423.95	2.60
Biocon	317.15	14.20
Britannia Ind	2563.25	-1.60
Cipla	449.20	35.45
Coal India	137.75	-1.70
Dr Reddy's Lab	3146.80	-51.80
Eicher Motors	12680.05	-321.55
GAIL (India)	80.90	5.15
Grasim Ind	454.70	-21.45
HCL Tech	405.80	-7.75
HDFC	1499.55	-83.95
HDFC Bank	813.85	-15.80
Hero MotoCorp	1582.05	-57.60
Hindalco	88.80	-2.85
Hind Unilever	2154.10	-25.55
KICL Bank	286.65	-24.50
IndusInd Bank	313.20	-29.05
Infratel	156.40	1.30
Infosys	585.70	-17.10
Indian Oil Corp	79.50	0.55
ITC	177.90	11.50
JSW Steel	140.70	-2.30
Kotak Bank	1140.85	-40.80
L&T	774.65	0.20
M&M	260.70	7.85
Maruti Suzuki	4011.50	-234.85
Nestle India Ltd.	15104.65	-549.90
NTPC	79.55	-1.45
ONGC	69.85	4.10
PowerGrid Corp	156.20	1.60
Reliance Ind	1700.45	-3.00
State Bank	175.50	-11.05
Shree Cement	15780.80	-765.85
Sino Pharm	375.95	32.40
Tata Motors	65.30	-2.65
Tata Steel	253.75	-12.60
TCS	1656.80	-54.55
Tech Mahindra	520.90	-9.70
Titan	862.80	-73.25
UltraTech Cement	3041.60	-99.05
UPL	298.10	-7.65
Vedanta	62.80	0.15
Wipro	180.00	-9.50
Zee Entertainment	124.35	3.45

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on April 03

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	75.97	76.29
Euro	81.96	82.31
British Pound	93.35	93.76
Japanese Yen (100)	70.04	70.34
Chinese Yuan	10.71	10.76
Swiss Franc	71.74	78.07
Singapore Dollar	52.91	53.14
Canadian Dollar	53.60	53.83
Malaysian Ringgit	17.42	17.54

IN BRIEF

RBI needs to monetise deficit, says SBI report

NEW DELHI
At a time when market appetite is low due to COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need to monetise deficit with the Reserve Bank subscribing to the primary issues of dated central government securities, a SBI report has suggested. PTI

Life turns turtle for MSMEs as lockdown chokes

Transporting men, machines and materials under strict curbs tests the sinews of enterprises located in smaller cities

MINI TEJASWI
BENGALURU

The lockdown ordered to stem the spread of COVID-19 has swept over millions of small and medium enterprises in tier-2 and -3 cities and across India like a tsunami.

Moving people and machines to facilitate work-from-home (WFH) options became a daunting task for many, as per industry executives of some mid-tier firms who narrate their harrowing experience.

In some cases, attempts to prove something as 'essential' turned into debates between business owners and local administrators. Consequently, many enterprises, across places such as Mysore, Hassan, Udupi, Kochi, Pune, Ahmedabad, Surat, Nagpur, Goa, Jaipur, Coimbatore and Salem suffered in terms of lack of business continuity and clarity, physical hardship and mental stress.

"It was nightmarish for many companies operating in Coimbatore and Salem. We were running [around]



The CII has urged all enterprises, which are still suffering connectivity or business continuity issues, to reach out to the industry association for assistance. •FILE PHOTO

for permissions to move people and computers. We could easily move people and systems between Bengaluru and Chennai, but in Salem, the rules were different. And eventually, we lost several days of productivity and our employees suffered a lot," explained Chocko Valliappa, CEO of IT services firm, Vee Technologies that employs 5,000 people across Bengaluru, Chennai and Salem. The situation was in stark

contrast with the promises of many State governments that of view with each other to attract investments to small cities in their regions.

Not enough time

Certain mid-tier firms are of the opinion that the lockdown came upon them all of a sudden though the government would have been contemplating it at least a few days before its introduction. "Over 300 of our em-

ployees in Bengaluru and Chennai were thrown out of their respective hostels soon after the lockdown. We arranged some stay for them in Salem and tried to bring them to Chennai. But authorities made us send them back," said Mr. Valliappa, whose company supports hospitals in the U.S. and in India by providing clinical documentation services.

COVID-19

Robosoft and its arm, 99Games, together employ 600 people across Mangaluru, Mumbai and Bengaluru. Rohith Bhat, founder-CEO at the company said, "Fortunately, we anticipated the trouble slightly in advance. Some of our customers in Japan [recently] alerted us; therefore, three days before the first lockdown call, we started moving our men and machines. But we went through a very tough time. "Had we waited until the complete lockdown announcement, we surely would have faced huge downtime issues like many others."

CII acts
Realising the gravity of the situation, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) sprang into action. It met the

respective State governments and industries departments to chalk out ways to ensure business continuity for the entire MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises) community in the country.

"We discussed a wide array of key topics with the Karnataka government and movement of people, material and machines was one of them," said Ramesh Ramadurai, vice chairman, CII-Karnataka. The CII has urged all enterprises, which are still suffering connectivity or business continuity issues, to reach out to the industry association for assistance. Pradeep Bhargava, president of Mahatma Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Agriculture (MCCIA) said most IT/ITES firms in Pune were able to shift to WFH mode with relative ease; however, other firms, including manufacturing companies, big and small, struggled as the task involved touch-points with facilities, staff, vendors and customers.

Resilience
The global death toll of the pandemic had crossed the 50,000-mark with more than 10 lakh confirmed cases. In India, the last few days have seen a greater rise in the number of new cases than they adding to investor concerns.

Incidentally, the impact of the record sales by overseas investors has been clearly visible in the stock markets with the benchmark Sensex registering its worst monthly fall in over 11 years. In March, the 30-share barometer lost a little over 23% (23.05% to be precise) which was the highest since October 2008 when it plunged 23.89%.

Foreign investors sell over ₹1 lakh-cr. securities in a month, for first time in history

But domestic institutions save markets the blushes, buying stocks worth ₹55,595 crore in March and arresting a further plunge

The Sensex registered its worst monthly fall in more than 11 years, declining 23% in March, the greatest percentage drop since October 2008

HIGHEST MONTHLY OUTFLOWS		HIGHEST MONTHLY INFLOWS	
Month	Net flows (₹ Cr)	Month	Net flows (₹ Cr)
March, 2020	-118,203	March, 2017	56,261
June, 2013	-44,162	March, 2019	48,751
November, 2016	-39,396	July, 2014	36,046
October, 2018	-38,906	February, 2012	35,228
May, 2018	-29,776	May, 2014	33,778
December, 2016	-27,111	January, 2015	33,688
September, 2018	-21,035	September, 2010	32,668
July, 2013	-18,124	March, 2014	31,663
August, 2015	-17,524	June, 2014	30,705
October, 2008	-17,205	March, 2010	29,438

ASHISH RUKHAIYAR
MUMBAI

For the first time in the history of the Indian capital markets, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have sold securities worth over ₹1 lakh crore in a single month.

As per data from the National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL), the cumulative net outflow from the debt and equity segments was pegged at ₹1.18 lakh crore in March – more than double the previous high of ₹44,000 crore witnessed in June 2013.

Further, both the equity and debt segments have individually registered new

Currently, the Sensex is trading over 53% lower than the intraday record high of 42,274 in January

highs in terms of monthly outflows of ₹61,973 crore and ₹60,376 crore, respectively.

COVID-19 concerns

According to market participants, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic that has affected stocks worldwide is the primary reason for such record outflows as foreign investors shy away from riskier assets and also, emerging markets.

Currently, the Sensex, which closed at 27,590.95 on Friday after falling 674.36 points, or 2.39%, is trading over 53% lower than its intraday record high of 42,273.87 touched in January.

Incidentally, the impact of the record sales by overseas investors has been clearly visible in the stock markets with the benchmark Sensex registering its worst monthly fall in over 11 years. In March, the 30-share barometer lost a little over 23% (23.05% to be precise) which was the highest since October 2008 when it plunged 23.89%.

Interestingly, buying by domestic institutional investors (DIIs), which include banks, insurance companies, mutual funds and domestic financial institutions, has been acting as a strong counter force to the selling by foreign investors.

As per BSE data, March also saw the highest-ever monthly net purchases by DIIs who bought equities worth ₹55,595.18 crore. This was again double that of the previous high of ₹26,033.9 crore registered in October 2018.

In the current calendar year, while FPIs have sold equities worth ₹51,832 crore – they were net buyers in January and February – DIIs have bought shares worth ₹74,554 crore.

Meanwhile, the voluntary retention route, or VRR, in debt securities, which was opened up for FPI investments in January, has seen an inflow of ₹4,165 crore in March while hybrid securities saw a marginal outflow of ₹19 crore, according to NSDL data.

Rice exports halted on supply chain disruption due to virus

Thailand seizes opportunity, inflates global prices

REUTERS

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI
Indian rice traders have stopped signing new export contracts amid the nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19, as labour shortages and logistics disruptions have hampered the delivery of even existing contracts, industry officials said.



The halt in exports from the world's biggest exporter is allowing rival countries such as Thailand to raise shipments in the short term and lift global prices, forcing millions of poor consumers in Africa to pay high prices. "Shipments have stalled as transport has become very difficult because of the lockdown. Drivers are not coming and labour is not available at mills and ports,"

than 44 countries. About 400,000 tonnes of non-basmati rice and 1,00,000 tonnes of basmati rice, meant for March-April delivery, are either stuck at ports or in the pipeline due to the lockdown, exporters said. New Delhi mainly exports non-basmati rice to Bangladesh, Nepal, Benin and Senegal, and premium basmati rice to Iran, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. As Cambodia, Vietnam and Myanmar curbed their rice exports, demand for Indian rice surged, but traders are not signing new contracts, said Nitin Gupta, vice-president of trader Olam India's rice business. Thailand, the only key exporter to offer rice currently, has seen its export prices soar to their highest in seven years this week.

Brent surges past \$33 on output deal hope

OPEC, allies working on unprecedented 10% reduction in global oil production

REUTERS

LONDON
Benchmark Brent crude oil futures climbed to as high as \$34.91 a barrel on Friday on rising hopes of a new global deal to cut global crude supply.

Brent crude futures were up 12.9%, or \$3.9, at \$33.83 a barrel by 6.51 p.m. IST. Brent soared as much as 47% on Thursday for its highest intraday percentage gain on record. It had closed up 21%.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude rose 8.8%, or \$2.23, to \$27.55 after jumping 24.7% on Thursday.

OPEC and its allies are working on a deal for an unprecedented production cut of about 10% of global supply, an OPEC source said.

Oil prices slumped 65% in the first quarter on a demand slump caused by the global COVID-19 outbreak and moves by Russia and



Stick move: A meeting of OPEC+ countries is scheduled for Monday to discuss production cuts. •REUTERS

Saudi Arabia to flood the market after their failure last month to extend much smaller OPEC+ supply cuts.

Azerbaijan Energy Ministry said, but details on the distribution of production cuts were thin on the ground. U.S. President Donald Trump said on Thursday that he had spoken with both Russian President Vladimir Putin and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and they had agreed to reduce supplies by 10 million

to 15 million barrels per day (bpd) out of total global supply of about 100 million bpd.

Mr. Trump said he did not make any concessions, such as agreeing to a U.S. production cut – a move forbidden by U.S. anti-trust legislation.

Trump-Putin meet

Both Mr. Trump and Mr. Putin are due to meet with their respective country's top oil producers on Friday.

Russia and Saudi Arabia both belong to OPEC+, but the United States does not.

"It does appear that momentum is growing for some form of output agreement," said analyst Harlan Matthews at Redburn Energy. "But there are huge obstacles to any output agreement on this scale, and even if it were to be implemented the market would remain chronically oversupplied in the near term."

Third TLTRO for ₹25,000 cr. on April 7

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

To ensure adequate liquidity in the system, especially in the corporate bond market, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday announced the third targeted long-term repo operation (TLTRO) on April 7 for ₹25,000 crore.

The central bank announced the TLTROs on February 6 and has pumped in ₹1 lakh crore since then. The TLTRO was announced on March 27. It has so far done two tranches worth ₹50,000 crore and the initial target is ₹1 lakh crore.

The second tranche was conducted for ₹25,000 crore on Friday. The new issue coming up on April 7 is for a three-year tenor, the central bank said.

M&M drops plan to fund Korean arm

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The board of Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. on Friday rejected a proposal to infuse any fresh equity in SsangYong Motor Company (SYMC) to help the Korean auto company tide over a difficult phase.

M&M's board of directors held a special meeting to review investment in SYMC and to discuss capital allocation in the light of the COVID-19 impact. The management and labour union of SsangYong had requested fresh injection of equity from M&M to help the company fund 500 billion KRW (\$406 million) of requirements over the next three years.

Skies clearing for airlines

Some international carriers gear up for limited operations

LALATENDU MISHRA
MUMBAI

The dark shadow cast by the COVID-19 pandemic on the global aviation industry seems to be gradually wearing away, with some international carriers gearing up either to start limited operations to select destinations to ferry stranded passengers or to commence regular schedules.

While Emirates has announced resumption of flights from its Dubai hub to London Heathrow, Frankfurt, Paris, Zurich and Brussels effective April 6, 2020, to carry only outbound passengers from UAE, Etihad Airways, from April 5, 2020, will operate a regular service starting with Seoul Incheon, followed by Melbourne,



flights a week to Frankfurt, Zurich, Brussels and Paris. Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, chairman and CEO, Emirates Airline and Group said, "These initial passenger services, although limited to travellers who meet the entry requirements set by the destination countries, will be welcomed by our customers seeking to return home to their countries and families." "Our network can only be restored with the easing of travel restrictions," he said. Singapore Airlines resumed limited flights to London, Frankfurt and Zurich. In April, a dozen flights each way will be operated to each of these destinations. Now it is operating flights to Los Angeles, Seoul and Sydney.

TAFE gesture to farmers of U.P., Rajasthan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Tractors and Farm Equipment Ltd. (TAFE) has unveiled a free tractor rental scheme for small and marginal farmers of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh for a period of 90 days from April 1 as they are facing distress following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The scheme will be available across 20 districts of Rajasthan and 25 districts of Uttar Pradesh, said Mallika Srinivasan, CMD, TAFE. On offer are 11,000 Massey Ferguson and Eicher tractors along with 50,000 implements in Rajasthan and 3,000 tractors and 15,000 implements in U.P.

Bajaj Auto March sales drop 38%

Two-wheeler exports climb 9%; domestic CV sales fall 53%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Bajaj Auto Ltd. has reported a 38% decline in sales of two-wheelers and commercial vehicles at 2,42,575 units for March 2020 compared with 3,93,351 units sold in the same period last year. The lockdown due to COVID-19 spread had impacted sales.

Two-wheeler sales in the domestic market were down 55% at 98,412 units as compared with 2,20,213 units sold in the same period last year. However, the company exported more two-wheelers during this month at 1,12,564 units against 1,03,325 units in the same period last year, up 9%. Including domestic and exports, two wheeler sales were down 35% at 2,10,976



units against 3,23,538 units sold in the same period last year. Domestic commercial vehicle (CV) sales were down 53% at 18,129 units as compared to 38,972 units sold in the same period last year. CV exports were down 56% at 13,470 units as compared to 30,841 units sold in the same period last year. In total, CV sales were down 55% at 31,599 units sold in the year-earlier period last year. For FY20, the firm sold a total of 46,15,212 units compared to 50,19,503 units sold in the previous year, a decline of 8%.

IN BRIEF



South African players symptom-free

JOHANNESBURG
The South African cricket team's chief medical officer Shaub Manjra has said that the players have completed a 14-day period of self-isolation after returning from India and they were symptom-free. The team returned from India on March 18 after the ODI series was called off due to the pandemic. But the players will remain in lockdown for the next two weeks. IANS

IOA contributes ₹71 lakh to PM-CARES Fund

NEW DELHI
The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has contributed a sum of ₹71,14,002 towards the PM CARES Fund. IOA also expressed gratitude to all the NSFs, State Olympic Associations and other federations/bodies for extending their support and humble contributions. IANS



UEFA tells clubs to complete the season

PARIS
UEFA and Europe's top clubs have stated their determination that the current football season should be played to a conclusion and threatened that teams may be excluded from the next Champions League if their domestic competitions are ended prematurely. In a joint letter released on Thursday, UEFA, the European Club Association (ECA), and the European Leagues body representing nearly a thousand clubs in 29 countries, said that they were working on the possibility of playing on into July and August if need be. AFP

FIH extends Pro League suspension

NEW DELHI
The International Hockey Federation has been forced to extend the suspension of FIH Pro League's second edition due to the pandemic and now plans to hold the ties in July and August, provided the current situation improves. PTI



Infantino says 'nobody knows' when football can resume

ASSOCIATION
FIFA boss Gianni Infantino admitted that "nobody knows" when football can resume around the world. "We all wish that we could have football tomorrow but unfortunately it's not possible and nobody in the world today knows when we will be able to play like before. Our world and our sport is going to be different when we return to normality. We have to make sure that football survives and that it can prosper once again." AFP

Premier League put off indefinitely

LONDON
Premier League clubs will ask players to take a combination of pay cuts and deferrals amounting to 30 percent of their salary due to the financial crisis caused by coronavirus, the league said in a statement on Friday. The Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) will meet with league and club officials to discuss the proposal on Saturday. A meeting between the 20 English top-flight clubs also agreed to indefinitely extend the suspension of the season until it is "safe and appropriate" for football to return. AFP

IOC revises qualification deadlines

Athletes now have up to June 29, 2021, to book their berths for Tokyo Games

OLYMPICS

UTTHRA GANESAN
NEW DELHI

The International Olympic Committee has revised its qualification deadline for the Tokyo Games to June 29, 2021.

Many yet to complete

The 2020 Olympics, postponed by a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has forced the IOC and International Federations to rework their qualification and tournament calendar. While some of the events, like hockey, have already completed their qualification processes and will not be affected, several, including badminton and track & field were yet to complete the same.

In a communiqué to National Olympic Associations, the IOC has now confirmed the new dates. "The new qualification period deadline is 29 June 2021, and IFs can



Extended wait: A man wearing a face mask takes a selfie next to a Tokyo 2020 Olympics countdown clock that has been adjusted for the new start date of July 23, 2021. *GETTY IMAGES

define their own qualification period deadlines, should the deadline be prior to this date. The revised final sport entries deadline has now been set for 5 July 2021," it

said. The IOC also reiterated its efforts to revise an overall final qualification system at the earliest, even as soon as mid-April, but admitted that specifics would only come later. "We understand that at this time these are unlikely to include the full details on the dates and locations of the specified events, recognising that these will follow later as

the impacts of COVID-19 and its related restrictions become clearer.

"We aim to finalise the adapted qualification systems by mid-April, with the details on specific events to follow when available. The priority remains to reflect, where possible, the allocation method/pathway of the original qualification systems for each sport," it added.

The IOC, while allowing international federations the discretion to tweak their rankings system accordingly, sought to ensure sport-specific balance between protecting those close to qualifying in 2020 and giving the top performers of 2021 a chance to qualify.

It also authorised IFs to decide on the age-eligibility of athletes who may not make the cut in 2020 but do so in 2021. While there is no upper age limit, sports like gymnastics (16 years), football (under-23) and boxing (17) have a minimum age.

PM Modi tells Indian sportspersons to 'boost morale'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged current and former Indian sportspersons on Friday to help "boost morale" and encourage people to adhere to a nationwide lockdown aimed at containing the coronavirus.

Modi held a video conference with 40 stars across various sports, including Sachin Tendulkar, Viswanathan Anand, P.V. Sindhu and Hima Das, his office said.

They have a "very important role to play in boosting the morale of the

nation as well as spreading the message of social distancing along with asking people to continuously follow advisories given during lockdown," said Modi.

Face challenges

He said traits learned in sport such as the "ability to face challenges, self-discipline, positivity and self-belief are the essential tools to combat the spread of the virus."

The athletes also "praised the leadership of the Prime Minister in this challenging times," according to the statement.

Key is to use this time effectively: Haridas

K. KEERTHIVASAN
CHENNAI

For the elite sportspersons, especially those aspiring to make it to the Olympics, this period is very crucial, according to Ajith Haridas, former National-level badminton player and chief mentor of Hatsun Badminton Centre, an exclusive residential badminton facility (Thiruthangal, Virudhunagar District),

How well they make use of the available resources and time during this period of lockdown and curfew will be the key to how they reach peak fitness during the Games, according to Ajith.

"The situation is unprecedented. If they use the time better during the lockdown, they might be able to get better results. What they do at home will make a huge difference. It is not difficult to maintain fitness. If you want



Ajith Haridas. *FILE PHOTO

to, there are always ways," said Ajith, who was a former National junior doubles champion.

The 45-year-old said for an intensive sport like badminton, fitness routine is a bit complicated given the situation, but players can still remain active.

"If you haven't done much in the 3-4 weeks, it will take time, probably 2-3 months to get back to peak form," he said.

Ajith said the sport re-

quires "endurance like a marathoner but not at the same level. For each rally it is different and there are ups and downs in every point."

"One needs to have tremendous leg strength, but not like a weightlifter, a bit supple. You have to be like a gymnast being able to get up [when you have slipped] and keep playing. You require strength, endurance, speed, agility and reflex," he observed.

At his home in Chennai, Ajith is planning new coaching ideas and strategies for each of his wards (personally) of which Rithvik Sanjeev and Siddhant Gupta are the most prominent junior players.

"Two-and-a-half years of our hard work are beginning to show. Now we are planning to send our players to more International tournaments," he said.

Mixed feelings for Ramanathan Krishnan

Playing now not a priority: Ramesh

WIMBLEDON

RAYAN ROZARIO
COIMBATORE

When The Championships was called off a couple of days ago due to COVID-19, many former champions expressed disappointment. Ramanathan Krishnan, who made the world take notice of India with his exploits at the prestigious event in the sixties, shared his views too.

"My immediate feeling about the cancellation was one of joy and sorrow," he told *The Hindu* from Chennai.

"It's sort of joy to me as it's going to save the players, the spectators and the others involved, from this virus threat. At the same time, it's one of sorrow as the players may have to miss the event for a year," he added.

Huge loss

Krishnan, a semifinalist in 1960 & '61 and who reached a world-ranking of No. 6, said that in a tennis player's career, losing one year of Wimbledon is a huge loss.

"It's so precious not only for the international stars but also for the Indian

players. I feel sad for them because we do not know whether they would carry the same form or confidence next year."

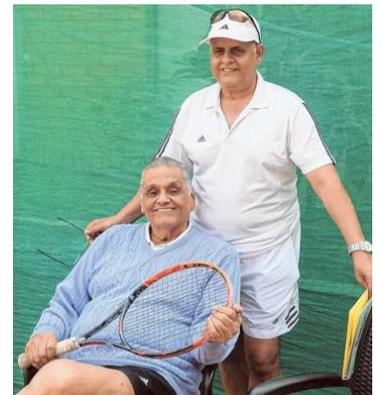
He was quick to add that one must not take a chance with corona. "Good luck to the players," he signed off.

His son, Ramesh Krishnan, who had reached the Wimbledon quarterfinals (1986), said these were quite extraordinary times. "Sorry this has to happen and, in the present scenario, we have plenty on our mind. Also, things are so uncertain that playing the sport is not a priority at the moment," said Ramesh.

The Wimbledon and French Open junior title-winner in 1979, Ramesh said it's going to be tough for all players.

"The main thing is to remain fit so that when things return to normalcy you can get going. For the older players such as Federer and Serena Williams, it's a year loss, which is a lot for them."

Ramesh, a regular visitor to Wimbledon, said, "I was looking forward to my travel this year, but that will have to wait for another year."



Right move: Tennis greats Ramanathan Krishnan and son Ramesh, though feeling sad at Wimbledon's cancellation, have welcomed the decision. *FILE PHOTO: RAJEEV BHATT

Ashish Kumar learning from Vijender's game

Aims to better India's Olympic middleweight record

BOXING

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

Middleweight boxer Ashish Kumar has not yet met Vijender Singh, but the 25-year-old from Himachal Pradesh draws inspiration from the Olympic bronze medalist.

For Ashish, who booked an Olympic quota place at the Asia/Oceania qualifying event in Amman last month, watching Vijender box is a learning process. "I have never met Vijender *bhai sahib*, but I like his counterattacks and long-range game," Ashish told *The Hindu*.

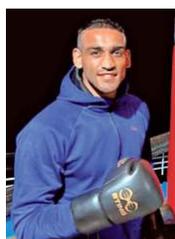
Special weight category
Ashish knows the importance of representing the country in the middleweight category, in which Indian boxers have given fine performances in the last three

Olympics. Vijender bagged the bronze medal in 2008 and made it to the quarterfinals in 2012, Vikash Krishan, a World Championships medalist, reached the last eight in 2016.

"My seniors have done well. Our middleweight boxers have set a high standard and I want to maintain this," said Ashish, who has been fighting in this weight category since 2012.

Ashish, who claimed silver at the Asian championships and gold at the Thailand Open, gained his quota place after overcoming some tough times. "I sustained a leg injury. Then, I lost my father. I am happy that, despite this, I could bring cheer to my family with success at the Olympic qualifying event.

"My family, which has some boxers and wrestlers,



Ashish Kumar. *SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

always supported me. My brother Johnny Chaudhary, an international wrestler, has backed me right from the start.

"After my father's death, he did not let me stay at home as the situation could have distracted me. He motivated me saying my father had always wanted me to

compete in the Olympics and win a medal," said Ashish.

Thanking JSW for its support, Ashish said, "When I badly needed a sponsor, they came forward."

Having achieved his first target of qualifying for the Olympics, Ashish wants to make the most of the additional time following the postponement of the Tokyo Games. "I now have more time to make myself stronger and better prepared."

Keeping in touch

In the time of lockdown, Ashish is doing his best to stay in touch with boxing. "We get inputs from our coaches through video conferencing. I stay indoors and do strength exercises and follow the training schedule given by the coaches," said Ashish.

Everyone keen for IPL to go ahead: Cummins

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SYDNEY

Pat Cummins, the costliest foreign player in the Indian Premier League, said everyone, including his team Kolkata Knight Riders, was still hopeful of the 13th edition of the T20 event to go ahead sometime later.

The Australian, however, conceded that the priority now was to minimise the risk of spreading the coronavirus.

The IPL was originally scheduled to start on March 29 in Mumbai but it was postponed to April 15 due to the worsening COVID-19 pandemic which has killed more than 53,000 people worldwide.

"Everyone is still really keen for it (IPL) to go ahead, but the priority is to minimise risk of it spreading,"



Pat Cummins. *FILE PHOTO

Cummins was quoted as saying by the Australian Associated Press.

India is currently under a lockdown until April 14, which has cast serious doubts over the future of the cash-rich event's 13th edition.

The 26-year-old Australian has been in constant touch with the KKR team which bought him for a whopping ₹15.5 crore.

Life more important than IPL: Raina

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The IPL can wait till millions of lives which are at risk due to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic are saved, felt veteran India batsman Suresh Raina.

Raina has already done his bit in the fight against the deadly virus by donating ₹52 lakh, one of the highest donations among elite sportspersons.

Asked about the IPL, which has been postponed to April 15 but is unlikely to take place in the near future, Raina said "it is all about life" at the moment.

"Life is most important at this point of time. IPL can surely wait."

Joshna moves to 11th spot

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Joshna Chinappa moved to 11 from 12 in the women's category as per the latest PSA world squash rankings released on Thursday. In the men's section, Saurav Ghosal remained on 13.

Vikram Malhotra jumped three places to 47, while Mahesh

Mangoankar moved into the top 50. He is ranked 49, a jump of two places from 51. Closing in on him was Ramit Tandon at the 53rd spot.



Joshna Chinappa. *FILE PHOTO: M. VEDHAN

Numbers reveal that women's cricket is fast gaining in popularity

The 2020 women's T20 World Cup was the most watched ICC event after the 2019 men's ODI World Cup

P.K. AJITH KUMAR
KOZHIKODE

Biju George was following the recent women's T20 World Cup closely. That wasn't surprising as he had been the fielding coach of the Indian team till recently.

Biju, though, was stunned to know that all his friends in his hometown of Thiruvananthapuram, too, had watched the mega event held in Australia.

He was in for a bigger 'shock' when the ICC released the viewership figures of the tournament: it was the most watched ICC event after the 2019 men's ODI World Cup. Across the digital channels, there were 5.4 billion viewing minutes in India



Wave of support: Fans at the ground and viewers across the globe made the women's T20 World Cup in Australia a grand success. *FILE PHOTO

alone. The Indian fans were in for a disappointment in the final, though, as the Women in Blue were compre-

hensively beaten by the host. That match was watched by 86,174 fans. Among them was former India seamer Snehal

Pradhan. "Both Cricket Australia and ICC deserve credit for making the World Cup such a big success," she told

The Hindu. "Though I wasn't surprised that it became such a big hit on television, I didn't expect it would become the ICC's second-most watched event."

Snehal said Cricket Australia had done a lot of work on the ground, while the ICC promoted the World Cup through its digital platforms well. "This World Cup was further proof that women's cricket is fast rising in popularity," she said.

Biju could not have agreed more. "When I joined the support staff of the Indian team, many of my friends did not even know that we had a national team," he said.

"India reaching the final of the 2017 World Cup, riding

on Harmanpreet Kaur's astonishing innings against Australia in the semifinal is, of course, the main reason for the change in fortune for women's cricket here.

"We should also give credit to the huge improvement in quality across the international teams."

Just curious!

Snehal said there was a time when people used to come to watch a match in India just out of curiosity.

"Years ago, I had played a game in front of a full house at Rajkot, but most spectators were there just to see how the girls played cricket," she said. "That is no longer the case."