

RS 10,350 CR CAPITAL INFUSION

Yes Bank revival plan unveiled: Top pvt banks step in, ban lifts in 3 days

NEW DELHI, MUMBAI, MARCH 13

TOP PRIVATE banks of the country including ICICI Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Axis Bank will join State Bank of India, the country's biggest bank, in picking up significant equity stakes in Yes Bank, investing a combined Rs 10,350 crore in the stressed lender.

The Union Cabinet Friday approved a reconstruction plan for Yes Bank under which SBI will acquire 49 per cent stake and the moratorium on deposit withdrawal and other transactions will be lifted within three days of the notification in the government gazette, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in a briefing.

Besides State Bank of India that had already announced capital infusion of Rs 7,250 crore, ICICI Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, HDFC and Axis Bank Friday said their boards have approved investment of Rs 1,000 crore, Rs 500 crore, Rs 1,000 crore and Rs 600 crore, respectively, in Yes Bank.

This is a unique rescue plan being piloted by country's major state-owned bank and private sector lenders under guidance of the Reserve Bank of India, aimed at visibly restoring depositors' trust in the banking and financial system of the country. Such a plan is likely to lower the threat of depositors pulling out their money from Yes Bank en masse when withdrawal restrictions are lifted. A clutch of other private in-

EQUITY INVESTMENT IN YES BANK	
BANK	AMOUNT IN ₹ Cr
SBI	7,250
ICICI Bank	1,000
HDFC	1,000
Axis Bank	600
Kotak Mahindra Bank	500
TOTAL	10,350

Source: Exchange filings by banks

ECONOMY

CRASH, PAUSE, RALLY: SENSEX SWINGS 5,380 PTS

WALL STREET BOUNCES BACK, OIL RECOVERS 5%

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Investors are also expected to pitch in with equity contribution.

"The decision to provide a reconstruction scheme keeps at its core the protection of depositors' interest. Keeps at its core providing stability to Yes Bank and also keeps at its core keeping a stable financial environment, banking system," Sitharaman said.

"After the notification of the scheme, within three (working) days the moratorium will be lifted and within seven days, a

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FIGHTING CORONAVIRUS

Death in Delhi, shutdown spreads to other states

Malls, restaurants in Karnataka; gyms, cinemas in Mumbai; more states invoke epidemic rules

NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

IN THE second coronavirus death in the country so far, a 68-year-old woman from West Delhi died at the Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital here on Friday. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said the woman had underlying conditions of diabetes and hypertension.

This comes a day after a 76-year-old man, who died on his way from Hyderabad to his hometown Kalaburagi (Karnataka) Tuesday, was confirmed to have tested positive. The man had returned from a month-long pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia and fallen ill with underlying conditions of asthma and hypertension.

"Death of a 68-year-old female from West Delhi (mother of a confirmed case of COVID-19), is confirmed to be caused due to co-morbidity (diabetes and hypertension). She has also tested positive for COVID-19. She had history of contact with a positive case (her son who had travel history to Switzerland and Italy between 5th to 22nd February, 2020)," the health

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Indian cricket captain Virat Kohli at Lucknow airport on Friday. The ODIs against South Africa in Lucknow and Kolkata have been cancelled. Vishal Srivastav

Virus thaws freeze: Let us join hands, fight it together, PM to SAARC

NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

TAKING SOME of India's neighbours by surprise, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday proposed that leaders from South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries should chalk out a plan to fight the coronavirus pandemic, starting with a discussion

via "video-conferencing". Given the urgency of the public health crisis, sources told *The Indian Express*, the video-conference could take place over the weekend. Among SAARC nations, India has so far recorded 82 cases followed by Pakistan (20), Maldives (8), Afghanistan (7), Bangladesh (3), Sri Lanka (2), and Nepal and Bhutan (1 each).

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EXPLAINED

E. Response is key

WITH THE coronavirus looming large, India's perceived U-turn on its engagement with SAARC has opened a new window for cooperation. But how the eight-member grouping responds will be the real test — for the public health crisis and diplomacy in the region.



INSIDE

EUROPE IS NOW EPICENTRE OF VIRUS, SAYS WHO

MAN QUARANTINED AT MANESAR TESTS POSITIVE

PAGES 4, 8, 16, 17

EUROPE'S GROUND ZERO

81 is mean age of Italy's dead, most had conditions but felled by virus: Lancet

NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

THE MEAN age of the 827 coronavirus deaths in Italy until March 11 is 81 years and more than two-thirds of them had diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, or cancer, or were former smokers, according to a paper published in *Lancet* Friday.

Outside China, Italy has been the worst hit by the virus with over 17,000 cases and 1266 deaths reported until Friday prompting WHO to declare Europe as the new epicentre of the pandemic.

Of the patients who died in Italy, 42.2% were aged 80-89 years, 32.4% were between 70 and 79 years, 8.4% were aged 60-69 and

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Hoarding shaming: As SC refers to larger bench, UP brings a law

LUCKNOW, MARCH 13

A DAY after its challenge to the Allahabad High Court order directing it to take down name-and-shame hoardings, carrying photographs and details of people accused of violence during anti-CAA protests, was referred to a larger bench of the Supreme Court, the UP Cabinet Friday cleared the draft Uttar Pradesh Recovery of Damage to Public and Private Property Ordinance, 2020.

State Cabinet Minister Suresh Khanna said the decision had



HC ordered UP govt to take down the hoardings. File

been taken in view of the Supreme Court's observations on different petitions regarding damage to public property. "An incident has been highlighted in

newspapers recently. We have decided to bring an ordinance for the same. UP Cabinet has unanimously cleared the Uttar Pradesh Recovery of Damage to Public and Private Property Ordinance, 2020," he said.

While hearing different petitions, the Supreme Court, Khanna said, had observed that public and private properties get damaged during political processions, illegal agitations, strikes etc, and that there was need for a strict law. He said the court had also observed that such protests should be video-graphed, and there ought to be a

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ASSEMBLY PASSES RESOLUTION

Stick to 2010 NPR, no NRC... hurts Muslims, Hindus: Delhi House

NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

OBSERVING THAT NPR will be followed by NRC which has "agitated" the country like no other issue "since Independence", the AAP-dominated Delhi Assembly passed a resolution Friday, appealing to the Centre to scrap the scheduled updation of the national population register from April 1, or to restrict it to the 2010 format.

The discussions that preceded the passage of the resolution saw Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal

delivering a sharp takedown of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's attempt to delink NPR and NRC, saying such statements hardly matter as none other than President Ram Nath Kovind has declared in Parliament that NRC will be implemented.

Kejriwal and AAP leaders, who have so far stayed away from the largely Muslim-led anti-CAA/NRC protests in the city, repeatedly emphasised that NPR and NRC will negatively impact not just Muslims, but Hindus as well. In fact, state Environment Minister Gopal Rai

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Farooq with family after his release in Srinagar. Shuaib Masoodi

221 days later, Farooq is released, he says my freedom 'incomplete'

SRINAGAR, MARCH 13

TWO DAYS after extending former Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah's detention under PSA by another three months till mid-June, the Jammu and Kashmir administration Friday revoked the order and set him free.

Abdullah, the three-time former CM, National Conference president and Member of Parliament from Srinagar, has been set free after 221 days. He was under preventive detention first, and charged under the Public Safety Act in September. His detention was last extended on March 11 for three months.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



Just after Friday prayers, wearing a black pheran and his

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CANADA

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INSIDE



CONG'S SINGHVI HAS A BILL: ENFORCE TWO-CHILD NORM

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Video clip that convicted 2 juveniles in Pehlu Khan lynching was not put on record in acquittal of six

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

DEEP MUKHERJEE JAIPUR, MARCH 13

A JUVENILE Justice Board in Rajasthan's Alwar district Friday sentenced and sent two teenagers convicted of the April 1, 2017 lynching of Pehlu Khan to a 'surakshit bal grah' (special home) for three years, the maximum punishment for such cases. The board led by Principal Magistrate Sarita Dhakad had,

last week, convicted the two teenagers — both minors when Khan was lynched — after finding them guilty on the basis of video evidence.

"The Juvenile Justice Board sentenced the two today to spend three years each in a correction home," Bhiwadi Superintendent of Police Amandeep Singh Kapoor told *The Indian Express*.

Pehlu Khan, 55, had died of injuries on April 3, 2017, two days after he was assaulted by self-styled cow vigilantes near Behror while transporting cattle. "The Juvenile Justice Board



Pehlu Khan died on April 3, 2017

sentenced the two teens after convicting them under sections 147 (rioting), 341 (wrongful restraint), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 427 (mischief causing damage to the amount of Rs 50) of the IPC along with section 302 (murder) IPC read with section 149 (every member of unlawful

assembly guilty of offence committed in prosecution of common object) IPC," said S Sengathir, Inspector General of Police, Jaipur range.

The case against another minor accused is currently under trial in a juvenile court in Alwar.

In August 2019, the Court of the Additional District Judge Number 1 in Alwar had acquitted all six men accused of assaulting and murdering Khan, giving them the benefit of doubt. It had also observed that the Rajasthan Police probe had "serious shortcomings".

Shortly after the verdict

which acquitted the six accused, the Congress government constituted a special investigation team (SIT) to identify lapses and irregularities in the investigations. After the SIT report highlighted the lacunae at various levels, the state appealed against the Alwar court's verdict in the Rajasthan High Court.

According to Ram Kishor Choudhary, Sub-Inspector of Bahror police station, the two

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RELATED REPORT

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Yes Bank revival Pehlu Khan case

new board will be constituted," Sitharaman said, adding that the notification will be issued "very soon".

The government's quick revival plan comes in the backdrop of a sharp fall in the markets over the last four weeks leading to a decline of around 20 per cent in the Sensex at BSE and Nifty at NSE. Market participants say that the intensity of the implementation of reconstruction plan and moving the moratorium period ahead of previous deadline, also stems from the fact that there is a panic situation in the market because of the corona pandemic and a delayed response on the bank's revival would have further set back depositor and consumer sentiment.

There will be two directors from the SBI on the new board of the Yes Bank and the administrator will vacate the office within 7 days of notification and new board will take charge.

On March 5, the RBI imposed a moratorium on Yes Bank, restricting withdrawals to Rs 50,000 per depositor till April 3. The RBI also superseded the board and placed it under an administrator, Prashant Kumar, former deputy managing director and CFO of SBI. For private investors, there will be a three-year lock-in period on 75 per cent of their investments in Yes Bank. However, the lock-in period for SBI would be only for the 26 per cent of the shareholding.

The authorised capital of the lender has been increased to Rs 6,200 crore from Rs 1,100 crore, she said. In the draft reconstruction plan, the authorised capital was proposed at Rs 5,000 crore. This is being done to ensure higher capital infusion is possible in the bank at a later stage.

On Thursday, SBI said it will invest a total of Rs 7,250 crore in Yes Bank, picking up a maximum of 49 per cent equity in the lender.

The Yes Bank rescue is different from past rescue efforts in the financial sector, when a failing bank would be merged with a state-owned lender. "This will ensure that the bank is professionally run, with a strong backing, without putting any negative burden on the SBI. Even after writing down stressed assets and making provisions, Yes Bank (after fresh investments) will have significant capital to expand growth," a government official said.

Previous mergers had mostly negative implications on the acquiring bank. Oriental Bank of Commerce bailed out the troubled lender Global Trust Bank in 2004, which lent heavily to individuals speculating in the stock market. Last year, the Life Insurance Corporation, being nudged by the government, and taken over IDBI Bank, infusing much needed capital alongside the government in the bank.

"This investment (of Rs 1000 crore) is likely to result in ICICI Bank Ltd holding in excess of 5 per cent shareholding in Yes Bank," ICICI Bank said in a regulatory filing with Bombay Stock Exchange. Yes Bank's financial results for October-December quarter will be released today. In a statement to the BSE, HDFC said its investment in 100 crore equity shares at Rs 10 each will result in the Corporation holding over 5 per cent stake in Yes Bank, and 75 per cent of the investment will be locked in for three years.

After the initial round of equity infusion in Yes Bank, the government expects next round to happen at market prices. "The price of Rs 10 is being offered only till such time Yes Bank is under RBI's mandated administration period. After the administrator vacates office, and new management takes charge, then any investment will be at market prices as per SEBI regulations and," the government official said.

minors were convicted based on video footage which showed their involvement during the assault on Khan. "This is a major point of difference from the case against the six men acquitted last August," he said. In its judgement then, the court too had expressed surprise that the videos and photographs — on the basis of which the six accused were identified — were not taken on record.

Choudhary is the case officer in the case against the minors. A case officer monitors the trial process for the prosecution and ensures that all witnesses depose and all important evidence is taken on record.

Last year, the Rajasthan High Court had also quashed a case of illegal transportation of cattle for slaughter against Khan, his two sons, and the owner of a pick-up truck in which they were travelling.

Delhi House

said Hindus will be bigger sufferers going by the "example of Assam".

The resolution appealed to the "Government of India that in the interest of the Nation, particularly when the economy is witnessing worst ever down slide and unemployment is witnessing terrifying growth and with the threat of Corona pandemic looming large, it invests all its energies and resources on real needs of the people of India rather than unnecessary issues like NPR/NRC".

The resolution, which brought Delhi into the league of 10 states and Union Territories to have passed resolutions against NPR, "urges upon Government of India to withdraw and not carry out the whole exercise of NPR and NRC, (should the Government of India insist on going ahead, to restrict the exercise to NPR only with 2010 format with no new fields added to it)".

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and several AAP MLAs, including Atishi, Raghav Chadha, Dilip Pandey, voiced their opposition to NPR and NRC during the day-long special session, which also saw a discussion on the coronavirus threat.

Atishi said: "The Union government claims that NPR is being carried out under the Census framework. The BJP leaders and the ministers are lying. Census is carried out under the law enacted in 1948. Census data is not to be revealed in the public domain. Census law does not have any reference to NPR at all. The sole objective of NPR is NRC, nothing else. Attempts are being made to bring NRC through the backdoor. We want NPR to be stalled not just in Delhi, but across the country."

In his speech, Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri of the BJP said the discussions hold no significance in light of Shah's "clear articulation" in Parliament.

However, AAP leaders, including Kejriwal, pointed out that Shah himself has more than once explained the "chronology of how NPR, NRC and CAA" are inter-linked. "Amit Shah said that documents will not be sought under NPR. But he didn't say documents will not be sought under NRC. Information collected under NPR will be used to implement NRC. Agar NPR ho gaya, toh phir NRC hoga hi hoga. Even the President has said as much," Kejriwal said.

Touching on CAA, against which the AAP had voted in both Houses of Parliament, the CM said, "If you are Muslim, you will be sent straight to detention camps. And if you are Hindu, you will be asked if you are from Pakistan. If you are, your papers will be made and if not, you will be sent to detention centres. The more I read, I understand that the law favours Pakistani Hindus and is against Indian Hindus. The Hindus of this country will be forced to declare themselves as

Death in Delhi, shutdown spreads

ministry said in a statement.

"The son had returned to India on 23.02.2020. He initially was asymptomatic, but developed fever and cough after one day and reported to Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital on 7th March, 2020. As per protocol, the family was screened and since he and his mother had fever and cough, both were admitted," it said. The woman's condition worsened on March 9, when she developed pneumonia and was shifted to the Intensive Care Unit.

"She was a known case of diabetes and hypertension. She also tested positive for COVID-19. Her condition worsened and she was on ventilator support," Dr Nutan Mundeja, director-general of health services, Delhi government, said. The health department has traced 14 contacts of the woman, and 813 contacts of her son.

With the number of coronavirus cases in the country touching 82, several state governments announced measures to enforce social distancing. In Karnataka, which re-

ported the first death, the state government announced a lockdown of malls, cinema halls, pubs and night clubs for a week, after which the "situation will be reviewed". Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa also issued instructions to stop all "exhibitions, summer camps, sports events, marriage events, conferences and other events" for this period.

In Maharashtra, cinema halls, swimming pools, gyms and auditoriums have been shut in Mumbai, Thane, Navi Mumbai, Nagpur, Pune, Pimpri-Chinchwad, while schools and colleges have been shut in Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad till March 30.

Several other states, including Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, also announced closure of schools and colleges. Some have closed cinema halls, zoos and public parks too. Some of these measures have already been put in place in Delhi, Kerala, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand and Manipur.

While new cases were re-

ported from Kerala, Karnataka and Maharashtra in the last 24 hours, 10 patients have been discharged so far.

"Three patients in Kerala had earlier been discharged from hospital, and seven others have now also been discharged. As for the death in Karnataka, he was a 76-year-old man with comorbidities — asthma and hypertension. He had stayed abroad for over a month. The family took the patient to a private hospital against medical advice even as his test results were awaited. That is why we are repeatedly saying that our entire effort is to help us help you. We need cooperation from the community," said Law Agarwal, joint secretary, health ministry.

In a letter to chief secretaries and health secretaries of all states and UTs, Union Health Secretary Preeti Sudan said although the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, has been invoked, "we have to make it very clear that there is no epidemic of COVID 19 in the country."

The Centre has decided to allow international road traffic

only through 19 border checkpoints out of 37, and continue the suspension of Indo-Bangladesh cross-border passenger trains and buses.

Meanwhile, 44 Indians who were stranded in Iran were airlifted to Mumbai on Friday. "A special flight operated by Indian Air Force brought back 58 passengers from Iran on March 10, 2020. India also facilitated Mahan Air flight to bring back people from Iran, and today one flight with 44 passengers has landed in Mumbai. These passengers are being kept in quarantine at the Navy facility in Mumbai. Another Mahan Air flight is expected to land tomorrow in Delhi," the Health Ministry said.

"India is also coordinating treatment of positive people in Iran as per protocol. The government has also sent a team of four doctors from the Ministry of Health to Rome. They have just reached Rome with sufficient material and reagents to collect samples of Indians there for onward testing in India," it said.

Virus thaws SAARC freeze: Let's join hands, says PM

Over the last five years, India appeared to have virtually abandoned the SAARC process on the

issue of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism, and diplomats of at least three countries in the grouping told The Indian Express that the latest move has come as a "pleasant surprise". They said they were looking forward to cooperating on the issue.

On Friday, Modi tweeted: "Our planet is battling the COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus. At various levels, governments and people are trying their best to combat it. South Asia, which is home to a significant number of the global population, should leave no stone unturned to ensure our people are healthy."

He wrote: "I would like to propose that the leadership of SAARC nations chalk out a strong strategy to fight Coronavirus. We could discuss, via video conferencing, ways to keep our citizens healthy. Together, we can set an example to the world, and contribute to a healthier planet."

Within hours of the Prime Minister's tweet, leaders from Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, the Maldives, Afghanistan and Bangladesh welcomed the ini-

tiative. However, Pakistan was yet to respond.

Sources said that while the spread of the virus has been relatively subdued in SAARC countries, India did not want to take any chances. It has suspended bus and train services to Bangladesh — boycotted the summit in Pakistan in 2016. This led to all movement being stalled on the SAARC dialogue process in the last three-and-a-half years.

India has always maintained that Pakistan's support for terrorist activities in the region has led to a situation that is not conducive to holding the SAARC summit, and pushed the BIM-STECH grouping to marginalise Pakistan in the region. Sporadic attempts by Nepal to revive the process had been stonewalled by India, with India and Pakistan refusing to engage with each other at the SAARC foreign ministers' meeting in the

last two years.

However, officials pointed to the prompt and positive response by four leaders in the region to Modi's call as a "positive sign".

Thanking Modi for the "great initiative", Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa tweeted that his country "is ready to join the discussion & share our learnings & best practices and to learn" from other SAARC members. "Let's unite in solidarity during these trying times and keep our citizens safe," he wrote.

Nepal Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli welcomed the idea of "chalking out a strong strategy by the leadership of the SAARC nations" and said his government "is ready to work closely with SAARC Member States to protect our citizens from this deadly disease".

Bhutan Prime Minister Lotay Tshering gave a ringing endorsement to the Indian leadership. "This is what we call leadership. As members of this region, we must come together in such times. Smaller economies are hit harder, so we must coordinate. With your leadership, I have no doubt we will see immediate and impactful outcome.

Looking forward to the video conference," he tweeted.

Maldives President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih supported the effort. Thanking Modi for "the initiative on this important endeavor", he said it "requires collective effort to defeat" the virus. Bangladesh junior Foreign Minister Shahriar Alam said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina "welcomes the proposal" and looks forward "to a constructive dialogue" with heads of governments and states "who already consented to discuss the way forward at this testing time for the region and the world".

Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani's spokesperson Sediq Sediqi said his government "strongly welcomes the proposal" and "readiness of the other SAARC members to work together devising a unified strategy to fight the coronavirus in the region".

Reacting to Modi's tweet, the SAARC Secretariat tweeted that it "welcomes the timely proposal... as well as the support of other SAARC leaders and stands ready to work with all Member States towards a strong strategy to fight the coronavirus" in the region.

Pakistanis. We cannot and will never do that as we are deshbhaktis."

"Even I don't have proof of birth, the CM of Delhi does not have. My wife doesn't haven't, my parents don't. In fact, 61 out of 70 members of this House don't have birth proof. Will my family will also be sent to detention centre? Will the entire Cabinet also go to detention centres? How many of you are ready to declare yourselves as Pakistanis? We will spend the rest of our lives in detention centres, but will not declare ourselves as Pakistanis to obtain citizenship. Ask the Union Cabinet, the MPs, CMs across the country. Even they won't have any proof. The other day (Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao) KCR asked if he should commit suicide for not having proof," Kejriwal said.

The resolution also took note "of the fact that there is widespread belief among public that the Government of India (GoI) will seek documents from the public to prove their citizenship and prepare a National Register of Citizens (NRC) thereafter based on the documents obtained and the new NPR and there is fear and

panic writ large in the society about NRC which will determine who is not a citizen and all such people will be sent to detention centres".

"That more than 90 per cent of the people of India won't have expected documents and the whole exercise of seeking documents to prove their citizenship will put the citizens of India to untold miseries, cause widespread panic and create a peculiar situation when such large number of people will be unable to prove their citizenship," it stated.

"With the considered view that since Independence no other issue has agitated the minds of the people of India as much as the issue of NRC and the fear of being thrown into detention centres arbitrarily," it asked whether NPR data will be fed into NRC and what documents will be accepted as conclusive proof of citizenship.

UP hoarding

provision to compensate the loss. "Considering the same, the new draft ordinance has been cleared unanimously by the state Cabinet today," he said. The ordinance, he said, will specify how to compensate for damage or loss to

property during such protests and agitations.

Cabinet Minister Sidhartha Nath Singh said that so far the steps for recovery were being initiated under an old order of the government, but now it will be done under a proper law. "Court said there should be an Act. So, respecting the order of the Court, this ordinance has been brought. Today, all Cabinet members thanked and congratulated the Chief Minister for taking the decision to move the Supreme Court. We told him that because of his decision, incidents of damage to public and private property during such agitations will be controlled by bringing this ordinance," he said.

In the Supreme Court Thursday, a two-judge bench, hearing UP's challenge to the High Court order on the hoardings, initially said there was "no law" to back the action of the state government. The bench decided to send the matter to a larger bench after it was told about the "persuasive value" of a judgment of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom.

The judges did not, however, stay the High Court order direct-

ing the Lucknow administration to remove the hoardings. The administration was told by the High Court to submit a compliance report on or before March 16.

Lancet

2.8% were aged 50-59 years and those aged more than 90 made up 14.1%. The male to female ratio is 80% to 20% with an older median age for women (83.4 years for women vs 79.9 years for men)

While it is true that these patients had underlying health conditions, it is also worth noting that they were affected by "severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) pneumonia, needed respiratory support and would not have died otherwise," said the paper by researchers Andrea Remuzzi of the University of Bergamo and Giuseppe Remuzzi of the Istituto di Ricerche Farmacologiche Mario Negri.

These findings are in line with the WHO's assessment that elderly persons and persons with pre-existing medical conditions (such as high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer or diabetes) appear to develop serious illness more often than

others. Based on information coming out of Wuhan, the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention also put older adults and patients of heart disease, lung disease and diabetes as being at highest risk.

India has recorded two deaths. On Tuesday, a 76-year-old man died in Karnataka. Health officials say he was suffering from hypertension and asthma and had been discharged against medical advice. On Friday, a 68-year-old woman died in Delhi after being on ventilator support for four days "due to comorbid conditions". The only two patients in the country on which a drug combination usually used in HIV, have been used for the treatment of COVID-2019 are an elderly Italian couple, one of whom had to be put on a ventilator after his condition took a turn for the worse. The drugs have been approved for use in the disease in case of a public health emergency.

The study in Lancet looks at the available resources in Italy in terms of beds, machines and manpower and paints a grim picture. In Italy, of the current 5200 beds in ICUs, more than 1000 are devoted to patients with coronavirus infection. The study says that if current exponential trends continue for the next few days, "more than 2500 hospital beds for patients in intensive care units will be needed in only one week." And there could be as many as 30,000 infected patients.

Abdullah freed

signature karakul hat, Abdullah stepped on to the roof of the garage at his Gupkar Road residence and said, "I'm free, I'm free." The 83-year-old leader had been facing health issues for a while. He had undergone two eye surgeries for cataract in the last 45 days and has also had check-ups for his heart, liver and knees.

Flanked by his wife and daughter, Abdullah said, "This freedom is not complete. This freedom will be complete when all leaders — Omar Mehbooba ji, and all leaders, in prisons either in the state or outside the state or in MLA Hostel or in various buildings where they have been put under house arrest — I hope the Government of India will take action soon to release everyone if they want the people of this state to live as free people."

His daughter Safia Abdullah Khan was the first to react on Abdullah's release. "My father is a free man again," she wrote on Twitter.

On Wednesday, the administration's order said: "The government hereby directs that Dr Farooq Abdullah, s/o late Late Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, R/O Gupkar Road Srinagar, be detained for a further period of three months." Abdullah was shown the order extending his detention on Thursday, post which, government sources said, he was told he could be released if he refrained from making political comments upon his release.

On Friday, this order, along with Abdullah's detention under PSA was revoked "with immediate effect" by the Home Department of the J&K administration. The sources said while health concerns were a key factor in doing away with the detention, his release also pointed to the Centre's larger outreach plan "for expanding political engagement in the Valley, a part of which was the setting up a new political party in Kashmir."

Abdullah expressed his gratitude to everyone who spoke for his release. "We tried for so many months, to see this gate open. Today I don't have words, the way I feel today, I'm free," he said.

According to the order extending his detention in December, the former CM was being held under PSA "with a view to prevent him from acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of public order".

After the initial 12-day custody at home, the state administration extended his detention for three months until December 15. And a second extension was granted December, allowing for Abdullah to be held until March 15. The maximum period for which such detention could be extended is two years. Less than 200 meters down the same road, his son and National Conference Vice-President Omar Abdullah continued to remain under detention. And in another part of Srinagar, former chief minister and PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti remains incarcerated.

The National Conference welcomed the release and termed the move "a step in the right direction for restoration of genuine political process in Jammu and Kashmir". J&K People's Conference General Secretary Imran Ansari also welcomed the decision and demanded the release of People's Conference Chairman Sajad Lone. "He is under strict house arrest after being in detention at MLA Hostel for six months. We also demand release of our workers who are detained under PSA", he said.

Prasar bharti

— as incorrectly reported by the public broadcaster.

Earlier, on February 28, the public broadcaster had directed another set of tweets at Wall Street Journal, claiming that a report published in the newspaper on IB staffer Ankit Sharma's death in the Delhi riots was wrong.

It claimed that Sharma's brother, Ankur, had "discredited" WSJ and told Prasar Bharati that the newspaper was "lying" in its report. It also shared a screenshot of the report that quoted Ankur as saying that the mob that attacked Ankit shouted "Jai Shri Ram".

In the latest tweets directed at the newspaper, PBNS News attached screenshots of purported documents and tagged the MEA and the Indian Embassy in the US. "Ministry of External Affairs today asked the Indian Embassy in the US to look into the request for immediate deportation of @WSJ's South Asia Deputy Bureau Chief @EricBellmanWSJ, who is based in India, for 'anti-India behaviour'," it posted.

In another tweet, it said: "A complaint in this connection had been lodged with MEA on March 2 after police complaints had been lodged against @WSJ for misreporting on Delhi riots, particularly about the killing of IB officer Ankit Sharma."

But in just over an hour, at 8:37 pm, it tweeted: "Sources inform PBNS that the above is a private complaint registered with the grievance cell and no decision has been taken on the complaint at this time. As a matter of routine processing, the matter was referred to appropriate department for examination and nothing further needs to be read into the matter - Sources to PBNS."

However, after the MEA intervened, the PBNS handle deleted the tweet that had claimed that the Ministry had asked the Embassy to look into the deportation. Around 9.45 pm, it retweeted the MEA spokesperson as stating that no decision had been taken. It added: "Clarification from @MEAIndia on earlier tweets by PBNS that had wrongly interpreted a routine procedure related to a private complaint." It said: "The earlier tweet has accordingly been withdrawn."

Responding to requests for comment, Prasar Bharati CEO Shashi Shekhar Vempati sent links to the broadcaster's subsequent tweets quoting the MEA spokesperson and the "clarification". When contacted, Bill Spindle, South Asia Bureau Chief of Wall Street Journal, referred to the official statement issued by the MEA spokesperson.

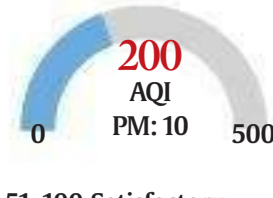
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0-50 Good

ANANDVIHAR

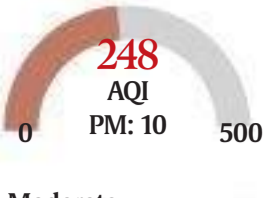
Moderate



51-100 Satisfactory

SIRIFORT

Poor



101-200 Moderate

SHADIPUR

Satisfactory



201-300 Poor

DWARKA-SECTOR 8

Poor



301-400 Very Poor

401-500 Severe

HC to hear only urgent matters from March 16

New Delhi: After the Supreme Court, the Delhi High Court too Friday decided to hear only urgent matters from March 16 as the country battles coronavirus.

The High Court has decided to not insist on personal appearance of parties unless it is indispensable.

The HC has decided to make sanitisers available for visitors and staff, "particularly those manning windows where there is constant public dealing".

A separate advisory for regulating entry of litigants in all district courts has also been issued, which states that courts should not insist on presence of parties unless it is unavoidable.

"Non-touch thermal scanners may be procured... and video conferencing be put to optimum use for recording of evidence," said the advisory.

As per the advisory, "the present situation persists, no adverse/default orders be passed in matters where parties are found to be absent". **ENS**

EMPLOYEE TESTED POSITIVE ON WEDNESDAY

At Noida firm, 707 workers in contact with coronavirus patient quarantined

AMIL BHATNAGAR
NOIDA, MARCH 13

MORE THAN 700 workers of a Noida-based private firm have been placed under quarantine after an employee tested positive for coronavirus on Wednesday.

According to officials, the 46-year-old patient had a travel history to European countries and began showing symptoms after returning to India.

"The patient had travelled to Italy and then Switzerland. When he returned to India, he began showing signs of lethargy. The person approached two-three hospitals for a routine check-up and nothing was diagnosed. Then it was suggested to him that a test for coronavirus should also be done, which turned out to be positive. We are observing all those who have come into con-

tact with him," said Dr Anurag Bhargava, Chief Medical Officer, Gautam Budh Nagar. On Friday, his 68-year-old mother, who had tested positive



Cleaning underway at a Metro station on Friday, part of several measures to control coronavirus. *Praveen Khanna*

for the virus, died due to comorbidity (diabetes and hypertension) at RML Hospital.

According to officials, the patient hails from Delhi and

works in a leather factory in Noida's Phase 2. As many as 707 factory employees who came into contact with him are under observation.

A team of medical officials are in touch with the employees through phone and WhatsApp to track any symptoms. While symptoms take 4-14 days to appear, employees have been kept under quarantine for the next 28 days as a precautionary measure.

In the event a factory worker develops fever or a symptom pertaining to the virus, officials said they will be tested.

During this period, employees have been advised not to go out and to get essential items like groceries delivered home. They can only interact with someone at a minimum distance of two-three metres, said medical officials.

Fumigation of the factory will take place at 12 pm on

Saturday.

According to doctors, the patient developed lethargy 18 days after returning from Switzerland. Prior to this, he had travelled to Italy. The employee travelled from Delhi to Noida for work via public and private transport.

Earlier, a tour guide hailing from Noida had tested positive for coronavirus after he came in contact with tourists.

The Gautam Budh Nagar administration Thursday held an outbreak committee meeting with health department officials to discuss measures to prevent the disease from spreading.

Till 6 pm on Thursday, 11 patients in UP had been tested positive for coronavirus while samples of 73 are awaited.

According to the Uttar Pradesh health department, 1,093 quarantine beds are available across the state.

At first point of screening, task cut out for airport staff

ASHNA BUTANI & ANANYA TIWARI
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

SCREENING HUNDREDS of passengers arriving from other countries and making sure everyone fills up the travel history form — officials at the IGI Airport have their task cut out. With the number of cases touching six in Delhi and one death reported Friday, airport authorities have stepped up measures to tackle the outbreak. Till March 13, 1,69,303 passengers have been screened.

According to an airport official, strict measures are in place for travellers from 15 countries, including a separate entry and baggage collection points.

"Passengers from the 15 countries — China, US, Italy, South Korea, Iran, Japan, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia, Spain, France, Vietnam, Nepal, and Thailand — are directed to a separate Airport Health Organisation (APHO) counter. Here, they undergo thermal screening to determine if they are running a temperature or not. In case health officials find that a traveller has fever, they are referred to RML or Safdarjung hospital for a check-up," said the official, adding that passengers are not allowed into the Delhi duty-free area as well.

Outside the airport, meanwhile, most passengers were wearing masks and cleaning their hands with sanitisers. Ankita Mishra (29), an Indian national returning from Madrid, said, "I noticed a sign that directed people from certain countries to a separate area. I was in the queue for around 20 minutes. I filled up two forms in the airline and submitted them at separate points."

Another flyer, Deepali Chawla (19), a resident of Jaipur and studying in Malaysia, said, "We couldn't figure out why we had to fill two identical forms. The process was simple otherwise."

She added that although most people underwent thermal screening, airport authorities checked the temperature of ba-



Travellers from 15 countries have separate baggage claim areas. *Amit Mehra*

bies using regular thermometers.

The airport official explained that two forms are needed to ensure no one leaves unchecked. "APHO officials collect the first form immediately after a traveller enters the airport. The second form, which is stamped by the same staff, is to be submitted at the immigration counter," he said.

Mukesh Kumar (26), a tourist coming from Dubai, said, "When we entered the terminal from the bus, they did thermal scanning. In the forms, we were asked to provide our address, passport number, travel history and state whether we have any symptoms such as cough, cold or fever."

Meanwhile, travellers arriving at peak hours complained that the process took too long. Jasmin Khulusi (53), a German national, said, "I visited Philippines, Thailand, Burma and Malaysia recently. Delhi was the slowest with regard to the screening process. Luckily, my temperature was normal so I was not held back."

A woman arriving from San Francisco said, "Some people inside the airport were wearing masks, not all... it was quite intense. In the US, there is a shortage of masks so I have ordered them here, otherwise I took precautions with sanitiser and wipes. They did not thermal scan everyone on arrival. The airlines did send emails saying they were deep cleaning after every flight."

Travellers noted that sanitisers are available at regular points at the airport. Many travellers pointed out that thermal scanning is done at departures as well.

Delhi govt issues regulations to deal with Covid-19

ASTHA SAXENA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

THE DELHI government has issued regulations to deal with the coronavirus pandemic, which has killed over 5,100 people and affected about 1,40,000 across the globe so far. In Delhi, six confirmed cases of the virus have been reported and the contacts of all cases are being traced and advised isolation depending on their medical condition. One death was reported in the city Friday evening.

On Friday, the government issued the Delhi Epidemic Diseases, COVID-19 Regulations, 2020. 'Epidemic disease', in this case, refers to COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019). Under the regulations, all hospitals — both government and private — in Delhi must have separate flu

corners for screening of suspected cases. Hospitals are being advised to record travel history of each person to ascertain if he or she has travelled to any country or area where COVID-19 has been reported.

Also, hospitals will trace the history of anyone who has come in contact with a suspected or confirmed case.

"In case the person has any such history in the last 14 days and the person is asymptomatic, then the person must be kept in home quarantine for 14 days from the day of exposure. If the person has any such history in the last 14 days and is symptomatic as per case definition of COVID-19, the person must be isolated in a hospital and will be tested for COVID-19 as per protocol," the guidelines state.

The regulations come into force immediately and shall re-

COMBAT MODE

If cases of COVID-19 are reported from a defined geographic area, authorised persons with approval of the constituted State Task Force have the right to implement following containment measures:

- Sealing off the geographical area
- Banning entry and exit of population from the containment area
- Closure of schools, offices and banning public gatherings
- Banning vehicular movement
- Designating any government building as containment unit for isolation
- Initiating active and passive surveillance of COVID-19 cases
- Hospital isolation of all suspected cases
- Staff of all government departments will be at disposal of area's district administration for discharging the duty of containment measures
- Any other measure as directed by the health department

main valid for a year. The government has also set up guidelines for private organisations to deal with suspected and confirmed cases.

"If the owner or occupier(s) of any premises or any individual suspected/confirmed with the disease refuses to take measures for prevention or treatment, or any such person refuses to cooperate with, render assistance to or comply with the directions of the Surveillance Personnel, the concerned district magistrate having jurisdiction and specifically authorised by the district magistrate in this regard, may pass an appropriate order and may proceed with proceedings under Section 133 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (2 of 1974). In case of a minor, such order shall be directed to the guardian or any other adult

member of the family of the minor," the guidelines state.

Any person/institution/organisation found violating any provision will be booked under a punishable offence under section 188 of the IPC (45 of 1860). On Friday, 5,468 passengers were screened at the Delhi airport and three new patients were hospitalised in Safdarjung Hospital for further treatment.

The regulations also restricted private labs from testing samples for the disease. The samples will only be collected as per guidelines by the Government of India and will be sent to designated laboratories. All medical officers in government institutions, registered private medical practitioners and AYUSH practitioners have been asked to notify all suspected cases to the district surveillance unit concerned.

Man beaten to death for refusing to have ice-cream, four arrested

New Delhi: Four men were arrested early Friday for allegedly beating a 35-year-old man to death, after he refused to take ice-cream from them, in Northwest Delhi's Rohini. The victim, Amit Sharma, was with his brother-in-law Rahul and friend, Ishant, at the time of the incident.

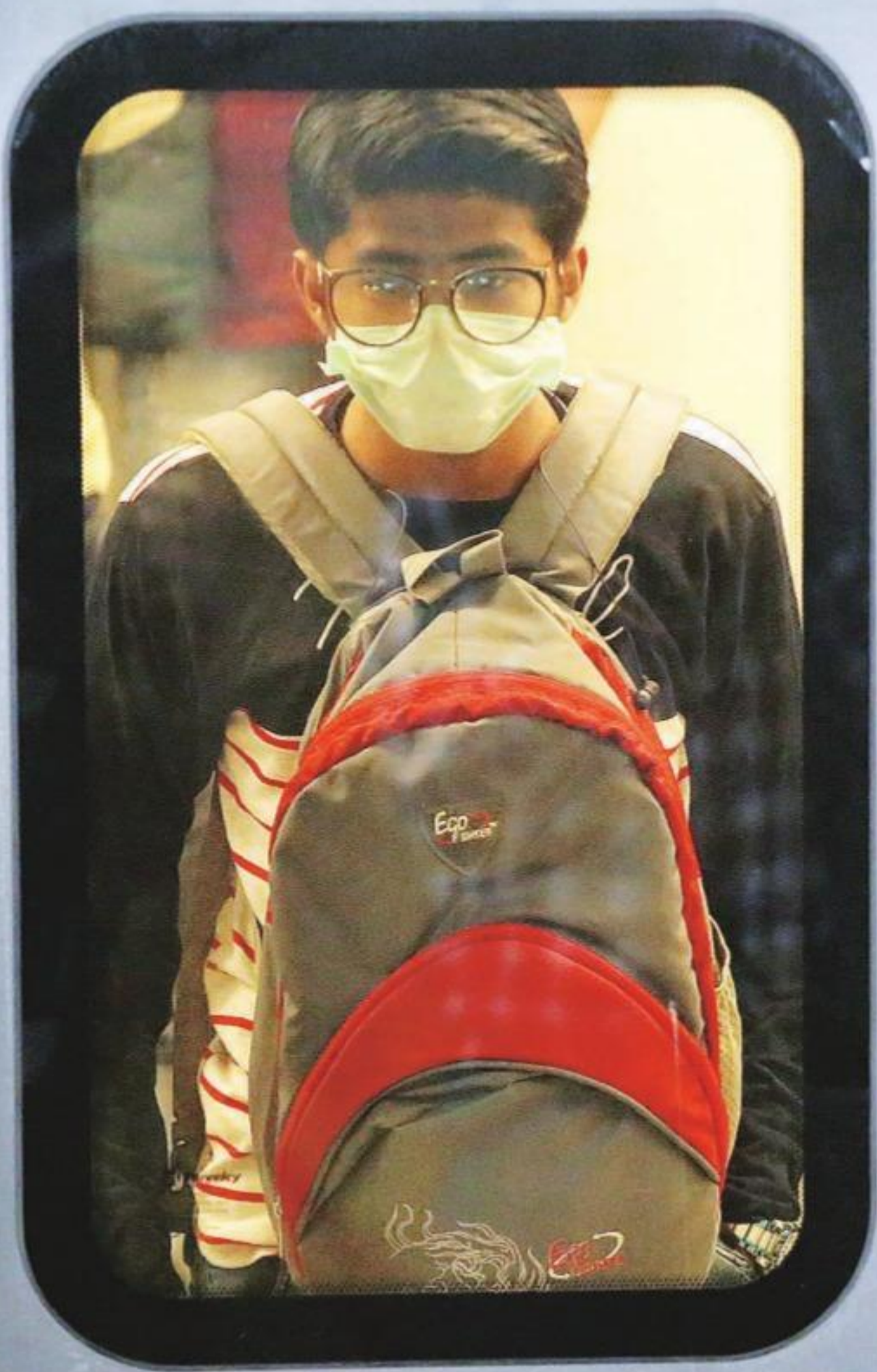
S D Mishra, Addl CP (Rohini), said, "We received a call at 12.45 am. Rahul and Ishant had noted the bike registration numbers of the two bikes the accused were

driving. We scanned CCTV footage and traced the bikes. We caught the four men—Lakshay, Karan, Dhiraj and Avinash—within four hours of the incident. A case has been registered."

Police said Lakshay (27), a student of Lala Lajpat Rai Memorial Medical College, had passed his MBBS exams and was celebrating at home with his elder brother, Karan, and their two friends. They then went out on bikes to buy ice-cream.

Police said they were under the influence of alcohol when Karan offered ice-cream to three strangers at the shop. When Sharma refused, the two groups fought. Lakshay and his group left, and later caught the victim near Rohini's Sector 3.

Police said the accused thrashed Sharma and his friends with sticks and fled. Sharma, who sustained head injuries, was rushed to BSA Hospital but was declared dead on arrival. **ENS**



At Rajiv Chowk Metro station, Friday. Metro officials said they have begun disinfecting trains and stations to check the spread of coronavirus. Praveen Khanna

CORONAVIRUS IS SCARY BUT IS IN CONTAINMENT STAGE: CM Centre working with us to contain outbreak: Kejriwal



CM Kejriwal discussed the outbreak in the Assembly, Friday

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

AT SAFDARJUNG, RML HOSPITALS

- Passengers from affected countries under observation: 211
 - Asymptomatic passengers isolated at home: 165
 - Symptomatic passengers hospitalised: 27
 - Positive cases (from Delhi): 6
 - Deaths: 1
- 1,69,303**
Passengers screened at IGI Airport so far
(Data as of March 13)

DELHI CHIEF Minister Arvind Kejriwal Friday thanked the Union government for its assistance in trying to contain the coronavirus outbreak in the capital. Addressing the Delhi Assembly, Kejriwal also advised people against hoarding hand sanitisers and face masks, saying a healthy individual need not use any mask and should frequently wash their hands with soap.

Health Minister Satyendar Jain also emphasised on the need to spread awareness about ways to contain the virus, instead of panicking. He said the situation is under control as of now.

"I want to thank the central government for working in close coordination with the Delhi government and various other authorities to contain the outbreak of the virus. All officers are working day and night to address the issue. It is largely because of the support of the people that Delhi has only six cases to date. I hope that the central government is working with all other state governments with the same cooperation, just as they are working with the Delhi government," said Kejriwal.

Jain said that a person should apply hand sanitiser only when soap and water are not available. He also urged people to not conceal symptoms of the disease.

"By doing so, a healthy individual might get cured in a few days. But he or she will end up infecting others who may not have a robust immune system,"

Jain said.

The CM said the outbreak of the virus scares him, especially looking at the way it has spread in developed countries like Italy and South Korea.

"The virus is still in the stage of containment right now, and we have been able to contain community spread of the virus. To date, there are currently 81 cases in the country... The majority of the cases out of these 81 are those who have travelled to India from foreign countries. But we do have cases like a mother being infected with the virus because of her child, which is the sixth case in Delhi, which means that some cases are because of close contact with the infected patients," he added.

IPL, other sports gatherings banned in capital: Sisodia

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

AMID THE coronavirus scare and with one death being reported in the city Friday, the Delhi government has stopped all sports gatherings, including the Indian Premier League 2020, in the national capital.

Announcing the decision, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said the district magistrates have been asked to ensure that all directives pertaining to coronavirus are implemented and they have also been asked to keep a close watch on the possible spread of the virus in their respective regions.

On Thursday, the government announced shutting down of all schools, colleges and cinema halls till March 31. All public swimming pools have also been closed till March 31, as per the government order.

So far, six cases have been confirmed in the city. While one patient died on Friday, the rest are being treated in isolation wards at hospitals.

"All sports gatherings will be banned, including the IPL, in the wake of coronavirus threat. Social distancing is the most effective way to stop the spread of coronavirus cases in Delhi and India. To maintain social distancing, it is important to avoid any big event which witnesses huge public gatherings. IPL and such sports events witness huge gatherings. Therefore, we have decided to stop such events with immediate effect till further orders," said Sisodia.

Stressing on the need to contain the disease by adopting preventive measures, he advised people to avoid any large gatherings. "I want to tell everyone to not wait for government orders but to proactively avoid any big gatherings. The government is doing its best but to stop



Deputy CM Sisodia advised people to avoid large gatherings. Prem Nath Pandey

the spread of coronavirus, mutual cooperation of people and the government is very important," he added.

Citing the example of South Korea, Sisodia said coronavirus was contained for the first 30 cases but the 31st patient passed it to thousands of other people. "In order to prevent instances like these, the Delhi government has decided that no big gatherings should take place but if you find any such gatherings, where people are coming from different places, please avoid such venues. We believe that such strict preventive steps are the only way to stop this disease and many other countries are following such steps," he said.

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain said self-quarantine is the best way to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

"This is an exponential threat where every day counts. I would urge people to self-quarantine themselves. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, get your tests done, avoid public gatherings and stay at home. This is the best way to contain the spread of this disease," said Jain.

Coronavirus has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Haryana directs schools in 5 districts to shut till March 31; in UP, till 22nd

SAKSHI DAYAL
GURGAON, MARCH 13

A DAY after schools and colleges in Delhi were directed to remain shut in light of a surge in cases of coronavirus, the Haryana government Friday made a similar announcement directing all colleges in the state and all government and private schools in five districts to remain closed until March 31.

"In view of a surge in cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the neighbouring state, the Department of School Education, Haryana, has decided that all government schools as well as private schools in Sonapat, Rohtak, Jhajjar, Faridabad and Gurugram districts will remain closed till 31.03.2020 with immediate effect, except for holding examinations," states the order issued by Dr Mahavir Singh, principal secretary to the Haryana government, School Education Department, Chandigarh.

"Students will attend school only to take board exams, annual exams and assessment exams as per previous schedule. However, all teaching and non-teaching staff members will attend school as usual," it states, adding that schools in the remaining districts "shall function as per normal schedule".

In another order issued Friday, the Deputy Director Cadet Corps for Director General Higher Education, Haryana, has similarly directed that "all universities and colleges situated in Haryana will



Many schools are exploring the option of online classes

be closed till March 31, 2020, as a precautionary measure".

The UP government too ordered closure of educational institutions till March 22. "All schools, colleges, technical and vocational educational institutes in Uttar Pradesh will remain closed till March 22. We will review the situation on March 22 and decide whether or not to extend it," said UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

The directions from the Haryana government came even as educational institutions, in the absence of any directions from the state government, had started taking decisions to suspend classes on their own. At many schools in Gurgaon, officials said classes will continue online.

Manisha Malhotra, Principal of The Shri Ram School, Mousari, said: "This is the term-end period, so only students who are giving

board examinations are coming to school. The new term was to start on March 23, with orientation on March 20. We have decided to do all that online, and school is shut till March 31. However, we will be conducting classes online through Zoom."

At the Heritage Xperiential Learning School, similarly, classes had been suspended since March 9 but the institution has been using "virtual learning programs" to continue lessons. "We have been working on flipping classrooms, setting up learning management systems and establishing online teaching and learning for almost three years now," said Principal Neena Kaul.

"In our initial runs of our virtual learning programme this week, we have had some wonderful feedback from parents," she added.

At Shalom Hills International School, Principal Atul Bhatt said, "Classes have been suspended for almost 10 days now as a precaution. Only exams are being conducted. There are no gatherings, assemblies or prayers. All parent-teacher meetings and results are being conveyed online."

At the Blue Bells Group of Schools, meanwhile, officials said classes have been suspended, along with assemblies, trips, events, and any other planned gatherings. The school had also, in the last few days, placed alcohol-based sanitisers at all entries of the schools and medical rooms.

Meanwhile, private schools in Gautam Budh Nagar are drawing action plans to maintain academic continuity in the wake of the closure.

An official from Shiv Nadar school said, "Classes are being conducted online... Every measure is being taken to protect students and avoid gatherings. We have also experimented with online examinations for non-board classes in which a Google form with MCQs was mailed to students. Several other virtual strategies are being drawn to ensure course is completed on time."

For some private schools, the closure has coincided with the scheduled break. "The school just got over with exams and will start its new session from April. We will review the situation and take steps accordingly," said an official from GD Goenka School in Greater Noida.

JNU, Jamia among varsities shut down

ARANYA SHANKAR,
SAKSHI DAYAL &
AMIL BHATNAGAR
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

MORE COLLEGES and institutes in the National Capital Region, including Jawaharlal Nehru University and Jamia Millia Islamia, Friday announced they would be shutting down as a precautionary measure against the coronavirus pandemic.

IIT-Delhi, which had Thursday suspended classes till March 31, has now asked most students to vacate hostels as a precaution. However, international students and some PhD students can continue after taking supervisor's permission, said a statement issued by the Dean (Academics) and Dean (Student Affairs).

Both JNU and Jamia have al-



JNU has also suspended exams for students

ready suffered academic setbacks last semester. While a prolonged student-teacher agitation over a hike in hostel fee affected classes in JNU, the anti-CAA protests and police action inside the campus had delayed academics in Jamia.

While JNU has also decided to cancel exams along with classes till March 31, Jamia said it would

hold exams. Delhi University and GGSIPU had already announced suspension of classes Thursday.

"It is hereby notified that all lectures, class presentations and exams at JNU are suspended until March 31..." JNU registrar Pramod Kumar said, adding, however, that "basic mess facilities will be available to hostellers".

Jamia registrar A P Siddiqui, in a notice, said teachers should make study material available online and avoid "face-to-face/group interactions". But "university exams will continue as per schedule", he said.

IIMC also suspended classes till March 31, and cancelled seminars and conferences. "It is advised that students staying in IIMC hostels should restrict their activities within the hostel campus," the assistant registrar said

in a notice.

At Sonapat, Jindal Global University's registrar told students and teachers in an email that classes would be suspended from Saturday until March 29.

At Ashoka University, the mid-semester break, which starts from Saturday, has now been extended till March 29. Officials said lectures will be uploaded online.

Universities in Greater Noida are preparing action plans to hold virtual classes across courses.

"Students in any course can attend online classes... We had suspended physical classes as a precaution before the order," said an Amity spokesperson.

Another private university in Greater Noida has come up with remedial classes, in which teachers can be approached on call or e-mail for problem solving.

Shaheen Bagh protesters condemn NE Delhi riots

AMIL BHATNAGAR
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

ON THE 90th day of the Shaheen Bagh sit-in, women protesters condemned the Delhi riots and reiterated their demand for the roll back of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC) following Home Minister Amit Shah's address in Parliament.

"Home Minister Amit Shah said the 'doubtful' category in the National Population Register will be removed. We demand certain questions be removed because it threatens citizenship. The Act was brought and an amendment was made during the tenure of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. We demand the Act as a whole must go. Only then will we feel secure," said Kehkasha, a protester.

Protesters further alleged that the government was using coronavirus as a "scare tactic" to vacate Shaheen Bagh.

The protesters also condemned the loss of 53 lives in the Delhi riots.

The women also demanded action against BJP leaders including Kapil Mishra and Anurag Thakur for their "inflammatory statements" before the riots.

Shaheen Bagh has been the epicentre of protests against the CAA-NRC since December 15. The Supreme Court-appointed interlocutors attempted to persuade protesters to end their blockade, which led to a portion of the road being opened up.

IB staffer's murder: Accused sent to 4-day police custody

ANAND MOHAN J
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

A DELHI court has sent Salman alias Haseen, an accused in the murder of IB staffer Ankit Sharma, to four days police custody.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) Pawan Singh Rajawat sent Salman to police custody after the investigating agency told the court that he was to be confronted with suspended AAP councillor Tahir Hussain, who is named in the murder FIR.

The investigating officer (IO) told the court since there were several thousand people in the mob who need to be identified, and that the weapon of offence has not yet been recovered, his custody for five days was required for thorough investigation.

The IO said Salman was arrested on the basis of secret information and that there were 51 stab injuries found on Ankit's body as per post-mortem report.

CMM Rajawat asked police if there was any DVR preserved from the site, to which police said they have preserved the DVR and they needed Salman's custody to "unearth the conspiracy".

Salman's lawyer S K Baliyan told the court that police did not have any CCTV footage and they were asking for five days police custody, with two holidays in between, which must not be used as an excuse by them later to seek further custody.



Delhi Police personnel with the accused, Salman, after his arrest. Tashi Tobgyal

Citing the two holidays, the IO asked the court to give them five-day custody: "Banks may be closed. We need further custody as we will look into the funding angle". CMM Rajawat said, "Will you take him to the bank and ask the manager if he took the money?"

However, after the hearing, Salman's mother approached the court and said her son was picked up by police three days ago and was a minor. She was accompanied by her lawyer, Afsha Pracha, who told the judge that she will file an application pertaining to his juvenility.

Ankit's body was found dumped in a drain in Chand Bagh on February 26. A day later, based on his father Ravinder Sharma's complaint, Delhi Police filed an FIR against Hussain on charges of murder, destruction of evidence and abduction. Hussain was later arrested.

PRESIDENT, SECY AMONG ARRESTED

3 PFI members get bail, officer pulled up

ANAND MOHAN J
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

A DELHI court granted bail to Popular Front of India (PFI) president, its secretary and a member who were accused by the Delhi Police Crime Branch of allegedly inciting the communal riots in Northeast Delhi last month.

Metropolitan Magistrate Prabhdeep Kaur, while granting bail to Parvez Ahmed, Mohd Iliyas and Mohd Danish, pulled up the case's investigating officer for not offering bail in the first instance.

The arrest came days after an FIR was registered under IPC sections 147 (punishment for rioting), 148 (rioting, armed with deadly weapon) and 120-B (criminal conspiracy).

The court, in its order, said, "The offences punishable under IPC sections 147/148 are bailable and consequently the offences under IPC sections 149/120 become bailable in nature. It is a settled principle that in bailable offences, it is the duty of the IO to offer bail to the accused at first instance. There is no explanation by the IO as to why he did not offer bail to the accused at first instance as per constitutional and procedural mandate."

The court granted bail to the accused upon furnishing a personal bond and surety bond of the sum of Rs 30,000 each, with conditions that they cooperate with police, and not flee the



(Left) PFI chief Parvez Ahmed and (far right) secretary Mohd Iliyas were arrested on Wednesday night. ANI

country, contact witnesses or tamper with evidence.

Police had moved an application seeking six-day custody of the accused, claiming that three PFI members were "involved in the conspiracy of communal riots, which caused the death of 50 innocent persons and injuries to approximately 300 people" and their custody was important to unearth the conspiracy.

Police, in their remand application, claimed that "the communal riots in Delhi were planned, and the same was hatched by Umar Khalid, a student of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), and all his assistants, all linked to different groups. As per the pre-planned conspiracy... Khalid gave provocative speeches at various places and appealed to the mi-

nority gathering to block roads and public places during the visit of (US President) Donald Trump... so the propaganda may be flashed at an international platform that minorities in India are being tortured."

The remand stated that to achieve this objective, "firearms, acid and other dangerous articles" were used, and women and children were sent to block the Jafraabad Metro station.

The accused were represented by their lawyers, Rizwan Ahmad and S M Bhardwaj, who submitted that the accused were taken into custody by concealment of the fact that the "offences involved are bailable in nature and the court, by oversight, granted police custody, which is bad in law and against the right of life provided under law".

Court allows riot accused in custody to sit for board exam

ANAND MOHAN J
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

POINTING OUT that the Right to Education is a fundamental right, a Delhi court allowed a Class X student, who is an accused in the Northeast Delhi riots case, to appear for his Mathematics board exam Thursday. The court, however, granted police custody of the accused, who is not a minor, for two days.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Pawan Singh Rajawat, who passed the order on Wednesday, noted, "Even though I am satisfied that two days police custody is necessary for further investigation of the case, however, at the same time, I am also aware that Right to Education is a fundamental right and being involved in any offence does not entitle any person from getting education and appearing for any exam that too for class X board exam."

The court had also directed police to not interrogate him till his examination is over and also passed directions to the police to accompany him to the examina-

tion centre and provide him with requisite stationery.

Police had initially tried to seek his custody to ascertain the identity of the "group of persons who instigated him". The man's lawyers, Abdul Gaffar and Mohammad Shahwaz, opposed the police remand, citing his class X board exam.

After he gave his Mathematics board exam Thursday, police produced him before the court Friday but did not pursue his custody and instead asked the court to send him to judicial custody.

The court has now sent the man to judicial custody till March 27. Taking note of the fact that the man has to appear for his next board examination on March 18, the court directed police to depute two police guards and make suitable seating arrangements for his examination.

The court also directed the jail superintendent to provide suitable space for preparing for the examination and allow family members of the student to hand him requisite books, stationery and original admit card issued by CBSE for taking the exam.

NE Delhi riots: 2 more arrested

New Delhi: Police arrested two more persons for their alleged involvement in the riots in Northeast Delhi on Friday.

Police said the accused, Tanveer and Gulfam, were identified from video footage recovered during investigation.

They were found pelting stones and firing near Chand

Bagh during the riots, claimed police.

Police suspect the two were with suspended AAP councillor Tahir Hussain, who was recently arrested on charges of murder and rioting.

On Thursday, police said they have arrested over 215 persons in connection with the riots. **ENS**

BRIEFLY

DU turns to public to name new women's college

New Delhi: In a notice dated March 12, Delhi University invited suggestions from the public on the name of its new women's college to be established in South Delhi. The land was allotted to DU by the Delhi government at Fatehpur Beri village in July last year.

4 sentenced in Faridabad court violence

Gurgaon: Almost 14 years after a scuffle between two groups of lawyers culminated in the firing of gunshots, which left one lawyer injured, four people were sentenced to six years' imprisonment for the crime. **ENS**

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

TWO WEEKS after it was burnt down allegedly by a mob during the riots in Northeast Delhi, over 350 students of DRP Convent School in Shiv Vihar returned on Friday to give their annual exams. Though the walls were freshly painted, parts of the building continued to smell of burnt furniture. The ground was covered in mud and broken tiles while the corridors were filled with broken benches and blackboards.

While students from classes VI-IX took their exams on the second and third floors, management and staff set about clearing debris and burnt material from the ground floor.

The school was locked after a mob took over the building on February 23, and police unlocked the gates on Wednesday. This had prompted a sit-in by locals who alleged the school was used as a "base" to carry out acts of arson during the riots.



DRP Convent School was taken over by a mob on February 23. The school has started renovation work by cleaning the walls and repairing desks and benches. Praveen Khanna

In the FIR, authorities said the mob remained at the school for two days. Computers, money, utensils and lab equipment were looted and rooms were set ablaze.

School authorities said a few students didn't come as their

parents were afraid to send them.

Twelve-year-old Meenakshi said some of her friends didn't give the exam. "My friend called my mother last night and told her she has left her house and shifted to a relative's place. She

is scared that rioters will break into the school again and hit her. I was scared too but the teachers told me that they would take care of us. Also, there are policemen outside the school," she said.

Meenakshi had visited the

school along with her parents on February 29, only to return home in tears.

"I love my school... it was heartbreaking to see what had happened. The building looked like a haunted house. My classroom was empty... all the benches, blackboards, lockers and almirahs were lying in the

corridor. Today, they have put up a new blackboard and benches in the classroom but lights and fans are still not there."

Building caretaker Roop Singh, who lives on the top floor, said he saw the mob barging in. Before the incident, he was alerted by a few parents that clashes had broken out in the

area and the school was vacated. Three hours later, a mob of 100-200 men entered the school.

"A few men jumped the walls from Rajdhani school. I was on the terrace when a man spotted me and shouted 'isko goli maaro'. The mob then burnt a van which exploded. I took my three daughters and wife and jumped from the terrace to an adjacent house. I went to a friend's place. Two days later, I saw that the school was burnt and my house was looted. Cylinders were lying everywhere, there were oil pouches and hammers. Thankfully, school staff has already repaired 50% of the damage," he said.

School administrator Dharmesh Sharma coordinated with teachers and workers to renovate the upper floors of the school. "We didn't want the children to wait months to give their exams. On March 1, we started cleaning and renovation work. The walls are first cleaned and then painted. We are also painting the benches and buying new ones," he said.

8 THE OUTBREAK TRACKING COVID-19

KERALA CORONA FIGHT

Kids can't go to school so mid-day meal material will go home

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 13

WITH KERALA'S capital coming on the coronavirus map for the first time — three cases Friday in a total of 22 across the state so far — the government is taking its fight right down to the last rung. All children registered with its 33,000 anganwadis will now get the nutrients listed on the mid-day meal scheme at their homes.

"Parents can go to anganwadis to collect the material, or teachers can take the items for the next two weeks to the homes of children. There is no plan to supply cooked meals, though," a government official told *The Indian Express*.

The state had decided to suspend all functions and shut down institutions, starting from anganwadis, Wednesday.

Supervised by the Social Justice Department, the 33,115 anganwadis supply nutrients for the noon meal to 3.75 lakh children aged between three and six. "On a day,



Meanwhile, poultry checks are on at Kozhikode. PPT

a child is entitled to 60 grams of rice, 50 grams of wheat, 20 grams of green gram, 5 grams of urad dal and 5 grams of cooking oil. After the closure of anganwadis, we will ensure that children get these materials at their homes," said the official.

Besides, the official said, the supply of nutrients to feeding mothers, pregnant women

and teenagers, as part of the central government-sponsored Integrated Child Development Services, will continue.

On Friday, the three cases reported in Thiruvananthapuram include an Italian tourist who was staying in a resort at Varkala beach. The other two are local residents who returned from Italy and UK.

Speaking on the latest cases, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said screening at airports would be strengthened to ensure that no passenger with foreign travel history does not skip the mandatory process. All resorts and home-stays in the state would also be inspected, he said.

He said that since Keralites form a significant part of the Indian diaspora abroad, steps will be taken to isolate passengers arriving from certain countries — the Health Department will prepare a list of such countries.

Meanwhile, at Sabarimala temple, which was opened for monthly rituals, pilgrims were screened before they were allowed to trek to the hill shrine.

Saw father's funeral via video call: Man arrives from Qatar, isolated

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 13

A MAN who flew from Qatar to Kerala to see his 70-year-old father on his deathbed ended up in isolation as part of the state government's fight against Covid-19.

Lino Abel is one of the 5,400-odd persons isolated either at home or hospital across the state. He was not even allowed to have a last glimpse of the body of his father Abel Ouseph, and had to watch the funeral via video call from a hospital bed.

In a Facebook post, Abel, "When I reached Kochi... I had no health issues and my temperature was normal."

His father was placed under life support system at a medical college, so Abel was unable to see him. "When I came out of hospi-

tal, I felt sore throat and decided to report at the corona section at the hospital. As I came from Qatar, the doctor who examined me, suggested that I should go into isolation. I obliged," he said in his post.

That night, his father had a stroke and died. Abel sought permission to have a last glimpse of his father, but it was denied. "I had no option but cry in isolation. It was terrible that I could not have a glimpse even though I was at the same hospital," he said.

"While my father's body was laid for public homage at home, I could watch my father only through a video call," he said.

Abel said if he hadn't reported his sore throat at hospital, he might have been able to attend the funeral of his father. But, he said, he had decided that he should not be instrumental in spreading the disease among relatives and neighbours.

CORONA WATCH



Mock drill to carry coronavirus patients at Deh Kalan village in Punjab's Sangrur. Gurmeet Singh

Medical team in Italy to test Indians

New Delhi: A medical team from India reached Italy on Friday to test stranded Indian nationals for coronavirus so that they can be brought back. Italy has more than 15,000 cases of Covid-19 and has recorded over 1,000 deaths — the most outside of China. "Pleasure to welcome the medical team at the Embassy in Rome. Gearing up for the testing which starts this afternoon and will proceed through the weekend," the Indian Embassy in Rome tweeted. The Indian mission said it was working actively with Italian ministries and local authorities in Italy to address the situation. **ENS**

Second batch of pilgrims in Iran returns

New Delhi: The second batch of 44 Indian pilgrims stranded in coronavirus-hit Iran arrived in India on Friday, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said. "Our efforts to bring back the others continue. @India_in_Iran and our medical team - keep up the good work. Appreciate the support of Iranian authorities and their airlines," Jaishankar tweeted. An Iran Air flight carrying the pilgrims landed in Mumbai on Friday, from where they were later taken to a Navy quarantine facility in Ghatkopar, Mumbai, a Navy official said. **ENS**

Rlys sets up isolation wards at its hospitals

New Delhi: As part of the preparation to check the spread of Covid-19, the Indian Railways has set up isolation wards at its hospitals. "We cannot stop passengers, but to ensure a safe journey, we have taken several steps. We have set up isolation wards in our hospitals. If there are symptoms in a person, he can be sent for testing; and if required can be quarantined," Railways Minister Piyush Goyal said on Friday. **ENS**

Maharashtra: Two new cases in Nagpur, state total rises to 19

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, PUNE, NAGPUR, MARCH 13

TWO PEOPLE in Nagpur and one each in Mumbai, Pune and Ahmednagar tested positive to Covid-19 on Friday, taking the number of cases in the state to 19.

The two new patients in Nagpur are acquaintances of the person who had tested positive for the virus on Wednesday. They were among 13 of acquaintances of the man who had arrived from the United States on March 6. Divisional Commissioner Sanjiv Kumar said, "The three positive patients are stable and are being treated as per protocol." In Mumbai, the wife of a 64-year-old resident, who had tested positive for Covid-19 on Thursday after traveling to Dubai, tested positive on Friday.

A 43-year-old Ahmednagar resident also tested positive to the virus. He belonged to the same tourist group that had gone to Dubai and returned on March 1 with the Pune couple who had become the first to be tested positive to the virus in the state.

A 21-year-old youth, who returned to Pune from the US on March 10, tested positive to Covid-19 on Friday, taking the number of cases in the city to 10.

Health officials said that of the 19 people, 10 are from Pune, four from Mumbai, three from Nagpur and one each from Thane and Ahmedabad.

All 112 people who were quarantined for 14 days at the ITBP camp in Delhi tested negative for Covid-19. Praveen Khanna

Relief, joy as second batch of Wuhan evacuees leave quarantine

SHIVAM PATEL
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

CLINGING TO his mother, Minu, who is about one-and-a-half-years-old, looks annoyed. "The quarantine was difficult for him because he couldn't play that often outside and had to mostly stay indoors. He is happy to be leaving now," his mother Ming Liang (32) said.

Minu is the youngest of 112 people who were quarantined for 14 days at the Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) camp in Chawla, Delhi after being evacuated from China's Wuhan on February 27. All have tested negative for the virus in the two tests conducted on the day of their arrival and on the 14th day, officials said.

This is the second batch of evacuees to have left the facility after being quarantined. It had 36 foreign nationals from countries including Bangladesh and Maldives, and the remaining were Indian nationals. Earlier, a batch of 406 people evacuated from China

was also quarantined at the facility between February 1-19.

Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai on Friday told the evacuees and staff at the facility that the government was committed to fighting the virus. "The Prime Minister has said that we need to stay careful and not be afraid of coronavirus," he said. "I request you too that when you return home, you don't need to be scared either... The Central government is proud of the selfless service given by the doctors and ITBP officials in this mission."

ITBP Director General Surjeet Singh Deswal said, "This is a situation being faced globally, but with the best efforts and prompt action of the government agencies and all health authorities in the country, the situation is absolutely under control."

The initial fears at the facility were similar for both the nursing staff and the evacuees, who feared the possibility of catching the infection off each other, they said. A nurse at the camp said, "We had to take nasal swabs

from the evacuees and we were anxious for some time until the first tests arrived — anyone would be in such a situation. We were given all safety equipments, including a body suit, but we were still being very cautious."

The evacuees followed a planned routine and underwent daily checks for body temperatures, blood pressure and symptoms of the infection. The 14 days they spent in dormitories at the facility was a change from the self-imposed isolation in China, and made them feel more like a community.

Monika Sethuraman (31), a PhD student, said, "We have seen more sunlight here, which makes a difference, and so does being with people. It was depressing being within the four walls of your room in Wuhan."

To pass the time during quarantine, there were indoor games to play, or assignments to work on. Diksha Singh (22), a university student, said she was taking online classes even during quarantine. "The lecture begins at 8.30 am as per the time in China, so here I have to attend it at 5.30am..."

AMONG 83 EVACUATED FROM ITALY

Man quarantined at Manesar facility tests positive

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, GURGAON, MARCH 13

ONE PERSON currently placed at the quarantine facility in Manesar tested positive for coronavirus on Friday, the Army confirmed.

"One individual (male) who had returned from Italy on 11 March 2020 has been tested positive. The individual was employed in one of the restaurants in Italy since last 14 years," stated an official statement by the Army. "As per procedure, he has been shifted to an isolation facility at Safdarjung Hospital for further medical examination and recovery."

The man was among 83 people admitted at the facility on Wednesday after being evacuated from coronavirus-hit Italy.

Meanwhile, 124 people who were quarantined in Manesar after they were evacuated from Japan were discharged on Friday morning. The evacuees, who included 119 Indian citizens and five people from Sri Lanka, Nepal, South Africa, and Peru, were among the nearly 2,700 passengers quarantined on the Diamond Princess cruise ship from early February.

Confirming their release, Army spokesperson Colonel Aman Anand said, "The 124 people who had come back from the cruise in Japan have tested negative after 14 days of their isolation, so they have been discharged."

The Army has said it will set up quarantine facilities for close to 4,000 people across the country as the number of people testing positive for Covid-19 in India continues to increase in India.

The quarantine facilities will be built in Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Jhansi, Binnaguri and Gaya, apart from the one already functional at Manesar. Army said that Command Headquarters "have been instructed to establish adequate quarantine facilities" to support the quarantine plans of the government.

The facility in Manesar will have a capacity for 300 people, while Jodhpur, Jaisalmer and Jhansi will accommodate 1,000 people each. Binnaguri and Gaya will also have capacity to keep 300 people each under quarantine.

J&K records its second case, Sec 144 in Kishtwar

THE JAMMU and Kashmir administration on Friday imposed prohibitory orders under CrPC Section 144 in Kishtwar district for a month after the Union Territory recorded its second case of Covid-19.

The prohibitory order, issued by District Magistrate Rajinder Singh Tara, said that while necessary precautions with regard to the prevention and control of COVID-19 virus have already been undertaken by the district administration in cooperation with police and health authorities, it has a pattern of transmission at a rapid rate in case prescribed preventive protocols including avoiding gathering etc. are not strictly followed.

Another order, issued by Jammu District Magistrate Sushma Chauhan, ordered the closure of all shopping malls, gyms, swimming pools and recreational clubs till March 31. "It has been felt that large gatherings in shopping malls, gyms, swimming pools, recreational clubs may cause spread of COVID-19 from affected to non-affected," the order said. "Any violation of this order shall invite action under Indian Penal Code." **ARUN SHARMA**

The Navy too is building quarantine facilities in Mumbai, Kochi and Vizag. It said that it has set up isolation facilities at its premier hospital INHS Asvini at Mumbai and a quarantine camp is "to receive evacuees" at Ghatkopar, Mumbai. Navy's Command headquarters at Kochi and Vizag have also been directed to setup similar facilities.

Only the Ghatkopar facility will be open for civilians, while the rest will only be for Navy personnel.

MOVE TO CHECK EXORBITANT PRICES

Govt declares face masks, hand sanitisers as essential commodities

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

TO CHECK the exorbitant prices of face masks and hand sanitisers in view of the coronavirus outbreak, the government on Friday declared the two items as "essential commodity" under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.

The move paves way for action against offenders under the EC Act as well as Prevention of Blackmarketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, 1980 (PBMSEC Act). Under the EC Act, an offender may be punished with an imprisonment upto seven years or fine or both, whereas under the PBMSEC Act, an offender can be detained for maximum of 6 months.

A statement released by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution said, "In view (of) the ongoing outbreak of COVID-19 and concern of the logistics for COVID-19 management particularly during last couple of weeks and that masks (2 ply & 3 ply surgical masks, N95



Medical staff with face masks at a Mumbai hospital. Prashant Nadkar

masks) and hand sanitizers have been noted to be either not available with most of the vendors in the market or are available with great difficulty at exorbitant prices, Government has notified an Order under the Essential Commodities Act to declare these items as Essential Commodities up to 30th

June, 2020 by amending the Schedule of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955."

The statement said the decision would "empower the Government and States/UTs to regulate production, quality, distribution" of the two products, and was taken to "smoothen the sale and availability of these items and carry out operations against orders speculators etc. and those involved in over pricing, black-marketing etc".

"It will enhance the availability of both the items to the general people at reasonable prices or under MRP," the statement said.

The ministry also asked states to publicise helplines for registering complaints by consumers.

"The consumers may also register their complaints in this matter with the National Consumer Helpline No. 1800-11-4000, Online Complaints: www.consumerhelpline.gov.in, Department's Website www.consumeraffairs.nic.in, dsadmin-ca@nic.in and dirwrm-ca@nic.in and secy.doca@gov.in," the statement said.

The decision came after reports of masks and hand sanitisers being sold at exorbitant prices in many cities of the country.

ICMR to test for community transmission of Covid-19

SHIVAM PATEL
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

TO RULE out community transmission of Covid-19, over a thousand samples of influenza- or pneumonia-like illnesses, taken from patients without any travel history or contact with infected persons, would now also be tested for coronavirus every week.

Community transmission is when people begin to catch a disease from those who do not know they have the infection.

A network of 65 laboratories of the Department of Health Research and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) will now test 20 samples each week — 10 of influenza-like illnesses and 10 of severe acute respiratory infection — for Covid-19.

Senior ICMR scientist Nivedita Gupta on Friday said the exercise was being done to document if community transmission was happening in any region of the country. "We don't want to do indiscriminate testing, but it is also important that we are not missing on community transmission... If we find a positive case anywhere then the strategies would be completely different," she said.

India has also become the fifth country to isolate the virus after China, Japan, the US and Thailand, ICMR's director general Dr Balram Bhargava said, adding that the strain

of virus isolated is "99.99 per cent similar" to that in Wuhan.

With the virus now isolated, authorities can begin working on a vaccine for it. Bhargava said, "We have the virus available with us, and that can help us develop more rapid diagnostic kits and could pave the way for vaccine development in future, which is still far away and every country is working towards that."

Bhargava said India has not reached the stage of community transmission yet, but countries like Italy, China, the US, and UK have entered it. "That's why we feel that we will go through that stage too, but if we can prevent it, that window of opportunity is now... If we manage for 30 days, and community transmission does not happen for another 30 days we may be at a good wicket (a better position)," he said.

He said the measures taken recently, such as closure of cinema halls and schools and colleges in certain parts of the country, are precautions to entering into the community transmission stage of the virus.

Gupta added, "Even if community transmission happens, it can be a localised transmission, which can be immediately contained in a very aggressive manner... So it's not essential that community transmission means that the entire country would be swept off. It could be localised and could be contained with appropriate measures."

FROM THE GALLERY

FROM THE CHAIR

RAJYA SABHA

“While talking about this, we have to be careful. We should not spread fear. Today, an international medical expert, Dr Bruce Lipton, has given an opinion. The conclusion of his opinion... is that fear of the Coronavirus is more deadly than the virus itself. So, let us not create panic... One has to be very careful by taking preventive steps. We should not allow this panic to spread across the country. Fortunately, the people of India — because of the weather here, because of our lifestyle, because of other things — are comparatively stronger and we are capable of fighting it”

M VENKAIAH NAIDU, Chairman, when CPI member Binoy Viswam demanded a free supply of masks and sanitisers.

LOK SABHA

“Honourable Members, the House functioned till 12 o'clock last night. I expect that the House should go on till late night in the same way, so that the trust of the people of the country in this Temple of Democracy rises.”

OMBIRLA, Speaker, at the beginning of proceedings of the House, referring to the debate on the Demands of Grants of Railways which went on till midnight on Thursday.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“Sougata ji has this delightful habit of getting up and poking his nose at every aspect, which is welcome.”

SMRITI IRANI, Minister of Women & Child Development, in response to frequent comments by the TMC member during Question Hour in Lok Sabha.

ROLL CALL

PRIME MINISTER: Not present
SONIA GANDHI: Not present
RAHUL GANDHI: Not present



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at Parliament on Friday. Anil Sharma

Cong MP withdraws Bill seeking removal of cap on poll expenses

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

CALLING THE electoral bonds scheme a “deform” instead of a reform, Congress MP M V Rajeev Gowda told Rajya Sabha on Friday that they promote opacity and black money. He was concluding the discussion on a private member’s Bill that he introduced last year and withdrew on Friday. The Bill sought an amendment to Representation of the People Act, 1951 so as to remove limits on expenditure by candidates during election campaigns.

Referring to electoral bonds, he said, “They are opaque. There, you do not know that in the claim it is white money because it comes from banks. But, during demonetisation, we saw how much black money was readily converted into white. This got rid of to make Electoral Bonds worth... Now, even shell companies can go out there and be created to contribute to Electoral Bonds, and round tripping could happen; all types of problems could happen, all because of the great innovation that has been brought in by this government.”

“Further, we suspect that because this information about who is contributing is avail-

able only to the government, that they can pressurise the bank and they can figure out who has contributed and who has not; that they can coerce people to contribute to electoral bonds, and then, what you end up with, you end up with the 95 per cent of the resources going to the ruling party,” he said.

Gowda said that despite opposition from the Election Commission, the RBI and “numerous entities, who are institutions that safeguard the sanctity of India and our democracy” the government went ahead and brought the electoral bonds.

Earlier, speaking against the Bill, Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said that if the limit on election spending is removed, it will give rise to money power in the elections. “...if election has to be free and fair, election should not be a display of naked wealth, election should not be the election of affluence, election should not be the election of display of rabid money power,” the law minister said.

“There have also been aberrations. I will not deny that. But, we all have to collectively work to improve the working of the system of democracy which we are so proud of. And, if this Bill is accepted, it will surely weaken the purity of India’s electoral process,” he said.

Rajya Sabha passes Vivad se Vishwas Bill

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

THE PARLIAMENT on Friday approved the Direct Tax Vivad Se Vishwas Bill which will provide an opportunity to taxpayers to end pending disputes by paying the tax amount, with interests and penalties waived off, till March 31.

The Bill was passed by voice vote in Rajya Sabha. It was approved by Lok Sabha on March 4.

Replying to the debate on the Bill in Upper House, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the government is taking all steps towards addressing the issue of reduction of litigation on a priority basis. “We are bringing in faceless assessment. Not just faceless assessment, but the appeals would also now become faceless... the root cause of the litigation should be addressed. The government is taking all steps towards reducing the litigation. It is our priority,” she said.

Denying allegations that this is an “amnesty scheme”, she said, “This scheme is not an amnesty scheme at all. But the taxpayer has to pay a certain tax amount and that tax amount, the undisclosed cash deposit during demonetisation, is liable to be suffering a tax of 75 per cent. Hence, the taxpayer has to pay 75 per cent, the demonetisation related ones, of tax for settling the dispute regarding the cash deposits, which had been made during the period of demonetisation. So, it is not an amnesty for anybody.”

For those who have paid tax under protest, she clarified that “if the amount already paid by the taxpayer exceeds the amount payable by the taxpayer under this scheme, refund shall be granted to the taxpayers. Those who have paid with a protest, if the amount paid already is much higher than the tax which they have to duly pay, then you have this relief of the refund coming in.”

She said cases above Rs 5 crore have been excluded from the scheme so that large evasion-related cases and fraud cases do not come under its purview.

Initiating the debate, Congress’s M V Rajeev Gowda targeted the government, saying it had given “tremendous discretion” to tax authorities “and that the use or misuse of their discretion is what is resulting in litigation”.

He called the Bill a “Band-Aid solution to a large problem that is festering” and said the Bill has significant flaws which demonstrate the “bankruptcy of the government’s approach to the economy”.

Arguing that the Bill was hastily brought about, he said the aim is to “plug the extraordinary fiscal deficit because the economy has been sinking and the government is not able to raise revenues in traditional ways”.

He argued that while the deadline for settling the disputes is just two weeks away, the Bill has yet to get the President’s assent and rules are to be framed.

“In such a situation, how do you expect people to be able to go out there and make a considered decision based on what has actually come out of Parliament?”, he said and asked the government to extend the cut-off date till June 30.

In her reply, Sitharaman said March 31 is the date given to pay dues without any additional penalty, whereas between March 31 and June 30, the dues can be paid with an additional penalty of 10 per cent. “However, what is important here is that the Bill authorises the government to notify the end date. So, depending on how this whole thing is going, based on the suggestions coming from the tax assesses themselves, the notification will be issued subsequently,” she said.

Some members, including P Wilson and Tiruchi Siva from the DMK, said the Bill’s title Vivad Se Vishwas is in Hindi and therefore in violation of the Constitution and will trigger implication in non-Hindi speaking states.

To, this, the Finance Minister gave an assurance that she will ensure through a circular that all regions use it with a local language and also advertise it in a local language, agreeing that the expression in Hindi may not be understood by many regional language-speaking assesses.

5 QUESTIONS



CONGRESS MP **GEETA KORA** SPEAKS TO **HARIKISHAN SHARMA** ABOUT RAISING IN LOK SABHA THE IMPACT OF MALNUTRITION ON CHILDREN AND PREGNANT WOMEN IN JHARKHAND’S SINGHBHUM CONSTITUENCY

What issue did you raise?

The issue of prevalence of malnutrition in my constituency. In this area, a number of children had died due to malnutrition. It has a very negative impact on the health of children and pregnant women... I wanted to know what steps the government is taking.

What is your demand?

I demand basic amenities in my constituency and strengthening of the anganwadi system. I also demand an increase in the stipend of anganwadi workers. Given the workload, government should raise their stipends... Many centres are being run from rented buildings. They should be provided adequate facilities...

Have you taken up any project related to malnutrition using your MPLAD funds?

Yes, we are trying to take develop a few anganwadi centres. But, issues such as a hike in the stipend need the attention of the Centre.

Have you raised the issue of malnutrition with the state government?

Yes, I have raised it on several occasions in the past.

What will be your next step?

I will continue to raise this issue. Today, I did not get a satisfactory answer... I will write to the Centre...

System of pvt booking agents must go: Goyal

HARIKISHAN SHARMA

NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

AFTER CRACKING down on touts, the government is setting its sights on private ticket booking agents, Railways Minister Piyush Goyal informed Lok Sabha on Friday.

During a debate on Demand for Grants for his ministry, Goyal said, “Now, I think the chain of vendors and ticketing agents is not required. I am considering that these agents and sub-agents, who have put boards claiming that passengers will get tickets quickly, should be done away with.”

“Today, all have phones. They can book tickets using phones. If anyone wants help, that person can visit the government’s Common Service Centres and book tickets. This will ensure an income for youth working at these centres,” the minister said.

Cautioning members against “falling prey” to fake tickets, Goyal said the Railways had cancelled such fake tickets amounting Rs 10 crore so far.

According to him, 5,300 touts who used to black-market tickets were arrested in the past 14 months. Also, 884



Railway Minister Piyush Goyal at Parliament on Friday. Anil Sharma

booking vendors were blacklisted.

On the issue of travel time, Goyal said the Railways will carry out an assessment on stoppages and those found unnecessary will be eliminated. He said the Consultative Committee of Parliament had already approved the proposals made by the ministry.

Speaking on the contentious issue of the merger of the Railway Budget with the General Budget, Goyal attacked previous Congress-led govern-

ments, saying they presented a separate budget only to mislead people.

The separate budget was only a “balloon” and only attracted “claps” in the House, he said, adding that the “fake” announcements used to only mislead people in elections. He cited several examples of projects that have been pending since 1974.

Talking about new safety measures, Goyal said, “From April 1, 2019 to March 13, 2020 not a single passenger

had died due to a rail accident... The millions of workers, who worked day and night; it is the effect of that... that not a single passenger is not.”

He also made a strong pitch for private investment in the Railways, saying it will help the Centre realise its goal of attracting an investment of Rs 50 lakh crore in the sector over the next 12 years.

Earlier in the day, Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury resumed the debate on the grant demand. “Whenever we dwell on the subject of Indian Railways, we used to get a little bit nostalgic because we have witnessed the huge fanfare while the Railway Budget had been presented in this House. The Railways has been suffering from various lacunae, deficiencies, non-performances and other ailments which the Minister is well aware of.”

Chowdhury asked Goyal if the amalgamation of budgets had yielded a tangible outcome. He also questioned the minister on the status of the bullet train project. “The deadline that was fixed was 2022. I would like to know whether it will be possible to complete the work by 2022...”

Later, the House passed the Demand for Grants of Railways.



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



SENSING OPPORTUNITY

THE OFFICE of Health Minister Harsh Vardhan is having a tough time to ensure that the preparations to tackle the coronavirus outbreak are in place. The staff is having a hectic time as they monitor the country's counter exercise as well as the campaign to spread awareness. His office has been flooded with panic calls from inside and outside the country. However, there is a new issue now — the calls from self-promoters. There have been a number of calls from people claiming to have found new medicines to prevent and treat the infection, and almost all of them want the ministry to provide the required funds for the 'inventions'.

BACKING OUT

FOR THE second time in this session, a BJP leader backed out from introducing a bill on the Uniform Civil Code. Kirodi Lal Meena was to introduce a private member's Bill titled The Uniform Civil Code in India Bill, 2020 to constitute a "National Inspection and Investigation Committee for preparation of Uniform Civil Code and its implementation throughout the territory of India and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto". However, like he had done on February 7, when his name was called out to introduce the Bill on Friday, he remained absent from the House. CPM leader Elamaram Kareem had written to Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu to prevent from the Bill being introduced as it would "further aggravate" the situation in the country towards "communal polarisation". It appears the letter wasn't required considering Meena absence.

ALL IN THE NAME

THE POPULATION Foundation of India, an NGO working in the field of reproduction and gender rights since the 1970s, has sent out a clarification to media houses, requesting that their widely used acronym PFI no longer be used. The reason — PFI also stands for the Popular Front of India, members of which have been accused of involvement in the Delhi violence. Pointing out that the acronym has been used since the organisations's inception in 1970, its use in recent weeks while referring to the Popular Front of India has been a cause of "embarrassment for the organisation and may have serious consequences for its staff members who may be wrongly seen as associated with this outfit".

Cong's Singhvi to move Bill for enforcing two-child norm

MANOJ CG
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

ARGUING THAT increasing population is putting pressure on India's limited natural resources, a private member Bill by Congress MP Abhishek Manu Singhvi, which is set to come up in Rajya Sabha, calls for enforcement of a two-child norm through incentives and disincentives.

Since The Population Control Bill, 2020 has monetary implications, it required the President's permission for its introduction in Rajya Sabha. President Ram Nath Kovind, Singhvi told *The Indian Express*, has given the permission.

In the Bill, the disincentives for those who do not comply include barring them from contesting elections, getting promotions in government services, receiving government subsidy — barring those in the BPL category — or applying for Group A jobs.

The Bill calls for providing financial incentives to couples adhering to the two-child norm, setting up of a National Population Stabilisation Fund by the central government and ensuring availability of contraceptives at reasonable rates at all sub health centres.

The Bill suggests that if a married couple, who have only one



Abhishek Manu Singhvi

child, "voluntarily undergo sterilisation/operation", then the government should provide them benefits including "preference to the single child" for admission in institutes of higher education and selection in government jobs. For married couples who live below the poverty line and undergo voluntary undergo sterilisation/operation, he has suggested that the Centre give them a "one-time lump sum amount of Rs 60,000... if the single child is a boy or Rs 1 lakh if the single child is a girl."

As for disincentives, the Bill says "both the husband and the wife in the case of a married couple, who have more than two children, shall be debarred from contesting in Lok Sabha, state legislature and panchayat elections, elections to Rajya Sabha... and similar elective bodies... getting promotion in government services, applying to Group A jobs under the central and state governments and receiving any kind of government subsidy, in case the married couple falls in the above poverty line category."

The Bill says "after one year

EXPLAINED E. Not the only one

PM Narendra Modi, in his last Independence Day address, had flagged the dangers of population explosion. And days later, Congress leader Jitin Prasada demanded that the government enact a law to put in place "stricter" population control measures. Rakesh Sinha, a nominated Rajya Sabha member aligned with the BJP, had then introduced a private member Bill, seeking to enforce a two-child norm.

from the commencement of this Act... all employees of the central government shall submit an undertaking in writing... that they shall not procreate more than two children." And employees who already have more than two children at the commencement of the Act shall "submit an undertaking that they shall not procreate any more children." The central government while recruiting employees, the Bill says, should give preference to candi-

dates who have two or less than two living children.

As for exceptions, the Bill says the "employee of the central government already having two living children may be allowed to procreate one more child in case of disability of living child or any such circumstances as prescribed in the rules". It says "an employee of the central government whose action is found to be in violation of any provision of this Act shall be liable for dismissal from service".

Singhvi said "real prosperity and well being is measured always in per-capita income and not in gross income. Whenever we talk about 5 trillion and 20 trillion economy, it feels good... but what matters is the per capita division of that five trillion... and we can never have that degree of prosperity without population control."

"I have eschewed all forms of coercion by giving a sophisticated, calibrated, nuanced framework of inducements and disincentives, entirely financial and career-based... This is intended to apply to each and every individual without exception, without region, community, caste, religion or political access. It has reasonable escape routes and exceptions for those who have specific disabilities or exigencies," he said.

SC to hear only urgent matters post Holi vacation

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

THE SUPREME Court on Friday decided that it will restrict itself to hearing only urgent matters when it reopens on March 16, after the ongoing Holi vacation.

The decision follows an urgent meeting convened by Chief Justice of India S A Bobde to deal with the emergent situation in view of the World Health Organisation (WHO) declaring Covid-19 a global pandemic, and the March 5 advisory issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in this regard, cautioning against mass gatherings.

"On reviewing the advisory issued by the Government of India and in view of the opinion of public health experts, including medical professionals, and also considering the safety and welfare of all the visitors, litigants, lawyers, court staff, security, maintenance and support staff, student interns and media professionals, the Competent Authority has been pleased to direct that the functioning of the Courts from Monday, 16 March, 2020 shall be restricted to urgent matters with such number of Benches as may be found appropriate," an official notification by the SC Secretary General Sanjeev S Kalgaonkar said.

tion by the SC Secretary General Sanjeev S Kalgaonkar said.

The court also limited the entry of lawyers and other litigants. The statement said, "No persons except the lawyers who are going to act in the matter, i.e. either for argument or for making oral submissions or to assist along with one litigant only, shall be permitted in the court room."

It added that mentioning of matters will be made before the Mentioning Officer only, and requested all to cooperate with the instructions of the staff on duty in the interest of all considering the importance of the safety measures for health.

In a separate circular, the court said that only six two-judges benches will sit on March 16.

The benches that will sit are that of Justices Arun Mishra and M R Shah, Justices U U Lalit and Vineet Saran, Justices A M Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari, Justices D Y Chandrachud and Hemant Gupta, Justices L Nageswara Rao and S Ravindra Bhat, and Justices S K Kaul and Sanjiv Khanna.

The Constitution Bench and Special Benches, which were previously fixed, will not be sitting.

Coronavirus in air, govt looks to prioritise essential House business

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

THE GOVERNMENT is prioritising essential legislative business in Parliament, keeping in mind the significance of social distancing protocols to limit the possibility of spreading the coronavirus.

In this regard, the ruling BJP on Friday issued a whip to all its members to ensure their presence in the House on Monday and Tuesday to pass the Budget and Finance bills.

"The government's essential business will be over by March 17. Although the government is no mood to adjourn the session abruptly, we have to be prepared if things go out of hand and we are forced to shut down Parliament," said a source in the government.

The government is also planning to complete the process of passing the demands for grants by Monday when the House would take up cut motions, if any, moved by the opposition to guil-



BJP has issued a whip to all its members to ensure their presence in the House on Monday and Tuesday.

lotine them.

"Once these processes are done, the government's important legislative business will be over," said the source.

Sources said members from different parties have been trying to put pressure on the government as well as on the Speaker to adjourn the session after the passage of the Budget Bill, due to concerns over the virus outbreak.

But the government is not

keen to conclude the session abruptly as it wants to pass some key bills, said the sources. On Friday, the Centre ruled out an early adjournment of the session, maintaining that it will go as scheduled.

However, the Lok Sabha Secretariat has already curtailed the number of visitors coming to Parliament since early this week. A health advisory issued this week said: "...With a view to pre-

vent the spread of infection among public, members are hereby advised to take adequate preventive measures."

Members have also been demanding thermal screening in Parliament. Hand sanitisers have already been provided to staff and security personnel at major entry and exit points.

The government had planned 31 sittings for the Budget Session which is scheduled to end on April 3. It has identified 45 bills and seven financial items. But after Parliament resumed the session following the recess on March 1, the first week was a washout with the Opposition demanding a debate on the communal violence in Delhi. The debate finally took place on Wednesday and Thursday.

On Friday, Rajya Sabha approved the crucial 'Direct Tax Vivad Se Vishwas Bill to increase the scope to cover litigation pending in various debt recovery tribunals.

Don't share Covid-19 details as it spreads panic: Kerala oppn to govt

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 13

KERALA OPPOSITION leader Ramesh Chennithala Friday flayed the LDF government for sharing details on Covid-19, saying the news would create panic among the public.

In the state assembly, Chennithala said: "It is not necessary that all details about coro-

navirus should be shared with people. That would create panic. News about coronavirus cases should not be revealed in this manner, on a daily basis. What is required is confidence building measures," he said.

The minister, in her reply, said: "You are saying we should not speak and if spoken people would panic. At the same time, you are saying that we are not enlightening the people. How is it possible?"

In Bihar, NDA picks file nominations

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PATNA, MARCH 13

RAJYA SABHA Deputy Chairperson and senior JD(U) leader Hariwansh Narayan Singh, JD(U) leader Ramnath Thakur — son of former chief minister Karpooi Thakur — and BJP leader Vivek Thakur — son of former MP CP Thakur — on Friday filed their nominations for the Rajya Sabha for the three NDA seats.

Hariwansh and Thakur are being nominated to Rajya Sabha for

the second time. Vivek Thakur filled the position vacated by his octogenarian father. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi were present during the filing.

Hariwansh was elected deputy chairperson of the Rajya Sabha on August 9, 2018. Ramnath Thakur has been a minister in the Bihar government and had also represented Samastipur in the Assembly. Former MLC Vivek Thakur has been associated with BJP for over 25 years.

Independent RS member withdraws Bill to create body for looking into FDI

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

INDEPENDENT RAJYA Sabha member Narendra Jadhav withdrew his private member's Foreign Investment in Financial Services, Critical Infrastructure and Technology Affecting National Security (Regulation) Bill, 2018 to regulate foreign investment coming into the country. He said he withdrew the Bill after assurances given by Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur.

Jadhav said, "(The) basic purpose was to drive home the point that we need to exercise extraordinary caution, even while welcoming FDI, and in the light of the assurances given by the min-

ister, I withdraw my Bill."

He said India needs more FDI to accelerate economic growth and to create jobs, but added, "Do we want FDI at the cost of national security? Most certainly not." He compared the same to the curtailing of international travellers to India in light of the coronavirus outbreak, even though India would want foreign exchange from tourism.

"That is precisely the point that I am making about FDI," he said. Jadhav's Bill had earlier been discussed by various members, and many of them had supported it. One of the last participating members was BJP's nominated member in Rajya Sabha, Subramanian Swamy, who said on Friday that it was a "very good suggestion to form a Committee

on Foreign Direct Investment and National Security".

Swamy said FDI in India "is not a very big proportion of the total investment" and is "below five per cent, and, therefore, it is not a matter which will have a big tragic effect or large effect on the total investment if any project is rejected because it does not meet certain strict criteria of national security".

Talking about FDI he said in certain sectors like defence, "we have to make sure whether we want FDI or we want transfer of technology".

Thakur, making a case for Jadhav to withdraw his Bill, said, "There is a due mechanism which is followed by the government... it would not be right to have a committee for this."

11 EXPRESS NETWORK

DEATH OF UNNAO RAPE VICTIM'S FATHER

No leniency: Court sends Sengar to 10 yrs in jail

ANAND MOHAN J
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

A DELHI court on Friday sent disqualified MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar to 10 years in prison and fined him Rs 10 lakh for the death of the Unnao rape victim's father, refusing to show any "leniency" to him and six others accused in the case.



Disqualified MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar

The other accused persons, including Sengar's brother and two policemen, were also given 10 years in prison. The former MLA's brother, too, was asked to pay Rs 10 lakh as compensation for the victim's family.

The court observed that the deceased was the sole breadwinner of the family, which has been uprooted from its residence. "It would be difficult for them to go back to their native place and reside along with fellow villagers. In the said circumstances... the above convicts Kuldeep Singh Sengar and Jai Deep Singh alias Atul Singh are directed to pay compensation of

Rs 10 lakh each to the wife and children of the deceased," the court said. The court said the sequence of events "establishes clearly, beyond reasonable doubt, that under the patronage of accused Sengar, his foot soldiers—namely Vineet Mishra, Birender Singh and Shashi Pratap Singh (and probably with others who could not be identified)—assaulted the victim with leg and fist blows by intermittently hitting him... with the barrel of the rifle." The court also directed the Uttar Pradesh government to carry out "appropriate disciplinary proceedings against the doctors concerned whose gross medical negligence led to the death of the victim in terms of

the inquiry report proved on the record". After the order on sentence was pronounced, one of the accused policemen, Station House Officer Ashok, pleaded for mercy before the judge. "What is my children's fault? I was just doing my job. I have nothing to do with Sengar. This is like death." The judge replied: "It is difficult for us to make decisions. You should have thought about your children and wife when you committed the crime." The court, however, acquitted the other accused—constable Amir Khan, Shailendra Singh, Ram Sharan Singh and Sharadveer Singh—giving them the benefit of doubt.

YES BANK CRISIS

CBI registers fresh FIR against Kapoor, wife

DEEPTIMANTIWAR
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13



Rana Kapoor

THE CBI has registered a fresh FIR against Yes Bank promoter Rana Kapoor and his wife Bindu, among others, in connection with the purchase of a property worth Rs 685 crore in Delhi at a much lower price. The CBI has alleged that the property was bought by Kapoor's wife fraudulently from Avantha Group using a loan taken from Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd.

However, the lease, according to CBI, was a sham as the annual rent of Rs 65 crore fixed for the property was exorbitant and the previous tenant — none other than Ballarpur Industries Ltd — was paying only Rs 1.02 crore annually. BGPPPL never paid any rent to Avantha Realty, the CBI has alleged. Avantha used Yes Bank's loan to repay ICICI and the property became Yes Bank's collateral, the FIR says. In due course, the loan became stressed and Yes Bank asked Avantha to sell off the property to recover it, it says.

The CBI Friday also conducted searches on premises associated with the Kapoors in Mumbai and Delhi-NCR, their company Bliss Abode Pvt Ltd and Avantha Realty. All have been arraigned as accused in the CBI FIR.

In August 2017, Bliss Abode Pvt Ltd (BAPL), owned by Kapoor's wife Bindu, bought the property for Rs 378 crore. Interestingly, even before making the offer to Avantha, for which an NOC was given by the Yes Bank board headed by Kapoor, BAPL entered a loan agreement with Indiabulls and received a loan of Rs 90 crore on the property which was still not owned by it, says the FIR, adding that Indiabulls financed rest of the loan to purchase the property.

According to the FIR, Yes Bank had loaned Rs 2,500 crore to Avantha Group and it was under stress. Avantha Group company Avantha Realty owned a property on Amrita Shergill Marg in Delhi, valued at Rs 550 crore, which it had mortgaged to ICICI Bank for a loan. To repay this loan, the company took a loan of Rs 400 crore from Yes Bank in March 2016. Since the property was mortgaged to ICICI Bank, the loan was sanctioned on the basis of a lease rental agreement Avantha Realty entered into with BILT Graphics Paper Ltd (BGPPPL), a group company of Ballarpur Industrial Ltd.

Elaborating on Indiabulls' role, the FIR said, "Loan agree-

ments were however executed between Bliss Abode Pvt. Ltd. and Indiabulls much later on October 5, 2017 showing balance amount of Rs. 285 crore out of above Rs 375 crore also taken as loans. Shri Rana Kapoor is shown as a co-borrower in all these subsequent loan agreements dated October 5, 2017 as well."

"If that was not all, Kapoors further mortgaged the property to take loans from Indiabulls through two more companies and ended up leveraging a loan of over Rs 600 crore on the property from Indiabulls," the FIR said.

"The above-stated facts relating to criminal conspiracy establish obtaining illegal gratification to the tune of Rs 307 crore by Shri Rana Kapoor, then MD and CEO of Yes Bank Ltd, by acquiring an expensive property situated at a prime location in New Delhi at 40, Amrita Shergill Marg at a price of Rs 378 crore against the declared value of Rs 685 crore by Mrs Bindu Kapoor and Mr Rana Kapoor themselves in lieu of favours extended by YBL to the Avantha group companies promoted by Mr Gautam Thapar as stated above," the FIR said.

An Indiabulls spokesperson said, "This is to inform you that no raid of CBI has happened on Indiabulls Group or any of its offices. The CBI Raids have happened on Yes bank/ Rana Kapoor who have their offices in Indiabulls Finance Center complex in the capacity of a tenant."

J&K: Youth who went missing month ago killed in encounter

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, MARCH 13

A YOUTH who had gone missing earlier this month and joined the Lashkar-e-Taiba was Friday killed in an encounter with security forces. Three other persons, who had gone missing with him, are also expected to have joined militant ranks.



SHAH FLAGS-IN WATER CONSERVATION PROJECT

Union Home Minister Amit Shah at the flag-in ceremony of the Ganga Aamantaran Abhiyan in New Delhi on Friday. The programme, launched by the National Mission for Clean Ganga, employs water-related adventure sports to spread awareness about water conservation. Speaking at the event, Shah said, "We must not look at Ganga as only a river. It is the pivot of a thousand-year-old civilisation, which is one of the oldest in the world... Ganga is the symbol of Indian civilisation and is revered in each household of the country." Amit Mehra

Police officials said the slain militant, Mudasir Bhat, was a resident of Rafiabad in Sopore.

"Rafiabad #Encounter Concluded: Killed #terrorist identified as Mudasir Bhat resident of Shutloo Rafiabad. Arms & #ammunition recovered. Affiliated with #proscribed terror outfit #LeT," Kashmir Police Zone said on Twitter.

SSP Sopore Javid Iqbal told The Indian Express: "Four boys were missing. Today (Friday), one of them was killed in the operation. The way we recovered ammunition from him, it is an indication that three others have probably joined militant ranks as well." Sources said that the Friday operation took place in an orchard after a search operation in the area.

13 test positive for swine flu in West Bengal

Kolkata: At least 13 people in the state, including two children, have tested positive for swine flu, a senior official said on Friday.

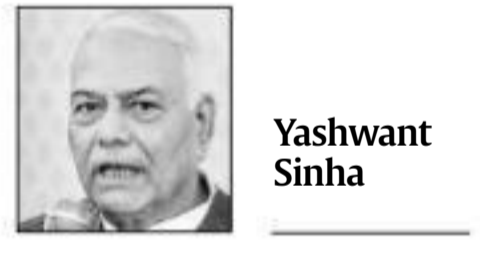
A woman from Manipur, and two children — a 10-year-old girl from Hooghly district, and a 23-month-old from Odisha — are being treated for swine flu at a private hospital in the city's southern part, the official said, adding that the blood samples of 10 more people across the city had tested positive for the disease.

"These patients are being treated at the private hospital," the official said. "The state government is in constant touch with the authorities of the medical institution."

A man, who returned home in Murshidabad district from Saudi Arabia last week, was detected with swine flu, and is undergoing treatment at the Beliaghata ID hospital at present. PTI

Yashwant Sinha hits out at merger of Rly cadres, amalgamation of Budget

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13



Yashwant Sinha

TERMING IT "innovation for destruction", former finance minister Yashwant Sinha on Friday hit out at the government's decision to unify all Railway services into a single cadre and to merge the Railway Budget with the General Budget.

Management Service (IRMS) leading to protests from civil servants. It also decided to trim the size of the Railway Board from nine to just five members, including the chairman.

Speaking at the launch of the book 'Railwayman: An Engineer's Memoir' by former Railway Board Member RR Jaruhar, Sinha said "an engineer or even a doctor or a CA can become a manager but a generalist cannot become an engineer, CA, or a doctor." Railway Board chairman VK Yadav was also present at the event.

He noted that were "some demands" made to decouple the budgets in the discussions in the Lok Sabha on Thursday. "Earlier, Parliament used to get two to three days to discuss the Rail Budget, which is now one of the departmental or ministry budgets," he said, adding that there should not be change for the sake of change and innovation for destruction.

Earlier this year, the Union Cabinet decided to merge the five Indian Railway engineering services and three civil services cadres into the Indian Railway

ministry, I would say that I would prefer to go back to the older system where the Railways had their own budget rather than being merged with the General Budget," he said as the audience, mostly retired and serving bureaucrats of the Railways, applauded.

He cited the experience of implementing the computerized Passenger Reservation System in 1989-90 and said the move had met resistance. "Everybody was opposing. They were saying jobs will go. But that was implemented. Today, when we look back, if that was not implemented, the reservation system would have collapsed. Today, we are again at such a crossroads. Today, we need to change our organisational structure to produce the best managers..." he said.

Earlier, defending the decision to merge the cadres, Yadav said the move would produce the "best quality of managers and best quality of technical experts." The present system is not able to produce a good manager

and a good technical expert, Yadav said adding that this was why the Railways was unable to implement its own vision of growth and modernisation, despite chalking out a vision a decade ago. "That is why the government is trying change the structure. I know, in such a huge organisation, when you are going for a change, there has to be resistance," Yadav added.

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DEEP MUKHERJEE
JAIPUR, MARCH 13

IN ITS verdict convicting two teenagers in the Pehlu Khan lynching case, the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) in Alwar has been scathing in its criticism for some doctors of the private hospital in Behror where Khan was first admitted after he was assaulted by a mob of self-styled cow vigilantes while transporting cattle in April 2017.

The JJB on Friday sentenced and sent two teenagers convicted in the Pehlu Khan lynching case to a 'surakshit bal grah' (special home) for three years, the maximum punishment that the board could pronounce in such cases.

"If there were actually no injuries on the body of the deceased, then the statements of the aforementioned doctors would have been alike. But because every doctor has given different statements, it appears that the doctors of Kailash Hospital treated the body of deceased Pehlu Khan as a dummy, wherein injuries were arbitrarily decided and inflicted injuries were arbitrarily treated as minimal. Such statements by the aforementioned doctors, also cast suspicion on their medical conduct," reads the verdict authored by Principal Magistrate Sarita Dhakad.

"Therefore, doctors of Kailash Hospital Dr Akhil Saxena, Dr BD Sharma, Dr RC Yadav and Dr Jitendra Butolia should be issued



Pehlu Khan was lynched in 2017 by a group of cow vigilantes.

a notice and their answers be sought that for the fulfilment of what objective they changed the reason for death from serious hurt to heart attack," says the judgment.

Among the four doctors, Yadav had unsuccessfully contested the 2018 Assembly elections from Behror Assembly constituency on a Congress ticket. The Rajasthan Pradesh Congress Committee website lists him as one of the party's leaders in Behror. Repeated attempts to reach Yadav through phone calls and text messages went unanswered.

The JJB has also said in its judgment that it is clear from the statements of doctors who conducted the post-mortem that a heart attack was not the cause of death Khan's death and that he died owing to the injuries which he sustained during the assault.

"The aforementioned doctors have said unanimously that the reason for Pehlu Khan's death is heart attack in which the argument forwarded by them is very

irresponsible. The doctor says — 'according to my tests and my experience, Pehlu Khan had died of a heart attack'. However, no particular tests were conducted and hurriedly they issued the death certificate. They should be asked where in medical science, without any tests reports are prepared only on the basis of experience," says the verdict.

The judgment says that the statements of the doctors who conducted the post-mortem 'totally contradict' the statements and reports submitted by the doctors of Kailash Hospital.

"With this, the reports related to Pehlu Khan submitted by the aforementioned doctors and their statements become totally suspicious," it notes.

The verdict noted that in the 21st century, when India is the largest democratic and secular country in the world, some anti-social elements don't hesitate to confuse youth and in the name of religion induct them into an illegal group and enact such inhuman acts and killings by taking the law and order in their hands.

"In the above case, even if it is assumed that Pehlu Khan and his sons were illegally transporting cows from the Jaipur market to Haryana, then too, no person by sidelining police and the administration gets the right of taking the law in their hands so that they can make an illegal group and, in a cruel and animalistic way, assault him and then try to validate their act by saying that they are saving cows," says the verdict.

'My relatives may not install them': TMC MLA readies 2 statues, bust of himself for erecting after his death

ATRI MITRA
KOLKATA, MARCH 13

EVERY MORNING, Trinamool Congress MLA Jayanta Naskar spends a good amount of time washing his own statues — two life-size statues and one full bust — at his Bagulakhali home in Chunakhali in South 24 Parganas district.



TMC MLA Jayanta Naskar, with his statues. Express

Naskar, the two-term MLA from Gosaba, says that he got his own statues made because he doesn't trust that his supporters or relatives would get his statue made after his death. "We are politicians. We have many enemies. When we will die, nobody knows. I can die any day. After my death, my relatives may not install my statues. So, I decided that I will get my own statues made," says 71-year-old Naskar, who is guarded by 11 policemen.

According to sources in the police, Naskar has been attacked by miscreants on at least two occasions, but he managed to escape every time. For the last three years, his security has been increased taking into ac-

count his threat perception. Gosaba in South 24 Parganas is infamous for political clashes. During the Left Front government, there used to be frequent clashes between CPM and RSP and TMC.

Naskar belongs to a political family. His elder brother, Chittaranjan Naskar, was a Congress leader and was defeated by the CPM in 1977 Assembly elections. After his death in 1987, Jayanta took over his political mantle and contested from Gosaba for three consecutive times — 1996 from Congress, 2001 from TMC and 2006 from TMC again, but he lost in all the three elections.

He won from Gosaba on his fourth attempt in 2011 as a TMC candidate. Even as the Left Front lost power in the state in that Assembly elections, infighting in the ruling TMC kept Gosaba simmering with clashes.

Standing beside the two life-size statues that bear an uncanny resemblance to him, Jayanta Naskar says that he looked for an "exceptional artist" to make the statues. "After a long search at

Kumartuli (the hub of idol makers) in Kolkata, I finally found one. I visited Kumartuli at least seven times in two months so that the statue maker could use me as a model for the statues. The artist told me that if I was physically present there, the statues will look more accurate. After three long months, the artist made a clay statue of me. From that clay statue, three fibre statues were made," Jayanta Naskar says.

However, the MLA has no plans to install the statues till he is alive and they will remain in the close confines of his home. "I do not want these statues to be placed anywhere before my death. I do not even speak about it to my party colleagues. But I got them made because if I die, then my close relatives and friends may use install these statues of me," says Naskar, who has five children.

COMBATING CORONAVIRUS

Odisha Assembly adjourned till March 29, BJP claims conspiracy

SAMPAD PATNAIK
BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 13

THE ODISHA Assembly was adjourned till March 29 on Friday in wake of the coronavirus outbreak. While Congress members supported the motion, BJP lawmakers opposed the move, saying the situation in the state does not warrant such a drastic move.

to demonstrate how to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Prior to the exercise, the state government held a detailed conference for briefing MLAs.

Earlier, BJP leader and Leader of the Opposition Pradipta Naik told journalists, "This is their old practice.. a discussion on Yes Bank and government deposit in other private banks would have exposed the government."

He added that suspension of the Assembly signals a "conspiracy", considering Parliament and various other state assemblies are functioning. "The most vulnerable places are bus stands,

railway stations, airports and ports. Will the government shut them down?" Naik said.

Dismissing the charges as "politically motivated", the ruling BJD said that Patnaik has always been on the forefront of tackling any natural or public health calamity. "There is no cure for this disease... social distancing is the only way to tackle this problem," said a BJD spokesperson.

Meanwhile, Patnaik informed that the Cabinet has declared Covid-19 as a disaster for the state under Disaster Management Act, 2005.

House panel for defence raps govt for gap in budget projection, allocation

KRISHN KAUSHIK & SUSHANT SINGH
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

THE LOK Sabha's Standing Committee on Defence has come down heavily on the government for the 35 per cent gap in capital outlay for the services compared to the projected demand at a time when China is becoming a major presence in Indian Ocean Region, and both China and Pakistan remain threats.

The standing committee has again recommended a non-lapsable fund for defence modernisation even as the 15th Finance Commission is looking into creating a non-lapsable fund for defence and internal security. In the report tabled in Parliament on Friday, the committee said it has recommended creation of such a fund earlier as well and mentioned that while Defence Ministry is in favour of such a fund, the Finance Ministry had rejected the proposal and wanted the current system of annual authorisation of budget from Parliament.

The committee has recommended that the Defence Ministry "take up the matter at higher levels" for creation of such a fund "so that procurement can be done unhindered without pursuing for funds to receive at supplementary or additional grants stages".

The committee has noted in its reports on Demand for Grants for 2020-2021 that there "is a considerable shortage" and said "such situation is not conducive for preparation of country to modern day warfare..."

The report emphasises that the 35 per cent shortfall between demand projection and the allocation of the budget "would affect acquisition of latest weaponry, aircraft, ships, tanks and capital intensive projects including land, building and other infrastructure".

The total capital allocation as provided in the budget this year is Rs 1,13,734 crore, when the projection provided by the armed forces was Rs 1,75,702.06 crore.

The committee has also expressed concern over the burgeoning pension bill of the defence forces which in the last

decade has increased over 3.5 times — from Rs 37,336 crore in 2010-2011 to Rs 1,33,825 crore in this budget. The share of pension in the total defence budget has shot up by 50 per cent in the same period. "The issue of burgeoning Defence pension liabilities unanimously emerged as one of the biggest challenges as the pension budget has increased approximately 3.5 times since the last decade," the report noted.

In his deposition before the standing committee, the Defence Secretary had acknowledged that the increase in pensions "is the biggest challenge in some ways because as was shown in the graph, our pension budget has increased 4-5 times in the last 10 years and everything else dwarfs in comparison".

"...the reasons for increase of pension are many. One of them is increase in longevity of people, increase manpower over the years for various new platforms that we continue to inculcate, revision of pension scales from time to time, etc. This is a liability today, which is a committed liability as it happens. ... The Ministry is very consciously aware of this," the Defence Secretary was quoted to have told the committee in the report.

There are a total of 32,35,730 crore defence pensioners and approximately 55,000 defence pensioners are added each year.

Among the major challenges posed by the defence budget, the ministry had highlighted "Increasing Pension Liabilities", "Share of pensions in Defence Budget has gone up by over 50%," and "Percentage of Capital Expenditure has been reducing continually".

"Considering such apathy towards allocation in Capital Acquisition fund, the Committee are wary of the fact that without sufficient allocation for Committed Liabilities, there would be difficulty in matching deadlines in the payments towards already committed purchases. Similarly, if there is no budget available for New Schemes, there would be no procurement for latest weaponry and modernization would take a back seat," the committee observed.

ED arrests developer for defrauding foreigners in Goa

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PANAJI, MARCH 13

THE ENFORCEMENT Directorate (ED) has arrested Goa-based businessman Ankit Kumar Jain for allegedly defrauding at least 50 foreigners since 2009 by promising them property in South Goa's Quepem in return for investments in his company. The accused's father has also been named in the complaint.

Central to the probe are two properties in UK registered in the name of Ankit and his father Sunil Kumar, believed to have been brought with the investments of the victims.

Ankit, CEO of Sanatan Financiers and Real Estates Private Limited, was arrested under provisions of Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

An ED statement Friday said Ankit and Sunil created shell companies and induced foreigners to invest directly in these entities in return for shares. Since foreign nationals are not allowed to buy property in the country according to provisions of Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999, the victims were asked to use the

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) route to invest and become major shareholders in the company. Reportedly, none of the victims were ever given any property and ownership of plots of land under the project, named Peace Valley, was also never transferred in their names.

"So in that sense, the plots and investments were in the name of the shell companies which had foreigners as the major shareholders and a tiny fraction of shares held by the father-son duo," said an ED official.

"Once the foreign nationals invested in these shell companies on the promise that their amount would be used in investments in Goa, the money would then be transferred in the accounts of the company, owned and controlled by Ankit and Sunil. We are still to probe the channel used," said the official. "The case became messy when they started threatening the foreigners and one of them approached police."

While FIRs in the case are lodged with Goa Police, ED took it up because of the "systemic risk" it demonstrated, according to an official. For now, ED has got four days' custody of Ankit and is expected to begin questioning him.

CATCHING 22

Most of the 22 MLAs who have resigned from the Assembly, putting the Kamal Nath government in danger, represent seats in and around the Gwalior region and swear allegiance to Jyotiraditya Scindia. Some of them have also cited their resentment with the government, accusing it of ignoring their concerns and overlooking them for ministerial berths. MILIND GHATWAI profiles the 22 legislators:



RAJVARDHAN SINGH DATTIGAON | 48
MLA FROM BADNAVAR (DHAR)

A marketing manager with Lufthansa in the mid 1990s, he left the job to contest his first election as an Independent. He said he entered politics to avenge the "insult" to his father, who was denied a ticket by the Congress in 1998. His father Premsingh was a loyalist of Madhavrao Scindia and the legacy has continued. Elected MLA for the third time in 2018, Dattigaon had hoped for a ministerial berth, but he did not get it. He also could not reconcile with the fact that his rival in the party Umang Singhar was named minister and so was Digvijaya Singh's son Jaivardhan, much younger than him. "One who puts up with injustice is more guilty than the perpetrator," Dattigaon said in a video posted from Bengaluru.

Profession	Agriculture & business
Education	Postgraduate
2018 victory margin	51,506 votes



HARDEEP DANG | 52
MLA FROM SUVASARA (MANDSAUR)

He was the only Congress candidate to win in the 2018 polls from Mandsaur district, the epicentre of the farmers' unrest and won with a thin margin. He went missing on March 3 along with nine others, including five Congress legislators. While eight of them returned, he remained incommunicado along with Raghuraj Kansana. The two remained in Bengaluru and 17 Congress legislators later joined them. Dang was the first to send in his resignation letter, accusing Chief Minister Kamal Nath of not giving him audience. He began as a sarpanch and was elected MLA for the second time in 2018. He was among the confidants of former Mandsaur MP Meenakshi Natarajan but when she was sidelined, he was left with no mentor and recently expressed loyalty to Scindia.

Profession	Family business
Education	Postgraduate
2018 victory margin	350 votes



BISAHUL SINGH | 69
MLA FROM ANUPPUR (ST) (ANUPPUR)

The tribal leader has been a minister and was hopeful of getting a berth in the Kamal Nath ministry when he was elected for the fifth time in 2018. He was among three Congress legislators who stayed put in Bengaluru before Tourism Minister Surendra Baghel went there and escorted him to Indore airport, where a state plane was waiting for him. He was brought to Bhopal and taken to the CM's residence. After coming out, he expressed faith in Kamal Nath and admitted that he was unhappy because he was not made a minister. "I have been with the Congress for four decades, will I join BJP in *budhapa?*," he asked. A few days later, however, he joined the BJP.

Profession	Hotel business and agriculture
Education	Graduate
2018 victory margin	11,561 votes



AIDAL SINGH KANSANA | 60
MLA FROM SUMAOLI (MORENA)

His supporters were so angry after he did not get a ministerial post that they blocked traffic on a highway and burnt tyres. Though the Congress won all six seats in the Morena district, none of the MLAs got a ministerial berth. Kansana belonged to the Digvijaya Singh faction and was a minister in his cabinet. He became a dissident after he was denied a ministerial berth in the Kamal Nath government despite winning for the fourth time. He was never part of the Scindia camp.

Profession	Business and agriculture
Education	Class VIII pass
2018 victory margin	13,661 votes



Jyotiraditya Scindia at Bhopal airport on Thursday. Scindia, who has joined the BJP, filed his nomination papers for the Rajya Sabha on Friday. PTI



RANVEER JATAV | 35
MLA FROM GOHAD (SC) (BHIND)

He defeated senior BJP minister Lal Singh Arya in the 2018 polls. The young politician had earlier defeated Arya in a bypoll held after the murder of his father and sitting MLA Makhanlal in 2009. Arya was accused in the murder case. Jatav lost the next election to Arya. He was earlier in the Digvijaya Singh camp, but later shifted allegiance to Scindia. A few months ago, he had accused two ministers of corruption and was frustrated that his works were not being done.

Profession	Agriculture
Education	Class XII pass
2018 victory margin	23,989 votes



KAMLESH JATAV | 39
MLA FROM AMBAH (SC) (MORENA)

The first timer was among those who went in the first batch to the Gurugram hotel. He did not go to Bengaluru and returned to Bhopal. A Scindia loyalist, he too had accused two ministers of corruption and said they did not give him due importance. He had recommended transfer of a government employee, alleging that he was demanding bribes, but the transfer did not happen.

Profession	Contractor
Education	Graduate
2018 victory margin	7,628 votes



RAGHURAJ KANSANA | 52
MLA FROM MORENA

In his first state election in 2018, Kansana defeated former IPS officer and BJP Minister Rustam Singh. A key factor behind his victory was the caste tension in the region after the Supreme Court order on SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. The BSP vote had then transferred to the Congress. Apart from a CBI raid last year, he has faced a lot of legal woes. Besides Dang, he was the only MLA who stayed put in Bengaluru. "Scindiaji was being harassed and ignored. We will remain with him," he had said in a video posted from Bengaluru.

Profession	Advocate and agriculture
Education	M.A. LLB
2018 victory margin	20,849 votes



MUNNALAL GOYAL | 61
MLA FROM GWALIOR (EAST)

In January, he embarrassed the Kamal Nath government by holding a dharna near the

THE MINISTERS



MAHENDRA SINGH SISODIYA, 57
LABOUR MINISTER AND MLA FROM BAMORI (GUNA)

He was the first to sound a warning bell after the initial attempt to destabilise the government appeared to have failed. After eight out of 10 MLAs returned in early March to the Congress, he said the government will be safe as long as Scindia is not given the short shrift. "The government was formed with Scindia's efforts. I had warned that dark clouds will gather if Scindiaji is ignored," he said in a video posted from Bengaluru.

Profession	Agriculture
Education	BSc (Second year)
2018 victory margin	27,920 votes



GOVIND SINGH RAJPUT | 58
TRANSPORT MINISTER AND MLA FROM SURKHI (SAGAR DISTRICT)

He was always with the Congress and is a staunch follower of Jyotiraditya Scindia. When he was not seen at a Scindia event last year there was speculation that all was not well and that he was no longer in the good books of the former Union minister. He was made general secretary of the state Congress committee in 2002. Rajput was elected MLA for the first time in 2003 and went on to win in 2008 and 2018.

Profession	Agriculture
Education	Postgraduate
2018 victory margin	21,418 votes



DR PRABHURAM CHAUDHARY | 61
SCHOOL EDUCATION MINISTER AND MLA FROM SANCHI (RAISEN)

Chaudhary became MLA for the first time in 1985 and owed his ticket to Jyotiraditya Scindia's father Madhavrao. After Madhavrao's death, he became a follower of his son. His second victory came in 2008 and the third in 2018. An alumnus of Gandhi Medical College, Bhopal, he was always with Congress and became a member of state Congress committee in 1991.

Profession	Agriculture, owns a petrol pump
Education	MBBS
2018 victory margin	10,813 votes



TULSIRAM SILAWAT, 55
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE MINISTER AND MLA FROM SANVER (SC) (INDORE)

Silawat was elected councillor in 1982 and MLA in 1985. He won three more assembly elections — in 2007 (bypoll), 2008 and 2018. He is a trusted lieutenant of Scindia and part of the group involved in organising his election campaigns. He camped in Guna ahead of the 2019 general election. "Will remain with Paramshradhey Scindiaji no matter where he goes," he said in a video shared from Bengaluru.

Profession	Agriculture
Education	Post Graduate
2018 victory margin	2,945 votes



IMARTI DEVI | 44
WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT MINISTER AND MLA FROM DABRA (GWALIOR)

She wears her loyalty to Scindia on her sleeve. "Whatever I am today is because of Shrimant Maharaj," she says. "If he asks me to jump into a well, I will do it. Wherever Maharajis, I will be there. I was an MLA (from Congress) for 10 years during the BJP rule but we did not fare as badly as during the Congress rule." She was first elected to the Assembly in 2008 and won again in 2013 and 2018.

Profession	Agriculture
Education	Class XII pass
2018 victory margin	57,446 votes



PRADYUMNA SINGH TOMAR, 52
FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES MINISTER AND MLA FROM GWALIOR

Tomar began his political career in 1984 and was always with Congress. Elected MLA for the first time in 2008, he was re-elected in 2018. "I owe everything to him. It's my moral duty to be with him (Scindia). Whatever he is doing is for the development of the Gwalior-Chambal belt and other regions of the state," he said in a video posted from Bengaluru.

Profession	Business
Education	Graduate
2018 victory margin	21,044 votes

Assembly building in Bhopal, saying that the government is not able to fulfill the promises made to voters. He had claimed that he was not unhappy with the CM or any minister, but wanted promises made in the manifesto to be fulfilled. He admitted that he owed everything to Scindia, who reportedly ensured he got a ticket for the election in 2008, 2013 and 2018.

Profession	Business
Education	Graduate
2018 victory margin	17,819 votes



O P S BHADORIYA | 51
MLA FROM MEHGAON (BHIND)

A staunch Scindia supporter, he lost the 2013 state polls by a narrow margin of 1,273 votes but defeated senior BJP leader Rakesh Shukla in the 2018 polls. He attributes his ticket and victory to "Shrimant Scindia". He said Scindia helped Congress win six bypolls but he was being sidelined. Bhadoriya said Scindia did not say anything wrong when he said he would take to the streets if promises were not kept. Referring to Chief Minister Kamal Nath's "let him be" retort, he said it was insulting to Scindia. "I will be with him till the last breath," he has said.


Profession	Agriculture
Education	Postgraduate
2018 victory margin	25,814 votes



GIRIRAJ DANDOTIYA | 47
MLA FROM DIMNI (MORENA)

He lost his first election in 2008 but defeated the same BJP candidate 10 years later. Attributing his victory and that of many others to Scindia, he said, "It hurt that he could not become CM. Then Congress did not make him PCC chief and even denied him a Rajya Sabha berth. Such a grave insult. Digvijaya Singh and Govind Singh (Minister) kept interfering in our region, we requested the CM to intervene but he did not listen." Slamming Digvijaya Singh, he said the senior Congress leader managed to make his son and nephew ministers.

Profession	Agriculture
Education	Graduate
2018 victory margin	18,477 votes



BRIJENDRA SINGH YADAV | 50
MLA FROM MUNGAOLI (ASHOKNAGAR DISTRICT)

In the 2018 state polls, he defeated K P Yadav, who later became a giant killer by defeating Jyotiraditya Scindia in the 2019 general election. He won by a margin of only 2,136 in December 2018, just 13

more than his victory margin in a by-election for the same seat in February. "He (Scindia) is our leader. We can't remain in the party where our leader is insulted," he said in a video shot in Bengaluru.

Profession	Agriculture
Education	Class VII pass
2018 victory margin	2,136 votes



SURESH DHAKAD | 57
MLA FROM POHARI (SHIVPURI)

He began his political career by winning a sarpanch election but became a legislator in his first state polls in 2018. A Scindia loyalist, he said, "I was a sevak of Shrimant Maharaj saab, I am one and will remain so. We got votes in his name. All the times we went to meet the CM, we were not given any importance. A government can't run like this." Prahlad Bharati of the BJP, who Dhakad defeated in 2018, said "people voted for him because they thought Scindia will become CM".

Profession	Agriculture
Education	Class VII pass
2018 victory margin	7,918 votes



JAJPAL SINGH 'JAJI' | 58
MLA FROM ASHOKNAGAR (SC)

"Whatever I am today is because of Shrimant Maharaj Scindia. Membership of assembly is a very small thing. I think we have got an opportunity to resign (to repay his debt). I consider myself fortunate. I will always be with him," he said in a video posted from Bengaluru. He ran into trouble a few months ago when his caste certificate became a subject of litigation.

Profession	Agriculture
Education	Graduate
2018 victory margin	9,730 votes



MANOJ CHAUDHARY | 44
MLA FROM HATPIPLYA (DEWAS)

"Was always with him and will remain forever. Whatever he decides will be good for us. Maharaja saab has not been treated well," he said. He began his career in student politics and went on to become office-bearer of NSUI. His father was a supporter of Digvijaya Singh and he gravitated towards Scindia only ahead of the last assembly election.

Profession	Business and Agriculture
Education	Postgraduate
2018 victory margin	13,519 votes



JASMANT JATAV | 52
MLA FROM KARERA (SC) (SHIVPURI)

He began as a sarpanch and was elected as MLA in his first election. "Constant attempt was made to cut Scindia to size and to insult him by the Kamal Nath government. It's a failure of the top leadership of the Congress. We will give a befitting reply. People who are not capable of getting elected as councilor are trying to target him. The Congress government was formed because of Scindia's sacrifice and commitment," he said in a video.

Profession	Agriculture
Education	Class XII
2018 victory margin	14,824 votes



RAKSHA SANTRAM SARAUNIYA | 46
MLA FROM BHANDER (SC) (DATIA)

Her husband is a teacher and father-in-law was a legislator. She was elected in her first election. "Wherever Maharaj goes I will go. Whatever I am today is because of him. I will walk in his footsteps," she said from Bengaluru.

Profession	Agriculture
Education	Class VIII pass
2018 victory margin	39,896 votes

Ready for floor test, probe MLAs' switch: Kamal Nath to Governor

MILIND GHATWAI
BHOPAL, MARCH 13

ACCUSING THE BJP of indulging in "horse-trading" and "hatching a conspiracy" to destabilise an elected state government, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath Friday called on Governor Lalji Tandon to investigate the circumstances in which the Opposition party submitted resignation letters of 19 Congress legislators who, he alleged, were "held captive" at a resort in Bengaluru.

Tandon was on leave this week when the state was thrown into a political turmoil, with Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia quitting the party to join the BJP and the ruling party accusing the BJP of abducting of its legislators.

Kamal Nath's call came on a day when six of the rebel legislators, who had been asked by the Speaker to present themselves before him, failed to turn up.

Declaring that he would welcome a floor test on a date fixed by the Speaker, Nath submitted a letter to the Governor, accusing the BJP of "immoral, unethical and illegal acts".

In the letter, he claimed the Congress foiled the first attempt to destabilise the government after its MLAs were allegedly kept in captivity in Bengaluru in the intervening night of March 3 and 4. "When the first attempt failed, the BJP arranged three chartered flights to whisk away 19 Congress legislators to Bengaluru on March 8. Since then the legislators, including six ministers, are incommunicado in a resort arranged by the BJP. Nobody is allowed access and/or

any sort of communication with the captive MLA," the letter said.

"To utter shock", the letter said, "senior BJP leaders reached the Speaker's residence (in Bhopal) on the day of Holi on March 10 to hand over alleged resignation letters of 19 MLAs, none of whom was present". "In an unusual act and/or conduct the resignations were submitted by BJP leaders not the legislators themselves. This demonstrates the complicity of BJP leaders in the entire conspiracy..." he alleged, demanding a full investigation and inquiry to expose and punish "persons responsible for derailing the democratic institutional process".

Requesting that the plea is "acted upon and completed early", the letter said, "this is the minimum a constitutional authority can offer to address the ongoing turmoil".

The letter also requested the Governor to use his office "as Constitutional head of a state with the union home minister to ensure release of MLAs held in captivity in Bengaluru".

The Governor, meanwhile, acted on an earlier letter from the Chief Minister and removed six rebel ministers from the Cabinet. Also Friday, Speaker N P Prajapati said he had waited three hours for the six legislators summoned to turn up. The Speaker had issued notices to 13 legislators, asking them to meet him to verify if they signed the resignation letters voluntarily or under duress.

Prajapati said he would wait Saturday for the second batch of seven legislators to meet him. Asked about the status of the legislators who did not turn up, he said he would give a new date "like the courts".

Father of rebel MLA approaches police for assistance in meeting son

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, MARCH 13

THE FATHER OF Madhya Pradesh rebel MLA Manoj Chaudhary on Friday approached the Karnataka Director General of Police for assistance in meeting his son.

Chaudhary, the MLA, is among 19 legislators from Madhya Pradesh holed up at a resort on the outskirts of Bengaluru, allegedly to topple the Kamal Nath-led government.

On Friday, Narayan Singh Chaudhary, the father, met senior Karnataka Police officials along with Karnataka Congress president designate D K Shivakumar and MP minister

Jitu Patwari and petitioned the police for help to meet his son.

In a letter, Narayan claimed that he and Patwari, along with others, had arrived from Bhopal to meet Chaudhary at the resort on Thursday.

"Though my son wanted to meet us, he was not allowed by some local people, said to be BJP members, who threatened us and took us to the local police station without any reason," the letter said. "As all of us have come from Madhya Pradesh to see my son who is in the custody of local people I request you to kindly provide necessary protection to us and allow us to meet my son without any further delay."



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

No NRC

Short of this assurance, fears about NPR will remain — those pointing this out are neither anti-national nor misled

RESPONDING TO THE discussion in the House on the communal violence in Delhi in Rajya Sabha on Thursday, Union Home Minister Amit Shah seemed to be taking a step back from his government's unyielding line on the NPR-NRC issue that forms its backdrop. No one would be marked "doubtful" in case he or she is unable to provide the information sought in the impending National Population Register process, he said, all information is voluntary, no document would be sought and nobody should fear the NPR. He assured members of the Opposition that he was open and ready for discussions with them on the matter. In effect, Minister Shah seemed to be reaching out, for the first time, to meet the criticism and apprehensions that data collected under the NPR would be weaponised subsequently by the NRC, that the former was a prelude to the latter, which would result, due to state malevolence or incapacity or both, as in Assam, in vulnerable citizens losing their citizenship. Minister Shah's assurance is welcome, but it isn't enough. In the House on Thursday, he could have gone further, taken another step back. He could have said that there will be no NRC.

The Citizenship Amendment Act, the National Register of Citizens, and the National Population Register are governed by separate processes and purposes. Yet they have come to be linked with each other, in popular fear and imagination — and, before that, in the politics of the BJP. In fact, the citizenship law gives, doesn't take away, citizenship. But in tandem with the proposed nation-wide NRC, it is seen to be holding out a legal safety net to Hindus caught on the wrong foot by the NRC, while underlining the helplessness of Muslims in the same predicament. In fact, the NPR only collects data. But in the verification process of the NRC that follows, it could hand the power to decide who is a citizen, and who isn't, to a local official. In other words, the NRC is the nub of the fears and doubts that have collected around both the CAA and NPR.

The CAA is now in the Supreme Court, which will decide on its constitutionality. But it is in the government's hands to strike out the idea of the nationwide NRC. At Ramlila maidan in December, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said that a nationwide NRC was not being discussed in government circles. President Ram Nath Kovind's address that flagged off the Budget session made no mention of the NRC. Now, the Home Minister, who has on several occasions spoken of the NRC and CAA in the same breath, has sought to allay the fears sparked by them ahead of the NPR. But both the PM and the home minister should recognise that in the climate of their party and government's making, in which those who have genuine questions about being left out of the NRC are called "anti-national" or painted as "misled", nothing less than a recall of the idea of a nationwide NRC will do. Admittedly, it is in the BJP's election manifesto but, surely, the prime minister's commitment of sabka vishwas should over-ride that.

RIISING UNCERTAINTY

Insecurity over coronavirus and its economic fallout will continue to weigh on markets. Prepare for turbulence ahead

WITHIN MINUTES OF opening on Friday, the Indian benchmark stock indices plunged by over 10 per cent, hitting the lower circuit that prompted a halt in trading for 45 minutes. The selling was across the board as fear and panic gripped investors. After re-opening, markets recovered their losses led, presumably, by bargain-hunting and short covering, but the volatility across Indian and global markets underscores the continuing uncertainty from the coronavirus fallout. The India VIX, which is essentially a measure of investors' perceptions about risk, rose to 59.48 — its highest level since the global financial crisis. In fact, the last time markets hit the lower circuit was in that period.

For some time now, there has been a growing disconnect between the benchmark stock indices and the wider Indian economy. While stock indices have been inching upwards, earnings growth has been sluggish as economic activity has faltered. With this correction, the forward price-to-earnings multiple is now below its long-term average. However, volatility is likely to continue, as uncertainty over the spread and depth of the coronavirus, and its economic fallout, will continue to weigh on markets. It is possible that the demand- and supply-side shocks emanating from disruptions in global supply chains owing to the lockdown in China, and the ensuing lockdown/quarantine in many parts of the world, continue to be felt well into the first quarter of the coming financial year. If the disruptions do not subside, the markets will have to factor in the possibility of forecasts for global growth being pared down even further.

The only silver lining for the Indian economy amid this gloom is the collapse in crude oil prices. The sharp fall in oil prices will reduce the country's oil import bill and thus the current account deficit. It will lower inflation, and possibly boost government revenues and/or put more money in the hands of households. Lower inflation — the consumer price index has moderated to 6.58 per cent in February from 7.59 per cent in January — will increase the space for the monetary policy committee to cut rates further. But while, across the world, the policy response to the crisis has relied on either easing monetary policy, or fiscal stimuli, these measures are unlikely to offset supply-side disruptions and cut-backs in discretionary spending. The top-most priority has to be to contain the spread of the virus.

NAMASTE KARO NA

With a little urging from coronavirus, the world embraces the contact-free Indian greeting. Cultural supremacists, be cool

IT APPEARS THAT coronavirus has taught the English something about India that India failed to do in about two centuries of colonial contact. At an awards function of the Prince's Trust, Prince Charles essayed a handshake but quickly switched to a namaste. Later, the presenters of the show demonstrated a heelshake, as a stand-in for a handshake. It is too absurd to contemplate, and no match for the sophisticated namaste.

So, Prince Charles is going namaste. The permanently embattled Benjamin Netanyahu has promoted it in an address on the coronavirus outbreak in Israel. Even Donald Trump, who is as transatlantic as a double cheeseburger, is doing it. Perhaps the prevalence of Indians globally has something to do with it. Now, the stage is set for cultural supremacists to wade in and ham up a very nice moment in international affairs with self-satisfied social media posts. They would be missing the point. The namaste is being adopted not out of choice, but out of the fear of becoming a pandemic statistic.

However, it is true that the namaste — along with many other contact-free Old World greetings — is remarkably hygienic. It is clinically suited to a region which has always been the happy hunting grounds of contagious disease. A populariser of myth has objected that its origins lie in the system of untouchability, but it hardly seems credible. The caste system has been fairly bloody-minded, and if it were to be reinforced by a hands-off greeting, the higher castes would have invented a rude gesture sanctioned by some god to rub it in. On the contrary, the namaste is graceful and philosophical, and from a post-colonial perspective, it is especially fitting that British royalty has adopted it. This is no time for kissing hands and rings. Just namaste, and hope for the best.



M S SAHOO

THE BENEFICIARIES OF the old order usually put every reform to several rounds of *agni pariksha*. They build public opinion against the reform, challenge it before every possible forum, create hurdles in implementation, misrepresent facts and figures and even spread rumours and canards. However, such resistance ultimately takes the reform deeper and makes it stronger. The insolvency reform (IBC) is no exception. It faced tough resistance from day one. The intensity increased with its implementation, as defaulters gradually lost their impunity and companies changed hands. The IBC started emerging stronger as it delivered on its promise, passed the constitutional muster, earned global recognition and became the preferred option for stakeholders in case of default.

There is a need to demystify some myths around the IBC outcomes. I will do so by using round figures here to keep the calculations simple. Most of the myths surround recovery. Let me give an example for quick appreciation. M/s. Synergies Dooray was the first company to be resolved under the IBC. It was with the Board of Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) for over a decade. The realisable value of its assets was Rs 9 crore, when it entered the IBC process. It, however, owed Rs 900 crore to the creditors. The resolution plan yielded Rs 54 crore for them. Some condemned IBC because the resolution plan yielded a meagre 6 per cent of the claims of the creditors, disregarding the fact that they recovered 600 per cent of the realisable value of the company, which had been in the sick bed for over a decade. If the company was liquidated, assuming no transaction costs, the creditors would have got at best Rs 9 crore — 1 per cent of their claims.

Let's examine the myth that the recovery through resolution plans is dismal. Two hundred companies had been rescued till December 2019 through resolution plans. They owed Rs 4 lakh crore to creditors. However, the realisable value of the assets available with them, when they entered the IBC process, was only Rs 0.8 lakh crore. The IBC maximises the value of the existing assets, not of the assets which do not exist. Under the IBC, the creditors recovered Rs 1.6

The real reform

Achievement of the Insolvency Code is that debtors now resolve defaults in the early stages

lakh crore, about 200 per cent of the realisable value of these companies. Hypothetically, any other option of recovery or liquidation would have recovered, at best, Rs 100 minus the cost of recovery/liquidation, while the creditors recovered Rs 200 under IBC. The excess recovery of Rs 100 is a bonus from the IBC. Despite the recovery of 200 per cent of the realisable value, the financial creditors had to take a haircut of 57 per cent as compared to their claims. This only reflects the extent of value erosion that had taken place when the companies entered the IBC process. Nevertheless, as compared to other options, bank are recovering much better through IBC, as per RBI data.

Recovery is incidental under the IBC. Its primary objective is rescuing companies in distress. There is a myth that although the IBC process has rescued 200 companies, it has sent 800 companies for liquidation. The number of companies getting into liquidation is thus four times that of the companies being rescued. Numbers, however, to be seen in context. The companies rescued had assets valued at Rs 0.8 lakh crore, while the companies referred for liquidation had assets valued at Rs 0.2 lakh crore when they entered the IBC process. Thus, in value terms, assets that have been rescued are four times those sent for liquidation. It is important to note that of the companies rescued, one-third were either defunct or under BIFR, and of the companies sent for liquidation, three-fourths were either defunct or under BIFR.

The next myth is that the IBC is resulting in huge job losses through liquidation. It is misconstrued that 600 companies — for which data are available and which have proceeded for liquidation — have assets (and consequently employment) at least equal to the aggregate claim of the creditors — Rs 4.6 lakh crore. Unfortunately, they have assets on the ground valued only at Rs 0.2 lakh crore. Take the examples of Minerals Limited and Orchid Healthcare Private Limited, which have been completely liquidated. They owed Rs 8,163 crore, while they had absolutely no assets and employment. What matters in this context is the assets a company has or the employment it provides — not how much it owes to cred-

itors. The IBC process would release the idle or under-utilised assets valued at Rs 0.2 lakh crore, which would have dissipated with time, for business and employment. Fifty one companies having assets valued at Rs 93 crore have been completely liquidated. The Rs 96 crore realised from the sale of these assets has been released. One also needs to consider the jobs saved through rescue of 80 per cent of the distressed assets, and job being created by these companies, post-rescue.

A distressed asset has a life cycle. Its value declines with time, if the distress is not addressed. The credible threat of the IBC process, that a company may change hands, has changed the behaviour of debtors. Thousands of debtors are settling defaults at the early stages of the life cycle of a distressed asset. They are settling when default is imminent, on receipt of a notice for repayment but before filing an application, after filing application but before its admission, and even after admission of the application. These stages are akin to preventive care, primary care, secondary care, and tertiary care with respect to sickness. Only a few companies, who fail to address the distress in any of these stages, reach the liquidation stage. At this stage, the value of the company is substantially eroded, and hence some of them would be rescued, while others are liquidated. The recovery may be low at this stage, but in the early stages of distress it is much higher — primarily because of the IBC. If the entire universe of distressed assets is considered, the percentage of companies or distressed assets getting into liquidation is insignificant. Stakeholders should increasingly address the distress in early stages and the best use of the IBC would be not using it all.

Stakeholders who understand business and have the backing of sophisticated professionals are using IBC with open eyes after evaluating all options. There is no reason to doubt their commercial wisdom. The 25,000 applications filed so far under IBC indicate the value and trust that stakeholders place on the law — the ultimate test of its efficacy.

The writer is chairperson, Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India



KHALED AHMED

MEMORY OF A LITERARY UTOPIA

Non-Muslim Urdu writers of Lahore left behind memoirs of abiding love for the city

THE BRITISH Raj ensured freedom of expression to Indians and, in the second quarter of the 20th century, this resulted in the flowering of modern Urdu literature in Lahore. Why Urdu and not Punjabi? Because Lahore was, historically, the nursery for a new "invasive" Persian expression and was, therefore, the court language of the great Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh who had captured the city in 1849. Under the Raj, it became the cradle of a new Urdu expression influenced by European and Russian literature.

Over time, Lahore became the publishing capital of India and printed Urdu magazines with circulation reaching across India to Burma, where the last Mughal king had been exiled. The other cultural centre with a similar reputation was Bombay, where the Indian film industry was taking birth, midwifed by great screenplay writers in Hindi and Urdu, including a Lahore genius, Saadat Hasan Manto. Manto's friends in Lahore were, among others, three great writers — Krishan Chander, Rajinder Singh Bedi and Kanhaiya Lal Kapoor.

In his book, *Lahore: Shehr-e Pur Kamal* (Lahore, a City of Genius, 2020) Mehmood Ul Hassan narrates how three Hindu and Sikh men of Urdu literature ruled the hearts and minds of Lahore, wrote and ran their publishing houses and were read by a secular-literate

population of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs.

Chander dominated the budding cinema industry in the city as a counter to Bombay, writing scripts featuring the life of all cultural gatherings in the city. In 1976, when the Indian writer Ismat Chughtai visited Lahore, some friends of Chander wept as they recalled him. Before his death, in 1977 in Bombay, Chander wrote a tearful letter to a friend in Lahore to say how much he missed the city of his youth.

Bedi, whose novels "created" a new style of writing in Urdu, began life as a lowly clerk in a post office while working as one of the editors of the famous literary magazine, *Adab-e-Lateef*. He was soon employed by Lahore Radio, where he wrote scripts for popular dramas — a genre that was catching on because of him. He also wrote film scripts on a salary of Rs 600 a month.

By the time Partition happened, he was running his own publishing house in Lahore's Model Town after his novels like *Ek Chadar Maili Si*, *Dastak*, *Garam Coat* and *Phagun* had become Urdu classics. When rioting started in 1947, he sent his family to Ropar to live with his brother, but could not stick around anymore when the violence increased. He landed up in Simla with his family, in time to save a Muslim family in his neighbourhood from a lynch mob.

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MARCH 14, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

NUCLEAR DECISION

PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi reaffirmed India's commitment to the peaceful uses of atomic energy but added that the country would not hesitate from carrying out "nuclear explosion or implosion, whatever is necessary, in the national interests". She told Rajya Sabha at question time: "We remain committed to the use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes. However, the government must look after the interests of the country and study this question in depth." The prime minister said: "We must have our eyes and ears open (to what had been happening in this region) and be in touch with the latest technology. We should not be

caught napping."

ASSAM FOREIGNERS

HOME MINISTRY SOURCES and leaders of the movement for the detection and deportation of foreigners from Assam sounded optimistic when they said that the door to further negotiations was open. A ministry spokesman expressed the hope that saner counsel would prevail on the All Assam Students Union and Gana Sangram Parishad. The door was still open as far as the government was concerned, he added. Noboron Bora, spokesman of the Assam leaders, confirmed that there was some contact between the leaders and the ministry.

NIC REBOOT

THE NATIONAL INTEGRATION Council is being revived. Announcing this in the Lok Sabha, while replying to a discussion on atrocities against Harijans, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi said that the council was not a solution to such a problem but could serve as a tool to help achieve that objective. The revival of the council was one of the specific suggestions made by the acting leader of the Janata group, Madhu Dandavate, who initiated the discussion. She accepted that it was the government's responsibility to ensure full protection to weaker sections, and to "cleanse society of shameful blots" like the Pipra outrage.

The writer is consulting editor, Newsweek Pakistan

A tale of two bugs

The response to COVID-19 shows that India, global community, have the political will, technical capacity and financial resources to control infectious diseases. Now, marshal these assets to eradicate TB



VIKRAM PATEL

THE WORLD HAS been spooked by COVID-19, the novel flu-like virus which emerged from the slaughter-houses of China and is now sweeping across the planet, propelled by the very engine of the global economy that it now threatens to pull asunder. Thanks to the waves of news engulfing us, including all shades of fake news, we are all now becoming experts in preventing this infection. Masks and hand-washing dispensers are flying off the supermarket shelves faster than a sneeze. Amongst the pure, there is a run on cow urine. Gobi Manchurian is off everyone's menu. The government has swung into a military-style operation, marshalling every resource at its disposal. The prime minister avoided Holi celebrations, setting an example for all of us not to hang out in crowds. Airports have ramped up screening and health care systems are on heightened alert. Globally, many countries are monitoring the spread of the bug on an hourly basis, have banned all international meetings, ordered healthcare staff to cancel holidays and quarantined entire sections of the population. Economists are busy calculating how many trillions will be wiped off the global economy.

This phenomenal response by almost every sector of society, local and global, will undoubtedly help halt the epidemic in its tracks, being aided by the natural history of epidemics and, one hopes, the onset of summer in the northern hemisphere (where most of the community-level transmission has occurred), which rings the death-knell of most flu viruses. Then, we will all breathe without masks, stop consuming cow urine, return to shaking hands and hugging, and board planes and cruise ships without batting an eyelid. The panic of this deadly infection will rapidly fade into a smug memory, just like every other flu-epidemic which has threatened our lives in the past decade.

But, of course, Indians will still have to contend with other deadly respiratory tract infections which spread via airborne transmission. We will still have to contend with one particular bug which kills millions of us and which has been around for millennia. Tuberculosis. But all comparisons between COVID-19 and TB end with the superficial observation that they are both deadly respiratory tract infections. COVID-19 began its march through humankind barely half a year ago and, in record time, scientists have identified the virus and hundreds of millions of dollars have been allocated to controlling its spread, developing vaccines (at last count, more than a dozen candidates) and testing medication regimens for those infected. While the virus has spread to over 100 countries, the epidemic already shows signs of waning in the Asian countries where it hit first and hardest.

On the other hand, TB is as old as humanity itself, infecting us for at least 5,000 years. The infecting agent, a bacterium, was identified way back in 1882, by Robert Koch, signalling one of the landmark discoveries which laid the foundation of modern medicine. The subsequent response to this disease, which was infamously called the White Plague and was a leading cause of death globally at the start of the 20th century, is similar to what we see today for COVID-19, but played out over decades rather than months. TB was made a notifiable disease, campaigns



CR Sasikumara

were launched to prohibit spitting and containment policies, including sequestering infected persons, were implemented. The first vaccine was produced over a hundred years ago, and the first curative treatments available by the 1950s. TB was largely beaten in the rich world, not only because of these medical miracles but also thanks to the dramatic reduction in poverty and improvement in living standards. There is compelling evidence that addressing these social determinants was even more impactful than medical interventions in the war against TB.

TB has always been, and this is even more true now than ever before, a disease of poverty and squalor. And no country is more affected than India. Every TB statistic is grim: We are home to 1 in 4 of the world's TB patients, over 2.5 million Indians are infected and, in 2018, over 4,00,000 Indians died of the disease. To put this in stark perspective, more people died of TB in India last week than the entire global death toll of COVID-19 to date. Given our urgent, energetic and multifaceted response to the latter bug, one is left wondering why we have failed so miserably for another bug, particularly one which has been around for so long, which has been exquisitely studied and characterised, which is preventable and treatable, and which most of the world has conquered.

It is because those who suffer from TB are not likely to be boarding international flights or passing through swanky airports to attend conferences. It is because TB infects people in slower tides, slow enough for industries to replace the sick with healthier recruits without endangering the bottom line. It is because TB does not threaten the turbines that keep the global economy throbbing. It is because TB no longer poses a threat to rich and powerful countries. It is because those who have TB live on the margins and have little political influence. It is because TB control requires

Every TB statistic is grim: We are home to 1 in 4 of the world's TB patients, over 2.5 million Indians are infected and, in 2018, over 4,00,000 Indians died of the disease. To put this in stark perspective, more people died of TB in India last week than the entire global death toll of COVID-19 to date. Given our urgent, energetic and multifaceted response to the latter bug, one is left wondering why we have failed so miserably for another bug, particularly one which has been around for so long, which has been exquisitely studied and characterised, which is preventable and treatable, and which most of the world has conquered.

society to address the squalid environments, which shroud the daily lives of hundreds of millions of Indians. It is because TB is a medieval scourge that reminds us of our shameful failure to realise a just, humane and dignified life for all our people.

Charles Dickens compared the deprivations in his home city of London with the events which led to the French revolution in his classic novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, noting that degrading conditions of life for the poor in London were a recipe for insurrection. The UK, like much of Europe, did heed the importance of addressing social injustice, through major welfare reforms to improve the living conditions of the poor, which in turn earned much of the credit for the control of TB, as indeed most other infectious diseases. Of course, the cruel irony is that they did so even while they plundered the rest of the world, creating and worsening the social conditions which led to penury and disease in their colonies. And today, TB is largely a disease of poor people and poor countries, with none more affected than this country which fashions itself as a superpower in waiting.

If there is one lesson from COVID-19, it is that India, and the global community, has the political will, technical capacity and financial resources to act in a committed and concerted way to control infectious diseases. It needs to marshal these assets to eradicate TB, the most pernicious and pervasive infection of all, both through addressing its social determinants and scaling up effective biomedical interventions. But, for this to happen, we will have to be as concerned about the health needs of those who travel by foot and bicycle as we do for those who board cruise ships and international flights.

The writer is Pershing Square Professor of Global Health at Harvard Medical School

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The UK is adopting a much more limited response (to the coronavirus) than other countries. It may be ignoring essential lessons from elsewhere."

— THE GUARDIAN

Face the Partition

It is being dredged up to rationalise every atrocity and question the founding ideals of India. Its ghosts and memories must be confronted



MANISH TEWARI

A COMMENT MADE during a conversation on the Delhi riots, that "India has not been able to come to terms with its Partition even after seven decades", provoked a line of thought. The remark implied that while Pakistan emerged out of that pogrom as a theocratic state, sure about its religious underpinnings, India, though crafted into a secular nation, remains in a state of haziness about its foundations.

Unfortunately, from its inception, Pakistan also fell between two stools — Jinnah's vision of Pakistan as a secular state and Allama Iqbal's conception, pregnant with revivalist connotations. This contradiction was exploited by various cliques to further their idea of Pakistan. Jinnah would not have recognised the nation that he defined thus: "I will tell you who made Pakistan: Myself, my secretary and his typewriter." A nation born based on religion in 1947 split on the basis of language in 1971.

Did India also fall between the same two stools by not allowing the religion-based Partition to reach its logical conclusion? Is the design and construct of modern India at odds with its history and elementary impulses? Do the demons of Partition need to be exorcised for modern India to reach a state of equilibrium? These are some questions that need to be addressed once again, for the cornerstones on which India was founded are being pounded to dust every day.

It would be trite to dispute that the choices we made at our inception were correct and what is happening today is a travesty. However, if that is true, then why do Hindus and Muslims turn on each other periodically and on some occasions both Hindus and Muslims together on other smaller minorities? There are two essential reasons.

The first is the digression from the original constitutional design that Nehru and Ambedkar had envisioned for India, particularly concerning secularism, meaning the strict separation of the church and state.

In the post-Partition months, Nehru made some tactical concessions to the doctrinal European definition of Secularism by averring "We cannot think of any state which might be called a communal or a religious state. We can only think of a secular, non-communal, democratic state in which every individual to whatever religion he may belong, has equal rights and opportunities." Implicit in his concession was that religion is a private endeavour and there would be no discrimination by the state for sequestered denominational activity.

Ambedkar went even further. He had drafted something akin to the establishment clause in the First Amendment to the US Constitution. It states: "The State shall not recognise any religion as State religion". K T Shah's draft said that the government would be entirely a secular institution, which would "maintain no official religion

or established church". H V Kamath even moved an amendment in the Constituent Assembly to insert the establishment clause into the draft constitution. It stated: "The State shall not establish, endow, or patronise any particular religion." However, obscurantist elements in the Constituent Assembly triumphed.

Had the establishment clause been the "grundnorm" of our Constitution, the subsequent lurch into "Sarv Dharam Sambhav" and the consequent free fall into right-wing majoritarianism may have been checked.

The second is the absence of a sustained public conversation around the choices that were made at the time of Partition has left us as emotionally bottled-up nations prone to periodic explosions. The phantom of historical grievances never leaves the collective consciousness of people and nations until it is willfully exorcised.

The plausible explanation for not confronting the ghoul of Partition was its sheer scale and bestiality. Twenty million people were displaced and over five million left dead between July-December of 1947. The helmsmen of the two newly-created nations could either have spent time dealing with the emotional fallout of this catastrophe or try and sandpaper it with the audacity of hope for those who had survived the carnage. Partition took place in the backdrop of the Second World that laid to waste 75 million lives. Human life was but a statistic.

So, the beaten, broken and brutalised were left to their own coping mechanisms. A horrendous calamity got internalised within every family. In whispers and sobs, in monotonous and graphic detail, the trauma was transmitted from one generation to another, often amplified with each iteration. This memory is now a venom that has permeated into our public mindspace. It has created a fertile field of odium, ready to be tapped when perversity needs to be unleashed.

The issues around Partition that require a revisit include: Was the partition of India inevitable, given its ethnic composition? Who were the real authors of the two-nation theory and why? Was Partition an imperial design that would have unfolded for geostrategic imperatives even if Indian opinion would have been to the contrary? Why did Mahatma Gandhi's moral force fail when he had been successful earlier? There are myriad such questions that need a fresh look, divorced from bias and with the objectivity that the passage of time may provide.

As the 75th Anniversary of Partition looms, the time has come for the Subcontinent — India, Pakistan and Bangladesh — to confront their past with brutal candour, either individually or collectively, through a series of sustained civil society conversations, joint parliamentary discussions and research endeavours.

For India, this is all the more necessary given that Partition is the apparition being dredged out to rationalise every atrocity, justify legislation and question the founding ideas and ideals of India. What we do not realise is that every time the nation goes through a communal eruption, another stone is cast in the direction of a second Partition.

The writer is a lawyer, MP, and former Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting. Views are personal



AKHILESH MISHRA

Prime dissenter

By challenging status quo, PM Modi has made vested interests uncomfortable

The present-day politics of the Congress, especially under Sonia Gandhi, has turned so overtly Islamist that it could not countenance even a simple humanitarian act of providing citizenship to thousands of people persecuted based on their religion. The CAA threatened to unravel the basic appeal of the Congress — as the last refuge of the Islamist agenda. What good was the Congress party, if the Islamist agenda was being defeated, and that too through constitutional means? This is the question that the leadership of Congress and other status quoists would have grappled with. And that is when decisions would have been made.

The CAA was passed by Parliament on December 11, 2019. And with electrifying speed, the top brass was mobilised. Sonia Gandhi, speaking at a political rally on December 14, 2019, gave the war cry of "iss paar ya uss paar ka faisla" (time to decide which side we are on).

The fact is that if there is a genuine dissenter in Indian politics today, it is Narendra Modi. We have long known what ails the Indian society, polity, and indeed, the Indian economy. But vested interests in each domain conspired to maintain the status quo.

Maintaining the status quo is profitable. It can lead to a great international profile. Or lead to people receiving international awards. It even gets people personal university chairs. It used to mean getting huge amounts of bank loans without accountability. The price for maintaining this status quo has been paid by generations and generations of Indians, forced to live in an India of mediocre achievements as compared to her potential.

Modi could have chosen the same path — of being a conformist. It was certainly easier and perhaps for himself, it would have been a happier path as well. But, as AJP Taylor said, all advance in human history comes from the non-conformists. Modi is that non-conformist. Modi is that dissenter. All the forces of the status quo have ganged up against Modi to quash his dissent. With the "vote veto" being neutralised, the final weapon is now being tested — the "violence veto". Who prevails will determine what kind of India we have by the end of this decade.

The fact is that if there is a genuine dissenter in Indian politics today, it is Narendra Modi. We have long known what ails the Indian society, polity, and indeed, the Indian economy. But vested interests in each domain conspired to maintain the status quo.

The writer is CEO, Bluekraft Digital Foundation and was earlier director (content) MyGov

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WORDS AND ACTION

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Serious reckoning' (IE, March 13). The home minister blowing hot and cold in his remarks on the Delhi violence in Parliament is not surprising. The government's assurance that punitive action shall be initiated against rioters and their properties will be impounded is welcome but will such action be taken against the Delhi police or those who are also associated with the BJP? During his marathon speech, the home minister failed to admit the government's failure in containing the riots — rather he gave it a clean chit by appreciating the role of Delhi police.

Deepak Singhal, Chennai

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Serious reckoning' (IE, March 13). Home Minister Amit Shah's assurance of action against those involved in the recent Delhi riots is welcome. But it will be taken with a pinch of salt until the BJP leaders with a visceral anti-minority attitude are sidelined and the police acts impartially.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

HYPE AND THREAT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Positive response' (IE, March 13). Notwithstanding the WHO declaration of the coronavirus outbreak as a pandemic, the hype over the disease, instead of measures to create awareness, is likely to fuel panic. COVID-19 is contagious but has a mortality rate of 3-

LETTER OF THE WEEK

VALLEY'S PARTY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Deja Vu Party' (IE, March 11). The formation of a new political party in Kashmir is a gimmick that has been enacted several times in the past. The process was started by Jawaharlal Nehru. This time, the choice of carrying out the agenda of the ruling party at the Centre has fallen on a person who is bereft of political acumen. Those who boast that they will resolve the Kashmir issue by repeating communally what the Congress did in a "secular" manner are shortsighted.

MY G Nairang, Kulgam

4 per cent. In 2017 over 7 lakh children under-five died due to malnutrition.

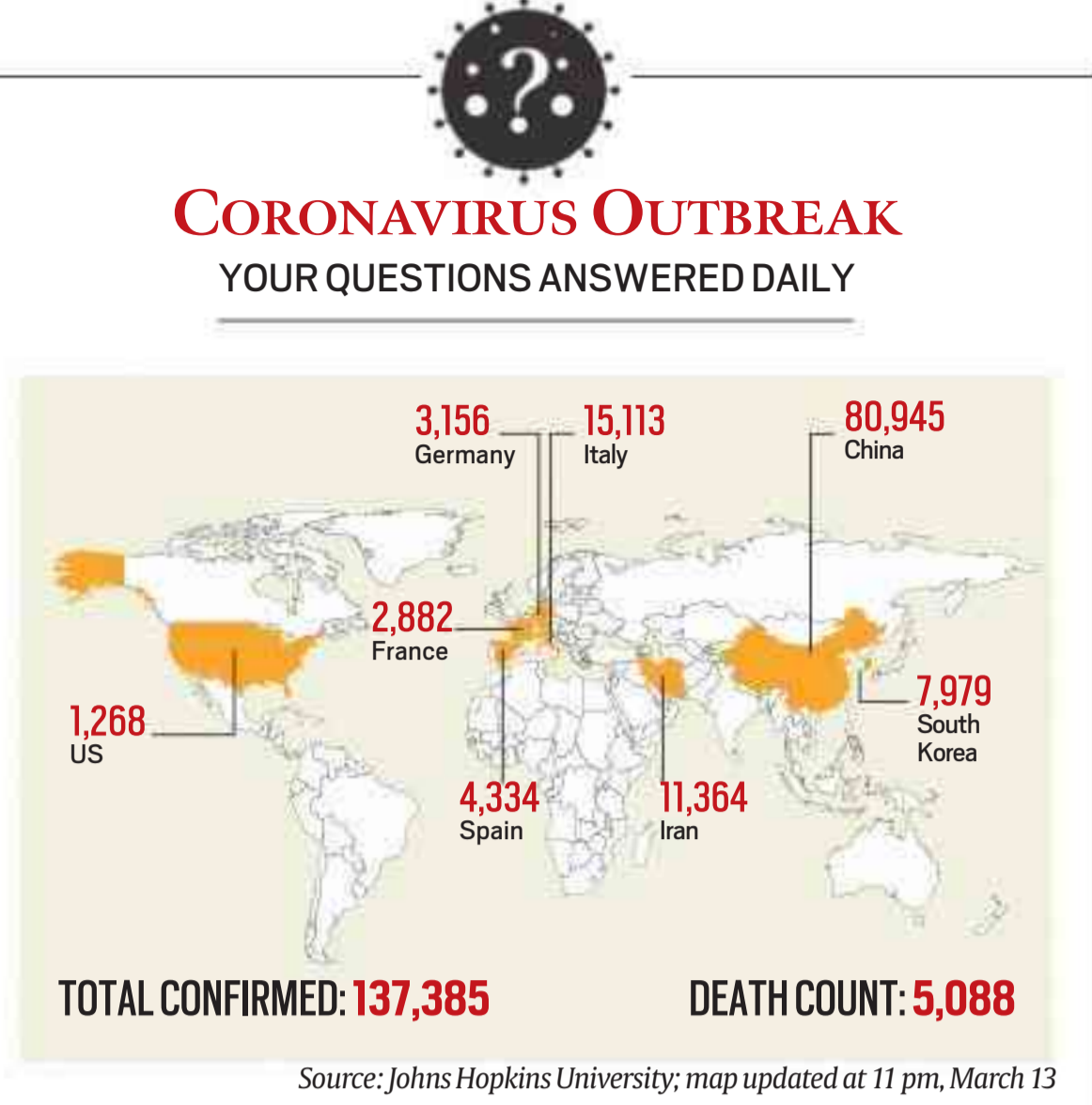
LR Murmu, Delhi

NOT WITH HUBRIS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Abuse of power' (IE, March 12). The Uttar Pradesh government's move to stifle dissent is irresponsible. Displaying a protester's identity and personal information is an open invitation for anarchy. The UP government should focus on preventing more clashes.

Varun Das, Zirakpur

@ieExplained
#ExpressExplained
If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com



How long does the virus stay alive on a surface?

ABANTIKA GHOSH

AS CASES rise the world over, there is increasing anxiety about how long a virus can stay alive once it is transferred to a surface. The nature of transmission by contact makes this the most important question of all because, on that will depend whether the taxi you have taken is safe. What if the last passenger had been carrying the virus?

The World Health Organization (WHO) says: "It is not certain how long the virus that causes COVID-19 survives on surfaces, but it seems to behave like other coronaviruses. Studies suggest that coronaviruses (including preliminary information on the COVID-19 virus) may persist on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days. This may vary under different conditions (e.g. type of surface, temperature or humidity of the environment)."

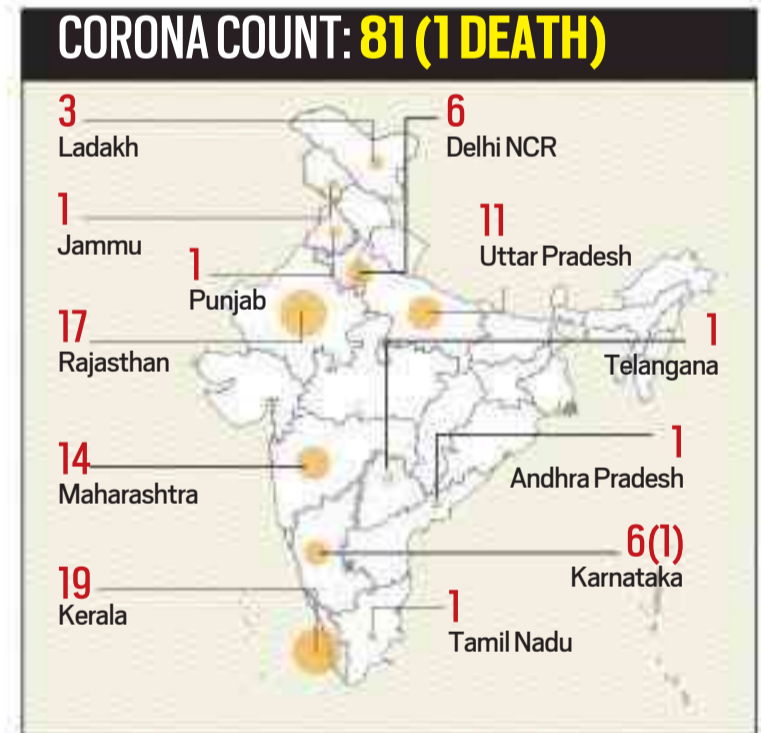
This variability and an element of the unknown pervade all containment measures. Said Dr Sujeet Singh, director, National Centre for Disease Control: "See, generally for coronavirus on a hard surface, it stays alive for about nine hours; on a soft surface it may survive even longer. It also depends on the heat, temperature and humidity. But the



At Delhi's Rajiv Chowk Metro station on Friday. Praveen Khanna

longevity of viruses is very variable, some can live up to nine days. That is why whenever we suspect contamination we disinfect with sodium hypochlorite and close the place down for four to six hours. We do not 'fumigate', we disinfect."

This basically means a soft toy is likely to retain the virus longer than a hard tabletop. However, neither can infect if your hands are washed well with soap and water, or cleaned with a sanitiser. The WHO prescribes: "If you think a surface may be infected, clean it with simple disinfectant to kill the virus and protect yourself and others. Clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water. Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, or nose."



The map is based on the Union Health Ministry update at 6 pm on March 13. Some state governments may have reported higher counts.

The 17 cases in Kerala include three persons who were discharged.

Have a question on the COVID-19 outbreak and what you should/should not do? Write to explained@indianexpress.com

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Why social distancing, in data

With public gatherings restricted worldwide, the question is how such moves affect COVID-2019 trends. A look at how the outbreak curve shapes, with or without social distancing, and why a flatter curve helps

KARISHMA MEHROTRA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

OVER THE last two days, a number of states in India have enforced measures aimed at reducing public gatherings. This is called "social distancing". With 100,000 reported cases of COVID-19 in 100 countries, starting with the outbreak in Wuhan in China 10 weeks ago, researchers have analysed trends in the spread have made a case for social distancing as a mitigation and containment strategy.

How does social distancing work?

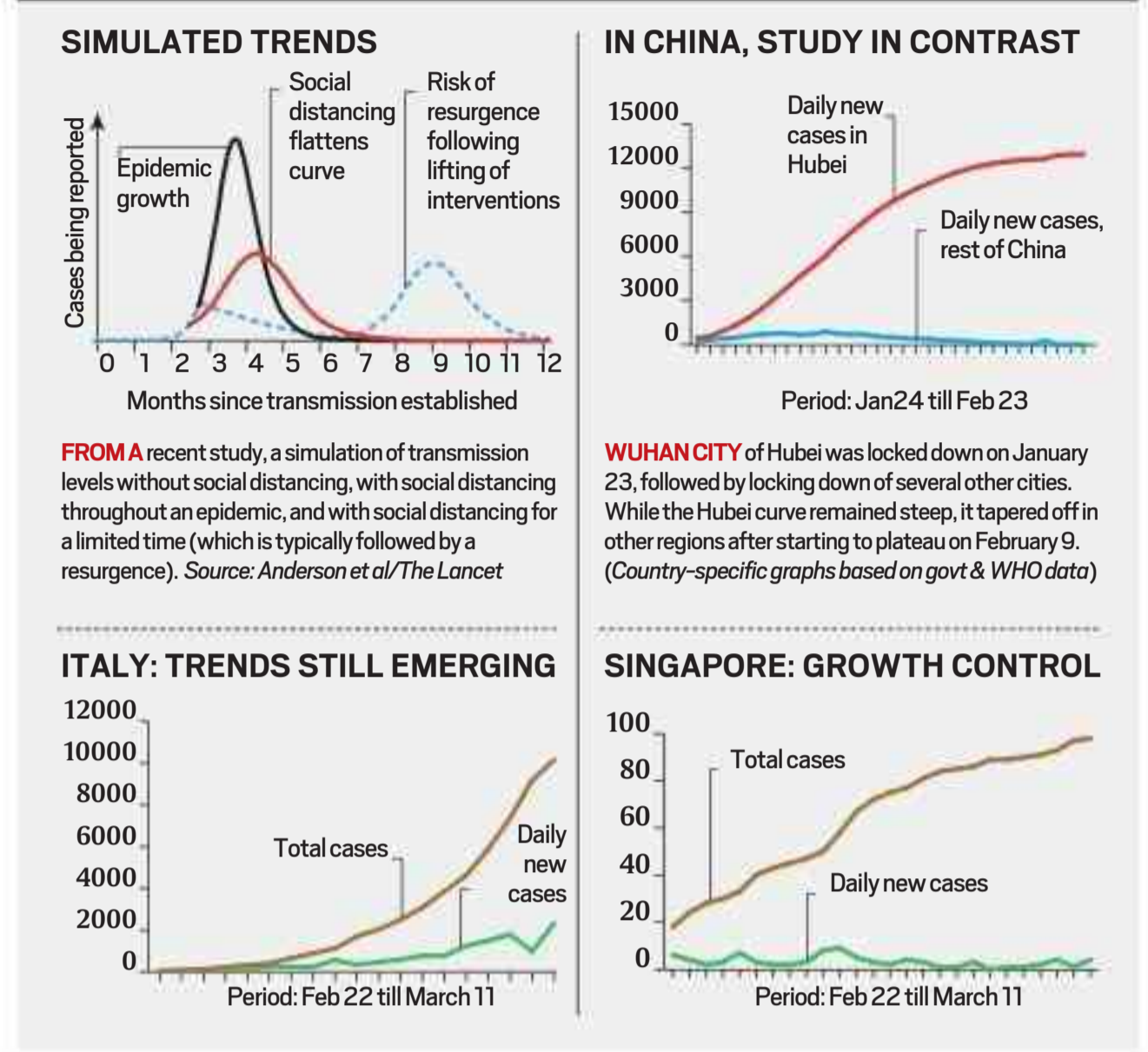
To stem the speed of the coronavirus spread so that healthcare systems can handle the influx, experts are advising people to avoid mass gatherings. Offices, schools, concerts, conferences, sports events, weddings, and the like have been shut or cancelled around the world, including in a number of Indian states. An advisory by the US Centers for Disease Control recommends social distancing measures such as: reducing the frequency of large gatherings and limiting the number of attendees; limiting inter-school interactions; and considering distance or e-learning in some settings (which could be interpreted as serving the same purpose as working from home).

What is the objective of such restrictions?

Compared to deadlier diseases such as bird flu, or H5N1, coronavirus is not as fatal—which ironically also makes it more difficult to contain. With milder symptoms, the infected are more likely to be active and still spreading the virus. For example, more than half the cases aboard a cruise ship that has docked in California did not exhibit any symptoms.

In a briefing on March 11, World Health Organization (WHO) officials said, "Action must be taken to prevent transmission at the community level to reduce the epidemic to manageable clusters." The main question for governments is how do you reduce the impact of the virus by flattening the trajectory of cases from a sharp bell curve to an elongated speed-bump-like curve. This is being

HOW DISTANCING FLATTENS THE CURVE



called "flattening the curve".

What was the curve like in China?

The numbers show that the virus spread within Hubei exponentially but plateaued in other provinces. Just as Chinese provinces outside of Hubei effectively stemmed the spread in February, three other countries — South Korea, Italy, and Iran — were not able to flatten the curve.

On December 30, active case finding began in Wuhan. Around January 21, the number of cases started to jump intensely to roughly 550 infections and 17 deaths. Wuhan city's lockdown was two days later. The next day, another 15 Chinese cities were shut down, eventually cordoning off 100 million people. In Chinese regions outside Hubei, new cases plateaued from February 9 on-

Lessons from a pandemic a century ago

SEEMA CHISHTI
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

AS COVID-19 balloons into a global health crisis, parallels are being drawn with the Spanish influenza of 1918-19, considered the most devastating pandemic in recent history, with an estimated toll of 20-50 million lives.

Spanish flu: the trends

The focal point of that pandemic a century ago was India, where between 10-20 million died. The disease hit India in two waves — an initial, milder attack followed by a severe wave through the country in the autumn of 1918. The disease is believed to have been brought to India by World War I soldiers returning home.

A study published in 2014 estimated weekly deaths in 213 districts of nine provinces to compute "statistical measures of the severity, speed, and duration of the virulent autumn wave of the disease as it evolved and diffused throughout India". These estimates, say the authors, "characterize the pattern of spread, mortality, and evolution of the 1918 influenza across India using spatial or temporal data". [The Evolution of Pandemic Influenza: Evidence from India, 1918-19', by Siddharth Chandra and Eva Kassens-Noor: *BMC Infectious Diseases*, 4, 510 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2334-14-510>]

The study found that over time, (a) the severity of the epidemic diminished; (b) the velocity (average time to death) of the wave slowed down; (c) the wave grew longer in du-

ration; and (d) the eastern portions of India were the last to experience the pandemic.

Why it tapered off

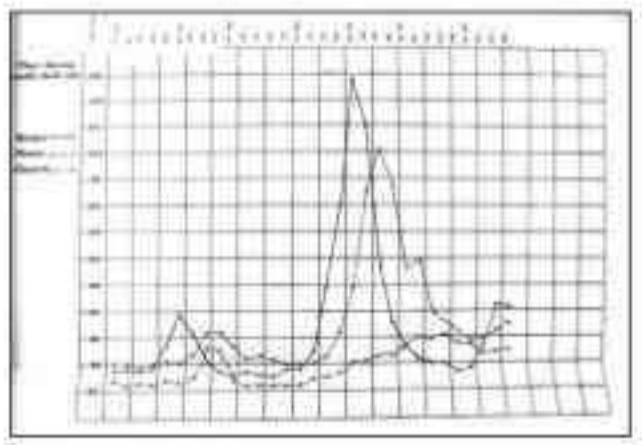
So how was the outbreak eventually tamed after it had passed through the length and breadth of India? There are at least three possible causes, Prof Chandra, Director of the Asian Studies Center at Michigan State University, told *The Indian Express*.

"(i) That word got around about this killer disease (either through government efforts or through informal communications) so that, by the time the influenza reach Calcutta (now Kolkata), people were practising social distancing and taking other preventive steps that people in Bombay and Madras had not been able to take because the disease caught people at the early locations unawares.

"(ii) The virus evolved as it spread across India, becoming milder in the process. There is a theory that, as viruses propagate, the more virulent strains are unable to survive, reproduce, and propagate as effectively as the less virulent strains, because their hosts die before the virus can jump to new susceptible hosts. This changes the composition of the virus in an infected population from more virulent strains to less virulent strains as the disease moves across a population.

"(iii) Differences in climate across India. Influenza viruses tend to not do as well in warm and moist conditions as they do in cooler, drier conditions."

However, Prof Chandra said, "We do not know definitively which of these three con-



Spanish flu weekly trends in 3 Indian regions in 1918. Siddharth Chandra and Eva Kassens-Noor/*BMC Infectious Diseases*, 2014

ditions applied to the pandemic in India".

The Sanitary Commissioner at the time did draw a correlation between the "crucial summer monsoon rains" and the virulence of the disease. The Commissioner noted on several occasions in his report that the low mortality rate along the coastlines was striking, lending support to the "humidity hypothesis".

The study was carried out ahead of the centenary of the pandemic in order to try and design appropriate strategies for possible future outbreaks. "The lengthening and weakening of the pandemic wave as it swept across India... has broad implications for pandemic control strategies," the study says. "The duration and intensity of pandemic control measures will need to be judiciously calibrated to the variable nature of any future pandemic wave."

wards. All of these regions could have exploded exponentially, but tapered off.

Where else did the curve grow and eventually flatten?

As reported in the March 11 WHO briefing, 93% of cases are from four countries, making it "an uneven epidemic at the global level." Countries are using varying testing and diagnostic systems, making comparisons tentative.

It is clear, however, that new cases began to grow in South Korea, Italy, Iran by the end of February, surpassing all Chinese regions other than Hubei.

On the other hand, countries close to China — Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand — as well as Hong Kong saw growth in case numbers plateau. Some say it's because many of these countries learnt from the 2003 SARS epidemic. The WHO singled out Singapore as a "good example of an all-of-government approach."

South Korea is an outlier. Experts say the country contained the virus within the first 30 patients, but on February 17 the 31st one spread it to thousands of people and symptoms showed themselves too late for authorities to check the outbreak. By now, South Korea's case growth has shown decline, while Italy and Iran have quickly surpassed it.

Why are Europe and the United States now concerned?

The growth in European countries and the United States since the beginning of March resembles the initial curves of Italy and Hubei during their respective growth phases, leaving officials wondering if they will follow the same trajectory. Experts say that if countries take measures similar to Singapore and Taiwan, they may be able to avoid that fate.

New cases have shot up in France, Germany, Spain, US, Switzerland, and the UK. Between March 5 and 6, there were a number of countries that doubled their case numbers. In order of highest daily growth rate, they were Belgium, Switzerland, the UAE, Netherlands, France, Austria, Malaysia, Sweden, Greece, USA, Spain, UK and Norway.

Why pi matters: part of our lives, its Day ruined by outbreak this year

KABIR FIRAQUE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

SATURDAY, MARCH 14 is Pi Day, a celebration of the beloved constant pi. This year, however, not many are celebrating, with the coronavirus outbreak having restricted public gatherings.

What is Pi Day?

It is dedicated to pi, whose value up to five decimal places is 3.14159. The idea originated in the United States, where the convention is to write dates in a format that expresses March 14 as 3/14. These three digits match the value of pi up to two decimal places, at 3.14. Coincidentally, March 14 is also Albert Einstein's birthday.

The late Larry Shaw, a physicist with the Exploratorium museum in San Francisco, came up with the idea of Pi Day in 1988. The

Exploratorium launched celebrations on 3/14, at 1:59, to correspond with 3.14159. The Exploratorium tradition eventually spread across the world among mathematicians, scientists and ordinary fans of pi.

In 2009, the US House of Representatives adopted a resolution supporting the designation of Pi Day and its celebration around the world. The House "encourages schools and educators to observe the day with appropriate activities that teach students about Pi and engage them about the study of mathematics", the resolution said.

But why pi, in particular?

Vital to a wide range of calculations, pi is also the most familiar of all mathematical constants. The concept is introduced to schoolchildren when they are taught to calculate the area and circumference of a circle. They usually work with the fraction 22/7, which gives an approximate value for pi.



A Google Doodle acknowledges Pi Day on March 14, 2018.

By definition, pi is the ratio of the circumference of a circle — any circle — to its diameter. It is remarkable because the ratio is always constant. Pi is also the area of a circle divided by the square of its radius — again a constant ratio for any circle. This was something that caught the attention of ancient mathematicians; the Babylonians took the ratio as 3. Centuries of observations and calculations have refined the value of pi, with modern computers having gone up to trillions of digits (digits after the decimal continue forever; for pi is an "irrational number").

Besides being indispensable in geometry and by extension trigonometry, pi has applications in physics, astronomy and other

sciences, and appears in various formulas.

What happens on Pi Day?

At an institutional level, the Americans take the lead. The Exploratorium organises multiple activities relating to pi, including methods for calculating its value and a "Pi procession", and invites fans across the world to do the same. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology announces its admission decisions for the next batch on Pi Day. NASA, which has a dedicated Pi Day page on its website, says it celebrates Pi Day everyday by using pi to explore space.

Outside the US, various universities report every year how they celebrated Pi Day. The Indian Institute of Science Research and Education (Pune), for instance, described in 2015 how it launched its pi-related activities on 3-14-15 at 9.26 am (pi = 3.1415926...).

Many non-Americans find it difficult to associate pi with March 14, which they ex-

press as 14/3 rather than 3/14. Other dissenters have noted that we usually work with a circle's radius, not its diameter. The ratio of a circle's circumference to its radius, they point out, is 2 times pi, or 6.28. Therefore, they prefer to celebrate on 6/28 (June 28), which they call "Tau Day".

What's different this year?

Because of the outbreak, public events are mostly off. The Exploratorium, which has shut until the end of March, announced that Pi Day celebrations are postponed. A number of universities, too, have announced postponement of Pi Day events.

Fans often celebrate Pi Day with a pie, which rhymes with pi, is circular, and lends itself to pi-related activities. Bakeries usually see a boom in sales in the days leading up to Pi Day, but this year they are missing that bump. CNBC reported, describing trends in San Francisco, New York and Seattle.

17 THE WORLD

ITALIANS SING AT WINDOWS TO BEAT VIRUS BLUES

Italians are beating the social isolation imposed by the country's coronavirus lockdown by taking to their windows and singing in unison, with videos of the phenomenon racking up thousands of views online. One recording in the Tuscan city of Siena has been viewed over 600,000 times on Twitter

PANDEMIC WATCH



Scott Morrison

AUSTRALIA Govt bans crowds, advises limited travel

Melbourne: Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison Friday announced a ban on all non-essential gatherings of over 500 people starting Monday and urged citizens to reconsider foreign travel. Morrison said the ban would not be extended to schools, universities, public transport or airports. "It is a precautionary (measure). It is getting ahead of this to ensure that we can minimise the impact on your health and (so) we can ensure with confidence the ability for people to be accessing the health services..." he said.

PAKISTAN Border with Iran, Afghanistan to be closed

Islamabad: Pakistan will close its border with Iran and Afghanistan in a bid to control the spread of the coronavirus, the interior ministry said Friday. The closure of Pakistan's porous border with Iran—where hundreds of people have died from the disease—and Afghanistan will start March 16. It will be for "an initial period of two weeks... in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19, in the best interest of all three brotherly countries", Pakistan's interior ministry said.

NEPAL Expeditions halted, tourist visas suspended

Kathmandu: Nepal has halted all mountaineering expeditions, including Mount Everest ascents, and stopped issuing on-arrival tourist visas after the WHO declared the outbreak a pandemic and urged countries to take precautionary measures. The Himalayan country attracts mountaineers from all over the world and earns millions of dollars a year from Everest permits. Nepal has so far confirmed only one case of coronavirus, though dozens of people suspected to have coronavirus were admitted to the government hospital for tests.

SPAIN Emergency declared, over 4,200 cases

AGENCIES MARCH 13

THE WORLD Health Organisation said Friday that Europe was now the "epicentre" for the global coronavirus pandemic, and warned it was impossible to know when the outbreak would peak.

"Europe has now become the epicentre of the pandemic," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a virtual press conference.

He said the continent had now more reported cases and deaths than the rest of the world combined, apart from China. "More cases are now being reported every day than were reported in China at the height of its epidemic," he said, referring to the global numbers.

Italy on Friday recorded its highest one-day death toll yet from cases of the new coronavirus, according to official data.

There were 250 deaths recorded over the past 24 hours, taking the total to 1,266, with 17,660 infections overall, a rise of 2,547 since Thursday evening.

Spain said it would declare a 15-day state of emergency from Saturday, signaling a sharp escalation in its fight against the coronavirus, as some regions shut shops and church authorities canceled at least two Easter parades. Cases in Spain soared to more than 4,200 on Friday, as the number of deaths rose by some 50 percent to 120, the health ministry said.

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said the number of cases could top 10,000 by next week—more than double the current level—and asked citizens to play their part.

The German government on Friday unleashed the biggest economic aid package in the country's post-war history, offering companies "unlimited" credit to keep them afloat during the coronavirus crisis.

Chancellor Angela Merkel said the measures "are unprecedented in the history of the

ITALY One-day record with 250 new deaths



DAY 4 OF ITALY LOCKDOWN: Medical personnel at the Spedali Civili hospital in Brescia, Italy, on Friday. Reuters

EXPLAINED EU attempts to unify

THE EU is attempting to ensure unity at a time when member countries have increasingly taken unilateral action, including closure of borders and stockpiling of essential medical equipment. The global body's direct role in tackling the crisis is limited, as per experts, but it maintains that a unified front will be essential in ensuring that the coronavirus is contained. However, the extent to which this call is answered remains to be seen.

German government", and repeated that Berlin would do "whatever is necessary" to tackle the fallout from the pandemic. Most schools across Germany will now be shut from Monday.

France announced Friday it was limiting gatherings to no more than 100 people in a bid to slow the spread of the coronavirus, a day after closing schools until further notice in its toughest measures yet. France previously limited gatherings to 1,000 people, and the tightened measures could squeeze venues even further.

EU Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen warned Friday against imposing unilateral travel restrictions to fight the coronavirus epidemic, as some member states have done.

She spoke after the Czech Republic announced that it would ban all foreigners from entering the country and all Czechs from leaving as of Monday. "Certain controls may be justified, but general travel bans are not seen as being the most effective by the WHO," von der Leyen said.

Outbreak reaches halls of power

NYT & REUTERS MARCH 13

PRESIDENT TRUMP said he had not been tested for the coronavirus despite coming into contact with a person who only days later tested positive. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada is self-isolating after his wife tested positive. And the Australian minister for home affairs, Peter Dutton, tested positive on Friday, days after meeting with Attorney General William P Barr and Ivanka Trump.

The reach of the virus into the world's highest political reaches was a stark reminder—if one was needed—that the pathogen knows no limits and that no corner of daily life was immune.

Australia's minister for Home Affairs, Peter Dutton, who last



After a scare, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro said he tested negative.

week met with Ivanka Trump, President Trump's daughter and senior adviser, said he had contracted the new coronavirus.

Last week, Dutton met with Trump and Attorney General William P Barr in Washington.

Dutton is the latest in a string of foreign dignitaries who have met with associates of Trump in

recent days, only to later learn they had been infected.

Sophie Grégoire Trudeau, the wife of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada, has tested positive for the coronavirus, the prime minister's office said in a statement on Thursday night.

"She is feeling well, is taking all the recommended precautions and her symptoms remain mild," the statement said.

Earlier in the day, Trudeau announced that he, Grégoire Trudeau and their three children had voluntarily isolated themselves at the prime minister's residence in Ottawa as they awaited the test result.

The Kremlin has asked that journalists who feel sick steer clear of events with the Russian president, Vladimir V Putin.

Dmitri S Peskov, Putin's spokesman, said the measure

was necessary to protect the president and his staff from the coronavirus. "If you feel unwell, if you don't feel 100 percent healthy, please do not come to the Kremlin," Peskov told journalists during his regular telephone briefing.

Romania's Prime Minister Ludovic Orban said Friday he would self-quarantine after attending the same meeting as a senator from his party who tested positive for the novel coronavirus. "I will put myself in isolation (...), while continuing to exercise my duties," Orban told journalists.

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro said Friday he had tested negative for the new coronavirus, after a scare over a trip on which at least one infected member of his staff rubbed shoulders with Donald Trump.

Ethiopia, Kenya confirm first coronavirus cases in East Africa

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NAIROBI, MARCH 13

KENYA AND Ethiopia on Friday announced their first confirmed cases of coronavirus, as East Africa, which has so far been unscathed by the global pandemic, scaled up emergency measures to contain its spread.

In Kenya, a 27-year-old Kenyan woman tested positive for the virus on Thursday in Nairobi, a week after returning from the United States via London. She was in a stable condition and recovering, Health Minister Mutahi Kagwe told reporters.

"We wish to assure all Kenyans that the government will use all the resources avail-



At an infectious disease unit in Kenya. AP

able to fight coronavirus," he said, as the government rolled out a raft of new containment measures. The government had traced all the contacts of the patient since she arrived back in Kenya on March 5, he said. "At the moment, there is absolutely no need for panic and worry," he said.

Kenya, with a population of 50 million people, saw a spree of

panic buying among the middle-class in Nairobi supermarkets, in the wake of the announcement.

Meanwhile Ethiopia, Africa's second most populous nation with over 100 million people, said a 48-year-old Japanese man who had arrived in the country on March 4 from Burkina Faso was confirmed to have contracted the virus.

Trump expected to announce COVID-19 a national emergency

ANNIE KARNI, PETER BAKER & MAGGIE HABERMAN NEW YORK, MARCH 13

PRESIDENT TRUMP is expected to declare a national emergency on Friday afternoon, a move that would give him authority to use \$40 billion allocated by Congress for disaster relief to address the coronavirus crisis.

Trump, according to a senior administration official, is expected to invoke the Stafford Act, a law that empowers the Federal Emergency Management Agency to coordinate disaster response and aid state and local governments.

Trump has been hinting in



Donald Trump

recent days that he had been briefed on using the law to address the pandemic, and Democratic lawmakers like Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the minority leader, have been pressing him to invoke it.

Trump's decision to employ the Stafford Act to address the

coronavirus crisis was reported earlier by Bloomberg News.

"We have very strong emergency powers under the Stafford Act," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office on Thursday. "I have it memorised, practically, as to the powers in that act. And if I need to do something, I'll do it. I have the right to do a lot of things that people don't even know about."

The details of Trump's announcement, another official cautioned, were in flux and being finalised ahead of a 3 pm news conference Trump announced on Twitter Friday morning.

Presidents frequently invoke the Stafford Act in response to natural disasters, like the recent tornado that killed two dozen people in Tennessee. **NYT**

Greece's first woman president begins term

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ATHENS, MARCH 13

GREECE'S FIRST woman president began her term on Friday with a pledge to protect the country's borders and defend human rights, whilst warning Greeks to follow health rules as the country grapples with over 100 coronavirus cases.

Katerina Sakellariopoulou, a 63-year-old former senior judge, said she would "walk together" with Greeks to create a "prosperous" and "cosmopolitan" future "that includes all of us."

The new head of the Greek state begins her five-year term in a terse standoff with neighbouring Turkey, which has allowed tens of thousands of refugees to mass at the border.

Sakellariopoulou said Greeks had to "repulse the aggression of those who make designs on our



Katerina Sakellariopoulou

national sovereignty by making use of human pain."

The new president also insisted that Greece had a "humanitarian duty" to defend "defenceless and desperate people."

Sakellariopoulou urged the public to follow health warnings "to avoid spreading panic".

She took a religious oath in parliament before Archbishop Ieronymos, head of the Orthodox Church of Greece.

US carries out retaliatory strikes on Iranian-backed militia in Iraq

AGENCIES WASHINGTON, TEHRAN, MARCH 13

UNITED STATES warplanes struck five targets in southern Iraq on Thursday night, hitting back at an Iraqi militia with ties to Iran that is believed to have been part of a rocket attack on Wednesday that killed two Americans and a British soldier, American officials said.

The airstrikes, which were supported by the British military, targeted the militia Kataib Hezbollah and facilities that were believed to store the type of rockets used in the attack on coalition forces on Wednesday. It is not known how many militia members, if any, were killed, a military official said. "The United States will not tolerate attacks against our people, our interests or our al-



Mark Esper

lies," Defense Secretary Mark T Esper said in a statement.

Esper's language falls in line with a now familiar pattern as Washington moves to curb malign efforts from Iran and its proxies across the region. But ultimately, the effort has translated into a violent tit-for-tat exchange with an outcome that is anything but clear.

A Defense Department official said the strikes were specif-

ically designed to be punishing and retaliatory—but not to escalate into a conflict with Iran. Another military official noted that the attack was ordered at night in Iraq with the intention of minimising civilian casualties.

Kataib Hezbollah released a statement on Thursday praising those who had carried out the strikes on Wednesday, though the group denied responsibility.

Iran on Friday warned US President Donald Trump against taking "dangerous actions" after American forces launched air strikes that they said targeted a pro-Iranian armed group in neighbouring Iraq. "The United States cannot blame others... for the consequences of its illegal presence in Iraq and the nation's reaction to the assassination and killing of Iraqi commanders and fighters," foreign ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said.

STRIKES KILL FIVE SECURITY FORCES, 1 CIVILIAN: IRAQ ARMY

Baghdad: Iraq's military said five security force members and a civilian were killed early Friday in the barrage of US airstrikes.

Iraq's military said the strikes killed three Iraqi army commandos and two federal police officers. A Shiite endowment in Karbala said the strikes resulted in the death of one civilian. An Iran-backed Shiite militia group vowed to exact revenge for the US strikes, potentially signalling another cycle of tit-for-tat violence between Washington and Tehran. **AP**

Pak media mogul arrested in 34-yr-old land allotment case

M ZULQERNAIN LAHORE, MARCH 13

PAKISTANI MEDIA mogul and the owner of Jang/Geo group, Mir Shakilur Rehman, was on Friday remanded into the custody of the country's anti-graft body till March 25 in a 34-year-old land allotment case.

Rehman, the editor-in-chief of Jang/Geo media group, was arrested by the National Accountability Bureau on Thursday on charges that he illegally acquired 54 plots each measuring one kanal on a prime location in Lahore at a throwaway price in 1986 during the tenure of then-chief minister of Punjab Nawaz Sharif.

An accountability court in Lahore accepted the plea of NAB

on Friday and remanded him in its custody for 12 days.

Rehman's counsel Aitzaz Ahsan opposed the NAB plea to hand over his client to its custody in a 34-year-old land case against him which he said based on NAB's malafide.

During the hearing, Rehman's counsel Aitzaz Ahsan opposed NAB's request for physical remand, saying NAB's "attitude towards Rehman is based on maliciousness".

Ahsan termed his client's arrest as "illegal", arguing that Rehman was cooperating with the accountability watchdog.

After his appearance before the NAB team in Lahore last week, Rehman had said he had bought the land in question from a private party and no illegality had been committed in this respect. **PTI**

19 ECONOMY

GOLD	RUPEE	OIL	SILVER
₹42,600	₹73.80	\$32.32	₹44,130

*Indian basket as on March 12, 2020

SENSEX: 34,103.48 ▲ 1325.34 NIFTY: 9,955.20 ▲ 365.05 NIKKEI: 17,431.05 ▼ 1,128.58 HANG SENG: 24,032.91 ▼ 276.16 FTSE: 5,613.40 ▲ 375.92 DAX: 9,705.53 ▲ 544.40

*International market data till 1900 IST

TRACKING COVID-19 SERVICES

Malls see decline in footfall; work from home, drop in airport trips hit taxi cabs

PRANAV MUKUL & SANDEEP SINGH
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

WITH CORPORATES and authorities turning to the principle of social distancing to contain the spread of COVID-19, business segments that are pegged to be at the heart of the "going out" economy are witnessing an unprecedented hit to their businesses.

Mall companies have seen footfalls reduce to a third of the usual with further decline expected caused by increasing clampdown on public places. Similarly, on back of plummeting airport trips and employers asking staff to work from home, cab aggregators are witnessing a fall in ride numbers. Additionally, with states ordering shut-down of cinema halls, film producers are postponing some releases slated the next few weeks.

Multiplexes, on which most malls across the country are dependent for attracting footfalls, are being brought to a grinding halt state after state. So far, governments of Delhi, Odisha, Kerala, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka and Maharashtra (for cities including Mumbai and Pune) have ordered shutdown of cinema halls. With a chunk of concentration for multiplex companies in metro cities, the move is expected to drive down box-office revenues significantly.

India's largest film-exhibition company PVR said: "We believe that this is a temporary situation and remain buoyant about the film business in India, and our own growth prospects". Movie producers have also taken a stock of the situation and pushed back near-term releases. According to film business analyst Taran Adarsh, the release of Akshay Kumar-starrer *Sooryavanshi*, in addition Hollywood pictures *Mulan* and *The New Mutants*, has been postponed.

Despite the sudden hit due to COVID-19, mall companies believe that bleeding in the short term to contain the outbreak is better than the disease continuing to spread. "The scare around coronavirus has had its impact. Our footfalls are down to 30 per cent in the malls we operate. We also run hotels and we are witnessing cancellations. We had marriage bookings for April and most of them are under cancellations. I, however, feel that given the circumstances, it is better to take a hit in the short term in order to control the speed of the virus and we are with

the government and authorities on the same," said Ankush Kaul, president, sales and marketing, Ambience Group, which operates malls and hotels in Delhi-NCR.

A consequent impact of people not going out is also being felt by ride-hailing firms. An executive at a Gurgaon-based ride-sharing firm said: "Trips to and from airports comprise a significant chunk of our rides and there is a visible decline in number of those trips. In addition, companies have implemented work from home for their employees. This is having an impact on our business".

On their part, the cab companies are attempting to sensitise their driver partners given that the taxis are deemed to be close points of contact among the drivers and customers. "We are supporting drivers and delivery people who are diagnosed with COVID-19 or placed in quarantine by a public health authority. Drivers and delivery people in these situations will receive compensation for a period of up to 14 days. This has already begun in some markets and we are working to implement mechanisms to do this worldwide," said Andrew Macdonald, Senior Vice President of Rides and Platform, Uber.

Responding to an e-mail query, Ola Cabs said: "We have set up a robust taskforce consisting of members from various internal departments to ensure continuous monitoring and support for all stakeholders. A detailed health advisory has been shared with all our driver-partners and customers to educate them about the situation at hand, in line with the prescribed guidelines".

While some segments such as shopping and retail will recover the losses faced in the current period with consumers only deferring certain purchases, most business segments like airlines, multiplexes, restaurants are incurring "non-recoverable" revenue losses.

"Directionally, we can say that people not going out for movies, for eating out, people not going out for shopping, there is a negative impact but quantifying it will be difficult. In some cases, the sales are only deferred and not lost. For shopping and retailing, some sales will be made up later. For cinema halls, taxi rides, restaurants, what is lost is lost. These are the segments of consumption, which have a non-recoverable impact," said Arvind Singhal, CMD, Technopak.

TRADING SUSPENDED FOR 45 MINUTES AFTER INDICES FALL 10% IN EARLY MORNING TRADE

Crash, pause and rally: Sensex swings 5,380 pts

Index gains 1,325 points to close at 34,103.48; rupee rebounds 48p to 73.80/\$

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, MARCH 13

THE SENSEX on Friday skyrocketed over 4,715 points from its intra-day low and closed with a gain of 1,325 points, or 4.04 per cent after markets went on a ride, with trading being halted for the first time in 12 years. The index closed the session at 34,103.48 after swinging 5,380 points (intra-day low to intra-day high).

Benchmark indices plunged over 10 per cent in opening trade. The Sensex, which dived over 3,300 points in the opening session, staged a pulsating recovery after US stock market futures surged 400 points and European bourses showed signs of a recovery.

The BSE and the NSE suspended trading for 45 minutes around 9.20 am after the Sensex and the Nifty plunged 10 per cent in line with the global sell-off as the coronavirus pandemic triggered recession fears. However, when trading resumed, domestic indices surged as investors snapped up battered stocks available at attractive

'Robust risk management in place'

Mumbai: Sebi said it has reviewed the market situation with exchanges and assured that "a robust risk management framework" is in place, which automatically gets triggered in response to movements in the indices (BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty) as well as individual stocks in the cash and derivatives market. "The positions of margin pay-

ments, margin utilisation, adequacy of collaterals (securities deposited by the brokers with the clearing corporations) and the pay-in's obligations being met by the clearing members (brokers) are being continuously monitored. Similarly, the settlement and clearance of trades are also being constantly monitored," the regulator said. **ENS**

cheap valuations amid expectations of stimulus measures by the US and other nations.

Domestic institutions were heavy buyers and accumulated stocks worth over Rs 5,867 crore, while foreign investors pulled out another Rs 6,000 crore from the equity market. With this, withdrawals by foreign investors from India have come close to Rs 20,000 crore in the last four sessions.

The Nifty settled 365.05 points, or 3.81 per cent, up at 9,955.20 after hitting an intra-day low of 8,555.15. The Sensex plummeted 3,473 points or 9.24 per

cent, while the Nifty lost 1,034.25 points or 9.41 per cent during the week. Investor wealth, or market capitalisation, worth around Rs 15 lakh crore has been wiped out in the last four sessions.

The rupee rebounded 48 paise to 73.80 against the dollar after the RBI assured steps to maintain liquidity in forex markets and announced a \$2 billion dollar-rupee swap deal.

Downside risk for the Indian markets cannot be ruled out in the near term, given uncertainty across globe, analysts said. "The improvement in domestic macro data (IIP and easing CPI

EXPLAINED Volatility likely to stay high

FRIDAY'S MEGA recovery doesn't mean that markets have returned to the bull phase. Downside risk for the Indian markets cannot be ruled out in the near term, given uncertainty across the globe.

is a good sign. However, growth recovery still remains elusive and therefore there are high expectations that the RBI may cut rates in its next policy meet to offset the impact of coronavirus as well as economic slowdown. Meanwhile, in the near term, we expect volatility to remain high and maintain cautious stance," said Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Religare Broking.

Chief Economic Advisor Krishnamurthy Subramanian also said the government and the RBI will take all necessary steps to quell the "fear sentiment" created due to the coronavirus outbreak.

'Stock investors advised against taking short bets'

Brokerages cautioned investors against making an entry even as benchmark indices recovered after hitting the lower circuit, saying the impact of coronavirus is still lingering

INVEST ONLY WITH MEDIUM TO LONG-TERM VIEW: If someone is buying stocks, they should do so only with a medium to long term investment horizon and not to make a quick buck

ECONOMIC HIT FROM CONTAINMENT EFFORTS: Containment of the virus will have an economic cost as it may require drastic lockdowns

SENTIMENT MIMICS GLOBAL PEERS: The selling in Indian markets was in line with global peers and possibly also a reaction to the first Indian

VOICE OF OPTIMISM: ICICI Securities said the current correction was a buying opportunity for investors who should utilise declines to lap up good businesses

"Spread fresh investments spread over 3-6 months": Investors should avoid taking any knee-jerk reaction to the current sell-off, Axis Mutual Fund said, advising that fresh investments should be spread over 3-6 months time



INTRA-DAY LOW OF DOMESTIC INDICES: The BSE 30-share Sensex had hit a low of 29,388.97 during mid-day trading, before recovering over 5,380 points to end at 34,103.48

The broader NSE Nifty saw an intra-day low of 8,555.15, but ended the day more than 1,400 points higher at 9,955.20

"Not yet time to buy": As per Bank of America Securities, it is "not yet" the time to buy, as the COVID-19 sentiment is still driving markets and major markets will first have to contain the spread

Source: PTI

DGCA asks foreign carriers to waive off cancellation, rescheduling charges, airports seek to levy extra 'fee'

PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

WITH THE outbreak of COVID-19 beginning to hurt the Indian aviation sector, airlines are grappling with their own financial troubles at the same time while trying to deal with passenger inconveniences and airport operators seeking additional levies in times of a severe slump for the industry.

In a circular sent to all scheduled international airlines Friday, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation advised the carriers to waive off cancellation or reschedule charges to support the passengers. "In view of the unfolding impact of COVID-19, the aviation industry is facing serious challenges. Flights are being curtailed, cancelled and disrupted almost on a daily basis. As a result, passengers

According to official data, foreign carriers had cancelled 492 flights till March-end beginning early last month

are also facing the brunt...In the current scenario, it would be appropriate if airlines support their passengers in this tough time by waiving off cancellation/reschedule charges or by providing any other incentive," the circular said. While most domestic airlines have waived off date change fees for their passengers, so far none of them are offering free cancellations. Airlines did not respond to e-mail queries seeking comments.

In the aftermath of the outbreak, domestic airlines have cancelled over 100 flights every week.

According to official data, foreign carriers had cancelled 492 flights till March-end beginning early last month. However, a spate of cancellations occurred after the government announced Wednesday that it was suspending all visas issued to foreign nationals, barring a few categories, till April 15. In addition to this, Air India Friday cancelled flights to Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Israel, South Korea and Sri Lanka till April 30.

Flight movements of international carriers account for a substantial amount of revenues for airport operators in terms of landing charges, parking fees and other ancillary revenues. This, in addition to the costs being incurred on account of measures to prevent spread of the virus, has made private airport operators reach out to the government to seek relief. In a letter to the Civil Aviation Secretary

dated March 11, the Association of Private Airport Operators flagged problems such as "less sales at the food and beverage, and retail outlets" at aerodromes, and proposed "allowing levying of a nominal passenger facilitation charge as part of airline fares to cover increased operating expenses being incurred by the operators".

Airport operators have argued that they have paid the government's revenue share portion in advance for the January-March quarter on the basis of certain projections that fell short because of the pandemic situation. To make good on their revenues, they have sought the facilitation charge. Even as government officials this newspaper spoke to acknowledged the proposal, they were non-committal on seeing it through.

Airlines, on the other hand, were quick to dismiss the airport

operators' proposal. "India's private airports need to do a reality check on their suggestion to impose a new levy at a time when passenger demand is plummeting...What is needed now are relief measures to help the aviation industry, and eventually when the situation is resolved to look at ways to grow demand, instead of a self-serving interest in protecting profits without recognising what is happening in the world," said Amitabh Khosla, country director -India, IATA. Experts don't see it a surprise that in an attempt to protect cash-flows, which may be affected if airlines begin to offer refund arising out of flight cancellations, companies have announced promotional schemes to sell all-inclusive one-way tickets for as low as Rs 986. Typically, cheap tickets are offered in bulk to generate immediate cash-flow.

OFF THE SHELVES



A supermarket in Guernica, Spain, on Friday. The country will be in a state of emergency for the next 15 days to better combat the coronavirus, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said, in a dramatic increase to the policy response that will allow authorities to confine people and ration goods. An increasing number of supermarket shelves in London, too, were empty on Friday as people rushed to buy pasta, toilet paper, flour and frozen food after the government ordered people with coronavirus to isolate themselves. Reuters

EU warns 2020 growth 'very likely' below zero after virus outbreak

AGENCIES
BRUSSELS, MARCH 13

THE EUROPEAN Commission, the EU's executive arm, warned Friday that growth in Europe would fall into negative territory due to the economic fallout of the coronavirus outbreak.

An EU official told a news briefing that it "is very likely that growth for the euro area and for the EU as a whole will fall below zero this year."

The final reading could "potentially even be considerably below zero," the official added.

The EU will boost spending on coronavirus-hit sectors of the economy, it said on Friday, also clearing member nations to run bigger deficits as Germany di-

Fed's economic forecasts to give window into extent of virus fears

Washington: US Federal Reserve policymakers have begun responding to the virus with an emergency interest rate cut and a reopening of their crisis tool kit, all without a clear idea of what damage is being done outside of plummeting financial markets.

In addition to likely cutting rates further when they gather on Tuesday and Wednesday for their next

scheduled meeting, they will have to offer their own best estimates of the outbreak's economic fallout.

That's because every quarter policymakers have to give individual forecasts for economic growth, the unemployment rate, inflation and interest rates for the end of the year in progress as well as for the next two or three years and the longer term. **REUTERS**

verted state funds to cushion businesses against the impact of the epidemic.

The European Commission,

which predicted the outbreak would cause the bloc's economy to shrink this year, said existing EU funds - but no new money -

would be redirected to companies in greatest need, backed by a lenient interpretation of budget and state aid rules.

The plan effectively gives a green light to the kind of deficit spending already announced by Italy, the EU country worst hit by the outbreak.

"I am convinced that the European Union can withstand this shock," commission head Ursula von der Leyen told a news conference.

"But each member state needs to live up to its full responsibility and the European Union as a whole needs to be determined, coordinated and united," she added, echoing calls for greater fiscal stimulus made on Thursday by European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde.

ON WARFOOTING

DoT relaxes work from home norms

New Delhi: The DoT has eased some norms for Other Service Providers till April 30 to facilitate work from home, including exemptions in requirement of security deposit and agreement for WFH facility for OSPs (IT and IT-enabled services firms). **PTI**

ECB on back foot after Lagarde's poor response

Frankfurt: The European Central Bank was engaged in a rearguard action on Friday after chief Christine Lagarde drew fire from investors and even heads of state for what they saw as a clumsy response to the outbreak.

Impact of virus 'short-term issue': Mnuchin

Washington: US President Donald Trump's "very close" to reaching a stimulus deal with lawmakers to fight the economic damage from the outbreak, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said.

EU to offer greater leeway under fiscal rules

Brussels: The European Commission is ready to activate a clause in EU fiscal rules that would allow a suspension of budget commitments by countries most affected by the crisis, EU executive vice president said. **REUTERS**

‘The government should not intervene till necessary in the economy’



Krishnamurthy V Subramanian, Chief Economic Adviser, Government of India, in conversation with Anant Goenka, Executive Director, The Indian Express Group, and P Vaidyanathan Iyer, Executive Editor – National Affairs, *The Indian Express*

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 GOLF RETREAT

Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India Krishnamurthy V Subramanian was the guest at the Express Adda in Mumbai recently. He spoke on the deceleration in growth, the government’s response, privatisation, trust deficit, and the wisdom of ancient texts



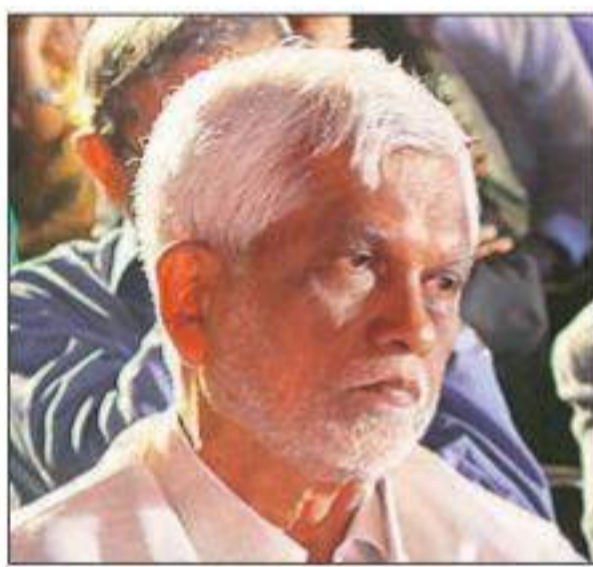
Psephologist Dorab Sopariwala



P Krishnamurthy, Corporate & Strategy Advisor, Private Equity & Venture Investing



Mukesh Butani, Managing Partner, BMR Legal



Bharat Dhirajlal Shah, Chairman, HDFC Securities Ltd

On deceleration in growth rates

If you look at the deceleration in growth rates, a good part of that stems from the financial sector. It is important to understand where we are. So if one looks at corporate credit, we plotted it from 2006 onwards, it peaked in 2013 and then there is a decline. There is a boom and bust. Across the world, we have seen that supply-led credit booms eventually become busts, which is what we had. The global financial crisis affected investment as well and that has affected GDP growth, with a lag. If you look at any macro variable, the impact on another macro variable happens with a significant lag. In the Economic Survey, we show that the highest correlation is with lag with four years. Post 2013, the decline in credit and then investment has had an impact on growth since 2017.

On the times we are in

I would call it part of business cycles in an economy. If you look at business cycles since 1991, on an average the phase of acceleration has been 12 and a half quarters, and the phase of deceleration has been 9 and a half quarters. There is actual data and empirical work that shows it. If you look at the recent cycle, we accelerated for 13 quarters which is almost the same as the average of 12 and a half, and we have decelerated for 13 quarters, which is more than 9 and a half quarter average. That is why actually relating it to the financial sector is very critical because research across the world shows that if you have a slowdown or a recession, you take any episode in a country when that slowdown or recession originated from the financial sector, it is far more prolonged than average. And that explains why we have a slowdown for 13 quarters. It is part of the business cycle phenomenon, which tells me that we are quite likely hitting the bottom, and while it will be actually good to hit 7 per cent very quickly, it will happen over time.

On the period between 1991 and 2011

You were referring to the Economic Survey, there is a particular chart we show there of the Sensex hitting different milestones. Sensex is one measure of the economy. I would want to respond to the question using this particular index. It was created in 1986, the first 5,000 took about 180 months. I remember very well because this was just before I went for my PhD. I used to work for a financial institution and when we reached 5,000, all of us from the treasury had those bells and we rang them. Since then, the next milestone from 5,000 to 10,000 took about 80 months. Then, till about 2007, there was an accelerated phase where every milestone was reached much faster and that was the period till 2004. Then from 2007 to 2014, it took another 80 months for the next milestone to be reached, which is basically the slowdown phase. Then there’s a third phase of revival where the milestones have been hit faster but with one exception, which is recent. The last milestone of 35,000-40,000 has taken a little longer. And why do I bring this up? What is happening in the real economy is reflected in this as well. The best phase in terms of reforms was up till about 2004. 2004-2014 was a period where we actually did not undertake many structural reforms. In the chapter on pro-business versus pro-crony, if you look at the Transparency International ranking, the perception of corruption had reached its peak in 2011. If you also look at the returns that “connected” companies generated vis-a-vis the BSE Sensex that was far higher till 2011 and after that, they have been losing a lot of value.

On protectionist measures

It’s important to understand the nuance here. There is a distinction between duties on finished goods and duties on raw materials and intermediaries. When duties on intermediaries and raw materials are increased, it increases the cost of production and makes domestic firms less competitive. But finished goods are a different matter.



Yatin Shah, Co-Founder & Executive Director, IIFL Wealth Management



Neelkanth Mishra, Co-head, Asia Pacific Strategy and India Equity Strategist for Credit Suisse



Navneet Munot, Executive Director and Chief Investment Officer, SBI Mutual Fund



Mukund Rajan, Chairman, ECube Investment Advisors Private Limited



Sajjid Chinoy, Chief India Economist, JPMorgan



Vallabh Bhansali, Co-Founder Chairman, Enam Group



Neel Raheja, Group President, K Raheja Corporation



Ashok Advani, Chairman-Publisher, Business India



Maharashtra ATS Chief Deven Bharti



Vishad Padmanabh Mafatlal, Executive Chairman, Navin Fluorine International Ltd. and Managing Director, Mafatlal Denim Ltd



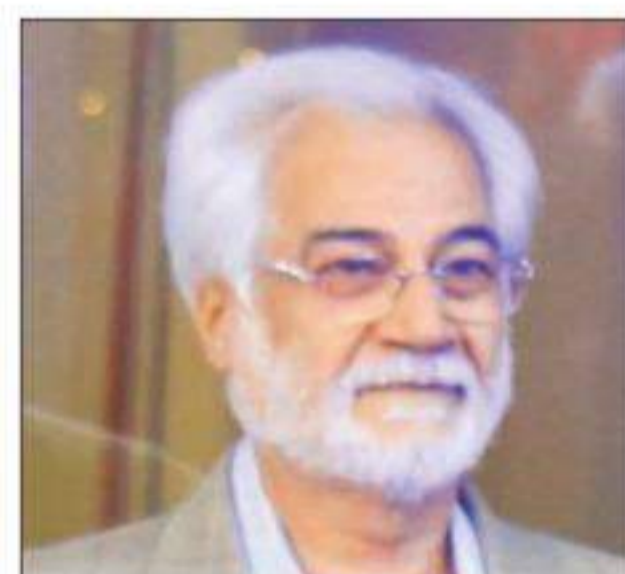
The audience at Express Adda, which was held at Express Towers, Nariman Point



George Varghese, Chief Executive Officer, The Indian Express Group, presents Krishnamurthy V Subramanian a portrait by *The Indian Express* illustrator Suvajit Dey



Somasekhar Sundaresan, Advocate, Independent Legal Counsel



Rajesh Chaturvedi, Chairman, Adfactors PR



Vivek Jain, Managing Director, DCW Ltd



Rama Bijapurkar, Management consultant



Bharatiya Janata Party's Mumbai spokesperson Shaina NC

VOICE BANK



SUBHADIP DUTTA CHOUDHURY

VICE CHAIRMAN-MANAGING DIRECTOR, HAWKINS COOKERS LIMITED

You talk about the invisible hand of the market, I think in India the biggest invisible hand is of the inspector. It doesn't show up in the GDP, but the inspector controls the production.

For me, basically the invisible hands of the market means that many of these visible or invisible hands of the state are slowly withdrawing. The invisible hand of the market subsumes removing visible or invisible hands or inspectors or otherwise or the licences. That's what we have advocated in the Economic Survey, that we really need to remove these obstacles to the economic activity and thereby see a thousand flowers bloom.



PRADIP SHAH

FOUNDER, CRISIL

Look at the budget. They have put tax collection at source, tax deduction at source, whether it is for e-commerce transactions or sales of more than 50 lakh, it is humongous bureaucratic work on businesses.

What we need is this distinction between law making for the deviant versus law making for the average. The best way to go about it is to keep the regulation as simple as possible for the average and use supervision to take care of the deviant. Same is with law making as well, make the law for the average and use law enforcement to take care of the deviant... There is scope of improvement there.



AJIT GULABCHAND

CHAIRMAN AND MANAGING DIRECTOR, HINDUSTAN CONSTRUCTION CO. LTD

I am from the infrastructure sector and government does not pay, sometimes for 10 years. If you don't pay, how do you pay back the banks? You said that this is cyclical. Does that mean stand and stare?

I think economists never say that it is a business cycle phenomenon, that you actually stand and stare. What economists say is recognise it for what it is and provide the counter cyclical stimulus, don't panic. It is important to recognise that in Economic Surveys, especially this year's, when they make a leap of faith, the implementation of that faith will happen overtime. Young people are impatient, I am impatient, but at the same time, one needs to temper that with wisdom, especially when one is entrusted with responsibility like this, to keep at it and saying that incrementally this will happen.



JASPAL BINDRA

CHAIRMAN, CENTRUM GROUP

How do you see the high savings rate and the higher consumption rate play out in a system where there is no social security?

When you invest, you actually consume less. For instance, when you look at China, as its per capita GDP kept decreasing, it kept investing more, and consuming less, because it was actually exporting far more. If domestically, you are consuming less goods that you are producing, you need the foreign market. Increase in wages and exports increases savings in economy as well. Savings are also driven significantly by the demographics of the population. At the micro level, savings earlier were not as much. But now, with emphasis on pension schemes, there is a move to provide greater social security.



HEMENDRA KOTHARI

CHAIRMAN, DSP BLACKROCK

There is nothing for the long-term investors or for dividend distribution tax, which is at 43 per cent. You are right about capital markets because we have to raise the equity, locally and internationally.

About Long Term Capital Gains (LTCG), one of the concerns was that sometimes the government is also accused of too much of flip-flop. The LTCG was introduced just a couple of years back, so removing it would also be a flip-flop. The classical method of Dividend Distribution Tax is what we have now and this prevails across a lot of countries, which means taxing it at the level of the investor. The earlier method of taxing was at the level of the entity and that's not how other countries do it.

On the government's slow response to slowdown

Even before budget, between July 2019 and February 1 this year, a bunch of measures were announced. In this delicate balance between fiscal prudence and providing a stimulus, the Survey had said lean on growth, but not put all the weight on growth. Why? Because if you go back and look at 2010-11 and the taper tantrum that followed in 2013, the fiscal deficit increased to 6.7 per cent of GDP. One of the key aspects is macroeconomic stability, which has to be non-negotiable. The budget has remained within the constraints set by the FRBM Act. It has taken that 50 basis points space that was provided by the FRBM Act of this year and the next year. Take the Rs 22,000 crore that was given to NIIIF and IIFCL, these are capital infusions into infrastructure companies which typically lever at one is to ten, that translates into Rs 2.2 lakh crore, which is one per cent of the GDP. This is also a stimulus. Apart from that, there were set of measures that were announced, the 16-point agenda, for the rural areas. Why? Because if one looks at the pattern of inflation, look at urban versus rural inflation, the rural inflation actually has been stagnant. So, the prognosis was that investing in the rural sector, the bang for the buck for the stimulus will be much greater. Also, if you look at the tax rate cut, it's for people who earn less than Rs 15 lakh. Why? Because of the marginal propensity to consume. When you put all this together, what the budget has actually accomplished is providing the necessary fiscal stimulus without basically throwing caution to the winds on fiscal prudence.

On trust deficit

In the financial sector, there is an overhang from some of the excesses that happened. For instance, in the Economic Survey we have shown that if one looked at the financial statements of the large borrowers, even if you go as early as 2012, the financial statements of these large defaulters were far inferior quality than the average firm. When you contrast a willful defaulter with let's say a distress defaulter, an important distinction is about the lack of willingness to pay versus the distress defaulter's lack of ability to pay. What stands out in the data this first time

Ancient wisdom has always emphasised wealth and wealth creation, rather than thinking about it as a necessary evil... we have had it for a long time. That's what led to the dominance of the Indian economy

is that the disclosure of related-party transaction is far lower for willful defaulters. The skin in the game of the promoter as proxies by the extent of pledging of shares is much higher, so skin in the game is lower. The use of loans given by banks, inter-party loans, is actually much higher. These are the aspects that actually speak to the trust element.

On disinvestment and privatisation

In recent times, the big change is the privatisation of Bharat Petroleum, which signals an important change in the stance of policy making, that being that the private sector on average is far more efficient than the public sector and that is something economists like me have always been saying. So rather than, either not doing any privatisation at all, taking a vacation or privatising just for meeting fiscal deficit targets, I think when privatisation is being done to cede space to the private sector and thereby enhance efficiency in the economy, I think that is a sign that some important economic principles that people like us adhere to are actually being heard and implemented as well. There is one more progressive theme that has been very well received, which is that government should not intervene till necessary in the economy. But globally we are seeing a trend of protectionism, of welfare kind of attitude. Back in India, states are competing to see who can be more welfare oriented; progressively, budgets are welfare oriented.

On ancient wisdom and economics

If you read *Tirukkural* or *Arthashastra*, you will find that the departure into socialism was actually the exception. Ancient wisdom has always emphasised wealth and wealth creation, rather than thinking about it as a necessary evil. For instance, many of us would have heard about the saying *Dharm, Arth, Kaam, Moksha*, the four noble human pursuits. *Arth* is actually about material wealth and that's what the *Tirukkural*, which is written in one of the oldest languages known to mankind, says, which is basically wealth is like that lamp that goes to distant lands and at its master's command dispels the darkness – the darkness of poverty. In fact, *Tirukkural* also talks about how there is no better tool than to destroy the pride of your enemy by becoming wealthy. So ethical wealth creation being regarded as a noble pursuit and the combination of the invisible hand of the markets and the hand of trust is something that has been there. The reason I point this out is something that is consistent with wisdom that we have had for a long time, which by the way is important. That's what led to the dominance of the Indian economy.

In recent times, the big change is the privatisation of Bharat Petroleum, which signals an important change in the stance of policy making, that being that the private sector on average is far more efficient than the public sector and that is something economists like me have always been saying

On whether he would like to write a textbook

Not much... but the serious point is that every nation has its myths, and its mythologies are often reflected and some of them come out of their school textbooks... Then there are certain parts of the world like India or Israel-Palestine, where history is so politicised that textbooks get rewritten depending on who's in government.

On their priority for next two years

The first set of measures, we should look at all those laws that are anachronistic because they were implemented at a time when the economy was very different. What we need to recognise is that when the government intervenes, the trade-off is between market failure and state failure. Many times, when laws have outlived their existence, state failure can actually be greater than market failure.

For instance, what we have shown is the raids which are conducted as part of the Essential Commodities Act have no co-relation with changes in prices. So, we have an infrastructure that basically implements an Act that seems to have no effect on consumer welfare or overall welfare.

The second, a lot more steps on ease of doing business. We have certainly made significant strides, so we have moved from being 142 in 2014, in terms of the ease of doing business rankings to 63, but we have to make further progress.

The third, which is very critical for me is the financial sector and within that, while in policy making discussions we often mention that we need to develop bond markets. Undeniably, we need to do that. But, if we look at the banking sector, it is really sub-scale. I am going to give you some facts pointed out in the Economic Survey. So, if you, for instance, go and look at the last 50-70 years, take any of the top five economies, they have all been supported by proportionate banking sectors. Even if we look in terms of credit penetration, which is measured by the private credit to GDP, there also we are a significant outlier on the negative side. The private credit to GDP should be about 80 per cent greater than what it is.

