

## MANY EXPRESS CONCERN OVER ECONOMIC IMPACT

# SAARC leaders discuss virus fightback plan, India proposes emergency fund

Pak raises J&K, says 'lockdown must be lifted immediately'

SHUBHAJIT ROY  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

IN AN unprecedented initiative, as SAARC leaders held a summit via video-conference to discuss the way forward to fight the coronavirus pandemic, India on Sunday proposed creation of a COVID-19 emergency fund, for which it committed "an initial offer of US\$ 10 million".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who initiated the idea of holding a summit via video-conference, was joined by Sri Lanka President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Maldives President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, Bhutan Prime Minister Lotay Tshering, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani and Pakistan Prime Minister's Special Assistant on Health Zafar Mirza.

During the hour-and-a-half-long summit, many of the

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## Rajasthan: Italian couple who got anti-HIV drugs test COVID-negative

HAMZA KHAN & ABANTIKA GHOSH  
JAIPUR, NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

TWO ITALIAN tourists — a 69-year-old man and his 70-year-old wife — who were administered the Lopinavir/ Ritonavir combination, usually a second-line HIV medication, after they tested positive for COVID-19 in Jaipur earlier this month, have



Workers line up the luggage of Indians who were airlifted from Italy, at the airport in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

## Highest single-day jump in new cases, over 450 airlifted from Iran and Italy

ABANTIKA GHOSH  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

WITH 26 NEW novel coronavirus (COVID-19) cases being reported on Sunday — the biggest single-day rise so far — the total number of positive cases jumped to 110, including 17 foreign nationals.

While 13 people have recovered,

two have died. Of the new cases, 18 were reported from Maharashtra, 2 from Telangana, 3 from Kerala and 1 each from Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. At 32, Maharashtra has now overtaken Kerala (22) as the state with the highest number of cases.

The health ministry clarified that a 71-year-old man from Maharashtra's Buldhana, who

was admitted to a private hospital and died on Saturday, tested negative for coronavirus infection. He had returned from Saudi Arabia recently and had diabetes and high blood pressure.

With the World Health Organisation (WHO) declaring COVID-19 a pandemic, over 4,000 people who had come in contact with the positive cases have been

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INSIDE



ITALY RECORDS 368 DEATHS IN ONE DAY, TOTAL TOLL 1,809

TRUMP TESTS NEGATIVE FOR CORONAVIRUS

VIRUS TESTING IN INDIA, ELSEWHERE

DAUGHTER OF KARNATAKA MAN WHO DIED TESTS POSITIVE

PAGES 4, 7, 9, 13



Congress MLAs returned from Jaipur to Bhopal on Sunday. PTI

## MP Speaker defiant on floor test, says virus bigger worry

MILIND GHATAI  
BHOHAL, MARCH 15

WITH THE Madhya Pradesh Assembly Speaker striking a defiant note, there was no clarity if the floor test ordered by the Governor would take place on Monday, the first day of the Budget Session of the Madhya Pradesh Assembly, even as the fate of the 15-month-old Kamal Nath-led Congress government hung in the balance.

In a late night letter to Chief Minister Kamal Nath on Saturday, Governor Lalji Tandon

had said that prima facie he was convinced that the Congress government was in minority and to "protect democratic principles", Nath must win the trust of the House immediately after the Governor's address on Monday. "The proceedings will begin on Monday and in every circumstance will not be cancelled, delayed or suspended," the Governor said while asking that voting should be by division, not

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RELATED REPORT  
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## Gujarat: 4 Cong MLAs resign ahead of RS polls, 41 sent to Jaipur resort

VAIBHAV JHA, KAMAAL SAIYED, GOPAL KATESHIYA  
AHMEDABAD, SURAT, RAJKOT, MARCH 15

FOUR GUJARAT Congress MLAs tendered their resignation to the Assembly Speaker on Saturday, triggering panic in the party ahead of the March 26 election to four Rajya Sabha seats from the state. One more MLA was reported to have gone "unreachable" since Sunday morning, leading to speculation that he too has joined the rebels.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Speaker Rajendra Trivedi con-

firmed that he had accepted the resignations of four MLAs of the Opposition party. Trivedi, however, refused to share their names, saying he would do so only in the House.

According to sources, the four MLAs who resigned are Soma Patel from Surendranagar, J V Kakadiya from Dhari, Mangal Gavit from Dang and Pradhyumansinh Jadeja from Abdasa.

Sources in the Congress said they were suspicious when Mangal Gavit, a two-time Congress MLA from Dang in South Gujarat, left Gandhinagar for Dang during the ongoing

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## Reading of Faiz poem 'unsuitable to time, place': IIT-K panel

RITIKA CHOPRA  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

THE RECITATION of Faiz Ahmad Faiz's poem by students protesting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) on campus last year was "unsuitable to the time and place", a committee set up by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Kanpur has concluded.

It has also found the role of five teachers and six students, who participated in the protest, "to be less than desirable" and recommended that the institute should "counsel" them.

The six-member committee was set up by the institute to look into a complaint against a students' demonstration on December 17, where Faiz's poem, 'Hum Dekhenge', was read to express solidarity with students of Jamia Millia Islamia, who were beaten up by Delhi Police during a protest against the amended citizenship law.

The complaint by Vashi Mant Sharma, a temporary teacher at IIT-Kanpur, claimed the poem hurts his religious sentiments. The complaint was provoked by the reading of two lines from the poem: "Jab arz-e-Khuda ke Ka'abe se, sab buutt uthwaaye jaayenge/Hum ahl-e-safa mardood-e-haram, masnad pe bithaaye jaayenge/Sab taaj ucha haley jaayenge, sab takht giraaye jaayenge", roughly translated as, "From the abode of God, when the icons of falsehood will be removed/ When we, the faithful, who have been barred from

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THE GOVERNANCE PAGE  
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There shouldn't be a cap on withdrawal of ministerial statements.  
TELANGANA: 22% RISE IN INSTITUTIONAL DELIVERIES  
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BUSINESS AS USUAL  
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There shouldn't be a cap on withdrawal of ministerial statements.

## UP property damage ordinance: Tribunal can hear ex-parte, can't be questioned

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

APURVA VISHWANATH & MAULSHREE SETH  
NEW DELHI, LUCKNOW, MARCH 15

UNDER THE new Uttar Pradesh Recovery of Damage to Public and Private Property Ordinance promulgated by Governor Anandiben Patel on Sunday, sweeping powers have been granted to a new claims tribunal, including on collecting compensation ex-parte if required, that is, without hearing the individual who is accused of vandalism. Further, the ordinance states that the award of compensation made by the tribunal will be final and cannot be appealed against before any civil court.

The ordinance makes provi-

EXPLAINED  
Law may face SC test

THE TIMING of the ordinance is significant as it was promulgated four days after the SC refused to stay the Allahabad HC's order, and a day before the HC's deadline for removing the state government's name-and-shame posters of alleged rioters. What remains to be seen is whether the state's decision will pass the SC test.

sions for the setting up of claims tribunals, one or more, to "investigate the damage caused (during protests) and to award

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WEB EXCLUSIVE

SHUTTING SCHOOLS TO CANCELLATIONS: HOW STATES ARE TACKLING OUTBREAK

Various states have gone into a virtual shutdown while many, including Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Odisha, Uttarakhand have closed schools, colleges, and movie theatres

VIDEO OF THE DAY



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ENTERTAINMENT



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EXPRESS AUDIO

Former IMA president answers our coronavirus questions

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

In today's episode of the 3 Things podcast, we clear our doubts and queries about the coronavirus with Dr K K Aggarwal

FROM PAGE ONE

Anti-HIV drugs

Earlier, Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan told The Indian Express that India had, for the first time, used the Lopinavir/Ritonavir combination in the treatment of the two Italian patients. State health officials said on Sunday that the antiviral drugs were administered to the 85-year-old also.

The decision was taken after their conditions took a turn for the worse, and also keeping in mind the higher mortality risks associated with older people, said officials. Due procedure was followed, including obtaining the consent of patients.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) had earlier obtained permission for "restricted use" of the drug combination in the event of a COVID-related "public health emergency" in the country. China is also conducting a 199-subject trial on the efficacy of the drugs.

Senior ICMR officials cautioned that the results in Rajasthan cannot be interpreted as proof of efficacy of the drugs. "We will wait for the results of the larger trial in China," said Dr R R Gangakhedhar, head of epidemiology and communicable diseases.

While 10 others have recovered and been discharged from hospitals across the country so far, none of them were administered the antiviral drugs.

The Italian man had tested positive on March 3 while his wife tested positive the next day. They were both quarantined at the Infectious Diseases Hospital, under the government-run Sawai Man Singh (SMS) Hospital here. "I want to salute my colleagues, physicians, anesthetists, paramedics, resident and nursing staff who have been an integral part of this achievement," said SMS Hospital principal Sudhir Bhandari.

"Happy to share, 3 corona patients including 2 senior citizens with comorbid issues at SMS hospital, have been treated successfully and their test reports are now negative. My heartfelt compliments to SMS doctors and staff for their commendable and dedicated service in treating corona patients," tweeted Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot.

With this, Rajasthan now has only one COVID-positive patient - a 24-year-old with travel history to Spain.

Kerala: UK man

after the tourist was found to be infected, the flight was later cleared for take-off with 270 passengers.

State Health Minister K K Shailaja said the tourists had left the resort, a Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC) undertaking, without informing the health officials, and a report has been sought from the Idukki district collector.

"The UK citizen tested positive on Saturday late night. When the health workers reached the resort in Munnar with an ambulance to shift him to hospital, he, along with others, had left the resort. The resort authorities should have been more vigilant and they should have obtained the permission of the health department before allowing the tourists to move out," she said.

Idukki District Collector H Dinesh said the health workers had met the UK national at the resort on Saturday night and advised him to stay back. "The test results came late night, and the entire group had left. The resort manager did not inform the district administration or health department. The health officials learnt that the tourist was missing only this morning, when they went to the resort to isolate him. It is a grave lapse on the part of the resort manager. Action will be taken as per the directions of the government, which has sought a

report," he said, adding that the resort manager has been taken into custody.

On Sunday morning, at 8.45 am, the Ernakulam district administration got an alert from officials in Idukki that the UK citizen had tested positive, but fled the resort and was scheduled to board the Dubai-bound Emirates flights at 9 am. The airport authorities were informed, and all passengers of the flight were off-loaded.

All the airport staff and CISF personnel, who came in contact with the UK citizen, were identified and advised home quarantine. The airport area and aerobics were disinfected.

The incident has triggered panic in Munnar, where tourists have begun to vacate hotels and resorts. The district collector has ordered the closure of all resorts till March 31. The staff at the resort where the UK citizen stayed have been put under observation, and steps have been taken to identify those who came in contact with the tourists in the state.

The UK national arrived in Kochi on March 6, and stayed at a hotel for two days before going to Thirissur. He reached Munnar on March 10, with suspected symptoms of COVID-19. The next day, he was taken to a hospital in Kottayam for sample collection, after which he returned to the resort in Munnar. On March 12, the resort allowed him to go out, but he was asked to remain under observation.

Meanwhile, a doctor from Thiruvananthapuram, who returned from Spain, also tested positive on Sunday.

"We had set up an Integrated Disease Surveillance Portal to better trace possible virus carriers and the people they contacted. We could share this disease surveillance software with SAARC partners, and training on using this," he said.

"Looking ahead, we could create a common research platform, to coordinate research on

MP Speaker

by a voice vote, and must be recorded by engaging an independent videographer. Speaker N P Prajapati on Sunday, however, dubbed as "hypothetical" a question on whether the trust vote would take place on Monday, and added he would reveal only on Monday if the Governor has the power to order a floor test. "I am more concerned about the spread of coronavirus," he said, after asserting, "Kalpanik sawal hai, trust vote hoga ki nahi (Whether the trust vote will happen or not is a hypothetical question). Only tomorrow will I spell out whether the Governor can order a floor test."

Late Sunday evening, the Vidhan Sabha secretariat issued Monday's list of business, mentioning only the Governor's address and the motion of thanks to the Governor's address, with no word on the trust vote.

The Speaker's reply came amid speculation that the Congress government would use the coronavirus spread to avoid or postpone the trust vote despite repeated demands by the Opposition BJP and the Governor's letter to the CM. The letter was issued around midnight, hours after a BJP delegation, including former CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan and leader of Opposition Gopal Bhargava, called on him with a request to ensure that the Congress government does not use any "excuse" to avoid taking the floor test.

Around midnight, CM Nath met the Governor and while leaving Raj Bhavan, told the media that they discussed how the Assembly could function peacefully. He said he would meet the Speaker on Monday morning to discuss the peaceful conduct of the House. However, when asked about floor test, he said he was ready for one but stayed non-committal, saying the Speaker would take a call on it.

Earlier, while addressing the Congress legislative party meeting at his residence, CM Nath said, "We will emerge victorious from this challenge created immorally and unconstitutionally by the BJP. We are together and our morale to protect democratic values is high." Nath chaired a Cabinet meet-

SAARC leaders discuss virus fightback

leaders expressed concern over the economic impact and called for a strategy to deal with the aftermath.

While the SAARC region has reported 174 cases so far, including 107 in India, the region accounts for one-fifth of the world's population, is densely populated and doesn't have robust public health infrastructure.

"It is clear that we have to work together. We can respond best by coming together not growing apart, collaboration not confusion, preparation not panic," said Modi. "I propose that we create a COVID-19 emergency fund. This could be based on voluntary contributions from all of us. India can start with an initial offer of US\$ 10 million for this fund. Any of us can use the fund to meet the cost of immediate actions. Our foreign secretaries, through our embassies, can coordinate quickly to finalise the concept of this fund and its operations," he said.

"We are assembling a rapid response team of doctors and specialists in India, along with testing kits and other equipment. They will be on stand-by, to be placed at your disposal, if required," he said. "We can also quickly arrange online training capsules for your emergency response teams. This will be based on the model we have used in our own country, to raise the capacity of all our emergency staff," Modi said.

"We need to take a proactive approach. We should not wait for emergencies to happen and outbreaks to take place and then start our preparations," said Mirza, as he backed the proposal on holding a SAARC health ministers' conference at an appropriate time.

Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani, while sharing his

controlling epidemic diseases within our South Asian region. The Indian Council of Medical Research can offer help coordinating such an exercise," he said. "We can also ask our experts to brainstorm on the longer-term economic consequences of COVID-19, and how we can insulate our internal trade and our local value chains from its impact," he said.

Modi said the "nodal experts" from all the countries can hold a video-conference a week later to follow up on the suggestions. Meanwhile, Pakistan's Zafar Mirza took the opportunity to score political points, as he raised the issue of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) in his final remarks. He said it was a "matter of concern" that coronavirus cases had been reported from J&K. "In view of the health emergency, it is imperative that all lockdown in the disputed territory must be lifted immediately, opening up communications and movement would facilitate dissemination of information, and allow distribution of medical supplies and enable containment and relief efforts to proceed," said Mirza, who has worked as a deputy director (health systems) at the World Health Organisation.

Indian government sources said Pakistan was trying to "politicise" a humanitarian issue. "We need to take a proactive approach. We should not wait for emergencies to happen and outbreaks to take place and then start our preparations," said Mirza, as he backed the proposal on holding a SAARC health ministers' conference at an appropriate time.

Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani, while sharing his

Highest single-day jump, over 450 airlifted

identified through contact tracing and are being tracked, while 42,000 people across the country are under community surveillance.

Meanwhile, over 450 stranded Indians were airlifted from Italy and Iran, the two worst affected countries after China, and quarantined. While 218 Indians, mostly students, from Milan landed at the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) in Delhi and were taken to an ITBP quarantine facility in south-west Delhi's Chhawla area, another 234 Indians from Iran, who first reached New Delhi, were quarantined at the Indian Army Wellness Centre in Jaisalmer.

"218 Indians including 211

students from Milan landed in Delhi. All will be quarantined for 14 days. GoI is committed to reach out to Indians in distress, wherever they are. Appreciate Govt. of Italy for their support and team. These evacuees are quarantined at the ITBP camp at Chhawla, as per protocol," tweeted Minister of State, External Affairs, V Muraedharan.

"234 Indians stranded in Iran have arrived in India; including 131 students and 103 pilgrims," tweeted External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

Those who were airlifted were tested prior to their departure, and are reported to be asymptomatic at present.

Enforcing social distancing

ing in the afternoon on coronavirus but did not take any call on a plea to either postpone or cancel the scheduled Assembly session.

Governor Tandon shot off another letter to the CM on Sunday, saying votes during the floor test should be recorded only by raising of hands because the electronic voting system in the state assembly is not functional. The governor's letter followed a plea to that effect by the Opposition BJP. BJP sources did not rule out party approaching the courts to demand a floor test at the earliest. "Yes, court is one of the options before us if they don't carry out a floor test at the earliest," said a BJP source in Delhi.

While maintaining he was confident that his 15-month-old government would sail through when the floor test happens, the CM on Sunday said the decision on a trust vote was the Speaker's prerogative.

On Sunday, the ruling Congress legislators, who had been taken to Jaipur a few days ago, returned to Bhopal and were taken to a hotel, closer to the Vidhan Sabha premises. They were examined by doctors and were slated to reach the CM House for a Congress legislative party meeting.

The BJP's legislators, who have been taken to Gurugram, and the 22 rebel Congress legislators and Congress-turned-BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia's loyalists, who are believed to be in Bengaluru, are yet to reach Bhopal. The Speaker had asked the rebel legislators, who had sent in their resignations through a former BJP minister, to appear before him by Sunday to let him verify if they had resigned voluntarily or under duress. None of them turned up. On Saturday, he accepted the resignations of six legislators, who were ministers in

views on the "unknown territory" the world now finds itself in and the need for a common cooperative framework, suggested creating a model framework for telemedicine, ensuring availability of medicines, SAARC satellite for tele-education, and asked India to coordinate between SCO and SAARC to learn from China's experience. He also pointed out how Afghanistan was affected due to its border with Iran.

Maldives President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih said tourist arrivals had already dropped by over 20%, and the figure was expected to go up to 35%. "There is a profound need to formulate an economic relief package targeted for the affected countries. A comprehensive regional strategy to fight COVID-19 should include long-term recovery plan for the region," he said.

Sri Lanka President Gotabaya Rajapaksa also recounted the measures taken by his government, which included cancelling visa on arrivals and closing down educational institutions. But, as an economy dependent on tourism from European countries, he said, "I strongly recommend SAARC leaders to formulate a mechanism to assist our economies to tide over this very difficult period."

Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina said all SAARC countries "need to cooperate and collaborate closely to fight this enemy". "We are ready to share our capacity and expertise, as well as the best practice, including providing logistics support, if required, to continue this dialogue at technical levels or health ministers," she said.

Nepal PM K P Sharma Oli said it was a "timely and important" decision to gather all

SAARC leaders. And, while recalling steps taken in Nepal, including cancellation of all mountaineering expeditions, he said: "We may encourage medical centres, research institutions and health workers in the region to build a good network for sharing experiences, research findings and best practices which are critically associated with the prevention and treatment of this deadly disease." He also said they "need to ensure a smooth supply of essential medicines" and protective equipment in the region.

Bhutan Prime Minister Lotay Tshering, who is a trained doctor himself, said it was an "uphill task". "Aftermath of this disease will also affect the smaller and vulnerable economies more badly than the better ones. So, as we fight and as we try to contain this disease, we are also concerned about the economic outcomes of this disease."

"We should evolve common SAARC pandemic protocols which can be applied on all our borders as well as within our borders in such situations. This can help to prevent such infections from spreading across our region, and allow us to keep our internal movements free," Modi said.

This was the first time SAARC leaders met over video conference, after the SAARC summit in Kathmandu in 2014.

India had abandoned the SAARC as a concept after the terror attacks in Pathankot and Uri in 2016, and — along with others like Afghanistan and 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.

Next, Indo-Bhutan and Indo-Myanmar borders, barring a few specified border checkpoints.

Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy said all paramilitary forces, including the CRPF, ITBP and BSF, have been advised to keep ready quarantine camps for COVID-19 suspects as a preparatory measure.

The Mumbai Police clamped prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPC to stop tour operators from conducting any kind of group tours to foreign or domestic destinations till March 31. Elections to rural and urban local bodies in Andhra Pradesh have been put off for six weeks by the State Election Commission.

said that later that night, around 10 pm, when Vansda Congress MLA Anant Patel, accompanied by party workers, reached Gavit's house, they found his car parked outside his house. While his son said they Gavit had gone out, when they called on his mobile phone, they found it switched off.

During the last Rajya Sabha elections in 2017, Gavit had nearly crossed over to the BJP side but Congress leaders had taken him to the house of former Union minister Tushar Chaudhary in Vyara. Another Congress MLA, Pravin Maru, from Gadgha in Botad, allegedly went "unreachable" on Sunday.

"I tried contacting him on phone around 2 pm but his mobile phone is out of network coverage. We do not know anything else about him," said Ramesh Mer, president of the Botad district unit of the Congress. Phone calls and text messages

sent by The Indian Express to Maru went unanswered even as his personal assistant Razzak Solanki said the MLA was not resigning. "I spoke to him at 2.35pm today and told him that the media is reporting that he is resigning. He told me there is nothing like that," said Solanki.

The events in Gujarat are seen as a near-repeat of the 2017 Rajya Sabha elections, which had four candidates vying for three seats. While national party chief Amit Shah and Union minister Smriti Irani won easily, the contest in the third seat, between Congress turncoat Balwantsinh Rajput and Congress veteran Ahmed Patel, ended up as a cliff-hanger after six Congress MLAs quit. Patel eventually won by a whisker.

The Gujarat Congress rubbished reports of their four MLAs having resigned. "This is a misinformation campaign being run by the BJP to create an atmosphere of confusion ahead of the elections. How can our MLAs resign on Sunday, a holiday? None of our MLAs have resigned and they fully support us," said Manish Doshi, spokesperson, Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee (GPCC).

However, sensing trouble, the Congress had already started sending their MLAs to resorts in Jaipur. According to sources, as many as 41 Congress MLAs have been sent to Jaipur over Saturday and Sunday.

While the law specifies that criminal proceedings can be conducted parallel to the claims proceedings against the same accused, it bars any civil court from interfering with any directives of the claims tribunal.

The claims petition, as per Section 3 of the ordinance, can be initiated by a circle officer of police based on a first information report (FIR) of the incident and the ordinance allows all persons named in an FIR to be added as "respondents" for claiming compensation.

The new law clarifies that on receipt of the circle officer's report, the district magistrate or commissioner of police will take immediate step to file a "claims petition". This will have to be done, preferably within the period of three months, the ordinance says.

While district collector or commissioner will review the claims cases every quarter and send their report to the government, private property owners, whose property has been damaged during the protests, can also file complaints for compensation.

Under Section 13 of the ordinance, if the respondent "fails to appear", then the tribunal "shall proceed ex-parte and the tribunal shall attach property and direct the authorities to publish the name, address along with a photograph with a warning to public at large, not to purchase the property of the respondent".

The ordinance also gives the authorities the power to publish such information. While setting a deadline of March 16 for the hearings to be taken down, the Allahabad High Court had said, "In the present case, the cause is not about personal injury caused to the persons whose personal details are given in the banner but the injury caused to the precious constitutional value and its shameless depiction by the administration."

When the state government hurriedly moved the Supreme Court against the High Court ruling, the top court had also questioned if such banners can be put up without any law allowing the state power to do so.

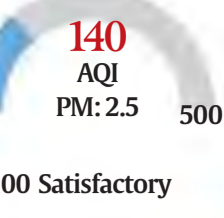


# 3 THE CITY

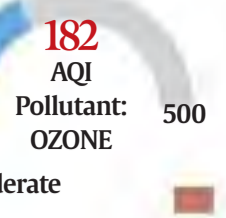


0-50 Good

ANAND VIHAR  
Moderate



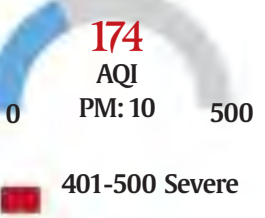
SIRIFORT  
Moderate



SHADIPUR  
Satisfactory



DWARKA-SECTOR 8  
Moderate



**WEEK-LONG SURVEY**

## Delhi govt to study impact of its welfare policies on people

**SOURAV ROY BARMAN**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

FRESH FROM a victory powered largely by a host of welfare policies, the AAP government has initiated a study on the impact of its subsidy-driven governance model on the lives of people, observing that there is “no consolidated data” on the “actual impact” of the schemes.



The govt said there is “no consolidated data” yet on the actual, cumulative impact of its welfare policies. Archive

A third-party agency will carry out the study titled ‘Impact of subsidies of the Delhi government on the socio-economic status of citizens and the local economy’ under the supervision of the government, according to official records accessed by *The Indian Express*.

“The Delhi government, since 2015, has provided subsidies to the citizens of Delhi in the domains of healthcare, education, access to clean drinking water, electricity and women safety. Though there are ground reports of these subsidies making a significant impact on the quality of life of the citizens, there is no consolidated data on the actual impact made on the socio-economic lives of the people. The government will study the cumulative effect of all subsidies on the socio-economic life of the citizens of Delhi as well as on the local economy,” states the objective of the survey.

Incidentally, the annual budget of the government,

where the next set of allocations will be made for the schemes, is expected to be presented within two weeks.

According to a sample form for the survey, respondents will be asked if they have benefited from reduced or zero electricity bills; water bills; free bus rides for women; free public education; and free or reduced cost of treatment in government hospitals in the past three months.

Once the study begins, a team comprising 22 surveyors aim to cover 3,300 households within a week. The households will be picked based on random sampling of those that received zero electricity bills, with the idea being that a household consuming less than 200 units of electricity would be of moderate earnings.

“And that would be the ones that avail most of the subsidies

provided by the government. A questionnaire-based door-to-door survey would then be carried out, with questions on the spending and saving habits of working men, working women and the household in general,” states the document.

At least 300 households — from unauthorised colonies, JJ clusters, resettlement colonies, bungalows as well as planned housing colonies — will be surveyed from each of the 11 districts of the national capital.

The government’s annual average allotment for the power subsidy scheme since 2015 has been around Rs 1,574 crore. After the introduction of the zero bills scheme, the subsidy bill rose to Rs 2,255 crore in 2019-20. The free rides scheme for women in buses cost the government around Rs 140 crore in the 2019-20 financial year.

## 2 weeks on, some NE Delhi residents install large iron gates to feel safer

**JIGNASA SINHA**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

OVER TWO weeks after riots broke out in several areas of Northeast Delhi, residents are trying to rebuild their lives and homes, but many remain wary of a repeat of the violence. As a result, in Shiv Vihar and Brijpuri, many have decided to “guard” their colonies and lanes by putting up large iron gates. The idea, residents said, is to ensure their homes and property remain safe in the future.



Residents said the idea is to ensure that their homes and properties remain safe in the future

“We don’t want to feel unsafe like we did last month. The violence and destruction was horrifying. We will put up gates at the end of the lane to guard ourselves against future riots or clashes. It will prevent outsiders from com-

ing here and burning down our homes,” said Pankaj Sharma (40), a resident of Brijpuri’s Block-A, while waiting for workers to install an iron gate at the end of his lane. While 53 people were killed in the clashes, Brijpuri saw a mosque and Arun Model Public School being set on fire while

dozens of shops were looted.

Mohd Irfan, who lives in Brijpuri’s Block-B, said, “We fled our homes on February 23. When we returned, we saw our shops had been set ablaze and our homes looted. On March 4, we decided to erect a gate at the end of the lane. We created a WhatsApp group and over 100 families pitched in to provide funds and we managed to collect Rs 25,000. We will also try to collect money for CCTV cameras. Mobs won’t be able to jump the gates because we are planning to put iron spikes on top.” He added that neighbouring colonies too have installed gates.

Another resident, Prem Pal, said, “I was inside my shop when a mob entered the area, destroyed streetlights and threw petrol bombs inside houses and shops. It

was difficult to keep the mob away from our houses as anyone can come here. My family and I had to stay at a friend’s house for a week. Though there are police teams in the area today, they won’t stay here forever. In their absence, anything can happen. It’s important to keep protesters and anti-national elements away from our houses.”

Residents said they didn’t approach the government for funds to set up the gates and have only applied for compensation for their looted or burnt belongings. Police said rebuilding work in most colonies started 10 days ago.

Meanwhile, police and BSF teams continue to be deployed in riot-hit areas. Burnt vehicles have been cleared from the roads and a complaint booth has been set up at the DCP office in Shahdara.

## 7 depts to shift to new OPD block at AIIMS

**ASTHA SAXENA**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

AS PART of a three-phase shifting process, the AIIMS administration will move seven departments to the new OPD building from its 50-year-old Rajkumari Amrit Kaur (RAK) OPD block. The shifting, now in its second phase, will be done on March 16. Departments such as urology, rheumatology, laboratory medicine, pulmonary medicine, anaesthesia, radiology, and hematology, will be functional from the new block from Monday.

In the second phase, part of basement 1, and the fourth and fifth floor OPD’s will start opera-

tions from Monday. The new block has three basements and nine floors divided into three wings. Basements 2 and 3 are reserved for parking of staff and patients. Basement 1 will have the radiology and laboratory services. The ground floor will have 40 registration counters and a patient cafeteria. Various clinical departments will run their OPDs from the first to seventh floors.

“The old block will be used for expanding the emergency services on the ground floor. Other floors will give more space to teaching faculty and offices will be created for them. The new block will offer all services to patients visiting AIIMS,” said a senior AIIMS official.

## Prep on for execution of Dec 16 convicts

**New Delhi:** Five days before the execution of the death-row convicts in the December 16, 2012 gangrape-murder case, Tihar Jail authorities have begun preparations for the hanging. Officials said the hangman, Pawan Jallad, has been asked to come to Tihar from Meerut on March 17, and a “dummy execution” will be conducted in the next two days to test the ropes and other equipment.

A Delhi court set the execution of the four convicts—Mukesh Kumar Singh, Pawan Gupta, Vinay Sharma and Akshay Kumar Singh— for March 20 at 5:30 am. DG (Tihar) Sandeep Goel said the jail has not received fresh pleas or petitions from the con-

victs over the weekend. The SC will Monday hear a plea from Mukesh, who claimed his lawyer Vrinda Grover didn’t inform him about the mercy petition. Vinay has also appealed to the L-G to commute the death sentence.

Jail officials said that the execution will be done in jail number 4. “Regular health check-ups are being done and they also being counselled. CCTV cameras and jail guards keep a vigil on them to check their diet and prevent any case of misconduct,” they said. The convicts are in isolated cells. While their weekly family meetings have been called off, authorities said they will arrange a last family meeting in the next three-four days. **ENS**

**BRIEFLY**

### Journalists awarded

**New Delhi:** Journalists Arfa Khanum Sherwani and Rohini Mohan jointly received the Chameli Devi Jain Award 2019 for Outstanding Woman Journalist. Sherwani, who is with *The Wire*, received the award for reporting from conflicts in Kashmir and UP, while Mohan, an independent journalist, got it for reporting on the NRC exercise in Assam.

### Cop, lawyer held for extortion

**New Delhi:** A police head constable and a lawyer were apprehended by CBI for allegedly demanding Rs 1 lakh from a man, said police. The officer was the IO in a robbery case in which the complainant was found accused.

### Man kills friend, held

**New Delhi:** A 34-year-old man was arrested for allegedly killing his friend in South Delhi’s Yusuf Sarai.

### Man poses with pistol, arrested

**New Delhi:** A 19-year-old man was arrested for allegedly posing a picture of himself posing with a pistol on social media in Ambedkar Nagar. **ENS**

## Facial recognition tech helps cops nab 2 women pickpocketers

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

DELHI POLICE busted an interstate pickpocket gang with the arrest of three people, including two women, who would allegedly commit thefts near banks and malls in Delhi and Gurgaon. The third accused, an auto driver, ferried them to the locations, said police.



Nargis and Anjali allegedly carried out thefts across Delhi and Gurgaon

Police said the women, Nargis (25) and Anjali (23), hail from Madhya Pradesh’s Rajgarh and had come to Delhi six months ago. They mostly targeted women outside banks and stole money from their bags. “The women gave the stolen items to Anjali’s mother Geeta, who then went back to MP to sell it. We have sent teams to arrest her,” said a police officer.

On March 3, Rajouri Garden police station received a complaint from a woman, alleging that two women had stolen Rs 5 lakh from her bag. Police found that after the complainant withdrew money from Canara Bank, she was followed by two women to a shop. Upon viewing the CCTV footage from the shop, police saw that one of the accused distracted the complainant by talking to her, while the other woman took the money from her bag.

“The women were identified after the footage was run through facial recognition software. One of them, Anjali, was identified as she has a criminal record; we matched her details from the criminal dossier system.” Police went through footage from CCTVs near the spot. Using Google Maps, officers then traced the path taken by the accused to the bank and the route they took while fleeing.

“We found the women had fled in an auto-rickshaw. The auto was traced and the driver, Pramod Podar, was arrested,” said Purohit. Police found that Podar knew the women and would ferry them from their home to malls and banks. After they committed the crime, he would drop them to Gurgaon, and charged them Rs 2,000 per day, said police. Teams were then sent to Gurgaon and Manesar, and the women were found.

## Let teachers work from home: DU panel to V-C

**New Delhi:** Four Academic Council (AC) members of Delhi University have written to the Vice-Chancellor, asking that teachers be allowed to work from home as a precautionary measure against coronavirus, and that the semester be extended. The members — Deo Kumar, Kanchan, Rajesh Kumar and Saikat Ghosh — said while DU announced suspension of classes for students till March 31, “many principals have asked teachers to compulsorily report to their respective colleges despite suspension of classes.”

“Teachers should be allowed to work from home so that unnecessary travelling of over 10,000 citizens can further be re-

duced. To further minimise contact points, administrative offices should be maintained at a minimum, on a roster,” they stated. While DU has asked for e-resources to be made available to students, the AC members said the semester should be extended. “We’ve always maintained that online contact and e-resources can, at best, supplement regular teaching. Especially in Science, where practical classes and lab work is integral to teaching-learning, e-teaching cannot be a substitute,” they said, adding, “We urge you to consider extending the duration of the semester to cover up for lost hours of regular teaching.” V-C Yogesh Tyagi did not respond to calls and texts. **ENS**

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More details and important dates will be announced in the **DIAT Admission Brochure** which will be published on DIAT website by **17th March, 2020**.

Joint Registrar (Academics)

### JOINT CSIR-UGC NET JUNE-2020

#### PUBLIC NOTICE (16 March 2020)

The **National Testing Agency (NTA)** has been established by Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) as an independent/autonomous, self-reliant and self-sustained premier testing organization. The conduct of the Joint CSIR- UGC NET Examination has been entrusted to the NTA by CSIR, Government of India. Only bonafide Indian Citizens are eligible for the test. CSIR-UGC NET Fellowship is tenable in India.

The NTA will conduct the next Joint CSIR-UGC NET for **Junior Research Fellowship and eligibility for Lectureship (LS)/ Assistant Professor** on **21 June 2020** for following subjects:

1. Life Sciences
2. Physical Sciences
3. Chemical Sciences
4. Earth, Atmospheric, Ocean and Planetary Sciences
5. Mathematical Sciences

The Test will be conducted in two different shifts as given below:

Shift	Timing	Duration
*Shift – 1 (Morning)	09:30 am to 12:30 pm (IST)	03 hours (180 Minutes)
*Shift – 2 (Afternoon)	02:30 pm to 05:30 pm (IST)	

\*Subject(s) in a shift will be decided based on number of students.

The Test will be conducted in **Computer Based Test (CBT)** mode only.

The candidates who desire to appear in the Test may see the details in the Information Bulletin for Joint CSIR-UGC NET June 2020, which is available on the websites: [www.nta.ac.in](http://www.nta.ac.in), and [csirnet.nta.nic.in](http://csirnet.nta.nic.in) w.e.f. **16 March 2020**.

The eligible candidates may apply online between **16 March 2020 -15 April 2020 (upto 11.50 pm)**. The Application Fees can be paid up to **16 April 2020 (upto 11.50 pm)**.

Senior Director  
NTA (Joint CSIR- UGC NET)

davp 21354/11/0020/1920

### UGC NATIONAL ELIGIBILITY TEST (UGC-NET) JUNE- 2020

#### PUBLIC NOTICE (16 March 2020)

The **National Testing Agency (NTA)** has been established by Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) as an independent/ autonomous, self-reliant and self-sustained premier testing organization. The conduct of the UGC-NET examination has been entrusted to the NTA by UGC and MHRD, Government of India.

The NTA will conduct the next UGC-NET for **Junior Research Fellowship and eligibility for Assistant Professor** between **15 June - 20 June 2020**. The Test will comprise of two papers as given below:

Paper	Marks	Number of Questions (MCQ Format)	Timing of First shift	Timing of Second shift	Duration
I	100	50	09:30 am to 12:30 pm (IST)	02:30 pm to 05:30 pm (IST)	03 hours
II	200	100			

The Test will be conducted in **Computer Based Test (CBT)** mode only.

The candidates who desire to appear in the Test may see the details in the Information Bulletin for UGC-NET June 2020 which is available on the websites: [www.nta.ac.in](http://www.nta.ac.in) and [ugcnet.nta.nic.in](http://ugcnet.nta.nic.in) w.e.f. **16 March 2020**.

The eligible candidates may apply online between **16 March 2020 - 16 April 2020 (upto 11.50 pm)**. The Application Fees can be paid upto **17 April 2020 (upto 11.50 pm)**.

Senior Director  
NTA (UGC NET)

davp 21354/11/0021/1920





Indian evacuees being screened after their arrival from Milan at IGI airport, Sunday

## AT CHHAWLA

# 218 Indians evacuated from Italy reach IGI airport, quarantined at ITBP camp

SHIVAMPATEL  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

A GROUP of 218 Indian nationals evacuated from Milan in Italy reached the national capital Sunday morning and were quarantined at the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) facility in Chhawla.

Italy has recorded the highest number of coronavirus cases outside of China. An ITBP spokesperson said the evacuees comprise of 211 students and seven "compassionate cases", which includes two families, all of whom are Indian nationals.

"They arrived at the facility by 12.30 pm and had nasal swabs

taken, which would be tested for coronavirus. We would get the reports by Monday evening. We are following all protocols and are giving them the best possible care," said the spokesperson.

The evacuees are in the age group of 25 to 30 years, and include 154 men and 64 women. They boarded an Air India flight early Sunday morning from Milan and arrived at the Indira Gandhi International Airport at 9.45 am, after a nine-hour journey.

Officials said the evacuees are from northern Italian cities and towns including Milan, Venice, Bologna, Turin, Genoa, Parma and Pavia. Eleven towns and villages in North Italy's Lombardy, the re-



gion around Milan, and Veneto, which includes Venice, were earlier in a quarantined "red zone" due to the spread of coronavirus. The entire country was declared in the red zone about a week ago.

The evacuees are usually tested for Covid-19 before being airlifted. However, officials said it was not immediately clear if this particular batch was tested. An Air India official said the evacuation process adapted by the carrier was the same as in previous such operations in Wuhan, China, where the outbreak began last year.

At the ITBP facility, the evacuees are expected to be in quarantine for at least 14 days. They will have to stay indoors, but will

have access to their phones and laptops, with WiFi, indoor games and television available at the site.

They will be housed in cabins in groups of four or five with a distance of about 2 to 2.5 metres between them, and their health will be monitored every day.

Emergency arrangements have been made by the ITBP, including beds for separate isolation. The 1,000-bed facility has a medical staff of about 40 persons, including over a dozen doctors.

The facility previously quarantined 518 evacuees from Wuhan between February 1 and March 14, all of whom were discharged after they tested negative for Covid-19.

## Will spread awareness about treatment & wonderful facilities in India: 1st Covid-19 patient after recovery

ASTHA SAXENA  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

AROUND 3.30 pm on Saturday, doctors at Safdarjung Hospital informed the first patient who tested positive for the coronavirus in Delhi that he has recovered and is fit to go home. Elated to hear the news, the 45-year-old man from East Delhi packed his belongings. And by 6.30 pm, he was home.

With a travel history to Milan, Budapest and Vienna, he had tested positive for the virus along with his two brothers-in-law

who accompanied him on the trip. An exporter by profession, he had gone to attend an export fair in Italy.

On Saturday, he met his family after 14 days. His 65-year-old mother was in tears as he got out of the car. "It was an emotional moment for all of us. I was meeting my family after 14 days. The entire family was eagerly waiting for me to recover and return home," he told *The Indian Express* on Sunday. Since then, he has been receiving endless calls from family and friends who want to know about the disease, health-

care facilities and the test.

Recalling one such call, he said: "One of my very close friends wanted to know if the test conducted for the coronavirus causes pain. I explained to him about the test and the precautions too. After getting out of the hospital, I am trying to spread awareness about the disease, treatment and the wonderful health facilities we have in India."

After he tested positive, his family was advised home isolation. While he is out of the hospital, he will remain at home for the next 14 days as per the WHO

guidelines. A team of doctors have been calling him at regular intervals to enquire about his health, if he is facing any trouble in breathing or if requires any other medical intervention.

The man, who was admitted to the isolation ward, said he will try to dispel fears around remaining in isolation. "People are scared of the word 'isolation'. They should know that the space created for patients is like a one-bedroom suite. Proper hygiene guidelines are being followed... The virus is only curable if you have medical assistance," he said.

Having to spend Holi at the hospital, he recalled how he was cheered up by a call from Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan.

"He made a video call on Holi to ask about my health. It was a proud moment. I knew about him as a doctor and how he has been active in taking medical issues forward, but I never thought I would be speaking to him personally. You feel that you are in safe hands," he said, adding that the country has been able to eradicate polio and will be able to tackle coronavirus too.

## As dining out becomes scarce, food apps focus on hygiene

ASHNABUTANI  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

FROM INTRODUCING an option for customers to get their food without physical contact with the delivery executive to ensuring hygiene is maintained by all employees, online food delivery companies are taking several measures in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

Zomato, Swiggy and UberEats claim delivery executives are continually being trained in proper methods of washing hands and identification of symptoms.

In an email dated March 11, Swiggy told customers about steps being taken by them to reduce chances of contracting the virus and Zomato followed suit.

A Swiggy spokesperson said: "The delivery executive can leave the food at the door, if specified by the customer. This option is not available on cash-on-delivery."

While the companies said they are making available masks and sanitisers to employees, a delivery executive said, "We have



Swiggy said their agents will leave food at the door, if specified by the customer

been told to wear masks and use sanitisers but we have to bear the cost. Furthermore, they are not easily available these days."

An employee with Swiggy said masks have already been provided in certain areas. However, she said, because of short supply in the market, it might take longer for it to reach the other areas.

Swiggy and Zomato state that delivery partners have been advised to self-quarantine themselves in case they notice symptoms and they will be supported financially in such cases.

Similarly, Uber announced that "any driver or delivery person who is diagnosed with Covid-19 or is asked to self-isolate by a public health authority will receive financial assistance up to 14 days."

Local eateries, meanwhile, remained empty even on a Sunday afternoon. With rumours going around that coronavirus could be contracted by eating chicken, restaurants such as Karim's, famous for its chicken dishes, are facing setbacks. "Firstly, people are scared of eating chicken... Secondly, very few people are stepping out; the current footfall is less than half of normal," said Parvez Ahmed, an employee at Karim's in Preet Vihar.

Amar Jyoti in Sarojini Nagar, which serves North Indian food, has seen a 60% dip in customers over the last few weeks. "Very few people are visiting the market so fewer people are coming to the restaurant. Online orders have reduced by around 10%. We are taking steps to ensure that the food we serve is clean," said restaurant owner Surjit Singh Arora.

## Amid virus scare, several events dropped, postponed

ASHNABUTANI  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

FROM THE Lotus Makeup India Fashion Week to photo exhibitions and concerts, several cultural events have been postponed or cancelled in the national capital due to the coronavirus pandemic.

On March 13, the Delhi government had banned all sports gatherings, conferences and seminars that host over 200 people. After a number of sporting events were cancelled, organisers of cultural events, too, said health and safety is a priority for them.

The Lotus Makeup India Fashion Week, scheduled for March 11-15, has been postponed by the Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI). "Around 80 designers were supposed to showcase their work at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. Everything was ready but we decided to postpone the event for two reasons. Firstly, the safety of the fraternity is a priority. Secondly, our foreign buyers were beginning to back out. There was no point in trying to

convince them to travel because they would face problems at customs. We took the decision around March 6," said FDCI chairman Sunil Seth.

Similarly, the India International Centre has postponed all events for March and April. "Accordingly, the 13th All India Photo Exhibition scheduled from March 17-25 also stands postponed," read a statement by the IIC.

Sofar Sounds, a music event startup company, has cancelled all shows until further notice. The organisation said "safety of our artists, audiences, hosts and employees is our highest priority and first responsibility".

The Underground Talks scheduled for March 28 at India Habitat Centre also stands cancelled.

Other events in March that have been cancelled include the Nemichand Jain centenary event at Triveni Kala Sangam, The South Asian festival of Sufism, Buddhism, Bhakti and Jainism at Sahitya Akademi, Khushwant Singh Humour Fest 2020 and the Italian National Day celebrations by the Embassy of Italy.

## RML, Safdarjung at forefront of coronavirus fight

## ACROSS THE CAPITAL

	RML	Safdarjung	Total
Passengers from affected countries under observation	110	110	220
Asymptomatic passengers isolated at home	103	79	182
Symptomatic passengers hospitalised	6	25	31
Positive cases (from Delhi)	0	3	3
Total cases (from across India)	0	6	6

ASTHA SAXENA  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

AS THE country battles the coronavirus pandemic, two hospitals — Ram Manohar Lohia and Safdarjung — are at the forefront to collect samples of patients coming with symptoms. From addressing queries of concerned men and women to providing treatment to those who test positive, the Centre-run hospitals have had their hands full.

Till Sunday, as many as 219 passengers from the coronavirus-affected countries were under observation at these two hospitals — 110 at Safdarjung and 109 at RML. On Sunday, six symptomatic passengers were admitted to Safdarjung hospital and two to RML.

Doctors at both hospitals have been given the task of collecting samples of suspected cases and sending them for testing. Testing facilities are currently available at the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), AIIMS and the National Institute of Virology at Pune.

"The only criteria to collect samples is to find out if the person has a travel history or has been in contact with a person who has travelled to other countries. We have to adhere to the case definition provided by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for dealing with cases of Covid-19. Symptoms like cold, cough and fever are not

enough to collect the samples of any person," said a doctor from Safdarjung hospital. On a daily basis, the samples are being sent to the testing labs and the reports come out in two-three days, depending on the number of samples at the lab centre. If the sample is positive, the patient is called to the hospital.

"Those who test positive are then counselled by doctors. The

next course of treatment is discussed to assess whether the patient needs to be admitted to the isolation ward or requires home isolation," added the doctor.

At RML, over 100 people were visiting the testing center on a daily basis till last week. The number has gone down to 30-35 this week. "The screening facility is available at the hospital round the clock at the dedicated flu corner. A team of doctors is carefully collecting samples and then sending it for testing," a senior doctor from RML hospital said.

Meanwhile, a 29-year-old of resident of Uttam Nagar who was admitted to Safdarjung hospital has recovered from the virus and has been discharged. With a travel history of Italy and France, he tested positive for Covid-19 on March 4. A tracing of 434 contacts was done by the department of health. The contact tracing of the patient's office in Gurgaon was also done and a list of 91 employees was received.

He is the second of the seven confirmed cases in Delhi to be discharged. On Saturday, the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Delhi, a 45-year-old male, was discharged from Safdarjung hospital.

Of the seven positive cases, two have been discharged, a 68-year-old woman expired at RML, and four are still undergoing treatment at Safdarjung hospital.

As many as 168 passengers who returned from different countries have been quarantined at the Delhi government's quarantine facility in the South district. A round-the-clock medical team has been stationed at the facility to monitor the cases. Till date, 1,77,203 passengers from Covid-19 affected countries have been screened at Delhi Airport and placed under surveillance. 3,389 passengers from affected countries were screened on Sunday.



## SAFE HANDS

At the New Delhi railway station, Sunday. Abhinav Saha

## Cinema halls, gyms shut down in Haryana

SAKSHI DAYAL  
GURGAON, MARCH 15

THE HARYANA government Sunday directed all cinema halls, gyms, swimming pools, theatres, clubs, and night clubs to remain closed till March 31. The government also decided that schools across the state will also remain closed. Officials, however, said examinations will continue as per schedule. Colleges are also closed till the end of the month.

Mass gatherings of "more than 200 people" have also been prohibited in the state, in all social, cultural, political, religious, sports, personal and family events, said officials.

This was decided at a meeting Sunday under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and Health Minister Anil Vij to discuss preparedness re-

garding coronavirus.

Meanwhile, the Gautam Budh Nagar and Ghaziabad administrations Sunday ordered shutting of multiplexes, cinema halls and gyms till March 31 as well. As per latest figures provided by the UP health department, out of the 13 positive cases in the state, two are from Ghaziabad and one from Noida.

Action under IPC section 188 (disobedience of public order) will be initiated for non-compliance, said officials. "The administration is making efforts to minimise large gatherings... Hence standalone cinema halls and multiplexes in malls will remain closed," said Ghaziabad district magistrate Ajay Shankar Pandey.

Ghaziabad officials said the order is not applicable to malls, swimming pools and gyms. In Gautam Budh Nagar, the order is similarly not applicable to malls as well.

## BRIEFLY

### Pvt nursing homes under watch

*New Delhi:* The Delhi government Sunday asked private nursing homes to send a daily report on the foreign nationals undergoing treatment in their homes. They have also been asked to create "Flu corners" to treat suspected Covid-19 patients.

### Govt: Clean mini-buses

*New Delhi:* The Delhi government has directed that all mini buses and vehicles carrying school children be washed and disinfected on a daily basis. **ENS**



# 5 GOVT & POLITICS



## PET ISSUE

AMID THE Covid-19 scare, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan took to Twitter on Sunday to dispel fears about the effect of the virus on pets. The minister wrote that "there is no evidence that pets such as dogs and cats can transmit" the virus. He added "it's still a good idea to wash your hands well with soap and water after playing with your pets!" The post had a photo of the minister playing with his three pet dogs — Leo, Junior and Skippy.

## A REMINDER

FORMER TRINAMOLU Congress MP Sugata Bose has expressed anguish that Lok Sabha "has not cared to take note of the passing" of his mother Krishha Bose, who was a member of the 11th, 12th and 13th Lok Sabha. In a letter to Speaker Om Birla, he said her biographical details were provided to the Speaker's Secretariat a day after she died on February 22. The letter said she was the chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs from 1999 to 2004, a renowned author, educationist, and "principal upholder of the glorious legacy of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose as chairperson of Netaji Research Bureau until her death". The letter urged the Speaker not to read her obituary notice in the Lok Sabha "as it would be meaningless ritual and not show genuine respect to the departed soul". In her final days, "she had been disheartened... to witness the assault on the values of parliamentary democracy that she held dear", it added.

## TAKING PRECAUTIONS

WITH ONLY six two-judge benches sitting in the Supreme Court from March 16, when it will reopen after Holi vacations, the workload of these benches has also been cut down. Each bench will deal with only 12 cases as per the causerlist put out on Sunday. Non-essential visits to the top court have been discouraged and entry of casual visitors restricted until further orders. The guided tour of the court has been suspended and entry to the court museum stopped.

## Gulmarg scam accused to be J&K L-G's adviser

**ARUN SHARMA**  
JAMMU, MARCH 15

WITH THE Home Ministry sanctioning the appointment, Baseer Ahmad Khan, one of the main accused in the 2009 Gulmarg land scam involving bureaucrats and some prominent hoteliers of Kashmir, is set to be the fourth adviser to Lieutenant Governor G C Murmu.

According to the communication from Home Ministry, the advisor shall assist the Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir in effective discharge of his functions. The appointment will be effective from the date on which he assumes charge. Presently working as

Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Khan attained the age of superannuation on June 30, 2019, but the government extended his service by a year, citing his role in handling crisis-like situations in Kashmir. His extended term was due to end on June 30 this year.

Lt Governor Murmu currently has three advisers — K K Sharma, Farooq Khan and Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar. While Sharma is a former IAS officer, the other two are retired IPS officers.

The Gulmarg land scam pertains to allegations of illegal transfer of government land at Gulmarg worth crores to some private hoteliers in 2009. At the time of the scam, Khan was Deputy Commissioner at Baramulla.

## Six years later, two land complaints against Jyotiraditya spring back to life

**MILIND GHATWAI**  
BHOPAL, MARCH 15

FORMER UNION minister Jyotiraditya Scindia's defection to the BJP has pushed the Kamal Nath government in Madhya Pradesh to the brink. But just a day after he joined the saffron party in Delhi and arrived in Bhopal to an enthusiastic welcome on March 12, two complaints of land grabbing filed against him nearly six years ago saw a fresh turn. Scindia camp said it was an obvious case of vendetta politics.

**The complaints**

In 2014, Gwalior-based Surendra Shrivastava filed two complaints with the economic offences wing (EOW) accusing the then Congress leader and his family members of grabbing prime land in Gwalior, selling government land by claiming ownership and using his clout to hush up the matter. In one complaint (filed on March 26, 2014), Shrivastava alleged that he was short-changed in a deal for a piece of land he purchased from Scindia in 2009. He alleged that he got nearly 6,000 sq

land less than the actual size shown in the agreement. He said it turned out (in 2017) that even the land he got was owned by the government, not the Scindias. The second complaint (filed on August 23 2014) alleged that two trusts run by the Scindia family — Scindia Devasthanam Trust and Jyotiraditya Scindia Trust — sold about 1 lakh sq feet to a private person although it was government land. He said the prime land is worth hundreds of crores. When complaints were filed the BJP was in power and Shivraj Singh Chouhan was the CM.

**What happened to the investigation?**

The agency began probing the allegations but no FIR had been registered. Shrivastava appeared be-

## After PM, Shah assures J&K party: No demographic change

**BASHAARAT MASOOD**  
SRINAGAR, MARCH 15

A DAY after Prime Minister Narendra Modi tried to allay fears of a demographic change in Jammu and Kashmir, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday repeated the assurance to visiting political leaders of Apni Party, a new political alignment of traditionally pro-New Delhi leaders.

"The delegation apprised the Home Minister about apprehensions with regard to demographic change. Responding to issue, the Home Minister dispelled the notion... saying any such changes are against the interests of the country," Apni Party said in an official release. "He said the perception about demographic change is a figment of imagination which needs to be removed by one and all in the country..."

Shah, in fact, assured the delegation that J&K would get the best domicile policy. "The Home Minister assured the delegation that Jammu and Kashmir will have a better domicile policy than other states in the country and said that a reasonable Economic Development Policy will be drafted soon after widespread consultation. He emphasised that there is no discrimination in implementation of central laws in Jammu and Kashmir and interests of all sections will be taken care of," a statement from the Ministry of Home Affairs said.

Sources said the meeting between the leaders of Apni Party, led by its president Altaf Bukhari, and Home Minister Shah lasted for over two hours. In its memorandum, the party raised 42 points, some of which were responded to by Shah during the discussion.



Union Home Minister Amit Shah at a meeting with a delegation from J&K's newly-formed Apni Party in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

"He said he has noted the 42 points that we had raised. He said among these points, he will respond to few points right now and the rest within next 10 days," a senior party leader told *The Indian Express*. "He said the first thing he wants to tell us is that he requests us to bury this issue of demographic change in the very room where it is being discussed because no one has any such intention. No one in the country can afford to engineer demographic change in Kashmir, nor is such a thing in the interest of the country..."

Shah was accompanied by the Union Home Secretary, IB chief, Additional Secretary Home, Additional Director IB and Joint Secretary Home.

On statehood, Shah said it would be returned soon. "He said the statehood will be restored as soon as is possible. This too is because of our national interest. It is not in the interest of India to have a weak J&K. It's a border state, it

needs to be very strong and it needs to have a strong government," said another member of the visiting group.

Shah also assured the political leaders that delimitation process in Jammu and Kashmir would be unbiased.

Responding to the demand for releasing of political detainees, Shah told the leaders that they will try to shift the detainees from outside the state to Jammu and Kashmir and promised telephone facility to them so that they can talk to their families.

"Shah said all decisions on relaxations being taken by the Prime Minister and implemented by Home Ministry are based on ground realities and not due to any pressure. He referred to steps like release of people from preventive detention, restoration of internet, relaxation in curfew and added that even political prisoners will be freed in times to come as the main objective of the government is that not a single per-

son should die, be it a common Kashmiri or security personnel," the ministry statement said.

After the meeting, Bukhari told reporters in Delhi: "Yes, we did discuss about the detention of remaining political leaders and others, and the Home Minister said it is a process and we will be releasing them very soon."

Shah, however, asked the J&K leaders to forget Article 370. "(Article) 370 is gone, that's now an old story. There is discussion going on outside and the issue is also in the Supreme Court, let's move ahead of it," a leader quoted Shah as saying. "I promise you from here that anything that has been given to other states, more will be given to J&K. How will it be done is being looked into. Whatever we have given to other states, you will get more. This is my commitment to you."

**INPUTS FROM ENDS, NEW DELHI**  
**FULL REPORT ON**  
[www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

## VALLEY LEADERS DETAINED OUTSIDE UT

### Abdullah asks J&K leaders to unite to bring back leaders

**ADIL AKHZER**  
SRINAGAR, MARCH 15

FORMER CHIEF Minister of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir and Srinagar Member of Parliament Farooq Abdullah on Sunday urged all political leaders in the Valley to unite and demand that the Centre bring back all J&K detainees lodged in jails outside the Union Territory since August 5, 2019.

Abdullah, who is also the president of the National Conference issued his first statement after his release on Friday, after remaining under detention for 221 days.

"Before we allow politics to divide us, I appeal to all political leaders here to unite behind the call to the Union government to bring back all detainees from J&K in prisons outside, pending their release. While we would like to see them all released as soon as possible, pending that, they should be shifted to J&K. This is a humanitarian demand and I hope others will join me in placing this demand in front of the government of India," Abdullah said in a statement.

Saying that he is "acutely aware that compared to hundreds of Kashmiri families, I have been far more fortunate," the Srinagar MP said that on Saturday, "when I went to meet my son Omar — also detained under the Public Safety Act - I had to travel a kilometre from my home to be able to see him."

"For families of most of detainees, meeting their loved ones is not nearly as easy. Their loved ones have been detained in jails spread across a number of states. They get two visits a month for



Farooq Abdullah

which they have to spend large sums of money. They can ill-afford travelling to and staying in the vicinity of these prisons," he added.

Adding that he had "consciously" avoided making any political statements since his release on Friday, Abdullah said, "While I believe a free and frank exchange of political views is essential so that we can take stock of the momentous changes that J&K has seen after August 5, 2019, we are still some way away from an environment where such a political discourse will be possible. This is especially so considering the number of people detained in August last year who remain in jails outside J&K."

According to Abdullah, the already onerous financial burden is made worse by the health risk "they now face because of Covid-19". "At a time when people are being advised not to travel, these families are being forced to put their lives at risk in order to meet their loved ones for a few short but very precious hours," he remarked.

Hundreds of youth, political workers and leaders were detained and a large number of arrested people were also shifted to jails outside the state ahead of the August 5 move last year.

## Bhim army chief launches new party

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

AFTER REPOSING faith in Mayawati's political leadership of Dalits for years, Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad launched his own political party on Sunday. He chose the occasion of the birth anniversary of Mayawati's mentor and BSP founder Kanshi Ram to launch his party — Azad Samaj Party.

The party is likely to fight the polls in UP in 2022 in alliance with O P Rajbhar's Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party as part of a larger alliance — the Bhagidari Sankalp Morcha.

Before the launch at an event in Safai village, the 37-year-old leader made Kanshi Ram's photograph his Twitter profile picture. He also launched the party flag — white band between two

blue strips with Azad Samaj Party written in the middle.

Azad said the Bhim Army will run parallel to the party and continue to fight for Dalit rights and enroll new members.

Earlier, Bhim Army members claimed that police had locked the gates of the venue and pasted a notice, which said: "Event cannot be held as large gatherings are prohibited in view of coronavirus." The gate was, however, opened later.

Azad had earlier given a call to voters to defeat the BJP by voting for Mayawati. He has even said that he wanted to see Mayawati as the PM, although the BSP supremo has called him a BJP agent. Only recently, after BSP lent its support to the contentious Citizenship Amendment Bill, that Azad said he would launch his own party as Mayawati was no more protecting the rights of the Bahujan society.

### पोषण पखवाड़ा

लक्ष्य : एनीमिया दूर करना

8-22 मार्च, 2020

**हरी पत्तेदार सब्जियां व फल अपनाओ एनीमिया को दूर भगाओ**

**“आइए, हम सब मिल कर पोषण पखवाड़ा को समग्र पोषण त्योहार के तौर पर मनाएं ताकि पोषण अभियान हरियाणा के हर घर तक पहुंचे तथा हर नागरिक इसमें अपनी भागीदारी सुनिश्चित कर सके।”**

**मनोहर लाल, मुख्यमंत्री, हरियाणा**

**एनीमिया से बचाव हेतु इन बातों का रखें ध्यान**

- ⦿ आयरनयुक्त आहार जैसे कि—दालें, हरी पत्तेदार सब्जियां, फल, दूध, दही, पनीर आदि खाएं।
- ⦿ गर्भवती महिला को गर्भावस्था के चौथे महीने से 180 दिन तक रोजाना आई.एफ.ए. की एक लाल गोली
- ⦿ यदि मांसाहारी हैं तो अण्डा, मांस व मछली का भी सेवन करें।
- ⦿ धात्री महिला को 180 दिन तक आई.एफ.ए. की एक लाल गोली
- ⦿ आयरन के अवशोषण हेतु खाने में नींबू, आंवला, अमरुद जैसे खट्टे फल शामिल करें।
- ⦿ खाने के साथ दूध, चाय इत्यादि न लें
- ⦿ इसके अलावा अलग से आयरनयुक्त पूरक लें :-

  - 6-59 माह के बच्चों को हफ्ते में 2 बार 1 मि.ली. आई.एफ.ए. सिरप
  - 5-9 वर्ष के दौरान हफ्ते में एक बार आई.एफ.ए. की एक गुलाबी गोली
  - 10-19 वर्ष तक के किशोर और किशोरियों को हफ्ते में एक बार आई.एफ.ए. की नीली गोली
- ⦿ कृमिनाश के लिए कीड़े की दवा (एल्बेण्डाजोल) की निर्धारित खुराक
- ⦿ बच्चे की गर्भनाल जन्म के 3 मिनट बाद ही काटें। इससे नवजात के खून में आयरन की मात्रा बनी रहती है।
- ⦿ सभी उम्र के लोगों की एनीमिया की जाँच आवश्यक है ताकि हीमोग्लोबिन के स्तर अनुसार उपयुक्त इलाज किया जा सके।

**हम सब मिलकर रखें ध्यान, आयरन युक्त भोजन लें, न बनें अनजान**

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# 6 EXPRESS NETWORK

## COMBATING CORONAVIRUS

# SAARC neighbours spell out plan to fight virus: Satellite classes to closed borders

SHUBHAJIT ROY  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

ASPRIME Minister Narendra Modi organised a video conference of SAARC leaders to formulate a strategy to combat coronavirus in the South Asian region, here's what the other leaders had to say. They reflected their own challenges, concerns and suggestions.

**Afghanistan**  
**CONFIRMED CASES\*: 11**  
"We would always be ready and willing to collaborate, and to welcome coordination, learn from the best practice."  
President Ashraf Ghani

Greatest vulnerability is that Afghanistan has open borders with Iran, which is the worst-affected in the region. Diffusion modelling needed, different from China or the US, and SAARC should do it. Create a framework for telemedicine, because poor women are vulnerable. As a landlocked country, closing of borders will hinder availability of medicines. Since schools are closed, prayers cancelled, how to keep women, youth and children occupied. So, SAARC satellite can be used for distance tele-education, since social distancing is being advocated. India, as a member of both SAARC and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, should coordinate to bring lessons learnt from China's experience. Impact on social fabric and economic transactions. How to take care of the most poor and most vulnerable.

**Maldives**  
**CONFIRMED CASES: 10**  
"No country on its own can succeed in combating the virus. It requires a shared response."  
President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih

Unique geography presents a challenge. Dispersed islands allows it to isolate cases, but providing medical care is tough. India has sent medical relief. Country is vulnerable to external shocks. Tourist arrivals declined — in February, it



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the video conference with SAARC leaders. PTT

dipped by 14.3%, in March (so far) dipped by 22.8%, and is likely to dip by 35% this year. Tourism contributes quarter of GDP, and two-third of forex. Every job is dependent on tourism. China and Italy are no. 1 and 3 respectively, in terms of source of foreign tourists. Serious shortfall of forex. Detrimental impact on economy. Need closer cooperation on health emergency agencies. Economic relief package needed.

**Sri Lanka**  
**CONFIRMED CASES: 10**  
"Our biggest challenge is to stop or minimise the virus entering into Sri Lanka and control the spreading of the virus."  
President Gotabaya Rajapaksa

Banned tourists from South Korea and Iran. Large number of Sri Lankans working specially in Germany, Italy and South Korea, so they are being put in quarantine. Have restricted social gatherings, closed educational institutions. National Task Force established, 24x7 hotline. Thirty-four Sri Lankan students and their families were evacuated from Wuhan. Parliament has been dis-

solved and the general elections will be held on March 25. No large meetings, but polls to be held as planned. Almost all major sporting events, international conferences, meetings, large gatherings postponed or canceled. Economy has suffered a severe blow, since tourists are from Europe. Exports affected adversely. SAARC should develop a mechanism to help economies to tide over this very difficult period. SAARC ministerial level be established to discuss, share risks and best practices.

**Bangladesh**  
**CONFIRMED CASES: 3**  
"We need to force, collaboration, through our collective capacity expertise and resources. We are ready to share our capacity and expertise."  
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

Need to devise a strong SAARC-wide strategy to fight public health challenge. Strong surveillance and rigorous check up at all international airports. Have set up a national committee to provide guidance. Massive awareness campaigns by government and party workers. SAARC countries

need to collaborate closely to fight this enemy. Important to establish an institution to prevent and fight against any public health threats in South Asian region in future.

**Nepal**  
**CONFIRMED CASES: 1**  
"Our collective wisdom and approach will help us devise sound and robust strategy for the SAARC region to fight Covid-19."  
Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli

Multi-agency coordination committees have been set up at the centre, provinces, and local levels. Visa-on-arrival facility for all foreigners and non-resident Nepalese with foreign passports suspended. Movement of third country nationals via land routes suspended. Suspended issuance of work permit for Nepalese nationals for overseas employment. International passengers are required to go through the screening process. Provision for self quarantine. Enhancing capacity of hospitals. All permits for mountaineering expedition for spring 2020 have been suspended and all major international conferences have been postponed.

**Bhutan**  
**CONFIRMED CASE: 1**  
"When the whole world is fighting one common disease that we cannot see with our naked eyes, I think it is very important that all of us come together and leave behind our differences."  
Prime Minister Lotay Tshering

Affects the elderly people, and it affects more people with comorbid conditions. The aftermath of this disease will affect the smaller and vulnerable economies more badly than the better ones. Concerned about the economic outcomes of this disease. Will share limited resources, have frequent such meetings. Propose that we must have a similar cooperation in economic sphere, because all the smaller economies are disproportionately hit.

**Pakistan**  
**CONFIRMED CASES: 31**  
"No nation, and no region on earth can afford to be unresponsive, least of all SAARC, which is home to one fifth of the humanity."  
Pakistan PM's special assistant on health Zafar Mirza

No room for complacency. Need for prevention and caution. We have strongly advised against panic. Taking steps to restrict movement to and from affected countries, institute health screening buyers at entry points by member states, and establish quarantined and isolation facilities. PM Imran Khan is personally overseeing these efforts. Have closed all educational institutions, closed the western border for two weeks, restricted international flights to three airports only, and will ban all large public gatherings. SAARC Secretariat is best placed to coordinate. Establish a working group of respective national authorities for health information and data exchange, as well as coordination for responses in real time. Proposal of hosting health ministers' conference at an appropriate time.

(\*Source: Johns Hopkins CSSE)

## At discussion on coronavirus, Pak raises J&K

SHUBHAJIT ROY  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

PAKISTAN ON Sunday raised the issue of lockdown in J&K as its representative at the SAARC leaders' videoconference on combating coronavirus said the Covid-19 cases in J&K are a "matter of concern" and asked for opening up of communication that will facilitate dissemination of information and allow medical supplies.

Indian government sources said Pakistan tried to "politicise" a humanitarian issue and it is a "churlish approach". "This is humanitarian issue, Pakistan tried to politicise humanitarian issue," sources said.

This was the first time that Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacted with a leader from Pakistan after the special status of J&K was revoked in August 2019.

Pakistan PM's special assistant on health, Zafar Mirza, who participated at the video conference, said, "We hope that during this emergency, our member countries will provide access to emergency assistance to all the regions in our countries. Because equity in health is a fundamental principle of public health."

"In this regard, let me say that it is a matter of concern that Covid-19 has been reported from J&K. And in view of the health emergency, it is imperative that all lockdown in the disputed territory must be lifted immediately, opening up communications and movement would facilitate dissemination of information, allow distribution of medical supplies and enable containment and relief efforts to proceed unimpeded."

Mirza called it a "constructive and insightful discussion". "We need to take a proactive approach. We should not wait for emergencies to happen and outbreaks to take place and then to start our preparations," he said.

# 'Only way for any party to gain strength is to ensure workers, leaders not alienated'

CONGRESS LEADER and former Union Minister for Law and Justice **ASHWANI KUMAR** speaks to **POOJA PILLAI** on his latest book, *Human Dignity: A Purpose in Perpetuity*, and the leadership crisis in the Congress



**AAP seems to have won Delhi elections on bread-and-butter issues**

In Delhi, the AAP got succeeded in winning the imagination of the people around delivery of their programmes. For example, work done in education, health and electricity, did catch the imagination of people. Local issues are relevant. For example, the issue of regional and local leadership is critically important. In states where Congress had effective leaders, it came back to power. This shows that we need to promote not only one or two, but a host of leaders at all levels while remaining firm in our commitment to the core values. If Congress is seen to be ambivalent or ineffective here, it will lose its qualitative distinction and popular support. At the same time, we must recognise the felt sensitivities of the people on emotional issues and where necessary lead the country in the right direction.

**The Congress seems to be suffering because the central leadership isn't in place. What is happening?**

Mrs Sonia Gandhi is the party president and is fully aware about people and the ground situation. There is no vacuum at the top but the question of the party's future leadership has to be resolved. Also, the spurious debate about the young versus veterans is harming the party... Seniors cannot be pushed around by those in a rush. The younger lot must know that age is on their side. Congress needs experience and intellectual depth more than ever before, in addition to the energy of the youth... Transition is a natural phenomenon but must not be imposed.

**How much damage does Jyotiraditya Scindia's departure do?**

Scindia's exit is unfortunate indeed. It is time for honest introspection as to the reasons for leaders leaving the party. It is a necessary part of political management to recognise legitimate aspirations and merit. The winner-takes-it-all cannot be the Congress' way. Above all, the dignity and esteem of party persons needs to be recognised at all times. I hope the party high command will apply the correctives and ensure that Congress persons are not diminished in any manner.

**In his resignation letter, Scindia said Sonia Gandhi was aware that this was something that had been 'drawing itself out over the year'. Could the Congress have done much to avoid this situation?**

I cannot comment on the specifics of the Scindia's case but it is clear that the party must conduct itself in a manner so that factionalism is not perpetuated and political power is fairly dispersed



with a view to giving leaders and workers a sense of belonging.

**What, if any, damage control can Congress do now?**

The only way for any party to gain in strength is to ensure that its workers and leaders are not alienated. Easy accessibility to party leadership, open, candid and purposive dialogue on important matters is the way forward. Congress persons should not have to wait endlessly to meet leaders... Diminished leaders and those dwarfed by their own timidity cannot strengthen the party. Political decisions must be seen to be just and credible so as to enlist the willing support of party persons. Loyalties, we know, are always reciprocal. It is also necessary to recognise the distinction between conscientious dissent and indiscipline.

**What about Rahul Gandhi's leadership style makes him a good choice?**

Rahul Gandhi is imbued with idealism, his heart is in the right place but he has to bond much more closely with party persons and with people. We have been suffering for a long time because of the preponderance of practitioners of 'realpolitik'. Congress must hold out hope for the people in their future and in the future of the country. This is its foremost challenge on which hinges the question of the party's future leadership and its place in national politics.

**In what way has Congress's communication to the people been ineffective?**

I don't want to pass a finalist judgment, but speaking purely in my personal capacity, I think we needed to hammer on one or two main themes which to my mind could only be about the need to defend the idea of India, about our core values.

My personal view is that nothing unites and galvanises Indian people more than a yearning for freedom and dignity. The Congress lost in 1977, post-Emergency, only on the question of freedom and liberty of the people. So while bread-and-butter issues are always important and cannot be discounted, we cannot forget that nations do not live by bread alone. Congress must talk about issues and not engage in a discourse centered on personalities alone.

## Andhra local body polls deferred, Jagan hits out

REENIVAS JANAYALA  
HYDERABAD MARCH 15

ANDHRA PRADESH State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar on Sunday postponed the upcoming local body elections by six weeks in the backdrop of the coronavirus outbreak in the country. The move invoked a sharp response from Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy who accused Kumar of issuing the notification without having consulted his government.

The CM also accused Kumar of catering to wishes of former chief minister and Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief N Chandrababu Naidu. In the notification, Kumar also ordered the transfer of District

Collectors of Guntur and Chittoor, and suspended the Circle Inspector of Macharla Town in Guntur following the attack on two TDP leaders, allegedly by YSRC workers, on March 11.

Lashing out at the notification, Jagan said: "From where did the SEC get this power to postpone elections without consulting anyone or transfer district collectors?... The SEC or his office did not seek any inputs from the health secretary or chief secretary regarding the measures we have taken to tackle coronavirus in the state... He has been taking orders from Chandrababu Naidu... I have complained to the Governor and requested him to ask Kumar to change his behaviour..."

## SEC to decide on deferring Bengal civic polls today

**Kolkata:** As the country is grappling with Covid-19, the TMC and BJP finally seem to be on the same page over the dates of the upcoming civic polls.

The two parties are likely to ask the West Bengal State Election Commission (SEC) to postpone civic polls at an all-party meeting here on Monday. State Election Commissioner Saurabh Das has convened the meeting to decide the dates for polls to nearly 110 civic bodies.

"The All India Trinamool Congress will appeal... to defer the upcoming municipal corporation elections..." said a TMC statement on Sunday.

West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh demanded that the civic polls be postponed. **ENS**

## VAISHNO DEVI SHRINE

# Temple board issues travel advisory, closures ordered across Jammu region

ARUN SHARMA  
JAMMU, MARCH 15

INTENSIFYING MEASURES to deal with the threat of Covid-19, the Shri Mata Vaishnodevi Shrine Board on Sunday advised foreigners and NRIs not to visit the shrine for 28 days after landing in India as a precautionary measure. The UT administration meanwhile has ordered the closure of all eateries and spas, besides banning all social, religious events involving an assembly of more than four people in Jammu till March 31.

In its advisory, the Board has also advised domestic pilgrims to reschedule or postpone their visit in case they experience symp-

toms. According to sources, an average of 25,000 people are visiting the shrine each day.

"The numbers are good as last year, but Board is taking all possible precautions," said Ramesh Kumar, CEO of the Shrine Board.

Meanwhile, in Jammu district, District Magistrate Sushma Chauhan invoked her powers under Section 34 of the National Disaster Management Act, 2005, to mitigate any possible spread of the virus by ordering the closure of langars (community kitchens), bhandaras, dhabas, bars, restaurants, food courts, food stalls, road side eateries etc., in the district till March 31. She also ordered closure of massage centres, spas, saunas etc., across the district till month

end, adding that no social or religious events will be held at any public place involving a gathering of more than four people.

Only fruit and vegetable markets may continue to function to ensure provisioning of essential supplies, she also banned conferences, rallies, protests till March 31.

Meanwhile, in Rajouri and Udhampur and Poonch districts, the respective district magistrates issued prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPc for a period of one month.

With two positive infection cases reported from the UT, the administration had already closed educational institutions across the UT till March 3.

## FIVE DAYS AFTER 42-YEAR-OLD MAN DIED IN BOKARO, RATION CARD CLEARED FOR FAMILY

# In Jharkhand, family claims hunger death, govt dismisses allegation

ABHISHEK ANGAD  
BOKARO (JHARKHAND),  
MARCH 15

"NAAMO BHUKKHAL, marlo bhi bhokhal (His name was hungry and he died hungry)," says Rekha Devi of husband Bhukhal Ghasi, 42. She is stretched out on the floor of her one-room hut in Karma Shankardih village of Bokaro, which is bare except for a few utensils and clothes hung from a wooden rod. Since Ghasi died on March 6, six family members share that space, with Rekha, officially just 36, already a grandmother.

The Hemant Soren government denies Ghasi, a Dalit, died of lack of food. Having made hunger deaths one of its main planks in the recent Assembly elections, the ruling JMM now says there have been no such ca-

sualties in the state in the past five years.

As per a report by a committee set up post 11-year-old Santoshi Kumari's death from alleged starvation in September 2017 — the report is yet to be notified by the government — the government must ensure that a post-mortem is conducted within 24 hours in the case of such a death, and hold an investigation into whether or not the deceased was receiving government benefits such as ration, pension, MNREGA jobs.

Ghasi's family does not have a ration card. Rekha says the family did not get any of the other benefits either and, in the past six months, had been eating whatever she could gather, begging fellow villagers. Their usual meal is rice and starch, with leaves plucked from fields of neighbours cooked like a vegetable. In the

four days leading to Ghasi's death, they did not cook anything, she says. On March 6, Ghasi simply "stopped moving".

Belonging to poorest of the poor category, the landless family is entitled to 35 kg of food-grains per month under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana of the National Food Security Act. Data from the block office shows Rekha applied for a ration card on July 12, 2019. The approval came on March 11, five days after Ghasi died.

A labourer, Ghasi had not been working for a year since developing swelling in legs. A relative says they made arrangements to take him to hospital, but eventually gave up the plan as no one could have stayed with him.

Money slowly dried up once Ghasi was home-bound. Rekha's sons, Gurja, 19, and Nitesh, 14, do odd jobs, earning less than



Bhukhal Ghasi's family in Karma Shankardih village

Rs 2,000 a month. One of the daughters was married off three years ago at the age of 13, and now has a child. Both the mother and child are visiting these days. Two other daughters are younger, 10 and 8. None of the children is currently in school.

Says a neighbour, "Bhedbhaav bhi hota hai, islye bachche school nahin jate hain (There is discrim-

ination too, which is why the children don't go to school)."

Karma Shankardih is one of three villages under Singhpur panchayat. According to mukhiya Mritunjay Kapardar, of the panchayat's 4,000 residents, around 25% are Dalits. Singhpur has six government schools, he adds, denying allegations of bias. "I am a Dalit too, but I have never faced any discrimination."

The Ghasi family does not have an MNREGS job card either. A neighbour, Vishnu, says there is no work in the village and hence most men migrate to state capital Ranchi, and take up manual labour. "Or they go to Chennai, Bangalore," says Mritunjay, a villager.

While the family has a one-room pucca house under Indira Awas, Rekha says a relative uses it.

Bokaro District Commissioner

Mukesh Kumar says there "is no correlation" between the absence of ration cards and Bhukhal's death. "The family had applied for a ration card, but block-level officers say there is a huge pendency of ration cards in the district. The card should have been made, but overall there is pendency. None of the villagers knew that the family did not have ration. The mukhiya too did not know."

Contradicting the family's claims, Kumar adds, "They are saying they had not eaten for Bhukhal's last four days, though the daughter and sons say they had eaten in that time. The sons earn enough money to buy food. There are several inconsistencies... This does not seem to be a case of hunger death."

About why no post-mortem had been done, which is required as per protocol, Kumar says the villagers cremated the

body quickly.

On the MGNREGS, a source in the administration says the state government doesn't have funds for it.

Jharkhand is among the poorest states in the country, with per capita income ranking it at 25th out of 28 states. Activists, who claim more than a dozen hunger deaths in the last five years in the state, say the one thing common to all is the lack of a ration card, followed by glitches due to which their Aadhaar data is not linked to the PDS.

Sometimes, the Point of Sale machines linked to Aadhaar and requiring biometric identification for handing out rations don't work due to erratic Internet connectivity.

Soon after Ghasi's death, CM Hemant Soren took to social media vowing action against "culprits" and ordered the Bokaro DC

to provide the family a ration card. With news of Ghasi's death giving the Opposition ammunition, officials have meanwhile rushed a few kilograms of pulses and rice, as well as set up a health camp in the village for those who don't have a ration card. Officials say they are still waiting for the exact numbers as no survey has been done. Rekha says they also got some medicines, showing iron and folic acid tablets and B-Complex syrup.

However, on a Wednesday afternoon, less than a week after Ghasi's death, the family is back to rice and starch. The new supplies of pulses, grains are locked in an aluminum trunk, that once held clothes. They have seen this much food for the "first time", explains Nitesh. "It should not get wasted. We will use it wisely... maybe not eat dal daily but once every two-three days."



# 7 THE OUTBREAK TRACKING COVID-19

## MAHARASHTRA

# 54.5% cases in state got virus from Dubai, UAE still not on 'high risk' list

**TABASSUM BARNAGARWALA & ANURADHA MASCARENHAS**  
MUMBAI, MARCH 15

MORE THAN half of those who tested positive for Covid-19 in Maharashtra have either visited Dubai or remained in close contact with the infected cases, indicating that even countries with low burden of coronavirus can become a potential threat to visiting citizens from other countries.

Maharashtra has recorded 33 Covid-19 cases. Out of them, 18 have travel history to Dubai, or history of close contact with them. That is 54.5 per cent of total cases in the state. Most who have tested positive returned from Dubai before March 5. At least 15, from Mumbai, Pune, Yavatmal and Nagpur, belong to the same group of tourists who returned from Dubai on March 1. Analysis of the cases show those who tested positive

after exposure to virus in Dubai have zero or very mild symptoms. The symptoms are stronger in patients with travel history to other countries, said Anup Kumar Yadav, director of National Health Mission (NHM).

Till Sunday, UAE had recorded 85 coronavirus cases. It still comes amongst low-burden countries which is why India was not screening passengers from Dubai until March 5. It is possible, state officials admit, that several passengers who returned from Dubai before March 5 may have the virus but remain asymptomatic, and have missed screening at the airport. Civic bodies are in process of reaching out to such passengers, but the task is tedious and can take several days. UAE is also not in the list of seven countries, passengers from where are followed up for a 14-day period for symptoms. On Sunday, state health minister Rajesh Tope said he has written to Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to include UAE in the list.

### Two more test positive in state

**Mumbai:** A 59-year-old woman from Aurangabad, who visited Russia and Kazakhstan, and a Pimpri-Chinchwad woman, who went to Japan, have tested positive for Covid-19. With this, the total number of confirmed cases of coronavirus infection in Maharashtra climbed to 33 on Sunday.

The Aurangabad resident is admitted in Dhoot hospital and is currently stable. Officials said the process of tracking her close contacts and people she met since she returned to India on March 3 is on. The woman travelled to Russia on February 23 and then to Kazakhstan.

So far, 758 people in the state have been tested for coronavirus and 669 have tested negative. **ENS**

Currently, while airport officials are conducting thermal screening for all international passengers, the standard operating protocol for quarantine mandates extra focus on passengers from China, South Korea, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and Iran. "We are following government guidelines, there are three categories of passengers based on risk pattern," said Dr Santosh Revankar, deputy executive health officer.

Category A comprises high risk passengers from these seven countries who suffer from high fever, breathless, cough, or a person with acute respiratory illness in close contact with a Covid-19 case. They have to be immediately isolated. Category B is medium risk — this includes senior citizens who are asymptomatic, have hypertension, diabetes or asthma and have visited these seven countries. They have to be moved to quarantine facility for testing. And category C is low risk passengers who are asymptomatic, they

have to practice home isolation for 14 days. Yadav said, "We expect them to remain at home, report to us if any symptoms emerge. They will be immediately quarantined," he said.

Four of those who have tested positive for the infection in Pune visited Dubai. One person who came in contact with them has also tested positive. Despite this, passengers arriving from Dubai to Pune airport and not having recent travel history to the seven "high risk" countries are not compulsorily being admitted to "institutional quarantine".

"We are following the directives given to us by Union Health Ministry. As per the directive, only those international passengers which have visited China, Italy, Iran, Republic of Korea, France, Spain and Germany in the last 28 days have to be sent to a compulsory quarantine."

According to the Indian embassy in UAE, Indians constitute 30 per cent of UAE's population.



A bus conductor and passengers wear protective masks, at Chikmagalur in Karnataka on Sunday. PTI

## KARNATAKA

# Daughter of man who became India's first casualty tests positive

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
BENGALURU, MARCH 15

THE DAUGHTER of a 76-year-old man from Kalaburagi in Karnataka, who was first person to die of coronavirus in India, tested positive for the infection on Sunday.

"The result of one female (daughter of P6 of Kalaburagi case) has been received and found positive for Covid-19. She is already admitted in the Kalaburagi district hospital and her health condition is stable. Three other contacts of P6 are declared negative. The contacts have been traced and containment measures have been initiated," Karnataka health commissioner Pankaj Pandey said in an official statement on Sunday.

The 76-year-old man, who returned last week from a month-long pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia, had tested positive for Covid-19 following his death. Health officials in Kalaburagi region have extensively traced the persons the elderly man came in contact with after he showed symptoms of the infection and also before that.

"In Kalaburagi city, monitoring of contacts of P6 is being carried out and community monitoring is happening in a 3-km radius containment zone and in another 5-km buffer zone passive surveillance zone. People are being educated. As many as 56 primary contacts and 400 secondary contacts have been identified and they are

housed in quarantine for 14 days. Seven members of the family are isolated at the district hospital," a health official said.

Four members of elderly man's family, including his son and daughter, were being closely monitored in special wards at the district hospital after they developed symptoms last week.

"We had received the test reports for three of the four persons earlier and we have now received the report for the fourth person as well. The test result is positive for this person. Since the patient was already under medical care, we are positive that there will be recovery soon," state Health Minister B Sriramulu said on Sunday.

"A massive exercise is underway in Kalaburagi to prevent spread of the disease in the region where the patient lived. Even journalists who came in touch with the primary contacts of the patient who died had been put in home isolation," state Medical Education minister Dr K Sudhakar said.

A total of seven persons have tested positive for the coronavirus infection in Karnataka so far.

The state health department on Sunday announced thermal screening measures at the high court and the Vidhana Soudha, among other locations, from Monday. The chief justice of the high court was briefed by health officials about the situation on Sunday. The high court has decided to take up only urgent matters for hearing from Monday.

# Father booked for misleading health officials about woman's whereabouts

**AMIL BHATNAGAR**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

THE FATHER of a woman, whose husband is undergoing treatment for coronavirus in Bengaluru, has been booked for allegedly misleading health officials about her whereabouts. Meanwhile, the woman, who travelled from Bengaluru to Agra via Delhi, has tested positive for the infection. Her samples had been sent to Aligarh and then to Lucknow for confirmation and they have tested positive, officials said.

"When the team of medical officials reached the woman's residence on 13th, we were told by her father that she had left for Delhi through Mangla Express at 10.45 am. He further told us that she would be flying to Bangalore. Immediately the DM sought information from railway authorities about her travel. The district officials further received a tip-off that the woman is present in Agra. We urge that action must be taken since the woman's father tried to give false information at a time when the disease is highly contagious," said the FIR.

The father has been booked under sections 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) and 270 (malignant act likely to spread infection) of IPC. "The charges that have been added are as per the primary report given to us. Once more facts are verified, other sections can be added. Arrest will also take place once investigation is carried out," said the Circle Officer.

Officials said the woman's sample had been sent to a medical college in AMU where it was deemed "highly suspicious". For further checking, they were sent to KGMU in Lucknow, officials said.



Workers clean a train at the railway yard in New Delhi on Sunday. Express

# Railways gets rid of blankets, curtains, to regulate AC coaches

**AVISHEK G DASTIDAR**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

NO BLANKETS, increasing the temperature in air-conditioned compartments, removing curtains and ticket-checking staff wearing masks. These are some of the measures Indian Railways, transporting 2.3 crore passengers every day, has taken in its fight against Covid-19.

"With a proper surveillance mechanism and response system in place, epidemics can be detected at the beginning stage of their outbreak and controlled," says Indian Railways' own Disaster Management Plan.

However, with no Standard Operating Procedure to follow in an unforeseen situation like the coronavirus outbreak, Indian Railways, just like all other gov-

ernment agencies, is thinking on its feet to keep the disease at bay. Recently, a woman, who later tested positive for Covid-19, flew to Delhi from Bengaluru and then took a train to Agra.

It has decided that since its blankets are washed only once in two months — a fact it has told Parliament several times — it would be best to do away with them for now.

Instructions have been issued to all zonal railway units that the linen set, which carries a hand towel, and a pair of identical bed-sheets, should be washed thoroughly (they are already washed and ironed before distribution) before giving them to passengers. And each set carries a blanket.

Some 18 lakh such sets are in circulation every day. Typically, around 3 times the train's total passenger capacity worth of linen

set is loaded on each long-distance train before every journey. It is enough for a to and fro journey and for those who embark midway. The national transporter does not want to take chances with that kind of load at the moment.

The Railways is advising that passengers bring their own blankets if they need it in view of the special measures. "The curtains are an added feature in AC coaches for privacy. But since they are not washed every day, we thought it best to remove them for now," said a senior government official.

There are over 12,000 AC coaches which have curtains. They are being removed on a war footing.

The 68 Divisions led by Divisional Railway Managers have been asked to coordinate with respective state health departments to follow localised instructions sur-

rounding mass contacts. There are some divisions which have started screening passengers with laser-based thermometers to check body temperature before letting them enter their premises. Instructions have been issued to them to sanitise each coach and all contact areas. "All contact places, including escalators, railings, door handles, seats, and bathrooms are being sanitised," Railway Minister Piyush Goyal has tweeted.

Instructions have also been given that trains should never run out of liquid soap and water.

With blankets gone and curtains removed, there is the issue of passengers feeling cold. As a workaround, efforts are on to slightly increase the AC temperature. "But then we cannot make AC coaches warm also. So there's a fine balance required," said an officer.



Health workers screen passengers at Agartala airport on Sunday. ANI

## UTTARAKHAND IFS trainee tests positive

**Dehradun:** A 26-year-old Indian Forest Service trainee at the Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy, Dehradun, tested positive for coronavirus infection on Sunday. This is first confirmed case of Covid-19 infection in Uttarakhand. Health department officials said the trainee officer recently travelled to Spain with 23 others for a training session. **ENS**

## ASSAM Schools and cinemas shut

**Guwahati:** The Assam government on Sunday ordered closure of schools, colleges and universities, and cinema halls, swimming pools and gyms till March 29. Chief Secretary Kumar Sanjay Krishna said that so far there have been no positive cases in Assam but all efforts are on to create awareness against the spread of the virus. **ENS**

## HARYANA No large gatherings

**Chandigarh:** The Haryana government has decided that cinema halls, gyms, swimming pools, theatres, clubs and night clubs in the state will remain closed till March 31. Also, all schools in the state will remain closed during this period and gathering of more than 200 people has been prohibited. **ENS**

## KERALA Awareness campaign

**Thiruvananthapuram:** The Kerala health department Sunday launched a new awareness campaign, "Break the chain". As part of it, offices, banks and PSUs should ensure facility for hand washing for the staff and visitors. At all residential apartments, it should be ensured that residents and others wash their hands before they enter. **ENS**

## INTERVIEW

# 'The goal should not be to scare people, but to start doing the right thing'

Director of Medical Research at Jaslok Hospital **Dr Rajesh Parikh**, internal medicine specialist and healthcare entrepreneur **Dr Swapneil Parikh** and clinical psychologist **Maherra Desai** are authors of *The Coronavirus: What You Need To Know About The Global Pandemic*, to be published by Penguin Random House later this month. They speak to **Kavitha Iyer** on the response to the outbreak and challenges ahead

**Is there some paranoia in the reaction of the public and government to the COVID-19 outbreak?**

**RP:** The flu virus has been around with us for more than 100 years. It is predictably unpredictable. We know it is seasonal. We also know it mutates. But it is wishful thinking to assume that

this virus will behave like the flu virus and that come summer, it will disappear...It might. It just may not. It may simmer down and resurface. We should certainly not be paranoid, but we should be concerned. Curbs on international travel, hotels reporting poor occupancy, this is not paranoia. These are fair measures.

**SP:** These measures don't go far enough. If your house is on fire and you panic, you're going to burn. But if your house is on fire and you're not alert and doing something about it, you're also going to burn. So the goal should not be to scare people but to wake up, start doing the right thing.

**What is the official view on the progression of the outbreak, given that in China, Singapore and South Korea it has begun to die down?**

**SP:** With immense measures. For example, in China they shut down the country and economy for two weeks. We have to understand what social distancing does. It's called flattening the curve. When you look at an epidemic curve, a flatter curve shows a slower progress in number of cases. With social distancing, this disease will eventually burn itself out when enough people become immune, through getting infected and producing an immune response. That's what happens with viruses.

In seasonal strains, some people have immunity, so when there's a change in weather and transmission decreases, it can burn itself out. But in a pandemic strain, nobody has immunity. So it won't stop. This is the goal of social distancing — not to reduce the number of cases overall, but to spread them out. If we allow the cases to



(From left) Dr Rajesh Parikh, Maherra Desai and Dr Swapneil Parikh

spike suddenly, a lot of people will die simply because they won't get oxygen, medical care...

**The theory that the virus**

**spread will weaken as temperatures rise, is that true?**

**SP:** We can only go by the evidence, and projections may change when evidence changes.

Right now, there is no evidence to suggest that it will decrease with the weather. Some evidence suggests that if this behaves like an influenza virus, it

will spike in the monsoon and post-monsoon period. We don't know whether it will behave like the flu virus...

**How vulnerable are we right now, and why?**

**MD:** I feel we in India are probably more vulnerable than other countries because we are a more collectivistic society; we are densely populated, especially urban areas; we live together; we almost think it is rude to do social distancing... Our public health system is also not able at this point to cater if we have a sudden spike in numbers, so I think it's very important for us to be more cautious...

**SP:** In Wuhan city alone, they have 1,800 teams with a minimum of five people each. These teams identify and test every single person who was in contact with anyone who was infected. One pa-

tient identified about 3,000 contacts, they tested every single one. Another team elsewhere in China found a patient with 29,000 contacts, they found 99 per cent and tested them. South Korea does more than twice as many tests in a single day as we have done in total.

Let's take the model that says 20 to 60 per cent adults across the world could be infected. If even 20 per cent of adult Indians are infected, that is 156 million. WHO data suggests 5 per cent patients need ICU admission. Let's assume only 1 per cent need ICU admission. That is 1.5 million ICU admissions. How many ICU beds do you think we have right now? About 1,00,000, including private hospitals. And we already need around 5 million ICU admissions in a year right now, with dengue, malaria, etc.

**FULL INTERVIEW ON**  
[www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)



## Four militants killed in encounter in Anantnag district: J&K Police

ADILAKHZER  
SRINAGAR, MARCH 15

FOUR MILITANTS were killed in an encounter with security forces in South Kashmir's Anantnag district on Sunday morning, the Jammu and Kashmir police said. According to police officers, the four were operatives of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Hizbul Mujahideen.

A J&K Police spokesperson said that joint forces had launched

a cordon-and-search operation in Watarigam area of Dalgam, Anantnag on Sunday. "During the search operation, the hiding terrorists fired upon the joint search party," said the official.

In the ensuing gunbattle, the four militants were killed. They were identified as Muzaffar Ahmed Bhat, who was district commander of LeT; Omar Ameen Bhat, Sajad Ahmed Bhat and Gulzar Ahmed Bhat. While Omar and Sajad were affiliated to LeT, Gulzar was with Hizbul,

said police officials.

Police sources said they recovered two AK-47 rifles and ammunition from the site of the encounter.

J&K Police DIG (South Kashmir Range) Atul Goel told reporters that the forces received a specific input about these militants Saturday night and they launched an operation immediately. "In the morning, the hiding terrorists tried to break the cordon. In the retaliation, four terrorists were killed," he said.

## Wet March throws cold water on rabi crop

HARISH DAMODARAN & ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA  
NEW DELHI, JALANDHAR,  
MARCH 15

AMIDST CORONAVIRUS concerns, heavy rainfall, accompanied by strong winds and even hailstorms, across northern and eastern India is keeping farmers on the edge, just when they are set to harvest a bumper rabi crop.

The thundershowers — triggered by back-to-back Western Disturbances since end-February, with each spell lasting for 3-4 days and a fresh active one expected from March 21 — aren't good for the wheat, mustard, chana (chickpea), masur (red lentil), matar (field pea), potato and rabi maize that are in grain-filling or ripening stages.

"The problem is not with rain as much as the winds and hailstones causing lodging (falling) of the crop and injury to the grain," said Rajbir Yadav, wheat breeder and principal scientist at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) in New Delhi.

The wheat sown in Punjab and Haryana before mid-November is now at the start of the "dough" stage, when the grain accumulates starch matter till it is ready for harvesting by mid-April. "If the fields remain water-logged for 3-4 days, the crop can even go



A farmer shows his damaged crops following heavy rainfall and hailstorm in Bathinda on Saturday. PTI

dry because of the roots not getting sufficient oxygen," Yadav said.

According to Pritam Singh Hanjra, a progressive farmer from Uralna Khurd village in Madlauda tehsil of Haryana's Panipat district, "large-scale lodging of wheat has taken place in my area and also Jind, Kamal, Kaithal, Kurukshetra, Yamunanagar and Ambala due to rains from March 11 to 14".

There are similar reports of major crop lodging in Punjab's Patiala and Ludhiana districts from the latest thundershowers, and in Sangrur and Ferozpur from an earlier spell on March 6-7. Conservative estimates are that at least 10 per cent of the to-

tal wheat area in the state has suffered lodging. "The actual extent of loss will be known after we do a special girdawari (survey). The grain yields of the flattened crop will obviously get affected, as it cannot fetch nutrients from the soil," Sutantra Kumar Airy, director of Punjab's agriculture department, told *The Indian Express*.

IARI's Yadav was, however, more optimistic about the wheat that is sown relatively late in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar from December. This crop is currently at the "heading" stage, with the earheads (containing the wheat flowers) emerging fully from the

tillers (side stems) and just about to commence early kernel ("milk") formation. "In much of eastern India, sowing is generally late. Although it has rained quite heavily in these parts, the damage may not be much. These rains will, in fact, help keep the temperatures down and allow for a longer period for grain-filling. I only hope we have no more thundershowers," he said.

Since end-February, there have been at least three Western Disturbances — storms originating in the Mediterranean region that, along with their induced low pressure area systems, bring winter/spring rains in India. "We had the first disturbance during February 28 to March 1, the second in March 4-7 and the third in March 11-14. And we expect a fresh and active one from March 21," said G P Sharma, president (meteorology), at the private forecaster Skymet Weather Services Ltd.

While wheat faces the highest risk, the damage to mustard is seen to be less, partly due to the main growing state - Rajasthan - not getting too much rain in the latest spell.

"80 per cent of the crop in the main belt of Bharatpur, Alwar, Karauli, Dausa, Sawai Madhopur, Tonk, Jaipur and Kota is already harvested. Harvesting is 50 per cent over in the Bhind, Morena,

Gwalior, Sheopur and Shivpuri areas of Madhya Pradesh as well. There has not been any heavy rain or hailstorms here," said Pramod Kumar Rai, head of the Directorate of Rapeseed-Mustard Research at Bharatpur. Rainfall close to harvesting can result in the filled mustard pods cracking and the seeds being thrown out. But that stage has passed.

The rabi maize crop in Bihar's Kosi-Seemanchal belt, too, is said to be in overall good condition, despite quite heavy showers in the past few days. "We are still about 45 days from harvesting. The crop is still in the early-milking/soft dough stage and there is no danger so long as we have no storms or hail," said an official from a corn seed company.

The situation may be less rosy, although, for rabi pulses grown in UP (particularly Bundelkhand) and eastern Madhya Pradesh, which have also received excess precipitation so far this month. The same goes for potato. "Potato harvesting normally starts from February 25 and ends by March 25. This time, only 40-45 per cent of the crop in Aligarh, Hathras, Mathura, Agra and Ferozabad has been harvested so far because of continuous rainfall. Waterlogged conditions could lead to the tuber rotting," said Doongar Singh Chaudhary, a cold store owner at Khandauli, near Agra.

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**GOVERNMENT MEDICAL COLLEGE, SECTOR 32, CHANDIGARH**

**e-TENDER NOTICE**

e-Tender (Online Tenders) are invited from the manufacturers or their Sole Authorized Distributors/ Sole Agents for the purchase of following items :

Sr No.	Equipment/Tender ID Ref. No.	Quantity	Department	Earnest Money (In Rupees)	Due Date of Receipt of EMD & Bid	Due Date of Opening of Tender
1.	Cell Saver (Autologue iQ Auto Transfusion System) 2020 GMCH 54607 1 GMCH-PB-II-PA-VII-ET/20/654	01 No.	Gen. Surgery	60000/-	07.04.20	08.04.20
2.	Inj Atracurium Besylate 55mg/2.5ml amp (iV) 2020 GMCH 54326 1 GMCH-PH-PRO/23-Med/2020	8550 amps	Pharmacy	10045/-	07.04.20	08.04.20
3.	Automated Tissue Embedding Station 2020 GMCH 54601 1 GMCH-PB-II-PA-I-ET/20/653	02 Nos.	Pathology	68000/-	08.04.20	09.04.20
4.	Cap. Iron with Folic Acid (Elemental Iron 100mg and 0.5mg folic acid) 2020 GMCH 54272 1 GMCH-PH-PRO/28-Med/2020	1125000 Caps.	Pharmacy	32130/-	08.04.20	09.04.20
5.	Portable Transport Ventilators required for Hi-Tech Ambulance 2020 GMCH 54531 1 GMCH-PB-II-PA-IV-ET/20/651	02 Nos.	Hi-Tech Ambulance	29000/-	09.04.20	13.04.20
6.	Syp Caffeine (Caffeine citrate 20 mg equivalent to caffeine IP 10 mg in each ml supplied as oral solution with volume containing 1ml) 2020 GMCH 54390 1 GMCH-PH-PRO/545-Med/2020	3000 pcs	Pharmacy	25051/-	09.04.20	13.04.20
7.	Inhaled Nitric Oxide Delivery System 2020 GMCH 54518 1 GMCH-PB-I-PA-V-ET/20/657	01 No.	Neonatology	70000/-	13.04.20	14.04.20
8.	Inj Human AntiHaemophilus Factor VIII High Purity 1000 IU 2020 GMCH 54393 1 GMCH-PH-PRO-Med 528/2020	480 Vials	Pharmacy	226800/-	13.04.20	14.04.20
9.	Skin Protective Sheet 2020 GMCH 54422 1 GMCH-PB-II-PA-III-ET/20/650	1000 Nos.	Gen. Surgery	10000/-	14.04.20	15.04.20
10.	Tab Clozapine 100 mg 2020 GMCH 54469 1 GMCH-PH-PRO/358-Med3/2020	160000 Tabs	Pharmacy	15150/-	14.04.20	15.04.20
11.	Fully Automated Immunohistochemistry Stainer 2020 GMCH 54504 1 GMCH-PB-II-PA-VIII-ET/20/651	01 No.	Pathology	120000/-	15.04.20	16.04.20
12.	Inj Propofol 10mg/ml, 20 ml vial (iV) 2020 GMCH 54467 1 GMCH-PH-PRO/Med-195/2020	11500 vials	Pharmacy	20225/-	15.04.20	16.04.20
13.	Data Management Software for comprehensive lactation management centre (CLMC) 2020 GMCH 54490 1 GMCH-PB-II-PA-VIII-ET/20/649	01 No.	Neonatology	14000/-	16.04.20	17.04.20
14.	Inj Oxalotin 50mg 2020 GMCH 54492 1 GMCH-PH-PRO/Med-515/2020	2800 vials	Pharmacy	35280/-	16.04.20	17.04.20
15.	Operation Theatre Gown 2020 GMCH 54485 1 GMCH-PB-II-PA-III-ET/20/648	500 Nos.	Orthopaedics	25000/-	17.04.20	20.04.20
16.	Tab Griseculvin 250 mg 2020 GMCH 54410 1 GMCH-PH-PRO/532-MED4/2020	90000 Tabs	Pharmacy	17640/-	17.04.20	20.04.20
17.	Echocardiography Machine 2020 GMCH 54616 1 GMCH-PB-II-PA-VIII-ET/20/660	01 No.	Neonatology	80000/-	20.04.20	21.04.20
18.	Tab Vitamin B Complex (Thiamin 10 mg, Riboflavin 10 mg, Pyridoxine 3 mg, Nicotinamide 45 mg, Calcium Pantothenate 50 mg and Cyanocobalamin 15 mcg) 2020 GMCH 54413 1 GMCH-PH-PRO/234-MED2/2020	720000/-	Pharmacy	34200/-	20.04.20	21.04.20
19.	Instruments for Disaster Management 2020 GMCH 54612 1 GMCH-PB-II-PA-III-ET/20/657	As per list	Gen. Surgery	7227/-	21.04.20	22.04.20
20.	Transcutaneous Bilirubinometer 2020 GMCH 54620 1 GMCH-PB-II-PA-VIII-ET/20/663	02 Nos.	Neonatology	12000/-	21.04.20	22.04.20
21.	Sample Cups for Auto Analyzer 2.0ml 2020 GMCH 54653 1 GMCH-PB-II-PA-VIII-ET/20/Bio15	5.0 lacs	Biochemistry	9000/-	22.04.20	23.04.20
22.	Operation Theatre Gown 2020 GMCH 54485 1 GMCH-PB-II-PA-III-ET/20/648	500 Nos.	Orthopaedics	25000/-	22.04.20	23.04.20
23.	Slow Low Efficient Dialysis Machine 2020 GMCH 54615 1 GMCH-PB-II-PA-III-ET/20/659	02 Nos.	Gen. Medicine	38000/-	23.04.20	24.04.20
24.	Phase Contrast Microscope 2020 GMCH 54617 1 GMCH-PB-II-PA-VI-ET/20/661	01 No.	Genetic Centre	10000/-	23.04.20	24.04.20
25.	Bioelectric Impedance Body Composition Analyzer 2020 GMCH 54648 1 GMCH-PB-II-PA-III-ET/20/663	01 No.	Gen. Medicine	18000/-	24.04.20	27.04.20
26.	Plasma Sterilizer 2020 GMCH 54659 1 GMCH-PB-II-PA-III-ET/20/6501	04 Nos.	Operation Theatre Block - C	720000/-	24.04.20	27.04.20
27.	* High Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) for Haemoglobinopathies 2020 GMCH 54666 1 GMCH-PB-II-PA-VIII-ET/20/P/82	01 No.	Pathology	130000/-	28.04.20	29.04.20
28.	* Video Cholelithoscope 2020 GMCH 54606 1 GMCH-PB-I-PA-VII-ET/20/655	01 Set	Gen. Surgery	64000/-	28.04.20	29.04.20
29.	* Fully Automated Elisa Processor 2020 GMCH 54636 1 GMCH-PB-II-PA-VIII-ET/20/652	01 No.	Biochemistry	80000/-	29.04.20	30.04.20
30.	ICU Beds 2020 GMCH 54609 GMCH-PB-II-PA-III-ET/20/656	13 Nos.	Neurosurgery	91000/-	29.04.20	30.04.20

**Terms & Conditions:**

- Tender documents for the above items can be obtained from websites.
- The Competent authority reserves all rights to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason.
- Tender Document of GMCH, after duly signed & stamped, along with original brochure of the manufacturer and EMD, in the shape of FDR /DD /Bankers Cheque/bank Guarantee, (separate for each item), must be submitted in physical form, in the office of Procurement Branch, Room No. 225, Block - D, first Floor, GMCH, Sector 32, Chandigarh on or before the dates as noted against each item by 1400 hours on any working day. Tenders without submission of EMD and Tender Document in physical form shall be rejected straightway.
- The tenders must be submitted online on or before the dates as noted against each item by 1400 hours. The bid guarantee and technical bid will be opened on due date at 1500 hours. No tender shall be accepted in physical form.
- Opening of Price Bid to be intimated to all the qualified bidders separately.
- PRE-BID CONFERENCE** with the intending bidders for the above said item at Sr. No. 27 & 28 will be held on 07.04.2020 from 03.00pm onwards and for item at Sr. No. 29 will be held on 08.04.2020 from 03.00pm onwards in the Board Room, Block - D, 1st Floor, GMCH-32, Chandigarh.
- All the bidders who are willing to attend the pre-bid conference in the respective cases on the above scheduled date and time and desire to make the amendment in the specifications should submit their points through e-mail i.e. msgmch@rediffmail.com or procurementbranch1@yahoo.com by 31.03.2020 positively. Besides, bidders should attend the pre-bid conference after thorough study of the technical specifications of the relevant equipment to avoid wastage of time during pre-bid.
- The tenderer can approach the Computer Programmer-cum-Nodal Officer, e-tendering, GMCH-32, Chandigarh on any working day, in case any query/clarification regarding e-tendering process (Ph. No. 0172-2601023-27 Extn, 2112) or (Ph. No. 0172-2740641) of IT Dept., UT, Chandigarh.
- The information regarding these tenders are also available at the following web sites :- <http://gmch.gov.in> <http://otenders.chd.nic.in/nicgep/app>

Medical Superintendent,  
for Director Principal,  
Govt. Medical College Hospital,  
Chandigarh

## A warrior for democracy in Pakistan, peace with India

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN  
MUMBAI, MARCH 15

HIS LANKY frame eased into a comfortable chair, his face wreathed in a big smile, his eyes twinkling behind his glasses. Mubashir Hasan would typically begin our conversations with: "Batao, Indiam kya ho nahaha". It was more like appearing for a viva, because Dr Mubashir really knew it all as a principal actor in one of the biggest and most ambitious people's movements for India-Pakistan peace over nearly three decades.

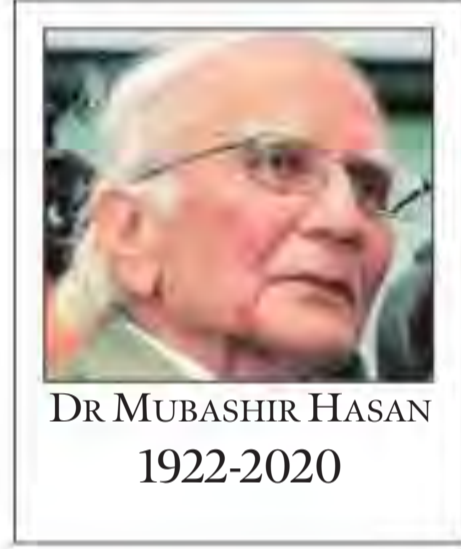
Dr Mubashir, who died in Lahore aged 98 Saturday, was an exemplary warrior for India-Pakistan peace, whose unstinting commitment and efforts toward the cause inspired peace activists on both sides for over 25 years.

But he was also a hard-nosed realist who knew it would take years of struggle, if not generations, for that elusive peace to be achieved, and that he would not be around to see it in his lifetime.

That was because Dr Mubashir had a clear-eyed, insider's view of the nature of the beast which he called the "South Asian state". In Pakistan, he had been Finance Minister in Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's cabinet as well as a founding member of the Pakistan People's Party — its first meeting was held at his home in Lahore over two days because no hotel was willing to provide the space. He had a big role to play in the party's initial socialist vision.

"Only later we discovered that we are in the Assembly, we are ministers, we are the government, but we have no power. The power was in the hands of those who stay permanently, the combine of military-civilian services, and it remains there," he told this reporter in a 2009 interview, at a time the PPP had come back to power and Asif Ali Zardari was the President of Pakistan.

As an Indophile, and a frequent visitor to Delhi until about five years ago, Dr Mubashir knew well India's internal faultlines too, and often said that the post-colonial legacy of both countries, which he called "mere clones of



DR MUBASHIR HASAN  
1922-2020

their colonial predecessor", were hardwired to thwart the real aspirations of their citizens.

That did not discourage him from throwing himself into a grassroots campaign for peace. In 1994, he was in a group of 10 public intellectuals from Pakistan, many of them, including him, founding members of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, and 10 more from India, who formed the Pakistan India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy, the first attempt at forging a cross-border civil society consensus on the imperative of India-Pakistan peace.

"He was the main spirit behind the initiative. It was a totally unique idea. Other Track Twos that existed then were statist and elitist. This was the first time a joint India-Pakistan forum was involving ordinary people," said filmmaker Tapan Bose, also a founding member of PIPFPD. In India, the forum has chapters in several cities.

The PIPFPD met regularly, holding massive conventions in both countries through that decade, undeterred by the suspicion from both sides. At a time when the situation in Kashmir was at boiling point due to cross-border militancy, here was an India-Pakistan group, made up entirely of members of civil society, that boldly called on Pakistan to end its material support to the militancy, even as it asked India to withdraw its Army from civilian areas and end the human rights abuses. A decade before the first bus service rolled across the LoC and Musharraf spoke of his "four point solution" to Kashmir, PIPFPD had declared that it was non-territorial dis-

pute, called for establishing cross-LoC contacts and for involving the people of Kashmir in a solution to the problem.

The Kolkata Convention of December 1996 was a particular high point. It was attended by over 300 Indians and Pakistanis. Unthinkable now, delegates from both countries walked through Kolkata chanting "Ek Mata Do Santan: Bharat aur Pakistan". The convention demanded that both countries celebrate the 50th anniversary of their Independence by pledging to devote the second half-century of freedom to strengthening peace, justice, equality and democracy. They asked the two countries to sign on August 14-15, 1997, a no-war treaty, and even declared that in the 50th year celebrations, the people of each country must rejoice in the other's freedom and integrity. Today, when visas have dried up for over two years, and being labelled a traitor is the territory that comes with even visiting the Pakistan High Commission in India in Delhi, such demands seem out of this world.

"The no-war stand was something PIPFPD initiated. And that was what we stood for even when the November 2008 Mumbai attacks took place. We have always condemned terrorism, but war is not the answer," said Bose, recalling the human chain for peace organised at the time by PIPFPD from Taj hotel to CSMT, both of which were targeted by the terrorists.

Dr Mubashir belonged to a well-to-do Shia family that went from Panipat to Lahore at Partition. A Columbia University doctorate-holder, he quit as a civil engineer in the 1960s to join forces with Bhutto when he was forming the Pakistan People's Party. He parted ways with it when Benazir took charge of it after her father's hanging, and in the 1990s, joined PPP (Shaheed) started by Ghinwa Bhutto, the wife of Benazir's slain brother Murtaza. Their daughter Fatima, now an acclaimed writer, once described Dr Mubashir as a "political treasure".

In a country as known as India for its corrupt politicians, Dr Mubashir refused to change his

names were written on the poster.

"They have been booked because the hoarding does not have the name of the publisher which is compulsory," Lucknow DCP (Central) Dinesh Singh said Saturday. "Another section for de-facement of public property under the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act has been slapped against them." They have been also booked under IPC Section 505(1)(b) — with intent to cause, or which is likely to cause, fear or alarm to the public, or to any section of the public whereby any person may be induced to commit an offence against the State or against the public tranquility — and the Press and

Registration of Books Act, 1867. A police officer said Ashwini's scooter was used when the poster was plastered outside the BJP headquarters. "We found that out during the probe when CCTV in the area was scanned," he added.

State Congress chief Ajay Kumar Lallu lashed out at the government over the arrests. "This government does not follow the rule of law," he told reporters. "It does what it wants to in a vindictive manner." The Opposition party also held a protest at the Gandhi Pratima area here.

Lallu accused the BJP of seeking to suppress dissent. "If there is so much of anger [due to such posters], imagine what will happen when their unlawful activi-

ties are unmasked before the public," said the Congress leader. "I want to gift the Indian Constitution to him [Adityanath], so that he reads it thoroughly. He wants to run the state like his mutt, which is completely unconstitutional." Adityanath is chief priest of the Gorakhnath Mutt.

BJP spokesperson Rakesh Tripathi said the Congress should have done the "sensible" thing by suspending the cadres responsible for such a "cheap gimmick". "This is not a matter of politics," he added. "The police and the administration have conducted a probe, and based on that and the rules they have lodged the case and made the arrests."

(WITHINPUTS FROM PTI)

## Two UP Cong workers jailed over posters targeting Yogi, Dy CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
LUCKNOW, MARCH 15

TWO CONGRESS workers here were sent to jail on Sunday, a day after being arrested for putting up posters in which Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya, and other BJP leaders were labelled "rioters".

The posters, which carried the photographs of the BJP leaders, were put up on Friday night, days after the city administration erected hoardings with the pictures of people who have received government notices seeking damages for properties destroyed during anti-Citizenship Amendment

Act protests here in December. "People want answers," read one poster. "When will recovery happen from these rioters?" Referring to Adityanath, it said: "According to Lok Sabha poll affidavit, he is the main accused for inciting Gorakhpur riots and five serious cases." The poster said Maurya was also accused of rioting, and was facing 11 cases in Kaushambi.

The two Congress workers arrested on Saturday night were identified as Sudhanshu Bajpai and Ashwini. A third party worker, identified as Laalu Kannaujia, was also allegedly involved in the incident. The police mentioned Bajpai and Kannaujia in the FIR lodged on Saturday "as their

names were written on the poster." "They have been booked because the hoarding does not have the name of the publisher which is compulsory," Lucknow DCP (Central) Dinesh Singh said Saturday. "Another section for de-facement of public property under the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act has been slapped against them." They have been also booked under IPC Section 505(1)(b) — with intent to cause, or which is likely to cause, fear or alarm to the public, or to any section of the public whereby any person may be induced to commit an offence against the State or against the public tranquility — and the Press and

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(WITHINPUTS FROM PTI)



SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

# Virus testing in India, elsewhere

Govt will start testing influenza patients without travel history or COVID-19 contact. A look at how this compares with other countries' strategies, and why India's model will not open doors to private labs yet

**ABANTIKA GHOSH**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

ON FRIDAY, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) announced that it would start testing influenza patients without any travel history or contact with novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) for signs of community transmission, terming it "inevitable". Last week itself, the Health Ministry had announced that India had recorded its first cases of community transmission, though officials later clarified it had meant "local transmission in the community".

Various countries have adopted various models for addressing community transmission, or for preventing it. India's decision also raises the question: will the larger number of tests open up testing at private facilities?

**What is community transmission?**

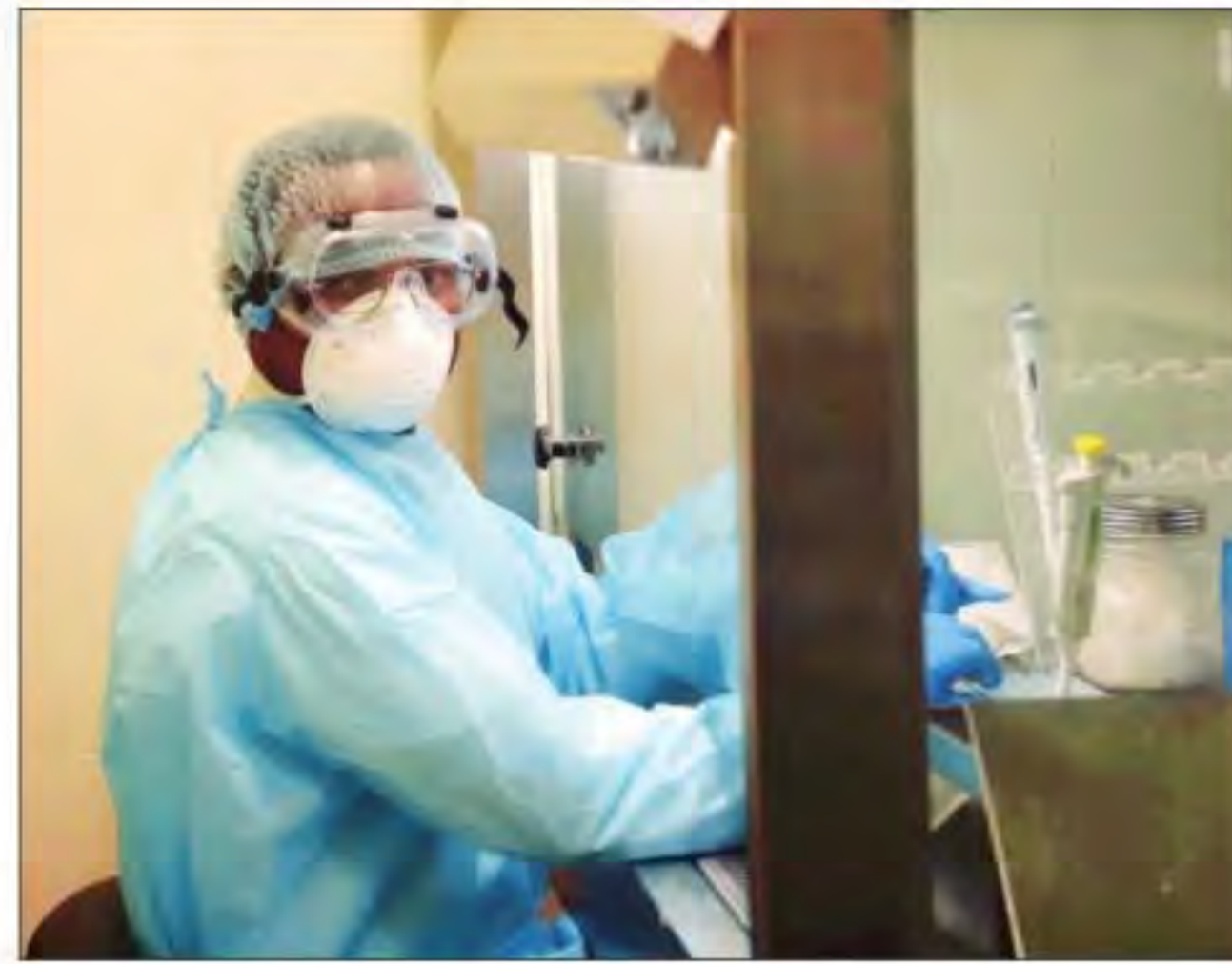
It is one of the levels of transmission defined by the World Health Organization (WHO). Simply put, community transmission means that a virus is circulating in the community and can affect people with no history of travel to affected areas or of contact with an infected person. That is what ICMR is trying to find out by testing over 1,000 samples from people suffering from influenza-like symptoms but with no history of such travel or contact. India's current emphasis on social distancing and discouragement of public gatherings, too, is aimed at checking community transmission.

Once community transmission begins, it is more difficult to trace contacts. One unknown source of infection can wreak havoc — one woman in South Korea, who refused to take the test, has been found to have ended up infecting over 160 people.

**What is known about the level of transmission in India?**

So far, most of the cases in India have had a history of travel abroad — for example, the Kerala and Delhi patients — or have contracted the disease from somebody around them — for example, the Italian tourist in Jaipur who ended up infecting 17 in the group including their Indian driver. On the other hand, some of the cases in Agra had neither any history of foreign travel nor had they come directly in contact with an infected person.

In a statement last week, the Health Ministry had said: "Since, in addition to COVID 19 cases related to travel, some cases of community transmission have also been observed, it has been decided to involve district collectors and States have been asked to



At the National Institute of Virology in Pune, where final confirmatory tests are done for novel coronavirus infection... Pavan Khengre

form rapid response teams as the district, block and village levels." Later, joint secretary Lav Agarwal clarified that this means local transmission at community level.

Local transmission, another level defined by WHO, happens through direct contact with an infected person within the country. In Agra, after two people with travel history to Italy infected their families, door-to-door searches were undertaken within a 3-km radius.

Another level is imported transmission, for which the protocol is vigilance at the borders and airports, such as thermal screening and quarantine if required, like India began early on. India has also suspended visas to foreign nationals and the facility of visa-free travel to OCI card-holders.

**So, does India's latest move mean opening up testing to the private sector?**

While the government is working with private hospitals to develop standard operating procedures for treatment and isolation of patients, there is no move yet for the testing process to be opened up for the private sector.

The possibility of profiteering is one concern. The primary reason for the government seeking to retain its control on the testing regime, however, is fear of wider exposure. "It is not a question of technology; allowing the private sector would mean possible pa-

tients will be going to such a large number of places where adherence to infection control norms would be crucial to prevent spread of infections. Designated laboratories mean that we streamline everything, including the exposure of the medical staff and laboratory technicians," said a senior official of the National Centre for Disease Control.

For now, the tests ICMR is doing are free for patients. Were they to pay, the two tests have would cost them about Rs 5,000. So, even if the government did open it up to private laboratories, it would mean not everyone would be able to afford the test. Rather than opening up testing to the private sector and risk exposing more people, India has chosen to wait a bit longer for test reports while the patient is in isolation.

**How does India's model for testing for the virus — and combating it — compare with those of other countries?**

Among the countries where community transmission seems to have begun are China (over 80,000 cases), Italy (over 21,000) and South Korea (8,000). For the time being, India has chosen to follow the Italian model of lockdown, rather than the South Korean model of free testing.

Italy, the epicentre of the outbreak in Europe, has imposed a nationwide lockdown, especially given its ageing population. Stores

and restaurants have been closed and restrictions put on individual movement. Spain too has announced plans to lock down its citizens, while France has shut down several places. Cases are still climbing in these countries.

South Korea, meanwhile, has been testing lakhs of people and tracking potential carriers — like detectives, according to a Reuters report — by using cell phone and satellite technology. Mass free testing and treatment, and identification of transmission sources, have brought down daily new cases, from 909 on February 29 to less than 100 on March 15.

For India, massive free testing in a country of 135 crore would need humongous resources. India currently has reagents for about 1 lakh tests, has done a little over 6,000 tests so far, and is in the process of procuring 2 lakh more test kits. But if mass testing were to be done, all this would be a drop in the ocean.

**What are countries besides these doing?**

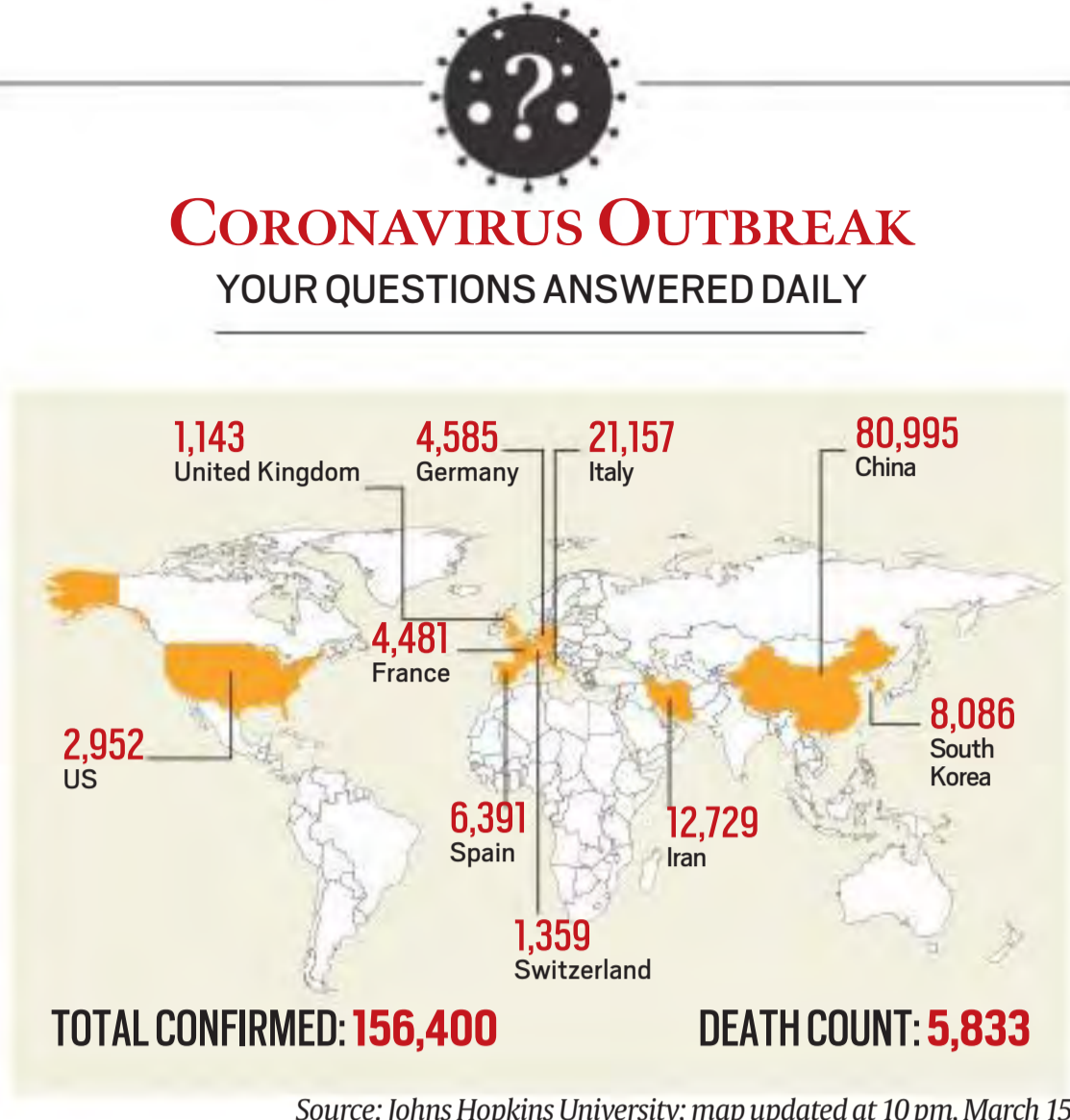
China adopted a graded approach, and the number of new cases are gradually declining. It has locked down Hubei, the epicentre, for 50 days now. Elsewhere, it enforced social distancing measures during the crucial phase of the Chinese New Year. "As part of these social distancing policies, the Chinese Government encouraged people to stay at home; discouraged mass gatherings; cancelled or postponed large public events; and closed schools, universities, government offices, libraries, museums, and factories. Only limited segments of urban public transport systems remained operational and all cross-province bus routes were taken out of service," *The Lancet* wrote earlier this month.

The US has partnered with a Google subsidiary to develop a website which will help determine whether a test is warranted.

**What else is in India's strategy?**

India is relying on social distancing and cluster containment. According to the containment plan developed by the Health Minister: "The cluster containment strategy would be to contain the disease within a defined geographic area by early detection, breaking the chain of transmission and thus preventing its spread to new areas. This would include geographic quarantine, social distancing measures, enhanced active surveillance, testing all suspected cases, isolation of cases, home quarantine of contacts, social mobilization to follow preventive public health measures."

Quarantine and isolation help by breaking the chain of transmission. More than 43,000 persons are now under community surveillance by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme, and contact tracing is still on.



Source: Johns Hopkins University; map updated at 10 pm, March 15

## Once treated for infection, can a patient relapse?

**TABASSUM BARNAGARWALA**

OUT OF 110 individuals who have tested positive for novel coronavirus infection in India, 13 have been discharged, according to the Health Ministry's update on Sunday. Worldwide, out of over 1.56 lakh positive cases, over a third — 54,000 — have recovered. Yet there have been cases in China, South Korea and most recently Japan, where treated patients were re-diagnosed with COVID-19 after discharge. On February 14, a septuagenarian in Japan was diagnosed in a cruise ship; on March 2, he tested negative and was discharged; on March 14, he tested positive again.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said immunity against COVID-19 is not fully understood. Signals from the previous coronavirus outbreaks have been mixed: studies on the virus that caused MERS showed people are unlikely to get reinfected within a short time of the original infection, while there were records of relapse during the SARS outbreak.

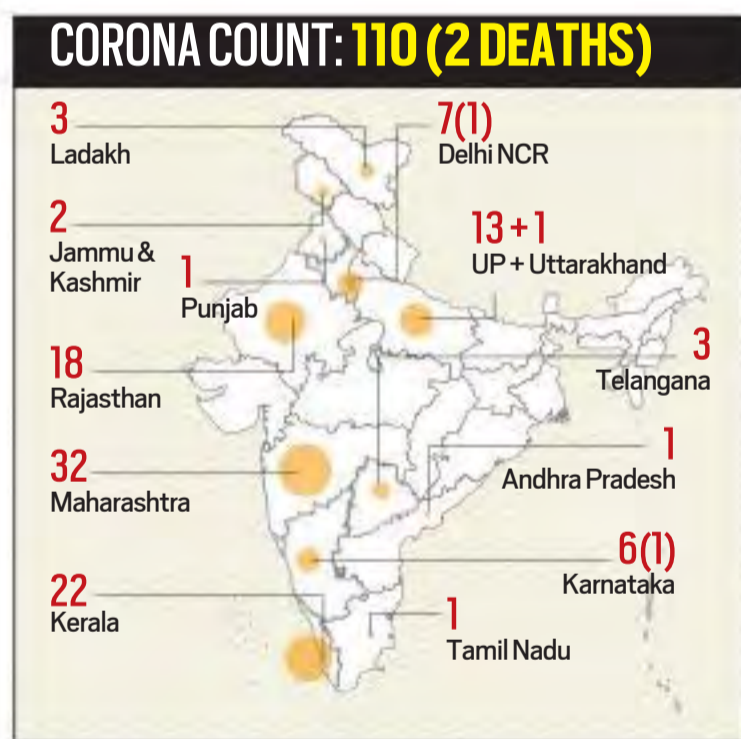
There are at least two possible scenarios leading to a second positive test. The virus could have lain dormant in the body, so that the test before discharge would have failed to pick the low virus threshold. Eventually, the viral load would have increased so that

it would be detected during re-testing. The second possibility is that the patient reacquired the infection, perhaps a mutated strain, from the community.

There could also be laboratory-related factors responsible for a second positive test — a human error in testing, contaminated swab samples, an over-sensitive nucleic acid test during re-testing, or discharge given to a person still infected, without following proper protocol. "The PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test amplifies and picks the virus. But it is possible the sample got contaminated; also sensitivity of the test is not 100%," said Dr Tanu Singhal, infectious diseases expert in Mumbai's Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital.

While discharging 13 patients, Indian authorities have been following a guideline that a patient must be tested twice within a gap of 24 hours. Only if both tests come negative is the patient discharged. China has a similar protocol in place but some experts have raised concerns whether each patient discharged did undergo two tests. The country's diagnostic resources were under strain with over 80,000 cases.

In many cases, a coronavirus infection causes lifelong immunity. In several other cases, however, the antibodies produced against the virus may not prove effective if there is a mutation in the virus. In such cases, there will be reinfection.



Map based on Union Health Ministry update at 11.30 pm, March 15. Some state governments may have reported higher numbers.

**13 DISCHARGED**  
Delhi (2), Kerala (3), UP (4), Rajasthan (3), Telangana (1)

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

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

ON FRIDAY, declaring a national emergency and listing the measures taken to tackle the coronavirus pandemic, US President Donald Trump announced that Google was helping the government develop a website "to determine whether a test is warranted and to facilitate testing at a nearby convenient location".

**The company & the tool**

Trump was talking about Verily, a subsidiary of Google's parent company Alphabet "focused on life sciences and healthcare". At the press conference, Deborah Birk, the White House's coronavirus response coordinator, said the website would let people fill out a questionnaire describing symptoms after which they would be directed to drive-through testing centres. "The labs will then move to the high-throughput automated machines to be able to provide results in 24 to 36 hours."

Soon after, Google Communications' Twitter handle had a statement attributed to Verily: "We are developing a tool to help triage individuals for Covid-19 testing. Verily is in the early stages of development, and

planning to roll testing out in the Bay Area, with the hope of expanding more broadly over time," the tweet said. It did not specify if this was the website Trump mentioned above, and rather used the term tool. As the US tried to get clarity from both, a later tweet said: "We are fully aligned and continue to work with the US Government to contain the spread of COVID-19, inform citizens, and protect the health of our communities."

Later, a Verily spokesperson told *time.com* that the site would be part of Verily's Project Baseline and could be available "by Monday".

**How it reads data**

Launched in 2015, Verily claims its mission is to "make the world's health data useful so that people enjoy healthier lives". So it "develops tools and devices to collect, organise and activate health data", and "creates interventions to prevent and manage disease". The company, headed by Andrew Conrad, PhD, has engineers, scientists, designers and medical experts working on various projects.

Project Baseline was launched in 2017 "with the goal of bridging the gap between research and care". A clear agenda is to create a detailed baseline of what a healthy human being should be using anonymised data



Samples for testing for COVID-19 in Denver, Colorado. AP

from hundreds of users. It also lets regular people become part of clinical research aimed at creating this human map of sorts.

Meanwhile, *Bloomberg* reported that Alphabet Chief Executive Officer Sundar Pichai has told employees about the partnership. "A planning effort is underway to use the expertise in life sciences and clinical research of Verily in partnership with Google to aid in the COVID-19 testing effort," *Bloomberg* quoted Pichai's email as telling employees. Asking for volunteers to work on the project,

Pichai wrote that the "planners are looking to develop a pathway for public health and health care agencies to direct people to our Baseline website, where individuals who are at higher risk can be directed to testing sites based on the latest guidance from public health authorities".

**Google's role**

Google seems to be helping the US government's efforts against COVID-19 in other ways too. Anne Schuchat, Principal Deputy Director at US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, had told Congress earlier this month that her agency was using Google location data to map travel patterns among other things. The search giant is also triggering an "SOS Alert" on coronavirus searches across the world, giving prominence to posts from mainstream news publications and health authorities. Last week it also banned ads for face masks as well as monetisation on YouTube videos related to the topic to disincentivise creation of fake videos touting alternative treatments for the virus.

Verily is not Alphabet's only medical research company. It also owns Calico — acronym for "California Life Company" — researching into aging and related diseases.

# How a little shell tells us the day was 23½ hours long, once upon a time

**KABIR FIRAQUE**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

TOWARDS THE end of the time when dinosaurs ruled Earth, a little mollusc lived for nine years in a shallow seabed. Seventy million years later, scientists picked up its fossil from what is now dry land in the mountains of Oman. Their analysis provided new clues about the behaviour of a much warmer Earth.

Earth spun 372 times a year 70 million years ago, compared to the current 365. This means the day was 23½ hours long, compared to 24 today. This new measurement, in turn, informs models of how the Moon formed and how close it has been to Earth over their 4.5-billion-year gravitational re-

lationship, the scientists said. The study is published in the American Geophysical Union's journal *Paleoceanography and Paleoclimatology*.

**Faster Earth in the olden days**

It has long been known that Earth's spin has slowed over time. Previous climate reconstructions, however, have typically described long-term changes over tens of thousands of years. The new study looked at daily and annual variations in the mollusc shell.

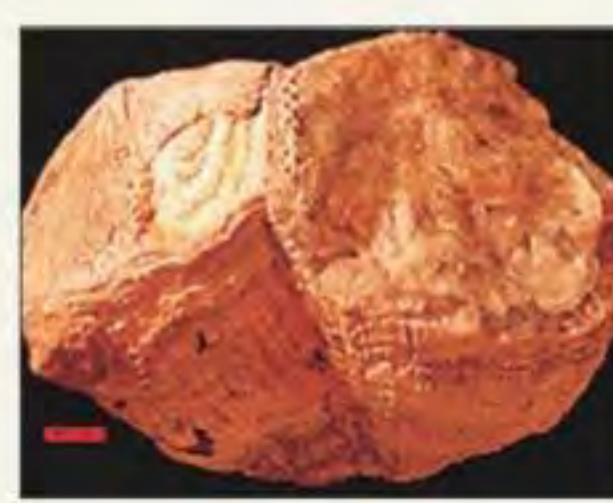
The ancient mollusc, *Torreites sanchezi*, belonged to an extinct group called rudist clams. At 70 million years ago, it belonged to the Late Cretaceous — it was around the time this epoch ended, some 65 million years ago, that dinosaurs went extinct.

*Torreites sanchezi* grew very fast, laying

down daily growth rings. Using lasers on a single individual, scientists sampled tiny slices and counted the growth rings accurately. This allowed them to determine the number of days in a year 70 million years ago, and more accurately calculate the length of a day.

It is important to note that the period of Earth's orbit has remained the same. In other words, one year 70 million years ago was as long as as one year today. However, if there were a calendar then, the year would have been 372 "days" long, with each "day" half-an-hour shorter than one day today.

Today, Earth's orbit is not exactly 365 days, but 365 days and a fraction, which is why our calendars have leap years, as a correction. In the new study, the most accurate estimate that can be made is in a whole



A rudist clam from the mountains of Oman from the Cretaceous Period. Scientists analysed a rudist clam from these mountains to estimate how long a day was 70 mn years ago. Wikipedia

number of days a year, said lead author Neils de Winter, a geochemist from Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

"We are pretty sure this number (372) is very accurate because of our new method of looking at multiple chemical records and multiple years. However, the exact number could be, for example, 372.25 or 371.75, just like it is approximately 365.25 days nowadays (when we count the leap days)," de Winter said, by email.

**The Moon's retreat**

Friction from ocean tides, caused by the Moon's gravity, slows Earth's rotation and leads to longer days. And as Earth's spin slows, the Moon moves farther away, at 3.82 cm per year.

If this rate is projected back in time, how-

ever, the Moon would be inside the Earth only 1.4 billion years ago. Which cannot be, for the Moon has been with us much longer. Which means the Moon's rate of retreat has changed over time. The authors say their study helps reconstruct that history.

"We now have a new method to reconstruct the number of days in a year with greater precision. This will help us understand how the Earth-Moon system evolved over time," de Winter said. "... We now have a technique that allows us to look at variations in climate and environment on the scale of days, millions of years in the past. This allows us to bridge the gap between climate and weather in our reconstructions of greenhouse periods in the past and gives us more detailed snapshots of what the world looks like when it gets so warm."





SEE HOW FEW OF THE CASES OF THE SUSPENSION OF THE HABEAS CORPUS LAW HAVE BEEN WORTHY OF THAT SUSPENSION. — THOMAS JEFFERSON

## The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY  
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

# Smart-locking India

We have political will, resources to shut down country intelligently to counter COVID 19 spread



SHASHANK R JOSHI

## INCOMPLETE STEP

Farooq Abdullah's release is reminder of continued detention of many others in Kashmir. Government must follow through

IT WOULD NOT be enough to simply welcome the release of member of Parliament and former Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir Farooq Abdullah. It must also be pointed out that a grave violation of fundamental rights was committed by placing him, other political leaders, and thousands of others under detention in the first place. No valid reasons were given for invoking the J&K Public Safety Act against the National Conference chairman, or indeed against two other chief ministers and other politicians, just as no reason has been given now for why such a danger to public safety — for that is what slapping him with the PSA had implied — has now been let go from house arrest. Or should it be inferred from the government's actions that arrest and a case under a draconian law are only instruments to be deployed and withdrawn at its discretion and whim?

The 80-year-old Abdullah, who underwent two cataract surgeries while in detention, has been restrained since his release, stating that while a "free and frank exchange of political views is essential" to understand the Centre's actions in J&K since August 5, 2019, he will not make any political statements until such time as the others remain in detention, and that he will keep what he has to say for Parliament. It is not known if the Centre has had any dialogue with Abdullah or reached an "understanding" with him, as is being suggested in some quarters. But what appears to be clear is that the government may have realised that the newly floated Jammu & Kashmir Apni Party can neither be a credible alternative, nor even begin to engage with the people of Kashmir and kickstart the political process unless it begins releasing the former state's established politicians. The engagement and participation of the National Conference, J&K's biggest regional political party, is as essential to the political process as it ever was. What remains to be seen is if and how the NC, which passed an autonomy resolution in the J&K Assembly in 2000, will play in a game in which the goalposts have been radically shifted.

Farooq Abdullah himself has not made the demand that the others be released immediately, asking only for those imprisoned outside the former state to be brought back to J&K "pending their release" as it will enable their family members to meet them more easily in the time of coronavirus. Yet the release of the detained politicians, including Abdullah's son Omar, and the People's Democratic Party leader, Mehbooba Mufti, several other top-line leaders and many more, under house arrest and in prisons in and outside J&K, is imperative. The government must lose no time in taking the next step.

## SORRY PICTURE

Allahabad HC was right to condemn naming and shaming of protesters. By not upholding it, apex court disappoints

THE ALLAHABAD HIGH Court had, suo motu, taken cognisance of the UP government's vindictive move to put up roadside posters naming and shaming and giving photos and details of individuals accused of damaging public property during the anti-CAA protests in Lucknow in December 2019. The court deservedly reprimanded the Adityanath government for "undemocratic functioning", for violating the individual's fundamental right to privacy and the assurance of Article 21, that no person shall be deprived of life and personal liberty except by procedure established by law. It directed the government to take down the posters "forthwith" and set a date for it to submit a compliance report to the court. When the UP government appealed the decision of the Allahabad HC, however, the Supreme Court merely remarked that the state's action was not "covered in law" and referred the case to a bigger bench. This is disappointing. Surely, it should not require a larger bench to see the obvious: That the UP government's move is an attempt to intimidate and hound the protester, that it is guilty of trying to undermine the presumption of innocence until proven guilty by due process of law — a cardinal principle of criminal jurisprudence.

Taking its cue from the apex court, the UP cabinet has cleared the draft Uttar Pradesh Recovery of Damage to Public and Private Property Ordinance 2020 — it proposes to legalise its invasion of the privacy of citizens and its invitation to mob justice in a state that has seen frequent episodes of vigilante violence. In a sense, the UP government's moves, first to name and shame protesters and then to provide legal cover for it, are only in keeping with its conduct so far, ever since the eruption of protests against the new citizenship law. The brutality of the police crackdown in December 2019, the indiscriminate slapping of grievous charges against protesters, and the death toll, are all an indictment of a rampaging state trying to look strong by using force to crush basic liberties. But the apex court's ostensible reprieve to the UP government is a let-down.

The Supreme Court has shown a disturbing lack of urgency in habeas corpus cases relating to Kashmir recently, and in matters of hate speech and sedition, yet it remains the citizen's best hope for protection of individual liberties against state trespass and transgression. It must be hoped that the larger bench which will hear the UP government's challenge of the Allahabad HC ruling in this week, will make amends for the impression of delay and miscarriage of justice in the case so far.

## FREEZE FRAME

EP UNNY



COVID 19 — A small tiny microbe — is stronger than any current nuclear warhead on earth which threatens to disrupt and destroy global as well as Indian economy and health. As we grapple with the global COVID 19 anxiety and fear, unfortunately, we rely on social media platforms where rumours spread faster than the virus. Currently, India has entered Stage 2 of the COVID 19 epidemic, but can we do something urgently to halt it before Stages 3 and 4, and prevent it from becoming another China or Italy? Let's look at what COVID 19 is doing globally and what it has already done in India.

Coronavirus 19, which emerged from China but has now spread globally, belongs to a simple family of common cold viruses which look innocent and harmless unlike the sinister flu. But it has footprints of two similar epidemics: SARS (2002) and MERS (2012) apart from Ebola, which were contained well globally in the last two decades. Coronaviruses are large groups of viruses seen in humans as well as animals like camels, bats, cats, and even cattle, which India should take note of. The current COVID 19 appears to be a bat-originated beta variant of the coronavirus. The human COVID disease is fatal predominantly in elderly or vulnerable groups, such as people with chronic disease like hypertension, diabetes, cancer or people with suppressed immune systems.

It is spread via airborne droplets (sneeze or cough) or contact with surface. It is possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or an object that has the virus on it and then touching their own nose, eyes or mouth. This creates vulnerability and susceptibility of the spread of the virus through airborne droplets and contact surfaces — which are now, therefore, targets of public hygiene for preventing the spread. The traditional Indian culture of hand washing and cleaning, for instance, is

a barrier which has helped our citizens gain some degree of natural protection. But we are vulnerable due to the large population constantly travelling and working: This needs immediate containment to halt the virus spread. We are a ticking time bomb now with less than 30 days to explode in Stage 3, which will be the virus getting deeper into communities, and which will then be impossible to contain. Public hygiene in India is poor despite the "Swachh Bharat (Clean India)" movements. We need to have legislation with a penalty to stop spitting in public as well as private spaces. India has done very well to contain both SARS and the novel Nipah viral spread very well.

The COVID 19 virus possibly came from the Wuhan epicentre of central China via, very likely, animal to human transmission from animal markets. Subsequent to such animal to human transmission, as the strain spread, it assumed a large enough proportion to be called a pandemic. It rapidly transitioned across different geographies of the world including Korea, Japan, Iran, Italy and others for the WHO to declare it as a pandemic. However, neighbouring countries like Thailand and Singapore shut down their major cities and towns for a few weeks to stop it from moving onto the next stages. The big question today is, should the Indian government and the state governments stop the virus spread from Stage 2 to 3 by totally shutting down cities and towns when the economy is already fragile and on the brink?

India had its first case diagnosed on January 30, from a student who returned from China. Later, it had a very slow spread despite the global transit involved. Such individual cases will become small clusters. These clusters will then spread to communities. Currently, we have just moved from case to clusters, but we must halt the community-wide spread. COVID 19 usually fol-

lows what is known as a biphasic or dual phase infection, which means the virus persists and causes a different set of symptoms than observed in the initial bout. Also, sometimes, the recovered person can relapse.

Currently, the cases and clusters in India are simple spreaders which means an infected person with normal infectivity. But COVID 19 can also have a "super spreader", which means an infected person with high infectivity who can infect hundreds in no time. This was reportedly seen in Wuhan where a fringe group spread the virus via a place of worship in Korea, infecting almost 51 cases. India saw a mini spurt of cases on March 4, and then again between March 10 and 13, when cases jumped from 23 to 35, yet no super spreader was present. But now we have almost crossed a hundred cases and we must be vigilant. As we enter Stage 2, we will now see a geometric jump in the number of cases which will put us at risk of rapidly transitioning from Stage 2 to 3 like Italy, which we need to halt urgently.

The ICMR has rightly advised the government to go into partial shutdown but is it too little too late now? Should Indian cities and towns be shut like Singapore or Thailand as soon as possible, is the central issue now.

As health is both a central and state subject, there is an urgent need to clamp down on all major cities and towns, in all aspects: From travel to mass gatherings, to schools, colleges and workplaces. Only then can we prevent an Italy or China-like situation in India. It's time to halt COVID 19 by smartly locking the country at home so that we can have a better tomorrow. This needs a political will which we currently have.

The writer is the dean of Indian College of Physicians and a well-known endocrinologist, Mumbai. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 2014.

## DISCIPLINE, HATE, PUNISH

The genesis of Delhi riots lies in creating the Other within us



HEM BORKER

AS GORY images of the violence unleashed during the Delhi riots started streaming in, there was soon a point when one could not see anymore. When I went to take classes in Jamia Millia Islamia on February 26, sitting across from students who experienced a night of terror — fearing that their localities, homes, places of work and worship may be next — words failed me. How can people become this inhuman, they asked. Who does one turn to? Those dialing the police for help were reportedly told *tum chahte the na azaadi, ye lo azaadi* (You wanted freedom, here's your freedom).

The reason for this deep-rooted hatred and inhuman violence lies in the politically-designed, socially-embedded trajectory of Discipline-Hate-Punishment, which we routinely see playing out before our eyes. Nothing about the riots that unfolded in Delhi, the police repression of the student protesters in Jamia Millia Islamia or the mob lynchings of Muslims, is spontaneous.

Disciplining entails regimenting the popular consciousness towards a stereotypical construct of a particular social group. A means of numbing the human mind to reason and predisposing it to only see Otherness. This construction, by its very definition, dehumanises the Other. Given this disciplining of consciousness, the resulting hatred just requires a pretext to be translated into punishment.

We can see this process unfold in the constant stereotyping of the Muslim community. The stereotyping of the Indian Muslims — as jihadi terrorists, traitors who

cheer for the other side, be it in cricket or war, "termites" hollowing out the nation, innately aggressive, educationally backward, a "population bomb" that will soon overtake the Hindu majority — has resulted in demonising Muslims as the enemy within. We are constantly fed these caricatures in films, television serials, schools and universities and in conversations at informal gatherings, and on Facebook and WhatsApp messages.

This construction of the imaginary Other stirs up hostility and hatred. The manifestations of this aversion range from mere differences of opinion to social boycott to outright violence. The simmering hatred needs a mere pretext to be converted into retribution for all the imagined wrongs committed, a punishment which can be meted out to any member of that group.

This disciplining of the popular consciousness serves the political function of seamlessly allowing micro-level realities to connote macro socio-political economic meanings. For instance, a person caught on the suspicion of eating beef, which is against the local cultural ethos of certain communities, automatically becomes a cow slaughterer Pakistani, and thereby deserves to be lynched. Students voicing their opinion against the establishment in a progressive university become the seditious group trying to advocate secession from India. Roadblocks caused by peaceful sit-in protests (primarily led by women, students and Dalits) with the national flag and Constitution in the hands of protestors, be-

come a licence for regarding the protestors as traitors — and unleashing inhuman violence on them.

Intellectuals (including Nobel laureates) who criticise government decisions become anti-nationals. Those wearing a certain dress become terrorists. Those entering in inter-religious marriages become jihadis. Those not chanting certain nationalist songs become traitors.

The political functionality of this construction also lies in its remarkable adaptability, which not only serves to homogenise the Other but allows an assembly line production of Others: Urban naxals, left-leaning liberals, armchair intellectuals, tukde tukde gang, pseudo seculars, hijabi jihadis and so on. It sets into motion an insidious spiral of binary choices, each indicative of being a (hyper masculine religious) nationalist or anti-national. The actual and critical national concerns of unemployment and jobless growth; social questions of exclusion, frustrated aspirations, persistent patriarchy; and, the political questions of representation are deferred to eternity, to be addressed in the future owing to the urgency of punishing the Others who are compromising the Nation.

As we stand silent witnesses to "nationalist" speeches that spew hatred, arms wielding mobs burning homes and shops, we, too, become participants in this vicious cycle of discipline, hate and punish.

The writer is assistant professor, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi



ONE OF 800 MILLION

A VOICE, UNDER 35

The manifestations of this aversion range from mere differences of opinion to social boycott to outright violence. The simmering hatred needs a mere pretext to be converted into retribution for all the imagined wrongs committed, a punishment which can be meted out to any member of that group.

## MARCH 16, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

### LOK DAL SPLIT

RAJ NARAIN GAVE clear indications of his intentions to split the Lok Dal. Addressing a crowded news conference in Delhi, Narain declared that he would at no cost leave the party. If anyone did not like his presence in it, he was free to go — and that applied to Charan Singh also. Accusing the former prime minister of authoritarianism, Narain said Singh knew no distinction between loyal workers and sycophants. Maintaining that he was still the "chairman of the parliamentary board, president of the Janata (S) and the working president of the Lok Dal", he said Singh had no authority "either to appoint me or to sack me" from the chairmanship of the

parliamentary board.

### NEW ECONOMIC ORDER

DEPLORING THE "PERSISTENT lack of equity in international economic relations" the ministerial meeting of the Group of 77 presided over by India's external affairs minister, P V Narasimha Rao, demanded completion of decisions on a new economic order by September 11, 1981. What is now proposed is that the UN special assembly session which is to meet in August-September this year will summon UN conference on global negotiations for international economic cooperation for development beginning January 5, 1981 and conclude by September 11, 1981.

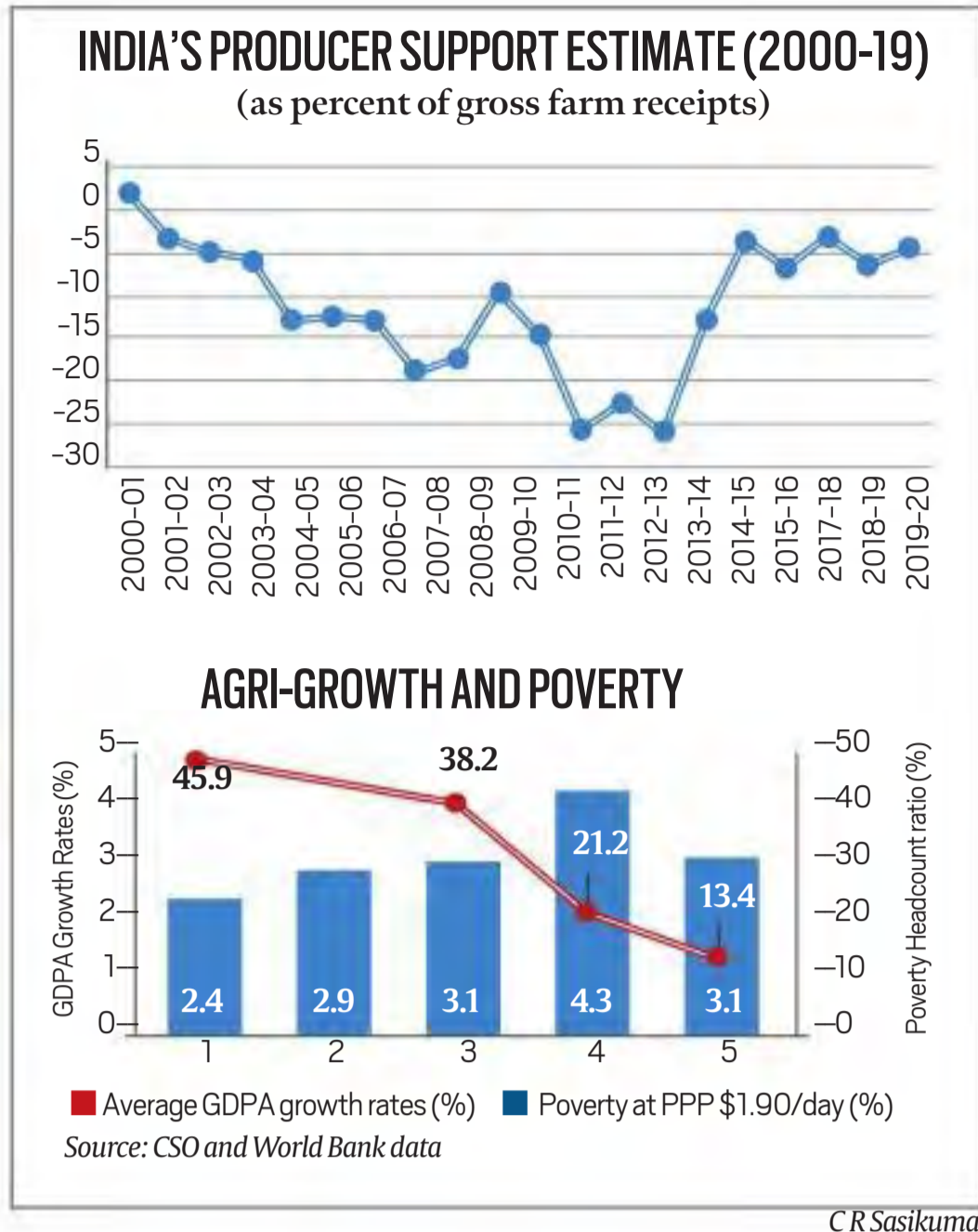
### ASSAM SOLUTION

THE FINANCE MINISTER, R Venkataraman, told the Lok Sabha that he hoped a solution to the Assam problem would be found "very soon". Venkataraman said there were several dimensions to the problem of foreigners in Assam. There was no accepted definition of a foreigner. Even if a definition was agreed upon, its application "bristles with difficulties". The matter was so delicate that it was being handled personally by the prime minister, he said. The minister admitted the people of Assam were facing shortages of salt, sugar, diesel and kerosene because of transport bottlenecks. The diesel shortage was, however, the creation of the Assamese themselves.





# 11 THE IDEAS PAGE



## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"How the epidemic will develop in Europe will largely determine the consequences caused by the epidemic and will reshape people's understanding of many issues." — Global Times, China

## Virus, on balance

Dealing with COVID-19 requires a clear public health focus while addressing fears at the individual level



ANAND KRISHNAN

MY FRIEND, WHOSE daughter is in the US, rang me up for advice. A coronavirus case has been reported from her city. Should he get his daughter to India? Is air travel safe? Everyone is worried about the way the COVID-19 outbreak will play out. In today's networked world, heightened sensitivities make it more difficult to manage such situations. There is a need for more informed decision-making and better dissemination of information.

The chance of getting infected is not very high and given the low mortality rates (to the general population), the threat perception should be low. The people who should be worried are healthcare workers, the elderly and other vulnerable groups and those who have had contact with the infected. Given the immunity levels of people in different parts of the country, even with low mortality rates, there are likely to be large number of deaths in a short period of time. This is a public health problem, but it should not be a personal problem for most people. Yet, people are overreacting by stocking sanitizers, masks and paracetamol. This is related to how the risk is communicated by governments and other sectors and how it is perceived by people. Our approach must be to have a clear public health focus while assuaging fears at the individual level.

The public health response to such outbreaks comprises three phases: The containment phase, delay phase and mitigation phase. During the containment phase, the aim is to detect and isolate cases and trace people who have been in contact with those infected. From a country point of view, the goal is to "prevent the disease taking hold in the country for as long as is reasonably possible". However, by the time the COVID-19 outbreak was known to the world outside China, many people had already travelled out of the country.

There are many unknowns when such an outbreak starts. For example, the incubation period (interval between being infected and showing symptoms) may be unknown and hence we do not know how long people should be quarantined. Similarly, we do not always know how many days before and after the onset of symptoms a patient is likely to pass on the infection. Moreover, if persons are infective even before they show signs and symptoms, they are likely to have already infected their close contacts and their isolation after diagnosis would not be very useful.

If containment does not work and the number of cases rise dramatically (there is no clear definition), we enter the delay stage — which is perhaps where we are in the current crisis. Delay is largely engineered through "social distancing" strategies and personal protection measures. These are the main tools to prevent accelerated transmission when no vaccine or prophylaxis is available. This includes school closures, encouraging more home

working and reducing large-scale gatherings. China did these most effectively, but other countries may find it difficult to follow it with the same effectiveness.

However, the evidence is not clear on the efficacy of measures like closing schools and stopping big gatherings. It is not possible to conduct "trials" to test such measures. Most of the evidence is based on modeling the spread of the infection, given the properties of the agent and social mixing in the population (who meets whom and how often). For many respiratory infections, children have been shown to bring the infection into the family from the schools. However, there are many things yet to be learnt with regard to the coronavirus infection.

Another purpose of the delay phase is to push the outbreak away from the winter season. If the peak of the virus can be delayed until the warmer months, it could possibly reduce the risk of transmission as the life of the virus in the environment is expected to be shorter. This phase allows time for strengthening the health system to prepare for the patient load.

In the event of the outbreak worsening, the response will escalate and the focus will be on providing optimal care for people who need hospitalisation and ensuring support for those who become infected but do not require hospital treatment. It also involves plans to minimise the impact of disease on society, public services and the economy.

The WHO was criticised for its handling of communication during the SARS epidemic — it was felt that the agency overreacted. Many lessons have been learnt since then. In the current situation, I am sure the WHO will be criticised for playing safe. In today's global environment, being balanced is very difficult and hindsight is cruel in its judgement. Travel advisories have serious economic and diplomatic consequences, especially if large and powerful nations are involved.

In such situations, it is not only necessary to give appropriate advice but also explain the process and purpose. The UK's approach has been praised for its transparency. In India, Kerala has received praise for its handling of the situation. However, we often get it wrong, as one hand of the government does not know what the other hand is doing. For example, on the day the Delhi government closed schools, I heard an advertisement on the radio in which a schoolchild complains that very few children came to play and the father reassures that there is no reason to worry about this in India.

There are some things we must not do — for example, politicise the matter. While there can be criticism of the way the issue was handled, this should not be given a political colour. This erodes trust in the government, which can be very harmful in a sensitive situation.

As the WHO has said, the world is entering uncharted territories. One of the tragedies of public health is that its failures are well known but its successes in preventing calamities are always questioned — as there is nothing to show. Let us hope that we not only mitigate the coronavirus infection but also learn lessons from it.

The writer is professor at the Centre for Community Medicine, AIIMS, New Delhi. The views expressed are personal

# Growth and the farmer

Montek Singh Ahluwalia's book helps frame the problem: Tilt in favour of consumer in food policy reduces incentives for farmers, makes it difficult to unlock resources for growth



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH BY ASHOK GULATI

LAST MONTH, MONTEK Singh Ahluwalia's book, *Backstage: The Story Behind India's High Growth Years*, was released. It is an account of India's economic reform journey—a process in which Montek was an insider for about 30 years. Besides some very interesting episodes pertaining to Montek's personal and professional life, the book is full of useful insights into policy debates and their complexities. At many places, it provides evidence of the impact of these policies. This can be extremely useful as we try to rejuvenate the country's sluggish economy and abolish poverty. It is impossible to do justice to every issue covered in the book. Here, I will confine myself to the policy debates and choices in the agri-food space.

Agriculture strategy appears in the chapter on inclusive growth. During the UPA period, from 2004-05 to 2013-14, it was believed that inclusive growth is not feasible unless agriculture grows at about 4 per cent per year while the overall economy grows at about 8 per cent annually. The reason was simple: More than half of the working force at that time was engaged in agriculture and much of their income was derived from agriculture. But many political heavyweights, even within the Congress, did not believe that agri-growth could reduce poverty fast enough.

The main instrument of agricultural strategy was the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), which gave more leverage to states to allocate resources within agriculture-related schemes. This, along with other infrastructure investments in rural areas, had a beneficial impact on agri-growth, which increased from 2.9 per cent during the Vajpayee period (1998-99 to 2003-04)

to 3.1 per cent during the UPA-1 period (2004-05 to 2008-09) and further to 4.3 per cent during UPA-2 (2009-10 to 2013-14). I strongly believe that the agri-GDP growth during UPA-2 was driven not as much by RKVY as it was by high agri-prices in the wake of the global economic crisis of 2007-08.

Agri-GDP growth had a significant impact on poverty reduction, whichever way it was measured — the Lakdawala poverty line or Tendulkar poverty line, which is higher. The rate of decline in poverty (head count ratio), about 0.8 per cent per year during 1993-94 to 2004-05, accelerated to 2.1 per cent per year, and for the first time, the absolute number of the poor declined by a whopping 138 million during 2004-05 to 2013-14. Interestingly, this holds even on the basis of the international poverty line of \$1.9 per capita per day (on 2011 purchasing power parity, PPP, also see graphs).

However, instead of celebrating this success of the growth strategy in alleviation of poverty, several NGOs and even Congress stalwarts remained sceptical. They advocated food subsidy under the Right to Food Campaign. Sonia Gandhi and her National Advisory Council (NAC) came up with a proposal to subsidise 90 per cent of people by giving them rice and wheat at Rs 3/kg and Rs 2/kg. Montek tried to convince them that this was likely to create an unsustainable burden on the exchequer. He also argued that India could end up importing grains to the tune of 13-15 million tonnes per year. Montek favoured a cap at 40 per cent of the population to be covered under the Food Security Act as the poverty ratio (HCR) in 2011-12 was 22 per cent. He also favoured providing smart cards to the beneficiaries so that they could opt for buying more nutritious food rather than just relying on rice and wheat. That would have also allowed diversification of agriculture and augmented farmers' incomes. But he could not win over the NAC — although the coverage for food subsidy was reduced from the original proposal of 90 per cent to 67 per cent of the population.

Montek also argued against export bans on agricultural commodities as these im-

acted farmers' incomes adversely. But the government of the day often ended up taking the consumer's side, as that was considered pro-poor. This reduced the incentives for farmers, who then had to be compensated by increasing input subsidies.

No wonder, years later, when we estimated the producer support estimates (PSEs), as per the OECD methodology — used by countries that produce more than 70 per cent of the global agri-output — we found a deeply negative PSE. This indicates implicit taxation of agriculture through trade and marketing policies, even when one has accounted for large input subsidies going to farmers (see graph on PSE).

Today, the food subsidy is the biggest item in the Union budget's agri-food space. In the current budget, it is provisioned at Rs 1,15,570 crore. But this factoid hides more than it reveals. Lately, the government has been asking the Food Corporation of India (FCI) to borrow from myriad sources, and not fully funding the food subsidy, which should logically be a budgetary item. The outstanding dues of the FCI are more than the provisioned subsidy, and if one adds these dues to the budgeted food subsidy, the effective amount of food subsidy comes to Rs 3,57,688 crore. This displays the consumer bias in the system.

How do we move forward and what lessons can one learn from Montek's engagement with policy formulation? The Economic Survey of 2019-20 makes a case for restricting food subsidy to 20 per cent of the population — the head count poverty in 2015 as per the World Bank's \$1.9/per capita per day (PPP) definition was only 13.4 per cent. For the others, the issue prices of rice and wheat need to be linked to at least 50 per cent of the procurement price or, even better, 50 per cent of the FCI's economic cost. Unless we make progress on this front, it is difficult to unlock resources for the growth of agriculture, which slumped from 4.3 per cent during UPA-2 to 3.1 per cent during Modi 1.0.

Gulati is Infosys Chair Professor for Agriculture at ICRIER

Lately, the government has been asking the Food Corporation of India (FCI) to borrow from myriad sources, and not fully paying for the food subsidy which should logically be a budgetary item. The outstanding dues of the FCI are more than the provisioned subsidy, and if one adds these dues to the budgeted food subsidy, the effective amount of food subsidy comes to Rs 357,688 crore. That shows the consumer bias in the system.

## VIEW FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD



A weekly look at the public conversations shaping ideas beyond borders — in the Subcontinent. Curated by Aakash Joshi

### DEMOCRACY'S DEFICITS

LIKE IN INDIA and much of the world, the South Asian press as a whole has been pre-occupied with the coronavirus pandemic. The articles and editorials read much the same, making similar points, across borders — take it seriously, don't panic, don't hoard masks and hand sanitiser, maintain social distance, the shock to the economy from the disease, etc. But there have also been opinion beyond corona.

The deal between the US and the Afghan Taliban has been the subject of discussion in the Pakistan press for some time now. While many in the strategic community seem to believe that it augurs well for the Pak security establishment, others have asserted that the Pakistan Taliban and other terrorist elements and warlords in the country may benefit from the deal. One of the main fears has been that the Taliban will destroy the Afghanistan government, and the nascent democracy will be nipped in the bud.

Imran Jan, in his column in *The Express Tribune* on March 12, makes a provocative point: "Democracy, it turns out, has its dark side and it is quite ugly. Just the recent events around the world drive the idea home." He uses the examples of Israel (it has had three non-conclusive elections in the last year, and

being PM might be the only way Benjamin Netanyahu escapes prison on corruption charges), the US and India to establish democracy's waning appeal.

In India, he argues "Racism, murder, and bigotry have become the new face of the largest democracy. Religious discrimination is now the law of the land". In the US, "Americans went to the polls in 2016 where the popular vote went to Hillary Clinton but the delegates voted Trump in, meaning he won by getting fewer votes. The indirect democracy in America is a check on democracy in itself". And the 2020 contest between Donald Trump and Joe Biden is "between a con artist and a war criminal". Jan also points out the problems in Putin's Russia and in Afghanistan vis a vis elections and democracy.

Given this backdrop, and the recent diplomatic successes of the Taliban, there is only one conclusion Jan is able to draw: "Given the unproductive and unsatisfactory situation of the democratic world, the Taliban would wonder if this is what they would become by embracing the ballot. Perhaps their way is better. No succession issues. No infighting. No compromise on their cause. They will hate the West and the democratic world not for their freedoms and rights but for their dysfunction and corruption. Whether it's the battlefield, talks

or ideology, the Taliban win everywhere."

### OLI'S HEALTH

The numerically stable government led by the united communist party in Nepal is being shaken by the continuing issues with Prime Minister KP Oli's health. After his latest surgeries and treatment, the reports suggest that he will need a long time to recover. "While the prime minister has every right to recover in peace and privacy after going through the same major surgery twice", writes the Kathmandu Post on March 13, "his office — the executive head of the government — is such that it needs someone to fulfil the role at all times". But Oli's "punchant for control" seems to make this unlikely proposition.

In essence, the editorial seems to be suggesting someone like a vice president of the US — a prime minister in waiting of sorts: "...with the prime minister looking at a potential six months where his doctors advise a lower workload and lesser interactions, he and the ruling party must decide on an alternative who can complete the executive's role — in case he cannot."

The fact is that Oli appears to have concentrated much power in himself, and many individual ministers are not empowered to

act without his clearance. Such a situation is particularly harmful at a time when the PM is not at a 100 per cent. Given the global economic crisis and Coronavirus scare, "Nepal's government needs to be ready to face the challenges as a unit".

### RESCUE POLITICS

The March 9 editorial in Sri Lanka's *Daily Mirror* points out a disturbing if unsurprising politics being played out after the coronavirus outbreak. On February 1, at the very beginning of the outbreak, "the Foreign Relations Ministry announced a special Sri Lankan Airlines charter flight (UL 1422) left Colombo to bring back the 33 Sri Lankan students who were stranded in Wuhan", as it should have.

The editorial points out that there are over 5,000 Sri Lankan workers, over 95 per cent of whom are unskilled, currently stranded in South Korea, where the virus is spreading with the greatest speed after China. Why, it asks, hasn't there been an attempt to rescue them. The editorial answers with a question: "Could it be that this is due to the fact, that the over 5,000 expatriate Sri Lankan workers in Korea are 'unskilled workers' from poor families of this country and that is why no effort is being made to look after their interests?"

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### GET BASICS RIGHT

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'No apocalypse now' (IE, March 13). By suspending most visas till April 15 to check the spread of the COVID-19 outbreak, India has been forced into a taking a desperate measure. The fear is that the outbreak will take hold in India and tax an already stretched and poorly provisioned public health system. Public health authorities must keep exhorting citizens to follow basic hygiene measures and ask them to seek medical advice if symptoms surface.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

### CHANGE IS OVERDUE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Mr. Scindia's exit' (IE, March 12). Jyotiraditya Scindia may have limited clout in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior-Chambal belt but his exit from the Congress is a blow to both the party and the Gandhis. The Congress may have won Madhya Pradesh under the leadership of Kamal Nath but Scindia's efforts during campaign cannot be ignored. He should have been made the state Congress chief. The Gandhis need to realise that their time at the helm is over.

Bal Govind, Noida

### TOO FUTURISTIC

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Predators and the prey' (IE, March 12). It's well known that insects are rich in protein, vitamins and other nutrients. Most of

### LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to [editpage@expressindia.com](mailto:editpage@expressindia.com) or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301.

our food crops are pollinated by insects. But insects are also under threat because of climate change and other environmental problems. It is also not easy to collect insects and prepare them as food items. For now, let them remain pollinators.

Tapomoy Ghosh, Purba Bardhaman

### EFFECTIVE PEACE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'It's not a peace deal' (IE, March 13). The deal could push Afghanistan into a fresh state of turmoil. India's investments in the country could be at risk. The global community should empower the Afghanistan government and its army to fight terrorism effectively.

Lalit Mohan Pal, Lucknow



# 12 THE GOVERNANCE PAGE

## SOCIAL INNOVATION

# Haryana govt to partner with mothers to combat drug addiction, promote sports

An App, called 'Mothers for Sports and Fitness', will help mothers locate the nearest govt sporting facility

SUKHBIR SIWACH  
CHANDIGARH, MARCH 15

WITH A mere 2 per cent of India's population and much less than 2 per cent of the country's geographical area, Haryana secures almost one-third of India's medals in international sports events. The athletes from Haryana won 22 of India's 66 medals in Commonwealth Games (CWG) of 2018 — they brought home nine gold medals out of the country's total 26 golds. The state produced some of country's best wrestlers including the Phogat sisters whose success had inspired the Bollywood blockbuster *Dangal*.

But the state government wants more and is keen to take the medals tally to the next level. To this end, it has thought of an innovative strategy — it plans to seek the assistance of young mothers in the state to encourage their children to take up some kind of sporting activity.

And the government is starting at the beginning — it has already assigned the health staff in the state to look after the wellbeing of pregnant women including their delivery and the immunisation of the kids. In coming days, the Anganwadi workers are likely to be asked to be more proactive on this front.

The officials believe that if mothers take their children to the playgrounds, then the number of sportspersons may increase significantly in the coming years. Officials of as many as seven departments, including Sports, Women and Child Development, will now be engaged in a mission to ensure that young mothers get all the assistance to ensure that their children make use of government playgrounds.

To this end, the government will soon introduce an App — called "Mothers for Sports and Fitness" — which will have details of all playgrounds and the contact persons of these playgrounds. The App will show the locations of the playgrounds like a taxi app shows the location of the available taxis.

"The idea is the brainchild of Chief Minister Manohar Lal. He believes in humanising governance. He believes that every mother, as a caregiver, has a right to access to the nearest playground and sporting opportunities for her growing children," says senior IPS officer O P Singh, who is looking after the responsibility of Special Officer (Community Policing and Outreach) in the Chief Minister's office.

The Chief Minister, according to Singh, wants the popular discourse about the youth



Mothers accompanying their kids to government sporting facilities. *Manoj Dhaka*

## EXPLAINED Sports versus drug addiction

Chief Minister Manohar Lal wants to change the popular discourse about the youth in Haryana from from "drugs and crime" to "sports for fitness". Haryana already has a proud tradition of producing excellent sportspersons. The CM believes promoting sports for fitness and recreation from the very childhood will be the best weapon in the fight against drug addiction and delinquency.

in Haryana to change from "drugs and crime" to "sports for fitness". "We plan to launch the App from next month," says Additional Chief Secretary, Amit Jha.

The officials associated with the move believe that if the government succeeds in en-

suring the health of young mothers and their kids, the number of the sportsperson in the state can increase significantly.

"Mothers, because of their proximity to and concern for the well-being of their children, can play a pivotal role on this count if they are well-informed, oriented and enabled to encourage their children to take to sports for fitness and help them, thereby, to stay away from drugs and delinquency," said another official.

With the state government offering high cash awards and senior government jobs to those who perform well in international sporting events, taking up sports is already an attractive proposition in Haryana. A tour to different parts of the state reveals that ranging from 100 to 200 youths from every big village go to the playgrounds and join one or other sport for exercise daily. The state has almost 7,000 villages.

"Haryana has proved that success in the sports comes from participation in events, not from the size of the population of a particular state. We want to enhance this participation while associating mothers with the campaign," says O P Singh, who has earlier held the assignments like Director and Principal Secretary of the Sports Department.

In the coming days, the officials plan to offer more services through its App. Though, initially, it will provide all types of information related to coaches and the facilities avail-

## THE PLAN FOR 'MOTHERS FOR SPORTS & FITNESS' CAMPAIGN

■ The Women and Child Development Department to team up with other departments such as Home, Panchayat, and IT to aggregate resources for sports and youth engagement in the state

■ Subsequently, mothers to be brought on board to utilise this information to help their wards to take up sports for fitness and recreation

■ The content may be in the form of short videos in Hindi and other local languages so that it is easily understood by the target group

■ The proposed App will map all sports and recreation facilities in private and public domains (stadiums, schools and college playgrounds etc. along with the contact details of their custodians (coaches and trainers etc.)

■ The App will also have content designed to help mothers to stay fit themselves

■ Mothers will be encouraged to form self-help groups and share experiences

■ There will be periodical impact assessment to ascertain the success in terms of the number of additional children and adolescents who have taken to sports for fitness

able in government-run playgrounds. The officers are also considering whether only mothers should be allowed to get registered on the proposed App or if this facility be provided to women of all age groups.

"We can also explore the angle of women's safety by offering self-defence training to girls," says senior IAS officer Amit Jha, who looks after Women and Child Development Department in the state government as its Additional Chief Secretary.

# 'Power line losses have halved since 2014, we are a surplus electricity state now'

WITH HARYANA power utilities facing pending electricity bills worth about Rs 5,000 crore (including about Rs 3,000 crore from the rural areas), Haryana Power Minister Ranjit Chautala has decided to hold "Bijli Panchayats" to motivate consumers to pay the dues. In first such Panchayat held in Hisar on January 5 this year, representatives of more than 100 villages, which had the maximum defaulting amounts against them, participated. An independent member of Legislative Assembly (MLA), and the youngest son of former Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal, Chautala tells SUKHBIR SIWACH about the concept of Bijli Panchayats.

## What do you aim to achieve from such Bijli Panchayats?

Under this campaign, we tell the consumer to pay their arrears and (in return) the government will waive off their surcharge. We also give the option to deposit their pending bills in instalments. After my appeal, the consumers from those villages which were not depositing their dues have started paying their bills.

## How do you convince the villagers?

I tell them that I am (also) the son of a farmer. I am their best well-wisher. I tell them that you can get sanctioned as many transformers and electricity lines as you need. But you just accept one suggestion of mine: be a good paymaster and stop stealing electricity. (In return) I will ensure round the clock electricity in your villages.

## Have you noticed any impact of your campaign?

Within a month, the electricity line losses have dropped by 2 per cent. The line losses have dropped to 14 per cent now from 30 per cent when the Bharatiya Janata Party took over the government in 2014. The state has now surplus electricity; there is no power shortage. During the sowing season of crops, the electricity supply to farmers was increased to 10 hours daily, from the previous 8 hours.

## How do you curb power thefts?

I have decided to conduct raids if I get information about the involvement of big players in power theft. In a raid conducted during one night, nine officers including three Chief Engineers and five Superintending Engineers of the Electricity Department were caught stealing electricity by *kundi* (illegal) connec-



THE POLICY INTERVIEW  
RANJIT CHAUTALA  
Power Minister, Haryana

I have decided to conduct raids if I get information about the involvement of big players in power theft. In a raid conducted during one night, nine officers including three Chief Engineers and five Superintending Engineers of the Electricity Department were caught stealing electricity"

tions. I imposed a penalty of Rs 7 lakh on them. It sent out a message that tough action will be initiated if anybody is found involved in the theft of electricity.

## How do you plan to tackle the long pendency of electricity connections for tube wells?

We have initiated the process to release the electricity connections to those consumers who had deposited full payments by December 31, 2018. By April this year, we will release nearly 5,000 electricity connections for tube wells in the state. As many 12,000 consumers in the state have made part-time payments for such connections.

## FROM STATES REFORMS TRACKER

### UTTAR PRADESH

#### A new startup policy in the works

THE STATE government is working on a new Startup policy aimed at making Uttar Pradesh an attractive state for startups. The approach is going to be comprehensive with the policy likely laying down entrepreneurship as part of the study curriculum. There will also be elements to provide incubation centres for startups especially in the remote areas of the state. The state is likely to have nodal centres in almost all the districts to provide help to upcoming firms. For the purpose of fine tuning the policy, the government has taken help from Niti Aayog, the national policy think tank in New Delhi.

### CHHATTISGARH

#### Custodian of Indian archery

UNDER THE Centre's policy of "one state, one game", Chhattisgarh has been made the custodian of India's archery from the point of view of preparing for the 2024 Olympics. Under this scheme of "one state, one game" different states are allocated different sporting disciplines to improve on India's medal prospects at the Olympics. Madhya Pradesh, for example, will be taking care of Indian shooters. The 2024 Olympics will be held in Paris.

### KARNATAKA

#### No-school bag Saturdays

CHIEF MINISTER B S Yediyurappa has announced a treat for school-going kids. From the next academic year, twice every month, school students will have no-school bags Saturdays. The idea behind "Sambhrama Shaniwara" is to make education and learning a joyful experience. Dakshina Kannada was the first district to pilot the scheme this year. The announcement was made during the Budget speech.

# Pollution control: Jharkhand third state in India to have star ratings for industrial firms

ABHISHEK ANGAD  
RANCHI, MARCH 15

IN JUNE this year, the Jharkhand government will start its "Star Rating Program," which will be mandatory for several industries, to reduce pollution through increased transparency. The programme, currently being run on a pilot basis, will gather emission data from various industries in the state and rate the firms according to their compliance.

Starting June 5, the rating programme will focus on particulate matter (PM) emissions out of 17 categories of "highly polluting" industries and every year a new emission parameter will be added. In a phased manner all pollutants will be covered under the star rating programme.

"For the last one-and-half year we have worked on data quantity. It required several meetings — both sectoral and one-on-one — with a lot of stakeholders such as the industries, the service providers etc. Through the Continuous Emission Monitoring System (CEMS), we have emission data on our servers every 15 minutes now. After making

sense of this data we will give ratings," said Jharkhand State Pollution Control Board (JSPCB) Chairman A K Rastogi.

He said that the programme would encourage healthy competition for better regulatory compliance. "As of today, data is there, but it needs an expert to read it".

More importantly, "the star rating program will empower the public by increasing awareness on the compliance levels of industries in their vicinity and thus, it hopes to engage people in the regulatory process," said Rastogi. "For example, people will now know which industry is the polluter in their area and this will become part of their discourse...bigger companies will have a lot a stake in it".

A five-star rating will be given to companies that have 50 per cent of the maximum allowed PM emissions. A one-star rating will be for companies whose emissions are 25 per cent more than the prescribed limit.

In Jharkhand, the sectors that belong to the highly polluting categories of industries include Captive Power Plants, Integrated

Power Plants, Integrated Steel, Sponge Iron, Cement, Copper Smelter etc.

The initiative was taken after the Jharkhand State Pollution Control Board (JSPCB) collaborated with the University of Chicago Trust (UC Trust) as knowledge partners.

The UC Trust Program Associate in Jharkhand Deepak Kumar said that Jharkhand is the third state in the country to implement the star rating program. "Once it is implemented we will be able to read the data and check if the data received is accurate and reliable and will be in a position to find loopholes, if any. Odisha and Maharashtra too have implemented the star rating system, however, the data collection happens once a month. Jharkhand will be the first state to do a star rating in other emission parameters such as Sulphur and Nitrogen oxides".

On the incentives, Rastogi added: "The board will decide on it. Consent To Operate certificates may be given to the companies for a longer period without going through the hassle of periodic renewals based on their compliance in the ratings".

## THE SOLUTION

## TELANGANA/HEALTHCARE REFORM

# KCR kits: How institutional deliveries rose by 22 per cent

SREENIVAS JANYALA  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 15

MAMIDLA JYOTHI, 24, who delivered her first child last Wednesday at the Sangareddy government hospital, displayed a green coloured briefcase when asked if she received what the Telangana government calls the KCR Kit. "The baby soaps, oil, powder, and the mosquito net alone would cost over Rs 500 outside. I don't have to worry about it for the next couple of months as I have them in the kit," Jyothi said.

The kit, which has a baby mattress, baby soap, oil, talcum powder, mosquito net, toys, napkins, diapers, two pairs of clothes, and two handloom sarees for the mother, is given free of cost to new mothers. It also comes with monetary help — Rs 13,000 (in four instalments) for a female child and Rs 12,000 in case of a male child.

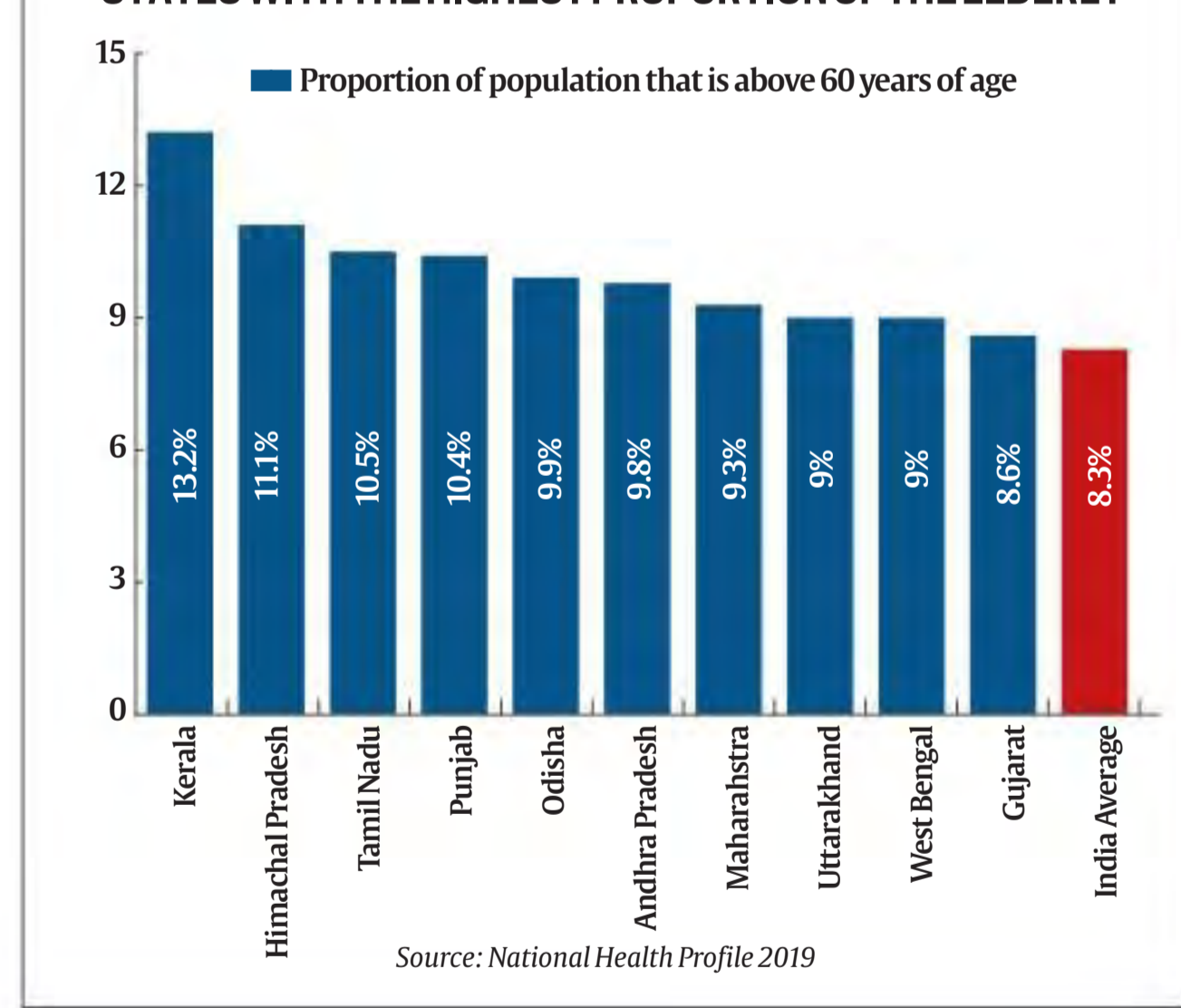


The so-called KCR kit has 16 items for the mother and the newborn baby *Express*

The whole kit costs Rs 2,100 for the state government but it is a crucial reason why institutional deliveries in government hospitals have gone up by 22 per cent over the last 30

months. Since its launch on June 2, 2017, 19,42,630 pregnant women have registered themselves to avail the benefits of the KCR Kit. "The quality of public healthcare given by

## IN NUMBERS COVID-19'S FATALITY RATE INCREASES WITH AGE. HERE ARE STATES WITH THE HIGHEST PROPORTION OF THE ELDERLY



Telangana Government has improved a lot," said Finance Minister T Harish Rao during his budget speech recently, adding that Rs 6,186 crore was being allocated to the health sector to implement many other health schemes.

Health Minister Etela Rajender told *The Indian Express* that the scheme has helped reduce infant mortality rate, maternal mortality rate, and female foeticide while ensuring that mothers remain healthy and get nutritious food at the hospital.

"The KCR kits are proving to be a boon for the pregnant women hailing from economically underprivileged families. The items provided for free are expensive when purchased outside; so it is a big relief to the mothers. The scheme also tested the capacities and capabilities of government hospitals, primary and community health centres as more and more women started coming to government facilities for delivery, but we scaled it up and also recruited a lot of staff to

ensure it goes on smoothly," Rajender said. Till the end of February, over 7 lakh units have been distributed.

As part of the KCR kits scheme, Jyothi received the first instalment of Rs 3,000 when she registered her pregnancy at the government hospital six months ago and was given two antenatal check-ups and iron and folic acid tablets free of cost.

On Wednesday, she also became eligible to receive (via direct bank transfer) Rs 5,000 as she delivered a girl child. Jyothi will receive Rs 2,000 as the third instalment when she takes her child for the first immunisation at the age of three-and-half months, and another Rs 3,000 when she takes the child for measles vaccine at nine months.

"The pre-delivery registration helps us in tracking and monitoring the pregnant woman's health. By giving the stipend in instalments we are also ensuring that the children are immunised," the health minister said.



PANDEMIC WATCH



Queen Elizabeth

UNITED KINGDOM  
Queen shifted to Windsor Castle

London: Queen Elizabeth II has been shifted out of Buckingham Palace in London to Windsor Castle as the UK plans for isolation measures for people over 70 amid the country's death toll from COVID-19 hitting 21, nearly doubling from 11 within a day. The 93-year-old monarch and her 98-year-old husband, Prince Philip, are likely to be placed in quarantine at the royal Sandringham Estate in Norfolk. The situation will be kept under constant review before she is brought back to London, as per reports. "She is in good health but it was thought best to move her," a royal source was quoted by *The Sun* as saying.

PAKISTAN  
Number of COVID-19 cases at 53

Islamabad: Twenty new cases of the novel coronavirus surfaced in Pakistan on Sunday, bringing the total number of infections to 53. The number of coronavirus cases have doubled in Sindh province, with 18 new positive cases detected on Sunday. The Punjab province also reported its first two cases in Lahore and Islamabad. Murtaza Wahab, a spokesperson of the Sindh Government, said 13 of the cases surfaced when a group of pilgrims were tested for the virus after they reached Sukkur city from the Taftan border. Prime Minister Imran Khan on Saturday said that he was personally monitoring measures to deal with the coronavirus in the country.

VATICAN CITY  
No congregation to be at Easter celebration

Rome: The Vatican said Sunday that its traditional Easter week celebrations would be held this year without worshippers due to the coronavirus. "Because of the current global public health emergency, all the liturgical celebrations of Holy Week will take place without the physical presence of the faithful," the Prefecture of the Pontifical Household said in a statement. The Vatican also said: "Until April 12, the general audiences and the Angelus broadcasted over by the Holy Father will be available only in live streaming on the official Vatican News website."

COVID-19 PANDEMIC  
Global toll 6,000, systems stretched thin

368 deaths in one day, Italy's health workers struggle to keep pace

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
ROME, MARCH 15

A WORN-OUT nurse slumps over her keyboard in a widely shared image symbolic of the extreme fatigue that Italian health-care workers are facing as they battle Europe's worst outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. The picture is of Elena Pagliarini, a nurse in the northern region of Lombardy which has been worst hit by the disease. Italy on Sunday recorded 368 new deaths from the coronavirus, its highest one-day increase to date, taking the total to 1,809, the most outside China, official data showed.



An empty water bus in Venice on Sunday. Reuters

The number of infections has reached 24,747, a count released to the media by Italy's civil protection service said. In normal times Lombardy is the economic heart of Italy, equipped with one of the world's best health systems. But those who staff it — like Pagliarini — have been put under enormous strain. "On one hand I was annoyed to see my photo everywhere, I was ashamed of showing my weakness," Pagliarini told the *Corriere della Sera* newspaper.

the northern city of Bergamo, (also in Lombardy) wrote in a Facebook post. "I settle for some photos of my son which I look at through my tears, and a few video calls," he says.

A nurse in the Tuscan town of Grosseto, Alessia Bonari, posted an image of her face bearing marks from a long day of wearing a surgical mask. "I'm worried because the mask might not be fitting right on my face, I might touch myself accidentally with dirty gloves, the glasses might not totally cover my eyes," she wrote in the caption.

"But then I was happy because I got beautiful messages from people who empathised with my story," she said. She's just one of many healthcare workers who have expressed their concern at the toll that the outbreak is taking. "It's almost two weeks since I've seen my son or my family because I'm worried about infecting them," Daniele Macchini, a hospital doctor in

the northern city of Bergamo, (also in Lombardy) wrote in a Facebook post. "I settle for some photos of my son which I look at through my tears, and a few video calls," he says.

The San Giovanni Bosco hospital in Turin this week put a mental health team in place to help its staff counter the stress of the current situation. "All those who need it can come forward, we're there for everyone," Monica Agnesone, one of 20 psychologists in the team, said.



A photo of a nurse, resting during the night shift at a hospital in Italy on March 8, has since gone viral on social media. Reuters

Virus could overwhelm facilities: Iran

AGENCIES  
MARCH 15

IRAN ON Sunday urged its citizens to stick to guidelines and stay at home to stop the new coronavirus spreading, as it announced another 113 deaths from the outbreak.

A spike in deaths from the coronavirus in Spain has pushed the global toll past 6,000, according to an AFP tally compiled from official sources. The worldwide death toll rose to 6,036, with 159,844 infections. While China remains the country with the most deaths with 3,199, the pandemic is now spreading more rapidly in Europe, with 1,907

EXPLAINED  
US sanctions another source of worry

AT a time when closed borders and travel bans will likely hit the economy hard, Iranian leaders have said the US sanctions are likely to significantly add to this damage. Most non-oil exports are likely to take a hit, said experts. On top of this, the sanctions, some of which are intended to curb oil and gas exports as well, may deliver a further blow to Iran's revenue. However, the US has claimed to have offered "humanitarian aid", which Tehran is said to have refused.

deaths in Italy. Meanwhile, the official leading Iran's response to the outbreak on Sunday acknowledged that the pandemic could overwhelm health facilities in the country, which is under severe US sanctions. "If the trend continues, there will not be enough capacity," Ali Reza Zali, who is

leading the campaign against the outbreak, was quoted as saying by state-run IRNA news agency.

The latest death toll announced by the health ministry took to 724 the official number of people to have been killed by the disease since last month.

People "should cancel all travel and stay at home so that we may see the situation improving in the coming days," ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said.

Zali also acknowledged that "many" of those who have died from the COVID-19 illness caused by the virus were otherwise healthy, a rare admission by local authorities that the virus does not only prey on the sick and elderly.

Trump tests negative for coronavirus, says White House doctor

NEW YORK TIMES  
MARCH 15

PRESIDENT TRUMP tested negative for the coronavirus, his doctor said in a memo released Saturday evening. The president's health had been a concern since he spent time at his Florida resort last weekend with a Brazilian official who was later found to have the illness.

"One week after having dinner with the Brazilian delegation at Mar-a-Lago, the president remains symptom-free," said Dr Sean P Conley, Trump's doctor, in the memo. At a news conference earlier Saturday, Trump said that he had been tested for the coronavirus on Friday night and was awaiting the results.

Whether the president would be tested had been a matter of speculation since it emerged that a member of a Brazilian delegation that visited Mar-a-Lago had tested positive. Two others who were with the president at Mar-a-Lago have tested positive, and members of Congress have been self-isolating after interacting with some of those people.

Trump said he had decided to be tested after his news conference on Friday, during which he declared a national emergency.

GERMANY TRIES TO STOP U.S. FROM LURING FIRM SEEKING VACCINE

Berlin: Berlin is trying to stop the US from persuading a German company seeking a coronavirus vaccine to move its research to the US, prompting German politicians to say no country should have a monopoly on any vaccine.

German government sources told *Reuters* on Sunday that the US was looking into how it could gain access to a potential vaccine being developed by a German firm, CureVac.

Earlier, the *Welt am Sonntag* German newspaper reported that US President Donald Trump had offered funds to lure CureVac to the US, and the German government was making counter-offers. CureVac issued a statement saying: "The company rejects current rumours of an acquisition". **REUTERS**

Deserted streets as Spain lockdown starts: Death toll doubles, PM's wife tests positive

REUTERS & PTI  
MADRID, MARCH 15

SPANIARDS HUNKERED down in silent cities on Sunday with children's playgrounds blocked off with police tape, after the government imposed sudden, severe restrictions on public life and the coronavirus death toll more than doubled overnight.

Meanwhile, The wife of Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has tested positive for the novel coronavirus, his office said.

Spain, the second-worst affected European country after Italy, on Saturday ordered its 47 million citizens to stay indoors except for necessary outings such



THANKING HEALTHCARE WORKERS: People look out of their windows during an event in Madrid on Sunday. Reuters

as buying food and medicine. Social gatherings are banned.

The government's official coronavirus death toll rose by 152 overnight to 288. The number infected rose by 2,000 new cases to 7,753.

Public places from city streets to beaches across Spain were deserted, with a strengthened presence of police, many wearing latex gloves and facemasks, and some using drones to ensure people complied with the emergency measures.

People formed orderly queues outside supermarkets in Madrid on Sunday, keeping at a distance from each other. A security guard with a face mask let shoppers in two by two.

Israel postpones Netanyahu's graft trial

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
JERUSALEM, MARCH 15

AN ISRAELI court on Sunday postponed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's graft trial over coronavirus, as the premier relaunched his appeal for an emergency unity government to tackle the crisis.

Netanyahu, the first Israeli prime minister ever indicted in office, had been scheduled to stand trial from Tuesday over

alleged bribery, fraud and breach of trust — charges which he denies.

Jerusalem's District Court said in a statement that, given the coronavirus pandemic, it had been instructed to hear "only urgent matters". In Netanyahu's trial, "we have decided to postpone the first hearing until May 24," the court said. Israel has 200 confirmed cases of the virus, and tens of thousands of people in home quarantine.

Gantz picked to form govt

Jerusalem: Israel's president on Sunday said he has decided to give opposition leader Benny Gantz the first opportunity to form a new government following an inconclusive national election this month.

President Reuven Rivlin's office announced his decision late Sunday after consulting with leaders of all the parties elected to parliament.

The decision raises questions about Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's political future.

Gantz's Blue and White received the support of parties representing 61 seats, a slim majority. However, those parties are also divided, and it is not clear whether Gantz will succeed in putting together a coalition. Rivlin said he would formally designate Gantz with the task on Monday. **AP**

MEASURES TAKEN

**AUSTRALIA**  
Australia on Sunday announced anyone arriving into the country will face mandatory 14-day self-isolation. It also said all cruise ships will be banned entirely

**BRITAIN**  
Britain will isolate older people "within weeks", for up to four months, and force into quarantine anyone diagnosed with the virus



EMPTY SHELVES IN BRITISH SUPERMARKET. Reuters

**THE BALTICS**  
Estonia and Lithuania said Saturday they will shut their borders to most foreign visitors while Latvia imposed some security measures of its own

**SOUTH KOREA**  
The country has declared areas hardest hit by the virus as special disaster zones, allowing for economic subsidies and tax exemptions



SOLDIERS DISINFECT BUILDINGS IN DAEGU. Reuters

Stay away from Europe: ISIS travel advisory warns terrorists

ADITI KHANNA  
LONDON, MARCH 15

THE ISLAMIC State (ISIS) terrorist group has issued a travel advisory for its operatives to steer clear of coronavirus-hit Europe, described as "the land of the epidemic".

According to *The Sunday Times*, the latest issue of the ISIS 'Al-Naba' newsletter refers to a new set of "sharia directives" warning against travel to Europe.

The Middle East-based terror outfit, which has in the past encouraged operatives to plot attacks in Europe, also instructed those of its followers who may have become ill with coronavirus not to leave the region, in order to prevent the disease spreading.

The newsletter says that the "healthy should not enter the land of the epidemic and the afflicted should not exit from it". It also instructs followers to "cover their mouths when yawning and sneezing" and to wash their hands regularly.

The newsletter refers to a "plague" described as a "torment sent by God on whosoever He wills", adding: "Illnesses do not strike by themselves but by the command and decree of God." **PTI**

Lanka dispatches Army to trace quarantine evaders

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
COLOMBO, MARCH 15

FACED BY the increasing threat of COVID-19 spread, the Army is to track down a group of Sri Lankans who had arrived from Italy and evaded quarantine, a top official said on Sunday.

They had arrived between March 1-9 and allegedly escaped the quarantine process where they ought to have travelled from the Colombo international airport to the quarantine centre in the eastern district of Batticaloa.

Sri Lanka Army has taken over the quarantine process of the returnees.

"One of the ways in which the Army ensures national security is guaranteeing the safety of citizens. Our work in the quarantine process in such action," Army chief Gen Shavendra Silva told reporters.

He said the military intelligence will be deployed to track down the escapees.

There are over 1,700 people in quarantine right now with 10 confirmed cases of COVID-19.

UNDER SHADOW OF CORONAVIRUS, A NATIONAL MEMORIAL WAS CANCELLED

Prayers, Maori haka: Christchurch marks shootings

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
CHRISTCHURCH, MARCH 15

PEOPLE IN the New Zealand city of Christchurch honoured the 51 worshippers who were killed in a mass shooting a year ago in small but poignant ways Sunday, after a planned national memorial event was cancelled due to fears it might spread the virus.

Outside the Al Noor mosque, dozens of leather-clad bikers



At the Al Noor mosque in Christchurch on Sunday. AP

from the Tu Tangata club performed a traditional Maori haka. They were welcomed by mosque imam Gamal Fouda, who said people of all beliefs and cultures were stopping to pay their respects, and they were all united as New Zealanders.

One of those who survived the shooting at the Linwood mosque was Mazharuddin Syed Ahmed, who said that marking anniversaries was not typically a Muslim tradition but they

were doing it so the wider community could grieve and remember. He said the shootings had provoked an outpouring of love and compassion.

"Of course, we lost our loved friends, family, people and community," he said.

"But we are also seeing so much good has come out of it. So looking at the positive part of that. Today, it is such a privilege to be in this country," Temel Atacogucu, who sur-

vived after being shot nine times at the Al Noor mosque, said the anniversary had provoked strong feelings.

"We are sad more than we are angry," he said. "It's very emotional. When I woke up this morning, I'm speechless. I can't explain what I feel." Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said Saturday the decision to cancel the memorial event planned for Homestead Arena was pragmatic and precautionary.



# 14 ECONOMY

**MARKET WATCH**

**FPIs WITHDRAW ₹37,976 CR**

*New Delhi:* Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have withdrawn a whopping Rs 37,976 crore on a net basis from the Indian markets in March so far amid the coronavirus pandemic triggering fears of a global recession. **PTI**

**TRACKING COVID-19  
ONLINE MARKETPLACE**

## As more people stay home, internet cos employ strategies to cut social contact

**PRANAV MUKUL**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

AT a time when social distancing is increasingly being adopted, customer interface with delivery agents of consumer internet companies is turning into a new problem area.

To counter this, e-commerce and other such platforms are coming up with novel strategies to curtail social contact — platforms like Flipkart are mapping impacted areas to minimise exposure of their delivery agents, while online food-ordering apps like Zomato and Swiggy are offering contactless delivery options to cut the interface between the customer and the delivery agent. Online grocery company BigBasket has started asking its delivery partners to exchange currency notes through envelopes and plastic covers, which are changed at the end of every delivery slot.

Notwithstanding the gradual shift in consumer behaviour towards online purchases over the years, the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 has forced corporates to impose self-quarantines by advising employees to work from home. This, in addition to people going out less on account of clampdown on public spaces by authorities, has led to higher traffic on internet platforms.

"Specifically, for our supply chain and logistics network, we have organised awareness sessions across all our facilities on how our employees and partners can minimise their exposure by following simple precautionary measures. We are providing all our wishmasters (delivery agents) with sanitisers and other required equipment to use while they are on the go, and are keeping track of impacted areas to minimise their exposure. Wishmasters who are unwell are being advised to rest with all assurance of medical support," a Flipkart spokesperson said in response to a query sent by *The Indian Express*.

In line with their global counterparts, Indian food-delivery platforms are nudging their customers to utilise the contactless delivery options that are being provided. Gurgaon-headquartered Zomato is rolling out an update to its app through which customers can opt-in for the contactless delivery option, only in case they have made an online payment. In this, the delivery agent will keep the parcel on "a clean surface out-

**DIFFERENT APPROACHES**

■ Platforms like Flipkart are mapping impacted areas to minimise exposure of their delivery agents

■ Zomato and Swiggy are offering contactless delivery options to cut the interface between the customer and the delivery agent

■ BigBasket has started asking its delivery partners to exchange currency notes through envelopes and plastic covers, which are changed at the end of every delivery slot

side" the door of the customer, who will receive a picture of the delivered food item.

Swiggy is also offering the option. "... you may request the delivery partner to leave your package by the door (in case of online payment), in case you are feeling unwell or prefer so," the Bengaluru-based firm said in a mail to its customers.

BigBasket, in a statement, said, "Before proceeding for delivery, customer experience executives (CEEs) are being checked for any symptoms of being unwell and are being thermally scanned. Any CEE failing these checks is not allowed to proceed for delivery and is advised to return home for recuperation. All CEEs are being equipped with sanitisers and disposable gloves which are to be changed after every delivery to ensure minimisation of any exposure."

"All CEEs will maintain social distance at customer locations as a second-level preventive protocol," the grocer said. Even as the spread of the virus is making more people stay at home, the extent to which it will go on will decide whether or not the process of a shift towards online utilities from traditional brick-and-mortar retail facilities will speed up. "It's early days to think about permanent behavioural changes. Companies have allowed work from home but if it continues for six months, then it will be a behavioural change," said Arvind Singhal, chairman and managing director of retail advisory firm Technopak.

**AVERAGE TIME TAKEN FOR 190 RESOLUTIONS AT 394 DAYS**

## Full review of IBC in pipeline as govt aims for faster resolutions

**KARUNJIT SINGH**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

THE GOVERNMENT is set to do a complete review of the insolvency law with a view to reduce the time taken for the corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP), according to a senior government official. Non-adherence to timelines under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) is an issue that has been repeatedly raised by lenders and the government has repeatedly sought to address it through amendments to the IBC.

The Code requires that the resolution process for a corporate debtor be completed within 330 days. In the 190 resolutions completed under the IBC till December 2019, the average time taken for resolution has been 394 days.

"The government is doing a complete review of the IBC (to reduce time taken for resolution). The leadership of the National Company Law Tribunals is also seized of the matter," said a senior government official, adding that the Centre expected to reduce the average number of days taken for resolutions.

**EXPLAINED**  
**E. Separate benches of NCLTs to speed up process**

THE GOVERNMENT is seeking to speed up corporate insolvency through monitoring by the insolvency regulator IBBI and verification of claims through independent information utilities. It is also planning to set up separate benches of NCLTs for insolvency cases to reduce the average time for a resolution from 394 days to around 330 days.

The official added that the government would consider allowing the use of information utilities (IUs) to verify claims by creditors to allow faster admission of cases to the CIRP.

The official further said that the government would also consider placing rules to require resolution professionals to provide more regular updates to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI), the insolvency regulator, to monitor progress under the resolution process. The government is aiming to bring down average time take for resolutions

by 60 days, the official said.

The government had earlier passed provisions in the IBC requiring tribunals to pass orders explaining why decision on an admission had been delayed in case such a decision is not made within 14 days. An IU is an organisation which collects and authenticates information regarding debts from stakeholders and makes this information available to all stakeholders.

Experts said the move would be able to improve admission times, if registration of a debt with an IU was made mandatory and

filing of false information was penalised. Daizy Chawla, managing partner of law firm Singh and Associates, welcomed the government's efforts to speed up the resolution process but noted that "unless it is made mandatory that true and correct information be filed with information utilities by corporate debtor as well as creditors ... it will leave scope for challenging the information available at information utilities".

She also suggested that the government should provide binding guidelines of committees of creditors as well as resolution professionals to ensure that they work in a time-bound manner.

Another government official said that enhancing the capacity of the National Company Law Tribunals (NCLTs) was a key focus of the Corporate Affairs Ministry and that the government was considering setting up dedicated benches of the NCLT to deal with insolvency cases. Manoj Kumar, partner at law firm Corporate Professionals, said that a move towards dedicated benches of the NCLT to deal with insolvency cases would help speed up corporate insolvency cases.

**Gold imports decline 8.86% to \$27 billion during Apr-Feb**

Gold imports fell 8.86% to \$27 billion during April-February period of the current fiscal, according to Commerce Ministry



**\$29.62 billion:** Imports of the yellow metal during April-February period of 2018-19

**12.5%**  
IMPORT DUTY ON GOLD, HIKE FROM 10% TO LOWER NEGATIVE IMPACT OF GOLD IMPORTS ON TRADE DEFICIT

**4%**  
REDUCTION IN IMPORT DUTY SOUGHT BY GEMS AND JEWELLERY EXPORTERS

**\$143.12 billion**

INDIA'S TRADE DEFICIT IN APRIL-FEBRUARY PERIOD OF CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR, NARROWING FROM \$173 BILLION IN CORRESPONDING PERIOD LAST FISCAL

**800-900 tonnes**

AMOUNT OF GOLD, IN VOLUME TERMS, IMPORTED ANNUALLY BY INDIA; MAINLY CATER TO DEMAND OF JEWELLERY INDUSTRY

**\$33.78 billion**

EXPORTS OF GEMS AND JEWELLERY, IN VALUE TERMS, IN APRIL-FEBRUARY 2019-20, DECLINING 8.25% OVER LAST FISCAL

**NEGATIVE GROWTH SINCE DECEMBER 2019:**

India, the largest importer of gold, has been recording negative growth since December last year in imports of the yellow metal

Source: Commerce Ministry/PTI

**\$32.8 billion:** Total imports of gold, in value terms, by India in entire 2018-19 fiscal

## India's audit space cannot have 'one-size fits all' approach: Corporate Affairs Secy

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

ASSERTING THAT "one-size fits all" approach cannot be put in place for the complex audit industry, Corporate Affairs Secretary Injeti Srinivas has said the potential of conflict of interest needs to be addressed and

made it clear that whoever is practising audit in India will have to be regulated under the country's regulations.

Amid persisting concerns that foreign audit companies might be circumventing the country's legal provisions, he further said there has to be a method where network firms are also registered with the ICAI,

which is the frontline regulator.

"Today, ICAI is registering individual members but is not registering firms. So, there are gaps and those also need to be addressed," he told *PTI* in an interview. The ICAI is the apex body of chartered accountants. Overseas audit entities operate in the country through network firms model.

**INTERVIEW WITH CHAIRMAN & MD, ESAF SMALL FINANCE BANK**

## 'Quality of corporate governance in enforcing credit standards relevant'

**K PAUL** Thomas, chairman and managing director of Thiruvananthapuram-based ESAF Small Finance Bank, spoke to **GEORGE MATHEW** on a host of issues relating to the banking sector and small finance banks. Excerpts:

**How safe is the Indian banking system in the face of the recent problems associated with a leading private bank?**

We believe the Indian banking system is one of the safest in the world. The safety arises out of the following factors... competent regulation and supervision, enforcement of prudential risk norms and maintenance of adequate liquidity positions. These are very important.

**Do you think there is a case for further tightening in credit standards?**

We believe that the credit standards used by banks in India are excellent. However, what matters is as to how they are actually applied by individual banks. What may actually bear more relevance today is improving the quality of corporate governance in enforcing credit standards and other parameters.

**Do you see further decline in interest rates as the RBI has pressed the pause button in its last two monetary policies?**

I believe that reduction in interest rate will be a catalyst for economic growth. RBI (Reserve Bank of India) has been reducing the repo rate consistently over a period but pressed a pause in the last two monetary policies. I believe that introduction of initiatives like long term repo windows and exemptions in maintenance of CRR to specific sectors will translate into reduction of inter-

## ₹8,415 crore worth of Yes Bank's AT-1 bonds written down

**ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU**  
MUMBAI, MARCH 15

INA major disappointment for Yes Bank's bondholders, the bank has said the entire Rs 8,415 crore worth Additional Tier-1 (AT-1) bonds have been written down to zero. The bank said these bonds would be written down completely as originally proposed in the draft reconstruction scheme of the bank.

Bondholders, led by Axis Trustee Services, had opposed the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) draft reconstruction scheme for Yes Bank which originally announced that all AT-1 bonds would be written down. It had filed a petition in the Bombay High Court against the RBI and Yes Bank for recovery of their investment.

In a stock exchange filing, the bank said the perpetual subordinated Basel III compliant AT-1 bonds issued by the bank for Rs 3,000 crore on December 23, 2016 and AT-1 bonds worth Rs 5,415 crore issued on October 18, 2017 "have been fully written down and stand extinguished with immediate effect".

AT-1 bonds are unsecured perpetual bonds — with no maturity — issued by banks to shore up

"Such AT-1 bonds would need to be fully written down permanently before any reconstruction of the bank is undertaken"

**YES BANK**

their capital base to meet Basel III requirements.

"The AT-1 instruments will be fully converted/written-down permanently before amalgamation/reconstitution in accordance with these rules," Yes Bank said.

"Given that Section 45 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 has been invoked by the RBI and the scheme has been notified, the bank is deemed to be non-viable or approaching non-viability and accordingly, the triggers for a write-down of certain Basel III AT-1 bonds issued by the bank have been triggered. Such AT-1 bonds would need to be fully written down permanently before any reconstruction of the bank is undertaken," it added.

Meanwhile, the private lender said that IDFC Bank will invest Rs 250 crore in its equity under the RBI scheme.

State Bank of India and six private banks had earlier committed capital infusion.

## Q4 results: Yes Bank's deposits decline by ₹71,991 cr since Sept

**ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU**  
MUMBAI, MARCH 15

YES BANK'S deposit base has declined by Rs 71,991 crore since September 2019 till date, according to the quarterly results announced by the private sector lender on Saturday.

As of December 2019, the bank incurred a quarterly loss of Rs 18,564.25 crore and a period to date loss of Rs 19,097.78 crore. Subsequent to this period, the lender's deposit base has seen a further reduction to Rs 137,506 crore.

The bank on Saturday reported a huge loss of Rs 18,564 crore for the quarter ended December 2019 — as against a

**The bank on Saturday reported a huge loss of ₹18,564 crore for the quarter ended December 2019, as against a profit of ₹1,000.5 crore in the year-ago quarter**

profit of Rs 1,000.5 crore in the corresponding quarter of the last financial year — in the wake of a spurt in bad loans.

Gross non-performing assets of Yes Bank skyrocketed to Rs 40,709 crore in the December quarter from Rs 5,158 crore a year ago.

**BRIEFLY**

**NCLAT adjourns all hearings in Mar**

*New Delhi:* Taking precautionary measures amid coronavirus outbreak, the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has adjourned all its scheduled hearings in March. However, urgent matters, which require immediate attention could be mentioned before the acting Chairperson Justice Bansilal Bhat, a notice by the appellate tribunal said. **PTI**

**Saudi Aramco's 2019 profit plunges 21%**

*Dubai:* Saudi Aramco on Sunday said it plans to cut capital spending in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, and also posted a 21 per cent plunge in profit for 2019. The decline in net profit for last year means that it fell short of analysts' forecasts for the period that culminated in the share sale. **REUTERS**

**DISINVESTMENT**

## Private container companies raise concerns over planned sale of railway land to Concor

**AVISHEK G DASTIDAR**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

THE DISINVESTMENT process of Container Corporation of India (Concor) has hit a roadblock with the Railway Ministry valuing the cost of its land leased to the mega-PSU at Rs 16,500 crore and private container companies objecting to any move by the government to "sell" the land to Concor at subsidised rates, raising multiple red flags to the plans.

The latest round of top-level deliberations within the Ministry, which happened end of February, has found that the 44 land parcels translating to some 220 hectare of land across India, that the Railways had given to Concor — mostly at a subsidised lease rates since it was its own PSU — to operate its container business, are valued currently at Rs 16,500 crore if the national transporter is to sell that to the PSU.

A majority of the value is from the Inland Container Depot Tughlakabad in Delhi, which accounts for 30 per cent of Concor's business and is on a railway land. The amount, based on market

**44 LAND PARCELS VALUED AT ₹16,500 CRORE**

■ 44 land parcels that the Railways had given to Concor to operate its container business are valued at ₹16,500 crore if the Railways is to sell them to PSU

■ Private container companies have objected to any move by the government to "sell" the land to Concor at subsidised rates, raising red flags to the plans

rates, is a setback to the disinvestment process since Concor cannot shell out that kind of money to buy the land. Even if it raises the money from outside, then the loan on its books would wipe out its profitability and turn all calculations of its valuation upside down, driving away prospective investors, sources said. The market valuation of the company is around Rs 35,000 crore and it turned profit of around Rs 1,200 crore last year.

The Ministry's own valuation process has not found any justification to value the land at lower than this amount, sources said. Any move to lower the value of the railway land would not be in sync with established norms, sources told *The Indian Express*. Getting a wind of things, the

Association of Private Terminal Operators (APTO) — which represents the 15-odd private container operating companies in India that compete with each other and with Concor — has written to the Prime Minister's Office, the Cabinet Secretary, Department of Investment & Public Asset Management and the Railway ministry, in objection to the move.

The government — through Railways — has 54 per cent stake in Concor, of which it wants to sell out some 30.8 per cent along with management control to a private player, effectively turning the country's largest container operator, which controls over 80 per cent market share, into a private entity. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs took the formal decision in November last year.



## COVID-19

# The politics of pandemics

All governments will struggle. Some will struggle more than others



Staff members wearing protective masks are seen at the Shanghai railway station in China on February 7. Reuters

TO SEE what is to come look to Lombardy, the affluent Italian region at the heart of the covid-19 outbreak in Europe. Its hospitals provide world-class health care. Until last week they thought they would cope with the disease—then waves of people began turning up with pneumonia. Having run out of ventilators and oxygen, exhausted staff at some hospitals are being forced to leave untreated patients to die.

The pandemic, as the World Health Organisation (WHO) officially declared it this week, is spreading fast, with almost 45,000 cases and nearly 1,500 deaths in 112 countries outside China. Epidemiologists reckon Italy is one or two weeks ahead of places like Spain, France, America and Britain. Less-connected countries, such as Egypt and India, are further behind, but not much.

Few of today's political leaders have ever faced anything like a pandemic and its economic fallout—though some are evoking the financial crisis of 2007-09. As they belatedly realise that health systems will buckle and deaths mount, leaders are at last coming to terms with the fact that they will have to weather the storm. Three factors will determine how they cope: their attitude to uncertainty; the structure and competence of

their health systems; and, above all, whether they are trusted.

The uncertainty has many sources. One is that SARS-CoV-2 and the disease it causes, covid-19, are not fully understood. Another is over the status of the pandemic. In each region or country it tends to proliferate rapidly undetected. By the time testing detects cases in one place it will be spreading in many others, as it was in Italy, Iran and South Korea. By the time governments shut schools and ban crowds they may be too late.

China's solution, endorsed by the WHO, was to impose a brutal quarantine, bolstered by mass-testing and contact tracing. That came at a high human and economic cost, but new infections have dwindled. This week, in a victory lap, President Xi Jinping visited Wuhan, where the pandemic first emerged. Yet uncertainty persists even in China, because nobody knows if a second wave of infections will rise up as the quarantine eases.

In democracies leaders have to judge if people will tolerate China's harsh regime of isolation and surveillance. Italy's lockdown is largely self-policed and does not heavily infringe people's rights. But if it proves leakier than China's, it may be almost as expensive

and a lot less effective.

Efficacy also depends on the structure and competence of health-care systems. There is immense scope for mixed messages and inconsistent instructions about testing and when to stay isolated at home. Every health system will be overwhelmed. Places where people receive very little health care, including refugee camps and slums, will be the most vulnerable. But even the best-resourced hospitals in rich countries will struggle.

Universal systems like Britain's National Health Service should find it easier to mobilise resources and adapt rules and practices than fragmented, private ones that have to worry about who pays whom and who is liable for what. The United States, despite its wealth and the excellence of its medical science, faces hurdles. Its private system is op-

**Universal systems like Britain's National Health Service should find it easier to mobilise resources and adapt rules and practices than fragmented, private ones that have to worry about who pays whom and who is liable for what. The United States, despite its wealth and the excellence of its medical science, faces hurdles**

timised for fee-paying treatments. America's 28m uninsured people, 11m illegal immigrants and an unknown number without sick pay all have reasons to avoid testing or isolation. Red tape and cuts have fatally delayed adequate testing.

Uncertainty will be a drag on the third factor—trust. Trust gives leaders licence to take difficult decisions about quarantines and social-distancing, including school closures. In Iran the government, which has long been unpopular, is widely suspected of covering up deaths and cases. That is one reason rebellious clerics could refuse to shut shrines, even though they spread infection.

Nothing stokes rumour and fear more than the suspicion that politicians are hiding the truth. When they downplay the threat in a misguided attempt to avoid panic, they end up sowing confusion and costing

lives. Yet leaders have struggled to come to terms with the pandemic and how to talk about it. President Donald Trump, in particular, has veered from unfounded optimism to attacking his foes. This week he announced a 30-day ban on most travel from Europe that will do little to slow a disease which is already circulating in America. As people witness the death of friends and relatives, he will find that the pandemic cannot be palmed off as a conspiracy by foreigners, Democrats and CNN.

What should politicians do? Each country must strike its own balance between the benefits of tracking the disease and the invasion of privacy, but South Korea and China show the power of big data and mass-testing as a way of identifying cases and limiting their spread. Governments also need to anticipate the pandemic, because actions to slow its spread, such as banning crowds, are more effective if they are early.

The best example of how to respond is Singapore, which has had many fewer cases than expected. Thanks to an efficient bureaucracy in a single small territory, world-class universal health care and the well-learned lesson of SARS, an epidemic of a related virus in 2003, Singapore acted early. It has been

able to make difficult trade-offs with public consent because its message has been consistent, science-based and trusted.

In the West covid-19 is a challenge to the generation of politicians who have taken power since the financial crisis. Many of them decry globalisation and experts. They thrive on division and conflict. In some ways the pandemic will play to their agenda. Countries may follow America and turn inward and close their borders. In so far as shortages crimp the world economy, industries may pull back from globalisation—though they would gain more protection by diversifying their supply chains.

Yet the pandemic also puts doctors, scientists and policy experts once again at the heart of government. Pandemics are quintessentially global affairs. Countries need to work together on treatment protocols, therapeutics and, it is hoped, a vaccine. Worried voters may well have less of an appetite for the theatrical wrestling match of partisan politics. They need their governments to deal with the real problems they are facing—which is what politics should have been about all along.

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## SUCCESSION AT JPMORGAN CHASE

# Mission accomplished

Should Jamie Dimon, Wall Street's most celebrated boss, call it a day?

WHEN JAMIE Dimon took the reins at JPMorgan Chase in 2005 he had, at the relatively tender age of 49, already earned himself a reputation. In the 1990s he was the wunderkind sidekick to the imperial Sandy Weill, then boss of Citigroup, the world's pre-eminent bank. Still, while some peers described Mr Dimon as brilliant, charismatic, caring and dedicated, others complained he was abrasive, foul-mouthed and unpredictable. Plenty doubted he was well suited to such a large stage.

As we explain this week, Mr Dimon has put paid to these doubters. JPMorgan weathered the financial crisis well and has since become the bank that all the others want to emulate. It is big, globally active, dominant in retail and investment banking, transparent, well capitalised and admirably profitable. Last year its return on equity was a handsome 15%. Its annual profits are now double the entire current market value of Deutsche Bank, once Europe's pretender to the global investment-banking throne.

However, another big question has remained unanswered: when Mr Dimon should leave and who will run the bank after he is gone. It has been cast in sharp relief by the recent news that Mr Dimon has undergone emergency surgery for an "aortic

dissection", a rare heart condition. The bank says he is recovering well. But investors, the board, staff and regulators have had a reminder that one day JPMorgan will have to have a different leader.

Wall Street's biggest succession decision is tricky for several reasons. JPMorgan could benchmark itself against other banks: in 2018 the head of Goldman Sachs retired and a flurry of European banks have waved goodbye to their leaders in the past few months. But in all these cases the firms were performing below their potential. Aged 63, Mr Dimon is no geriatric—77 CEOs who are older than him are serving at firms in the S&P 500 index of America's biggest companies. The most seasoned, Warren Buffett, is still, inadvisedly, clinging on at the age of 89.

Mr Dimon has served for longer than the typical American CEO, who lasts about a decade. Bob Iger, the boss of Disney, has just stood down after 15 years at the top. But tenure is not, in and of itself, a disqualification. There are 66 S&P 500 CEOs who have been in place longer than Mr Dimon. Reed Hastings has run Netflix for over two decades and few reckon he should press stop.

So how to make a decision? Two tests matter. The first is that Mr Dimon is not blocking the path of an entire generation of

successors who might end up leaving or becoming disillusioned. Inevitably, one cohort has already departed. A JPMorgan diaspora now run financial firms all over the world, including Wells Fargo, Barclays and Standard Chartered. It would be a mistake to let another generation go, too. Mr Dimon has two co-presidents directly beneath him who are both aged about 60. Beneath them is a broader group of half-a-dozen potential successors, most of whom are in their 50s and still being battle-hardened.

The second test is the likely time horizon of the strategic threats and opportunities that the bank faces. These mainly arise from technology—the prospect that big tech firms might challenge the big banks, or that new payments firms win huge customer bases independently of the banks, as they already have in China, or that new digital currencies take the world by storm. These trends will play out over a decade or more—and no one, not even Mr Dimon, thinks that he will stay that long.

Both tests suggest that Mr Dimon should leave the stage sooner rather than later. A good option would be for him to do so at the end of next year. By then the next generation of executives will have acquired the experience necessary to run the Western



Jamie Dimon of JPMorgan Chase has served for longer than the typical American CEO, who lasts about a decade. Reuters

world's biggest bank at a time of technological tumult, while not being so frustrated that they quit. Even if JPMorgan and Mr Dimon follow this advice, they and the shareholders should reflect on another succession. March 2nd saw the death of Jack Welch, the former chief executive of General

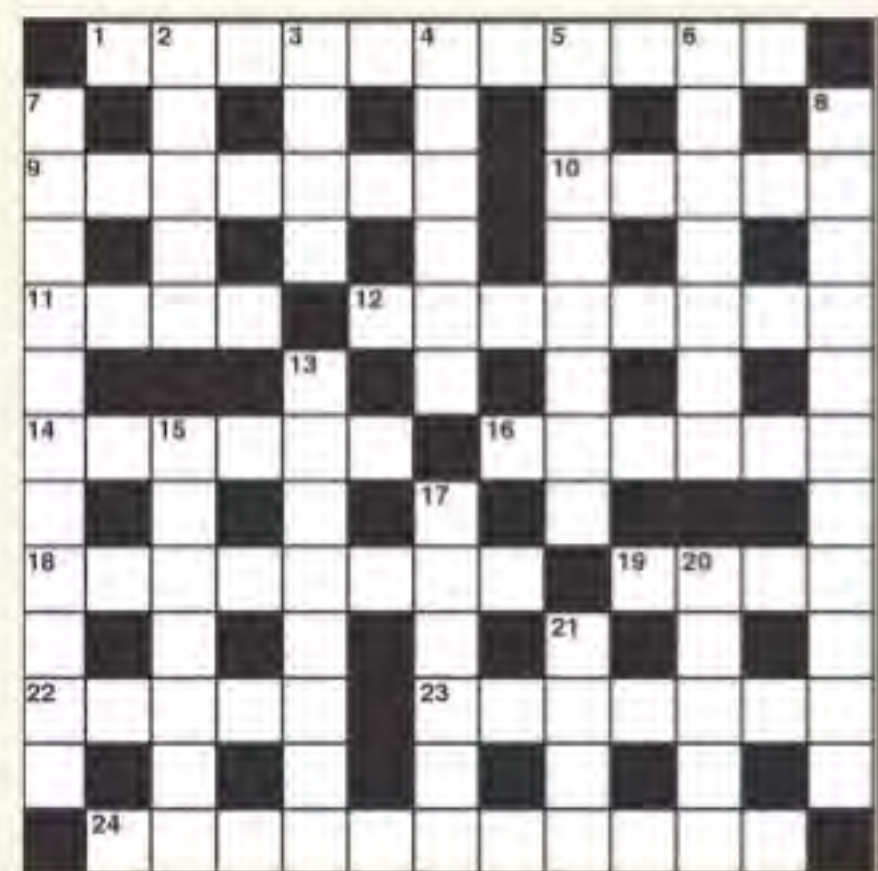
Electric (GE), and perhaps the most celebrated American boss of recent decades. He retired from GE in 2001 on a high, but the firm soon slipped into brutal decline, reflecting in part long-standing problems that became clear only once he had left. The best bosses face up to the reality that at some

point someone else has to be in charge. But even then their legacy can only be assessed years after they have thanked their team, shed a tear and walked out the door with their head held high.

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## CROSSWORD 4066



- ACROSS**
- Loses time in fresh celebrations (11)
  - Make a mess of fat and be unconventional (7)
  - Turn aside for inspiration (5)
  - Note in foreign currency (4)
  - Casting is one of his jobs in the studio (8)
  - Pouring in, in a state of change (6)
  - The load burned out (6)
  - Maximum charge for conveyance (4,4)
  - It's evidently bad form not to (4)
  - Craft about to change (1-4)
  - Deuce of a match (7)
  - This order won't require attention (5,2,4)
- DOWN**
- Going with some hesitation to make a bid (5)
  - Watched, I'd heard (4)
  - Announcement to put up in a French resort (6)
  - A course that is purely experimental? (5,3)
  - Chose to delete a hundred, perhaps (7)
  - From the French, as it should be (5,2,4)
  - No more stars for those who watch by night (11)
  - Doctor's report - on a man who has been shot? (8)
  - Have a difference of opinion following a nuclear test (4,3)
  - Hilda is upset over a bloomer (6)
  - First odd results of splits (5)
  - Somehow came top (4)

Solutions Crossword 3503: Across: 1 Berlin, 4 Scotland, 9 Coaxes, 10 Gruesome, 12 Wits, 13 Angle, 14 Fans, 17 Sports master, 20 Feeling swell, 23 Toes, 24 Nyasa, 25 Boom, 26 Diameter, 29 Lotion, 30 Obliterate, 31 Pleats. Down: 1 Backwash, 2 Reaction, 3 Idea, 5 Carelessness, 6 Tied, 7 Amoral, 8 Daemon, 11 Unemployment, 15 Strew, 16 Feast, 18 Semolina, 19 Elements, 21 Studio, 22 Reward, 26 Gear, 27 Proll.

## OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



## CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



## MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



## JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

The sicken of the calm, who \_\_\_ the \_\_\_ - Dorothy Parker (4,.,5)

**BTOOR**      **BKUUMN**

**AHIST**      **EERSKW**

SOLUTION: ROBERT, SAITH, BURNING, SKEWER. Answer: They sicken of the calm, who knew the storm.

## SUDOKU 4150

Difficulty Level 5s  
Instructions  
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.



Difficulty Level  
1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius

## SOLUTION SUDOKU 4149



## SALUTE THE SOLDIER

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INSP/EXE S. S. PANDEY  
FBPP FARAKKA  
16-03-1983

## Classifieds

### PERSONAL

I, Kumari Neelima Singh Chauhan W/o Sidhendra Pundhir R/o-24-B, Pocket-C, SFS Flats, New Kondli, Mayur Vihar, Phase-III, Delhi-110096, have changed my name to Neelima Pundhir for all future purposes. 0040535639-2

I, Prateek Aggarwal S/O Shree Niwas Aggarwal R/O of A102, Mayurdhwar Apartments, IP Extn, Patparganj Delhi 110092 have changed my name to Prateek Aggarwal. 0050163827-1

I, Geeta Rani W/O Sh. Sanjeev Soni R/O-3a, Wh/87-Nit, Faridabad-Haryana, Have Changed My Name, From Geeta Rani To Geeta Soni. 0040535631-1

I, Alia Khalid W/O, Khalid Ahmed R/o 70, phears Lane Kolkata 700073 have changed my name to Aliya Khalid for all purposes. 0040535633-1

### LOST & FOUND

I, Sajidah have Lost my Original passing certificate of 12th, year 2014 Roll.No. 9767579 CBSE Board. If Found Please Contact: 9953426737. 0040535258-1

### "IMPORTANT"

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This is to certify that I, Mrs. Vineeta Rebecca Williams w/o Brig Rajiv Enoch Williams (Retd), is the same person as Vineeta Williams, as mentioned in the Pension Payment Order (PPO) of my husband. My date of birth is 27th June 1955 (27/06/1955). 0040535581-1

My correct name is Parmesh Kumar Singh instead of Parvesh Kumar Singh as wrongly-mentioned in my ESJ documents, S/o (L) Geeta Ram Singh, A-76/B-2, Chander Vihar, Nilothi-Extension, Nangloi, Delhi-41. 0040535632-9

My correct name is Md. Farooque Azam instead of Farukh as wrongly-mentioned in my ESJ documents, S/o MD. Israfil, B/48, Under-Enclave, Phase-II, Kirari Suleiman-Nagar, Delhi-86. 0040535632-8

I, hitherto known as Khan Kamran Ekmal, S/o Ikmal Ahmed Khan presently, R/o-B-3, G-2, DLF-Colony, Dilshad-Ext-2, Distt, Ghaziabad, U.P.-201005, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Khan Kamran Ikmal. 0040535617-7

I, Vinita Sharma, W/O Shri Vijay Kumar R/O-R-112, Ramesh-Park Gali, No.3, Near-Community-Center Laxmi-Nagar, Delhi-110092, Have Changed My Name Viheeta Sharma To Vinita Sharma, According To My Adhar Card No. 773223451815, For Future, All Purpose. 0040535632-3

I, Vikas Singh S/O Mahender Singh R/o-H.No.16, Devi Mandir, Villa-Rithala, Delhi-110085, have changed my name to Vikas Gulia (DOB-02.06.1981). 0040535616-2

I, Narayan Dutt Sharma, S/O Late. Ram Bharose Sharma, R/O-162-A, Balbir-Nagar-Extension, Street, No-13-14, Shahdara, Delhi-110032, have changed my minor daughter name, from DHANI VATS to DHANI SHARMA. 0040535617-6

I, Manjinder Singh, S/O Hardeep Singh, R/O-VPO-Jodhe, Teh-baba bakala, Dist-Amritsar, Punjab, Inform, that my wife name, and dob is, wrongly-mentioned, as kuldeep kaur & 05/03/1983, in my service record her correct name & dob, is kuldeep kaur & 05/03/1979. 0040535639-1

I, Anju Bala W/o Harvinder Chopra R/O-BK-1/179, Shalimar Bagh, Delhi-110088 have changed my name to Anju Chopra for all purposes. 0040535616-1

I, Shashi Prabha Saini W/O Surinder Kumar Saini R/O 3/54, Second Floor, Punjabi Bagh West, have changed my name Shashi Saini. 0050163809-1

I, Aarushi Gupta, D/O Rakesh Gupta R/O-B-1004, Victoria-Gardens, Azadpur, Delhi-110033, inform that name of my mother-written as Manisha in my Passport No. M842221. The actual name of my mother is Manisha Gupta. 0040535617-5

I, Vinay Singh S/O Raj Singh R/o Maroudi Jatan (103), Rohtak, Haryana-124001, have changed my minor son's name from Sanyam Grewal aged 5 Months to Sanyem Grewall forever. 0070702958-1

I, Seema Kumari, W/O Ashutosh Parmar R/O 3421 Malviya Street Delhi Gate Daryaganj Delhi-110002 have changed my name to Seema Parmar for all purposes. 0040535610-1

I, Sargam Preet Alias Rahat D/o Rupa Singh R/O-D-10 Ground-floor, Balli Nagar, Ramesh-Nagar Delhi-110015, have Changed my name to Sargam Preet. 0040535657-1

I, SWADHIN GHADAI, S/o Sh. Subal Ghadai, R/O-House. No.829, Chirag-Delhi, Malviya-Nagar, New Delhi-110017, have changed my name to SUKUMAR GHADAI, for all purposes. 0040535656-5

I, Renu W/o Narendar R/O-H.No.19, Kh.no.382/204, Village-Saidulajab, Delhi-110030, have changed my name to Renu Kumari. 0040535617-8

I, Pothika Rani Ray, W/O Dino Bondhu Ray, R/O-B-131 Rampuri, Surya-Nagar Ghaziabad-201011, have changed my name to Pothika Ray, for all purposes. 0040535632-4

I, Nidhi Jain, W/O-Ashish Jain R/O-F-1/139-140, Top-Floor, Sector-11, Rohini Delhi-85, changed my minor Son's name Aadvik Jain to Advik Jain. 0040535617-3

I, Naresh Kumar alias Naresh alias Naresh Pal, S/O Late Sh. Ram Chander, R/O-A-12, Mange-Ram, Park Budh-Vihar, Pooth-Kalan, Delhi-110086, have changed my name to Naresh Kamboj. 40535617-4

I, Mohan Kumar Datta s/o Ajay Kumar Dutta r/o A-840, Gali No.-13, Deendayal Puri, Nandigram, Ghaziabad, UP-201001 have changed my name to MOHAN KUMAR DUTTA. 0040535678-1

I, Manoj Varma S/O Sh. S.C. Verma R/O A-39 2nd Floor Front, Ashoka Enclave - 2, Sec-37, Amarnagar, Faridabad have changed my name to Manoj Verma. 0070702953-1

I, Manju Gautam D/o Sh. Harswrup W/o Sh. Pawan Kumar R/o H.No.352E/6 Munirka Village, Near Girls School, New Delhi-110067 have changed my name to Manju Singh for all purposes. 0040535259-1

I, Mamta Garg W/o-Virender Kumar R/O-H-5/29, Sector-11, Rohini, Delhi-110085, have changed my name to Mamta Rani. 0040535617-9

I, Kum. Leela Lodha W/O, Prakash Chand Sand R/O 107, Third Floor, Vivekanand Puri Delhi-110007 have changed my name to Leela Devi Sand. 0070702884-1

I, Hariom, S/o Bhola Prashad R/O-RZ-2864, Gali No.32, Tughlakabad-Extn, New-Delhi-110019 have Changed my name to Hari Om Gupta. 0040535656-1

I, Faizur Rehman S/o Khaliqur Ur Rehman R/O H.No.1559, Katra Pathan Wala, Sarai Khalli, Sadar Bazar, Delhi-110006 have changed my name to Anusur Ur Rehman for all purposes. 0040535405-2

I, Deepali Varshney W/O Sh. Atul Kumar Varshney R/O-58, Engineers Enclave, Pitampura, Delhi-34 have changed my name to Deepa Varshney for all purposes. 0040535679-1

I, Dasrath Mehto S/O Late Sh. Ram Swroop Mehto R/O-D-2/4, Kailash Vihar Pansali Delhi-110042 have changed my name to Dashrath Mehto. 0070702932-1

I, Anjali Kumari, D/o Bechan paswan, R/O-E-1/267 st.no-16 /4/5-pusta Sonia-vihar, Delhi, have lost my original-certificate class-10th Year-2019 Rollno-8656719 CBSE-Delhi. 0040535632-10

I, Adesh Kumar Dixit, S/O Shri Suresh Chandra Sharma, R/O U-139, 2nd Floor, Upadhyay Block, Shakarpur, Delhi declare that my name is Adesh Kumar Dixit not Adesh and my wife name has changed after marriage from Sneha Lata to Sneha Dixit. 0040535580-1

I, Zulafkar S/O, Bundu Khan R/O D-5/247, Gali No.5, Block-D, Batra Road, Nangal Bazar, Sangam Vihar, ND-62 have changed my name to Zulafkar Ali. 0040535583-1

I, Vishal Chand S/O Emmuels Samuel Rajput, R/O-79B, First-Floor, Basant-Nagar, Pandit-Mohalla, Vasant-Vihar, Delhi-110057, Have Changed my Name to Vishal Rajput. 0040535617-1

I, Tarannum Naseem, W/O Naseem Ahmed R/O-Siltham, Bhatkote-Mission, Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand-262501, Changed My Name To Tarannum. 0040535632-2

## DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

### ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

It's easiest to take the line of least resistance and find a reasonable compromise! Probably the only decent way to proceed is to voluntarily insist that other people have their say. That way they'll give you the credit! Impeccable manners will help you achieve your aims, and traditional values will help cement a relationship.

### TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

For once the planets are supremely considerate, aligned with your houses of work, partnerships and money in different ways. You could have a conventional day if you wish, but you can also gently experiment with new options. And then you can enjoy family and friendly activities.

### GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Your basic lunar picture reverses the day's normal arrangements, favouring leisure early on, followed by powerful working influences this evening! This is obviously perfect if you're either a shift worker, or if you only click into gear when evening family obligations take over.

### CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

You may not know what to do at work, but that won't prevent you from doing it! You must accept that past decisions may have to be revised, and there is nothing to be ashamed of in admitting that you may have been wrong. In fact, a partner might follow suit and concede that they weren't always right either.

### LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

It's an intriguing day for communication and discussion. This naturally favours those of you with important arguments to make, or interviews to attend. The mood of the week, as will become clear over the next few days, is creative rather than routine.

### VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

The prevailing mood should be generally optimistic, but you have to make sure that your expectations match up with reality. Do try to tackle financial issues, amongst which are your own extravagant tendencies. There is nothing wrong with spending more than necessary, just as long as you have the readies in your pocket.

### LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

Although the general situation is looking very positive, you must realise that in a number of minor issues the sands of time are running out. In particular, a run of social or emotional good luck is now almost coming full circle. That's why you need to pay attention to partners who are disgruntled.

### SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

The fact that constructive alignments are powerful today, directly supports elements of your emotional character. Your deep secrecy and concern with justice, should guide your feelings. Your behaviour should be designed to boost the common good rather than merely your own self-interest.

### SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 23)

This is your week. Don't imagine that what happens on any one day will take place in isolation from the rest of your life. Instead, take a look at the way doors are opening to the future. The more detailed your plans, the better the outcome will be.

### CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Happily, the general situation looks very reassuring. At work, a reasonably ambitious day may raise questions of law, morality and rights. An overseas contact may also come to be of increasing significance, and you might have a chance to mend fences with someone you haven't seen for a long time.

### AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

The overwhelming general influence today is nice and pleasant. You should therefore be cushioned against lingering stress in a number of areas, including social engagements. You may be reminded of certain long-term responsibilities late this evening.

### PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

Business partnerships on every level are favoured if your connection is with a young person, preferably a woman capable of exerting a sort of comforting and protective influence. It's also quite simply a good day for domestic bargains, mainly because you've a shrewd head on your shoulders.

## Classifieds

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**WEST**  
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**CENTRAL**  
**CHANDNI CHOWK** : RAMNIWAS ADVERTISING & MARKETING, Ph.: 9810145272, 23912577, 23928577, **CONNAUGHT PLACE** : HARI OM ADVERTISING COMPANY Ph.: 9811555181, 43751196

**NORTH**  
**TIS HAZARI COURT** : SAI ADVERTISING, Ph.: 9811177748 **KINGWAY CAMP** : SHAGUN ADVERTISING, Ph.: 9818505505, 27458589, **PATEL CHEST (OPP. MORRIS NAGAR POLICE STATION)** : MAHAN ADVERTISING & MARKETING, Ph.: 9350304609, 7042590693, **PITAMPURA (PRASHANT VIHAR)** : PAAVAN ADVERTISER Ph.: 9311564460, 9311288839, 47059729

**SOUTH**  
**CHATTARPUR** : A & M MEDIA ADVERTISING, Ph.: 9811602901, 65181100, 26301008, **KALKAJI** : ADWIN ADVERTISING, Ph.: 9811111263, 41605556, 26462690, **MALVIYA NAGAR** : POOJA ADVERTISING & MARKETING SERVICE, Ph.: 9891081700, 24331091, 46568866, **YUSUF SARAI** : TANEJA ADVERTISEMENT & MARKETING Ph.: 9810843218, 26561814, 26510090

**NCR**  
**FARIDABAD (NEELAM FLYOVER)** : AID TIME (INDIA) ADVERTISING, Ph.: 9811195834, 0129-2412798, 2434654, **FARIDABAD (NIT, KALYAN SINGH CHOWK)** : PULSE ADVERTISING, Ph.: 9818078183, 9811502088, 0129-4166498, **FARIDABAD** : SURAJ ADVERTISING & MARKETING, Ph.: 9810680954, 9953526687, **GURGAON** : SARBODHI MEDIA PVT. LTD., Ph.: 0124-4065447, 9711277174, 9910633399, **GURGAON** : AD MEDIA ADVERTISING & PR, Ph.: 9873804580, **NOIDA (SEC. 29)** : RDX ADVERTISING, Ph.: 9899268321, 0120-4315917, **NOIDA (SEC. 65)** : SRI SAI MEDIA, Ph.: 0120-4216117, **NOIDA (SEC. 58)** : JAI LAKSHMI ADVERTISERS, Ph.: 9873807457, 9911911719, **GHAZIABAD (HAPUR ROAD TIRAHA, NR GURUDWARA)** : TIRUPATI BALAJI ADVERTISING & MARKETING, Ph.: 9818373200, 8130640000, 0120-4561000

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# 17 TALK ART, MUSIC, STYLE, FOOD

## SNAP SHOTS



### Calling a Halt

ACTOR SHAHID KAPOOR announced on Twitter that the team of his upcoming film *Jersey* has decided to suspend the shoot of the film to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus. "At a time like this it is our social responsibility to do everything in our capacity to curb the spread of this virus. Team #Jersey is suspending shoot so as to enable all unit members to be with their families and in the safety of their homes. Be responsible. Stay safe," wrote Kapoor. The actor had been shooting for *Jersey* in Chandigarh. A Hindi remake of a Telugu hit of the same name, the film chronicles the story of a talented but failed cricketer, who decides to return to the field in his late 30s after being driven by the desire to represent the Indian cricket team and fulfill his son's wish for a jersey as a gift.



### Closing Down

DISNEY STUDIO has suspended production on its live-action movies — *The Little Mermaid*, *Home Alone*, *The Last Duel*, *Nightmare Alley*, *Peter Pan & Wendy* and *Shrunk* — amid the coronavirus outbreak. "While there have been no confirmed cases of COVID-19 on our productions, after considering the current environment and the best interests of our cast and crew, we have made the decision to pause production on some of our live-action films for a short time. We will continue to assess the situation and restart as soon as feasible," the statement read. Production of the Marvel Studios project *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* had already come to a halt in Australia due to fears of the virus spread. Disney also closed Disneyland and California Adventure beginning Saturday. Disney World in Orlando will not be open for visitors next week. The studio also postponed the March 27 release of its much-anticipated live-action remake of *Mulan*. However, there is one good news too. Walt Disney Co would make *Frozen 2* available on its streaming platform Disney+ three months ahead of schedule in the US starting Sunday, "surprising families with some fun and joy during this challenging period".



### On a Later Date

RECORD STORE Day has been postponed until June 20 due to the coronavirus outbreak. The event, set up in 2008, to champion independent record stores, involves thousands of outlets around the world. It was originally scheduled for April 18. The event has become a focal point for the independent music scene each year, with artists playing special in-store gigs and labels issuing highly sought-after limited edition versions of their releases. Last year, 827,000 vinyl records were sold in the week of Record Store Day in the US alone.

### New Beginnings

PROMOTING FUNCTIONALITY in art, at its inaugural exhibition, conceptual art gallery, Interstellar, has brought together works of 20 artists, including Ankon Mitra, Vishal Joshi, Nupur Kundu, Maneesha Ahlawat and Sangita Marwah. The mediums range from prints to paintings, sculptures and kinetic installations, among others. Ikrut Kataria, founder of Interstellar, says, "Our vision is to create a design space clubbed with an art gallery concept which not only promotes original artwork but also inspirations apart from customising art for all to experience."

# Designs for the Future

Rimzim Dadu on her steel and leatherite saris, opening her maiden store amid the coronavirus scare and the democracy of social media



Many feel it's the aesthetic that is sustainable, the khaki-handloom wearing sensibility, for instance. But sustainability has to be in the practice, too, even if your aesthetic is retro or futuristic"

RIMZIM DADU



(From left) Rimzim Dadu Amit Mehra; two of her designs

### EKTAA MALIK

THE INITIAL rush and anticipation that Rimzim Dadu had in the run up to the opening of her maiden flagship store has now been replaced by a wry expression. "The first 10 days were exciting, as we did have many walk-ins and people who wanted to come and experience the creations. But suddenly, this whole space has become desolate. Earlier, one would never get a chair in the cafe outside. But today it's deserted. Coronavirus has made people stay at home," shares Rimzim Dadu, who opened the doors to her first ever experience store at DLF Emporio, in Delhi's Vasant Kunj, recently.

It has taken Dadu 12 years to open her first ever store. In the past, she has retailed her creations online; through pop-ups, trunk shows and through multi-designer stores across the globe. That seemed to be working well, so what prompted her to open a physical store at a time when the market is not doing too well? "People need to see and touch our clothes, which is very important for a brand like mine because of the kind of work we do," explains Dadu, 34. Her store has an almost austere feel when compared to her other heavily gilded neighbours that range from Varun Bahl, Tarun Tahiliani and Kunal Rawal.

Dadu and her aesthetics broke into the limelight in 2007, when she presented her maiden collection 'My Village' at the Lakme Gen Next show. Structure and creating textures has been her calling card since then. "My Village" was also the label I retailed under till three years ago. I changed it to the eponymous label because there was ample confusion as to who or what was Rimzim. People still confuse me with other designers, many think that Rimzim is a boy. I thought using my own name would help clarify that," says Dadu, who adds that she has always been fascinated by the texture of a textile and wanted to create her own kind. She worked with cords then. "I work with them now as well, but with a different medium," says Dadu, who grew up in Delhi, and was surrounded by fabrics as her father was a garment exporter.

Her clothes combine structure and draping. Her pre-draped saris, which resemble an armour, combine chiffon, steel cords and metallic leatherite. "I like breaking down materials and then putting them back together, which, for me, is very craft intrinsic, and one that requires a lot of handwork. The result is often futuristic," she says.

Steel is broken down to become soft and malleable and chiffon is strengthened to be stiff and structured. "While people think that it will be very stiff, it's soft and malleable. India has a strong draping tradition. But we can create structures out of steel as well. I want to break the myth that we can't. We don't give structure much credit, but, as an aesthetic, it enhances everyone's body type," she adds.

With sustainability and ethical fashion becoming the buzzword in the industry, is steel the answer for Dadu? "I don't think there is enough information available on the topic. Many feel it's the aesthetic that is sustainable, the khaki-handloom wearing sensibility, for instance. But sustainability has to be in the practice, too, even if your aesthetic is retro or futuristic," asserts Dadu, who, on most days, works out of her workshop in Noida. Sustainability for her is taking small, meaningful steps and creating designs that won't need an upgrade every season. "Our clothes need special packaging as we ship them overseas. We are trying to develop a new form of bubble wrap, for instance, which is not plastic. Also, we need to develop new ways of pattern making, where we don't waste any material," says Dadu, who who graduated from the Pearl Academy of Fashion, Delhi, in 2006.

While many of her contemporaries decry the overdependency on and the onslaught of social media on fashion, Dadu feels that it is a supremely democratic space for creators. "Not all young designers get a Gen Next show or a slot at Fashion Design Council of India Fashion Week. I had many designers who started out with me, but they are nowhere to be seen now. Where do they show their work? Not all have money and capital to start a store. But today Instagram pages are serving as platforms for people to showcase their talent," she says.

# 'I wanted to create a non-Western-centric post-apocalyptic world'

Pakistani writer Sophia Khan on writing a steampunk novel, exploring womanhood and her love for science fiction

### SURBHIGUPTA

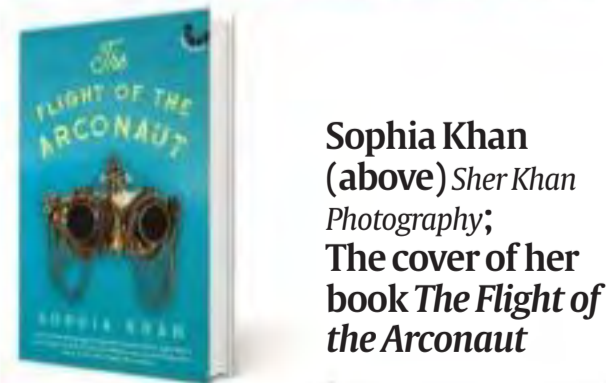
IN PAKISTANI writer Sophia Khan's *The Flight of the Arconaut* (Rs 599, Red Panda), we meet Nyx, a young girl shielded from the harsh realities of the Empire, who spends her days in an underground lab, and nights testing her skills as an arconaut, until she is pitted against a mysterious brigadier. Islamabad-based Khan, 34, who studied fiction writing at New York's Sarah Lawrence College, wrote her first novel *Yasmeen* in 2015. It was shortlisted for the Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize and the Karachi Literature Festival Getz Pharma Fiction Prize. Excerpts from an interview:

**What was the first idea that sparked the story of *The Flight of the Arconaut*?**

Arapaie Black, the book's illustrator, and I first came up with the idea of the arconaut in 2012. We were discussing how only White people (and usually only men, unless a love interest survives) ever seem to make it to the end in dystopian movies, and we came up with the idea of creating a non-Western-centric post-apocalyptic world. I felt it was important for people to see themselves in what they're reading. If dystopia depicts a world without people of colour, what does it suggest to us about our place in the future?

**Lineage, bloodline and fertility are some of the major themes in the story. What made you want to explore them?**

I wanted to explore the different ways in which women exercise power — both by finding their way within the confines of the society that binds them and by utterly rejecting it. Women can either work



Sophia Khan (above) Sher Khan Photography; The cover of her book *The Flight of the Arconaut*

within the structures of the society that confines them and find ways around these confines (ie Ephelia working quietly in her greenhouse) or they can shatter the conventions of said society (ie Nyx arconauting), which can often lead to drastic consequences — different people find different routes to freedom in oppressive societies.

**How did the setting of fictional and fantastical world assist you in**

### exploring sociopolitical issues?

I love science fiction because it is probably the only genre in which writers can explore social, political, moral, and philosophical issues without boring the readers to tears (so I hope, anyway). Somehow when serious ideas are surrounded by fantastical scaffolding, they're infinitely more interesting.

**Take us behind the process of creating the character of Nyx — she is part of a world with privilege and yet is not one of them.**

Nyx is probably the most difficult character I've ever written because I had to work very hard not to fall into the trap of making her a pleasant, agreeable girl. It's much easier to write nice, agreeable girls because we see so many of them. The fact that she is an outsider in every context kept me in check every time I started to make her a little too civilised.

**You've recreated the cracks in a society on the basis of class, race, community, colour, gender, and identity. But aren't identities getting more fluid than before?**

Yes and no. I think humans gravitate instinctually towards tribalism. While traditional identities may be getting more fluid, I do think we tend to self-select into groups.

**You've also linked the levels of IQ with levels in social hierarchy.**

There seems to be a global trend towards anti-intellectualism. Science fiction allows you to extrapolate what you see around and take it to extremes. The falling IQ levels are a sort of thought experiment: what would happen if intelligent people by and large ceased to exist? Would there be factions who

wanted this to happen, and, if so, why?

**To weave the story, you've drawn from various mythologies, customs, and languages.**

One sees a lot of cultural intermingling in science fiction; the idea, I suppose, being that as the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the barriers between cultures blur — futuristic globalisation, if you will.

**Why did you think steampunk fit best to tell your story?**

I love the mix of old and new. Steampunk seemed like a good fit for a world that is in some ways advanced and in other ways primitive. Atlantis (where the story is set) is a society built upon the ruins of a destroyed world, so steampunk provided the perfect medium to depict a world that is at once ancient and new.

**What are the challenges of creating a whole new fictional universe in such detail?**

Keeping everything organised can be a struggle. I have pages and pages of notes, outlines, maps, genealogies and timelines forming backstories that don't even make it to the drafts.

**What drew you to writing? Is there any previous work in the genre that served as an inspiration?**

It was a bit of an accident. I've always enjoyed making up stories, but when I was younger I imagined I'd go into academia. Unfortunately, I'm not much good at lecturing. So many works were inspiring. Growing up, I read and reread the *His Dark Materials* trilogy (by Philip Pullman). I also admire China Miéville and Paolo Bacigalupi's worldbuilding. Although he doesn't write steampunk, I have always loved Salman Rushdie's intermingling of the real with the fantastical.

**Which are the other genres that you'd like to experiment with?**

I've been writing short stories lately; which has taught me a great deal. When you only have 10 or 20 pages to create a life, you have to pay exacting attention to every single sentence.

### HIDDEN FIGURES

Sekrè, a German-Swiss startup, is selling "luxury handbags with a secret". These contain snippets of authentic manuscripts including fragments of original documents by Queen Victoria, King Frederick William III, and Charles Dickens among others.



### ON THE LOOSE



LEHER KALA

# A Cross to Bear

Naming and shaming is an ancient tactic. Its consequences, as cruel as ever

THE ALLAHABAD High Court has directed Yogi Adityanath's government to remove all hoardings in Lucknow displaying photos and personal details of those accused of violence during the protests against the Citizen Amendment Act. Visible on major crossroads, the billboards identified protestors, holding them responsible for the destruction of public property when the anti-CAA protests turned violent. Though the High Court intervened and put an end to the malicious allegations (yet to be proven in court), the anti-CAA protestors have already suffered irreparable damage to their reputations. This story has been widely reported, their images shared in newspapers and retweeted on Twitter.

Fifty-three pictures, names and addresses of presumed arsonists blazing down on commuters; this when the common man doesn't entertain the possibility of diabolical intent and will believe the people listed are guilty. It makes the protestors vulnerable to mob justice because a state-sanctioned hoarding carries a certain legitimacy. And alas, even the well informed among us are programmed to believe the worst of our fellow citizens. No matter what else these anti-CAA protestors achieve in their lives, search engine optimisation will throw up this case first, since it traverses the law, controversy and brute force. A Google search will reveal thousands of opinions, pro and against their role in this movement, which though perfectly legal, puts a question mark on someone's ethics forever. Despite the support from the Supreme Court, being featured in a hoarding like a wanted criminal is hardly ideal in the eyes of a prospective employer. (Jky though it is, profile checking is accepted practice for companies while hiring, and those zeroing in on potential life partners.)

Unfortunately, there is no legislative remedy in India for victims of false accusations. These protestors can file a suit for defamation but compensation is rare. The speculation, did they or did they not instigate chaos, doesn't completely end. This clever tactic of public shaming has a primitive brutality about it. It is a tried and tested method that's been in use liberally, since Biblical times. The Protestant Christian doctrine, the Humiliation of Christ explores the suffering he experienced while being savagely mocked in public. Similarly, one of the most emotionally wrought scenes in *Game of Thrones* was the ruthless queen Cersei Lannister's walk of atonement when she was utterly exposed to jeering crowds, who'd gathered to insult their shorn leader. The human species knows instinctively, the fastest way to destroy someone is to delight in their weaknesses and display their terrible choices before their contemporaries.

So much for stories of disgrace from thousands of centuries ago. In India, today, it is depressingly normal to see horrifying headlines like 'Dalit man being paraded naked for polluting a temple by entering it'. Dishonourment is an excruciating form of punishment because each individual is born with a sense of personhood. When our dignity is taken away, it can be worse than a physical blow, because unlike broken skin, a broken spirit does not automatically heal. However, subtle forms of humiliation persist in modern culture because they affect change. For example, it is not unusual for housing societies to put up letters in common areas, naming people who haven't paid their monthly dues.

The Delhi Golf Club and the Gymkhana have similar notice boards naming offenders. Presumably, this is a warning to other members, of what might happen to anyone planning to scam the club. Unless one is shamelessly brazen, it's hard not to feel like a cheapskate, once outed like that. These are still minor indiscretions which one can get around. Having your face plastered on a roadside banner for alleged vandalism, declared a culprit on Twitter, the collateral damage can be deeply unfair and unstoppable.

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## BRIEFLY

## I respect BCCI decision: Manjrekar

New Delhi: Dropped from the BCCI commentary panel for the South Africa ODI series, former India batsman Sanjay Manjrekar on Sunday said he always considered commenting a privilege and accepted the decision as a professional. One of the most accomplished voices among Indian experts, Manjrekar, who got embroiled in controversies in recent years for some of his views on air, was axed from the BCCI's commentary panel for the South Africa series recently. "I have always considered commentary as a great privilege, but never an entitlement," the 54-year-old wrote on his twitter handle. "It is up to my employers whether they choose to have me or not & I will always respect that. Maybe BCCI has not been happy with my performance of late. I accept that as a professional." Manjrekar had courted controversy during last year's World Cup when he termed Ravindra Jadeja a "bits and pieces cricketer", something that didn't go well with the Saurashtra all-rounder. PTI

## 'Playing all formats must for respect'

New Delhi: Former India player Wasim Jaffer says present day cricketers will be "respected and recognised" only if they achieve success in all three formats of the game. Domestic heavy-weight Jaffer recently announced retirement from all forms of cricket after 24-year-old first-class career during which he amassed close to 20000 runs. "You will be recognised and respected only if you fit in all three formats. I am not saying (Cheteshwar) Pujara is not respected, but then obviously he is going to play only Test cricket and no other format," Jaffer was quoted as saying by cricket.com. Jaffer played only two ODIs but scored 1944 runs in 31 Tests for India and holds the record for the second highest individual score by an Indian in the West Indies. "I think the time has changed. Even in my time I feel a lot of players like Rahul Dravid or VVS Laxman, I don't think they got their value," Jaffer said. "A player playing with them in a Test match knows how important those players are. But you know we have to go with the time. A lot of importance is given to T20 cricket." PTI

## McClenaghan heads home from PSL

Karachi: Mitchell McClenaghan, a fast bowler who plays for Karachi Kings in the Pakistan Super League, left for home following travel restrictions imposed by New Zealand in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 33-year-old, who also represents Mumbai Indians in the IPL, is the latest player to join the list of foreign players who left the ongoing PSL amid concerns over the affliction. "Karachi Kings fast bowler Mitchell McClenaghan will return to New Zealand following the Pakistan Cricket Board's decision to provide an option to competing players to withdraw from the ongoing HBL Pakistan Super League 2020," the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said in a statement. "The left-arm pacer failed to take any wicket against Multan Sultan in the only match that he played." PTI

## INTERVIEW: CHETESHWAR PUJARA

## 'You can't bat for social media... my aim is not to entertain... but to win'

DEVENDRA PANDEY  
RAJKOT, MARCH 15

Days after Saurashtra claimed their maiden Ranji Trophy, the moment is yet to sink in for Cheteshwar Pujara. For, it has been a long and agonising wait for him, as Saurashtra were always the 'nearly team', having lost three finals in the last eight seasons. The master batsman opens up to *The Indian Express* about the Ranji hangover, planning for the title, his role in the side, his often misunderstood batsmanship and in a lighter vein, the social-media trolls. Excerpts:

## Is there still a bit of Ranji Trophy hangover?

It is still there. The same day we had a small party in the evening. The next day I was flooded with messages. Whoever I met, including the former players, told me that they felt proud of us and they have never seen a day like this. The last time this region won the tournament was in 1936, when it was called Nawanganar. The next day I went to watch Angrezi Medium and people were talking about it (the title). That shows what it means to this part of the world.

## How much planning has gone into it?

We had been planning for the last two years after Jaydev Shah stepped down. I was asked to lead the team but due to international commitments, I said no. It's important to have a player who can lead the team throughout the season. So Jaydev Unadkat was the right choice. He is my friend and we both had a common goal. Last year, we came close and lost to Vidarbha away from home. The day we lost, we began planning for the next season. We (understood) that we needed to work on fitness, fielding and slip catching. The best part is that 7-8 players have been playing together for the last six-seven years. We understand each other's potential. We kept small, small goals, had team bonding sessions and dinner with each other.

## What was your role in this team?

I was there to help anyone at any time, whenever anyone needed me. I have watched them closely, so if I felt something ought to be told, I told them. Some of the players used to think too much (about their game), which was not needed. Someone like Chirag Jani, who was in and out of the team. So I told him that he needs to spend more time at the crease. He told me that temperament was an issue. Sometimes, his shot selection was bad. He was overthinking. I told him a few technical things and assured him that it was about getting one decent knock. The runs will come, the rhythm will fall into place and he will gain confidence. Eventually, his achievements were down to his hard work. I am not a coach, I will only suggest. I will not force anyone to change things. If they wanted to grow as cricketers, they need to trust their game.

## Were you the one who emphasised on team culture? Like Mumbai has one, Karnataka has another.

Yes. We wanted to have our own team culture. We never had one. Each and everyone is looking after everyone. Even those on the bench had that positive attitude and nobody cribbed when he was dropped. Credit should go to Unadkat. He did all the team-bonding exercise.



Cheteshwar Pujara, batting at No.6 for Saurashtra, made 66 off 237 balls in the Ranji Trophy final. File

## When you were away on India duty, were you in constant touch with Unadkat?

My mind was in Rajkot even when I was with the Indian team. It is very tough to be detached from something you love the most. I love Saurashtra and I can't think of myself without my team. I used to communicate with Unadkat, not on a daily basis but whenever it was needed, whenever he wanted to make a big decision or if he had a confusion about the playing eleven. Like the combination Saurashtra should play away from home or on a certain type of pitch. We both had one goal, which was to win the Ranji Trophy. Unadkat has leadership *ka shauq*. The best part is that we are often on the same page.

## What's your relationship with Unadkat?

He is like a younger brother and a close friend. Whenever he needs guidance, he calls me. Be it life or cricket, he talks openly. He was the person who danced the most at my wedding. (Laughs). He is a smart bowler and smart person.

## How do you put in perspective his consistency this season?

He is certainly a rarity because I have seen that the moment some players start getting good money in the IPL, they lose interest in Ranji Trophy. It is a fact, young player don't give much importance to Ranji Trophy. So the commitment he has shown is remarkable. I have seen players, *ke IPL nazdeek aa raha hai*, so don't give full effort in Ranji because they don't want to get injured and miss out on the IPL money. He has given his heart out. He could have easily said, I will bowl fewer spells and save energy for the IPL. But

"The other day, when I was having dinner in a Mumbai suburb, an old couple told me that after Sunil Gavaskar and Gundappa Viswanath they watch Test matches only because of me. The other day, someone told me that people follow ODIs and T20s but thanks for keeping Test cricket alive. I'm still that classical player they are looking for in Test cricket. So these words make me happy."

ON APPRECIATION FOR HIS BATTING

he didn't. The positive attitude of doing well in every match has helped him a lot. He has improved as a bowler, be it pace, control or swing. In the final, he bowled eight overs on the trot despite bowling 30 overs in the past two days on that pitch.

## Do you think in today's time that no one wants to become Cheteshwar Pujara?

Shayad yes, I agree. But the young generation does understand my game. Then, Test matches are getting fewer day by day, there are more white-ball games happening. So they won't copy my style because my batting approach suits Test cricket (more). It's not that I cannot change gears, I can play in shorter formats too. Many people have not seen me bat in white-ball cricket on TV. I know I take some time (to get in) but that's the way I have been taught when growing up.

## How do you deal with it when people say, he stays at the crease but doesn't score?

"In the first innings, I took some 200-odd balls to score 60 something but my teammates and I knew how tough the wicket was. It was a final and there was a responsibility on my shoulders. There is nothing wrong with batting slowly if the situation depends. I have to keep my ego behind, the ego of me being an international batsman and facing some bowlers who bowl at 110 kmh."

ON BATTING IN THE RANJI FINAL

In the first innings, I took some 200-odd balls to score 60 something but my teammates and I knew how tough the wicket was. It was a final and there was a responsibility on my shoulders. There is nothing wrong with batting slowly if the situation depends. I have to keep my ego behind, the ego of me being an international batsman and facing some bowlers who bowl at 110 kmh. If the situation is not easy and I know I can't play my shots, then I will not. Game changes as per the pitch. Like in New Zealand, where the pitches were more challenging.

## How did you deal with the trolls?

You can't bat for social media. Many of them don't understand my game and Test cricket because they see more white-ball cricket. *Yaar yeh toh bahut bore kar raha hai, kitna ball khel raha hai* (He is boring us, how many balls does he need). Please understand one thing, my aim is not to entertain someone, my aim is to win for my team, be it for

India or Saurashtra. Sometimes I bat fast, sometimes I bat slowly. I respect cricket lovers and crowd, I'm not someone who can hit sixes. I try to avoid social media. I don't follow social media when I am playing. I am not batting for entertainment.

## You must have fans who appreciate your work?

Yes, there are. When I meet them I feel happy. Things changed after the Australia series. The other day, when I was having dinner in a Mumbai suburb, an old couple told me that after Sunil Gavaskar and Gundappa Viswanath they watch Test matches only because of me. The other day, someone told me that people follow ODIs and T20s but thanks for keeping Test cricket alive. I'm still that classical player they are looking for in Test cricket. So these words make me happy. It keeps me motivated, it feels, *nahi koi toh dekh raha hai* (At least somebody is watching).

## What happened in New Zealand?

For me the biggest regret is the shot that I played during the second Test where I tried to pull. I don't usually. I never play that kind of a shot. It happened instinctively. I still rue it, I wonder how it happened. Once I am set, I never give my wicket away.

## DRS was used for the first time in domestic cricket. Any suggestion?

It's good but the full DRS system will be better. At least, have full DRS for the final. I was inside the dressing room most of the time and I felt that if full DRS were there, we would have won the game way before.

## JUNIOR HIGH

## Vidarbha colts make up for Ranji disappointment with U-23 title

VISHAL MENON  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

AFTER BEATING hosts Madhya Pradesh to clinch the U-23 CK Nayudu Trophy in Indore on Saturday, the Vidarbha team got into a huddle for a selfie and a huge cake was cut before the players packed their bags and left to catch a flight to Nagpur. One would have expected a bigger celebration, considering this was Vidarbha's only title this season.

On their way back, coach Trevor Gonsalves and Vidarbha Cricket Association (VCA) vice-president Prashant Vaidya were busy chalking out a road map for the next season. This, in essence, summed up Vidarbha cricket — low-key, understated but driven and passionate.

This win notwithstanding, it's been a season of disappointments for Vidarbha. Their Ranji Trophy team failed to make it a hat-trick of titles, and even failed to qualify for the knockouts this time around.

Their U-23 one-day team failed to progress beyond the quarterfinals, going down to Chandigarh in a rain-affected encounter. So, a lot was riding for them in the CK Nayudu Trophy, and Vidarbha gave a terrific account of themselves, registering eight outright wins and three draws from 11 matches.

By winning the long-format U-23 tournament, Vidarbha collected their ninth trophy in the last two years, thus reaffirming

their status as a domestic powerhouse with an abundance of emerging talent.

From allowing U-23 players to team up with the senior team during the off-season and roping in military personnel for lectures on mental fortitude, to asking players to come for nets at 2 am, the think tank showed they were willing to think out of the box in their planning.

Perhaps this was the reason why the colts managed to stage monumental comebacks from crunch situations. Captain Atharva Taide cited the example of their win over Rajasthan in a league match. "We were bundled out for 66 while batting first on a green-top in Jaipur. Despite that, we displayed tenacity to stage a comeback and register an outright win."

Gonsalves is extremely satisfied with this title, but like his players and other coaching staff, extremely measured. "This is something that we had set out to achieve 10 months ago. It's our meticulous planning and preparation that has helped us get here," he told *The Indian Express*. Back in May 2019, Vaidya gave Gonsalves two clear directives: First, ensure the U-23 squad wins the CK Nayudu Trophy. Secondly, assemble a pool of players ready to play Ranji Trophy. The coach succeeded on both fronts.

"While planning for this season, (Prashant) Vaidya had told me that the senior Ranji team would need a steady supply of players from the junior level. That's exactly what happened, with seven players making



The Vidarbha Under-23 team after winning the CK Nayudu Trophy.

their first-class debut this year. These include pacers Yash Thakur, Darshan Nalkande and Aditya Thakare, along with batsmen Atharva Taide, Anirudh Chowdhury, Mohit Kale and Siddhesh Vat," Gonsalves explained.

All these players made the step up to first-class cricket based on their consistent performances at the U-23 level. Thakare, with 47 scalps from seven matches, finished as the highest wicket-taker in this tournament; others like Vat contributed over 1,000 runs, while captain Taide had in excess of 800 runs to his credit.

Gonsalves insisted that all these players

have emerged from a systematic channel that's working to unearth talent from the districts. Vidarbha being a relatively small area, the VCA has to scout in only 10 districts under its jurisdiction.

"We have a channelised programme working in the districts. If any player manages to impress us, we bring him to the VCA academy in Nagpur and train them. We have a convenor for each district and there are committees under them. Under them are the selectors. VCA also has a coach's academy in Nagpur, where coaches are trained and sent to these districts to improve the techniques

## From allowing U-23 players to team up with the senior team during the off-season and roping in military personnel for lectures on mental fortitude, to asking players to come for nets at 2 am, the think tank showed they were willing to think out of the box in their planning.

of players," he noted.

## Feeder line

There's the Guzder League, which also serves as a platform to judge upcoming talent. "Guzder Trophy is played along division lines. These are essentially clubs affiliated with the VCA who compete in three divisions. Then there are a host of other local tournaments that are conducted in the names of former cricketers," he added.

Perhaps the biggest reason for the seamless transition made by these U-23 cricketers to the Ranji Trophy was the plan put in place by Vaidya, in consultation with Gonsalves and senior team coach Chandrakant Pandit. "During the off-season — between June-September — we clubbed members of the Ranji Trophy team with the U-23 squad into a single pool. They trained together and spent



# 'Gaining throwers' trust a challenge'

Hohn reckons that since athletes are used to a particular method, they are not ready to alter it immediately

NIHAL KOSHIE  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

INDIAN JAVELIN throwers take time to trust a coach's methods, which are new to them in terms of technique and training regimen, and this is one of his biggest challenges, says coach Uwe Hohn. The legendary German, the only man to throw the spear over 100 metres, says he is in a constant battle to win over the confidence of the athletes he is coaching. He hopes throwers see the light, sooner rather than later, in an Olympic year where time is of the essence.

What has got his hopes high is a recent chat he had with 24-year-old Shivpal Singh, one of his trainees who qualified for the Tokyo Olympics by throwing 85.47 metres at the ACNW Meeting in Potchefstroom, South Africa.

"After Shivpal met the qualification standard, we spoke and now it looks like both of us will work more in the same direction. It takes time to gain the trust of athletes because they are used to a method or a particular way and are not ready to change it because a previous coach told them it was a good method or they are just used to it. Trying to make athletes change their technique or training methods is a challenge. It takes time, but hopefully things will move in a better direction now. When they start to perform after following the method you have told them they will trust and listen faster," Hohn said.

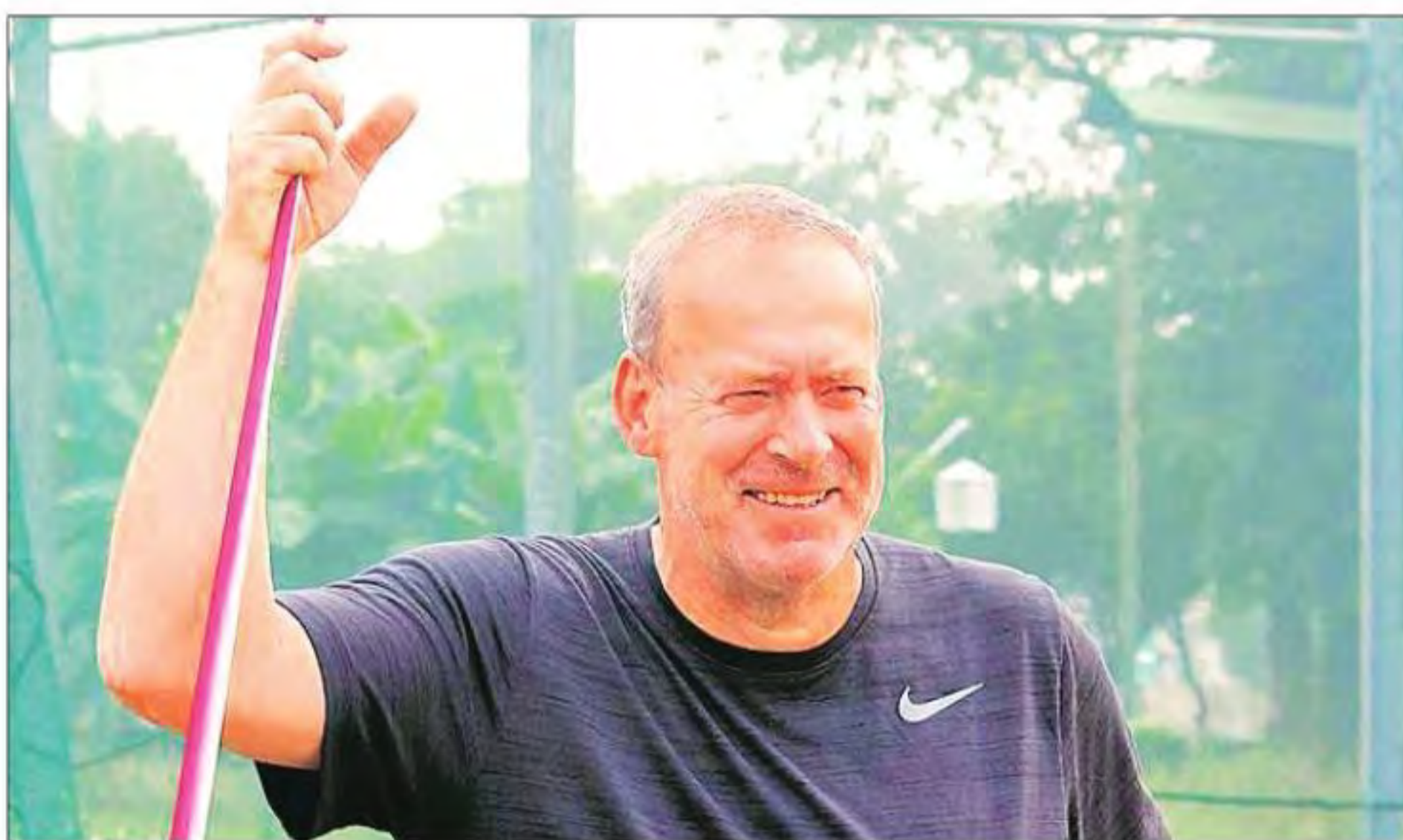
Shivpal is the second Indian javelin thrower after Neeraj Chopra to qualify for the Tokyo Games and there is growing enthusiasm about the sport in the country. Though Hohn is excited about the prospects of the athletes he trains, the German is a stickler for technique, which unless perfected won't help throwers reach their full potential, he says.

"The javelin throw is not only about trying to apply the most force. The release speed is also important and every movement of the body has to be perfect. A thrower has to understand the event and trust the process, believe in the coach and work as a team," Hohn added.

The coach has made observations about specific aspects of the throwing technique that Shivpal has to change.

"I am happy that Shivpal could qualify for the Olympics but overall I am not happy with his technique. His technique is not at the same level as it was last year. At the moment, he does not have a 'block' (locking the non-throwing side of the body at the point of delivery) and also his left side opens up too early. He has been throwing without a block, so though he has qualified, his technique needs work. He tried to get into intensive throwing without the block but if he gets his technique right, it will lead to better throwing efficiency, greater distance and fewer injuries. But it will take time because Shivpal needs to realise this," the coach said.

Shivpal's decision to participate at the South Asian Games (SAG) in Kathmandu in



Javelin coach Uwe Hohn believes that Shivpal Singh (below) can breach 90m provided he improves his technique. Express



December was not ideal, according to Hohn, because it robbed him of precious time to fine-tune his technique. The games were held in the first week of December, two months after the World Championships in Doha. Shivpal won a silver at SAG with a throw of 84.43 metres, which was short of the Olympic qualifying standard of 85 metres.

"He was not ready technique-wise after the World Championships. But he wanted to try and qualify for the Olympics fast so he went to the South Asian Games. His technique was not at a good level and he needs to continue to work on it," Hohn added. Shivpal also picked up an injury during the

SAG which was a setback. "Currently he is still not where he should be as he needed uninterrupted preparation time."

Shivpal has a personal best of 86.23 metres and Chopra's best is 88.06m and these distances can move into the 90-plus mark if processes are followed and the athletes remain injury-free, the coach believes.

"At the moment with Neeraj, the aim is to slowly move him into the 91, 92-metre mark. It will take time but it is possible. If you ask me about Shivpal's potential, I believe he can also reach the 90-metre-plus mark. There is a lot of talent so things can move in a positive direction."

**I am happy that Shivpal could qualify for the Olympics but overall I am not happy with his technique. It is not at the same level as it was last year. At the moment, he does not have a 'block' (locking the non-throwing side of the body at the point of delivery) and also his left side opens up too early. He has been throwing without a block, so though he has qualified, his technique needs work."**

**"After Shivpal met the qualification standard, we spoke and now it looks like both of us will work more in the same direction. It takes time to gain the trust of athletes because they are used to a method or a particular way and are not ready to change it because a previous coach told them it was a good method or they are just used to it. Trying to make athletes change their technique or training methods is a challenge."**

UWE HOHN,  
ON SHIVPAL SINGH

# In Dubai, Bhosale justifies fleeting moments of fame

SHAHID JUDGE  
MUMBAI, MARCH 15

A TENNIS-PLAYING youngster tries to convince her father to let her go for a training camp in Goa. The father disagrees and asks her to name Indian women players apart from Sania Mirza. "Ankita Raina, Prarthana Thombare, Rutuja Bhosale..." rattles the girl before her father stops her. He says, "You know these names because you play the sport. Ask others." Rutuja Bhosale describes this scene from a 2019 Marathi film, *Smile Please*.

She laughs over the phone, as she explains how surprised she was when she heard her own name make it to the final cut of the movie. "They probably just mentioned it because I'm Maharashtrian and this is a Marathi movie. That's probably the only reason because they made this movie last year, and I hadn't played a full season on tour," she says.

Since returning to the tour in 2017 after a stint at college tennis in the United States, Bhosale has struggled with a shoulder injury. But in her latest sojourn, at the Group 1 Fed Cup tie in Dubai, Bhosale arguably justified those fleeting moments of fame. For the first time ever, the Indian women's team qualified for the World Group Playoff stage of the competition, after finishing second behind China. And the 23-year-old, from Shirur in the Ahmednagar district, played a crucial role in that success. Ranked 438, Bhosale played the opening match for the Indians in each of the five ties in the six-team group, and managed to pull off important wins in three of them – against Uzbekistan, South Korea and Chinese Taipei.

"Vishal (Uppal) sir, the team's captain told me that Ankita (Raina, India's highest ranked singles player, 163) had never entered a Fed Cup match with India in the lead," she recalls. "If I got the win, then Ankita could play her singles freely because we knew our doubles team, which had Sania (Mirza), was strong." Bhosale's three wins kept the Indians on course for a top-two spot in the six-team group – which would secure them a spot in the playoffs. In the final tie against Indonesia, Bhosale lost in three sets, but Raina levelled the tie and then secured it with Mirza in the doubles, giving the team its biggest achievement so far. "It's a great feeling, and the more you think about it, the better it gets," says Fed Cup coach Ankita Bhambri. "We had come close in 2006, but we lost to Australia. This time, somehow, we knew this was our year. Even though we lost to China in the opener, we could feel the momentum building as the days went by. We knew this was possible."

Off court, the Indians worked towards it. Uppal, who was appointed as captain of the team last year, decided to give the players the freedom in handling their own pre-match rituals. "I told them to do whatever they wanted to be ready for the match. If they wanted to go for a hit at five in the morning or at 11, it will be done no matter what. All that I wanted was that they be ready for the match. No excuses," he says.



Rutuja Bhosale played the opening match for India in each of the five Fed Cup ties, and managed to register wins in three of them. File

"The girls know their own bodies, their diets, much better than anyone else. So I gave them the freedom to prepare in the way they wanted to. They all did their work responsibly. They were hungry for this and that's what made a difference."

The win also comes at an interesting juncture in Indian women's tennis, especially since it was accomplished by a younger group of players. For Bhosale though, who has been on the tennis circuit for a few years, this is a spark she hopes will reignite her career.

A shoulder problem – rotator tear – has hampered her growth. In December though, she made the decision to stay away from the sport and work on her fitness till the end of January. Her first event this year came last month at an ITF event in Jodhpur – where she reached the quarterfinals – before making the trip to Dubai for her first Fed Cup appearance since 2013. "The match sharpness wasn't there at the start, but I could feel myself move much better. I felt more positive with my body, and that helped me push myself," she says.

Those three crucial wins in the singles matches were instrumental in the team's success. And though it gives Bhosale a shot in the arm, there's an expectation that making the playoffs for the first time will have a strong effect on women's tennis in the country. "Indian women's tennis needed this. Hopefully people will become more serious about the women's game and there will be some motivation for the players," Bhambri adds. That's what Bhosale hopes for. She has basked in all that was achieved in the Middle East, and looks to push her career in the right direction – up the rankings and away from the injury woes that have kept her down.

She laughs again when reminded about the movie, realising the layman's limited understanding of women's tennis in the country. But with this Fed Cup achievement, she hopes the country remembers her for the right reasons.

# Habas to coach merged ATK-Bagan outfit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KOLKATA, MARCH 15

FRESH FROM winning a record third Indian Super League title, ATK boss Sanjiv Goenka on Sunday announced that Antonio Habas would remain the coach of their team that has merged with the country's oldest club, Mohun Bagan. The Spaniard, who had guided them to the title in the inaugural ISL in 2014, was back at the helm at the start of 2019 following two tumultuous years, which witnessed four coaches with the team finishing ninth and sixth in the standings.

"Yes (he will be the coach)... I think there's something in the stars. If we work together, we succeed together," Goenka said as ATK celebrated their triumph. With Habas set to continue, it would mean an end of the road for Kibu Vicuna at Mohun Bagan despite

guiding the team to the I-League title with four rounds to spare.

"Vicuna is also a very good coach. Let's see what happens," Goenka said of Vicuna, whose contract is expiring this season. The Habas-coached side defeated Chennaiyin FC 3-1 in the summit clash in Goa to become the most successful franchise of ISL.

"We are not in a habit of boasting. But we had great players, great coaching outfit. It is difficult to individually list out players. It was an exceptional performance and I express my heartfelt gratitude, appreciation to each and every player." Prabir (Das) came back from an injury and made such a huge mark. Roy (Krishna) and Edu (Garcia) were brilliant, Javier (Hernandez) yesterday, what a performance.

"Sumit Rathi, a youngster who cemented his place in the team. Jayesh (Rane) played in a different position. Pritam (Kotal) was extraordinarily matured always. Arindam

(Bhattacharya) saved his best for the last two games. I can go on and on. Everyone played their role. We beat the rest."

The merged team will be formed on June 1 and the RPSG Group chairman, who had acquired a majority shareholding of 80 per cent in the century-old club, announced that they have signed Manvir Singh from FC Goa and Subhashis Bose from Mumbai City FC for the next season.

"Till now we were planning for this season which just got over. Now with the I-League and ISL under our belt, we will start planning for the next season which starts tomorrow. "But as far as we are concerned, the two signings we have confirmed are Manvir Singh and Subhashis Bose. We are happy to have them. We have to build from here. Tomorrow, it (the win) will be past. We have to plan for the future. We got to nurture the young talents," he added.

# Players' mobiles, wallets stolen during league game

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

THEY WENT out on the field and won a local league match comfortably. But when the players of Delhi United returned to the dressing room, they found their belongings stolen: mobile phones, wallets, bags, clothes – and even chewing gum!

The incident took place on Friday at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in the heart of the national capital. The multi-sport stadium, which was the showpiece venue for the 2010 Commonwealth Games, is home to athletes from several sports who train there every day. The venue has also hosted marquee international matches, including India's under-17 World Cup and Indian Super League matches, apart from food festivals and concerts.

On Friday afternoon, Delhi United were to take on City FC in a Delhi Football League match,

**Delhi United won the match 2-0, but when they returned from the field, the players realised that most of their belongings had gone missing from the dressing room, which is situated alongside the indoor warm-up track.**

which was scheduled for 3.15pm kick-off, according to Delhi United coach Ayush Bhuttan.

"The kick-off got delayed by around 15-20 minutes but we had locked the dressing room when we left," Bhuttan says. "The keys were with our team manager, who was in the dugout for the entire duration of the match."

Delhi United won the match 2-0, but when

they returned from the field, the players realised that most of their belongings had gone missing from the dressing room, which is situated alongside the indoor warm-up track. "When the players unlocked the dressing room and walked in, they saw everything was scattered," Bhuttan said.

Among the items stolen were mobile phones of around 12 players, wallets and a bag belonging to one player. "They even took chewing gum from a players' pocket," says a team official. The club officials claim they immediately reached out to Football Delhi, the local governing body, and lodged a complaint at the Lodhi Colony Police Station.

It is learnt that the police have looked at CCTV footage from the one security camera that was functioning. Football Delhi president Shaji Prabhakaran called the incident "unfortunate." "We have to make sure the culprit is caught as soon as possible. The police is investigating the matter," he said.

## [SPORTS BAR]



### Sharath wins in Oman for first title in a decade

Ace Indian paddler Achanta Sharath Kamal ended his decade-long wait for a title, producing a sensational performance to win the ITTF Challenger Plus Oman Open in Muscat on Sunday. Despite being a game down, the 37-year-old Indian recovered well to outclass top-seeded Marcos Freitas of Portugal 6-11, 11-8, 12-10, 11-9, 3-11, 17-15 in the summit clash. It was in 2010 that Sharath had bagged his last title at the Egypt Open. Since then he made two semifinals – Morocco Open in 2011 and India Open in 2017 – but couldn't manage to go further. In the semifinals in Oman, Sharath pulled off a stunning come-from-behind victory against Russia's Kirill Skachkov. Fourth-seeded Sharath recovered after being two games down to register an 11-13, 11-13, 13-11, 11-9, 13-11, 8-11, 11-7 win in a thrilling seven-game match that lasted one hour and eight minutes.

### Vertonghen's family at knife-point in burglary

Jan Vertonghen's family were held at knife-point during a burglary while the Tottenham defender was away with his Premier League club. British police said four men wearing balaclavas and armed with knives broke into Vertonghen's house while the Belgian international's wife and children were inside. The 32-year-old was in Germany for Tottenham's Champions League last 16 second-leg defeat against Leipzig on Tuesday. A Police spokesman said: "Police were called to a residential address at 7.49pm on 10 March. It was reported four men wearing balaclavas, armed with knives, had forced entry to the property and stolen a number of items before leaving."

### Unadkat engaged two days after Ranji crown

Two days after leading Saurashtra to a maiden Ranji Trophy title, pacer Jaydev Unadkat announced his engagement on Sunday. The 28-year-old from Porbandar posted a picture of his fiancée Rinny and himself on his social media accounts. "6 hours, 2 meals & 1 shared mud cake later..." Unadkat wrote along with a ring and a heart emoticon. India Test player and Saurashtra teammate Cheteshwar Pujara congratulated the bowler. "Welcome to the family Rinny. I am so glad that my brother @Unadkat has found the love of his life. P.S:- You have to deal with a lot of bromance."



It was alleged in a Daily Mail report that a farmer was offered money to provide an alibi for Tyson Fury's failed drug test in 2015.

### Fury won't lose belt over doping claim: WBC chief

Tyson Fury's reign as world heavyweight champion will not be ended by new claims over an alleged drug-testing scam, according to WBC president Mauricio Sulaiman. It was alleged in a Mail on Sunday report that a farmer was offered money to provide an alibi for Fury's failed drug test in 2015. Fury and his cousin Hughie tested positive for nandrolone in 2015, which they subsequently blamed on eating uncastrated wild boar meat, citing a farmer called Martin Carefoot who claimed to have provided them with the product. After an expensive and elongated stand-off with UK Anti-Doping, Fury and Hughie received retrospective two-year bans and were able to resume their careers in December 2017. In the Mail report, Carefoot denied having provided the Fury team with the meat, insisting he was offered £25,000 to make up the story in order to aid their case. The person who has claimed he accepted money to lie should be the one on trial, in my personal opinion, especially when he has waited five years to tell his story.

### Biles hits back at USA Gymnastics after tweet

Four-time Olympic gold medalist Simone Biles wants more than good wishes from USA Gymnastics. The US federation wished Biles a happy 23rd birthday on social media on Saturday. Biles – who also owns 19 world titles and is expected to be among the stars of the Tokyo Olympics – used their tweet as a chance to demand an independent investigation into the Larry Nassar sex abuse scandal. "How about you amaze me and do the right thing... have an independent investigation," Biles snapped on Twitter after the federation's birthday tweet. "HAPPY BIRTHDAY to the most decorated gymnast of all time, @simonebiles!" USA Gymnastics wrote, posting a video of Biles in action in a floor exercise.

### Bedi prevails over Mane in longest tour playoff

Aadil Bedi put up a lion-hearted performance to earn his maiden title at the Bengal Open Golf Championship on Sunday. Chandigarh-based Bedi, 19, triumphed with a chip-in birdie on the sixth playoff hole to end Pune golfer Udayan Mane's three-event winning streak on the TATA Steel PGTI. The Rs 30 lakh tournament witnessed the longest-running playoff on the PGTI. The previous record was four holes which was set three times. The last such event was the Jeev Milkha Singh Invitational 2019.



### Axelsen, Tai clinch All England honours

Viktor Axelsen of Denmark claimed his maiden men's singles title at the All England Championship, while two-time former winner Tai Tzu Ying of Chinese Taipei regained the women's singles crown in Birmingham on Sunday. The second-seeded Axelsen, a former world champion, beat Chinese Taipei's top seed Chou Tien-chen 21-13 21-14 in a lopsided final to add another feather to his cap. Former world no. 1 Tai Tzu, playing in her fourth straight All England final, overcame top-seeded Chinese Chen Yu Fei 21-19 21-15 to claim her third title. Third-seeded Japanese Yuki Fukushima and Sayaka Hirota beat China's Du Yue and Li Yin Hui 21-13 21-15 to claim the women's doubles crown, while Indonesian mixed doubles pair of Praveen Jordan and Melati Daeva Oktavianti defeated Thais Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai 21-15 17-21 21-8.



TRACKING THE VIRUS

Five Valencia squad members test positive

Five members of the playing squad and staff of La Liga club Valencia have tested positive for the coronavirus, the Spanish side said on Sunday. "Valencia CF inform that five positive cases of the COVID-19 coronavirus have been detected amongst first team staff and players," the club said in a statement. "All of these persons are now at home, in good health and obeying self-isolation measures." Earlier on Sunday Valencia and Argentina defender Ezequiel Garay became the first La Liga player to confirm he has the virus. "It's clear that I have got off to the wrong start in 2020. I've tested positive for the coronavirus, I feel very good and now I just have to listen to the health authorities and for now remain isolated," he wrote on Instagram. The 33-year-old was already ruled out for the remainder of the season after suffering a knee injury in February. Valencia travelled to Milan last month for a Champions League match at Atalanta played in front of a packed San Siro stadium, before restrictions were placed on sports events in Italy. A Valencia-based radio journalist who travelled to the match tested positive for the virus the following week. The second leg of the tie, which Valencia lost 8-4 on aggregate, was ordered to be played without spectators at the club's Mestalla stadium. In line with most major sports worldwide, all organised football in Spain has been postponed for at least two weeks in a bid to prevent further spread of the virus. Spain is the second worst-affected country in Europe after Italy.

Friday, along with a club physiotherapist. Seven Sampdoria players have tested positive, including Italian midfielder Depaoli and Polish defender Bereszynski on Saturday, along with Juventus defender Daniele Rugani this week. Vlahovic, 20, revealed that he had not realised anything was wrong until he became feverish and his temperature rose to 39 degrees, and he went to hospital. "Anyway, I'm fine now," he said on Instagram. "What to do now? Nothing, just rest. I just have to stay away from people." Serie A as well as all sport in Italy has been suspended until April 3. But the Italian Players' Association (AIC) on Saturday slammed a "paradoxical situation" whereby pressure was being put on players by some clubs to return to training. "Today in Italy there are still football clubs which are either shamefully irresponsible, or live on Mars, or lack a minimum of dignity," the AIC wrote

MLB: Astros' Springer, Bregman pitching in

Houston Astros stars George Springer and Alex Bregman joined the ranks of US sports figures stepping up to help out stadium workers and others impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. Astros outfielder Springer, the 2017 World Series MVP, is donating \$100,000 to Minute Maid Park workers who stand to lose wages after Major League Baseball pushed back the start of Opening Day, scheduled for March 26, "at least two weeks." "These are the people that help take care of my family when I go to work," Springer said through his agency, Excel Sports Management. "Now I want to help take care of them when they're in a time of need." Bregman donated 1,000 quarantine food kits which the Houston Food Bank said would make sure students who normally receive free lunches at school will get 28 meals per kit while their schools are closed. The Astros players swell the ranks of athletes and teams who have pledged to provide financial assistance to hourly wage workers who will be hard-hit by the disruption to the sporting schedule. The Los Angeles Clippers, Lakers and Kings, along with Staples Center, have established a fund to provide financial assistance to all hourly employees at the arena impacted by the pandemic.

Serie A doctors warn against training return

Serie A doctors have issued a joint warning advising against a return to club training after four more players tested positive for coronavirus, bringing the tally in the Italian top flight to 11. Fiorentina's Patrick Cutrone and German Pezzella contracted the virus, the Tuscan club said on Saturday, with Sampdoria's Fabio Depaoli and Bartosz Bereszynski later confirming they had also been diagnosed. Serie A doctors said they had "strong concerns" and "unanimously advise not to resume training until a clear improvement" in the situation. Four Fiorentina team members were diagnosed with Serbia forward Dusan Vlahovic also testing positive on



SELFIE-HYGIENE

Two women take a selfie with the Olympic rings in the background in the Odaiba section of Tokyo. While many international sporting events have been postponed or cancelled, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe promised on Friday that Tokyo would host the Olympic Games as planned in July and August. AP

Dominant show, weak season finale

Liverpool could have won first top-flight title in 30 years on Monday. Instead, they're left to wait and wonder

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON, MARCH 15

LIVERPOOL COULD have been crowned Premier League champions on Monday for the first time in a generation. Instead the stadium will be silent and the streets empty.

Jurgen Klopp's team needed Manchester City to lose to Burnley on Saturday to give them a chance to seal the deal at their local rivals Everton two days later.

Regardless of whether it would have happened at Goodison Park or over the coming weeks, their first top-flight title for 30 years was a mere formality. But now fans are wondering when, or even if, they will be crowned champions after the coronavirus laid waste to the global sporting calendar. The message coming from Liverpool is that there are more important issues than football to talk about, even with the club tantalisingly close to glory.

"I've said before that football always seems the most important of the least important things," Klopp said in a statement on Friday. "Today, football and football matches really aren't important at all. If it's a choice between football and the good of the wider society, it's no contest. Really, it isn't." Klopp's stance won him the support of World Health Organisation chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who thanked him for his "powerful message".

Liverpool supporters, desperate to reclaim their position at the pinnacle of the English game, agree with their German manager, saying the pandemic overshadowed football.

Supporters' union Spirit of Shankly is focusing on the damaging fallout from the COVID-19 virus.

"In talks with @lfc we asked for assurances that non-playing staff will not lose their pay as a consequence of shifts being cancelled," it said in a statement. "We also need to keep in mind those most vulnerable. Cancelling football games means (foodbanks) will be hit hard."



Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp said, "If it's a choice between football and the good of the wider society, it's no contest"; a stance which won him the support of World Health Organisation chief Tedros Ghebreyesus. Reuters

Liverpool have stumbled in recent weeks, knocked out of the Champions League by Atletico Madrid and dumped out of the FA Cup by Chelsea. But they have been peerless in the Premier League, leaving their rivals in their wake to race 25 points clear of defending champions Manchester City. With Alisson Becker in goal, Virgil van Dijk marshalling the defence and their devastating front three of Roberto Firmino, Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane, Klopp's men have been irresistible. Paul Hayward, writing in the *Daily Telegraph*, said Liverpool should be crowned champions for the 19th time even if no more games are played.

"If a season ends too soon, its natural winning line is the point it reached before the halt

was called: emphatically so, 29 games into a 38-match campaign, which is a respectable distance," he wrote. "Voiding the 2019/20 football season would be nonsense," he added.

"Handing over the trophy at any point where clubs were forced to give up would feel morally correct." Brighton and Hove Albion chief executive Paul Barber said if the season were to be "frozen" it would be unjust on Liverpool.

"Everybody in the game appreciates what a fantastic season they've had and what a wonderful team they are," he told the BBC.

"But equally it would be unjust for teams to be relegated when there are still eight, nine, ten games to play of the Premier League."

'NULL & VOID'

The PL hopes that an interlude of three weeks from today will enable it to restart but that may well be dreamland. So what if the league cannot be finished? As games in both the PL and in the EFL are affected, the only fair and reasonable thing to do is declare the whole season null and void. Who knows who would have gone down or come up if the games have not actually been played in full?

KAREN BRADY, VICE-CHAIRMAN OF WEST HAM UNITED, WHO ARE CURRENTLY 16TH ON THE TABLE

Have a look at Klopp's comments compared to Karren Brady's. What's fair is to finish the season for teams in every league when the football is allowed to start again. The football authorities found a way to put a World Cup in the middle of a season so I'm sure they can sort next season out.

JAMIE CARRAGHER, FORMER LIVERPOOL DEFENDER

PLAYERS TREATED LIKE 'GUINEA PIGS', SAYS ROONEY

Former Manchester United star Wayne Rooney claims the British government and football authorities have treated players like "guinea pigs" during the coronavirus crisis. While the rest of European football was shutting down, Rooney is angry it took several days for the English leagues to postpone their matches until April 3. "Why did we wait until Friday? Why did it take Mikel Arteta to get ill for the game in England to do the right thing?" Rooney, currently playing for second tier Derby, wrote in the *Sunday Times*. "For players, staff and their families it has been a worrying week - one in which you felt a lack of leadership from the government and from the FA and Premier League. After the emergency meeting, at last the right decision was made - until then it almost felt like footballers in England were being treated like guinea pigs. I know how I feel. If any of my family get infected through me because I've had to play when it's not safe, and they get seriously ill, I'd have to think hard about ever playing again. I would never forgive the authorities."



Wayne Rooney, currently playing for second-tier Derby, lashed out against the authorities in his column for the *Sunday Times*.

'EVERYBODY IS PANICKING'

UFC continues to fight on, holds card in Brasilia behind closed doors

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
MARCH 15

THE UFC staged a full fight card in an empty arena Saturday night in Brazil's capital city, sticking to its plan to keep fighting in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.

Charles Oliveira stopped lightweight Kevin Lee with a guillotine choke in the third round of the main event in the UFC's first show since many other sports organizations around the world postponed and canceled competitions.

The world's biggest mixed martial arts promotion held 12 bouts in Brasilia with only the fighters, their camps, the television production crew and a few dozen essential personnel inside Nilson Nelson Gymnasium.

"It was a bit weird not having any fans inside the arena," said Bea Malecki, a Swedish bantamweight who won a decision over Veronica Macedo in the show's opening bout. "But I was able to hear everything my coaches were saying, and it was good. Sometimes it is so loud out there. It was a crazy week. We didn't know if the fight was going to happen or not, but we stuck to the plan. It was really emotional."

The UFC has not canceled any events in the

wake of the pandemic, going against the plans of nearly all major sports leagues and organizations. UFC President Dana White has claimed the sports world is "panicking" with its cancellations, and he remains determined to stage four more shows over the next five weekends.

But White announced Saturday night that all four shows must take place at new, currently undetermined venues — including UFC 249, the promotion's next pay-per-view event headlined by lightweight champion Khabib Nurmagomedov fighting top contender Tony Ferguson.

"We're not stopping," White said on ESPN, his promotion's broadcast partner. "We will keep finding a way to put on the fights. I'm in the fight business. I've been doing this for over 20 years, and this stuff happens to me every weekend — obviously not at this level."

The UFC had scheduled a show with fans inside London's O2 Arena on March 21. The U.S. government's new travel restrictions regarding the United Kingdom have forced the UFC to move the show, White said.

The London show is likely to be held in the U.S., but Europe-based fighters are unlikely to be able to compete on the card. White's matchmakers are putting together a new undercard for the show, which is slated to be headlined



by American welterweight Tyrone Woodley against Britain's Leon Edwards.

The UFC also intended to hold fan-free shows in Las Vegas on March 28 and April 11, but White said the Nevada State Athletic Commission's decision to suspend any combat sports competition in the state until March 25 have made it impossible to stick with that plan. He intends to find new homes for those shows, which were initially scheduled for Columbus, Ohio, and for Portland, Oregon.

**We're not stopping. We will keep finding a way to put on the fights. I'm in the fight business. I've been doing this for over 20 years, and this stuff happens to me every weekend — obviously not at this level... Unless there's a total shutdown of the country where people can't leave their houses and things like that, these fights will happen. We will find venues and we will figure this out. The only thing that's going to stop us is a complete government shutdown where people are confined to their homes"**

DANA WHITE, UFC PRESIDENT

The UFC broadcast from Brasilia included constant promotion of the UFC 249 would be headlined by lightweight champion Khabib Nurmagomedov against Tony Ferguson in a matchup that has been booked four previous times, but canceled each time due to injuries or other circumstances.

"Unless there's a total shutdown of the

country where people can't leave their houses and things like that, these fights will happen," White said. "We will find venues and we will figure this out. The only thing that's going to stop us is a complete government shutdown where people are confined to their homes."

The show in Brasilia was likely a boon for ESPN, as it filled a yawning void of live sports during what's usually one of the busiest weeks of the international sporting calendar. The fights were initially scheduled to be aired in the U.S. on the ESPN+ subscription service, but instead filled nearly six hours on ESPN.

Oliveira (29-8) ended the show by finishing Lee (18-6), a former lightweight title contender who missed weight for the bout. Oliveira has won seven straight fights by stoppage, and the Brazilian veteran's celebratory screams echoed through the empty arena after his UFC-record 14th submission victory.

"We spent the whole week not knowing if this was going to happen," Oliveira said. "I came to make history again, this time without anyone cheering. Of course I wanted everyone to be there, but I'm sure that an audience that didn't know me yet had the opportunity to meet me today."

The absence of fans led to a unique atmosphere. The UFC still played its fighters' walk-in

music as they walked to the cage, and ring announcer Joe Martinez declaimed the fighters' names with no fans in attendance to hear it. After conducting an in-cage interview, UFC broadcaster Michael Bisping instinctively exorted the absent crowd to "Make some noise!"

The absence of crowd energy perhaps played a role in the card's first nine fights all going to decisions. Brazil's Jussier Formiga lost a narrow unanimous decision to Mexican lightweight Brandon Moreno in the type of close bout that might have been influenced by thousands of fans cheering for the home fighter.

Lightweight contender Renato Moicano got the card's first stoppage victory nearly 4 1/2 hours into the show, finishing Damir Hadzovic in 44 seconds with a rear naked choke.

"I'm very frustrated because today I fought in my hometown, and I don't see nobody," Moicano said. "I didn't see familiar faces. I didn't see my family over here. I don't know what to say."

The atmosphere outside the arena was equally strange. The UFC had already erected signage and cordoned off gathering areas normally placed outside venues for fans, but the areas sat unused and empty.